



Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter



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March Program: Speaker to be determined.

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President's Comments. . .

The Big 12 Tournament, closely followed by the NCAA Tournament, commercials for The Masters are already on TV, our next meeting is on St Patrick's Day – obviously Spring is just around the corner! Our menu for our meeting will be an Irish-themed meal.

Please make sure to join us for our March dinner meeting. We have had some challenges as several speakers have declined our invitation for a variety of reasons, but we will have someone for sure – we just don't have a name here at press time. We will send out an email when a speaker is identified.

On February 17th Ed Phillips, George Pogge and I joined other members of Kansas MOAA chapters to Storm the Capitol in Topeka. We discussed veterans issues with Kansas State legislators – two key issues were (a) to extend active duty exemption from auto property taxes to National Guard members and (b) build a third State Veterans Home in Kansas – currently we have homes at Winfield and Ft Dodge. We met with all our local representatives, including our own Barbara Ballard, and were welcomed very warmly in the Capitol building.

A reminder to recruit new members if you know of any retired officers who are not yet among our ranks.

Looking forward to seeing you all at our March meeting – I promise we will NOT have green beer.



Coop

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1 March 2020

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*** Reservations should be sent
to Jim Cooper by
11 March 2020**



JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS



CHAPTER DUES (\$20.00) were due & payable 01/01/2020.

If you have not gotten your dues to Jim Cooper, please do so ASAP.

We will publish the 2020 Chapter Directory for the May meeting.

Members who have not paid their dues by mid-April will not be included.

If you do not have a picture in the current Directory, please submit one.

If you wish a different picture, please submit one or contact John Halladay.

PERSONAL NEWS

From Dean Bevan: Judy and I visited friends in Orange Beach, Alabama, for two weeks and celebrated our 60th wedding anniversary there.

From Mike Kelly: Georgiana Beverly and I enjoyed a trip to Maui and Oahu Hawaii in the early part of January. While in Maui, we attended the professional golf Sentry Tournament of Champions. Sentry Insurance, the tournament sponsor, granted free admission to all veterans and veteran families for the entire tournament! KU's Gary Woodland was our favorite golfer to watch and he placed in the top 10 of the field. They also enjoyed a beautiful whale-watching cruise.

While on Oahu we visited the Punch Bowl Cemetery in Honolulu. Formally known as the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, Punch Bowl is a solemn and particularly well-kept place. World War II correspondent Ernie Pyle is buried here alongside many other veterans such as Senator and Medal of Honor recipient Daniel Inouye and Challenger astronaut Ellison Onizuka. More than twenty Medal of Honor recipients are at rest there.

My USAF Academy classmate, Mike Fricano, is Vice-President of the Hawaii Aloha Chapter of MOAA and invited me to give my 9-11 presentation at their January luncheon. Georgiana and I visited the Navy Exchange at Pearl Harbor along with the crew of the *USS Abraham Lincoln* that was enjoying liberty after a **nine-month** deployment to the Central Command AOR. We spoke with several family members getting ready for the Tiger cruise from Pearl Harbor to San Diego, the new home port of the *Lincoln*.

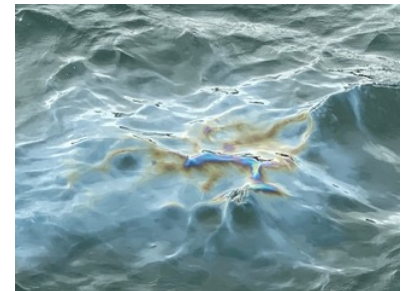
Finally, Georgiana and I visited the USS Arizona Memorial. There are no words to add to the sense of honor and sacrifice one experiences there. The National Park Service and the Navy have done a fabulous job with the shore-side exhibits and with the newly-rebuilt berthing at the memorial itself. Oil still leaks from the *Arizona* and forms a sheen on the surface of Pearl Harbor. There are other Pearl Harbor sites to see including the *USS Missouri*, the *USS Bowfin*, and memorials to the *USS Oklahoma* and *USS Utah* crew members lost on December 7, 1941.



Lady Liberty represents all grieving mothers at Punchbowl Cemetery



USS Abraham Lincoln in background and USS Arizona Memorial launch in foreground



Oil from the USS Arizona on the surface of Pearl Harbor

From Mike Miller: Hello to all, and an apology for not keeping up with some of my responsibilities. As most of you know, I have been dealing with some significant medical issues that have taken up a lot of my time and energy. I now believe I am at or near to turning the corner. To keep it sweet and short, I underwent four medical diagnostic procedures from the Oct/Nov and Dec time frame. This led to Open Heart Surgery in mid January (two procedures done on the same day) at Saint Luke Hospital in Kansas City. After several days I was moved to Presbyterian Manor in Lawrence, where I stayed for two weeks starting my progression to regain my strength, mobility, etc. From there I was released to home, and am now in my second week of cardio rehabilitation at LMH Cardiac.



