



Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter



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January Program:

*Local historian Paul Stuewe will speak on
"The Lawrence Raid of 1863"*

4-STAR CHAPTER - 2005
5-STAR CHAPTER - 2003/2004

WEBSITE AWARD - 2004
NEWSLETTER AWARD - 2003

President's Corner

by Bob Longino



Greetings Jayhawk Chapter!

I trust your holiday season was relaxing and enjoyable. I also hope everyone made a New Year's Resolution to attend all of our 2006 meetings! Well, that might be a bit too much of a stretch!

As a couple of housekeeping items from our last meeting, the membership approved two major items of business. First, the membership heard a report from Jim Cooper on our Scholarship Task Force recommendation. The membership voted to support the recommendation of establishing a Comfort Memorial Scholarship program with the KU ROTC units in honor of Major General Clayton Comfort. Your support of this program as we implement it will be greatly appreciated.

Secondly, the membership heard the Nominating Committee's proposed slate of officers for 2006 and voted in favor of the slate. We all must thank Erv Hodges for agreeing serve as our President. I hope our membership continues their efforts in support of improving the Jayhawk Chapter under Erv's leadership.

Finally, I want to thank you all for your support of the Chapter's 2005 officers. It was a rewarding year for me as I was able to become more involved with our Chapter as well as getting to know the key leadership of the Kansas Council of Chapters. I encourage everyone to become just a little more aware of what MOAA is all about this coming year!

See you all on the 17th!

Semper Fi,

Bob Longino

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1 January 2006

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*** Reservations should be sent
to Jim Cooper by 14 January.**



JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS

DUES FOR 2006 ARE NOW PAYABLE

PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR CHECK FOR \$20 WITH YOUR DINNER RESERVATION
OR MAIL SEPARATELY TO CAPT. JIM COOPER, 1115 STONE MEADOWS DRIVE, LAWRENCE 66049-3961

Lee Gerhard reports he was recently elected to the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, U. S. Section, and awarded the Kapitsa medal in recognition of his scientific work on climate change and other contributions. He says, "It seems like it was only yesterday that I was being trained on Russian small arms in order to fight the Communist scourge. The world has changed."

Alan Van Loenen is the 2006 Commander of the Lawrence, KS camp for the "Sons of the Union Veterans (SUV)". He says, "Any MOAA members interested in the Lawrence SUV Camp are invited to attend one or more of our SUV meetings held the third Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM at Watkins

Museum. Most meetings have a guest speaker presenting a program on US Civil War history. The Lawrence SUV camp is always interested in adding new members to the Lawrence SUV Camp."

Charles Heller reports his tour of duty with the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon ends 9 January 2006. He says, "I'll be coming home!!!!!"

Herschel & Jacque Stroud's only son, John, and his wife are having their second granddaughter. The delivery date is January 4 – Jacque's birthday.



"Driving a Car With a Maytag Motor and Kiddie Car Wheels"

Herschel Stroud

We had saved our air-miles, and had enough for a free flight to Spain. So, we went. We have a condo week with RCI, and they offered an extra week for an unbelievably low price. So, we took them up on it for two weeks.

We have USSA charge cards, and were able to decline the car rental insurance in Spain. So, we did. But we had to rent the car for less than 14 days. When we checked our CAR back into the rental agency, the "in" ticket showed 13 days and 20 hours. So, we just made it.

The car we rented was a little one. A really little one. It was a Renault "Elf". Really smaller than cars we are accustomed to driving. We had to put our suitcases in a miniscule hatch-back. So, we did it.

We wanted to tour the inland cities of Southern Spain, the "White Cities", tucked away in the small rills and arroyos away from all English speaking people. And we did. We used our condo exchange as a base of operations and visited many small, charming pueblos of Phoenician, Roman, Moorish, and finally Spanish ancestry.

Arcos de la Frontera, El Bosque, Grazelema, Caseres, Ronda, Mijas, Estiponce, Itallica, Cremora, Cadiiz, and many more were some of the highlight cities. We remember Cadiz particularly because there was a Exposition on the Naval Battle of Trafalgar - from the Spanish point of view. We remembered visiting Portsmouth and the HMS Victory, and to hear the other side of the story was , enlightening.

