

December 2022

ILCouncilMOAA.org

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Never Stop Serving!!!

***“NEVER
STOP
SERVING”***



President's column

As we approach the holiday season, we really are hoping that Congress puts an approved NDAA under the nation's Christmas tree!

While vigilance is a seasonal theme, it also applies to our MOAA activities as we observe a "lame duck" session and the seating of a new Congress.

As I was collecting toys for the annual Marine Corps Reserve's Toys for Tots program in Decatur, I was reminded of why we originally put on a uniform and why we continue to serve this great nation.

While it was our honor to serve, it continues to be the American spirit of generosity and togetherness that makes that service worthwhile.

As Gen Atkins frequently says when thanked for serving, "You were worth it!" And yes Americans, its veterans, and our way of life are really worth "it"!

So as the Jolly 'Ole Elf readies his sleigh, let us take time to celebrate family, friends, our American heritage, and the wonder of the season. Happy Holidays! Merry Christmas! And Happy New Years!

Semper Fi – Bob

Legislative Input to the IL CoC Newsletter

Congress has yet to pass a budget for 2023, but did pass a continuing resolution (CR), signed by the President, that keeps the government funded through December 16th. This will give lawmakers more time to pass FY23 funding bills, including the annual defense appropriations legislation. The CR does not fund the MOAA “wins” that we hoped would be included in the FY 2023 NDAA. Thus, we all need to contact our Illinois Congressional delegation to convey the critical importance of passing the FY 2023 NDAA and the various veteran-related House and Senate bills that it contains. MOAA National’s legislative staff have provided the information below to help in our campaign to influence our Illinois Congressional delegation. The links embedded in the paragraphs below provide information on the current status of the NDAA and actions each of us can take.

Currently, only the House has passed its version of the FY 2023 NDAA. The Senate has yet to pass its version, delaying when the FY 2023 NDAA can go into conference, where the House and Senate versions can be reconciled. With the [recent passage of the CR](#) extending current funding levels until mid-December, a government shutdown is only delayed until Congress can pass all 12 appropriations bills that make up the federal budget. More information regarding Congress' appropriations and authorization processes can be found in our recent article [here](#).

Repeated engagement and correspondence with the Illinois delegation in Congress is important as it serves to inform them of issues that are of greater importance to their constituents. MOAA National encourages MOAA members to use all methods of communicating with their Senators and respective representatives. Whether it is via email, hand-written or typed letters in the mail, phone calls, or office visits, all constituent engagements are tracked and tallied by the legislators' staff, and then relayed back to the legislator.

MOAA members in Illinois can use MOAA National’s Legislative Action Center (LAC) to support our advocacy on both the FY 2023 NDAA, and making sure Congress fully funds the government by passing the necessary appropriations bills. They can find our active campaign to urge the Senate to pass their version of the FY 2023 NDAA through [this link](#). Members can also contact both their Senators and their respective Representative and urge them to pass appropriations through our LAC's active campaign [here](#).

We encourage all MOAA members to share the links to those two advocacy campaigns on our LAC with any non-MOAA members in their respective networks that support this issue to increase constituent engagement with Congress. They can also feel free to use MOAA's Capitol Hotline at 866-272-MOAA (6622), a toll-free line to the U.S. Capitol switchboard – to connect with their legislators' office directly.

Chaplain's Column

From Your Chaplain,

Greetings to all throughout MOAA Illinois,

This past Veterans' Day, my wife Cindy and I spent an enjoyable hour listening to a small musical ensemble from Scott AFB. It was made up by two trumpets, a trombone, tuba, French horn and a percussionist. They played the usual music for that type of ensemble which consists of arrangements of popular opera and orchestral pieces in reduced or altered form. They played the Stars and Stripes Forever, sounding as it was played by a 35 piece band. The event was held in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield. It was a free event. The Musicians, of course, were paid for their time. It was almost frightening to hear young players play so well! Being a veteran of the USAF Band Program, I was curious about the existence of some of the service bands and got an update - there aren't as many around as there were in the 1960's.

