



Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter

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March Program:

**LtCol Nicole Phelan has set up a Zoom meeting for
Tuesday, 16 March, at 7:00 p.m.**

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

Meeting ID: 785 864 1214

One tap mobile

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President's Comments . . .

All:

The weather has been atrocious, but our "Great Freeze of 2021" is over. Hopefully you all endured without any major damage such as frozen/burst pipes, lengthy power loss, etc. Winter isn't over, but we hopefully have seen the worst of it. I'm so glad that we are already at March – St Patty's Day means Spring is nearly here!

For January we reviewed some great information about Volcanoes, provided by our own 1st VP Mike Kelly. He had some great updates on the status of Kilauea in Hawaii and volcanoes elsewhere. Fortunately none of them are very close to Lawrence. Our scheduled speaker had a delay in getting approval for her presentation, so we had to delay it by a month.

Our meeting in March will feature Laura Blanchard of Blanchard AE Group who will present about her firm's subcontract design work for U.S. Navy training simulators. Please tune in to see how a local Lawrence firm is contributing to our national security effort. The meeting will start at 1900 (7 PM) and run about an hour, perhaps a bit more.

I did receive my first Moderna vaccine at the Topeka VA Hospital. VA is moving fast through all eligible veterans – if you mislaid my email about how to get the vaccine through the VA, let me know (contact info below) and I'll resend it to you – and remember, this is for veterans only – VA is NOT providing vaccine to dependents. The county has been moving pretty quickly to vaccinate those 65 and over as well – Sandy received her first Pfizer injection the third week of February. If you've had problems getting access to Covid 19 vaccine, let me know and we'll see what we can do to help.

And again, my offer stands - in case any of you are in need of any kind of assistance regarding anything please contact myself or one of the other members of the board of directors. And, as always, if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please email or call me: (785) 979-7279 or jscooper36@hotmail.com

Stay smart, stay safe, wash your hands, and wear your face masks when out among other folks.



Coop

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1 March 2021

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Inside this issue:

March Program	1
President's Message	1
Jayhawk Chapter News	2
Army ROTC	3
Navy ROTC	4
Air Force ROTC	4
MOAA Legislative Updates	5
Dues Payment Form	11
MOAA calendar & websites	12

* Reservations should be sent
to Jim Cooper by



JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS



DUES FOR 2021

*Dues for 2021 were due 01 January 2021 in the amount of \$20.
If you have not already done so, please send your check to
Jim Cooper, 5216 Brown Lane, Lawrence, KS 66049-5112*

CONDOLENCES

Memorial services for Richard Carl Peters, 92, Lawrence, will be held at a later date. Richard passed away on Wednesday, December 30, 2020 at his home.

Richard was born on March 20, 1928 in Frankfort, KS, the son of Carl and Hazel (Cisne) Peters. World War II ended before he could join, but Richard enlisted in the Army after the war, serving first in the Infantry, and then as a draftsman with Corps of Engineers, to include a six month stint in the Aleutian islands. After separating from the Army, Richard began his architecture studies at the University of Kansas with the help of the GI Bill and the Army Air Force ROTC. His studies were interrupted in 1951, when he was called back to active duty during the Korean conflict. Richard remained an officer in the Air Force Reserve, occasionally being recalled to active duty, such as during the Berlin Crisis of 1961, and ultimately retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1976.

Richard separated from active duty in 1953, returned to KU, and completed his architectural degree in 1954. He worked for several architectural firms following graduation, and in 1957, at just 29 years of age, decided to start his own firm. The early years were difficult, but with experience and incremental successes, the firm grew and later merged with another practice, becoming larger still. Richard stayed with his firm for 33 years, and was very proud of their many projects, to include the following: Deerfield Elementary School, Babcock Senior Apartments., Haworth Hall and Child Development Center., Lawrence City Hall, Lawrence Public Library, Edgewood Public Housing, Frank Carlson Federal Office Building in Topeka, Maupintour Travel headquarters (now KU Extension), Alvamar and Lawrence Country Clubs, the Golf Course Superintendents Headquarters, First Baptist Church, Westside Presbyterian Church, and his personal favorite, the home he designed and had built for his family in Lawrence.

He married Mary Kathleen Denny in 1951. They celebrated their 50 year anniversary in 2001, and were blessed with three children and five grandchildren. Kathy passed away in 2007, but Richard was delighted to find a second "love of his life" in Carol Louise (Freeman) Owen. They were married on May 18, 2008 in Lawrence. She survives of the home.

Richard was a member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA); a past president of the Kansas Chapter of the AIA; a distinguished alumnus of the KU school of architecture and a prior visiting professor at the school; a past member of the board of directors for the Lawrence National Bank, United Way, and Cottonwood; past president Lawrence Country Club; past elder and trustee for the Westside Presbyterian Church; and a 50 year member of Rotary.

Richard's love of life, of people, and of new experiences, will be missed by all who knew him. No memorial events are currently scheduled. To offer your sympathy during this difficult time, you can now have memorial trees planted in a national forest in memory of Richard. Also, memorial contributions may be made in Richard's name to the Salvation Army or Family Promise, and may be sent in care of Warren-McElwain Mortuary, 120 W. 13th Street, Lawrence, KS 66044.

PERSONAL NEWS

From Herschel Stroud: We have received our second Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccine. Other than shots:

1. We have been nowhere.
2. We have done nothing.
3. The Public Library has provided us with a 2 person Film Festival.
4. I have shoveled the sidewalks twice.
5. This morning it was 4 below zero while shoveling.
6. The TV still works.
7. Praying for a heat wave.

