



Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter

This newsletter is published bimonthly by the Jayhawk Chapter of Kansas, Military Officers Association of America, as a service to all members. The Jayhawk emblem is used with the permission of the registered trademark owner, the University of Kansas.

January Program:

**LtCol Nicole Phelan has set up a Zoom meeting for
Tuesday, 19 January, at 7:00 p.m.**

<https://kansas.zoom.us/j/7858641214>

Meeting ID: 785 864 1214

One tap mobile

+16699006833,,7858641214# US (San Jose)

+12532158782,,7858641214# US (Tacoma)

☆☆☆☆☆ CHAPTER
awarded for

2002 / 2003 / 2005 / 2008 / 2009
2010 / 2011 / 2012 / 2013 / 2014
2016 / 2017 / 2018

☆☆☆☆ CHAPTER
awarded for

2004 / 2006 / 2007 / 2015 / 2019

President's Comments. . .

I hope that you're all healthy and enjoying the season! It's been a crazy year, but the vaccine is finally rolling out and hopefully we'll start to get back to normal later this year!

In the meantime, a couple of financial considerations:

Dues are due! Please mail in your dues checks to me at 5216 Brown Lane, Lawrence, KS 66049-5112. Make your checks out to "Jayhawk MOAA" for \$20.00.

Our MGEN Clay Comfort Scholarship fund is going well, and we awarded checks to three ROTC cadets/midshipmen this last Spring. We'd like to grow our fund, and this year we've all had to stay at home, so we haven't been spending money on MOAA dinners or travel or a lot of the normal expenses – why not donate some of that spare cash to our Comfort Fund? If you're so inclined, we'd be very grateful for your contribution - make your check out to "KU Endowment," and in the memo line write "Clay Comfort Fund" ROTC scholarship, and just mail them to me at the address I put above for dues payments. If you want the deduction for your 2020 taxes, please mail the contributions in soon.

We'll be having another Zoom meeting on Tuesday evening, January 19th – more on that to come in the newsletter. If you have comments please let me know. Is 7 PM (1900) a good time for everyone, or would you prefer a different time? I'd really like to see more of you join us – if you have problems connecting or questions or concerns, please let me know!

If you have any questions or concerns about anything, or need assistance of some sort, do not hesitate to let me know. We want to ensure that all of you are doing well this Winter!

Please have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Coop



Volume XXVI, Issue 1

1 January 2021

Staff:

President:

CAPT James S. Cooper, USN (Ret)

1st Vice-President:

Col Michael R. Kelly, USAF (Ret)

2nd Vice-President:

LTC Michael R. Devlin, USA (Ret)

Secretary:

COL John W. Halladay, USA (Ret)

Treasurer:

CAPT James S. Cooper, USN (Ret)

Past-President:

COL George W. Pogge, USA (Ret)

Directors:

MAJ Andrew D. Bauch, USAF

LT Gary Bjorge, USN (Fmr)

COL F. "Bernie" Kish, USA (Ret)

LtCol Nichole Phelan, USAF

Surviving Spouse Representative

Sandy Cooper

Newsletter Editors:

COL John & Shirley Halladay

Web Master:

COL George W. Pogge, USA (Ret)

Inside this issue:

January Program	1
President's Message	1
Jayhawk Chapter News	2
Army ROTC	3
Navy ROTC	3
Air Force ROTC	4
MOAA Legislative Updates	5
Dues Payment Form	9
MOAA calendar & websites	10

*** Reservations should be sent
to Jim Cooper by**



JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS



DUES FOR 2021

Dues for 2021 are due 01 January 2021 in the amount of \$20.

Please send your check to Jim Cooper, 5216 Brown Lane, Lawrence, KS 66049-5112

CONDOLENCES

Colonel James F. McMurray, USAF (ret.) died 12/4/2020. He was 78. Born in Bloomfield, New Jersey. He graduated from St. Michael's College, Winooski, VT in 1964, where he was commissioned in the United States Air Force through the school ROTC Program. He immediately entered active duty serving as an intelligence officer with tours in Japan and Korea as well as serving with Air Force forward air controllers in Vietnam. He met his wife Vicki Darling while stationed at Offutt AFB, Omaha NE and in 1976 they moved to Lincoln, where he became a full time member of the Nebraska Air National Guard and they raised their daughter. McMurray graduated from the USAF Air War College in 1987 and during his 30 year Air Force career was awarded three Meritorious Service Medals and the USAF Legion of Merit.

