

July 2021

ILCouncilMOAA.org

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Never Stop Serving!!!

**“NEVER
STOP
SERVING”**



President's Comments

It was good to Zoom with y'all in June. I am looking forward to getting together in person at Cantigny on September 25th. We should have LOE results by then so we can be planning our respective trips to DC for the awards ceremony (15 Oct).

As you know we have been working to realign Zip codes within our six active Chapters. Hopefully, the e-mail blasts to all MOAA members within your Chapter's area will be sent from National soon and that it will assist Chapters in their recruitment efforts. Along with the Zip code realignment, our Council webmaster has updated the Council site (www.ilcouncilmoaa.org) with links to either individual Chapter web sites or to the MOAA National web page for your Chapter. Please make sure that your information on the National site is current. They are in the process of updating all MOAA's databases and information sharing services – a good time to get our info current as well.

It is Summer and the State Fair is hosting a Veterans Day at the Fair on August 15th. The Council sponsored the JROTC Drill competition second place trophies with a \$500 contribution. Chapter contributions made this possible – thanks to all who provided funds to the Council Treasurer! We will be manning an information table in the “shed” again. I will forward parking passes and information to participants as they become available – thanks for joining me at the fair!

It is also the summer recess for our legislators in DC and Springfield. Several veteran issues are pending which means it is a good time to contact your representative to continue advocacy for those important veteran issues. As Congress is facing several challenges in passing funding legislation this year, veteran support issues may suffer. We all need to be vigilant and engaged.

Thanks for your continued commitment to *Never Stop Serving* our veterans!

Semper Fi – Bob

From the Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator

While finding resources for an elderly Survivor recently, I ran across a resource that was new to me and may be to you, as well. The resource is Senior Citizen Discount List and the website address is www.seniorcitizendiscountlist.org. You can search by state and by city. The discounts include restaurants, retail stores, grocery stores, and travel. This is a great resource not only for those of us who fall into this category, but also for those caring for parents and/or grandparents.

One of my go-to resources for senior Survivors is the Illinois Department on Aging. The website address is www2.illinois.gov/aging. The programs offered by the agency include adult day services, adult protective services, benefit access, community care program, legal assistance, long-term care ombudsman program, older adult services, senior health insurance program, and many more. If surfing the web is not your thing, you can call the Senior HelpLine at 800-252-8966 (TTY is 888-206-1327). The information line is available Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and provides information about all the programs offered by the IL Department on Aging. If you prefer to stop in and visit with someone in person, the office is located at One Natural Resources Way, Suite 100 in Springfield.

If you are not familiar with the Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) in Illinois, the IL Department on Aging can provide you with information about the program and answer any questions you have about it. Briefly, SHIP is a free statewide health insurance counseling service for Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers. SHIP counselors are trained to educate consumers and answer questions about Medicare, Medicare Supplement, long-term care insurance, Medicare HMOs, private fee-for-service and other health insurance; Organize and assist in filing Medicare and Medicare Supplement claims; and Analyze Medicare Supplement and long term care policies.

Another Survivor I assisted recently was looking for caregiver resources to assist her mother with caring for her father in-home. In addition to connecting her with the eldercare resource offered by the Illinois Department on Aging, I also provided the Eldercare Locator resource offered by the U.S. Administration on Aging. The website address is <https://eldercare.acl.gov/public/index.aspx>. They also have a phone number to call for information: 800-677-1116.

If you need additional resources or know of other great resources for eldercare or seniors, please let me know and I will share the resources in the next newsletter.

Take care,

Chris

217-720-9574

Christine.a.milchuck.ctr@mail.mil

Legislative Priorities for MOAA in 2021

By MOAA Government Relations Staff

Here are MOAA's priorities for advocacy as the 117th Congress begins its work. Our focus remains on all eight of the uniformed services and their service-earned entitlements.

As protecting health care and service-earned benefits continues to be a challenge, MOAA will press forward in engaging Congress to shape outcomes in these vital areas. There are steep hills before us. Our nation has a rising debt of more than \$27 trillion, and a deficit of more than \$3 trillion.

