

February 2022

[ILCouncilMOAA.org](http://ILCouncilMOAA.org)

## **FORWARD OBSERVATIONS**

### **Never Stop Serving!!!**

***“NEVER  
STOP  
SERVING”***



#### **President's column**

Good news! Congress overrode the President's December 23<sup>rd</sup> veto of the Defense Authorization Bill (NDAA).

The passed legislation includes a 3% pay raise for service members, some restraint on TriCare costs, hazardous duty incentive pay parity for Guard and Reserve members, some Toxic Exposure coverage, along with funding for some military housing.

More information on the NDAA is available on the MOAA web page.

Speaking of the MOAA web site, MOAA National has recently updated its web presence. Check it out! It is easier to navigate to advocacy issues and priorities for 2022, and the site makes it easy to contact elected representatives about those specific issues.

There is a tab for "2022 legislative priorities" which revolve around Military Health Care, TriCare benefits, and sustaining pay increases.

Take some time to explore the MOAA Advocacy link and its "Legislative Action Center."

As Congress and the administration deal with the plethora of daily issues, we need to remain vigilant to make sure that they continue to care for those who have worn the uniforms of this great Nation.

***Never Stop Serving!***

Semper Fi – Bob

## February 2022 Council of Chapters Zoom Meeting

I am looking forward to our meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

This particular Council meeting will focus on how we keep MOAA active and viable in Illinois. Captain Erin Stone from National will be joining us along with a couple of other Illinois MOAA members to help us chart a way ahead.

I will be sending out some “thought” slides that a small working group of us assembled to guide us in our discussion. Please make every effort to attend this Zoom meeting on February 26<sup>th</sup> at 1000.

On to other things. The NDAA passed BUT Congress has yet to pass a budget.

That means the veteran legislation in the NDAA will not happen if funds are not provided.

Continuing resolutions do not allow new legislation to go forward. **So, once again it is important to let your folks know that they need to press their Congressmembers to pass a budget / spending bill.**

**Further, with the recent redistricting of Illinois’ Congressional and state districts, all of us (and our members) need to reach out to our “new” legislators (or those running in the new districts) to get a feel for their concern for MOAA initiatives and just to get to know them.**

As always – stay warm and healthy. And THANK YOU for continuing to serve America’s volunteer service members!

*Semper Fi – Bob*

**Robert R. Tyler, Ph.D.,**

**Col USMC (ret)**

**President, Illinois Council of Chapters**

**Military Officers Association of America**

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) established the **MOAA Scholarship Fund** in 1948 to provide educational assistance benefits to children of military families. It supports one of the association's founding principles: ***education is the cornerstone of a strong democracy***. It is funded by donations from MOAA members, Councils and Chapters, corporations, and others with a desire to help military families. For additional details, go to the MOAA website at **MOAA.org**

## **From the Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator**

The mission of Survivor Outreach Services (SOS) is to build a unified program which embraces and reassures Survivors that they are continually linked to the Army Family for as long as they desire. As a program, we serve spouses, parents, children, and siblings by providing support, resources, and referrals for any needs our Family Members may have. Part of what we do to keep our Survivors linked to our Army Family is provide events and activities at which they can connect with other Survivors and, in some instances, with Veterans and currently-serving military members. The SOS program relies on partnerships with government and non-government organizations to make many of these events and activities happen since the SOS program does not have funding to provide these things on their own.

In addition to events and activities, such as Survivor Dinners, participation in the Annual Golf Outing, and partnering events such as Gold Star Mission's Annual Gold Star 500 Closing Ceremony each September, Survivor Outreach Services also assists Survivors in finding resources for unmet needs. What that means is that as a Support Coordinator, I do the research to find a reputable agency, organization, or individual to fulfill the requested need of the Survivor.