He was a member of the Air Force Association (AFA), Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), American Legion, Veterans of foreign Wars (VFW) and Vietnam Veterans of America. Following his USAF retirement, Col. McMurray worked for several years at Girls and Boys Town in Omaha, as the training coordinator in leadership and management. Moving to Lawrence in 2003, he and his wife became active members of St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church and volunteers at Lawrence Interdenominational nutrition kitchen (LINK). McMurray volunteered a large amount of his time with AARP Tax-Aide service at Lawrence Senior Center and at Lawrence Habitat for Humanity, receiving their Spirit of Service award in 2009 and The United Way's Outstanding Volunteer award in 2011.

McMurray enjoyed time in nature and loved to travel, especially to visit family and friends. He was well known for his generosity, opening his door to anyone in need. This extended to animals as well and he was known by all the neighborhood dogs as the distributor of treats. He is survived by his wife Vicki, daughter Andrea, sister Mary O'Halloran, and brother Dennis McMurray, many nieces, nephews, and loved ones. He will be interred at Leavenworth National Cemetery. Memorial donations can be made to LINK, Just Food, St. John's Catholic Church, or Habitat for Humanity.

PERSONAL NEWS

From Herschel Stroud: Topeka is still standing! Thanks to Jim Cooper and all the folks that make our Jayhawk Chapter a success. Jacque and I give a big Huz-zah and a salute to all for a joyous, bounteous, and healthy future. Miss seeing you in person.

From Alan VanLoenen: All I have is the American Legion Post has bingo on Wednesday and Saturday evening, and coffee time for vets on Tuesday and Thursday from 9AM to 12PM.

From Mike Kelly: I have been keeping up with the charity work of the Lawrence Veterans Day Parade Association. The Board of the Parade Association approved a grant to the Heartland Community Health Clinic for dental care for veterans living in Douglas County. The former Douglas County Dental Clinic has now merged with Heartland to continue their work providing dental care to community members without dental insurance. The Parade Association Board will consider other grant requests and plan for the 2021 parade in the months ahead.

I was published in the Journal World Opinion Page on Veterans Day with a Thank You message to veterans. I have been busy as landlord for my parents' home and repairing water leaks, hiring drywall repair craftsmen, and fixing a temperamental ice maker. I hope the roll out of the vaccine program fighting COVID-19 is successful and we can resume some measure of normalcy again.

**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.**



Army News

LTC John D. Finch, USA

Happy Holidays from the Jayhawk Battalion:

Since our last missive, the cadets and cadre of the Jayhawk Battalion have been busy closing out the strange year of 2020. I think very few folks predicted that we'd be able to conduct the entire semester in person, but because of remarkable efforts by KU and the other schools in the Jayhawk Battalion and because of a group of resilient, hard-working cadets able and willing to adapt to the challenges presented by COVID, we were able to thrive through the course of the semester.

In October, the Jayhawk Battalion participated in the Virtual Army Ten Miler, the Veteran's Day Virtual 5K, and the Commander's Cup (detailed here: <https://armyrotc.ku.edu/cadets>) which was won by the Air Force, but only barely, and only by including video games in the competition. We also had two cadets win National Guard Minuteman Scholarships (Cadet Sydney Powell and Cadet Landon Adamo).

November was just as action packed with a Cadet Change of Command (as well as a change in Cadet Staff), Army component and branch selection for our seniors, and the identification of the distinguished military graduates. Of our 21 seniors, a total of 10 will go active duty, 10 will go into the National Guard, and one will go into the US Army Reserves. Of the 10 going active duty, we have three who branched Infantry, two Armor, one Military Police, one Military Intelligence, one Adjutant, one Ordnance, and one Army Nurse. Notably, across the components and branches, the Jayhawk Battalion had six distinguished military graduates (DMGs) – meaning these cadets graduated in the top 20% of all cadets across the country based on scholastic, athletic, and military grades. This is the highest number of distinguished military

graduates of any program in Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, or Missouri and speaks to the hard work of the cadets of the Jayhawk Battalion.

On the last day of regular classes (and on one of the coldest days of the year to date), the remarkable cadets designed and ran a Northern Warfare Challenge qualifying event. The Jayhawks will field two five-person teams to compete in La Crosse, Wisconsin on 20 February in an event designed to test endurance and military skills in a cold weather environment. To determine the makeup of the teams, the seniors designed a series of physical challenges interspersed between three laps of campus (at 2.5 miles per lap). The cadets, despite the urging by this author, insisted on starting the event at 0430 to ensure verisimilitude to the event in Wisconsin.