Army News *LTC Tracey Olson, USA*

Greetings from the Jayhawk BN

The start of the semester has been full of training events, volunteer work and visits from our Brigade Command Team. The program had the distinct honor of hosting the 3rd Brigade, United State Army Cadet Command, Command Team. COL Jesse Phillips and CSM Gareth Kilpatrick conducted PT with the Cadets, had a question and answer session with the MS3 and MS4 class and had lunch with cadre and Cadets. COL Phillips wrapped up his visits with a tour of campus.

CDT Petit organized a blood drive with the American Red Cross in February. A goal of 25 donors for the event was set. In all, 32 Cadets, students and ROTC Cadre donated blood. This semester the Cadets transition from individual/team training to platoon level training in preparation for Cadet Summer Training 2020.

The MS4s have lead the training of our underclassmen through four leadership labs at Sesquicentennial Point. The training has consisted of

ambush, raid, platoon defense and recon to name a few.

Looking forward to the upcoming months, we are hosting the 23rd annual Ranger Buddy Challenge. This year's event will be held at Sesquicentennial Point on April 4th. We are planning on having approximately 400 competitors this year. Following the Ranger Buddy Challenge, the battalion will head to Fort Riley for our Spring FTX in conjunction with Creighton. The FTX provides the Cadets with the opportunity to lead students from other university's replicating the experience at Cadet Summer Training. To end the semester, the battalion will have a dining out on May 1st.

LTC Tracey Olson
Professor of Military Science



Navy News *CAPT Trenton Lennard, USN*



Greetings From the Jayhawk Battalion, Winter Commissioning

Just before our Jayhawks left campus for their well-deserved winter break, we had the privilege of commissioning MIDN 1/C Charlie Beck at the Oread Hotel on December 21st, 2019. ENS Beck was most recently the Battalion's Command Master Chief and will soon depart for Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida to begin his flight training. The ceremony was filled with family,

friends and military tradition. ENS Beck was sworn into service by family friend Lt Col. Warner White (U S A F) a n d rendered his first salute by another mentor, A1C Rod Hector (USAF). Despite being the first day of winter



ENS Beck stands at attention during his commissioning ceremony.

break, many of the battalion midshipmen delayed their trips home to take part in the time-honored tradition of commissioning their fellow shipmate and friend. The ceremony was a culmination of over four years of hard work and dedication by ENS Beck.

Congratulations on your commissioning and earning your bars! Bravo Zulu!

Battalion Update

The battalion’s first order of business upon returning from winter break was bringing onboard a new member. MIDN 4/C Devany joined the unit mid-year and has embraced the academic challenges of KU in addition to the commitment to the NROTC Unit. He is the brother of a current MIDN 3/C and we are pleased to have him. The battalion is hard at work making sure he gains the knowledge he needs to effectively lead others in the upcoming semester.

As we gain one midshipman, we will be losing another one for an academic year. MIDN 3/C Hussong has not only been selected to attend another summer of ProjectGo in Eastern Europe, he was approved to study abroad in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan for the entirety of his junior year.



MIDN 4/C Devany

While he is there, he will be improving his already impressive knowledge of the Slavic languages and culture and he will ultimately be a great asset to the US Navy later on in his career. MIDN 3/C Hussong will remain a Midshipman while abroad and he will be returning to us for his senior year. Good luck!

Upcoming

The battalion will be traveling to Boulder, CO in March for a large drill competition. The meet will test the midshipmen’s shooting, physical endurance, unit drill procedures, color guard, and Naval knowledge. Programs from all over the country will be competing in this annual meet. Wish us luck. Although there is still plenty of work to do, our commissioning events will be here before we know it. I hope you will mark the following dates on your calendars and join us on campus. The KU NROTC Awards Ceremony is scheduled for 29 April in the Woodruff Auditorium of the Kansas Union at 1600, and the Joint Commissioning Ceremony on 18 May in the Kansas Union Ballroom at 1100. As always, we extend an open invitation to the MOAA members to attend.

Thank you for your service and the support you give these future leaders. I am encourage every day by the high quality men and women that are prepared to stand the watch.

Rock Chalk! Go Navy! Beat Army!

CAPT Trenton Lennard



Air Force News

LtCol Nichole Phelan, USAF

Hello from Detachment 280, the Flying Jayhawks!

We’ve hit the ground running in the Spring Semester with several training events geared towards preparing sophomore cadets to attend Field Training, as well as, preparing the commissioning cadets to be high caliber 2Lts. This semester the focus turns toward leadership traits and Air Force operational fundamentals. Sophomore cadets will spend two-weeks at Maxwell

AFB, Alabama this summer being evaluated on their leadership abilities during Field Training. This is a gateway field evaluation that determines whether a cadet has the leadership skills needed to continue in the program. Sophomore cadets are currently competing for an enrollment allocation that allows them to attend Field Training.

We had two staff member selected to hold a field training staff position. SSgt Shawn Lowe will attend Session 1 as a support NCO, and Major Todd Rapp will attend Session 2 as the Field Training Officer. Cadets Eric Cotter and Mary Schreffler were selected for the very competitive position of Cadet Training Assistant.

