



Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter

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July Program:

**Coop has set up a Zoom meeting for Tuesday, 14 July.
See his President's Message below for details.**

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President's Comments. . .

The CoVid 19 pandemic just keeps on percolating, and we're not much closer to reconvening in person for our dinner meetings. This month we'll test out a new way to hold meetings: via Zoom, which is the way most meetings have been happening since mid-March.



Our speaker will be Dan Partridge, the Director of the Douglas County Health Department. This will be an especially timely meeting and speaker, as Kansas, like most states, is having a surge in CoVid cases. Our meeting will begin at 1800 (6:00 PM) and should last no longer than 1930 (7:30 PM), depending on questions. The up side is that if you listen from your own homes, you won't have to wear a facemask for the meeting! Please join us:

The link to join via computer is:
<https://kansas.zoom.us/j/7858641214>.

Zoom ID: 7858641214 - password is **443678**. The password shouldn't be required, but is included here it just in case the website asks for it when you attempt to join.

Look forward to having you join us! Let us know if you have any questions.

I do want to extend a hand in case any of you are in need of something during these times. My cell number is (785) 979-7279, and my email is: jscooper36@hotmail.com. If you are in need of some assistance and can't obtain it through normal channels, contact me and we'll try to help you out quickly. Stay safe, wash your hands, wear your face masks when out among other folks, and be safe.

Coop

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1 July 2020

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*** Reservations should be sent
to Jim Cooper by



JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS



PERSONAL NEWS

From Mike Kelly: I spoke to the Air Force ROTC on March 4th and 5th about the new Space Force and my previous experiences in USAF satellite operations. A few days following my speech, the campus closed for the pandemic response so I may have been the final "live" speaker of the semester. I hope to speak to the KU Naval ROTC about 9/11/2001 this upcoming September.

I received a letter from Dr. Jeff Hambleton (Col USAF ret) and Jeff is closing his dental specialty practice and going to really retire after serving in the USAF Dental Corps and the Lawrence community for many years.

I am very happy to report my family survived the pandemic without drama (so far) and we celebrated my parents 66th (!) wedding anniversary at a Topeka restaurant. My dad served as an enlisted man in the USAF stateside during the Korean War era.

Georgiana had a family member who resides nearby test positive for COVID-19, but thankfully it was a mild case that did not require hospital treatment. Ironically, our speaker for our March meeting was to be Mr. Dan Partridge, the head of the Lawrence Douglas County Health Department. We hope he can speak to us at a future meeting.

From Dean Bevan: I was cast in a play, "Remembering Abbie 'B'" that was performed online June 20. The author, Dustin Hageland, wrote it about his great-grandfather (guess who played the great-grandfather). It's part of his Master of Fine Arts degree in playwriting at Southern Illinois University.

This was my first online play. It's available on YouTube, if you have an hour and a half to spare. <https://www.youtube.com/watch> It's part of the Southern Illinois University Festival. If you follow the link let me point out that the reading doesn't start until the 10:30 mark, so move the "Play" arrow to that point to begin the play.

From Ray Finch: On 9 June, our son John Finch gave up command of the 304th MI Bn at Fort Huachuca. John, his wife Raelean and their two sons will soon move to Lawrence, where John will become the Professor of Military Science for the KU ROTC program. John is shown with his son Sebastian.



Army News LTC Tracey Olson, USA

Greetings from the Jayhawk Battalion:

What an exciting time of the year for the Army ROTC. We had the opportunity of commissioning some of the finest young men and women the University of Kansas has last month. We are planning a major training event for the Cadets that did not get an opportunity to attend the annual Cadet Summer Training at Fort Knox and LTC Olson's time as the Professor of Military Science is coming to an end.

On May 18th, the Army ROTC swore in and commissioned 16 new Lieutenants. This year's class received multiple accolades throughout Cadet Command, from distinguished military graduates and to being in the top 20% of all commissioned lieutenants across the nation. The program commissioned five lieutenants to Active Duty, nine to the National Guard and two to the Army Reserves.

Typically, this time of year sees our Cadets and Cadre attending the annual Cadet Summer Training (CST) at Fort Knox. However, the event was canceled this year due to COVID-19 and travel restrictions across the nation. In cooperation with nine other universities, the Jayhawk BN will conduct a 10 day training event the first week of August at Fort Riley focusing on land navigation, basic rifle marksmanship and patrolling operations as a platoon. Operation Agile Leader (OAL) is intended to certify rising Military Science 400 Cadets (MS21) on the required BOLC-A common core tasks which are normally part of CST Advanced Camp training. OAL also intends to qualify lateral entry Cadets (MS22 and beyond) for enrollment in the SROTC Advanced Course.

This summer closes LTC Tracey Olson’s time as the Professor of Military Science. LTC Olson held the position for four years and will report to Fort Leavenworth in July for her new assignment. Replacing her is LTC John D. Finch, he is coming from Fort Huachuca, AZ where he commanded the 304th Military Intelligence Battalion. We look forward to integrating him to the KU team and working with him on developing our Cadets to be creative and adaptive leaders.

Looking forward towards the beginning of the fall semester, we will hold our new Cadet Orientation for incoming freshmen the week before the start of class, our fall FTX is scheduled for the third week of September and the Joint Military Ball is tentatively scheduled for Friday, the 6th of November.

LTC Tracey Olson
Professor of Military Science



Navy News
CAPT Trenton Lennard, USN

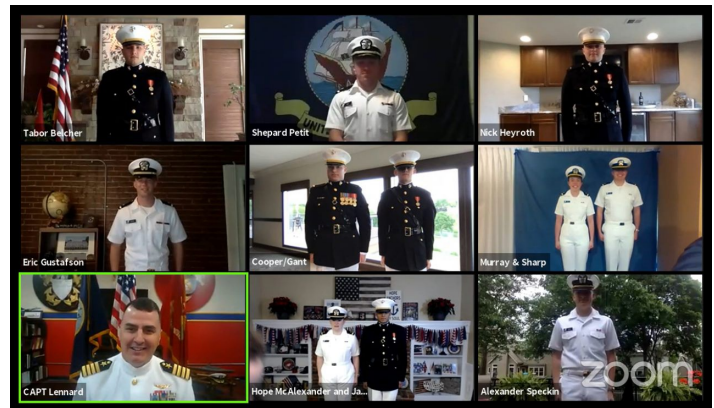


Greetings from the Jayhawk Battalion!