Last, but certainly not least, the Jayhawks promoted one of our instructors – SSG Nichole Richter – to Sergeant First Class (E-7). The promotion to SFC is as consequential a promotion as any in the military as the E7s of the Army world are the primary trainers to ensure we are fit to fight. Regarding that last bit (being fit to fight), we also started our "Lift to the Moon" and "Jayhawks Across America" competitions, in which any Jayhawk Battalion Alumnus can participate. Details are on our Facebook page (here: University of Kansas Army ROTC - Home | Facebook).

Happy Holidays and Rock Chalk!

LTC John D. Finch
Professor of Military Science



Navy News

CAPT Trenton Lennard, USN

Greetings from the Jayhawk Battalion!

The staff and midshipmen concluded an outstanding fall semester with many accomplishments in spite of the challenges faced in this unprecedented time. Their perseverance and dedication were admirable as we finished the semester virtually following the Thanksgiving break.

In late October, the midshipmen participated in the KU ROTC Commander's Cup where their athletic abilities were put to the test as they competed against the Air Force and Army ROTC units. Although our Naval Battalion did not win the overall competition, it was a great weeklong event that boosted unit morale and



engaged all services in a sense of fellowship and pride. Some of the events included, running, a swim relay, shooting, and e-gaming, all of which were in a distanced and supervised setting to ensure the safety for all midshipmen and cadets.

The midshipmen organized the Veteran’s Day vigil in early November to honor those who have served in the Armed Forces from KU. This was yet another display of our cohesion with the Air Force and Army ROTC units as each unit posted a midshipman or cadet at every war memorial on KU’s campus to stand watch. The event was highly professional as the uniformed students stood at attention at these memorials for a 24-hour period. Yet another demonstration of their pride in the military service!

In addition to the Veteran’s Day vigil, the students organized a fantastic virtual 5K run. The students ran the event at the time and place of their choosing. This again kept our traditions alive in spite of an unusual year and also contributed to the cohesion of the unit. Great effort out there to all the participants!

As we concluded Fall 2020, the students were assigned billets for the Spring 2021 semester. This culminated in the Battalion Change of Command ceremony where all the billets were revealed and a formal turnover of the coveted Battalion Commanding Officer (BCO) position occurred. Congratulations to MIDN 1/C Sarah Ulmer for being selected as our new

BCO for Spring 2021! MIDN 1/C Jacob Allen did an outstanding job as the Fall 2020 BCO and we thank him for his outstanding leadership!

Over the holidays the Battalion is engaged in a six week physical challenge. Along with pushups, planks, professional readings and a volunteer activity, they are attempting to run a combine 3,000 miles. I will let you know how they do. The midshipmen have worked hard this past semester and overcame difficulties that nobody could have imagined. Their ability to balance academics and the workload of Naval ROTC is an impressive accomplishment but doing so in the midst of a pandemic is all the more incredible. I am extremely proud of their achievements and I am confident in my staff’s abilities to mentor and train our future Naval and Marine Corps Officers. We have the best and brightest heading into the Fleet!



Midshipmen in formation for Change of Command Ceremony

Rock Chalk and Fly Navy!

CAPT Trenton Lennard
Commanding Officer, KU NROTC



Air Force News
LtCol Nichole Phelan, USAF

“Oh what a year”....from Detachment 280, the Flying Jayhawks!

Oh what a year....I’m not even sure where to begin except to say Goodbye 2020 and HELLO 2021! We all survived the fall semester and we even had a few amazing accomplishments along the way. Cadet Vishva Shah and Ryan Ward from the University of Kansas were recipients of a Type-II Air Force ROTC scholarship for sophomore cadets. This competitive scholarship covers \$18,000 in tuition per year and includes books and stipend payments. Cadet Eric Cotter was selected as the Cadet Wing Commander for the Spring 2021 semester. He, along with his Cadet Vice Wing Commander, Cadet Cooper, will plan and run all training and activities for the Flying Jayhawk Cadet Wing during the next 15 weeks.

Despite COVID restrictions, the end of the semester was packed with endless opportunities for officer development. November most notably in the past has been our busiest month of the semester. However, this year, many of our usually activities looked a lot different. The beginning of November kicked off just after the Air Force solidified its first win EVER in the joint commander’s cup. Veterans Day events were pared down as well. The cadets still held a 24-hr vigil at the military monuments on campus, and ran in KU’s first

virtual Veterans Day 5K. And instead of our usual combined field leadership exercise with Detachment 270 at K-State, our cadets planned, instructed and ran our first ever computer simulated warfighting exercise. Using the same software simulation as is used on active duty, our cadets not only made themselves experts in Air and Space force packaging, they were able to instruct all the K-State cadets on the force packaging concepts and war-gaming execution. Observing the computer interaction taking place brought me right back to many of the exercises I’ve participated in at the Air Operations Center. One busy month led to another, with the culmination of their 15 week semester ending with a cadet wing change of command and award ceremony held in December the week before finals.