We also started a “first Friday” mentoring session with the upperclass cadets and cadre, much like you would see in the operational flying world. This allows the cadets to pick topics of interest to focus on and ask questions to the cadre.

If anyone is interested in participating in these sessions, we would love to host you.

Coming Up:

We are anxiously awaiting the results of the rated board for this year. Those results should come out in the next week or two.

We are hosting a joint ROTC Open House on Saturday, 28 Feb from 0900 – 1200. This is an opportunity for local area high schools, JROTC units or current college students to check out Air Force ROTC.

Rock Chalk, Jayhawk!

Very Respectfully,

LtCol Nikki Phelan

Commander, Air Force ROTC Det 280

NOTES FROM MIKE KELLY

VA, CDC closely monitoring Coronavirus outbreak:

VA is working closely with The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other federal partners, monitoring an outbreak of Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

VA has activated its emergency management coordination cell (EMCC) and is implementing an aggressive and collaborative public health response to protect and care for Veterans.

At this time, no Veterans receiving care at VA have been diagnosed with 2019-nCoV. Currently, there is no vaccine to prevent the 2019-nCoV infection and no medication to treat it.

What to do if you have symptoms

If you have both:

Symptoms of fever, cough and shortness of breath and

Have either recently returned from China or have direct exposure to others diagnosed with 2019-nCoV.

Call before visiting your local VA medical center to seek care. Tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.

MOAA NEWSLETTER ADVOCACY

This is a summary of the many items MOAA produces each week on legislative activities.

Those who have e-mail receive the full MOAA Newsletter each week upon completing application.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 24 February 2020:

Ask Your Lawmakers to Back Bipartisan Legislation Helping Military Spouses

Rep. Donald Norcross (D-N.J.) introduced H.R. 5876, the Jobs and Childcare for Military Families Act of 2020, on Feb. 12 as a companion bill to the Senate version introduced last summer by Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.) MOAA supports the legislation, which would include military spouses as a target group for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and provide Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) as an employee benefit for servicemembers.

“The Work Opportunity Tax Credit has been instrumental in reducing veteran unemployment rates and could be a vital solution to addressing the high military spouse unemployment rate.” said Lt. Gen. Dana T. Atkins, USAF (Ret), MOAA’s president and CEO. “Additionally, every federal agency offers flexible spending accounts as an employee benefit. With the

rising cost of health care and child care, now is the time to extend that benefit to servicemembers to give them an option to mitigate these financial burdens.

“MOAA fully supports this legislation and we urge members of Congress to sign on in support of this legislation — our military families deserve no less.”

[TAKE ACTION: Ask Your Lawmakers to Support the Legislation]

According to DoD, the military spouse unemployment rate sits at 24%, over six times the national average. While military spouses are more educated than their civilian counterparts, they have trouble finding employment due to the unique lifestyle requirements of the military such as relocating every two to three years, on average.

A tax credit would incentivize businesses to hire military spouses. MOAA would encourage businesses to use this tax credit strategically by investing in ways to retain their military

spouse employees as they PCS through portable work options.

[RELATED: MOAA's Spouse Resources]

Another barrier for many military spouses entering the workforce is securing child care. Affordability and availability of child care is a nationwide issue; however, this issue is compounded for military families as they move from duty station to duty station. We hear from many military families about long waitlists, struggles to find care for the flexible hours the military requires from them, and how they take the cost of child care into consideration in their job search.

These Military Medical Facilities Will Stop Seeing Retirees and Military Family Members

Approximately 84,000 active duty family members and 110,000 military retiree beneficiaries will be impacted by military treatment facility (MTF) downsizing proposed in a DoD report to Congress released Feb. 2019.

In a phone call the morning of the release, senior DoD officials assured MOAA and other advocacy groups they are committed to maintaining access to care for all beneficiaries via a deliberate process and robust analysis of civilian TRICARE network capacity. However, MOAA remains concerned about the potential impacts on military families, retirees and their families, and survivors.

[RELATED: [Military Families Need a Safety Net During Military Health System Reform](#)]

We are also following up with DHA to better understand the relationship between [proposed medical billet cuts](#) and MTF restructuring. According to senior DoD officials, these are distinct and separate proposals, initiated on separate tracks but clearly interrelated. MOAA was told that the detailed analysis, metrics, and mitigation plans mandated by the [FY 2020 NDAA, Section 719](#), will be completed before any MTF restructuring is implemented.

MOAA is committed to ensuring military families, retirees, and survivors maintain access to high quality care without facing barriers related to costs. We are reviewing the report and preparing MOAA's response, but we need your help! Please share your concerns about how these changes will impact your family by emailing us at legis@moaa.org.

Here's a breakdown of the facility changes outlined in the report. Many MTFs will transition to active duty-only and occupational health clinics (AD/OHs). However, these facilities are projected to maintain their existing pharmacy workload, including filling prescriptions for non-active duty beneficiaries.

(Download the below list as a printable PDF from Military.com [here](#).)