In view of this, MOAA anticipates robust attempts to control federal budgets, reduce or eliminate unprogrammed expenditures, and reduce entitlements. MOAA needs you to be at the ready to reach out to your legislators, and keep that engagement going as needed to make sure your voice is heard.

Our priorities may be updated, as warranted, during the next two years this Congress is in session. Together, we can succeed.

- Recognize the COVID-19 Pandemic Changed the Landscape for Many of Our Priorities
- Protect the Value of the Military Health Care Benefit
- Protect the MHS Pharmacy Benefit and Achieve Flexibility in TRICARE Pharmacy Copays
- Address Barriers to Accessing Care Within the MHS, Including TRICARE Coverage Gaps and Mental Health Care Access Challenges
- Achieve Concurrent Receipt of Service-Earned Retirement Pay and VA Disability Pay
- Protect Family Support Programs, and Ensure Military-Provided Services (Housing, PCS, Child Care) Are Affordable, Readily Available, and Meet Quality Standards
- Reform the Presumptive Process to Support Veterans Claiming Service-Connected Disabilities for Toxic Exposures
- Achieve Equity of Benefits, Protections and Administrative Support for Guard/Reserve Members Consistent With Their Active Duty Counterparts
- Sustain Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Foundational Missions and Services
- Protect Arlington National Cemetery as an Option for Those Currently Eligible to Receive Full Military Honors, Through Expansion of Our National Cemetery
- Sustain Pay Raises for Service members and COLA Raises for Retirees
- Improve Survivor Benefits
- Ensure the Coast Guard Receives Pay During a Government Shutdown

Advocacy in Action.

As most of you know by now, MOAA has renamed “Storming the Hill” to “Advocacy in Action” a less threatening title. Our contact with Congress will again will be a virtual event this year. MOAA National has requested we form teams to make contact with our legislators. We have formed five teams to make contact with our senators and representatives and advocate the issues identified as priority issues for this year. We are hoping this strategy will get more chapter members involved with MOAA National’s spring advocacy campaign. The three topics, listed below, were approved by the MOAA Board of Directors on January 29, 2021.

Topic #1: Toxic Exposure – TEAM Act (Toxic Exposure in the American Military)

When most people hear about toxic exposure, they think of Agent Orange and Vietnam. The problem extends to those in uniform today. One of the more recent and impactful examples are from burn pits in Afghanistan and Iraq. Additionally, there are exposure risks from fire-fighting 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 (TYA)

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. H.R. 475, *The Health Care Fairness for Military Families Act of 2021* addresses this inequity and supports our military families.

Topic #3: Basic Needs Allowance

This allowance helps our most vulnerable servicemembers that face food insecurity—mostly junior enlisted military families. An automatic subsistence allowance for servicemembers whose gross household income (not including BAH) is below 130% of the federal poverty line is needed. This recurring struggle is exacerbated by COVID-19 layoffs which impacted spouses’ contribution to the household income. While a small number of servicemembers qualify for SNAP, there are many military families that do not qualify for the program as BAH is considered income; so, they turn to food pantries instead. Armed Forces YMCA reported a 400% increase in grocery demand at their food pantries on and near military installations during the pandemic. Commanders in the field will appreciate these efforts to take care of their troops.

Concurrent Receipt Resources and Advocacy Updates.

Nine days after Major Richard Star, USAR, [lost his battle with cancer from toxic exposure](#), Sens. Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) reintroduced the Major Richard Star Act ([S. 344](#)) with 42 Senators as original cosponsors. The legislation will authorize concurrent receipt of DoD retired pay and VA disability for those injured in a combat zone and forced to medically retire under Chapter 61. Senators are growing bipartisan support for this legislation – part of an incremental strategy to chip away at the larger concurrent receipt problem that has an associated \$33 billion price tag.