We also had a very last minute and very small virtual commissioning ceremony for 2LT Chase Penka. She was our first graduated from Washburn University since I’ve been here. She will be a force support officer.

Coming Up:

Cadets are on extended winter break until the Spring Semester starts the first week in February. Once again, the

Air Force is late to announce the commissioning cadets' Air Force Specialty Code. Each one of our non-rated cadets is anxiously awaiting that announcement, which should happen right after the first of the year. The Air Force has just recently announced we are at our highest end strength numbers since post-9/11. Because of the overage in officers, our 2LTs that commissioned last spring and have yet to go on active duty have been given the opportunity to do an inter-service transfer to the Department of the Navy, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard or even obtain a civil service job and serve out their active duty service commitment where they are needed. This offer is expected to flow down to our senior cadets before they commission in this May. This also

means that we will probably see a decrease in the amount of AFROTC cadets needed and potential decrease in our Detachment size in the up-coming years. We wish each of you and your families a very safe and healthy Happy Holiday season and thank you so much for your great support of our program.

Rock, Chalk!

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, 25 November 2020:

TRICARE Costs: What You Need to Know for 2021

TRICARE recently released comparison charts to help beneficiaries see what rates are rising in 2021, and the biggest change should come as no surprise to regular MOAA.org visitors: The addition of [TRICARE Select fees for Group A members](#).

MOAA has worked to inform its members of this change for months, as [have Defense Health Agency \(DHA\) officials](#). We've also fought successfully to [extend the reinstatement period](#) for beneficiaries, allowing them 180 days to seek reinstatement and secure retroactive coverage if they miss the Jan. 1, 2021, deadline.

You can learn more about the TRICARE Select fees at the links above, and you can access the official TRICARE cost-comparison documents, in PDF format, at the links below:

[RELATED: [MOAA's TRICARE GUIDE](#)]

Catastrophic Cap Updates

Aside from the TRICARE Select fees, the largest year-over-year difference on either chart comes from the TRICARE Select Group A catastrophic cap, which jumps to \$3,500 in 2021, up from \$3,000 in 2020. The new annual enrollment fee (\$150 for individuals, \$300 for families) will apply to the cap.

The catastrophic cap for TRICARE Prime Group A members remains \$3,000 for 2021. Group B beneficiaries in both TRICARE Prime and Select will have a \$3,703 cap in 2021, up from \$3,655 in 2020. Under both plans, Group A includes those whose sponsor entered service before Jan. 1, 2018; other beneficiaries fall into Group B.

For active duty family members, the TRICARE Prime and Select Group A cap remains \$1,000, while the Group B cap increases to \$1,058 in 2021 under both plans, up from \$1,044.

[TAKE ACTION: [Urge Your Lawmakers to Stop Cuts to Military Medicine](#)]

What Else Is Changing?

Review the charts above to check out your specific plans, but services such as medical care visits, inpatient admission, and specialty care services either went unchanged or rose in small increments, usually no more than a dollar. Primary care costs remained unchanged from 2020 for TRICARE Select beneficiaries, for example, while TRICARE Prime users will pay \$21 for such visits in 2021, up from \$20.

The largest of these upticks comes with emergency room visits – TRICARE Select Group A beneficiaries must pay

\$125 for an in-network visit in 2021, up from \$118 in 2020. The out-of-network cost remains at 25%.

MOAA has provided details on other TRICARE programs in previous weeks, including a review of [TRICARE Young Adult cost changes](#) and [good news for TRICARE pharmacy users](#). Get the full 2021 Cost and Fees Sheet [at this link](#).

More Resources

If you're trying to figure out what these changes mean for your future coverage options, or if you have other questions on TRICARE or your medical benefits, check out these links to start your research:

[MOAA's TRICARE Guide](#) includes details on all types of coverage, videos answering frequently asked questions, and step-by-step guidance for beneficiaries at critical life stages – those nearing retirement from service and those nearing age 65.

[MOAA's Health Care Resources page](#) offers additional TRICARE materials, links to MOAA Insurance offerings, and the latest military and veteran health care news.