**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.**

From Your Editors: With the COVID-19 situation being what it is, Herschel Stroud’s is the only input received from the membership. We can only presume that all the members of the Jayhawk Chapter are pretty much following the same pattern that Herschel, John and I follow – no travel, no church, no in-person meetings, no eating out, no visitors. Our “big excitement” for the week is donning our masks and plastic gloves for a trip to the grocery store!! John has received both his COVID vaccine shots (courtesy of the VA) and I have had my first.

Hope each of you is staying safe and well and that our membership will gradually all get vaccinated and we will be able to again have our regular LCC bi-monthly MOAA meetings.

* * * * *

Busy people don’t have time to be busybodies.

* * * * *



Army News
LTC John D. Finch, USA

Greetings from the Jayhawk Battalion:

I hope everyone is reading this note in a warm spot, because the Spring Semester has ushered in some fairly extreme temperatures – which has been a great opportunity for our cadets to test their collective mettle in the great outdoors! As the Gen. Paul Funk (current TRADOC Commander) likes to remind us: the Army is an outdoor sport.

Like our Joint partners, our cadets had a long break between the end of classes last semester and the start of this one. KU elected to eliminate Spring Break and role that time into the Winter Break to reduce travel and potential COVID spread. We knew that some of our cadets would want to use that time to get really strong and fast, so we decided to incentivize fitness with two competitions. The first competition, “Lift to the Moon (and back)” equated pounds to kilometers and asked the cadets to catalogue the total volume of weight they lifted. To make it to the moon, cadets had to lift 384,400 lbs total over the course of the break; to make it there and back, they had to lift 768,800 lbs. We had two cadets make it to the moon and back and nine (9) additional folks make it to the moon. We had great overall participation, with several folks ending up well past the stratosphere and over 10.3 million pounds lifted.

Our other fitness competition incentivized running, ruck marching, swimming, or cycling. We came up with some whiz-bang formulas to equate these things (1 mile swam = 4 miles run, 3 miles biked = 1 mile run, etc). Cadets posted their workouts to our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/KUArmyROTC/>) with screen captures of their workouts. Our high

performers in this competition were Cadet Brandon Powell with 250 miles (he’s a St. Mary’s swimmer who routinely did 5-6 miles in the pool) and Cadet Anna Mikkelson (one of our best runners) with 110 miles. The competition was open to Jayhawk Alumni – who were eligible for and received prizes. Thank you to all the Jayhawk Battalion Alumni who participated!

Everyone came back to campus fit for the start of classes on 1 February. The cold temperatures didn’t scare off the cadets and everyone was excited to train together again. We also welcomed 11 new cadets into the Jayhawk Battalion who are joining this semester. The word is getting out that if you want to learn to lead with a bunch of hard working team builders, then ROTC is the place to do it!

These next few weeks will be intense for the cadets and cadre of the Jayhawk Battalion as we compete in the Northern Warfare Challenge on 20 February and the Task Force Ranger Challenge from 25-28 February. I’m confident that our teams will fight valiantly to carry on the Jayhawk tradition!

The last bit of news is that over the break we promoted CPT Jon Heller – our cadre member with the most time in the program – to the well-earned rank of Major. Congrats to Jon and his family!

Rock Chalk!

LTC John D. Finch
Professor of Military Science



Navy News **CAPT Trenton Lennard, USN**



The Jayhawk Battalion is back in action!

The Jayhawk Battalion has returned to campus from a well-deserved extended winter break. Even with the restrictions of pandemic operations, the midshipmen arrived in Lawrence with enthusiasm and excitement and are ready to tackle another semester full of education and training.

Upon the conclusion of the fall semester, I tested the Battalion with “Trigger’s Holiday Challenge”. This was a physical fitness and academic event where students and staff alike participated in their own individual workouts as well as engaged in professional reading and volunteer activity over the winter break. Our combined efforts logged a total of 2,936 running miles; 114,174 push-ups; 3,497 minutes of planks; 53,903 lunges; 11 volunteer activities, and 18% completing a professional reading. Our high performer was LCDR Tyson Biddle, a post-graduate Supply Officer in the KU School of Business. BZ to LCDR Biddle and the entire battalion!

We kicked off the spring semester with the promotion of our Assistant Marine Officer Instructor (AMOI), Andreau Winslow. After just 12 years of outstanding service to our Marine Corps, Staff Sergeant was promoted to Gunnery Sergeant which is a significant milestone in his career. Capt Jeremy Ross (MOI) presided over the promotion and delivered the Oath of Enlistment. Thank you for your continued service GySgt Winslow!



KU NROTC AMOI being promoted to Gunnery Sergeant outside the MSB. Congratulations GySgt Winslow!

The KU NROTC staff was ready to train as soon as the midshipmen returned to campus. The five Naval Science courses kicked off as well as physical training and leadership lab. Most recently, students took part in active shooter training. The University of Kansas Public Safety Office was kind enough to have two officers host a presentation to ensure all Battalion members know what to do in such an emergency. Battalion members then put their skills to the test as they went through an active shooter scenario in our Military Science Building. Additionally, CAPT Nirav Patel, former CO of SSBN 740, engaged the Jayhawk Battalion in a highly informative and exciting brief plus a Q&A session on the Nuclear Navy. His experience and knowledge was of great use to the midshipmen and active duty staff and we are grateful for his time.

There is a lot to look forward to this semester such as: Ship Selection, Flag leadership discussion, the University of Kansas Drill Competition, interactive training, virtual leadership conferences, community clubs (Surface, Nuclear, Semper Fi, and Aviation), and of course, graduation and commissioning. Due to COVID operations, the majority of our events will not be open to guests but we will strive to utilize streaming capabilities whenever possible. The staff and students have done an outstanding job in remaining safe while still executing engaging training that contributes toward their growth as future Navy and Marine Corps Officers. I look forward to seeing continued progression as they all achieve success!