The streets in many of these cities were one ass, or two ass streets. Let me enlarge. A one ass street, our car could not negotiate. Two ass streets, well, yes, when we folded the

rear view mirrors "in". Oh the excitement of almost scraping the sides of our Kiddie Car.

The car performed really quite well. The most exciting thing that happened to us was a flat tire. We crept to several gas stations, but found they do not offer tire service. Then we found a Renault dealer - woops, no luck here either. But the very nice car salesman referred me to a "Taller de Pneumaticos"- a tire repair shop. The tire man was enormous. His arms were bigger than my thighs. He spoke no English. We loved it. He cooperated grandly, but was a little aloof with this character who was speaking text book Spanish. Ah, but I won him over. I presented him with a tie tack that was a sunflower with Kansas emblazoned upon it. In doing so, I made him an honorary Citizen of the State of Kansas. He loved it. The sunflower is grown widely in Spain, and is called the, Girasol. After we were brother Kansans, he could not do enough for us. Thank you Mr. Sunflower.

One of the unique dishes we had was a mixed plate of fried fish. We all know what minnows are - we use them for bait. They brought me a plate full of french fried minnows, heads, eyes, and all. The fellow next to us had the same thing, and he was popping those minnows into his mouth with gusto. So, I did too. I report that the bones were crunchy, but tasty, and I still like fish. I deferred from trying the sheeps eyes, although, the "cow cheeks" turned out to be rather tasty as well. Whoever thought that food could be fun and adventurous. Jacque and I have enjoyed traveling to Spain, and will do so again. We are still trying to become fluent, really fluent in Spanish.

Until then. Adios y vaya con dios.



Army News

LTC Jeff Maxcy

Greetings, Jayhawk Chapter!

The cadets of the Jayhawk Battalion have safely and successfully concluded another outstanding semester here at the University of Kansas. The battalion is steady at 70 cadets, with five new cadets scheduled to join the program in the Spring semester. The final training event of the semester was a record PT test that took place on December 8th in spite of the tremendous snow that fell the night before.

Overall it was a very busy semester. Training events included the Fall Field Training Exercise from September 30th to October 2nd, and the Ranger Challenge Team Competition in Iowa from October 28-30th where the Jayhawks finished 3rd in the overall standings. Also that weekend back at KU, the newly created Jayhawk Battalion Alumni Association inducted the inaugural members onto the KU Army ROTC Wall of Fame. On November 18th Army ROTC sponsored the Joint Military Ball and the event was a great success. Colonel Barry Fowler, Class of 1978 KU alumni and 2005

KU Army ROTC Wall of Fame Inductee, was the guest speaker for the event that was attended by over 300 people. The cadets are currently on a well-deserved break for the holidays until classes resume on January 20th. There are many exciting training events on the schedule for next semester including the Flying Irish Basketball Invitational at Notre Dame, the Spring FTX, and the annual Ranger Challenge Buddy Competition that the Jayhawk Battalion sponsors each year.

Please check out the website, <http://www.ku.edu/~kuarotc/> and the link to the new Jayhawk BN alumni page. Have a happy and safe holiday and do not hesitate to stop by when you are in the area!!!

JAYHAWKS LEAD THE WAY!

LTC Jeff Maxcy



Navy News

CDR Chris Orwoll, USN



Christmas Greetings from the Jayhawk Navy,

December has been a quiet month, which is always a little scary since it portends a very busy Spring semester. Basketball season is in full throw and the joint KU ROTC Units are providing the color guards and, in a new twist this year, we've involved some of the local JROTC Units to come on in to Allen Field House and do some color guard support as well. The NROTC Unit will be providing judges for the first- ever regional JROTC drill competition at Shawnee Heights High School in January.

One of the privileges of being CO here at the Unit is getting to commission our new Ensigns and Second Lieutenants. Our most recent ceremony was on December 17th where we commissioned Ensign Ryan Stewart. He has been at the Unit for six years completing a rigorous Bachelor of Science Degree in Architectural Engineering and will be heading into the fleet for training enroute to service as a Submarine Officer.