[Health.mil](#) and [TRICARE.mil](#) have an array of pages with official benefit guidance, including a details on the ongoing [TRICARE Open Season](#) and a [Plan Finder](#) to help beneficiaries determine which plan (or plans) they can access.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 03 December 2020:

MOAA Continues Fight to Preserve Arlington Burial Eligibility for Retirees

The public comment period for [proposed eligibility changes to Arlington National Cemetery](#) may be closed, but the work of MOAA and The Military Coalition to shape the final regulation is far from over.

MOAA members made significant contributions to the 1,965 comments on the proposed rule change at the Federal Register before the Nov. 16 deadline. [These comments highlighted many of the same concerns](#) MOAA and The Military Coalition, a group of military and veterans service organizations representing a combined 5.5 million-plus membership, have communicated to DoD leadership, the Arlington National Cemetery Advisory Council, and lawmakers. MOAA and the coalition will continue these efforts until we can secure grandfathering for those currently eligible and a concerted effort by the Army and DoD to secure noncontiguous expansion of the cemetery.

[TAKE ACTION: [Ask Your Lawmakers to Preserve Eligibility for 20-Year Retirees](#)]

In the COVID-19 environment, it is important to call, in addition to writing, your lawmaker. Congressional staff

members have already indicated It is not too early to [reach out to your elected officials](#) and voice your concerns; you can do so via MOAA's toll-free Capitol Switchboard: 1-866-272-6622.

Here Are MOAA's Legislative Priorities for the 117th Congress

The 116th Congress is scheduled to end its session Dec. 18, though House and Senate leaders can extend it if necessary to pass year-end legislation. There is still plenty of work to be done during this time, to include averting a potential government shutdown and passing critical defense legislation.

The Latest on the SBP-DIC Offset Elimination

The elimination of the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) offset from the Survivor Benefit Program (SBP) payments is still a bit confusing for many. Let's try to clear the air.

SBP is a survivor annuity administered by DoD. DIC is a survivor annuity administered by the VA. Receiving both payments simultaneously has been considered double dipping (two government payments for the same event), and so the DIC amount has been subtracted from the SBP to prevent double dipping.

The FY 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) included MOAA-supported language that eliminated this offset, a change that will be phased in through 2023. The bill marked the [successful conclusion of a long advocacy process](#), but MOAA remains engaged to assist members through its implementation.

The Details

This offset elimination only affects survivors who are eligible to receive both SBP and DIC payments. The offset is where the DIC amount is subtracted from the SBP amount. The DIC has and will continue to be paid in full; it's the SBP amount that's been reduced by the amount of DIC paid.

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

For some survivors, the DIC amount subtracted from your SBP left you with no SBP payment, as the DIC amount was greater than your SBP amount. You still have SBP eligibility, you just don't receive your SBP.

Survivors who received an SBP premium refund in the past because you were denied your full SBP amount due to the offset do not have to pay back the refund.

Whether you received no SBP or a partial SBP amount due to the offset, all with the offset received the Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA) payment. SSIA is a payment to minimize the damage done to your SBP amount by the DIC offset.

[RELATED: [More Surviving Spouse Resources](#)]

Survivors with both SBP and DIC will receive a letter from the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS, the administrator of SBP) in December explaining how the first phase of the offset elimination (2021) will affect you. The letter will provide you with your payment amounts so you can see the benefit of the first offset elimination actions starting with your Feb. 1, 2021, payment. The offset elimination phase-out continues in 2022, and the offset ends in 2023.

The bottom line: The DIC offset amount in your SBP will decrease, thereby allowing you to collect more of your SBP amount. Plus, you will continue to receive SSIA.

[FROM MOAA'S PRESIDENT: [Making Repeal a Reality](#)]

The SSIA payment will continue until 2023, when it will be discontinued because all SBP and DIC survivors will be receiving their SBP and DIC amounts in full.

Read more about the process [on the DFAS website](#).

Surviving Spouses and MOAA

Did you know a surviving spouse of an officer who was not a MOAA member can join in her or his own right? Help MOAA maintain the achievements made to date and fight other negative financial impacts, such as the lower computation for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation as compared with other federal survivor benefits. Join now to make sure your survivor benefits are protected.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 10 December 2020:

[Here's What's in the Finalized Defense Bill](#)

Pay Raises

Congress approved a 3% military pay raise, effective Jan. 1, 2021. The raise matches the administration's request and nearly matches the FY 2020 raise of 3.1%, which was the largest pay increase for servicemembers in 10 years. A 3% increase equates to an annual raise of nearly \$2,400 for an O-3 with 10 years of service.

