



Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter



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September Program:

**LtCol Nicole Phelan has set up a Zoom meeting for
Tuesday, 15 September.**

<https://kansas.zoom.us/j/7858641214> Meeting ID: 785 864 1214
One tap mobile +16699006833,,7858641214# US (San Jose)
+12532158782,,7858641214# US (Tacoma)

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President's Comments. . .

Well, here we are at the end of summer and the CoVid situation doesn't seem to want to improve anytime soon. We'll continue to do Zoom meetings for the foreseeable future. Our Zoom meeting in July was very smooth and informative, we had a good group of folks tune in as we learned about the progress of the CoVid pandemic here in Douglas County and Kansas.



In September our speaker will be Dr. Kim Kimminau of the KU Medical Center. Dr. Kimminau is a biomedical anthropologist and health services researcher who has worked throughout her career with organizations trying to meet the health needs of their communities, and she is also a forensic scientist for the U.S. Army.

Our meeting in September will be on Tuesday the 15th, at 7PM. This should allow everyone to eat dinner beforehand. I expect that with the speaker our meeting will run about an hour or so. Please, if you need assistance setting up Zoom let me or one of the other officers in the chapter know in advance and we'll assist you. Login information for the meeting is shown above.

And of course, my offer stands - 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, and wear your face masks when out among other folks. This will end at some point and we'll resume getting together in person, but for now, stay smart and stay safe.

Coop

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1 September 2020

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* Reservations should be sent
to Jim Cooper by



JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS



CONDOLENCES

Jerry Goforth passed away August 5, 2020, at his home. Inurnment services will be held at a later date. He was born December 24, 1934, in Winfield, Kan., the son of Leo E. and Gladys Barker Goforth. He graduated from Arkansas City High School, and later attended Arkansas City Junior College. He served 20 years in the 226th Engineering Battalion of the Kansas National Guard, attaining the rank of Captain. Jerry retired as a District Operations Manager from Southwestern Bell in 1990 after 38 years of service, notably being recognized for perfect attendance his entire career. Jerry served on the board and as chairman of the board of both Nekan Bell Credit Union and Delta Dental of Kansas. In retirement, he was active in the Kansas Golf Association serving as president in 2003 and became a golf rules official volunteering at amateur tournaments across the state. The KGA presented him the Virgil Parker Award in 2010 in recognition of his "unselfish contributions to the game of golf and people who play and enjoy the game." He was a member of Immanuel Lutheran Church, the Military Officers Association, and the Hereditary Neurological Support Group.

Jerry married Barbara L. Reinking on December 26, 1953, in Arkansas City. She survives of the home. Other survivors include three sons, Greg Goforth and wife Mary, Wells, ME; Todd Goforth and wife Yvette, Peoria, IL; and Clay Goforth and wife Debbie, Topeka; a sister, Carol Hadorn, Wellington, KS; a sister-in-law Naomi Goforth, Salem, OR.; eight grandchildren and five great grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents, a stepfather, Charles Brooks, a brother, Charles Goforth, and two sisters, Joan Pyer and Darlene McGee.

Memorial contributions in honor of Jerry are suggested to Hereditary Neurological Disease Center or Immanuel Lutheran Church, in care of Rumsey-Yost Funeral Home, 601 Indiana St., Lawrence, KS, 66044.

PERSONAL NEWS

From Dean Bevan: On Sep. 28, I'll join the rest of the cast in a NYC audio recording of my latest play, "In the Garden," with Adam and Eve. I play the snake.

From David Kent: This is my third year to grow sunflowers from Burpee seeds, and this crop is the tallest ever, topping 11 ft.

Our granddaughter Rachel, whose family lives near Ramstein AFB in Germany, just started her freshman year at the College of William and Mary. Grandson Colin has one more year at Ramstein High School.

From Alan vanLoenen: American Legion Post 14 at 3408 W 6th Street in Lawrence is open from 9 AM to 12PM on Tuesdays and Thursdays for any American Legion members and other military veterans that would like to drop by for coffee and conversation. Yes, we do practice social distancing and masks when not at least six feet separation. --

Also American Legion bingo will start as soon as Douglas County allows more than 45 in attendance at public gatherings; the "Progressive Black Out" game was over \$6,000 at posted number or less when bingo had to stop because of COVID-19 attendance number limitations (when bingo starts again the over \$6,000 will be the starting point for this one game). Check FaceBook "American Legion 14 Bingo" for updates on bingo for when bingo games start again, I believe you can play all bingo games for around \$16 for all game sheets -- bingo games start at 6:45 PM, doors open at 4:30 PM with pull tab games from 4:30 to 6:45 PM; yes, there is also a snack bar open for burgers, dogs, etc starting at 5PM!! Watch FaceBook for bingo updates; our website Legion14.org is down and cannot be updated. All proceeds from bingo go for veterans, local youth sports, and maintenance to keep Post 14 open.

I am also a member of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) Lawrence, KS - Camp 4. Our SUVCW Camp meets every third Tuesday at the American Legion Post 14 at 3408 W. 6th Street at 6:30 PM. Our Camp 4 post has programs related to the American Civil War at our monthly meeting except for the Nov and Dec



**The newsletter is only as good as the material available,
so each member is requested to forward to the editors news and other items of interest.**

meetings and we do not have a meeting in July. The public is invited to attend our SUVCW meetings and of course we are always looking for new members. Below is the program for our September 15, 2020 meeting.

The PROGRAM for the September 15th meeting "Confederate Generals and US Army Post Names" by Michael Hill. Michael Hill earned his B.A. in English/Communications from Adams State University in 2001. Upon graduating he enlisted in the U.S. Army, serving for six years, first as an Army paratrooper and then as a CID Special Agent. After leaving the military, Michael earned an M.A. in Theology from Fuller Theological Seminary and then a second M.A. in U.S. History from Adams State University. Michael studies 19th century U.S. history, Russian history, empire, and foreign relations. In particular, he is most interested in points of intersection between the United States and Russia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

From Mike Kelly: Mike Kelly reports good news that his nephew was finally able to celebrate his Class of 2020 high school graduation in early August in a two-part socially distanced ceremony in Topeka. Same nephew just started college at Emporia State a few days ago. Georgiana and Mike have several younger nieces and nephews whose K-12 fall school attendance is still in flux due to various plans to respond to the public health emergency in different school districts. We may get called upon to do some child care so parents can continue to work.