Lastly, we've had some changes here in the NROTC active duty staff. Captain High departed in November to start

working for Flight Safety International in Wichita. SK1 Eric Goblirsch (our Supply Officer) departed this past fall and moved back up to the Great White North and his homestate of Minnesota. His replacement, SKC Sibley, will begin working here in January. LT Arney, our resident Submarine officer, will be departing from active duty in March and will begin working in the Nuclear Power industry in Iowa. His replacement, LT Beaty, is from the Nuclear Surface Warrior community. Most importantly and happily, GySgt Amadis was selected for advancement to First Sergeant. What a great Christmas present for his family and the NROTC Unit. Sadly, this will necessitate his departure this Spring for duty at Camp Pendleton, CA. He will be sorely missed.

Cheers,

CDR Chris Orwoll, USN



Air Force News

LtCol Sandra Leiker, USAF

Hello again, Jayhawk MOAA!

Well, KU's "finals week" is over and it's time for a well-deserved break for the cadets (not to mention the Det280 staff!) I must have wiped the memories of my own college exam weeks from my mind entirely, since I don't recall feeling quite as overtired as most of them looked during the past two weeks. All I can say is, "Who needs zombie movies when you have your very own "walking dead"?" Many responded to my "How's it going - are you going to make it?" queries with something akin to "Well, Lt Col Leiker, I only have a three finals left, two engineering projects, and a 30-page research paper to finish before I can sleep ..." I was really impressed with their determination and stamina. Ah, the sweet delights of higher education!

As for the ROTC training, I'd say we finished the term with a "bang" – no? Maybe a purr? (Better than a snore!) Yes, I guess I'd say things were "purring along" there at the end of the term...the cadet corps wing staff had really grown into their leadership roles, the fitness program gelled as all that 0600 "conditioning" started to pay off (we even introduced a cardio kick-boxing class to "spice up" those early morning workouts - thanks to generous volunteerism from one of sister service CADRE, a certified aerobics instructor!), and I think we even topped our own high level of volunteerism and interface with the local community. Here are a few highlights...

The Veteran's Day tribute and 24-hour candlelight vigil (supported by all three services) was really special – I was honored to be a part of it and to be joined by so many local "heros" – parents, KU faculty, congresspersons, and numerous active duty/retired military. Our Arnold Air Society (AFROTC-affiliated service fraternity) cadets coordinated the evening's events, to include the (cold!) over-night vigil at the campus Korean and Vietnam War memorials, a retreat and formal POW/MIA remembrance ceremony, and guest speakers – a USMC father-son duo who served in IRAQ together and shared their recent experiences (along with many great photos!) and their great hope for the future of that country.

Joint Military Ball (Nov 18th) - Wow! The Army ROTC folks did a terrific job hosting this for us – what a grand

evening! The cadets (from all three services) looked SO great in their "dress" uniforms – and who knew they could all find such "good-looking" dates? In a few rare cases – who knew they could find dates at all? :-)- Okay – that was the cadets' joke – I should stick to teasing them about the quality of their essay answers on my National Security Studies final exam! On a serious note, mil ball was very special – this year's graduating seniors were all recognized individually, including their hometown, career field designation, and first assignment base/post. As they each walked through the tri-service sword arch, symbolic of their transition to active duty, tears came to my eyes. Stock tip – buy "Kleenex" now – I may not make it through the Spring commissioning ceremony.

December Commissioning (18 Dec) – The real culmination of the semester was our winter commissioning ceremony – two of ours became 2nd lieutenants in the company of many family members and friends. Quite movingly, both new officers were "next" in a long string of family members who had served our country – both fathers pinned gold bars on their sons that had been passed down through multiple generations! (Good grief, I'm tearing up again!) What a bittersweet event! The new Lts (Matt Boles, Dayvid Prah!) will be inprocessing together at Montgomery AFB AL, just after the first of the year, before moving on to their initial assignment bases and career fields. We'll miss them, but we know they'll serve well – incredible things lie ahead!