Although our semester was interrupted by COVID-19, the Naval service again proved to be flexible. I am immensely proud of my students and staff for their resilience, teamwork, and ingenuity during these uncertain and difficult months to finish out the semester strong.

While we were unable to participate in many of the events we normally look forward to – the Women in Naval Service Symposium, Dining In, and the Field Training Exercise – we still maintained our traditions to the greatest extent possible by hosting a virtual Awards Ceremony and Commissioning Ceremony. We also continued meeting as a battalion each week through Zoom for leadership lab, and my staff continued to teach Naval Science courses live on Zoom. I am incredibly grateful to my staff for the time and dedication they put into ensuring that our students had a seamless transition to online learning and for the extra attention and work they put in to continue to mentor, guide, and develop these future Navy and Marine Corps officers.

This spring we virtually commissioned six Ensigns into the United States Navy and five 2ndLts into the United States Marine Corps. This complex event would not have been possible without the absolutely remarkable work of our Operations Officer, Capt Ross and Executive Assistant, Ms Tamara Horner. Thank you both for the hard work. We were honored to have VADM Myers, Deputy Commander of US Cyber Command and KU alumnus, as our guest of honor. It was not the way we wanted to host our commissioning, but it was a great day for our country as they are getting some of their best and brightest young people to lead the men and women of the US Navy and US Marine Corps. Bravo Zulu to all! If you have not had a chance to watch the event, I encourage you to view it here: https://mediahub.ku.edu/media/Navy+ROTC+Ceremony+2020/0_y72wmdtv



The newest Ensigns and 2ndLts from the KU NROTC Jayhawk Battalion.

This summer we are also saying farewell to two of my staff who have been here for the past three years. LT Wood and GySgt Cobos are headed back to the fleet, and we are anxious to hear about their continued success. They are outstanding mentors and role models and I am excited that they are going back to what they do best - leading Sailors and Marines. Thank you for all of your hard work. Fair Winds and Following Seas! Semper Fi!

We are now preparing for the newest Jayhawk Midshipmen. We plan to receive a new class of freshmen on 18Aug as we prepare for another school year. Although our procedures may change due to COVID mitigation measures, we will still demand focus and discipline from the new class.

Thank you again for all your support of our Midshipmen. This is a challenging time for the school and the Nation. Value and take care of each other. Remember our Core Values – Honor, Courage, and Commitment. Rock Chalk! Go Navy!

CAPT Trenton Lennard
Commanding Officer, KU NROTC



Air Force News

LtCol Nichole Phelan, USAF

Hello from Detachment 280, the Flying Jayhawks!

We hope this message finds you safe and healthy in these interesting times. This summer continues to be a challenging time for our cadre and cadets, but we continue to adapt and overcome in the face of adversity.

Nationally, Air Force ROTC is leaning forward and executing the sophomore leadership Capstone Field Training experience with many measures and protocols in place to mitigate risks and ensure it is a safe environment to operate in. Field Training is designed to assess cadets on their leadership skills over two weeks of stressful and dynamic scenarios; it's considered mission essential for cadets to transition from underclass to upperclass cadets.

Along those lines, our rising cadet wing staff have been given the task of building the next year's Cadet Wing Operations plan with multiple COAs, in person and virtual, they can flex to in the event things change. A daunting task, but one these future Air Force and Space Force officers are up for, as we saw this spring.

Finally, we hail our newest cadre officer, Captain Stormi Brewer, who joins us in July from the maintenance world at Aviano Air Base in Italy. We bid farewell to Major Garrett Carson, as he and his family depart Lawrence in August for his next assignment as the Assistant Director of Operations at the 320th Missile Squadron at F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming. We wish him and his family all the best and remind them they will forever be part of the Flying Jayhawk family.

Rock Chalk, Jayhawk!

Very Respectfully,

LtCol Nikki Phelan

Commander, Air Force ROTC Det 280

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, 07 May 2020:

GAO Report Solidifies MOAA's Concerns With Proposed Commissary-Exchange Merger

A DoD-commissioned task force may have underestimated the costs of a commissary-exchange merger and overestimated the savings it would produce, according to a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report released April 30.

The report's findings are consistent with [MOAA's concerns](#) regarding the cost associated with a venture this large. GAO highlighted gaps in the business case analysis (BCA) produced by the task force, including:

Overestimation in the reduction of costs of goods sold.

Methodological concerns with cost estimates of information technology costs.

No cost analysis for expenses that will be associated with moving the location of a consolidated headquarters.

The Military Coalition, a group of military and veterans service organizations (including MOAA) with a combined membership of 5.5 million, has been vocal in ensuring costs do not impact morale, welfare, and recreation (MWR) projects funded through Exchange profits.

[\[RELATED: MOAA Interview: Commissary Boss on COVID-19 Response, Future of Military Resale\]](#)

The task force initially estimated consolidation will cost \$700-\$810 million in the first five years and \$80 million

annually thereafter. Senior defense officials stated seed money for the first year would be fronted by the services, however it is unclear where they will get this money and what programs will suffer because of it.

MOAA wants to ensure safeguards are in place for MWR funding and the defense resale system, and that any cost savings associated with a merger go directly to MWR funding and family programs.

[\[RELATED: Military Commissaries Limit Meat Purchases Amid Supply Chain Worries\]](#)

Timeline of Events

Aug. 19, 2019: Deputy Secretary of Defense David L. Norquist concurs with recommendations presented by DoD's CMO and task force to move ahead with a merger.

Dec. 20, 2019: The FY 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) is signed into law, including a provision for the GAO to conduct a study on the validity of the BCA.

[\[RELATED: All Commissary and Exchange Customers Must Now Wear Face Coverings\]](#)

MOAA eagerly awaits DoD's responses to the recommendations outlined in the GAO report with a goal of ensuring a fair and sound assessment is done to make the best decision for the defense resale system.

Big Increase in Telehealth

According to VA officials, the agency has been [preparing for the COVID-19 outbreak](#) since January, when it “began tracking a pneumonia of unknown origin with 40 cases surfacing in China.”