Mike has been in contact with Charlie Bryant at the LDC Health Department in case volunteers are needed for line (queue) management and traffic control at a future county-wide mass vaccination event. Anyone able to volunteer for such duty should expect an e-mail or phone call when such event is scheduled. Mike also reports the board of directors for the Lawrence Veterans Day Parade Association voted to cancel the in-person parade for this year due to uncertainties in the safety of our environment. The board will find other ways to thank all of our veterans of military service and will continue charity work for Douglas County-resident veterans in need.

Our friends in Oahu Hawaii who are active in the Aloha Chapter of MOAA there, survived the passage of Pacific Hurricane Douglas in late July without serious difficulty. We hope all of your friends and family in the southeast part of our country fare as well in with the arrival of two major storms in the same week now in August. 2020.



Army News

LTC John D. Finch, USA

Greetings from the Jayhawk Battalion:

This past summer, instead of 274 host universities all consolidating at Ft. Knox, Kentucky for Advanced Camp (a crucible for rising seniors), we decentralized the training; ten ROTC host programs from Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, and the western half of Missouri conducted two weeks of rigorous training on the northern edge of Fort Riley at Camp Douthit, KS. The training – dubbed Operation Agile Leader and consisting of basic rifle marksmanship, day and night land navigation, and platoon situational training – was superb. In all, just over 250 people from the ten host programs closed on Camp Douthit to practice light infantry tactics and to put leadership skills to the test. So how did we complete this training during a global pandemic?

In short, the controls we had in place were strict. The first control was that neither cadets nor cadre were allowed onto the main cantonment of Ft. Riley; we were effectively quarantined on Camp Douthit. Furthermore, the "Exercise Rules of Engagement" (EXROE) - signed by the Commanding General of 1st Infantry Division - stipulated that if anyone had direct contact with a known

positive less than 14 days before the start of Operation Agile Leader, they could not attend, even if they tested negative. Second, for 14 days prior to the training, cadets and cadre were required to log their temperatures twice a day; once training started, a cadre member did twice daily temperature checks of both the cadets and the rest of the cadre. Anyone who exhibited any symptom (fever, cough, etc.), was evaluated by a PA and if the PA deemed that a test was required, the test was conducted that same day and - even if the results were negative - the cadet was sent home (in a specially modified van with only one driver wearing full PPE). We didn't have any positives at the camp, but had any occurred, the EXROE directed that the platoon the cadet had been placed in would be suspended from training and quarantined for 14 days.

Probably the best control was that 100% of the training was conducted outdoors, 100% of the meals were outdoors, and we spent the nights outside too. Nevertheless, cadets and cadre were required to wear masks any time they could not maintain 6 feet of distance. In sum, we trained in spite of a global

pandemic because COVID-19 mitigation measures were rigorously enforced and all our training was outdoors. As one of my first NCOs used to say: “the Army is an outdoors activity.”

I owe a brief introduction. While I am not a University of Kansas grad, my mother, father, two of my three siblings, and my wife all graduated from KU. My father graduated from the Jayhawk Battalion in 1980, and though I was too young to remember, his was the first commissioning ceremony I ever attended. I’m a Lawrence native and I attended high school at LHS (back when there was only one high school in

Lawrence). I’m an MI officer by training and my last job was on beautiful Fort Huachuca, Arizona, the home of Army Intel; I loved it there, but I’m glad to be home. My wife (Raelean), two sons (Solomon - 8 and Sebastian - 2), and two dogs all live in North Lawrence.

Bottom line: I’m absolutely excited to lead the Jayhawk Battalion and to join the Jayhawk Family.

LTC John D. Finch
Professor of Military Science



Navy News
CAPT Trenton Lennard, USN



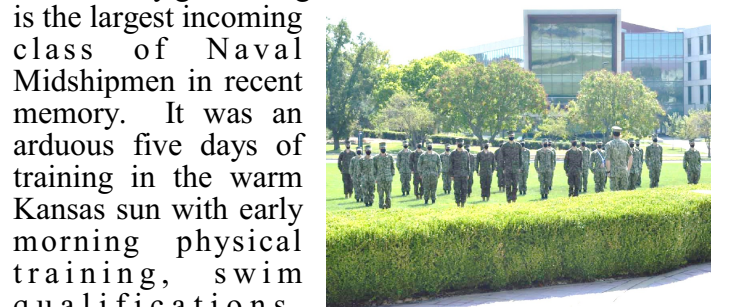
Greetings from the Jayhawk Battalion!

It is great to see midshipmen back on campus! Although it was a challenging summer as the NROTC enterprise continued to grapple with COVID limitations, I was continually impressed by the resilience, determination, and work ethic of my staff and students. The challenges of operating as a virtual unit were met head on by our Navy and Marine Corps Team. We were able to accomplish summer training for some of our Marine Option Midshipmen as well as extensive planning for the upcoming New Student Orientation and the fall semester.

This summer we had two new active duty staff members join our team! LT Thomas Mickelson, transferring from the USS Oak Hill, will serve as the Navigation and Operations Naval Science Instructor and assume the duties as the Freshman and Sophomore advisor. SSgt Andreau Winslow, transferring from Camp Pendleton, assumed the duties as the Senior Enlisted Advisor and Assistant Marine Officer Instructor. We also wished fair winds and following seas to departing staff members LT Sarah Wood and GySgt Isidro Cobos.

For summer training, the KU Midshipmen, MECEPs, and Officer Candidates achieved significant milestones in their path towards commissioning. Two rising senior Midshipmen, MIDN Miller and MIDN Bowers, graduated from Officer Candidates School in Quantico, Virginia. This extremely challenging and rigorous school offers a great leadership experience for the future Marine Corps Officers and their successful completion is no small feat. Additionally, we had one promotion with MECEP Sergeant Lee promoting to Staff Sergeant. Congratulations Shipmates!