Up next – Det 280 will be hosting the HQ IG team from 19-20 Jan 06 (and we're so looking forward to that!) No "real" break for us just yet – but we'll find some relaxing holiday time in there somewhere.

Wish all of you the happiest...thanks so much for your continued support and we'll see you in 2006!

Lt Col Sandra S. Leiker

MOAA LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

MOAA's Legislative Update for November 4, 2005.

Issue 1: 2007 Military Pay Raise: 2.2%

The U.S. Department of Labor announced this week the annual (Sep 04-Sep 05) private sector Employment Cost Index (ECI) is 2.2%. That means, unless Congress legislates otherwise, the 2007 military pay raise will be 2.2%.

With the recent jump in inflation, retirees find themselves on the plus side once again for 2006, receiving a 4.1% COLA vs. a 3.1% military pay raise. Barring a significant slowing of inflation in the coming year, the new ECI number means retirees probably will again do somewhat better in 2007.

Similarly, Congress' recent action to permanently link military pay raises to private sector pay growth establishes an important standard to protect active duty, Guard and Reserve members' long-term pay value.

Annual budget constraints and other threats will almost certainly continue to come and go, but the principles set in these laws provide crucial protections for currently serving and retired members alike.

MOAA's Legislative Update for November 10, 2005

Issue 1: Senate Endorses SBP, Disability Fixes.

The full Senate voted overwhelmingly this week to end deduction of VA survivor benefits from the military Survivor Benefit Plan annuity; implement 30-year, paid-up SBP coverage immediately; and authorize full concurrent receipt for disabled retirees rated "unemployable" by the VA. But we still have to convince the House.

Issue 2: Other Senate-Approved Amendments

The Senate also voted this week to adopt a long list of other amendments to the FY2006 Defense Authorization Act. Here is a summary of selected personnel-related initiatives adopted at the behest of the following senators, in alphabetical order:

- * Boxer (D-CA): Require appointment of special task force to identify servicemembers' and families' mental health needs and require implementation plan within 12 months.
- * Chambliss (R-GA): Reduce Guard/Reserve retirement age requirement by 3 months for each 3 months served on active duty contingency since 9/11/01 (e.g., retire at age 59 if served one year on active duty since 9/11).
- * Durbin (D-IL): Require payment of Federal civilian income differential to Guard/Reserve members who have completed 180 days continuous mobilization, completed 24 months on active duty in last 60 months or are involuntarily mobilized less than 6 months after separating from previous active duty mobilization.
- * Graham (R-SC): Increase maximum assignment incentive pay from \$1,500 to \$3,000; authorize development of special recruiting incentives; allow Service Secretaries to implement Selective Early Retirement Boards (SERB) for FY2006-2011; and

authorize voluntary separation incentive pay (up to three times involuntary separation pay) for members with 6 to 19 years of service. (NOTE: MOAA is concerned about the potential for coercive application of the latter package by threatening members with involuntary separation -- and even lower compensation -- if they don't "volunteer" to leave. We believe members with substantial service who are excess to service needs should be authorized the same highly successful voluntary separation/early retirement incentives that were authorized during the post-Gulf War I drawdown.)

- * McCain (R-AZ): Authorize a variety of improved recruiting and retention incentive programs for active and Guard/Reserve members.

MOAA Alert - November 16, 2005.

Issue 1: VA Calls Off Dogs on PTSD Review.

Responding to growing outrage from military and veterans' groups, including MOAA, the VA has cancelled its plans to review thousands of VA disability ratings for PTSD.

MOAA's Legislative Update for December 2, 2005.

Issue 1: "New Reserves" Conference

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs and the Reserve Forces Policy Board jointly sponsored a two-day conference this week in McClean, VA to assess the seismic shift in the nation's Guard and Reserve forces from a "strategic reserve" to an "operational" one.

The first day's session featured remarks by Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, ADM Edmund Giambastiani, Jr., USN, and three panels that considered the impact and implications of using Guard and Reserve forces for ongoing operational missions at home and abroad. Giambastiani stressed that in the "long war" against global terrorism, the reserve forces are a vital link to the American people, and the Guard and Reserve are no longer a strategic reserve but an operational one. In this context, he said the military must do more to further operationalize the reserves.