Thanks to early prep work, VA rapidly started implementing the \$17.2 billion funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act or CARES Act, when it was released in early April.

[RELATED: [What You Need to Know About the CARES Act](#)]

In an April 8 [press release](#), VA Secretary Robert Wilkie stated, “Since the President signed the CARES Act, VA has been moving quickly to implement the President’s intent to hire new staff, take care of homeless veterans, use our cutting-edge telehealth technology to keep appointments, and to help state-run veterans homes.”

In weekly briefings to organizations like MOAA, Wilkie said he sees this telehealth phenomenon not only growing, but sees the crisis stressing VA’s health system “in a good way.” The rapid expansion of virtual services will serve as benchmarks for the future, especially for veterans in rural areas and tribal communities.

From March to April, VA went from delivering 45,000 telehealth appointments to over 154,000.

For mental health services, [VA data](#) indicates veterans are using an app called [VA Video Connect](#) to consult with their provider via their computer, tablet, or phone.

Some of my friends and family members using VA telehealth services have been impressed at how the technology works and the availability of services. In many cases, telehealth appointments for mental health services have been easier and quicker to access than in-person appointments.

According to VA, “in March, mental health providers completed more than 34,000 appointments with Veterans using VA Video Connect, an increase of 70% from the 20,000 appointments made in February, before the pandemic.”

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 14 May 2020:

TRICARE Drops Telehealth Copays, Adds Phone Call Coverage in Emergency Measure

This article by Patricia Kime first appeared on [Military.com](#), the premier resource for the military and veteran community.

Note from MOAA: In addition to advocating for expanded telehealth options, MOAA has asked Congress to waive TRICARE mail order pharmacy copayments during the COVID-19 crisis. Make your voice heard [here](#).

[Tricare](#) will now cover telephone services for some medical appointments and will eliminate copayments for beneficiaries who use telehealth services in place of an in-person visit to the doctor during the COVID-19 pandemic. *[Why? None lost pay.]*

Effective Wednesday, the Defense Department’s health program will cover audio-only remote services for office visits “when appropriate” and will not require copays for telemedicine, [according to a notice in the Federal Register](#).

The coverage will extend through the end or suspension of the national emergency as declared by President Donald Trump, according to the ruling.

The ruling eliminates cost-sharing, including co-pays and deductibles, for in-network telehealth services for both [Tricare Prime](#) and [Tricare Select](#) beneficiaries in all geographic locations.

[RELATED: [Troops, Families Say They’re Worried About Planned Changes to Military Health System](#)]

To be eligible for reimbursement for a telephone consult, providers should determine that a phone call is “appropriate for accomplishing the clinical goals of the encounter” and must document it, according to the ruling.

Any visit requiring a physical exam would not be appropriate for a phone consultation and would not be covered, Tricare officials added.

The ruling also lifts some restrictions on providers practicing medicine across state lines. Under normal circumstances, Tricare requires that providers must be licensed in the state where they are practicing, and they can treat patients only in that state.

[RELATED: [Military Families Need More Telehealth Options During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)]

Under the temporary rule, providers will still be required to be licensed but can provide telehealth and audio medicine to patients across state lines. For example, in Washington, D.C., Tricare providers would be allowed to provide telemedicine to their patients who reside in Virginia. Previously, this was prohibited.

The change was made to ensure that providers can deliver care as needed to beneficiaries, regardless of where they are located.

The licensure change also would let Tricare providers treat beneficiaries in other nations, as long as the host nation allows it and is not on a sanctions list. Under such circumstances, the host nation will still regulate the provider’s ability to practice; the ruling simply ensures that it is allowable in places where it is permitted and would be reimbursable under Tricare.

The change could help Tricare beneficiaries who need mental health services during the pandemic; some military families living overseas have said they are unable to access quality behavioral health care because mental health treatment practices and availability vary widely across countries.

More articles from Military.com:

[Here’s the VA’s 3-Part Plan to Resume Full Services for Veterans](#)

[Tricare Limits Some Prescription Refills During Pandemic Army Wants Uniform Accessory That Can ID Friendlies But Stay Invisible to the Enemy](#)

What Will Possible Budget Cuts Mean for Your Pay?

First, the good news: Servicemembers can expect a 2021 pay raise close to last year’s 3.1% increase despite overwhelming financial uncertainty, a top House lawmaker recently told reporters.

[PROTECT MILITARY MEDICINE: [MOAA’s Virtual Storming the Hill 2020](#)]

Defense Secretary Mark Esper already has expressed concerns that coronavirus-related belt-tightening “may lead to smaller defense budgets in the future,” according to a May 4 [U.S. Naval Institute News report](#). This could put pressure on White House budget-makers or Congress to disconnect military pay from ECI in an attempt to make up some of the lost funds.

Protecting military pay remains [a key MOAA priority](#), especially as past [Congressional Budget Office reports](#) on ways to cut the federal deficit – which will increase after coronavirus expenditures – have included suggestions to cap the military raise below the ECI.

Long-Term Improvements in Store for PCS Moves

The delayed PCS moving season is building up a backlog, and the approaching surge is creating stress on top of the COVID-19 environment. Previous experiences of unpredictable scheduling windows, difficult truck drivers, inexperienced packers, rough movers, broken furniture, and lost heirlooms all come to mind.

After the move comes the frustrating and time-consuming claims process, while your new unit wants you at work immediately regardless of progress on school enrollment and

searches for child care. For many, competing requirements mean we just don't get to the claims process.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 21 May 2020:

These 20 VA Facilities Have Restarted Some Non-COVID Services

Twenty VA facilities in 19 states began offering "select health care services" May 18 – procedures and appointments that had been discontinued as part of the department's COVID-19 response.

[RELATED: [Meet Annie: This VA App Helps Patients Track Appointments, Health Care Goals, and More](#)]

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 28 May 2020:

Will Next Year's Government Funding Fall Victim to COVID-19?

It is nearly impossible to have a discussion regarding policies, budgets, or appropriations without the pandemic 5-meter target eclipsing all other subjects. But we must find a way past that target to address significant challenges that lie beyond – specifically, funding our government to avoid another shutdown.