If memory serves me correctly, the entire Band from Scott played a concert at Springfield High School's Auditorium a few years ago and not surprisingly filled the place with a magnificent sound. Perhaps it's time to invite them again as a recruiting tool for MOAA Illinois. Military bands' purpose is to promote the military as a fighting force, designed to protect our many freedoms as American citizens. Among the more notable military band leaders of the WW 11 era would be Col. George S. Howard and Major Glenn Miller.

This raises the question of what value music has for the average American. Throughout the Scriptures, music has a prominent place. The Psalms, often called the hymnal of the Old Testament, repeatedly tells us to sing to the Lord, to use musical instruments and in the New Testament, St Paul tells us to make melody in our hearts. In the Revelation of St John we read of the occupants of Heaven gathered around the throne singing praises to the One sitting on it. Today's worship, in many cases, could use a revival of these examples to give Glory to God and to increase their attendance.

As we are in the season of giving, let us be thankful for the gift of music and share it with one another. There are many concerts throughout the area, put on by fine church and civic groups. Perhaps we will see you at one of them.

In the Spirit of Christmas,

Ch Ralph Woehrmann

MOAA Illinois Council Chaplain

**Best Wishes to all for a Very Merry Christmas and an
Excellent New Year!!**

Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator Column

The Gold Star Appreciation Dinner on November 19, 2022 could not have gone better! On behalf of Survivor Outreach Services and my Survivors, I want to thank Pres. David Miller and MOAA LLC members for their continued support of our Survivors and for the hospitality exhibited Saturday evening. Monday morning, I received calls from several Survivors, expressing their appreciation for the invitation and the heart-warming interaction they experienced with MOAA members in attendance and with other Survivors. They were pleasantly surprised with the generosity of MOAA not just because of the fabulous dinner, but for the \$100 in gift cards each Survivor family received, as well. Many commented on how helpful the gift cards will be with some of the upcoming holiday preparations. Some MOAA Members and Survivors even went home with door prizes! President Abraham Lincoln entertained and informed attendees, much to their delight. Brigadier General McDonough expressed his gratitude for the sacrifices made by our service members and spoke of the continued support the Illinois National Guard provides Survivors. Colonel Bob Tyler informed Survivors and attendees about the important work MOAA does to improve benefits for service members and their families. It was truly a spectacular evening! Below is a group photo of the Survivors who attended, as well as MOAA and SOS Leadership. I hoped to have more photos to share, but my Public Affairs photographer was unable to get the photos to me in time for the newsletter publication. However, once I do receive the photos, I will share them with Dave Knieriem to put on the MOAA LLC website. (I think Dave K. took the photo below.)

Wishing all of you a Blessed and Happy Thanksgiving!

Chris Milchuck, Survivor Outreach Services

217-761-3382



MOAA Accomplishments in 2022

Active Duty

Executing a Credible Game Plan for Health Care Oversight --
This issue also impacts Families, Retirees, and Survivors.
Maintaining Pay Raise Comparability

Families

Securing Comprehensive Privatized Military Housing Reform
Securing a Basic Needs Allowance for Families Facing Food Insecurity
Temporary BAH Increase for High Cost-of-Living Areas
Enhanced Leave for Military Families
Support for Public Schools Serving Military-Connected Children

Guard & Reserve

Securing Major GI Bill Upgrades to Include Transferability and Improving
Benefits for Those on Title 32 Orders
Improving Guard and Reserve TRICARE Coverage (and Securing a Premium
Cut)
Ensuring Guard and Reserve Retirement Age Credit for Active Duty Service

Retirees

Protecting TRICARE For Life
Lessening the Impact of TRICARE Fee Hikes
Defeating 'COLA Minus 1 Percent'
Boosting Compensation Significantly for Retirees With 50% VA Disability (and
Fighting for Full Concurrent Receipt)
Ensuring TRICARE Coverage Evolves to Keep Up With Commercial Plans and
Other Government Payers