Active Duty Only: In Process or In Place

Facilities already limiting patients to active duty servicemembers, or in the process of doing so, in realignments supported by the report.

More Changes

Other facilities facing changes:

Kansas: The report supports Munson Army Health Clinic's suspension of surgical capabilities and transition to an outpatient clinic at Fort Leavenworth.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 13 February 2020:

Report: Dozens of Military Medical Facilities Will Stop Treating Families, Retirees

[A recent article published by Military.com](#) gives us the first look at the Defense Health Agency's plan to move approximately 200,000 military family members, retirees, and their families and survivors into the TRICARE civilian network.

Many beneficiaries are concerned about the impact on their out-of-pocket costs. Active-duty family members would continue to receive covered services from network providers with zero copays provided they follow TRICARE referral and authorization requirements. TRICARE Prime retirees and their family members transferred from MTFs to TRICARE network care would face out-of-pocket cost increases since they [would now incur copays](#) for most care until they hit the \$3,000 annual catastrophic cap (i.e., maximum out of pocket) for covered services.

[RELATED: [TRICARE Expands List of Drugs It Won't Cover](#)]

After reaching the catastrophic cap, there are zero copays for covered services from network providers.

Although we have been told nothing is changing immediately, we have already been contacted by families who have been notified they are being transitioned to civilian care.

TRICARE Prime retirees and their families have the added worry about how new out-of-pocket costs for civilian health care will impact their household budgets, particularly given the TRICARE copay increases that went into effect in 2018.

[RELATED: [How MOAA Wants to Improve Quality of Life for Military Families](#)]

The memo to MTF commanders emphasized that no care will be moved out of MTFs until civilian providers are identified, but there are many more factors to consider.

For any areas of concern identified, we will assess whether our best next step is to leverage relationships at DHA and the services to address the issue or pursue congressional engagement. Throughout this process, please be assured MOAA's focus is protecting the military health benefit for service members and retirees, their families, and survivors.

Troops Get 3% Pay Raise in 2021 Budget Request

The 3% raise, following 2020's 3.1% bump, ensures that the troops will be "well compensated" and underlines DoD's recognition that military and civilian personnel "are our most valuable resource" in carrying out the 2018 National Defense Strategy to counter China and Russia, according to the Pentagon's budget overview.

The overview said the raise is aimed at giving the military a "competitive compensation package" to offset the drain of highly-trained personnel to the civilian sector "even as the Department prioritizes funds toward the NDS."

End of the Line?

"We have to brace ourselves that at best, defense spending will be level" in future years, Esper said last Thursday at the Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies.

The requested increase would keep the pay for military personnel in line with increases in the civilian sector and serve to aid retention, said retired [Air Force](#) Col. Dan Merry, vice president of government relations at the Military Officers Association of America.

"Whatever the baseline increase" for the military, "it should be no less than that of the civilian population," Merry said.

The raise would send a positive message to troops thinking of making a career of the military, and also to troops retiring next year, Merry said.

Retirement pay is based on the last year of service, and Cost of Living Increases ([COLA](#)) increases for retired personnel are then based on the Consumer Price Index, Merry said.

Here are the basic military pay raises going back to 2007, according to the Defense Department:

Jan. 2007: 2.2%	2014: 1%
April 2007: 0.5%	2015: 1%
2008: 3.5%	2016: 1.3%
2009: 3.9%	2017: 2.1%
2010: 3.4%	2018: 2.4%
2011: 1.4%	2019: 2.6%
2012: 1.6%	2020: 3.1%
2013: 1.7%	2021: 3%

What You Need to Know About the Proposed VA Budget

The White House's FY 21 VA funding proposal would add more than \$22 billion to the department's budget over the current fiscal year – a move that includes increased funding for several programs championed by MOAA in recent years, and continues almost a decade of funding for VA modernization.

The \$243.3 billion budget is 10% more than the \$220.7 billion enacted in FY 20 and comes in a proposal that includes level or reduced funding to [many other federal agencies](#). Among the programs that would benefit from the increased funds:

About \$90 billion in medical care funds, an increase of 12.9% from last year's enacted level. These include \$1.3 billion for telehealth programs, \$10.3 billion for mental health care, \$1.9 billion to fight veteran homelessness, and \$626 million targeted toward women's health – a key part of [MOAA's 2020 legislative mission](#). As in previous years, MOAA remains concerned that VA foundational medical programs are adequately resourced and medical funding is not redirected to community care programs at the detriment of VA's direct health care system.

\$137 million to address an expected 70,000 claims and appeals from "Blue Water Navy" veterans – those who served off the coast of Vietnam and recently became eligible for benefits connected with exposure to Agent Orange and other toxins.

[RELATED: [Here's How Blue Water Navy Veterans, Survivors Can Claim Benefits Under New Law](#)]

\$1.2 billion in caregiver support, up nearly \$500 million from the previous enacted budget. Much of the increase is earmarked for when the VA Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PC AFC) is expected to expand to veterans seriously injured in the line of duty prior to Sept. 11, 2001, likely sometime this summer. The PC AFC now covers only those injured on or after that date. MOAA has supported a [range of caregiver programs](#),

including the PC AFC changes that were part of the 2018 MISSION Act.