In addition to a general pay increase, Congress increased Hazardous Duty Incentive Pay from \$250 to \$275 month for duty in a foreign area designated as an imminent danger area or high-risk duties.

[RELATED AT MILITARY.COM: [Earl Plumlee, Alwyn Cashe Among 4 Soldiers Highlighted for Medal of Honor in Defense Bill](#)]

Medical Billet Cuts and MTF Restructuring

MOAA's extensive efforts to halt military medical downsizing, including our [Virtual Storming the Hill](#) and [Summer Storm](#), paid off with two provisions addressing these concerns.

One provision (Section 717) addresses medical billet cuts by prohibiting DoD and the services from reducing medical end strength authorizations for 180 days following enactment of the bill. It also requires DoD to conduct a review of medical manpower requirements that specifically considers the homeland defense mission and DoD's role in a pandemic influenza response, in addition to all other national defense strategy scenarios.

The other provision (Section 718) increases requirements for implementation plans for each MTF slated for restructure or realignment. It also requires DoD to certify to the congressional defense committees that a covered beneficiary affected by restructure or realignment of a MTF would have access to health care services through the purchased care component of the TRICARE program.

This provision prohibits MTF restructuring from moving forward for 180 days following the date Congress receives the implementation plans and notice of certification or the date of enactment of the FY 2021 NDAA, whichever comes later.

TRICARE

Congress included a provision to expand benefits available under the [TRICARE Extended Care Health Option](#) (ECHO) program, which covers services for a subset of military special needs families with individuals who are diagnosed with intellectual disabilities, a serious physical disability, or an extraordinary physical or psychological condition. The provision includes an increase in respite hours from 16 to 32 hours per month, and also requires a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on caregiving assistance available under other programs, including Medicaid home- and community-based services.

The bill includes no new TRICARE fees or copay increases. However, a new [TRICARE Select enrollment fee](#) for Group A retirees will go into effect Jan. 1, 2021 – a change that became law with the FY 2017 NDAA.

[RELATED: [TRICARE Costs: What You Need to Know for 2021](#)]

Guard and Reserve

The past year was emblematic of the contributions made by members of the National Guard and Reserve to our nation, as they responded to the pandemic, natural disasters, and civil unrest. A House provision to [expand hazardous duty incentive pay parity](#) for the Guard and Reserve was adopted in the final bill. Reserve component personnel who maintain a proficiency will receive monthly pay like their active-duty counterparts receive when fulfilling required proficiencies like parachute duty, aircrew duty, and many others.

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

DoD Civilian Jobs and the '180-Day Rule'

The bill would allow for direct hire of certain retired military members (GS-13 and below) in logistics positions that are facing manpower shortages, letting these qualified candidates bypass a rule requiring a 180-day waiting period. And while a MOAA-supported Senate provision that would've expanded direct hire authority for positions that perform support functions for depot-level maintenance and repair did not make the final bill, the conferees noted DoD already possesses extensive direct hire authority for a variety of civilian personnel positions, to include any job involved with DoD maintenance activities and major range and test facilities bases.

[RELATED AT MILITARY.COM: [Space Force Won't Be Forced to Use Navy Ranks, Lawmakers Decide](#)]

Spouse and Family Issues

Military families can expect to see improvements to the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) to ensure continuity of services and standardization across the services. Continuity of education for families with special needs will get a closer look as well by the GAO. MOAA was one of five military family advocates to [testify on Capitol Hill](#) to secure improvements carried forward in this legislation.

Cheryl Lankford Memorial Expansion Assistance

The bill improves assistance for Gold Star families by increasing support offered by Casualty Assistance Officers (CAO). The updates ensure that if a Gold Star spouse dies, their dependents will receive the support of a CAO to advocate for the family, answer questions, log complaints, and assist with the benefits process.

Outgoing Legislator's Bill Would Spur Discussions on VA Care Criteria

A bill put forward by Rep. Phil Roe (R-Tenn.) on the eve of his retirement would create a bipartisan committee to discuss potential changes to VA eligibility and offer recommendations to improve and simplify criteria.

Roe – a doctor who spent two years in the Army Medical Corps and a legislator who spent his entire 12-year tenure on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee – was honored during [a Dec. 2 committee hearing](#), where members paid tribute to their former committee chair and current ranking member.

MOAA acknowledged appreciation for Roe's faithful years of service to his country and his work to provide for his fellow veterans in a statement for the record.

[RELATED: [Rep. Phil Roe Receives MOAA's 2019 Arthur T. Marix Congressional Leadership Award](#)]

Roe responded to fellow members' heartfelt thanks and best wishes, saying his service in Congress has been an honor of a lifetime.