He acknowledged that this change would require educating the American people on the new "compact" with Guard and Reserve families and employers, and developing "flexible" modes of service -- what he termed "on and off ramps" to active duty service. The three panels discussed stress on the reserve forces, recruiting and retention, and combatant command perspectives on the use of reserves for ongoing operations.

The second day's sessions focused on the impact of the new model on reservists' earnings, employers, and families; and analyses of recent reserve compensation and benefits proposals, including health care and retirement improvements.

Amazingly, Defense researchers concluded that -- despite the sea change from the Cold War model of using reserve forces only for a world war scenario -- there is insufficient reason to make significant adjustments to the

previous Reserve compensation model. Panelists asserted that retention and reenlistment rates were acceptable, and downturns in Reserve and Guard recruiting were being addressed through monetary incentives and a bigger recruiter force.

Absent a major meltdown in force manning, the Department sees no disconnect in calling on Guard and Reserve members (and their families) to make more and more sacrifice, but opposes making adjustments to their institutional compensation package. In MOAA's view this is an economic model that seeks to exploit Guard and Reserve families and fails to anticipate what is sure to happen when the house of cards collapses.

We don't think Congress will buy it. A growing chorus of bi-partisan leaders on Capitol Hill recognizes the need to make some compensation adjustments consistent with the new compact. Our hope is that, in the coming weeks, Congress will expand fee-based TRICARE to all members of the Selected Reserve, upgrade the reserve retirement package in exchange for increased mobilization time, and improve housing, family support, and transition assistance services for overstressed families -- all worthwhile investments in the nation's security and still a bargain in the new age of the operational reserve.

Issue 2: Final Salute

The uniformed services community is vastly poorer with the Nov. 15 loss of Sgt. Maj. C.A. "Mack" McKinney, USMC-Ret, to cancer at the age of 80.

Mack, then Legislative Director for the Non Commissioned Officers Association, and Col. George Henrikus, USAF-Ret, MOAA's Director of Government Relations at the time, co-founded The Military Coalition in 1985.

After retiring from the Marine Corps a few days short of 30 years' service ("I didn't want to make it a career," he joked), Mack devoted the next 34 years to supporting the troops as an ardent and highly effective advocate on Capitol Hill. He was also active in the Marine Corps League, The Retired Enlisted Association, and served the last 10 years as legislative counsel to the Fleet Reserve Association. Earlier in November, he was re-elected by acclamation as Administrator of The Military Coalition.

He worked tirelessly on servicemembers' behalf for the entirety of his remarkable life, and there has been no significant legislative initiative on military personnel and benefits in the last 30 years in which he didn't have some hand.

On his deathbed, he (and every doctor and nurse in the hospital) heard the voice of NCOA president and former Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Gene Overstreet booming out "The Marines' Hymn."

Mack was buried yesterday at Arlington National Cemetery, on a tree-lined knoll amid a cluster of three- and four-star flag officers. He must have thought they'd need some guidance.

Farewell, old friend and partner. We're really going to miss you.

MOAA Legislative Update for December 9, 2005.

Issue 1: VA Disability Claims Soar

The House Veterans Affairs Committee heard testimony this week from a retired USAF flight surgeon, senior VA officials, and a panel of veterans' service organizations (VSOs) concerning mounting challenges facing the VA claims system.

Dr. William Jones, USAF-Ret. said the VA system was programmed to procrastinate. His claims for service-connected disabilities have been held up for six years.

Since 2000, VA claims for initial disabilities have risen by 36%, from 579,000 to 788,000 in fiscal year 2005. Witnesses testified that the system is plagued with poor quality, inconsistencies between VA offices, mounting demand, and insufficient resources.

The average initial claim takes over six months to complete, and appeals of denied claims can take as long as three years. In addition to rising numbers, quality problems, and increasing claim complexity, the VA is also struggling to accommodate new legislative changes and court decisions.

The problems are compounded by accelerating retirements among experienced VA claims workers. Inexperienced replacements feel more pressed to make productivity goals than meet quality goals. By contrast, service officers with Veterans Service Organizations (DAV, VFW, American Legion, etc.) have a more extensive training program (DAV's entry-level service officer course is 16 months long).