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’ve hit the ground running in the Spring Semester with several training events geared towards preparing sophomore cadets to attend Field Training, as well as, preparing the commissioning cadets to be high caliber 2Lts. This semester the focus turns toward leadership traits and Air Force operational fundamentals. Sophomore cadets will spend two-weeks at Camp Shelby, MS this summer being evaluated on their leadership abilities during Field Training.

This is a gateway field evaluation that determines whether a cadet has the leadership skills needed to continue in the program. Sophomore cadets are currently competing for an enrollment allocation that allows them to attend Field Training. We had two (2) active duty members selected to hold a field training staff position. SSgt Shawn Lowe and Major Todd Rapp will attend field training at Camp Shelby,

MS. Cadets Austin Crist and Sarah Tarnowski were selected for the very competitive position of Cadet Training Assistant.

Air Force Specialty Codes were finally announced for our non-rated commissioning cadets. We had two cadets receive 13N–Missile Operations, and one cadet each receive 17D–Cyber Operations, 14N–Intelligence Operations, 64P–Contracting Officer, and 62EXG–Developmental Engineer. The seven of them will commission with the four other rated flying cadets in the May. Finally, we had one 2LT commission as a 38F–Force Support Officer late in December 2020, 2LT Chase Penka. Normally 2LTs wait almost a year to go on active duty but she just received short notice orders to Lakenheath, UK. She will fly out the end of the month.

The flying Jayhawks will not let one full year in the COVID environment get us down. We recently procured two drones and will expand our flight simulator operations in the military science building to outdoor drone flying. The cadet's also purchased airsoft guns so we can finally stop borrowing our joint services paintball guns when we conduct field mission scenarios. The cadets have a PACKED spring semester that includes an expanded flight operations week,

field exercise training at Zip KC, and an expanded computer simulated war week with K-State Det 270. Most bases have denied our request for base visits except McConnell AFB has graciously allowed us to bring small groups of cadets through to tour. This is a huge deal as normally between freshman and sophomore year cadets are offered an opportunity to spend 3-weeks at an Air Force base touring and learning different jobs. Both last summer and this summer were cancelled due to COVID.

Coming Up:

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

Rock Chalk, Jayhawk!

Very Respectfully,

LtCol Nikki Phelan

Commander, Air Force ROTC Det 280

MOAA NEWSLETTER ADVOCACY

This is a summary of the many items MOAA produces each week on legislative activities. Those who have e-mail receive the full MOAA Newsletter each week upon completing application.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 21 January 2021:

From MOAA's Letter to President Joe Biden

The first 100 days of a president's term is a time where the new administration considers the top issues it wants to tackle through either executive orders, legislation, or policy changes. Based on meetings with the transition teams of then-President-Elect Joe Biden and then-Vice President-Elect Kamala Harris, it is clear the new administration is keenly interested in doing all it can to help improve the quality of life and protect service-earned benefits for all our uniformed servicemembers and veterans, their families, retirees, caregivers, and survivors.

The new administration is [expected to move quickly](#). MOAA sent a Jan. 20 letter to the president asking for swift action in many areas. In it, MOAA urges the incoming administration to consider taking up several issues and working with military and veterans service organizations in a collaborative manner to affect these important changes. MOAA looks forward to helping the administration during the transition by providing the necessary background information support needed to successfully achieve its goals moving forward.

You can read the full letter below, or access a PDF version [at this link](#).

Dear President Biden,

On behalf of the more than 350,000 members of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), I congratulate you on your election victory. MOAA, as the largest military service organization and fourth largest veterans service organization, is proud to represent officers from all uniformed services, past and present, to advocate for the interests of all servicemembers. MOAA looks forward to working with the Biden-Harris Administration to continue supporting our national defense and those who serve and have served.

In these challenging times, we urge the administration to commit to transparency and collaboration with military and veterans service organizations. MOAA stands ready to support efforts to assist servicemembers, veterans, their families, and survivors whenever you ask.

Department of Defense

Full Pay Raise – Include a full servicemember pay raise in the President's FY 2022 Budget request in line with the Employment Cost Index ([2.7% for FY 2022](#)).

No TRICARE Fee Increases – Include no proposals for TRICARE fee increases in the administration budget request. Such fees unfairly shift health care costs to military beneficiaries.

Reconsider Medical Billet Cuts – These plans to eliminate approximately 18% of medical billets could have negative impacts on medical readiness and beneficiary access to care.

30-Day Reserve Component Orders – Require the use of federal orders in increments over 30 days for members of the reserve component activated to help with future COVID-19 support or vaccination efforts.

Improve Dependent GI Bill Transfer Process - Review the service obligation process and inter-department communication for GI Bill transfers to dependents. [Administrative errors](#) are leading to dependents being required, unfairly, to pay back GI Bill payments.

Department of Veterans Affairs

Restore the 48-Hour Review Period – The VA's decision to rescind this review will lead to more errors in claims, clog the appeals process, and ultimately harm veterans. Multiple veterans service organizations, including MOAA, [have joined in this effort](#).

Waive Dependent Debt for GI Bill Administrative Errors – Direct the VA to waive dependent GI Bill debts stemming from [administrative errors](#) that led to servicemembers failing to complete obligated service.

Delay VA Debt Collection – All such collection by the VA should stop until the pandemic is over.

Pause VA Contract Exam Changes – MOAA seeks this delay to address whether these changes would negatively affect exam quality and timeliness. The GAO and VA's Office of the Inspector General have expressed similar concerns.

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

Restart Military Lending Act Supervisory Compliance Exams – Monitoring compliance is necessary for this act to work the way it was intended. Work with Congress to pass legislation to restart the exams and ensure they won't be stopped again.

Department of Education

Support Defrauded Students – Rescind the 2019 borrower defense rules that limit the ability for defrauded students to get their tuition reimbursed.