[TAKE ACTION: [Ask Your Lawmaker to Ensure Full Funding for FY 2021](#)]

There are only 38 days when both the House and Senate are in session between June 1 and the end of September, when funding runs out. There are five more House-only days and 16 Senate-only days. And the national party conventions (July 13-16 for the Democrats, Aug. 24-27 for the Republicans) will compete for time and attention beyond those scheduled sessions, not to mention a robust summer and fall campaign right up to the Nov. 3 elections.

As you may recall, funding our government over the past few years has been a challenge, lowlighted by the government shutdown from Dec. 22, 2018, to Jan. 25, 2019. Currently, all of our uniformed services are funded by these two pieces of legislation, both of which have funds ending Sept. 30:

We must find a way to start the narrative beyond the shadows of the current pandemic. [Please reach out](#) to your representative and senators now.

Update: President to Extend Reserve Component Orders Beyond 89 Days

"The mission is not done yet," National Guard Chief Gen. Joseph Lengyel, USAF, [said](#). "The one thing we know for sure is that this mission is going to continue beyond the 24th of June." The President's extension of the National Guard reflects an understanding of their vital role in the COVID-19 response and the value they provide in helping the nation recover.

The question remains as to whether the 7,500 reservists will also be extended to mid-August. Many of these reservists were initially activated on individual training or annual training orders.

The President's response to the MOAA and ROAA letter is good news for the reserve component and show his concern for taking care of the troops in these difficult times.

If you're a member of the Guard or Reserve responding to the pandemic, use our [COVID-19 reporting tool](#) to share how you've helped the national and which orders you're on.

Here's How the COVID-19 Military Support Initiative Helps Military Families

MOAA has joined forces with military support organizations and companies to provide resources and support to military families impacted by COVID-19.

[Secure TRICARE telehealth coverage](#) for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) parent/caregiver

guidance services, with or without the child present.

Highlight food insecurity issues for military families exacerbated by COVID-19 and secure congressional champions on [excluding Basic Allowance for Housing \(BAH\) from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\) calculation](#).

Urge the services to allow transitioning service members to delay transition if they so choose, a proposal mirrored in current Army and Marine Corps policy.

[DONATE: [MOAA's COVID-19 Relief Fund](#)]

Recommending policies at the local, state, and national level that will benefit military families.

Seeking feedback by live polling to better understand "pain points."

Make your voice heard! Share with CMSI how your family is staying resilient and coping with the COVID-19 crisis by completing the [Resiliency Under Stress Study \(RUSS\)](#).

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 04 June 2020:

COLA Increase for Veterans Benefits Passes House

The House on May 28 passed by voice vote an annually required measure to increase cost-of-living adjustments tied to veterans benefits in parity with the [COLA](#) approved by the Social Security Administration.

Senate passage and the president's signature would normally be mere formalities, but those could face delays this year as Congress deals with the COVID-19 pandemic that has disrupted regular schedules.

Veterans benefits affected by the COLA increase include disability and dependent compensation; clothing allowances; and dependency and indemnity compensation to surviving [spouses](#) and children.

The 2018 COLA increase for both veterans and Social Security recipients was 2.0%; it was 2.8% in 2019, according to SSA. Last year saw an increase of 1.6%. It is difficult to project what it might be for 2021 in an economy ravaged by the novel coronavirus.

[RELATED: [VA to Resume In-Person Compensation and Pension Exams at 20 Locations](#)]

Since 1975, Social Security COLA increases have been guaranteed by law, but veteran benefits COLAs are not, requiring annual bills to be passed by Congress. Last year, the COLA increase for veterans was approved with no opposition.

The Social Security Administration bases the annual COLA increase for its recipients on the Consumer Price Index, as determined each December by the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

This year's bill was introduced by Rep. Elaine Luria, D-Virginia, a retired [Navy](#) commander, and co-sponsored by Rep. Mike Bost, R-Illinois, a [Marine](#) veteran. Both stressed the need for urgent action by the Senate.

"During this public health emergency, it is more important now than ever to provide this cost-of-living adjustment to disabled veterans who depend on their benefits to pay for necessities," Luria said in a statement Thursday. "I urge my Senate colleagues to quickly pass this economic relief and pay raise for our veterans."

In his own statement, Bost added, "Now more than ever, it is critical that the men and women who have served our nation receive the benefits they have earned."

The linkage of the veteran COLA increase to Social Security has been a perennial sore point for many vets, who feel it should be tied to [military pay](#) raise increases instead.

The 2020 pay raise approved for the military was 3.1%. Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, said in a May 7

roundtable with defense reporters that he expects next year's military pay raise to be in the same range.

More articles from Military.com:

[Promotion Nixed for Special Forces Officer in Charge During 2017 Niger Ambush, Report Says](#)
[Marine Corps to Shut Down, Cut Back 7 MOSs as the Force Prepares for Change](#)
[Police: Soldier Saved Lives by Stopping Shooter on Bridge](#)

How MOAA Members Joined Forces for a Successful Virtual Storm

The COVID-19 pandemic usurped MOAA's efforts to [Storm the Hill](#) in March of this year, so we did what most everyone else started doing – we hunkered down and found solutions.

From teleworking with laptops to phone calls and video chats to full-blown meetings online, we all adapted to the new business models of remote work and maintaining social distance. Fortunately, MOAA had been preparing for telework as an enhancement to our operations, so our conversion was a little less strenuous than others experienced.

One of the positive byproducts of the pandemic constraints was MOAA's Virtual Storming the Hill. With an army of stormers previously primed to lead our signature event in March, MOAA was in a good position to recall those forces and revector them to an alternative method of storming. While health care was the center of our planned storm in March, the COVID-19 pandemic forced a re-look at the topic to ensure it remained relevant.

[RELATED: [Answering Your Questions on Planned Cuts to Military Medicine](#)]

As the pandemic unfolded, we learned [DoD was pausing](#) its congressionally mandated reform to the military health system (MHS) – a reform that consisted of reducing or closing nearly 50 medical treatment facilities. DoD also acknowledged a pause in their plan, initiated last year, [to cut nearly 18,000 military medical billets](#) to help fund an increase in warfighting specialties.

Our Virtual Stormers urged Congress to direct DoD to not only pause, but to halt and fully reassess plans to reform and reduce medical capacity. MOAA believes it is imperative to take the lessons learned from this pandemic and assess how the whole of government can be stronger and better prepared as a result.