Recent examples in which I have been involved include handyman-type work for a Survivor needing indoor and outdoor light fixture replacement and some landscaping work; grant money for another Survivor needing emergency vehicle repairs; résumé assistance and job resources for a spouse reentering the work force; health insurance/Medicare counseling for a Survivor seeking to change her Primary Care Doctor; childcare "stuff" for a grandmother who suddenly became the guardian to her grandchildren: She needed diapers, children's toys, formula, clothes, and several other items immediately until we could get state agencies onboard for long-term care; and, my current Survivor situation involves temporary plumbing repairs for a Survivor who is in dire need of a safe home in which to live. I have several large, commercial business involved and some nonprofit agencies who are currently in talks to see how they can all work together to build a safe home for my Survivor.

As you know, everyone has needs of some sort, big or small, particularly those who have lost the primary family supporter and have no one to lean on to help them over or through the crisis. Help comes in the form of just being there to listen, providing a helping hand directly, referring them to someone else, or providing the monetary means to help. Any of these things are the kind of support so many people find themselves needing at some time or another. Survivor Outreach Services strive to do just that and with your help, we can do so much more.

Thanks for listening and if I can help you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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## Thoughts from the Council Chaplain

Kindest Greetings to all as we are now in the second month of the New Year. I wish everyone abundant health and prosperity. Recent events of this past year and up to the present such as the Covid Crisis, rioting in several major cities and the uncertainty of the situation involving Russia and the Ukraine as well as more local and private anxieties have prompted the question of how well we are supportive of one another ? I personally have heard of no one being neglected in body,soul or spirit.

Quite the contrary. I read and hear of many in MOAA Illinois responding with gifts, good wishes and other kindnesses to help the aggrieved get through their difficulties. One such person who is always supportive is Phliippa Porter, a Gold Star Mother. I've known her for several years through music and military circles in Springfield. Her singing voice has always been welcomed at many concerts and grave sites as has been an encouraging voice to keep alive the memory of those who have given their lives in service of Our Country.

There are others like her but she stands out the most. Our motivation to be supportive of one another in any crisis at times comes out of self interest- we will be supportive expecting others to do the same for us some day. That works but there is a higher purpose to which we all have been called. St Paul puts it this way :

“ Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the Law of Christ " Galatians 6: 2. We all have to take care of ourselves. We have to be proactive about ourselves and the Good Lord provides plenty of guidance for us. Yet we all know that we can only do so much and we need to swallow our pride and ask others for help. That is where we come in. We do so because Our Lord's Law is “ Love your neighbor as you love yourself “

We may not like our neighbor, He may be obnoxious,rude and uncaring,yet we are to love him in that Christ has loved us by paying the penalty for our sins and daily caring for us by any means possible- and His means are unlimited.

We have various committees and offices designed to care for one another and we pray for their success. But at the same time, let's do all we can to see to the needs of others before waiting too long for someone else to do something.

In Your Service,

Ch Ralph Woehrmann

Council Chaplain.

## Legislative Issues

### **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.”

### **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:

**1. Require a review of medical manpower requirements related to pandemics and other potential threats , 2. Stop any realignment or reduction of medical end strength for at least a year after the passage of the NDAA and 3. 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.*

## MOAA accomplishments in 2021

- 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.

# Military Officers Association of America

Issue #2022-01

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15 December 2021 supersedes 1 September 2021

### Who to Contact for membership in the applicable Chapter

If you wish to join a local chapter, contact the Chapter President listed above and they will get you in touch with a Chapter Membership Chair.

MOAA chapters sponsor interesting programs and opportunities to interact with civic, political, military, and business leaders on issues important to members.

Chapters include second-career members in the work force and retired service members who have contacts in their communities that can be valuable to transitioning officers.

## 10 Tips to Help Retain Chapter Members

**These strategies can help MOAA chapters combat the challenge of retaining their members.**

Though many affiliates work hard to recruit new members, they sometimes forget about the equally important challenge of retention.