Committee Chairman Steve Buyer closed the hearing with a promise to push for more VA claims adjudicators in the coming year's budget. "The increase in disability claims can be directly related to the increase in U.S. military operations abroad," Buyer said. "Doing more with less is not a strategy of success. We need to increase the staffing at the regional compensation offices and at the Board of Veterans Appeals to attack this backlog and prepare for the anticipated increases in additional claims."

MOAA's Legislative Update for December 16, 2005.

Issue 1: Defense Bills Resolved?

As this was being written, congressional leaders and the White House had apparently resolved all remaining differences on the Defense bill, clearing the way for a House vote - perhaps as early as later today.

Issue 2: MOAA Takes on Reserve Health Care Critic.

Wall Street Journal columnist Brendan Miniter ("The Benefits Explosion,"

http://moaaonline.org/ct/31z_irK1HXtb/) Dec. 6) got MOAA's dander up by trying to claim that the country can't afford to provide health coverage for Guard and Reserve members and families, and that the government already has given Guard and Reserve troops all they deserve.

MOAA President VADM Norb Ryan, Jr. (USN-Ret) fired off a response to set the record straight.

Ryan's letter (http://moaaonline.org/ct/xpz_irK1HXtg/) (pdf) cited another recent column in the same paper that showed the current defense budget, at the height of the war on terror, represents "only 3.2% of the gross domestic product, as opposed to the average of 5.7% of GNP in the peacetime years between 1940 and 2000."

He pointed out that servicemembers and families are "paying premiums of sacrifice that far exceed what any civilian will ever pay for his or her health coverage," and that the federal government provides health coverage for its part-time civilian employees.

"We need to keep our priorities straight here," Ryan said. "No Americans deserve health coverage more, and no country was ever more able to afford that coverage than the United States of America."

MOAA's Legislative Update for December 21, 2005.

Issue 1: Congress Decides Key Military Benefit Issues

The decisions are in, and the legislative glass is half full, at best, regarding the final FY2006 Defense Authorization Act. Bad news first:

The House refused to go along with either of the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) fixes that Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL) persuaded the Senate to pass, primarily for cost reasons (in combination, the programs would cost about \$9 billion over Congress' 10-year "scoring" period).

So SBP widows will still have VA payments deducted from their SBP benefits if the member's death was service-connected, and "Greatest Generation" retirees who already have paid more than 30 years of SBP premiums will have to wait at least another year to win the same paid-up SBP coverage that post-1978 retirees enjoy.

It's a bitter pill to swallow after this year's strenuous efforts on these widows' and retirees' behalf. But we should also recognize that we came closer than ever before, and that many of the victories we won in the past required multi-year campaigns. We plan to be carrying the fight on these issues again next year.

We made some modest gains on some other key issues, but fell well short of what we had hoped for:

- * Concurrent Receipt for Unemployables: Congress agreed to accelerate the timetable (from Oct. 1, 2013 to Oct. 1, 2009) for eliminating the disability offset, but rejected Sen. Harry Reid's (D-NV) Senate-passed plan to make it happen immediately.
- * Guard and Reserve Health Care: Congress agreed to make nearly all members of the Selected Reserve eligible for military TRICARE coverage, but the price will be steep for those who haven't been mobilized since 9/11. Unmobilized members who don't have access to health care through a civilian employer will have to pay almost twice the premiums paid by those previously mobilized -- about \$145/mo vs. \$81 for single and \$452/mo vs. \$253 for family coverage, respectively. TRICARE premiums for unmobilized members with access to employer-sponsored coverage will be set even higher, at \$246/mo and \$768/mo for single and family coverage. MOAA thinks these high fees

undercut the purpose of the coverage, and we'll reengage on this front in 2006, as well.

In the meantime, Congress deserves credit for making some administrative improvements, such as allowing demobilizing members 90 days after separation to sign up, protecting periods of earned coverage for remobilized members, and extending 6 months of coverage to survivors if the member passes away.