Department of Labor

Track Military Spouse Unemployment Rates – Require the Bureau of Labor Statistics to create methods to better quantify this issue at the heart of financial security for many military families.

Improve Military Spouse Licensure – Require the Department of Labor to prioritize state-level technical assistance training to educate occupational licensing boards on current military spouse licensure laws and compacts.

End Forced Arbitration – Support rulemaking to end forced arbitration for Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act disputes.

Department of Homeland Security

Preserve Parole in Place (PIP) – Allow PIP to continue for the families of military members and veterans, and direct the United States Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS) to process applications for those in removal proceedings and adjudicate all PIP applications within 60 days.

Support Servicemember and Veteran Naturalization – Ensure servicemembers have access to expedited paths to citizenship by:

Rescinding DoD memos requiring O-6 certification of honorable military service.

Restoring Basic Training Naturalization through a USCIS directive.

Directing USCIS to expedite processing of all servicemember and veteran applications.

Directing USCIS to provide resources to assist qualified members of the armed forces to navigate the application and naturalization process (as outlined in Public Law 115-91, Section 530).

Sincerely,

Lt. Gen. Dana T. Atkins, USAF (Ret)

President and CEO, Military Officers Association of America

Here Are Some Key TRICARE Coverage Improvements Contained in the NDAA

Fixing TRICARE coverage gaps is a top priority at MOAA because coverage policy is a key driver of the value of the military health care benefit. We were gratified to see the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) included several key improvements to TRICARE coverage.

Among them:

Maternity Care

The NDAA requires DoD to conduct a demonstration project to evaluate coverage of doulas and expanded coverage of lactation consultants under the TRICARE program. Doulas are trained professionals who provide physical and emotional support during labor, delivery, and the early postpartum time.

We are pleased Congress, recognizing the unique conditions of military life, authorized this demonstration. Servicemembers and spouses may benefit from additional maternity care resources since they often deliver without the support of their spouse, family, and friends due to geographic separation.

[RELATED: [MOAA Secures Major Provisions to Support Military Families With Special Needs](#)]

It will take some time for the demonstration to go into effect. The legislation requires DoD to submit an implementation plan to Congress within 180 days of the bill's passage.

Other TRICARE Coverage

The legislation also includes digital breast tomosynthesis (3D mammography) as a TRICARE-covered benefit for breast cancer screening. The procedure is already covered for diagnostic purposes and as a [provisional benefit](#) for screening.

The House provision to allow dependents of reserve component members to receive hearing aids from MTFs was scaled back, but it does make dependents enrolled in TRICARE Reserve Select eligible for the [Retiree At-Cost Hearing Aid Program](#) (RACHAP) offered at select military treatment facilities.

MOAA will monitor implementation of these military health care enhancements and provide updates as more information becomes available.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 28 January 2021:

Check Out MOAA's Veteran Health Care Priorities on the Hill

MOAA shares many of these interest areas with congressional leaders and looks forward to helping Congress address these matters either through legislation or oversight hearings:

Implementing the [VA MISSION Act](#). The 2018 legislation represented a major shift in VA health care delivery. The massive bill will take years to implement but will result in more options where veterans can receive care, expand caregiver programs to veterans of all eras, enhance VA's workforce capabilities, and modernize medical facilities.

Expanding access to care for veterans in rural communities. While not a new priority, this issue has taken on greater importance during the pandemic, where lack of internet access may limit a veteran's ability to access much-needed online or telemedicine resources.

Implementing several critically important [measures signed into law in 2020](#). These MOAA-supported laws address the rising rates of mental health conditions and veteran suicides, as well as provide health care and benefit improvements for veterans, particularly those in need. Examples include the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act; the Veterans Comprehensive, Prevention, Access to Care, and Treatment (COMPACT) Act; and the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act.

Implementing the [joint VA-DoD electronic health record](#). This long-sought move would allow clinicians to easily access veterans' medical information.

Eliminating health disparities for women, minority, and underserved veterans. The VA must ensure a welcoming and safe environment, and should remove barriers to provide timely, sensitive, and high-quality care, particularly for veterans at high risk.

Assessing the impact of COVID-19 on VA's workforce. MOAA has worked with Congress in recent years to strengthen and modernize the VA workforce and to fill ongoing critical employee shortages.

MOAA Alerts TRICARE to Potential Problems With Select Enrollment Fees for Survivors

MOAA continues oversight of the TRICARE Select enrollment fee implementation process by collecting member feedback and highlighting potential trouble spots to the Defense Health Agency (DHA) for corrective action.

Thanks to information from MOAA's [Surviving Spouse Advisory Council](#), we recently alerted DHA that some surviving spouses were mistakenly allowed to request allotments from Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payments. The pay center that handles SBP payments to survivors has never accepted allotment requests, so regional contractors have been directed to contact impacted survivors and ensure that necessary corrections are made to their websites and call scripts, and that call centers and enrollment and billing associates have accurate information on the topic.

Please note that survivors of active duty deaths are not subject to the new TRICARE Select enrollment fee. The fee

also will not affect TRICARE for Life beneficiaries, active duty family members, and those medically retired.

[RELATED: [What to Do If You've Been Disenrolled From TRICARE Select](#)]

MOAA encourages all beneficiaries to verify their TRICARE Select enrollment fees have been paid by logging into your TRICARE account on your [regional contractor's website](#) or [calling](#) your contractor for assistance.

Contractors are conducting targeted outreach to beneficiaries who have not paid the enrollment fee or need to correct their method of payment. If your regional contractor calls, emails, or sends you a letter stating your enrollment fee has not been paid, please contact them as soon as possible to verify your enrollment status, even if you believe you have set up an allotment or other form of payment.