[RELATED: [MOAA and the Elizabeth Dole Foundation Present \[Tips for Lifelong Caregiving\]\(#\)\]](#)]

\$4.9 billion for information technology improvements, with \$309.4 million of that money earmarked for MISSION Act improvements. In addition, the budget calls for **\$2.6 billion** to continue work on creating a seamless electronic health record that would follow service members from their time in uniform through their care under the VA.

\$360 million for the National Cemetery Administration (NCA), to support 156 national cemeteries and the expanding Veterans Legacy Program, a remembrance effort [founded in 2016](#).

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 06 February 2020:

'Robust Pay and Benefits': What DoD's Top Civilian Says About the Impending Budget

[READ: [Defense Secretary Mark Esper's Jan. 27 Memo](#)]

The White House is expected to submit its budget request for fiscal 2021 to Congress on Feb. 10. That request, in keeping with a two-year budget deal secured last year, will include a \$740 billion topline for defense spending, a slim increase from \$738 billion enacted in fiscal 2020.

Esper's priorities, laid out in the memo, are grouped into four categories: strengthening military readiness and modernizing for a more lethal force; strengthening alliances and attracting new partners; reforming the DoD "for greater performance and accountability;" and supporting troops and military family members.

Under the last category, Esper said the 2021 request "advocates for robust pay and benefits packages essential to attracting and retaining the best personnel and warfighters." [RELATED: [NDAA Explained: What's Changing for You, and Your Benefits, in 2020 and Beyond](#)]

It will also, he said, continue military housing reforms and oversight efforts. That comes in the wake of an explosive 2018 investigation revealing dangerous mold, vermin and squalid conditions in privatized military housing. The 2020 NDAA included a tenant bill of rights for military families.

It will advance efforts, he added, to increase the sharing of cost burden across NATO and other allies, a [continual point of emphasis for President Donald Trump](#). And, the memo said, it will promote "the enduring defeat of ISIS" and other extremist groups while positioning the Pentagon to prepare for great power competition from China and Russia, in accordance with the National Defense Strategy.

Esper again referred to his plan to [divest legacy military systems](#) in order to fund military innovation and new technology, a larger version of the Army "night court" effort he presided over while the service's secretary.

Earlier this month, Esper said [hypersonic weapons would figure prominently in the fiscal 2021 defense budget](#), at levels even more aggressive than the nearly \$5 billion included in this year's budget.

In an address at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 24, Esper acknowledged that the task he had set for the Defense Department, particularly regarding cutbacks and limiting growth, is a difficult one.

MOAA Advocates for Improvements to Military Family Health Care at House Hearing

Military families with special needs should be notified of actual availability of appointments – not just that special-needs providers exist – before moving to their next duty station, MOAA’s director of government relations for health affairs told lawmakers Wednesday during a House Armed Services (HASC) subcommittee hearing.

Karen Ruedisueli was one of five military family advocates who testified before HASC’s military personnel panel about problems with the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) and the Military Health System (MHS), including gaps in care that can be caused by lengthy waitlists as servicemembers move to new duty stations. She called on members of the subcommittee to address concerns of special needs families.

If you are AD or Retired military, you are entitled to assistance for special needs children.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 30 January 2020:

Issues President Trump Should Address During His State of the Union Speech (Updated Jan. 29)

1. Don’t Neglect Quality of Life Concerns. Fair paychecks for servicemembers are only part of the equation: From housing needs to shopping benefits to child care concerns, lawmakers must improve the services offered to military families if they want to keep the force strong. [As MOAA continues to stress](#) in its discussions on Capitol Hill, these programs aren’t simply nice-to-haves as part of a military budget – decreased benefits and poorly delivered resources can lead to retention issues and harm overall readiness.

The president should convey this message to the American public, especially to civilians who may not be familiar with the importance of these programs.

2. Do It All on Time. Continuing resolutions and shutdowns have [cost DoD billions](#), while servicemembers and federal workers continue operations without pay. As MOAA fights for the programs outlined above, lawmakers can help by moving the appropriations process forward in a timely fashion. The current system of long delays, longer extensions, and brinkmanship as the finish line nears makes implementing DoD and VA essential programs nearly impossible, creating uncertainty from the highest planning levels to those awaiting word on key benefits programs ... or even whether they’ll receive their paychecks.

The president should stress that such delays are unacceptable and commit to working with Congress to move more efficiently.

How Your Voice Can Help MOAA’s Advocacy Mission

MOAA works hard to shape and advance policy in Washington, D.C., but the most effective voice in reaching members of Congress is yours, the constituent.

So how can you make sure your concerns are received by — and acted on — by legislators?

We examined traditional and newer ways of advocating for change on issues you care about, and we encourage you to explore all avenues to make sure your voice is heard in 2020 and beyond.