So, how did we do?

Leveraging our grassroots advocates in our [councils and chapters network](#), we set a course for 100% congressional contact within the month of May. I can report we delivered on that goal and then some.

Our members have been exceptionally busy over this Virtual Storm. In May, MOAA:

- Sent over 19,000 letters to 435 districts and 50 states – covering 100% of Congress.
- Held 253 storming meeting appointments via virtual meeting platforms.
- Shared [an educational video](#) garnering nearly 18,000 views on Facebook.

Further, our efforts gained traction within the House of Representatives – Reps. Bill Posey (R-Fla.) and Kathy Castor (D-Fla.) circulated a congressional letter urging House Armed Services Committee leadership to ensure the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) includes language to stop planned cuts to military medical capacity. Others have shown an interest in halting these reductions until Congress and DoD can assess lessons learned.

[READ THE LETTER]

What's next? Within a few weeks, we will get a chance to see the House Armed Services Committee draft of the NDAA

and assess the language relative to these two issues: MHS reform, and DoD reductions of military medical billets.

If the language fits the ask, we will immediately pivot to the Senate to ensure the provision makes it through conference and into the final bill. We will need to remain engaged throughout the conference process, which generates the final bill for the floor votes and onto the president to sign.

Now is not the time to let up. We need MOAA members and our partners to translate our virtual success into reality by remaining actively engaged.

We will keep you updated along the way, and you can count on at least a couple of calls to action to ensure we shepherd this issue all the way to the White House.

Help MOAA End the '180-Day Rule' for Retirees Seeking Most DoD Civilian Jobs

MOAA and The Military Coalition (TMC) are working with lawmakers to repeal the requirement for those retiring from military service to wait 180 days before entering DoD civil service General Schedule (GS) positions for GS-13 and below.

This year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA FY21) is an opportunity to authorize military retirees to transition to DoD GS-13 and below positions directly after retirement. Section 3326 of United States Code Title 5 requires a waiting period of 180 days after retirement before a retired member of the armed forces can be appointed into the civil service within DoD. This restriction forces many who wish to continue national service into other careers.

The 180-day waiting period has resulted in a talent management problem for hiring officials who are grappling with an antiquated hiring process; it can take months to hire a qualified candidate, even one with a current security clearance.

[TAKE ACTION: [Ask Your Lawmaker to Repeal the '180-Day Rule'](#)]

The intent of this "180-day rule" was to prevent senior military officers in positions of influence from creating GS positions for themselves upon retirement. However, the current scope of the 180-day rule severely restricts the ability of federal hiring authorities to hire highly qualified individuals for GS-13 and below positions that require current military certifications and experience. This issue has become severe at many of our nation's depots and organizations that require diverse experience.

The DoD has suffered from a disadvantage in competing with the private sector for talent. Recent DoD initiatives in talent management have identified a growing "war for talent" that requires Information Age solutions. As the DoD modernizes various weapons systems in support of the National Defense Strategy, the services also must modernize personnel hiring procedures. Changes to the 180-day rule for GS-13 and below will support efforts to improve the quality of the talent pool competing for GS positions and increase the readiness of the force – both major concerns for our military leaders.

Collective shortages of skilled labor have resulted in increased civilian starting salaries and incentives. Many of the personnel qualified for critical vacancies are recently retired military members who want to continue national service. But rather than wait 180 days, many of these retired servicemembers find positions elsewhere – jobs with salaries DoD cannot match.

As we confront the COVID-19 pandemic, it is even more important to pave the way for our talented military force to be available for immediate hire in support of the many defense programs on which our warfighters rely. [Contact your representative](#) and ask them to support repeal of the 180-day restriction.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 11 June 2020: **Key Senate Panel Approves 3 Percent Pay Raise for Troops** **Next Year**

A key Senate panel on Tuesday approved a 3 percent pay boost for troops starting next January, with bipartisan support for the idea.

The mark matches the expected pay boost prescribed under federal statute and, if approved, would represent the first time in a decade that troops have seen consecutive years with salary boosts of at least 3 percent. This past January, military pay increased by 3.1 percent.

Senators included the 3 percent pay raise in the personnel section of the Senate Armed Services Committee's [annual defense authorization bill](#) draft.

If approved by the full committee — and it is expected to be later this week — the pay raise plan will match White House recommendations. The pay increase level is already publicly backed by several leaders on the House Armed Services Committee.

[RELATED: [COLA Increase for Veterans Benefits Passes House](#)]

The plans passed the subcommittee without objection, although several Democrats on the panel lamented that leaders refused to include several reform provisions related to military sexual assault, including eliminating the ability of appellate panels to overturn some convictions.

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y. and a vocal advocate on the issue, promised to keep pushing the issue during the full mark-up later this week.

Unlike the House Armed Services Committee, which holds the majority of its votes and debate in public view, the Senate Armed Services Committee each year holds the majority of its work on the annual defense authorization bill behind closed doors. Of the six subcommittees, only the personnel panel held its mark-up work this week in a public session.

Senate committee leaders have said the arrangement allows for quicker consideration of amendments and eliminates worries about shifting between classified and non-classified topics. But open government advocates have long criticized the practice, especially given the House committee's ability to achieve the same legislative goals without secrecy.

GAO Report Underscores Need to Halt MTF Restructuring

A recently released Government Accountability Office (GAO) report highlights numerous shortfalls with DoD's plan for restructuring military treatment facilities (MTFs), including insufficient analysis — based on incomplete and/or inaccurate information — of the availability of high quality civilian medical care for impacted beneficiaries.

The report underscores MOAA's objections to moving forward with MTF restructuring at this time and builds on our sense of urgency in asking Congress to include additional reporting requirements and congressional oversight in the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

MOAA already has contacted Armed Services Committee staff in both the House and Senate, and we are drafting a letter to committee leadership in both chambers outlining our concerns.

For the last several months, MOAA has urged Congress to include a provision in the FY 2021 NDAA to suspend MTF downsizing and medical billet cuts. The issue was the centerpiece of our [successful virtual Storming the Hill campaign](#), which mobilized thousands of MOAA members to contact their elected officials.