[RELATED: [MOAA's 2020-21 TRICARE Guide](#)]

Fearing many retirees would not get the news about the new Select enrollment fee, MOAA successfully pressed for an [extension](#) to the reinstatement period for those disenrolled due to failure to pay the fee. MOAA will continue to monitor enrollment levels and will advocate for future extensions to ensure no retiree is locked out of TRICARE because they did not learn about the new enrollment fee requirement.

This Is What DoD Duty Status Reform Should Look Like

With these principles in mind, policymakers should address several key issues of confusion or unfairness (or both) faced by these servicemembers, to include:

GI Bill

Servicemembers must perform 36 cumulative months on active duty to qualify for full Post-9/11 GI Bill eligibility. To receive minimal eligibility at the 50% rate, they must serve at least 90 days on active duty. Each day of service on active duty should be credited equally toward this eligibility.

Instead, many variables affect whether Guard service counts toward the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Even though Guard members may be supporting a national emergency mission, their orders may be issued under a variety of statutory sections and for relatively short durations that are repeatedly renewed, causing confusion and frustration in determining benefits eligibility.

[RELATED: [Here's What the Flurry of Recent Veterans Legislation Means to You](#)]

Recently, National Guard members ordered to protect the U.S. southern border fell into this loophole. It took [a December 2019 declaration by then-Secretary of Defense Mark Esper](#) to finally resolve that those Guard members would, in fact, accrue eligibility toward the Post-9/11 GI Bill for those missions.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 04 February 2021:

National Guard Members on DC Protection Mission Get Credit Toward GI Bill Benefits

National Guard members who've been protecting the U.S. Capitol will receive credit toward Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, according to a Jan. 28 National Guard Bureau memo sent to lawmakers.

"For Congress to have to question the application of these benefits, and for a two-star general in the National Guard to weigh in with a two-page memo, it's clear the system needs changed," said Cory Titus, director of veteran benefits and guard/reserve affairs for MOAA's Government Relations team. "Lawmakers won't always be so intimately involved in these missions. Reserve component members must have clarity on what they've earned, and no servicemembers on duty at the same time and in the same place should receive different sets of benefits."

[RELATED: [MOAA's 2020-21 TRICARE Guide](#)]

After they lose coverage under TRICARE, dependents can purchase TRICARE Young Adult (TYA), a premium-based plan. Monthly premiums for 2021 are \$459 for TYA Prime and \$257 for TYA Select, up 22% and 13% respectively since last year. At the end of FY 2019, there were approximately 37,000 young

adults enrolled in TYA; most were the children of military retirees.

Since its inception in 2012, TYA premiums have increased dramatically, leading to lower enrollment and a beneficiary pool skewed toward those with chronic medical conditions. TYA Prime premiums are up 160% since 2012 (an average annual increase of 14%) while the cost of TYA Select has grown 69% (up 7% per year, on average). These increases call the future viability of this premium-based plan into question.

[RELATED: [Here Are Some Key TRICARE Coverage Improvements Contained in the NDAA](#)]

"Our service members have risked everything to protect our nation and preserve our freedoms," Waltz said. "They should not have to worry about the health and welfare of their families while serving our country. That's why I'm proud to support this legislation to support our military families, provide an additional retention-incentive for our service members, and ensure the children of our troops have the same, equal access to health care as their civilian counterparts."

Luria, who introduced a similar bill last year, cited a sense of urgency given the COVID-19 pandemic: "During this public health emergency, it is more important than ever to provide our servicemembers and their families with affordable and accessible health care."

MOAA appreciates their efforts to address this TRICARE parity issue. Military families who have sacrificed so much in support of our nation deserve the same health care protections for their young adult children as their civilian counterparts covered by commercial plans.

We are currently developing our engagement strategy to support this bill and will share ways MOAA members can get involved in the coming weeks.

State Tax Update: News From 5 States on Efforts to Exempt Military Retired Pay

[Senate Bill 370](#) targets the uniformed services population more directly: Retirees of the uniformed services under age 55 would be able to subtract the first \$5,000 of their retirement income from tax calculations, and retirees older than 55 could subtract their first \$20,000. However, retirees over 65 years old who are receiving a Social Security benefit would be required to pay a tax on that pay.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 11 February 2021:

Congress Pulls the Plug on TRICARE Dental Program Transition to FEDVIP

The FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) stops the planned transition of active duty and National Guard/Reserve families who use the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) to the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP). MOAA supports this move and will continue working to ensure Congress and the Defense Health Agency (DHA) remain committed to addressing known problems with TDP networks.

TDP is a voluntary dental plan available for purchase by active duty family members, transitional survivors, and Guard and Reserve members and their families. A similar move did take effect for the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP): The FY 2017 NDAA sunsetted TRDP and made military retirees eligible for dental and vision coverage through [FEDVIP](#) as of Jan. 1, 2019. There are no changes to retiree dental and vision coverage – military retirees are still eligible for FEDVIP.

Administration of TDP transitioned to [United Concordia](#) in May 2017, and many military families complained their dentists left the network due to reimbursement rate cuts. Some high-concentration military areas such as Fort Leavenworth, Kan., and the Tidewater region of Virginia had few in-network providers.

MOAA and other advocacy groups took this issue to Capitol Hill, and Congress responded by including language in the FY 2019 NDAA that would have made TDP beneficiaries eligible for FEDVIP effective Jan. 1, 2022. The FY 2021 NDAA reverses these plans. The TRICARE Dental Program will remain in place.

[RELATED: [Bipartisan Legislation Would Fix TRICARE Young Adult Coverage Gap](#)]

Unlike TRDP, which was fully funded by military retirees through plan premiums, TDP includes a [premium contribution](#) from DoD. For most TDP beneficiaries, DoD pays 60% of the plan premium while the servicemember contributes 40%. Complications related to DoD's premium contribution, among other issues, hampered efforts to transition TDP to FEDVIP.