Despite these challenges, we most recently stood up our newest class of Midshipmen with 25 candidates successfully graduating New Student Orientation. This is the largest incoming class of Naval Midshipmen in recent memory. It was an arduous five days of training in the warm Kansas sun with early morning physical training, swim qualifications, classroom work and drill sessions but they persevered. We are very proud of them and look forward to seeing these new Midshipmen integrate into the Battalion! The student PAO staff did an outstanding job last week and both Facebook and Instagram are full of photos of the event. I encourage you to visit those pages.



25 Midshipmen Candidates complete New Student Orientation with an inspection and oath administered by the Commanding Officer.

The Jayhawk Battalion continues to excel in these unprecedented times. We are all excited to be back in Lawrence and look forward to representing the Naval Combat Team with pride and enthusiasm.

Rock Chalk and Fly Navy!

CAPT Trenton Lennard
 Commanding Officer, KU NROTC



Air Force News

LtCol Nichole Phelan, USAF

Hello from Detachment 280, the Flying Jayhawks!

We added one new staff member to our team. We'd like to welcome Capt Stormi Brewer to our cadre line-up. She's a career maintenance officer, coming to us from Aviano, Italy. She is an AF Academy grad with multiple deployment experience and will be a great asset to our organization.

We are excited to start the new academic year at KU with a new class of cadets. We still are not 100% certain what this new year will look like but we are exercising our resiliency and staying as flexible as possible. We do have a smaller inbound class than normal. But I'm confident this will be an amazing year as last semester the innovation in our cadet wing soared as they came up with new creative ways of getting the mission done in a constrained COVID environment.

We held our first virtual new Student Orientation on 21 August. We are slowly moving all our processes into the virtual realm as the cadre staff looks for ways to be more efficient and develop electronic means for accomplishing most events we have always held in-person.

We've got a big year ahead with many new events on the horizon. Thanks again to MOAA Jayhawk Chapter for all the great support for our cadets and the detachment.

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, 02 July 2020:

[TAKE ACTION: [Congress Must Secure America's Pharmaceutical Supply](#)]

Help MOAA Fight for Maj. Richard Star and Thousands More Who Deserve Full Concurrent Receipt

Note from MOAA: For more information on concurrent receipt, including the latest on advocacy efforts, visit MOAA's [Concurrent Receipt Resources and Advocacy Updates](#) page. [Click here](#) to take action now.

Maj. Richard Star, USA, is a combat engineer who is battling stage 4 lung cancer. Engineers are tough, and he is the sort who signed up for route clearance and road construction missions that were incredibly dangerous because of IEDs. But after his last deployment, the veteran of Afghanistan and Iraq knew something wasn't quite right. The burn pits and other environmental hazards from his service had taken a toll.

Star and his wife, Tonya, discovered he had cancer just after Memorial Day 2018.

When they first entered Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, they never thought they would make friends with other servicemembers during their extended stay. In a shared struggle to heal, they made some lifelong friends. These friendships sparked the drive for their next fight. At Walter Reed, Star began to understand that he and many of his new friends would medically retire under Chapter 61 before reaching 20 years of service.

A Chapter 61 retiree is a servicemember who is forced to medically retire from injury on duty. These retirees are not authorized for concurrent receipt, which means receiving retirement pay from DoD for their service, while also receiving disability pay from the VA to compensate for injury.

[RELATED: [MOAA Answers Your Questions About Concurrent Receipt](#)]

A law that dates back to the 19th century prevents these retirees from receiving both retirement pay and disability pay. For every dollar of disability pay received, the law reduces, or offsets, retirement pay. There are 210,000 Chapter 61 retirees; of those, 42,000 have combat-related injuries.

As Richard Star is fighting cancer, he is also fighting to clear the road for concurrent receipt for retirees like him.

"When I first learned of the concurrent receipt problem, I was shocked that the rules actually made my retirement insignificant. You work for this retirement for years only to find out that you're not eligible to get what you have earned. Then I was really worried about how I could support my family and what to cut back on to make things work out," Star said.

[RELATED: [A Wife's Request: Please Support the Maj. Richard Star Act](#)]

The five-meter target for concurrent receipt is combat-related Chapter 61 retirements. MOAA's long-term mission is to achieve concurrent receipt for all. The last progress was 16 years ago, and we need engaged members make progress. Sixteen years is a long time to wait.

"How long do we have to self-fund our VA disability pay? When Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP) was making its way through Congress in 2003, retirees were told effectively, 'Just be patient. It's too expensive to eliminate the offset for all. You retirees with less than 50% VA disability, we'll get your offset eliminated soon,'" said Lt. Cmdr. Michael Roy, USN (Ret), a MOAA Life Member.

Congress demonstrated the willingness to address the inequity of offsetting DoD military retirement pay for VA disability compensation when it passed the Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003, which ended the offset for military retirees with 20 years of

service and greater than 50% disability. Veterans who have a VA service-connected disability rating of 40% or less and Chapter 61 veterans are still required to offset their retirement pay with their VA benefits.

Congress also created the Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) program to provide partial offset relief for combat-wounded veterans. CRSC does not eliminate the entire offset, but it is an indication by Congress that combat-injured veterans should not be required to forfeit their retirement pay.

While bills to fully repeal the offset of military retirement pay and VA benefits have garnered support, they have failed to pass for over a decade due to cost.

“Looking ahead is filled with so much uncertainty and years of grief, as I know the love of my life will one day slip away,” said Tonya Star. “The loss of military retirement benefits was a shock. Because Rich will not reach 20 years of military service, he will be classified as a Chapter 61 retiree – a terrible injustice for our family and countless others.”

“The brave men and women who return from serving our country should be able to receive the benefits promised to them. Military retirement pay and service-connected disability compensation are two completely different benefits,” Bilirakis said. “One does not diminish the merits of the other. While I am still committed to rectifying this injustice for all veterans, passage of the Major Richard Star Act gets us one step closer to our goal of ensuring that veterans receive the benefits they have earned and deserve.”

“After serving and sacrificing for our nation, too many veterans face unnecessary roadblocks in receiving the benefits they have earned and deserved,” Ruiz said. “That’s why I joined my friend, Congressman Bilirakis, in introducing the Major Richard Star Act, which would repeal the unjust law that stands in the way of veterans receiving the military retirement pay and service-connected disability compensation that they have rightfully earned.”