Military Pay Raise: All active duty, Guard and Reserve members will receive a 3.1% pay raise - one-half percentage point higher than private sector pay growth effective Jan. 1, 2006.

Reserve Housing Allowance: Guard and Reserve members mobilized for more than 30 days will be eligible for full locality-based housing allowances, rather than having to wait 140 days under current law.

Military Manpower Changes: Army strength is increased by 10,000 and the Marines by 1,000.

Active Duty Death Benefits: The military death gratuity is increased to \$100,000 for all deaths in the line of duty (rather than combat deaths alone covered in current law), including all deaths since Oct. 7, 2001. In addition, survivors of all members who died in the line of duty (rather than combat deaths alone) since Oct. 7, 2001 will be eligible for the recent \$150,000 increase in the maximum Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI).

Commissary Privatization Protection: The new law bars any further studies of commissary privatization for the next three years.

Combat Pay During Hospitalization: Servicemembers hospitalized with combat wounds will be eligible to receive a special pay of \$430 per month for the duration of their hospitalization or until they start receiving the new SGLI traumatic injury benefits.

Guard/Reserve Pay Differential: All qualifying Guard/Reserve members who are mobilized (not just those who are Federal employees) will be eligible to receive a monthly pay differential equal to their monthly civilian pay loss, once they have been on active duty for at least 18 months, or for at least 24 of the last 60 months, or if remobilized involuntarily within six months of their last active duty tour.

Issue 2: Medicare/TRICARE Payments Frozen

MOAA pushed hard this year, teaming with the American Medical Association, to get Congress to change the law requiring a 4.4% reduction in Medicare and TRICARE payments to doctors, effective January 1. We worried that such payment cuts would discourage more doctors from seeing TRICARE and TRICARE For Life patients. Virtually everyone acknowledges that the statutory payment-setting formula is broken, but congressional budget hawks also balk at the cost of payment increases.

Congress's compromise budget savings package (S. 1932) - approved earlier this week by the House and scheduled for a vote in the Senate today - struck a compromise that doesn't make anyone happy.

It repeals the 4.4% payment cut requirement, but freezes 2006 Medicare and TRICARE payment rates at 2005 levels. That's far better than the scheduled cut, but it still amounts

to a modest rate reduction, since physicians' practice costs keep rising every year.

On the positive side, the budget package requires a Medicare Payment Advisory Commission to report to Congress on ways to fix the statutory payment-setting formula, which sets reimbursement rates for physicians. MOAA believes it's vital to make that fix as soon as humanly possible. TRICARE and Medicare already are two of the lowest-paying programs in the country. We have to do better than a rate freeze to keep providers interested in accepting military patients.

The budget package also updated provisions of the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 that will effectively raise Medicare Part B premiums for Medicare-eligibles with annual incomes over \$80,000, starting in 2007. Currently, Part B premiums are set to cover 25% of the government's cost per individual to provide Medicare benefits. Under the new law, some higher-income beneficiaries will see their Part B premiums doubled or tripled by 2009, as their premiums will be raised to cover a higher share of the government's cost, as follows:

- * Under \$80,000: 25% (no change from current law)
- * \$80,001 to \$100,000: 35%
- * \$100,001 to \$150,000: 50%
- * \$150,001 to \$200,000: 65%
- * Over \$200,000: 80%

Under the 2003 law, those premium increases were to be phased in over 5 years. The new change shortens the phase-in period to three years, with 30% of the increase coming in 2007, 67% coming in 2008, and the full increase in 2009. MOAA remains as concerned today as we were two years ago about this plan to means-test what was enacted to be a universal health insurance plan for all older Americans.

Two other provisions of the budget package also may be of interest to MOAA members.

- * **Cap on Physical Therapy Payments:** The new package would implement a \$1,740 annual cap on Medicare payments for physical therapy, but directs Medicare to implement a process allowing an exception from the cap if therapy is deemed medically necessary.
- * **Long-Term Care Coverage Under Medicaid:** The package tightens rules concerning transfer of assets to qualify for long-term care, and applicants will be required to disclose annuities as assets. People with more than \$500,000 equity in a home will not be eligible.