[RELATED: [MOAA’s 6 Tips for Engaging Congress](#)]

Face to Face

As you might expect, in-person visits from constituents are the most influential way to communicate with a senator or representative who is undecided on an issue, according to the Congressional Management Foundation, a nonpartisan nonprofit that works with Congress to improve operations and constituent engagement.

“You do better when you’re face to face,” says Rep. Phil Roe (R-Tenn.). “There’s an interaction. You see a person. You look into their eyes. You feel their needs. It’s different.”

The congressman said nothing beats an in-person conversation. His staff welcome members of the public to their district offices once a month, and any topic is fair game. And if you happen to see Roe at the local Walmart, he says you should chat him up.

“Some of your best ideas are from your constituents,” he says.

Online

As effective as in-person advocacy is, it’s not always feasible or practical to visit Washington, D.C., every time you want to talk to a member of Congress about an important issue.

Consider sending an email instead. Sixty-five percent of congressional staffers said email is the most effective way to reach out to representatives, according to a study by Dr. David Rehr, professor and director of the Center for Business Civic Engagement at George Mason University.

Rehr’s study showed that congressional offices receive an average of 151 emails every day. If you’ve sent an email through the MOAA Take Action Center, you know that staffers respond to many of them on a regular basis.

It’s now easier and faster for citizens to communicate with Congress than it has ever been, says Roe. Email also allows the office to respond in a more timely manner.

Social Media

Take online communication a step further with social media — such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. These sites have transformed constituents’ ability to interact with lawmakers.

A timely social media campaign, especially at key moments in the legislative season, can garner a lot of attention and move the needle on an issue you care about.

Phone and Mail

If you’re not comfortable engaging Congress from your computer or mobile device, rest assured that you can still pick up the phone or write a letter to voice your concern.

Although regular mail is on the decline, Roe says it’s still valued. But mail is among the least effective ways to reach legislators, according to Rehr, the GMU professor.

Rep. Joe Wilson (R-S.C.) says phone calls are still important. An added bonus of this method is you can get instant feedback.

“I strive to be accountable and accessible to the community I represent,” he says. “I encourage those who need assistance to stop by or call one of our district offices or our Washington office.”

'A Measureable Impact'

Although the forms and methods are changing, advocacy remains essential to the political landscape.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 23 January 2020:

NDAAs Should Arm Commanders With New UCMJ to Battle Sexual Harassment

Attitude is contagious in our military ranks, and one frustrating situation that continues to hurt the military culture of trust is the absence of justice for substantiated cases of sexual harassment.

The latest National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) makes a positive step by requiring a report on a new article in the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) to rapidly deal with harassment. The law requires the Defense Department to submit recommendations on implementation to the armed services committees in the House and Senate within 180 days of the NDAA's passage.

[RELATED: [President Signs NDAA: What the Law Includes, and What's Next](#)]

Deterrence is essential to battling misconduct. When a bad actor is in your formation, and their presence lingers with no apparent repercussion, it erodes the culture of trust, destroys faith in the chain of command, and does not deter further violations.

Sen. Martha McSally, an Air Force veteran, has successfully championed these improvements.

"Currently, sexual harassment isn't criminalized under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) which allows this despicable behavior to fester within the ranks," McSally (R-Ariz.) said. "Seventeen of 18 of my provisions to combat military sexual assault were incorporated into the annual defense bill with broad bipartisan support, including a provision to define sexual harassment in the UCMJ. Empowering commanders to specifically hold servicemembers accountable for sexual harassment underscores the zero tolerance culture we need and allows us to measure and track the magnitude of the problem. I'm grateful to see it included with my other initiatives to change the tide of sexual harassment and assault in our military."

[RELATED: [MOAA Named One of The Hill's Top Lobbyists for 2019](#)]

Rep. Chrissy Houlahan, also an Air Force veteran, is working to improve bystander intervention and reporting critical to improving the culture of trust.

"As a fellow Air Force veteran, I'm grateful for Senator McSally's leadership on this critical issue," said Houlahan (D-Pa.). "It is our duty to stand up for survivors and ensure our Armed Forces are safe and welcoming environments."

The NDAA contains several provisions regarding the prevention of sexual assault and harassment in the services, as well as means to actively address substantiated misconduct, and provide victim aid and assistance. Previous legislation that mandated ineffective training and increased the bureaucracy of lengthy investigations has arguably made the problem worse. Sexual harassment incident rates have moved in the wrong direction [despite countless academic studies](#) and attempts to train ourselves out of this problem.

Servicemembers know "talk is cheap" and deterrence through swift justice is always better than mandatory prevention training that is only PowerPoint deep.

Ending the Widows Tax: MOAA President Reflects on Making Repeal a Reality

(Editor's Note: A version of this article will appear in the March issue of Military Officer, a magazine available to all MOAA Premium and Life members. Learn more about the magazine [here](#); learn more about joining MOAA [here](#).)