Sens. Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) sponsored the companion bill, [S.3393](#).

“When it comes to providing disabled veterans with their earned benefits, the government needs to provide them in full— not have one benefit cancel out the other,” said Tester, ranking member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. “The *Major Richard Star Act* would get rid of the unfair offset that prevents 42,000 veterans, who sacrificed life and limb in combat, from receiving both their disability compensation and retired pay. This bipartisan bill is a necessary step in making sure that veterans living with the wounds of war receive the benefits and assistance they deserve.”

“I have been dedicated to ensuring all active and retired military personnel receive the care and benefits they deserve, which is why I previously worked to eliminate the military widows tax,” Crapo said. “The Major Richard Star Act will allow military retirees to receive both military retired pay and disability compensation without being offset. ... As Congress works to improve veterans benefits, it is important to ensure that unfair discrepancies such as this are fixed.”

A Road Map Ahead

The Star Act is an incremental approach to concurrent receipt for military retirees. It is expected to cost roughly \$2.5 billion over 10 years while addressing all remaining concurrent receipt will cost \$30 billion.

The incremental approach to concurrent receipt is envisioned as five milestones:

- Those who retire with 50% VA disability rating or higher. This was achieved through the 2003 NDAA.

- Those forced to medically retire because they were hurt in combat. This would be addressed by H.R. 5995 and S 3393.

- Those forced to medically retire because they were hurt on duty in non-combat incidents.

- Those who retire with 40% VA disability rating.

- Those who retire with 30% VA disability rating or below.

[RELATED: [Chapter 61 Retirees Span the Generations of War](#)]

Drawing From Lessons Learned

Please [reach out to your elected officials](#) to co-sponsor the Major Richard Star Act, push for its language to be included in the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, and correct the injustice of concurrent receipt.

These NDAA Provisions Address Needs Faced by the Reserve Component

The annual National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) process is underway again, with the Senate bill leading the charge. Along with the many standard provisions focused on parity with the active forces, this year’s NDAA provides several opportunities to address some of the unique coronavirus-related challenges facing the National Guard and Reserve forces.

This year’s bill marks the first opportunity outside of a COVID-19 legislative package to address issues facing the tens of thousands of members of reserve component forces activated to assist with the coronavirus response and civil unrest.

[TAKE ACTION: [Ask Your Lawmaker to Take Care of the Reserve Component in the NDAA](#)]

The added risks of operating in an environment where a member is exposed to COVID-19 are being considered by the Senate Armed Services Committee, which included a mandate to pay hazardous duty pay at the rate of no less than \$150 a month in its version of the NDAA. If enacted, this section would put hundreds of dollars into the pockets of servicemembers who responded to the virus.

Another section that made it into the bill text addresses the health care of servicemembers who responded to COVID-19 on Title 32 orders. When on Title 32, the federal government pays, but state governors maintain control. Title 32 is important for [many benefits](#), but while the pandemic is still underway, this addresses an important question: How do we care for their health needs after a member is no longer activated?

This section requires the DoD to provide 180 days of premium-free TRICARE for National Guard members separating from a period of active duty related to the COVID-19 response; while this is a positive step, it does not provide health care coverage for the activated 7,500 reservists.

[RELATED: [Your Benefits: Title 10 vs. Title 32 vs. the State](#)]

In addition to these COVID-19 fixes, the Senate bill offers a section that would change the discharge document from the DD-214 to a “Certificate of Military Service.” This common discharge document would be given to any member who serves; at present, reserve component members only receive DD-214s under certain qualifying conditions. The new certificate would mark a positive step for the recognition of reserve component service.

Finally, a Senate amendment that could be added to the bill is a fix for the hazardous duty incentive pay (HDIP) proration for those who maintain a technical proficiency, such as jump pay. Despite needing to do the same work and make the same time commitment to maintain a technical proficiency as members of the active component, reserve component members receive prorated pay for their proficiencies. This amendment is based on a bill previously introduced by Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), which [MOAA covered](#) earlier this year.

These positive steps reflect Congress's understanding of the essential role the reserve component played in the pandemic response. Please act now and [contact your senator](#) about these sections that are good for the National Guard and Reserve and ask that they do all that they can to include the HDIP amendment.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 23 July 2020:

NDAAs Update: Where We've Been, Where We Are, and What's Next

The House passed its version of the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) on July 21 by a strong bipartisan vote of 295-125, and the Senate followed suit July 23, passing its version by an 86-14 margin. While these votes mark significant steps forward in the NDAA process, it's far from over.

Here's a look at what's happened so far, where things stand, and the status of some MOAA-supported NDAA provisions, including ways you can reach out to your legislators to make your voice heard.

The House worked through 407 amendments before passing H.R. 6395, its version of the NDAA. More than 700 amendments went to the House Rules Committee. The SASC adopted 62 amendments during its markup of S. 4049.

Provisions to Note

This year, some provisions in the NDAA will benefit servicemembers, retirees, survivors, and their families, and some provisions will be detrimental. The provisions MOAA is advocating to make it through the NDAA process include:

Military Pay

A provision to increase military pay by 3% tied to the Employment Cost Index is included in both the House and Senate versions of the NDAA.

Military Health Care

Despite the [success of MOAA's Virtual Storming the Hill](#), efforts to include a halt to military medical end strength cuts and the realignment of military treatment facilities (MTFs) in the NDAA remain at risk. While the House version has language supporting these provisions, the Senate version does not.

MOAA is pivoting its focus to the Senate to ensure the House provisions make it through conference. [Contact your senator today](#) to express your support for the House provisions.

[RELATED: [Here's How the NDAA Would Improve Military Housing](#)]

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 30 July 2020:

Here's What 2 Major Appropriations Bills Mean for Military Families.

Defense Appropriations

The House Appropriations Committee passed its version of the Defense Appropriations bill July 14. The legislation is expected to be voted on by the full House as part of a minibus bill, [H.R. 7617](#), this week.

The committee highlighted areas of concern and backed its worries up with additional funding for DoD to use in addressing these areas.