Issue 3: More Drugs Proposed for \$22 Co-Pay

On December 19th, the Defense Department convened the Beneficiary Advisory Panel (BAP) to review recommendations to move certain Alzheimer's medications, nasal steroids, antidepressants, and antibiotics to the third (\$22-copayment) tier of the TRICARE formulary. The drugs involved are:

Alzheimer's: Cognex.

Nasal Corticosteroids: Beclovent AQ, Vancenase AQ/DS, Rhinocort AQ, and Nasacort AQ.

Antibiotics: Azithromycin (Zmax only) and Ketek.

Antidepressants: Prozac Weekly, Sarafem, Lexapro, Paxil CR, Cymbalta, and Wellbutrin XL.

The beneficiary panel, including MOAA's CDR John Class (USN-Ret), expressed two general concerns with the recommendations.

- * The full range of medications should be made available to active duty members if deemed medically necessary by the doctor. Currently, active duty personnel are denied access to third-tier drugs except when special-ordered by a military pharmacy. In many cases, members are assigned out of the vicinity of military facilities, and they should have the same medical-necessity access as all other TRICARE beneficiaries.
- * In some cases, the beneficiary panel urged a longer transition period to ensure beneficiaries are informed about the changes and have an opportunity to discuss alternative medications with their doctors. CDR Class noted that the panel had not yet seen a DoD communication plan to inform the TRICARE Standard population and their providers about such changes.

The recommendations will be submitted to Dr. Winkenwerder, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, for final decision.

Issue 4: Let's Call It a Year

With many of the MOAA staff out of town for the holidays, this will be the last legislative update until Friday, January 6.

We wish you and yours the merriest of Christmases, the happiest of Hanukkahs and all the best in the new year. If you're traveling over the next two weeks, please be safe. We'll need every possible member back for the tough legislative battles to come in 2006.



JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA



A membership meeting will be held Tuesday, 17 January 2006, at the Lawrence Country Club. Dinner cost is **\$20.00** per meal.

The Program: Local historian Paul Stuewe will speak on "The Lawrence Raid of 1863"

Social Hour: 1800 hours

Dinner: 1900 hours

The Menu: *Filet Mignon, baked potato, vegetable, rolls, salad, tea or coffee and ice cream*

Send your reservation and check payable to **Jayhawk Chapter MOAA** to arrive no later than 14 January 2006, to:
CAPT (Ret) Jim Cooper
1115 Stone Meadows Drive
Lawrence, KS 66049-3961

If you have any questions, you may contact Jim at 842-7037 or Erv Hodges at 841-2889.

cut here

Yes, please make _____ reservations for me and my guests. (Spouse and other guests are welcome.)

The cost is \$20.00 per meal. I am enclosing a check for \$ _____ for meal(s).

ALSO ENCLOSED ARE MY DUES (\$20.00) FOR 2006 \$ _____

TOTAL: \$ _____

Name

Telephone

Dinner reservations are confirmed on Monday before the Tuesday dinner. Cancellations, if necessary, should be made prior to Monday noon; otherwise, the Lawrence Country Club will charge us for those meals.

BRING A GUEST !!!

**TEAR OFF AND RETURN THIS FORM WITH A CHECK PAYABLE TO:
JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA**

MOAA WEBSITE: www.moaa.org

JAYHAWK CHAPTER WEBSITE: www.jayhawkmoaa.org

We are still looking for members willing to receive the Newsletter by e-mail.

Postage goes up in January.

If you received this issue by mail and would prefer e-mail, please let us know at jwhalladay@sunflower.com.

2006 MOAA Calendar:

Tuesday	17 January	MOAA meeting	Tuesday	18 July	MOAA meeting
Tuesday	21 March	MOAA meeting	Tuesday	19 September	MOAA meeting
Tuesday	16 May	MOAA meeting	Tuesday	21 November	MOAA meeting

IF YOU NEED A RIDE TO MEETINGS, PLEASE LET US KNOW ON YOUR RESERVATION FORM



*Newsletter Editor
Jayhawk Chapter, MOAA
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*Happy New Year
from your
Editorial Staff*

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