Survivors

Repealing the SBP-DIC Offset ('Widows Tax')

Veterans

Comprehensive Toxic Exposure Reform
Providing Wounded Warrior Protections and Caregiver Enhancements
Expanding Veterans' Health Care, Benefits, and other VA Compensation and
Support Programs

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



Levels of Excellence Awards Presentation

Illinois Recipients of the

MOAA Levels of Excellence

Awards presented at the National Meeting

Surviving Spouse Corner: Benefits of Pet Adoption

If you're looking for companionship from a pet, here are five reasons why pet adoption might be the right choice.

By [Nancy Mullen](#), *Surviving Spouse Advisory Council member*

According to the ASPCA, well over 6 million companion animals enter U.S. animal shelters every year and just under 1 million are euthanized each year. Thankfully, that number has been declining in recent years due in part to more publicity around adoption as well as ease of technology tools like social media and microchips that can help to reunite a lost pet with its family.

You might have thought about pet adoption and perhaps have some misgivings, and it is true that pet ownership is not right for everyone. After all, it can be a commitment of up to 20 years. Here are some adoption myths and why pet adoption might be right for you.

- *"Why adopt, not shop?" Adoption is cheaper, and you can save a life. Look into your local pet rescues and animal control shelters. Many will offer low cost adoption days or assistance with adoption fees and spay/neuter costs. Buying a pup from a pet shop may encourage the use of "puppy mills" or overbreeding. True, there are very reputable breeders that take great care of their animals, but consider all the animals that currently need a loving home that you could provide.*
- *"I can't get a purebred from a shelter." You'd be surprised at what you can find through your local rescues and shelters. If you want a specific breed, reach out to your local rescue organizations and shelters, and fill out an application listing your preference.*
- *"Shelter pets have behavioral issues." Some do, some don't, and there is no guarantee of an animal's disposition even if you buy one from a breeder. Most rescues want to see a successful placement so they will try their best to match an animal to a potential family based on their breed and observed demeanor. Want an energetic pup? They have it. Want a cuddly cat? They have those, too. Housetrained pet? Yep. No time for pet training? Many will offer that as well. Just remember that you and your shelter pet need an adjustment period to get used to a new routine.*
- *"I'm older. What if the pet outlives me?" First, as many of us know, tomorrow is not guaranteed and as such, regardless of our age we should all have a care plan for who will care for our pets when we no longer can. Second, consider adopting a senior pet or fostering through a reputable rescue.*

"I can't afford it." Yes, pets can be expensive. If this is a concern, check into long-term foster programs where costs may be covered in part or in full. You might also want to consider pet insurance. ([MOAA Insurance](#) even offers a plan.)

My two senior pups recently passed away, and when I was ready, I reached out to a few rescues in my area. I am now the dog mom to a 2-year-old, lazy, fully housebroken 45-pound, ridiculously cute, mixed-breed bundle of love and couldn't have asked for a better pup.

MOAA Store and ROTC/Junior ROTC Items

The MOAA store has re-opened at <https://moaa.estore.shop/>. In addition to promotional gear, you can find ROTC and Junior ROTC (JROTC) award certificates (in stock now) and medals (place orders now for backorders to be shipped when medals are in stock, expected by the end of April). Electronic certificates may be customized and downloaded [online](#) at any time. Note that medals have been updated to reflect all eight uniformed services, and JROTC certificates have been updated with language more appropriate to high school students rather than ROTC students.

The cost of medals to affiliates will remain at \$3.00 per medal due to a MOAA subsidy. Additionally, the store recently added the USPS live rate to shipping options, providing a lower-cost alternative.

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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

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 TRI-CARE 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

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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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**

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The Greatest Casualty is
Being Forgotten!

Now and Always
We'll be There.



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