In addition to report language to provide better oversight and better funding for programs such as DoDEA schools, military moves and child care, the bill proposes:

- \$270 million above the request to address public school infrastructure requirements on DoD installations.

- An additional \$116 million for upgrades to child care facilities, and report language directing the

- services to present innovative ideas to assist servicemembers with this quality-of-life issue.

- \$40 million for Impact Aid, and an additional \$10 million for Impact Aid for those with disabilities.

Military Construction and Veteran Affairs Appropriations (MilconVA)

MOAA recently reported on the MilconVA appropriations bill as it relates to [veterans](#) and also [military housing](#). The bill also includes the following as it relates to military families:

- Full funding of the budget request for DoDEA school construction projects.

- \$135 million in additional funding (above budget request) to address environmental hazards in military family housing.

- \$152 million for construction of three additional Army child development centers (CDCs).

- Continued funding for VA to provide child care through the Veterans Access To Childcare Demonstration Program.

[RELATED: [As an Uncertain School Year Approaches, MOAA Continues Its Work for Military Families](#)]

In addition to the proposed funding, the MilconVA subcommittee requests reports back from DoD on the number of child care centers by location, the quality of these centers, and the length of time families must wait to enroll their child. This report will help the subcommittee ensure appropriate funding for building of future CDCs.

The subcommittee also is requesting a report from DoD on access to high quality broadband in and around military installations, as this issue becomes more important with the transition to virtual platforms for work, education, and medical appointments in a COVID-19 environment.

The MilconVA appropriations bill is expected to be voted on by the full House of Representatives this week in a separate minibus package, [H.R. 7608](#).

After the full House approves the spending bills, the Senate will continue its work to complete their versions of the spending bills. Using the NDAA as a sneak peek into the Senate's priorities, we can expect the Senate appropriations bills also will focus on child care, children's education, and military housing. MOAA will continue to advocate on the Senate side to ensure full funding of military family quality-of-life programs.

MOAA Supports Senate Bill to Study Cancer Risk Faced by Military Aviators

Along with requiring DoD to maintain a database documenting cancer diagnoses and mortality of all military aviators, the bill would require such a study, in two parts:

- To determine whether aviators have a higher incidence of cancer than others in the general population in similar age groups.

- If a higher incidence is found, to determine what's causing the increase. This would involve a deeper look at hazardous materials and carcinogens common to aviation duty, and an analysis of whether cases are connected to specific duty locations or tasks, among other requirements.

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

"The idea that military aviators could be suffering adverse health effects from their service to our country is alarming and demands further investigation," Cornyn said in a news release announcing the bill, [S. 4043](#). "This legislation would help determine if an outsized population of air crew members is developing illnesses like cancer, and if so, what the cause is and how we can stop it."

A similar bipartisan bill in the House of Representatives – introduced by Rep. Elaine Luria (D-Va.), a retired Navy

commander, and Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R-Ill.), a lieutenant colonel and aviator in the Wisconsin Air National Guard – would require DoD to study cancer rates among aviators compared with those of other servicemembers, and to determine proper ages for screening aviators based on a range of criteria, including age, gender, and aircraft type.

That bill, [H.R. 5858](#), was introduced Feb. 12 and assigned to the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) the same day. No further action on the bill has been taken by the chamber, although a section in the House's version of the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act includes language requiring a similar comparison between cancer rates for aviators and other servicemembers.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 06 August 2020: **MOAA Seeks 12-Month Grace Period for New TRICARE Select Enrollment Fee**

As the Defense Health Agency (DHA) works on implementation plans for the new TRICARE Select enrollment fee, MOAA is advocating for a 12-month grace period for impacted beneficiaries to ensure no retirees lose TRICARE coverage because they were unaware of the new enrollment fee requirement.

[RELATED: [TRICARE Select Enrollment Fees: What You Need to Know, and What You Need to Do](#)]

Starting Jan. 1, 2021, Group A retirees and their families must pay a monthly TRICARE Select enrollment fee to maintain TRICARE Select coverage. The charge for an individual plan is \$12.50 per month or \$150 annually. For a family plan, the enrollment fee is \$25 per month or \$300 annually. Later this summer, TRICARE will announce the process for setting up an allotment or making other arrangements to pay the fee.

If you don't take action to pay the enrollment fee, you will be disenrolled from TRICARE Select on Jan. 1, 2021, for failure to pay. Current policy states you will have 90 days to request reinstatement.

Why a Grace Period?

MOAA believes it is important to extend the reinstatement period from three months to 12 for these four reasons:

Past transitions suggest it is impossible to reach every beneficiary with updates about TRICARE benefits and requirements. Inevitably, some beneficiaries only learn about a new requirement when they try to use their benefit and find out they no longer have coverage.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted almost every facet of life, making it even more difficult to catch the attention of beneficiaries with critical enrollment fee information.

TRICARE annual open enrollment messaging over the past two years has created a hurdle to effectively communicating the new enrollment fee by emphasizing beneficiaries who want to stay in their current plan don't have to take any action. This message is still being conveyed on the [official TRICARE website](#).

A 12-month grace period for the Select enrollment fee would be consistent with the 12-month grace period offered when the TRICARE annual enrollment requirement was established in 2018.

[RELATED: [Pentagon to Retirees: Plan Now for TRICARE Select Enrollment Fees in 2021](#)]

Why Isn't MOAA Fighting This Fee?

Congress passed this new Select enrollment fee as part of comprehensive [MHS Reform legislation](#) in the FY 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), but it is just now being implemented.

During the FY 2017 NDAA process, MOAA opposed and defeated several proposals for even higher beneficiary cost sharing, including enrollment fees up to \$900 and a proposed TRICARE for Life enrollment fee that would have charged Medicare-eligible retirees an annual enrollment fee equal to 2% of gross retirement pay (capped to \$632) for TFL participation.

Because the TRICARE Select enrollment fee has been in law for several years and represents a compromise relative to higher fee increases proposed by Congress and the administration budget during the FY 2017 NDAA process, MOAA is focused on ensuring there is an effective communications plan and adequate grace period so beneficiaries do not lose coverage for the 2021 calendar year if they fail to pay the enrollment fee.