[RELATED: [Here's How TRICARE Is Expanding Telehealth Coverage During the COVID-19 Crisis](#)]

We also have continued a dialog with Defense Health Agency (DHA) leaders to ensure beneficiary access to high quality care is considered throughout the MTF restructuring

process. And next week, MOAA President and CEO Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins, USAF (Ret), will attend a Military and Veteran Service Organization Executive Session with senior leaders from the DHA and the services' medical departments, where he will discuss MOAA's concerns about the GAO report's findings and urge further analysis and mitigation planning before any beneficiary care is eliminated from military facilities. MOAA's top priority is ensuring beneficiaries maintain access to high quality health care.

Background on MHS Reform

With the FY 2017 NDAA, Congress directed DoD to [reform the military health system](#) (MHS), including both TRICARE and the direct care system of military hospitals and clinics. Congress' goals were increased efficiencies, an enhanced focus on military medical provider readiness, and improved patient satisfaction across the MHS.

Earlier this year, as directed by Congress, DoD released its [plan for rightsizing the direct care system](#). The plan recommended downsizing or closing 48 MTFs and would impact approximately 200,000 beneficiaries who receive care at those military hospitals and clinics. As part of the MHS reform process, Congress directed GAO to review DoD's plan.

GAO Findings

GAO found DoD's MTF restructuring analysis was based, in part, on incomplete and inaccurate information. MOAA has been told the analysis of impacted MTFs will continue during the implementation phase. That is encouraging, but we are concerned about the lack of reporting requirements and formal congressional oversight during implementation.

[RELATED: [House Bill Would Provide Relief from TRICARE Pharmacy Copays During COVID-19 Crisis](#)]

After reviewing the GAO report, MOAA has the following concerns about MTF restructuring:

DoD's analysis of civilian health care availability was limited and based on potentially faulty assumptions. This could lead to problems for beneficiaries moved out of MTFs who must find care elsewhere. Among the issues highlighted in the report:

Significant problems with determining civilian care availability. The plan based this availability only on the presence of providers in the local market — it did not look at whether those providers were accepting new patients and/or new TRICARE patients. The accuracy of the provider directory was not verified, and the plan assumed all civilian providers are of sufficient quality.

Inaccurate information in drive-time access-to-care assessments. These assessments did not account for traffic, including bridges and tunnels that create traffic chokepoints.

Flawed logic predicting provider growth. The plan assumes the supply of providers in impacted markets will increase over time, but recent research suggests there will be a [nationwide shortfall of physicians by 2032](#).

[RELATED: [TRICARE Users Face Limits on Prescriptions Connected to COVID-19](#)]

The plan's analysis of cost effectiveness is limited and possibly flawed. This means MTF restructuring could result in higher-than-expected costs to DoD and subsequent calls for higher TRICARE fees for beneficiaries. Among the issues:

When calculating cost of MTF care, DoD included full cost of military medical personnel salaries even though military personnel who staff MTFs sometimes spend half or more of their time contributing to other military work activities.

The plan assumes no change to TRICARE reimbursement rates, even though future increases likely will be required to attract new, quality network providers as reliance on purchased care for beneficiaries increases.

The plan focused on MTFs' support to combat casualty and physicians' readiness, and only conducted limited assessments on the readiness impact to military primary care physicians and nonphysician medical providers including nurses, physician assistants, and enlisted medical and surgical specialists.

The plan does not evaluate the readiness benefits of primary care graduate medical education (GME) programs and non-GME training to MTFs. DoD states the impact on GME and non-GME training programs will be addressed in the implementation phase. GME and non-GME training programs conducted within MTFs are critical to the uniformed providers pipeline.

[RELATED: [Problems Accessing MTF Care? Tell Us Your Story](#)]

DoD does not have a process for monitoring restructuring transitions to address challenges. Yet, the MHS plans to complete restructuring actions by Oct. 1, 2025.

DoD plans to reverse or slow an MTF transition if needed to address any challenges that arise with ensuring patients' ability to access health care, the GAO report states. However, DoD's plan does not discuss conditions that would warrant slowing or reversing an MTF's restructure, or how the need for such an adjustment would be determined.

As the FY 2021 NDAA markup begins this week, MOAA continues to fight for an MHS reform process that ensures all military beneficiaries maintain access to high quality health care. Do you have concerns about your ability to access civilian medical care in your area? If so, please share them with MOAA by emailing legis@moaa.org.

MOAA President, Key House Lawmaker Discuss Legislative Priorities

Protecting the health of the military and veteran communities – in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic and throughout planned changes to the military medical health system – was the primary focus of a wide-ranging video chat last week between MOAA President and CEO Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins, USAF (Ret) and Rep. Mark Takano, the Chair of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Takano invited Atkins to take part in a series of video chats being held with leaders of military and veteran service organizations. The conversation covered active, reserve, and retired concerns; touched on military and VA medical care; and dealt with pandemic response. The full video is below:

Asked about key MOAA member concerns, Atkins said the biggest remains with military medical care – specifically, plans to overhaul the military health system that could affect the access to high quality care for 200,000 beneficiaries.

"Many of our veterans, particularly retired veterans, have found themselves in locations, by choice, that offer a medical treatment facility," Atkins told Takano (D-Calif). "The big concern now is an ongoing effort from DoD and the Defense Health Agency to modify the military medical treatment facilities (MTFs)."

Plans to close or downsize dozens of MTFs "force the beneficiary population to kind of go out into the community" for their care, Atkins said. He added that MOAA believes DoD and the Defense Health Agency have not "done the appropriate assessment of these communities to absorb that patient population" – a belief borne out in a recent Government Accountability Report that found [multiple issues with DoD's analysis](#).

"The Committee on Veterans' Affairs and Armed Services Committee are going to have to take a closer look at how

TRICARE and medical treatment facilities can better respond to the needs of veterans in the midst of a pandemic, too," Takano [said in a news release](#) about the discussion.

COVID-19, VA Care, and More

Takano also outlined the committee's work to ensure VA continued providing updated statistics on COVID-19 cases among patients and staff, to include a breakout of minority populations.

"We're pressing for more transparency throughout this crisis. And what's more important right now is that we know what VA absolutely needs to keep their staff and their veteran patients safe," he said.

Atkins praised VA's "remarkable strides at making their facilities more welcoming than they ever have been in the past" as well as the department's improvements in mental health treatment and telemedicine opportunities.