"Almost always on my travels I hear from veterans that the VA is better now, a result of our bipartisan efforts," he said. "I will forever be proud of the work we've done and I know my fellow veterans are in good hands as I cheer the committee from afar while you continue the hard work of

ensuring our grateful nation fulfills its solemn obligation to the brave men and women who secured our freedoms."

Roe's bill, the [Modernizing Veterans' Healthcare Eligibility Act](#), creates a commission to address VA health care eligibility, a system he believes has been relatively unchanged since the Veterans Health Care Eligibility Reform Act of 1996.

MOAA did not take a position on the legislation, but instead urged Congress to proceed carefully and deliberately by addressing a number of outstanding questions and gaps in data, as well as considering the unknown impact of COVID-19 on the health (physical, psychological, and financial) of veterans during this difficult time. Other veterans service organizations (VSO) stated similar concerns during the hearing.

More Work to Be Done

The VA and most VSO witnesses believe VA's current framework for determining eligibility has served veterans well, even though it is complex. However, all were open to ongoing assessments for system improvements.

"Respectfully, VA does not support an independent commission to review eligibility," said Tammy Czarnecki, deputy to the VA undersecretary for health operations.

MOAA-Backed NOAA Expansion Heads to President's Desk

A MOAA-supported bill that would expand and strengthen the NOAA Commissioned Corps passed the House on Dec. 4 and will head to the president's desk.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps Amendments Act of 2020, [S. 2981](#), passed the Senate on Nov. 16. It would provide an obligated service requirement to the NOAA Corps, improving the service's ability to retain skilled officers, as well as establishing an education loan repayment program and the creation of an aviation accession training program.

[MOAA expressed support](#) for a House version of the legislation in 2019.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 17 December 2020:

[Rollout Report: The COVID-19 Vaccine and DoD, VA, Medicare, and More](#)

In the days since the Food and Drug Administration provided the first emergency use authorization for a COVID-19 vaccine in the U.S., thousands of doses have been shipped nationwide ... and an uncounted number of medical facilities, care centers, and government agencies have been asked to clear up questions on how the rollout will work.

As part of MOAA's ongoing effort to provide health care information to its members, you'll find some of the details on the early stages of this process below. Don't be surprised if your specific question doesn't yet have a solid answer – many of the pieces remain in flux, and many of the guidelines remain short on detail in the early going. MOAA will provide updates as new information becomes available.

DoD Sites:

DoD [released plans Dec. 9](#) outlining the basics of the department's response. These include the locations where the initial inventory of vaccine doses – just under 44,000 – will be distributed:

California: Coast Guard Base Alameda, Naval Medical Center San Diego (including Camp Pendleton).

Florida: Naval Branch Health Clinic Jacksonville, Naval Hospital Pensacola (including Keesler Air Force Base, will administer vaccines to residents at the Armed Forces Retirement Home in Gulfport, Miss.)

Hawaii: Tripler Army Medical Center

Indiana: National Guard (Franklin)

Maryland: Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (will administer vaccines to the Armed Forces Retirement Home in Washington, D.C.)
New York: National Guard Medical Command (Watervliet)
North Carolina: Womack AMC
Texas: Brooke AMC, Darnall AMC
Virginia: Naval Medical Center Portsmouth (including Coast Guard Base Portsmouth)
Washington: Madigan AMC
International: Camp Humphreys, South Korea (Allgood Army Community Hospital); Kadena Air Base, Japan (Kadena Medical Facility); Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Germany.

Priority: DoD has divided recipients into phases.

Phase 1A includes health care providers and support personnel at military treatment facilities and other care locations. This may include non-clinical staff, contractors, and others who may be in close contact with COVID-19 patients.

Phase 1B includes personnel supporting “critical national capabilities,” to include those preparing for overseas deployment. The vaccine will not be mandatory while under emergency use authorization, DoD officials stated, though that could change once regular authorization is granted.

Phase 1B and Phase 2 both include high-risk beneficiaries.

Phases 2 and 3 include other beneficiaries.

Who gets it: “I think in that first batch you'll see the retirement homes, the medical community and a very -- you know, a handful -- couple dozens of senior leaders for leadership and messaging purposes,” Assistant Secretary Of Defense For Health Affairs Thomas McCaffery at a Dec. 9 briefing.

[FROM CDC.GOV: [What to Expect After Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine](#)]

Health.mil released its first full post on the vaccine, including details on priority and other concerns, [on Dec. 15](#).