The [repeal of the "widows tax"](#) in the FY 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) marks a major milestone in MOAA's advocacy and served as one of several legislative successes from 2019. We can point to decades of leadership and driving education on the issue, but the final push was made possible by a coalition of people and veterans organizations coming together.

There are many legislators to thank, chiefly Sens. Doug Jones (D-Ala.), Susan Collins (R-Maine), Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.) and Jack Reed (D-R.I.), along with Reps. Joe Wilson (R-S.C.), John Yarmuth (D-Ky.), Adam Smith (D-Wash.) and Mac Thornberry (R-Texas). There were many others over the years, but these are the ones who led the final surge, leveraging overwhelming bipartisan support in both chambers of Congress: 383 House and 77 Senate cosponsors.

Also impactful were the leaders and supporters from the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), the National Military Family Association, and the Gold Star Wives of America, Inc. Their engagement and stories made a complex issue familiar to many over the years.

[RELATED: [MOAA's Surviving Spouse Resources](#)]

[MOAA's Surviving Spouse Advisory Committee](#), with its virtual chapter spanning the nation, used their collective voices to inform our Board and fuel our efforts. Individuals like Kathy Prout and MOAA Board member Rear Adm. Tom Jurkowsky, USN (Ret), made a difference locally and nationally. Kathy, a staunch advocate in California and Capitol Hill, and Tom, [a prolific writer of op-eds published in local and national publications](#), were also critical to our success.

Our [Councils and Chapters](#) were center stage during MOAA's Storming the Hill in April and continued efforts with a [Summer Storm campaign at home in August](#) – both efforts instrumental in getting the message out broadly on the Hill with deeper contact at home.

Our virtual army, a sea of members and caring citizens who took to social media to Storm the Hill in new ways, reached legislators and influencers. Millions saw and interacted with the information, tagging legislators and sharing their own stories.

[RELATED: [Follow MOAA on Social Media](#)]

For me, the repeal of the widows tax is personal. I once promised my Executive Officer, Maj. David Brodeur, I would look out for his family when he was sent overseas to Afghanistan. I thought again about my promise as I watched his 4-year-old son hug his casket after [his death in an attack on Kabul International Airport in April 2011](#). I took the role I have today pledging to fight for this repeal.

MOAA – You – helped lead the way, and your efforts via letters, calls, emails, and visits with legislators were essential to fostering the bipartisan commitment to passing the FY2020 NDAA eliminating the widows tax. Now, as you read this, another Storm is brewing. In March, we'll again storm Capitol Hill to fight on behalf of servicemembers, veterans, and their families. Will you join in this effort?

NDAAs Explained: What's Changing for You, and Your Benefits, in 2020 and Beyond

President Donald Trump signed the FY 2020 National Defense Authorization Act into law on Dec. 20, 2019. The \$738 billion piece of legislation authorizes funding and provides authority for the military and other federal agencies. The law contained a number of important changes to military benefits, but not all of them took effect immediately. Here are a few of the changes already in place, and a few dates that should be on your radar.

Changes Already in Effect

Pay raise. Active duty, Guard and Reserve members saw a [3.1% military pay raise](#) effective Jan. 1. Military retirees and survivors received a 1.6% increase in their cost-of-living adjustment.

TRICARE fee increases. There were no TRICARE For Life enrollment fees or deductibles in 2020. While Congress enacted no new programmed TRICARE fee increases in the FY 2020 defense bill, several previously scheduled fee increases took effect Jan. 1:

Enrollment fees for retirees who entered service prior to Jan. 1, 2018. TRICARE Prime: \$300 (single)/\$600 (family), up from \$297/\$594; TRICARE Select: No fee.

Enrollment fees for retirees who entered service after Jan. 1, 2018. TRICARE Prime: \$366 (single)/\$732 (family), up from \$360/\$720; TRICARE Select: \$471 (single)/\$942 (family), up from \$462/\$924.

Retail pharmacy fees. \$13 for 30-day supply of generic, \$33 for brand name, \$60 for non-formulary (up from \$11, \$28, and \$53, respectively).

Mail-order pharmacy fees: \$10 for a 90-day supply of generic, \$29 for brand name, \$60 for non-formulary (up from \$7, \$24 and \$53, respectively).

Note: No fees for 30-day supplies for generic and brand-name drugs from military treatment facilities (MTFs). [Non-formulary prescriptions](#) are generally not available at MTFs.

Getting prescriptions filled via mail-order continues to provide significant cost savings to both the beneficiary and the government. MOAA understands some beneficiaries have concerns about the mail-order program. Some beneficiaries prefer interacting with their pharmacist at the retailer; others have concerns about receiving medications in the mail. MOAA encourages beneficiaries to use the health delivery system that best fits their needs.

As a reminder, active duty families pay no enrollment fees for TRICARE Prime or Select. Military survivors and medically retired beneficiaries will not see an increase in their TRICARE fees.

Mental health improvements. The services will provide a report to Congress on a strategy to recruit and retain mental health providers. The report will describe the shortage of mental health providers in DoD, explain why a shortage exists, and show the effects of the shortage on the military.

