



**The Standard Bearer**  
The North Shore & Chicago Chapter of  
THE MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION of AMERICA

**Newsletter**

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**Speaker and Program for March 2026**



Our next Chapter luncheon meeting is on March 15<sup>th</sup> at Dover Straits, 890 Highway 45, Mundelein. The social hour begins at 12:30 pm with lunch at 1:00 pm and speaker to follow. We are fortunate to have Chapter member MG David Harris, ILANG (Ret) and currently the Director of the Illinois Department of Revenue as our speaker for the event. He will talk to us about the state of finances in Illinois.

Prior to his appointment, Director Harris had served a total of 18 years as a State Representative over two separate periods. He was a member of the Revenue and Finance Committee for all of those 18 years and also a member of the Appropriations Committee for his final eight years. In building a bi-partisan team for his Administration, Governor Pritzker appointed Harris because of his extensive experience with State budget

issues and tax policies. In 2022, he became a member of the Board of Trustees of the Federation of Tax Administrators (FTA), and he is now on the FTA Executive Committee.

The financial situation for Illinois has improved substantially over the past seven years. Credit rating agencies have issued 10 straight credit rating upgrades following 17 downgrades over 20 years. The State's "Rainy Day Fund" has increased from virtually nothing to more than \$2.5 billion, and increased payments were made to the State's pension funds above the statutorily required amounts. A mountain of delinquent back bills has been eliminated, and the State is now paying its vendors in a timely 25 to 30 days. The Department of Revenue was instrumental in achieving this notable success.

General Harris served in uniform for 33 years. His last duty assignment was the position of The Adjutant General (TAG) for the State of Illinois in June of 2003. As The Adjutant General, he was the Commanding General of both the Illinois Army and Air National Guard. He was responsible for the military and civilian operations of the Illinois National Guard: 13,500 men and women in uniform and 500 civilian personnel.

After his service as TAG and before he returned to elective public service in 2011, Harris served in Iraq with the US Department of State as the Deputy Director and Chief of Staff of the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office (IRMO) in 2005-2006. IRMO was responsible for oversight and coordination of the \$18 billion appropriated by Congress for the reconstruction of Iraq.

MG Harris has had a truly varied career and we are fortunate to have him address us.

## **From the President's Desk**

As we move into a new year, I want to extend a warm welcome back to each of you. Whether you've been with the Chapter for years or recently joined our ranks, your presence is what gives this organization its strength and purpose. The start of a new year is always a unique vantage point—it's a moment to reflect on our shared service and an even better time to look forward to the mission ahead.

Our focus for this year remains connection and impact. Our calendar for the coming months is already shaping up to reflect that concept with our meeting agendas. We look forward to supporting the Midwest Veterans Closet at the Chapter this coming year and ask that you consider individual support if possible.

The Chapter is only as vibrant as its membership. Invite a fellow officer to a meeting, volunteer for one of our community projects, or share your ideas for new activities. Your perspective is invaluable, and your leadership is what will drive us forward.

Never Stop Serving.

**Matthew Garrison, President**

## **Chapter News**

### **Sad News**

The Chapter is saddened to announce the death of a valued member. Lt, Col. Thomas S. Costello, USAF (Ret.) who passed away in late-2025. Tom, a former Board member, always brought his enthusiasm, knowledge and good cheer to the Chapter. He is missed by all.

### **New Member**

The Chapter welcomes MAJ John L. Romano, USA (Ret) as a new member. MAJ Romano with his spouse have attended meetings and they reside in Chicago.

### **Charitable Efforts**

For those of you who have or will make donations to the **Chapter's Scholarship Fund**, please be aware that we have obtained the opinion that those deductions are, in fact, tax deductible. Initial information led us to believe that they were not.

The Chapter has applied for a \$5,000 MOAA grant to be made to the **Midwest Veterans' Closet (MVC)**. As we all know, the MVC does tremendous work supporting veterans and active duty personnel in

northern Illinois. Between 2022 and 2024, the Chapter has either obtained grants or provided support of \$8,394.00 to the MVC.

## Legislative Reports

**National:** MOAA formed the **Richard Star Act Alliance** to push Congress to finally enact that legislation. MOAA also joined the National Assn. of County Veterans' Service Officers (NACVSO) which mobilized many veterans' organizations to present a united effort for penalties against Claim Sharks.

Here are MOAA's top priorities for this session: **S 3168**- Pay during gov't shutdowns; **HR 6231/S 3268** - Work Opportunity Tax Credit; **HR 1732**- Penalties for Claim Sharks; **HR 6796**- Military Care Act; **HR 2148/S 879**- Veteran Caregiver Re-educ., Re-employment, Retirement. Please use the letters at the Legislative Action Center under the Advocacy Tab at [MOAA.org](http://MOAA.org) to support these and other initiatives

### LTC John DeReu, USA (Ret), Director of Legislation (National)

**State of Illinois:** A new piece of legislation, **SB3646**, has just been introduced in the 104<sup>th</sup> Illinois General Assembly, and it is already generating strong interest. Chairman Porfirio has expressed real enthusiasm for this bill. It will become a central focus of our collective advocacy efforts this session.

At its core, **SB 3646** strengthens the Military Assistance Act by expanding access to Veterans' Assistance Commissions (VAC), improving accountability, and closing gaps that have allowed counties to shortchange veterans' services. It creates new pathways for jurisdictions without an existing VAC to form regional commissions and reinforces the obligation for counties to provide "just and necessary assistance," and adds oversight mechanisms to ensure that veterans are not left without recourse.

That said, the bill is not final. We fully expect and intend to tweak and improve the language through amendment as it moves through committee. Our goal is to make this legislation stronger, clearer, and more enforceable in practice, based on real world experience from veterans' service organizations and advocates on the ground.

As I write this, no other veteran bills have been identified for us to act on.

### MAJ Dean Farr, USA (Ret), Director of Legislation (Illinois)

## Luncheon Costs

Beginning with our March luncheon meeting, the cost of the meeting meal will increase to \$40.00 per person. As we all know, costs are rising all around us and Dover Straits has been a great host offering us multicourse meals with exceptional entrees and outstanding service and flexibility. As always, the cost of the meals includes tax and service.

## Mark Your Calendars

Our April meeting is scheduled for April 19th and we will meet in May on May 17th. Programs for these meetings are being developed and promise to be of member interest.



## Dover Straits

890 E. Route 45, Mundelein

Sunday, March 15, 2026

Speaker: MG David Harris, Director, Illinois Department of Revenue

*Entrees from a Special Menu, plus soup, salad and dessert*

● **1230 Friendship Hour - 1300 Luncheon - 1400 Program** ●

● RESERVATION REQUEST (Deadline is March 13, 2025) ●

TO: Lt. Col. James E. Haley, 4717 Saratoga Ave. Downers Grove, IL 60515-3534

Phone: 630-229-5006 email: [jasehaley@icloud.com](mailto:jasehaley@icloud.com)

FROM: NAME \_\_\_\_\_ RANK/SVC \_\_\_\_\_

GUEST/SPOUSE \_\_\_\_\_

Please reserve \_\_\_\_ places at the MOAA meeting on **Sunday, March 15**, at Dover Straits, Mundelein @ \$40.00 per person.

\_\_\_\_ This will be my first attendance at a meeting of this Chapter.

\_\_\_\_ I will need a ride to the meeting. \_\_\_\_ I would be happy to drive someone.

Enclosed is my check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ payable to *North Shore and Chicago Chapter MOAA*