MOAA supports this move by Congress to ensure all TDP beneficiaries have continued access to affordable dental coverage, and we are encouraged by recent steps the DHA has taken to address issues with TDP.

In September 2020, MOAA participated in a discussion on the way ahead for TDP hosted by DHA, sharing military family frustrations with the high number of dentists who have left the program and sparse provider networks in certain areas. We also shared military family concerns about reimbursement rate cuts potentially resulting in a lower quality of available dental care.

[RELATED: [MOAA Alerts TRICARE to Potential Problems With Select Enrollment Fees for Survivors](#)]

Last month, DHA released a [request for information](#) (RFI) on the next generation of TDP contracts, known as TDP6. The RFI seeks industry input on how to improve access, including recommendations on network adequacy standards to improve beneficiary satisfaction. It also addresses provider quality by seeking feedback on identifying higher quality providers that would result in better outcomes for beneficiaries.

As the TDP6 process moves ahead, MOAA will remain engaged to ensure military families continue to have affordable dental coverage that includes improved access to care and a greater emphasis on high quality providers.

[VA Under New Leadership: How the New Secretary's Priorities Align With MOAA's](#)

Denis McDonough's confirmation Feb. 8 as the new VA secretary received overwhelming bipartisan support – an 87-7 vote reflecting the collaborative and consultative relationship the administration and Congress want to foster between the executive and legislative branches.

McDonough made it clear during his Jan. 27 confirmation hearing that once he took his new post, he and the president will “fight like hell to give our veterans and their families the health care, respect, and dignity they deserve.”

McDonough has a long history of public service, beginning in 1996 when he worked as an aide for the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. He continued working in Congress until 2008, when he joined then-Sen. Barack Obama's presidential campaign; he took on multiple roles in the Obama administration, serving as senior policy adviser and deputy national security adviser before becoming White House chief of staff from 2013 to 2017.

McDonough's path to becoming the secretary of VA is a result of his lifetime passion for public service. His wife, Kari McDonough, has devoted her work to serving veterans in the community; she is the president and co-founder of [Vets' Community Connections](#), a nonprofit organization that assists veterans with community integration.

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

The new secretary spoke at length about his priorities and the commitment he will bring to the position during his confirmation hearing. “I will dedicate every fiber of my being to care for them and their families upon their return from defending the country,” he said, adding that he would “restore trust in VA and be a fierce, staunch advocate for veterans.”

Bipartisan Backing

The Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs cleared the path for the secretary's confirmation. Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.), the new committee chair, and ranking member Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), the committee's former chair, offered clear direction to the then-nominee: The well-being of veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors must come above all else.

Both leaders stressed the important work and daunting challenges facing the secretary — leading the VA

through the pandemic, saving as many lives as possible, and overseeing the massive reforms across the VA enterprise.

“If you put veterans first, you will succeed,” Tester told McDonough.

Moran further emphasized the message: “As secretary you must be ready on day one to continue implementing the reforms passed in recent years. ... You must also put veterans at the center of their health care — not VA making the decision where veterans will get their care.”

McDonough pledged his support and cooperation, and assured members that any veteran-related decision made by him and his staff will be guided by two questions: Does it improve access to care, and will it result in better outcomes for veterans?

What Can Veterans Expect?

The new secretary outlined several of his priorities, many of which are in line with MOAA's and those of other veterans organizations. MOAA's ongoing efforts to improve the VA were included in a recent [letter to President Joe Biden](#), and were outlined further in a [recap of veteran health care priorities](#).

McDonough's veteran health care priorities include:

Offer serious communication and a commitment to providing VA employees and veterans with protective equipment, care, testing, and vaccines to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

Provide strict oversight and implementation of the 2018 VA MISSION Act, including the rollout of VA's community care and new caregiver programs, along with newer legislation designed to expand mental health services and suicide prevention programs, such as:

[S. 785](#), the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act

[H.R. 8247](#), the Veterans Comprehensive, Prevention, Access to Care, and Treatment (COMPACT) Act

[H.R. 7105](#), the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act

[Advocacy in Action](#)

Our topics this year address those who are currently serving, veterans and recent retirees, and members of the National Guard and Reserve forces.

Topic 1: Comprehensive Toxic Exposure Reform

This focus on comprehensive toxic exposure reform highlights those currently serving, veterans, those recently retired from active duty, and the Guard and Reserves. When most people hear about toxic exposure, they think of Agent Orange and Vietnam, and we work that, too. However, there is a significant lack of awareness of the current toxic exposures for those in uniform today and since 9/11.

Among one of the more notable and impactful exposures are from the burn pits and other fires during the Gulf War in Afghanistan and Iraq. Additionally, there are exposure risks from firefighting chemicals and contaminated drinking water, to name a few.

We seek the basics: expanded health care for those who were exposed, the creation of an advisory council, and to reauthorize the Agent Orange authorities which expired in 2015. This issue hits more than the servicemembers — it is a direct impact to the families who are or will be the caregivers.

Topic 2: TRICARE Young Adult Parity

There is a glaring disparity between commercial health care plans that cover adult children to age 26 and TRICARE, which requires a separate premium for young adult coverage. In 2013, TYA monthly premiums were \$152 for Standard and \$176 for Prime; today, those monthly fees are \$257 and \$459 respectively, which is an unsustainable curve, charting a course for TYA plan failure.

The Health Care Fairness for Military Families Act of 2021 ([H.R. 475](#)), sponsored by Reps. Elaine Luria (D-Va.) and Michael Waltz (R-Fla.), expand TRICARE eligibility to young adult dependents up to age 26. Learn more about the legislation [at this link](#).

Military kids face unique challenges — the average military kid will move six to nine times during their school years and experience repeated family separations. Yet, current law leaves military kids transitioning to adulthood without the same health care protections afforded to families with commercial plans. Ensuring health care access and affordability is particularly important during the current pandemic.