President Extends Title 32 Orders for National Guard Through End of 2020

President Donald Trump on Aug. 3 announced the extension of Title 32 orders for National Guard members responding to the COVID-19 pandemic through the end of 2020, a move affecting about 25,000 Air and Army National Guard members still deployed in all 50 states, three territories, and the District of Columbia

Earlier that day, the National Governors Association called on the president to extend Title 32 orders beyond the Aug. 21 deadline. In a [press release](#) the association said, "we urge the President to continue to extend the use of Title 32 as part of COVID-19 recovery and reopening efforts, which is still critically necessary today, and likely until a vaccine is available." The National Governors Association represents all the leaders of 55 states, territories, and commonwealths.

The extension comes with a cost share for continued federal support in most of the nation. Texas and Florida will continue to receive full federal funding for Title 32 orders through year's end, but other states and territories receiving federal support will have to pay 25% of the bill.

[RELATED: [Your Benefits: Title 10 vs. Title 32 vs. the State](#)]

How states respond to the cost share ask remains to be seen. Continued uncertainty among members of the reserve component could have downstream effects for re-employment and other financial contracts servicemembers and their families signed. If a servicemember is extended until a vaccine is available and the economic situation remains stagnant with millions unemployed or even worsens, is their job at risk?

These potential concerns highlight the importance of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) protections. These rights and protections are necessary to support a national response on this scale by the reserve components.

An extended activation for servicemembers may lead to situations where they may need these protections. Unfortunately, many servicemembers may have already forfeited their rights due to forced arbitration clauses – contract language preventing them from taking any grievances to court, which could prevent them from realizing their full service-earned benefits.

MOAA has [long opposed](#) these clauses, and this year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) reignites hope that action may be taken to end them. A [bipartisan floor amendment](#) from Reps. David Cicilline (D-R.I.), Jared Golden (D-Maine), Guy Reschenthaler (R-Pa.), Susan Davis (D-Calif.), and Katie Porter (D-Calif.) passed and was added to the final House bill.

[RELATED: [MOAA's Summer Storm 2020](#)]

With the House and Senate version of the NDAA passed, the next step is for the chambers to work out differences between the versions in the NDAA conference.

Your voice will be critical in the coming weeks; stay tuned to [the latest MOAA advocacy news](#) and watch your inbox for *The MOAA Newsletter* to see how you can help this section and many other critical provisions reach the final NDAA.

[Fight Continues to Repeal '180-Day Rule' for New Retirees Seeking DoD Jobs](#)

With the House and Senate versions of the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) complete, the opportunity to repeal the rule that forces new retirees to wait 180 days before applying to DoD jobs is within reach.

MOAA and [The Military Coalition](#), a group of military and veteran service organizations representing a combined 5.5 million-plus membership, have worked toward this repeal. Removing this barrier to entry would not only help highly qualified retirees find employment, but also help DoD talent managers who are struggling to fill these positions.

[RELATED: [Help MOAA End the '180-Day Rule' for Retirees Seeking Most DoD Civilian Jobs](#)]

The NDAA versions contain different language addressing this "180-day rule":

The House version would repeal the rule for all General Schedule (GS) positions at the industrial or depot level. This version's strength is that it addresses personnel problems at depots; many members who retire with critical skills that match job openings at these locations can't wait the 180 days and seek employment in the private sector. Unfortunately, this version would keep the 180-day rule intact for all DoD GS positions not at industrial facilities.

The Senate version is not exclusive to industrial or depot-level jobs. However, it removes the rule only for GS-13 and below positions, and is relatively short-lived as a three-year pilot.

[TAKE ACTION: [Ask Your Lawmaker to End the 180-Day Rule as Part of the NDAA](#)]

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 13 August 2020:

[Service Chiefs to SecDef: Stop the Handover of Military Hospitals to Defense Health Agency](#)

The heads of the U.S. military branches are calling on the Defense Department to stop the transfer of all medical facilities to the Defense Health Agency, saying the novel coronavirus pandemic has shown that the plan to convey the services' hospitals and clinics to the agency is "not viable." In a memo sent to Defense Secretary Mark Esper on Aug. 5, the secretaries of the [Army](#), [Navy](#) and [Air Force](#), along with the branch chiefs of the Army, Navy, Air Force, [Marine Corps](#) and [Space Force](#), called for the return of all military hospitals and clinics already transferred to the DHA and suspension of any planned moves of personnel or resources.

They said that the COVID-19 outbreak has demonstrated that the reform, which was proposed by Congress in the fiscal 2017 National Defense Authorization Act, "introduces barriers, creates unnecessary complexity and increases inefficiency and cost."

"The proposed DHA end-state represents unsustainable growth with a disparate intermediate structure that hinders coordination of service medical response to contingencies such as a pandemic," they wrote in the memo, first obtained by a reporter for Synopsis, a Capitol Hill newsletter that focuses on military and veterans health care.

[RELATED: [MOAA's 2020 Summer Storm: Will DoD Health Care Stay Afloat?](#)]

The DoD launched major reforms of its health system in 2013 with the creation of the Defense Health Agency, an

organization initially established to improve the quality of health care available to military personnel and family members and reduce services such as administration, IT, logistics and training that existed in triplicate across the three service medical commands.

But the initiatives ballooned in 2016, with Congress passing legislation that placed the DHA in charge of military hospitals and clinics worldwide, as well as research and development, public health agencies, medical logistics and other operations run by the service medical commands.

On Oct. 1, 2019, all military hospitals and clinics in the continental United States were transferred to the DHA, with those overseas expected to move over by October 2021.

But in December, Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy asked for a temporary halt of the transfers of Army facilities and requested that the Army Public Health Center and Army Medical Research and Development Command remain permanently under the service's control.

Ryan said he had concerns with what he viewed as a "lack of performance and planning with respect to the transition" by the DHA and Defense Department Health Affairs, according to a memo he sent Deputy Defense Secretary David Norquist.

[RELATED: [MOAA Seeks 12-Month Grace Period for New TRICARE Select Enrollment Fee](#)]

[LATEST NEWS AND GUIDANCE: [MOAA.org/Coronavirus](#)]

"We look forward to working together to achieve successful reform of the military health system," they wrote.