The House is on a different schedule than the Senate and will also reintroduce the Major Richard Star Act very soon. Reps. Gus Bilirakis (R-Fla.) and Raul Ruiz (D-Calif.) will champion the legislation again this year in the House. Last year, the bill ended in the 116th Congress with support from 101 representatives. Increasing support for this legislation is critical for the bill to pass – either as a standalone measure or as part of the National Defense Authorization Act.

MOAA and The Military Coalition will continue to advocate for concurrent receipt legislation like The Major Richard Star Act and the strategy to incrementally achieve concurrent receipt for all retirees. [Contact your legislators today](#), and monitor updates and read more about concurrent receipt at MOAA.org.

Key Bills in the US Congress

The following key bills are important issues before the 116th Congress that MOAA recommends supporting. You may find more details about each bill, such as the sponsor, status, prognosis, what stakeholders are saying, and the history at <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/#find>:

Federal - S 21: Pay Our Coast Guard Act. A bill making continuing appropriations for Coast Guard pay in the event of an appropriations act expired prior to the enactment of new appropriations (official title to be confirmed). [MOAA supports](#).

Introduced January 3, 2019

Original sponsor: Sen. John Thune (R-SD); 40 Co-Sponsors

Illinois Co-Sponsors: Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)

Federal - HR 413: Hire A Hero Act of 2019. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow the work opportunity credit to small businesses which hire individuals who are members of the Ready Reserve or National Guard, and for other purposes. [MOAA supports](#).

Introduced: January 9, 2019

Original Sponsor: Del. Stacey Plaskett (D-VI); 20 Co-Sponsors

Illinois Co-Sponsors: Rep. Robin Kelly (D-IL2)

Federal - HR 847: Protecting Gold Star Spouses Act of 2019. A bill to provide interim appropriations for the Coast Guard Retired Serviceman's Family Protection and Survivor Benefits Plans for each fiscal year after fiscal year 2018, and for other purposes. [MOAA supports](#).

Introduced: January 29, 2019

Original Sponsor: Rep. Mark Green (R-TN); 45 Co-Sponsors

[Illinois Co-Sponsors:](#)

Rep. Bobby Rush (D-IL1)

Rep. Robin Kelly (D-IL2)

(New) Federal – S 344 (Formerly S 3393): Concurrent Receipts of Veterans' Disability. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide for concurrent receipt of veterans' disability compensation and retired pay for disability retirees with fewer than 20 years of service and a combat-related disability, and for other purposes.

Introduced February 22, 2021

Original sponsor: Sen. Jon Tester; 45 Co-Sponsors

Illinois Co-Sponsors: Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL)

Key Bills in the Illinois Legislature

HB 583 – Income Tax-Veterans Caregiver. Amends the Illinois Income Tax Act. Creates an income tax credit for taxpayers who are caregivers of a veteran with a disability. Provides that the credit shall be in an amount equal to 5% of the costs incurred in caring for the veteran, not to exceed \$1,000 in credits in any taxable year. Effective immediately.

Introduced February 8, 2021

Original Sponsor(s): Rep. Katie Stuart; Chief Co-sponsor: Joyce Mason; Co-sponsors: 6

Last Action: March 2, 2021 - Assigned to [Revenue & Finance Committee](#).

HB35-Veterans Bill of Rights. Creates the Veterans Bill of Rights Act. Requires the Department of Veterans' Affairs to make specified efforts to: (1) increase loans to small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans or service-disabled veterans; (2) increase veterans' access to health care coverage and services; (3) take specified steps toward preventing veteran suicide; and (4) develop and implement a strategy to end veteran homelessness within 3 years. Directs the Department of Financial and Professional Regulation to review all State licenses for which military service members may have relevant training or experience, produce a report recommending steps that can be taken to increase recognition of military training and experience toward licensing, and take those steps within one year of issuing the report. Contains provisions regarding veterans at public institutions of higher education receiving college credit, registering for courses, and being called to active duty. Requires the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to annually review apprentice, training, and other vocational programs focused on providing job training and placement to returning military service members and veterans. Contains other provisions.