As COVID-19 impacts higher education pathways and makes it more difficult for young adults to find jobs, we must ensure military families who have sacrificed so much in support of our nation have the same health care protections for their young adult children as their civilian counterparts covered by commercial plans.

Topic 3: Basic Needs Allowance

This proposed allowance would address our servicemembers and their families who are most vulnerable to food insecurity and are finding it difficult to make ends meet. The subsistence allowance would be provided automatically to servicemembers whose gross household income (not including their Basic Allowance for Housing, or BAH) is below 130% of the federal poverty line. This recurring struggle was exacerbated by COVID-19 layoffs.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 18 February 2021:

[This Key Military Pay Indicator Is Bouncing Back. But Will It Matter?](#)

The Employment Cost Index (ECI) for private-sector wages and salaries, a metric that guides future military pay raises, ticked up slightly in the first quarter of this calendar year – good news for servicemembers, but not a guarantee.

The quarterly ECI of 2.8% was up from the [2.7% reported Oct. 30, 2020](#). That October figure is used yearly as a guideline in setting the military pay raise – the 2020 figure, for example, should offer a hint at the FY 2022 raise. And while the October number was down from 2018 and 2019 figures, it would still represent the third-largest raise in the last 12 years.

The 2.8% figure released in January sets a good trend for servicemembers, who could see future raises in line with a growing index. But those pay hikes aren't set in stone ... and that's a major reason why fighting for military pay raises remains a key MOAA advocacy mission.

[RELATED: [MOAA's COLA Watch](#)]

MOAA tracks these figures and others to ensure budgets are not balanced on the backs of the military community. But because ECI is a guideline, not a requirement, it's even more vital for MOAA to remain engaged with lawmakers to ensure military pay keeps pace with the private sector and remains an incentive to recruit and retain those who make up the all-volunteer force.

Help MOAA maintain its voice by [remaining engaged with ongoing advocacy efforts](#), and consider [joining or upgrading today](#) to add your voice.

[Don't Miss Out: MOAA Scholarship Deadline Is March 1](#)

It also guaranteed that when schools close due to financial issues or lose eligibility because of federal rule violations, student veterans would see their GI Bill benefits fully restored, in an effort to keep institution mistakes from punishing student veterans.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 25 February 2021:

[MOAA Outlines TRICARE Mental Health Advocacy Goals](#)

MOAA recognizes the shortage of mental health providers is a national problem and contributes to access challenges, so our recommendations focus on actionable goals to achieve incremental improvements, including:

[RELATED: [Congress Pulls the Plug on TRICARE Dental Program Transition to FEDVIP](#)]

Enhanced TRICARE Contract Requirements: MOAA will advocate for more robust mental health network adequacy and provider directory requirements in the next generation TRICARE contract (T-5) including:

Ongoing mental health provider certification/credentialing to continuously build the pool of TRICARE-authorized mental health providers even if overall network adequacy requirements are met.

Provider directory accuracy requirements specific to mental health care to eliminate duplicates, providers no longer practicing, and inaccurate provider categorization.

A comprehensive list of institutional behavioral health providers across all regions, accessible to all beneficiaries. This list is critical for families who must seek inpatient care outside their geographic area due to limitations on local options.

[RELATED: [GAO Report Highlights Problems with TRICARE Provider Directory](#)]

Telehealth Licensure Flexibility: MOAA seeks a study on the impact of COVID-19 national emergency licensure waivers allowing providers to practice telehealth across state lines, and the feasibility of making such waivers permanent.

Reduced Mental Health Copays: MOAA wants a targeted fix to reduce mental health and other therapy copays that does not result in increases to other TRICARE Prime or Select copays, enrollment fees, or other out-of-pocket costs. TRICARE mental health copays more than doubled in 2018, and military families now pay more per visit than federal employees covered by Federal Employees Health Benefits plans. The combination of high copays plus the frequent visits required for mental health care treatment creates a barrier to access for some families. We cannot allow cost to prevent families from seeking care.

The mental health of servicemembers and military families is a readiness issue. MOAA is committed to improving access to mental health care for all military beneficiaries. Our efforts will include outreach to DHA, members of Congress, and professional staff on the House and Senate Armed Services Committees. Please stay tuned to [advocacy updates at MOAA.org](#) for developments.

MOAA in Action: Major Legislative Accomplishments

MOAA engages with Congress on all manner of issues related to the uniformed services community. These efforts can include collaboration with other like-minded organizations and with The Military Coalition. We also rely heavily on our members who make their voices heard by contacting lawmakers via [MOAA's Legislative Action Center](#), by participating in our annual signature advocacy event, and through local efforts at the chapter and council level.

For more than 90 years, this work has led to real results – pay and benefits protected from budget-driven threats, continued access to quality medical care, and countless other areas of concern to our members, our military, and the wider uniformed services community.

No list could encompass everything MOAA's achieved since 1929, but below, you'll find some of the highlights. Click the links for details on each of the items (or scroll below the boxes to see the full list), and reach out to MOAA's legislative team at legis@moaa.org to discuss your concerns on these or other topics. Note: Items with an asterisk (*) are reoccurringly under attack or underresourced.

Repealing SBP-DIC offset, known as the 'Widows Tax' – saving up to \$12,000 per year for nearly 67,000 surviving spouses.