[RELATED: [VA to Resume In-Person Compensation and Pension Exams at 20 Locations](#)]

Other topics discussed included:

The need to expand benefits under the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, commonly known as CHAMPVA, to cover the small, vulnerable group of adult children of veterans who are permanently and totally disabled, have died of a service-connected disability, or died on active duty and did not qualify for DoD's TRICARE program. Learn more about this issue [here](#).

Concerns over Reserve Component members receiving earned benefits, especially in the wake of a recent push to ensure National Guard members [weren't left one day short](#) of qualifying for some federal benefits.

The need to improve veteran job training opportunities, especially during the economic downturn. "In the financial turmoil our nation's facing right now, what can we do to get veterans back into the workforce?" Atkins said. "In some cases, that's retraining."

Learn more about recent MOAA advocacy efforts [here](#).

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 18 June 2020:

Big Changes to Military Health System Will Be Delayed, Top Health Official Says

[RELATED: [More Advocacy News From MOAA](#)]

On June 11, McCaffery did not comment on McCarthy's request, but said much of the DoD's funding for research and development comes through his office, and he works with the DHA and the services to determine priorities and allocate the money to various offices and research arms.

"We think that approach works well, and we are going to continue that," he said.

Other articles by Military.com:

[New Army Green Uniform Will Soon Be Available for Soldiers to Buy](#)

[Lawmakers Move Once Again to Rescue A-10 Warthog from Retirement](#)

[Congress Pumps Brakes on Moves to Shift Air Force Bases to Space Force](#)

Legislation Moving to Support Reserve Component Credit for COVID-19 Response

A bipartisan bill is gaining support to address the orders issued for the National Guard members activated to mitigate the impacts of the coronavirus.

The National Guard COVID-19 Earned Benefits Guarantee Act, [H.R. 6957](#), introduced by Rep. Jimmy Panetta (D-Calif.), directs DoD to treat any time served as part of the COVID-19

response by activated members of the National Guard as no less than 90 days.

[TAKE ACTION: [Ask Your Lawmaker to Support H.R. 6957 and Expand Its Benefits](#)]

[[READ THE LETTER](#)]

The growing support for this bill falls in the wake of President Donald Trump's [recent decision](#) to extend the National Guard's Title 32 orders.

As the fight continues against COVID-19, it is becoming apparent we will see [ebbs and flows](#) at the state level. As states begin to reopen, they run the risk of mass outbreaks that could require a rapid response to contain the virus. A single event like a choir practice in Washington led to [52 people infected](#) over the course of a couple hours. If events like this are not caught quickly, the results could prolong necessary preventative measures.

The reserve component will continue to be vital to any response. With the potential for servicemembers to go on and off federal orders several times, they should not run the risk of missing education benefits and retirement credit when responding repeatedly to the national fight against the virus.

[Department of Justice officials](#) on Monday filed paperwork to grab the land, currently owned by Arlington County, through eminent domain powers. Army officials (who oversee the cemetery) estimate the move will provide about 9 additional acres of space and result in enough developable land for up to 60,000 additional burial sites in coming years.

[RELATED FROM MOAA: [Your Guide to Military Burials](#)]

Monday also marked the 156th anniversary of the cemetery, established in 1864 in the wake of the Civil War. Over its existence, the site has evolved into one of the most hallowed military locations in America, housing grave sites of casualties from every military conflict.

In a statement, federal officials said the move would allow the cemetery to "continue to serve as a burial ground for America's fallen well into the future."

[RELATED: [Nearly All VA Cemeteries Resume Committal Services](#)]

Army leaders for several years have said that without major changes at the site, burials will cease within the next two decades.

The southern expansion project is expected to cost \$420 million. It will also connect the Air Force Memorial site into the existing Arlington Cemetery campus.

In lieu of trading other federal property for the land seizure, the Justice Department filing calls for multiple civic improvements in the area, to include new bike and pedestrian paths and improvements to community electrical infrastructure.

[RELATED: [150,000 Letters and Counting: One Man's Quest to Collect War Stories](#)]

About 7,000 former troops and family members are currently interred at the cemetery each year. Along with the expansion project, leaders have proposed expanding above-ground storage of cremated remains and severely limiting eligibility.

Veterans groups have protested those eligibility changes, but the expansion project has received broader support.

Typically, more than 3 million visitors travel to the cemetery each year, but the site has been closed to nearly all visitors except family members since March, because of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

Other articles by Military Times:

[Korean War veteran sees medals for first time at ceremony](#)

[VA's protective equipment supplies inadequate for second wave of coronavirus, officials warn](#)

[More troops, bigger paychecks and housing improvements in Senate military budget policy plan](#)

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 25 June 2020:

[Senate Bill Would Provide Relief from TRICARE Pharmacy Copays During COVID-19, Other Emergencies](#)

MOAA continues to make progress toward pharmacy copay relief during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The bill, S. 3979, would give DoD flexibility to provide relief from retail and/or mail-order prescription copays for beneficiaries unable to visit military treatment facility (MTF) pharmacies for zero copay medications.

[TAKE ACTION: [Ask Your Lawmaker to Support S. 3979](#)]

It authorizes DoD to waive pharmacy cost-sharing requirements after considering whether the waiver would increase affordability of alternatives to MTF pharmacies, promote prescription adherence, or facilitate the government response to a covered emergency.

A similar bill, [H.R. 6573, the Help Our Heroes Access Medicine Act](#), was introduced in the House earlier this year.

MOAA is urging Congress to address this issue with the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). During a livestream of the Senate Armed Services Committee Personnel subcommittee mark, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), the committee's ranking member, indicated the subcommittee's NDAA mark would include a provision authorizing DoD to waive copays during national emergencies. Providing DoD with this flexibility is critical in allowing TRICARE policy to quickly adapt in unexpected situations.

Please join MOAA's efforts by [encouraging your senators to support the TRICARE Prescription Relief Act](#).

[Know Your NDAA: What's In, What's Out, What's Next as Critical Bill Moves Forward](#)

[NDAA Basics](#)

The SASC on June 10 voted 25-2 to advance the NDAA to the Senate floor. Markups from the House Armed Service Committee are proceeding as scheduled, with the full committee markup scheduled for July 1.