Lisa Lawrence, a public affairs officer at the Pentagon, said the department plans to continue pursuing reforms as spelled out in the fiscal 2017 defense policy bill.

"The Department remains focused on ensuring the Services maintain a medically ready force and a ready medical force, as well as [ensuring] all eligible beneficiaries have continued access to quality health care," Lawrence said.

A spokeswoman for the National Military Family Association said that it "makes sense" the pandemic would lead to a reevaluation of the military health system reforms, adding that the organization hopes the DoD, DHA and military services will continue focusing on accountability, transparency and standardization across the system.

"Whatever the outcome, our priority is that service members and families have access to high-quality health care, wherever they happen to be stationed," said Eileen Huck, deputy director for health care at NMFA.

[What's the Status of Reserve Component Duty Status Reform?](#)

Since the spring, a number of news stories have looked at the pay and benefits of National Guard members who are either called up to respond to the pandemic or to protests around the nation. Many of these stories have highlighted that even though National Guard members are serving in critical capacities and in dangerous duty assignments, they are not receiving the same pay and benefits as active-duty servicemembers.

This has been an ongoing problem for over a decade. There are over 30 different varieties of duties that an active-duty or National Guard member may be assigned to, each with its own set of rules for determining whether the member's time counts toward Post-9/11 GI Bill eligibility, allows his or her family to use DoD health care, and more.

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

DoD has promised for several years that a duty status reform package was headed to Congress that would dramatically reduce the number of duty statuses to four and simplify benefits eligibility rules. Now, it seems that the efforts are finally moving forward, but there is no comprehensive view of what the end result will look like because DoD has not shared their plan with military service organizations.

What we do know is that in 2013, the Defense Reserve Forces Policy Board recommended that the primary feature of the new duty status system be “a day of duty is a day of duty.” The board recommended the elimination of varying statuses, with duty predominantly performed on active duty, and inactive duty reserved for “virtual”-type duty.

[RELATED: [These NDAA Provisions Address Needs Faced by the Reserve Component](#)]

During a March 2019 House Armed Services Subcommittee hearing, lawmakers expressed concerns about the fact that active duty would be separated into two categories, each with different benefits associated with them.

Expectations within the DoD and National Guard Bureau were that duty status reform would be included in the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), but no changes were introduced. Sources say the reform was not included due to Office of Management and Budget objections stemming from Department of Veterans Affairs benefits. None of these objections have been publicly shared, however.

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

Some Guard and Reserve members are very concerned about what the outcomes of duty status reform will be. For example, will there be changes to what types of duty count toward eligibility for the Post-9/11 GI Bill? Also, will all duty status count toward a reduced age retirement, or will certain types be excluded, as occurs now?

[RELATED: [Guard and Reserve Resources From MOAA](#)]

Duty status issues cause challenges not only for servicemembers. During a call with service organizations in May, Army North commander Lt. Gen. Laura Richardson was asked what is the one thing that needs to change for the next crisis. She said, “access to Reserve enablers was not what it should be.”

Part of the challenges of access stem from orders and duty status with the reserve component.

While the coronavirus has brought many of these issues to light, these challenges for servicemembers in receiving fair benefits are longstanding. For example, a servicemember attending the National Training Center (NTC) or Joint Readiness Training Center will be cut orders for 14 and then 17 days, despite continuous training and service.

During annual training of over 30-plus days, it is common for members of the Guard to see two or three different types of orders, breaking up their service and reducing the benefits they are owed. This practice eliminates the need to pay basic allowance for housing, separation pay, and other special pays for those training.

With duty status reform looking like it will be a potential issue for the FY 2022 NDAA, approaching it in a way that addresses these challenges is essential, given how rarely these issues are touched.

[RELATED: [President Extends Title 32 Orders for National Guard Through End of 2020](#)]

Of the 30-plus types of orders, only five have been added since 1980, with the last major changes nearly a decade ago. Once they are updated, Congress and DoD may be reluctant to update them for a long time after major changes.

[Ask Your Lawmakers to Support House NDAA Reforms to TRICARE ECHO Program](#)

House passage of the TRICARE ECHO Improvement Act as part of the chamber’s FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) marks the next step in a long effort to secure better benefits for the most severely impacted military special needs families.

Reps. Tom Cole (R-Okla.) and Elaine Luria (D-Va.) secured House passage of the bill, which is now Section 706 – *Expansion of Benefits Available Under TRICARE Extended Care Health Option Program* – in the House-engrossed

version of the NDAA. MOAA needs your support to ensure lawmakers maintain the language in the final NDAA as the legislation moves through the conference process.

[TAKE ACTION: [Urge Congress to Improve Support for Military Special Needs Families](#)]

MOAA has been fighting for improvements to the TRICARE Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) program since the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission highlighted ECHO shortcomings in its 2015 [report](#). Most recently, MOAA included ECHO improvement recommendations in [testimony](#) at the House Armed Services Personnel subcommittee [hearing](#) in February.

Join MOAA in this effort by [asking your lawmaker](#) to support H.R. 6395 Section 706 – *Expansion of Benefits Available Under TRICARE Extended Care Health Option Program* – as the NDAA process moves forward.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 20 August 2020:

[Arlington Eligibility Changes: Here’s How You Can Have Your Say](#)

The public comment period for changes to Arlington National Cemetery (ANC) eligibility will open in late summer, a senior DoD official informed MOAA – giving you a chance to make your voice heard on plans to dramatically reduce the number of people who qualify for in-ground burial.

The proposed changes, [which can be viewed in full here](#), are part of an effort to prolong the life of ANC.

MOAA and [The Military Coalition](#), a group of military and veterans advocacy organizations with a combined membership of more than 5.5 million, support DoD’s work to expand ANC. Plans for the southern expansion are well engineered and maximize available contiguous land. Without expansion, ANC would fill up in the next 25 years, according to a senior DoD official.

Unfortunately, if the eligibility changes are approved, many who had planned for an in-ground burial at ANC will have to change plans. ANC staff are eager to point out that VA cemeteries are available. However, full military honors with caisson are not available at most VA cemeteries.