- Executing a credible game plan for oversight of DoD's health care – protecting continued access to quality care.*
- Securing comprehensive privatized military housing reform – improving housing, establishing Tenant Bill of Rights, and Congressional oversight.*
- Lessening impact of TRICARE fee hikes (Family = \$300 vice \$900) – fighting multiple efforts to end grandfathering for those who entered service before Jan. 1, 2018.*
- Protecting TRICARE For Life (TFL) – blocked five consecutive administration budgets proposing TFL enrollment fees (2013-2017).*
- Maintaining pay raise comparability – ensuring pay raises for our uniformed services keep pace with civilian sector increases.*
- Providing Wounded Warrior protections and caregiver enhancements – securing multiple improvements to VA caregiver programs.*
- Defeating COLA Minus 1 Percent' – ending Congressional attempts to reduce retired pay, costing an E-7 retiring after 20 years \$83,000, and an O-5 \$124,000, by age 62.*
- Securing major GI Bill upgrades to include transferability – and improving benefits for National Guard on Title 32 orders.*
- Boosting compensation significantly for retirees with 50% VA disability – still fighting for the rest to include those medically retired.*
- Improving Guard and Reserve TRICARE coverage – and securing a premium cut.
- Ensuring Guard and Reserve retirement age credit for active duty service – now allowing 90 days to stretch over two consecutive years.

Ending the 'Widows Tax'

For decades, survivors of deceased military members forfeited part or all of their purchased Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuity when they received Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) from the VA. This was known as the SBP-DIC offset, but most who followed the issue had a more sinister name for it: The "Widows Tax."

This unfair policy cost up to \$12,000 a year for nearly 67,000 surviving spouses. With leadership from MOAA's surviving spouse community, in true grassroots fashion, the issue became the focus of advocacy efforts, media outreach, Military Officer features, and more traditional advocacy measures.

After years of work on all fronts, MOAA helped secure passage of a widows tax repeal as part of the FY 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which became law in late 2019 with an implementation period completing in January 2023.

"The inclusion of the widows tax repeal in the NDAA was only possible through a persistent, unified voice," said MOAA President and CEO Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins, USAF (Ret), following Senate passage. "MOAA's 350,000 members have advocated aggressively in support of repeal, and we have worked in sync with fellow veteran service organizations."

[RELATED: 'We Did It': Military Widows, Supporters Celebrate After Senate NDAA Vote]

Ensuring a Credible Game Plan for Health Care Oversight (2020)

As part of the FY 2017 NDAA military health system (MHS) reform legislation, Congress directed DoD to restructure the direct care system of military hospitals and clinics to improve focus on military medical readiness. This led to a February 2020 DoD report to Congress outlining plans to downsize dozens of military treatment facilities (MTFs). It came on the heels of a separate proposal in the DoD budget request to cut 18,000 medical staff to realign resources in support of the National Defense Strategy.

With hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries potentially affected by these changes, MOAA immediately pressed DoD officials for the statistics and analysis behind these moves, and asked Congress to exercise its oversight authority and ensure continued access to quality care. Media outlets amplified MOAA's messages of concern.

These messages grew louder as both the military and civilian medical systems began buckling under the strain of COVID-19. MOAA led the charge to ensure DoD paused these reforms as the pandemic affected all types of care, but longer-term goals remained in focus – language in the FY 2021 NDAA that will:

- Require a review of medical manpower requirements related to pandemics and other potential threats.
- Stop any realignment or reduction of medical end strength for at least a year after the passage of the NDAA.
- Expand reporting requirements related to MTF restructuring, including concerns about civilian providers and other issues raised in a Government Accountability Office report.

After a successful Virtual Storm and Summer Storm, the language was included in the FY 2021 NDAA, which became law in early 2021.

Protecting TRICARE For Life

The TRICARE For Life (TFL) program launched in 2001. Since then, TFL has come under budgetary attack in multiple legislative cycles, with MOAA and other advocacy groups working to preserve the benefit for Medicare-eligible uniformed services retirees and their families.

MOAA's advocacy efforts, including congressional testimony, statements for the record, and engagement with Armed Services Committee staff and member offices on Capitol Hill, successfully blocked five consecutive administration budget request proposals for a TFL enrollment fee in fiscal years 2013-2017.

These proposals included enrollment fees based on military retirement income level that would have been indexed annually based on either retiree COLA or health care inflation.

Restoring and Maintaining Military Pay Raise Comparability

A quick look at this list and others like it show the wide range in year-over-year pay raises among the military community. MOAA has fought to ensure those who serve get what they've earned, and has been part of efforts in recent years to secure the largest raise in a decade.

This work hasn't always broken records, but it's proceeded, largely with success, toward a goal of pairing raises with the Employment Cost Index (ECI), a metric that, by statute, links military pay increases with civilian economic indicators. The basic pay raise has not dipped below ECI since FY 2016.

This work not only benefits the current force but helps increase the base pay for future military retirees, which will lead to greater benefits after service.

Boosting Compensation Significantly for Retirees With 50% VA Disability

MOAA has been fighting for concurrent receipt, the ability to receive both retired pay and VA compensation in full each month, since the early 2000s. While that fight continues, a key milestone came with the passage of the FY 2004 NDAA in 2003, which authorized a 10-year phase-in of concurrent receipt for all retirees with a 50% or greater VA disability rating.

The next year's NDAA expanded that benefit further, eliminating the phase-in for those with a 100% service-connected disability rating to allow immediate payment.

MOAA's work on concurrent receipt has come on many fronts. Updates on recent efforts can be found at [MOAA.org/concurrent-receipt](https://www.moaa.org/concurrent-receipt).



JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA



A Zoom membership meeting will be held at **7:00 p.m. Tuesday, 16 March 2021**
Laura Blanchard of Blanchard AE Group
will speak on her firm's naval training aid design
(Specific information is given at the top of Page 1)

Annual Chapter Dues (\$20.00) were 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
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KANSAS COUNCIL WEBSITE: www.kansasmooa.net
JAYHAWK CHAPTER WEBSITE: www.jayhawkmoaa.org

Tentative 2021 Meeting Schedule:

Tuesday, 16 March

Tuesday, 18 May

Tuesday, 20 July

Tuesday, 21 September

Tuesday, 16 November



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IN GOD WE TRUST