Introduced January 14, 2021

Original Sponsor(s): Rep. Joyce Mason; Co-sponsors: 2

Last Action: February 23, 2021 - Assigned to [Veterans' Affairs Committee](#) (VAC). VAC hearing March 16, 2021 9:00 AM, www.ilga.gov Virtual Room 3, Springfield, IL.

HB 163 – School Code-Military Dependent Tuition. Amends the School Code. Provides that if, at the time of enrollment, a dependent of United States military personnel is housed in temporary housing located outside of a school district, but will be living within the district within 6 months (instead of within 60 days), the dependent must be allowed to enroll and must not be charged tuition. Provides that United States military personnel shall provide proof within 6 months (instead of within 60 days) after the time of enrollment that the dependent will be living within the district. Effective immediately.

Introduced January 22, 2021

Original Sponsor(s): Rep. Jeff Keicher; Co-sponsors: 6

Last Action: February 23, 2021 - Assigned to [Elementary & Secondary Education: School Curriculum & Policies Committee](#).

HB 390 - Veteran Service Dogs. Appropriates \$200,000 from the General Revenue Fund to the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to be used for a \$100,000 grant to the Willing Partners Canine Education, Inc. and a \$100,000 grant to K9s for Veterans, NFP, for costs associated with service dog training for veterans. Effective July 1, 2021.

Introduced January 29, 2021

Original Sponsor(s): Rep. Martin J. Moylan; Co-sponsors: 3

Last Action: March 2, 2021 - Assigned to [Appropriations-General Services Committee](#).

HB2378 - Surviving Spouse Amendment to Homestead Exemption (companion bill to SB 2559). Amends the Property Tax Code. Provides that, for the 2015 taxable year and thereafter, the exemption for veterans with disabilities also carries over to the surviving spouse of a veteran who was killed in the line of duty in the current taxable year or any preceding taxable year. Provides that, for the 2021 taxable year and thereafter, the exemption for veterans with disabilities also carries over to (i) the surviving spouse of a veteran who did not obtain the exemption before death, but who would have qualified for the exemption in the current taxable year if he or she had survived and (ii) the surviving spouse of a veteran whose death was determined to be service-connected and who is certified by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as being a current recipient of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation. Provides that, in the case of a surviving spouse who is certified by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as being a current recipient of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, the property is exempt. Provides that the exemption carries over to the benefit of the veteran's adult or minor child if the child receives social security disability benefits or social security supplemental income because of a permanent disability and the veteran is deceased and the veteran's surviving spouse is deceased, remarries, or disclaims the exemption under this Section. Effective immediately.

Introduced January 29, 2021

Original Sponsor(s): Rep. Joyce Mason; Co-sponsors: 0

Last Action: March 9, 2021 - Assigned to [Revenue & Finance Committee](#).

HB3279 - Nursing Scholarship for IDVA. Amends the Department of Veterans' Affairs Act. Provides that the Department of Veterans' Affairs shall establish a program to enable veterans who are certified nursing assistants to meet the requirements for practical nurse licensure under the Nurse Practice Act.

Introduced January 19, 2021

Original Sponsor(s): Rep. Terra Costa Howard; Co-sponsors: 0

Last Action: February 19, 2021 - Referred to [Rules Committee](#).

SB 91 - Admission to Veterans Home for Guard and Reserve Retirees. Amends the Department of Veterans' Affairs Act. Provides that a veteran is entitled to admission to an Illinois Veterans Home if he or she has served in the National Guard or Reserve Forces of the United States and completed 20 years of satisfactory service, is otherwise eligible to receive reserve or active-duty retirement benefits, and has been an Illinois resident for at least one year before applying for admission for purposes of eligibility for domiciliary care or nursing home care (currently, only domiciliary care). Effective immediately.

Introduced January 19, 2021

Original Sponsor(s): Sen. Jil Tracy; Co-sponsors: 0

Last Action: February 3, 2021 - Referred to [Assignments](#).