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

ANC has the unique mission to render honors at burial and inurnment. These honors are coveted and serve to comfort the grieving and instill pride that our nation is thankful for their loved one’s service and sacrifice.

A Path Forward

The Military Coalition is concerned with proposed eligibility changes to ANC through the Federal Register rules process. The proposed changes to eligibility are service and mission discriminatory and do not account for all-important military honors for those who would be forced to use a different cemetery.

These concerns, and proposals to alleviate them, [were outlined in an Aug. 14 letter](#) to Defense Secretary Mark Esper and Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy. In the letter, the coalition recommends grandfathering eligibility to account for those who have already intended ANC to be their final resting place.

The letter also recommends non-contiguous expansion of ANC as the cemetery reaches capacity. This would facilitate burials and inurnments with military honors replicated from ANC, where such individuals had been eligible.

ANC is running out of room for interments. Non-contiguous federal land is available for expansion of the cemetery, and continuation of military honors as noted above will matter intensely to families who maintain the rare propensity to serve.

A Bitter Decision

Changes to eligibility for in-ground burial at ANC represent more than a math and geography problem. The proposal will force those who have already made end-of-life plans to make a bitter decision – in some cases, the family will have to decide on behalf of the deceased.

[MEMBER PUBLICATION: [Your Guide to Military Burials](#)]

Mission and cost avoidance, to the detriment of our military families, sends a signal to our military community that yet another benefit earned through service and sacrifice is being diminished. Grandfathering the currently eligible, alongside non-contiguous expansion, continues this service.

MOAA and The Military Coalition will continue to monitor the timing for the public comment period, which had been scheduled for Spring 2020 but was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. When the 60-day window opens, we will need your voice.

What These 2 Big News Stories Mean for MOAA's Health Care Advocacy

As MOAA works to preserve the military health care benefit via Summer Storm 2020, two new distractions may obscure our message.

First, the service secretaries and chiefs penned a [letter to Defense Secretary Mark Esper](#) asking him to halt all transfers of military treatment facilities to the Defense Health Agency (DHA).

Second, Esper found himself at the center of an Aug. 16 [report by Politico](#) on proposals within DoD that would cut \$2.2 billion from DoD's health care budget. It is not clear if any of this amount was the result of previous Pentagon reviews. Esper [tweeted](#) that the story was "inaccurate" and that "he would not allow any reductions that would harm access to quality medical care." Regardless, any such proposals may be moot following a [tweet](#) from President Donald Trump stating the proposal "has been firmly and totally rejected by me."

[TAKE ACTION: [Urge Your Elected Officials to Support Legislation to Stop Cuts to Military Medicine](#)]

Before outlining what these developments could mean moving forward, understand that we must not allow them to distract us or others from our core message: Planned changes to military medicine, including downsizing treatment facilities and removing thousands of medical billets, should be stopped until a more thorough, [less flawed](#), analysis of what these moves will do for patient care can be conducted. Incorporating Sections 715 and 716 of the House version of the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act into the final NDAA is a necessary step in this process.

DHA and the Services

On the surface, the service leaders' request would halt the restructuring of MTFs and any actions relative to Section 716 of the House NDAA. However, there is no indication Secretary Esper will budge from his current plan – follow the law, realign all MTFs under the DHA, and capitalize on any efficiencies by turning those funds over to support war-fighting operations and lethality.

As such, we must continue to make clear our position of getting Sections 715 and 716 in the final version of the NDAA. It remains imperative to ensure DoD maintains a capability to meet its legal obligation to all beneficiaries.

[RELATED: [Summer Storm 2020: A Key Goal Reached, But More Work Is Needed](#)]

Tweets, Reports, and Cuts

Notwithstanding the president's tweet, plans to significantly reduce health care funding and send more beneficiaries out into community networks already are underway and disregard MOAA's concerns of ensuring access to quality care – concerns validated by the GAO in [their report](#) submitted in May.

Per the report, DoD's assessment of the availability of civilian primary care providers was incomplete and a product of inaccurate information. MOAA members have already told us they have experienced a lack of access to care in the civilian networks in some areas. We must secure legislation to increase DoD reporting requirements and congressional oversight of the processes that govern this service-earned health care benefit.

So, how can you help?

Send [this updated letter](#) to your senators now. Help MOAA cut through the distractions and express a clear legislative path forward to protect these earned benefits in an ever-changing environment.

Summer Storm 2020: A Key Goal Reached, But More Work Is Needed

We're halfway through MOAA's Summer Storm 2020, and thanks to the work of our members throughout the nation, we've reached a major milestone in our fight to preserve military health care benefits.

I can report 100% contact with every senator, via nearly 1,900 letters to their offices, asking them to help get two critical House provisions (Sections 715 and 716) into the final version of the Fiscal 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). This still remains the overall objective; we must keep the pressure on.

The context of our efforts continues to evolve, and legislators may be distracted by [related news about proposed changes to the military health care system](#).

This doesn't change the path of our Storm. To help MOAA reach this legislative goal, you can:

Send [this updated letter](#) to your senators now. Make sure they understand how proposed changes to military medicine will affect those who have served full careers in uniform, and their families.

Share this article, and [other Summer Storm resources](#), with your family and friends – anyone can use our link to send a letter to their senators.

Engage on social media to spread the word even farther. Share the importance of this issue on social media using #MOAASummerStorm. Already on Twitter? [Just click here to make your voice heard](#).

We have all done so much to protect our benefits, but it will take our unified message to give us a fighting chance. Now that we've put this issue on the radar of all 100 senators, it's critical to continue the push – whether you're one of the 200,000 beneficiaries who may lose access to military treatment facilities under these reforms, one of the millions more whose care will suffer because of planned medical staff reductions, or simply fighting to ensure our servicemembers and their families get what they've earned.

At this halfway point, it's time to redouble our efforts. [Reach out to your lawmakers today](#).

Hope never abandons you; you abandon it.

MOAA WEBSITE: www.moaa.org
KANSAS COUNCIL WEBSITE: www.kansasmoaa.net
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Tentative 2020 Meeting Schedule:

Tuesday 15 September - Zoom
meeting

Tuesday 17 November



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