A growing national deficit from the COVID-19 pandemic response and recent increased military investments make the defense budget a likely candidate for future cuts. The good news is that MOAA's Virtual Storming the Hill event and advocacy for our military community is already evident in the hearings and executive summaries. There are several promising provisions in the House and Senate versions of the NDAA that still must survive the NDAA conference to become law.

[RELATED: [How MOAA Members Joined Forces for a Successful Virtual Storm](#)]

[What's In the NDAA So Far?](#)

[Pay Raise](#)

Both the House and Senate versions support a 3.0% pay raise tied to the Employment Cost Index.

[Halting Cuts to the Military Health System](#)

MOAA's Virtual Storming the Hill efforts paid off with the inclusion of two provisions in the FY 2021 NDAA HASC Personnel Subcommittee mark that would temporarily halt medical billet cuts and military treatment facility (MTF) restructuring with new reporting requirements. They are:

A review of medical manpower requirements related to homeland defense missions and pandemic response. The bill also would prohibit any realignment or reduction of military medical end strength for one year after the date of enactment of the FY 2021 NDAA and requires an analysis of availability of civilian health care and mitigation planning for any care to be eliminated from MTFs due to medical billet cuts.

A requirement to address concerns raised by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) on the quality and availability of civilian providers. The bill also would prevent DoD from implementing the planned MTF restructuring for one year following a new report.

[RELATED: [GAO Report Underscores Need to Halt MTF Restructuring](#)]

This is not a done deal, but it marks a positive development as MOAA seeks to halt cuts to military medicine to ensure congressional oversight of DoD's efforts and access to high quality care for beneficiaries at impacted MTFs. It will still take all of us to engage at the right opportunities to shepherd these and other provisions through the amendment process, chamber floor votes, and the conference committee. Please stay tuned and be ready to call or email your legislators.

The executive summary of the SASC markup did not directly address MOAA's Storming the Hill goal of halting MTF restructuring and medical billet cuts.

Improving Military Family Readiness

MOAA's top military family priorities on childcare and the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) were included in the HASC Personnel Subcommittee mark. Items of note include:

Standardization of EFMP across DoD, a proposal successfully influenced by MOAA's testimony and advocacy. Language also includes a required report on rates of military family disputes for Free Appropriate Public Education (learn more about FAPE [here](#)).

A basic needs allowance for servicemembers who are at poverty levels.

National Guard and Reserve Component

The HASC included the following language on the reserve component:

A pilot program for states to expand job placement programs for unemployed Guardsmen or Reservists.
A talent optimization marketplace to improve assignments for Reserve and Guard service members.

SASC provisions on the topic include:

A Space Force reserve component, but with a delay in establishing a Space National Guard until the completion of a study on the issue.

Reserve retirement relief for servicemembers affected by the COVID-19 stop-movement order.

Mental health and suicide prevention, including a GAO study on the delivery of federal, state, and private mental health services to reserve servicemembers, and reviewing efforts to prevent suicide among service members stationed at remote installations outside of the continental U.S.

[RELATED: [Legislation Moving to Support Reserve Component Credit for COVID-19 Response](#)]

What Is Missing in This NDAA?

Provisions to address concurrent receipt of retirement pay and disability pay for those with 40% rated disability and below or medically retired before reaching 20 years are missing from the NDAA base language. The Military Coalition continues to advocate for fixing this problem, and champions in the House and Senate plan to propose an amendment to the NDAA to address concurrent receipt at first opportunity, such as the Major Richard Star act.

[RELATED: [The Military Coalition Keeps Up the Fire on Concurrent Receipt](#)]

What Are the Next Steps With the NDAA?

Once markups are complete, the HASC and SASC will post the approved language, and a window will open for members to propose amendments to the NDAA. The House and Senate will then appoint conferees to meet and negotiate a final NDAA version that resolves differences in language.

At last year's NDAA conference, the widows tax was finally repealed when the conferees voted to waive the budgetary "pay for" rule and [fix that longstanding injustice](#). Although budgetary concerns are greater this year, MOAA will continue to advocate for our community throughout the process.

MOAA Endorses Bill to Expand Education and Career Opportunities for Military Spouses

As the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) process rolls forward, several bills designed to improve military family readiness are being considered for possible inclusion. MOAA and The Military Coalition – a group of more than 30 military and veteran advocacy organizations representing a combined membership of more than 5.5 million – recently endorsed [H.R. 7112](#), the Military Spouse Career Education Act.

This bill would expand the current licensure reimbursement program to cover continuing education units and allow eligible military spouses to use the [My Career Advancement Account \(MyCAA\) program](#) for both national testing and continuing education units. The Senate Armed Services Committee incorporated this legislation into its draft of the FY 21 NDAA. MOAA is actively advocating for this language to make it in the final version of the bill.

"Servicemember spouses constantly uproot their lives, families, and careers to meet the needs of the military," said Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan, the Northern *Mariana* Islands' delegate to Congress. "I introduced the Military Spouse Career Education Act to provide them more support in securing portable licenses and other government-recognized credentials. Spouses can achieve their professional goals faster under my bill, which covers the costs of exams granting college credit and additional training they may need to relicense when their families relocate."

[TAKE ACTION: [Ask Your Lawmaker to Cosponsor H.R. 7112](#)]

Finding solutions to military spouse unemployment is a top legislative priority for MOAA and The Military Coalition. Expanding programs that are proven successful is a key strategy.

Education is foundational to improving meaningful career opportunities for military spouses. The MyCAA program provides educational scholarships for military spouses looking to start a career. [A 2019 RAND report](#) shows this program is effective for military spouse employment and has improved retention rates among servicemembers.

The MyCAA program originally covered more degree areas for spouses of servicemembers in all ranks, but because of budget constraints, the program was scaled back to cover only certain ranks and degree areas. MOAA continues to find solutions to expand MyCAA, including this legislation, which would expand the program to allow coverage of national testing and continuing education units. Both of these areas are critical to helping military spouses maintain their careers.

[If God sends a storm, He will also steer the vessel.](#)

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*If you can receive this by
e-mail, please let us know.
Printing and postage costs
the Chapter close to \$3 for
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Tentative 2020 Meeting Schedule:

Tuesday 14 July - Zoom meeting
(See President's Message for details.)

Tuesday 15 September
Tuesday 17 November



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