VA Sites: The VA announced the 37 sites that will distribute the department's initial vaccine allotment. [Here's the full list](#). A VA spokeswoman [told Stars and Stripes](#) the department received 73,000 doses of the vaccine.

On Dec. 21, the VA announced an additional 128 sites offering vaccinations, including 113 that would offer the new Moderna vaccine, which can be stored at warmer temperatures. [See the full list here](#).

Priority: Health-care workers and veterans at the VA's long-term care facilities will have early access to the vaccine. After those populations, VA will begin vaccinating beneficiaries “based on factors such as age, existing health problems and other considerations that increase the risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19,” per [a Dec. 10 news release](#).

More details came a few days later in the form of an [88-page vaccine rollout plan](#), issued Dec. 14. Per that report, “Populations of focus for initial COVID-19 vaccination may include” the following:

- “Critical workforce,” to include health care providers and those “maintaining essential functions of society”
- Staff and residents of long-term care and assisting living centers
- Patients ages 65 and older
- Patients with conditions making them more susceptible to COVID-19

A day after the report's release, VA went into more detail [via a blog post](#): “Under this phased plan, VA will begin vaccinating health care personnel – as they are essential in continuing to care for patients throughout the pandemic. At the same time, VA will vaccinate Veteran inpatients in Community Living Centers and Spinal Cord Injury and Disorder Centers.”

Veterans “receiving care from VA at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19” will be offered the vaccine after health care personnel, per the post.

Coverage: Plans call for free vaccines for all enrolled veterans who want one, once supplies are available. Supply-chain issues may also delay vaccines for [rural veterans and VA care providers](#).

FAQs: VA has compiled [a series of answers to frequently asked questions](#) about the vaccine and its administration.

Cost and More

Per multiple reports and federal guidance, the vaccine itself will be free to all Americans, regardless of insurance. Providers may charge for giving the shot, but all insurance plans are expected to cover that portion of the bill, with some federal money available to cover that cost for uninsured individuals.

Per the [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services website](#), “Providers that participate in the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] COVID-19 Vaccination Program contractually agree to administer a COVID-19 vaccine regardless of an individual's ability to pay and regardless of their coverage status, and also may not seek any reimbursement, including through balance billing, from a vaccine recipient.”

(TRICARE For Life users, take note: Medicare Part B will cover vaccines without coinsurance or a deductible thanks to [an Oct. 28 rule change](#).)

Those seeking care outside DoD and VA channels will be part of a distribution/priority system designated on a state-by-state basis. For more information about your state, visit the links on the last pages of [this National Governors Association report](#).

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 24 December 2020:

[President Vetoes FY 2021 NDAA](#)

President Donald Trump on Dec. 23 vetoed the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which passed the House 335-78 and the Senate 84-13 before reaching his desk.

The bill includes several MOAA-backed provisions, which are outlined in detail [at this link](#). The 4,517-page conference report on the bill can be viewed [at this link \(PDF\)](#).

The president outlines his reasons for the veto [in this statement](#).

Plans for a veto-override vote in both chambers reportedly include sessions early next week.

Having reviewed the NDAA in its entirety, MOAA believes it strongly supports servicemembers and their families and will provide for an organized and well-equipped force. It is within President Trump's authority to veto this bill and it's within Congressional authority to override it.

You can contact your legislators prior to the override attempt to express your view. Use MOAA's toll-free Capitol Switchboard: 1-866-272-6622. Tell the operator you would like to leave a message for your member of Congress.

An NDAA has become law every year since 1961. The FY 2021 version authorizes more than \$740 billion in defense spending.



JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA



A Zoom membership meeting will be held **Tuesday, 19 January 2021**

<https://kansas.zoom.us/j/7858641214>

Meeting ID: 785 864 1214

One tap mobile

+16699006833,,7858641214# US (San Jose)

+12532158782,,7858641214# US (Tacoma)

Annual Chapter Dues (\$20.00) are due and payable 01/01/21 \$ _____

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

TOTAL: \$ _____

Name _____ Telephone _____

TEAR OFF AND RETURN THIS FORM WITH A CHECK PAYABLE TO:

JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA

CAPT Jim Cooper, 5216 Brown Lane, Lawrence, KS 66049-5112

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

Tentative 2021 Meeting Schedule:

Tuesday, 19 January

Tuesday, 16 March

Tuesday, 18 May

Tuesday, 20 July

Tuesday, 21 September

Tuesday, 16 November

Happy New Year

Let us all pray to God for a better year in 2021



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

NEVER STOP SERVING!

IN GOD WE TRUST