SB 2559 - Surviving Spouse Amendment to Homestead (companion Bill HB2378). Amends the Property Tax Code. Provides that, for the 2015 taxable year and thereafter, the exemption for veterans with disabilities also carries over to the surviving spouse of a veteran who was killed in the line of duty in the current taxable year or any preceding taxable year. Provides that, for the 2021 taxable year and thereafter, the exemption for veterans with disabilities also carries over to (i) the surviving spouse of a veteran who did not obtain the exemption before death, but who would have qualified for the exemption in the current taxable year if he or she had survived and (ii) the surviving spouse of a veteran whose death was determined to be service-connected and who is certified by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as being a current recipient of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation. Provides that, in the case of a surviving spouse who is certified by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as being a current recipient of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, the property is exempt. Effective immediately.

Introduced February 26, 2021

Original Sponsor(s): Sen. Melinda Bush; Co-sponsors: 0

Last Action: February 26, 2021 - Referred to [Assignments](#).

SB59 - Wave Certification Fees for Active-Duty Military. Amends the Department of Professional Regulation Law of the Civil Administrative Code of Illinois. Provides that the Department shall waive all application fees and examination fees for active military personnel and their spouses. Provides that nothing in the provisions waives the requirement that the person or spouse meet all other licensing requirements, including other fees required during the licensing process.

Introduced January 29, 2021

Original Sponsor(s): Sen. Thomas Cullerton; Co-sponsors: 19

Last Action: March 9, 2021 - Placed on Calendar Order of 2nd Reading March 10, 2021.

SB569 – Recruiter Access/ASVAB Test. Amends the School Code. Beginning with the 2022-2023 school year, requires a school district to provide to students enrolled in grades 10 through 12 the opportunity to take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test and consult with a military recruiter during regular school hours and in a location situated on school grounds.

Introduced February 23, 2021

Original Sponsor(s): Sen. Ram Villivalam; Co-sponsors: 0

Last Action: March 3, 2021 - Assigned to [Education](#).

Support Your MOAA Charities [Amazon Smile](#)

The MOAA Scholarship Fund and The MOAA Foundation joined forces with AmazonSmile in 2015.

Both charities now receive quarterly payments from the Amazon Foundation because generous Amazon shoppers have chosen to support the MOAA Scholarship Fund or The MOAA Foundation.

Many of MOAA's 390,000 members are Amazon shoppers, making this a great source of funding for our programs.

How to set up donations: When you first visit smile.amazon.com (do not use “www”); log in using your regular Amazon account information and you will be prompted to select a charity.

Search for the MOAA Scholarship Fund or The MOAA Foundation. Then, shop as normal, but be sure to go to **smile.amazon.com** instead of [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) for future purchases.

Thank You!

Key Bills in the Illinois Legislature

The Illinois bills listed below have direct impact on our veterans and military families.

Illinois - SB 110 Surviving Spouse. Amends the Property Tax Code. Provides that, for the 2015 taxable year and thereafter, the exemption for veterans with disabilities also carries over to the surviving spouse of a veteran who was killed in the line of duty in the current taxable year or any preceding taxable year.

Provides that, for the 2019 taxable year and thereafter, the exemption for veterans with disabilities also carries over to (i) the surviving spouse of a veteran who did not obtain the exemption before death, but who would have qualified for the exemption in the current taxable year if he or she had survived and (ii) the surviving spouse of a veteran whose death was determined to be service-connected and who is certified by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as being a current recipient of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation. Provides that, in the case of a surviving spouse who is certified by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as being a current recipient of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, the property is exempt.

Illinois - SB 1255 Transfer of Veterans Education Benefits Amends the Higher Education Student Assistance Act. With regard to the Illinois Veteran grant program, provides that, beginning with the 2019-2020 academic year, a veteran may transfer his or her benefits to a qualified dependent if certain conditions are met; defines "qualified dependent".

Provides that a veteran may transfer benefits to multiple qualified dependents; however, the total number of credit hours of assistance transferred may not exceed 120 credit hours, and a veteran may transfer benefits to only one qualified dependent at a time.