Don't negate all your hard work to increase your chapter's membership. To help retain members, consider these 10 tips:

- Vary programs and events and meeting times and days to meet member needs.
- Invite relevant speakers, such as legislators or city officials, to chapter meetings.
- Organize special events and raffles, gift exchanges, etc.
- Recognize the accomplishments of members by publishing their biographies on your website or in your newsletter.
- Offer community service opportunities to bring members together to achieve a goal.
- Provide opportunities for involvement on short-term, one-time-only projects and special issues.
- Keep costs economical, but don't let price be the driver of what type of activity to hold.
- Provide invoices for dues paid by members.
- Offer ride-sharing programs to chapter activities.
- Contact inactive members before terminating their chapter membership.

**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](mailto:dknieriem@casscomm.com)**

### Patriots Back Home

“We need to make sure that we have one another’s back and recognize the fact that patriots come in all different sizes, shapes, and colors. Not all of them wear uniforms, some of them are employers, some of them are the family members who stay at home and take care of business.”

Lt. General Harry M. Wyatt



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### MOAA Legislative Action Center

You can help MOAA by visiting their legislative action center and contacting your elected officials regarding pending legislation MOAA is working. You can reach the Legislative Action Center at the following email address: [take.action.moaa.org](mailto:take.action.moaa.org)

## MOAA's Legislative Priorities for 2022

- Sustain pay raises and adequate BAH for the troops and COLA raises for retirees.
- Ensure the Coast Guard, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Public Health Service continue to receive pay during a government shutdown.
- Protect the value of the military health care benefit.
- Protect the Military Health System 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.
- Protect family support programs, and ensure military-provided services (housing, PCS, child care, youth programs, financial counseling) are readily available and meet standards for quality and costs.
- 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.
- Reform the presumptive process to support veterans claiming service-connected disabilities for toxic exposures.
- Achieve concurrent receipt of service-earned retirement pay and VA disability pay.
- Protect full military honors and burial at Arlington National Cemetery for those currently eligible.
- Improve survivors' benefits.
- Support a quality transition experience from active duty to veteran status for all servicemembers.
- Recognize the pandemic continues to affect the lives of our servicemembers.

## Reasons to Join a MOAA Chapter

### **You know the value of belonging to MOAA and your chapter!**

But when you're talking to a potential new chapter member, it's important to remember that many officers might have only limited knowledge of MOAA's chapter system.

Creating a dialogue and asking open-ended questions is the best way to find out if and how a chapter membership could help a prospective member.

Find out as much as you can about their priorities in order to tailor a response that is more likely to resonate with them personally.

Here are some aspects of membership that may appeal to them:

1. **Make yourself heard.** MOAA's chapters provide critical grassroots support for MOAA's national legislative agenda. Chapter members let their legislators know what's on their minds and open doors for MOAA's legislative team in Washington, D.C.
2. **Give back to the community.** Chapter members are MOAA's ambassadors in their communities, supporting countless programs that make a difference in the lives of others. These members continue to serve and are giving back in the truest sense.
3. **Value added to chapter members' lives.** MOAA chapters sponsor interesting programs and opportunities to interact with civic, political, military, and business leaders on issues important to members.
4. **Networking with fellow officers.** Chapters include second-career members in the work force and retired service members who have contacts in their communities that can be valuable to transitioning officers.
5. **Stay informed.** Chapter newsletters, websites, and meetings provide you with the latest information on local, state, and national issues and changes to military benefits.
6. **Influencing state legislation.** Most states have a council of chapters that unites chapters in the state. These councils, and independent chapters in states without a council, often lobby for and pass state-level legislation that affects military members and their families, such as exempting military retired pay from state income tax or increasing funding for state veterans' programs.
7. **Camaraderie with a purpose.** MOAA chapters unite active duty, former, and retired officers from every branch of service, including National Guard and Reserve, as well as surviving spouses, offering the opportunity to connect with others with similar backgrounds and interest and develop close and lasting friendships.

## 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](mailto: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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Being Forgotten!

Now and Always  
We'll be There.



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