Sept. 30, 2020

Records of service for reserves. The secretary of defense will establish and implement a standard record of

service for members of the reserve component of the armed forces, similar to a DD-214. The record will summarize the member's service and include dates of active duty service.

Jan. 1, 2021

Widows tax. A three-year phase-out of the Survivor Benefit Plan-Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (SBP-DIC) offset, commonly known as the "widows tax," begins. The offset will be reduced by one third over 2021 and another third over 2022, with full elimination starting Jan. 1, 2023.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 16 January 2020:

TRICARE Expands List of Drugs It Won't Cover

Thousands of TRICARE beneficiaries are losing coverage for their medication as more drugs are dropped from the list of those approved for TRICARE coverage.

The Defense Health Agency has been excluding some [prescription drugs from TRICARE coverage](#) after the fiscal year 2018 National Defense Authorization Act included a provision allowing DHA to do so.

Previously, all medications were categorized in one of three tiers – Generic, Brand Name and Non-Formulary – with varying copays for beneficiaries.

Has the TRICARE pharmacy Tier 4/non-covered drug issue affected your health care? Please tell MOAA about it.

[Email legis@moaa.org](mailto:legis@moaa.org)

Now, drugs that DHA categorizes as "Tier 4/non-covered" are excluded from coverage under TRICARE. These Tier 4 drugs cannot be obtained at pharmacies at military treatment facilities. They also aren't available through the TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery Program.

Tier 4 drugs are only available at retail pharmacies at full out-of-pocket cost to the beneficiary. Costs for Tier 4 drugs do not apply to the annual TRICARE catastrophic cap.

[RELATED: [TRICARE Formulary Search Tool](#)]

For the last year, the DHA has been identifying and reviewing drugs to potentially remove them from coverage. The first round of Tier 4/non-covered drugs was announced in August 2019 and included Glumetza, Vimovo, and Lexette. Excluding these drugs had little impact on beneficiaries since very few TRICARE patients were using these prescription drugs and alternative agents were available for them.

However, nearly 19,000 beneficiaries taking Dexilant to treat gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) were impacted when that drug was dropped from TRICARE coverage effective Nov. 28, 2019.

[RELATED: [Benefits at Risk as Congress Advances Military Health System Reform Measures](#)]

While MOAA understands the rationale for establishing Tier 4 to improve formulary management, we are concerned about where this process is headed. We are monitoring Tier 4 drug reviews closely to ensure DHA follows congressional intent and moves to Tier 4 only those medications that "provide very little to no clinical effectiveness" per the FY 2018 NDAA legislative language.

MOAA is also pressing DHA to establish an appeals process for Tier 4 determinations.

No Winter lasts forever; no Spring skips its turn.



JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA



A membership meeting will be held **Tuesday, 17 March 2020**
at Lawrence Country Club

Dinner cost is \$24.00/meal.

The Program: Speaker to be determined.

Social Hour: 1800 hours **Dinner:** 1840 hours

The Menu: Irish pub salad, Corned beef and cabbage, Grasshopper pie

Send your reservation and check payable to Jayhawk Chapter MOAA
to arrive no later than **Wednesday, 11 March 2020**, to:
CAPT Jim Cooper, 5216 Brown Lane, Lawrence, KS 66049-5112

Dinner reservations are confirmed on Monday before the dinner.
Cancellations, if necessary, should be made prior to Monday noon;
otherwise, the Lawrence Country Club will charge us for those meals.

If you have any questions, you may contact Jim Cooper at 842-7037 or John Halladay at 843-6184
cut here

Yes, please make _____ reservations for me and my guests. (Spouse and other guests are welcome.)

The cost is \$24.00 per meal. I am enclosing a check for \$_____ for meal(s).

Clayton L. Comfort Award program contribution \$_____
(Separate check made out to "KU Endowment")

Annual Chapter Dues (\$20.00) were due and payable 01/01/20 \$_____

TOTAL: \$_____

Name _____ Telephone _____

IF YOU NEED A RIDE TO MEETINGS, PLEASE LET US KNOW HERE _____
AND GIVE US YOUR TELEPHONE NUMBER _____

TEAR OFF AND RETURN THIS FORM WITH A CHECK PAYABLE TO:
JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA
CAPT Jim Cooper, 5216 Brown Lane, Lawrence, KS 66049-5112

MOAA WEBSITE: www.moaa.org
KANSAS COUNCIL WEBSITE: www.kansasmooa.net
JAYHAWK CHAPTER WEBSITE:
www.jayhawkmoaa.org

*If you can receive this by
e-mail, please let us know.
Printing and postage costs
the Chapter close to \$3 for
each copy we have to mail.*

Tentative 2020 Meeting Schedule:

Tuesday 17 March
Tuesday 19 May

Tuesday 21 July
Tuesday 15 September
Tuesday 17 November



*Newsletter Editor
Jayhawk Chapter, MOAA
2403 Manchester Road
Lawrence, KS 66049-1646*

NEVER STOP SERVING!

IN GOD WE TRUST