Illinois – SB 2293 Admission to the Veterans Homes for Retired Guard Reserve Amends the Department of Veterans' Affairs Act.

Provides that a veteran is entitled to admission to an Illinois Veterans Home if he or she has served in the National Guard or Reserve Forces of the United States and completed 20 years of satisfactory service, is otherwise eligible to receive reserve or active duty retirement benefits, and has been an Illinois resident for at least one year before applying for admission for purposes of eligibility for domiciliary care or nursing home care (currently, only domiciliary care).

Illinois – HB 5422 - Tax Credit for Guard and Reserve Employers Amends the Illinois Income Tax Act. Makes changes to a credit awarded for wages paid to qualified veterans.

Provides that the credit shall be: (1) \$5,000 (instead of 20% of the gross wages, but not to exceed \$5,000) for certain veterans who were unemployed at the time of hire; and (2) \$1,200 (instead of 10% of the gross wages, but not to exceed \$1,200) for other qualified veterans. Changes the definition of "qualified veteran" to include all Illinois residents who are members of the National Guard, reserve, or regular component of the Armed Forces of the United States. Allows the credit to be prorated. Provides that the credit is exempt from the Act's automatic sunset provision.

Illinois – SB 3761 - Tax Credit for Guard and Reserve Employers Amends the School Code. Beginning with the 2021-2022 school year, requires a school district to provide to students enrolled in grades 10 through 12 the opportunity to take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test and consult with a military recruiter during. There will not be a veto session of the Illinois legislature. The bills before Illinois and the Congress will probably be addressed next year.

Council of Chapters

New Website

The Council has a new website. Address is <http://www.ilcouncilmoaa.org>

If you have any items or input for the website, contact MAJ (USAF, Ret) Dave Knieriem at the following email address: dknieriem@casscomm.com

MOAA is the nation's largest and most influential association of military officers. It is an independent, nonprofit, politically nonpartisan organization.

While MOAA is permitted by law to lobby—and does so actively—its status as a tax-exempt veterans organization precludes it from participating in political activities, which are defined as intervening directly or indirectly in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.

Stated briefly: the association may advocate issues, but it may not advocate the election or defeat of particular candidates or political parties. This newsletter follows the policies of MOAA National.



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Comments from the Council Chaplain

As one glances over the calendar of events for July, August and September as put together by your chaplain one sees a variety of activities and observances which at least show we have plenty of opportunity to celebrate some events while pausing to remember with sorrow the various conflicts which our nation has gone through to secure the many freedoms we enjoy.

Of particular significance to me are two - the Anniversary of the US Army Chaplain Corp, which Ch Pfeffer and I appreciate which gave us both invaluable experience in our development as pastors in military uniforms, and the founding of the US Air Force which I was member of which pushed me over the top in obtaining my 23 year military retirement.

As with all these events, we are moved with thankfulness for the consistency of God's presence in our lives as the stabilizing influence which we sometimes neglect to acknowledge.

Our Armed Forces Hymnal of whatever edition provides us all of whatever faith or no faith at all with plenty of assurance of His presence. In an older undated edition we read from Psalm 91, "there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come near thy dwelling" and "Because He hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him" and "with long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation"

Let us encourage each other with these words.

Ch Ralph Woehrmann

Council Chaplain

ILLINOIS COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS OFFICERS

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Col Bob Tyler, USMC (Ret) robtttyler@msn.com/rtyler@richland.edu

1st Vice President

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LT Chet Klodnicki, USN (Ret) C_Klodnicki@msn.com

Chaplain:

MAJ (Ch) Ralph Woehrmann, USA (Ret) ralphwoehrmann@gmail.com

Special Advisor to the Council

LTC John DeReu, USA (Ret) jdereu@aol.com

Director of Communications

LTC USA (Ret) Dave Miller david.b.miller32.nfg@mail.mil

Council Webmaster

MAJ (USAF, Ret) Dave Knieriem dknieriem@casscomm.com

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Being Forgotten!

Now and Always
We'll be There.



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