



Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter



This newsletter is published bimonthly by the Jayhawk Chapter of Kansas, Military Officers Association of America, as a service to all members. The Jayhawk emblem is used with the permission of the registered trademark owner, the University of Kansas. The newsletter is only as good as the material available, so each member is requested to forward news and other items of interest to the editors.

May Program:

Our speaker will be Coach Bonnie Henrickson,
Women's Basketball Coach at Kansas University.

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

WEBSITE AWARD - 2004
NEWSLETTER AWARD - 2003

President's Corner

by *Erv Hodges*



Greetings, Jayhawk Chapter:

Changes have been made to our May meeting. General Myers has had to cancel due to an unforeseen conflict that appeared after his acceptance of our invitation but he has made a commitment to visit our chapter this Fall.

*As with every change we have had a good result in that KU women's basketball coach, Bonnie Henrickson, has agreed to be our speaker at the May meeting. Her schedule is such that the only date available is **Tuesday, May 9, one week prior to our regular meeting date.** Please mark this change on your calendar and plan on attending and hearing an exciting, dynamic speaker. Please accept our apologies for the change in date.*

May is graduation for the cadets and midshipmen and as a result of your very generous response we will be awarding three Comfort Scholarships. This is also the time we award the MOAA leadership medals to outstanding ROTC members. We wish these young officers well in their military careers.

At our April Board meeting the Board agreed that we should enroll in the MOAA "Give Me Ten" program and recruit at least ten new members in 2006. I am especially interested in expanding the number of active duty officers in our active and reserve forces in our Chapter. MOAA is engaged in its support of programs for active and reserve officers not just the retired. With that thought in mind, do not hesitate to write your legislators to support servicemen's rights, past and present.

See you at the meeting on May 9.

Erv Hodges

Volume XI, Issue 3

15 April 2006

Staff:

President:

LtCol Erv Hodges, USMC (Ret)

1st Vice-President:

RADM Mike Sullivan, USN (Ret)

2nd Vice-President:

Col Jim McMurray, USAF (Ret)

Secretary:

COL John Halladay, AUS (Ret)

Treasurer:

CAPT James Cooper, USN (Ret)

Past-President:

LtCol Robert Longino, USMC (Ret)

Directors:

LTC Britt Bray, USA (Ret)

ILT Tom Carmody, AUS (Fmr)

LTC Dave Darwin, USA (Ret)

ILT Lee Gerhard, USA (Fmr)

Capt Herschel Stroud, USAF (Ret)

Newsletter Editors:

COL John & Shirley Halladay

Web Master:

Lt Col Stanley Sneegas, USAF (Ret)

Inside this issue:

May Program	1
President's Message	1
Jayhawk Chapter News	2
Amy News	3
Navy News	3
Air Force News	4
MOAA Legislative Updates	5 - 8
Dinner Reservation Form	9

*** Reservations should be sent to Jim Cooper by 3 May 2006.**



JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS

TAPS

LCDR Bill Barr, 82, passed away Monday, 20 March, at Lawrence Memorial Hospital. Bill was a native of Birmingham, Alabama. He graduated from the University of Alabama in 1948 and received a master's degree from KU in 1961. He served in the U.S. Navy as a fighter pilot during World War II and survived the bombing of the USS Franklin aircraft carrier. He also served in the U.S. Naval Reserve in

Olathe for 20 years. Bill worked for Proctor & Gamble from 1948 to 1962 and was a professor of mechanical engineering and director of the Space Technology Center at KU for 15 years. He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Martha, one son, two daughters, five brothers, a sister, seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

COL Stanley Parr, 85, passed away Thursday, 23 March, at Pioneer Ridge Retirement Community. No services were held and burial was in Topeka Cemetery. Stan was born in Leavenworth. He served in the U. S. Army for 26 years and retired after earning the rank of colonel. He served in World

War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. He also worked as a farmer. His wife, Mary, preceded him in death. Survivors include a son, Jim, Lawrence; a daughter, Penny Cooper, Liberal; and two grandchildren.

Any member who wishes to make a memorial contribution in the name of either deceased member, please see the article below regarding our Chapter's "MG Clay Comfort Scholarship Fund."



MAJOR GENERAL CLAY COMFORT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Last fall, we as a chapter decided to take an important step forward and sponsor a new scholarship program. We named the program the "Major General Clay Comfort Scholarship," and designed the program to recognize one outstanding cadet and midshipman from each of the three ROTC units at the University of Kansas. We decided that, initially, we would make one monetary award per unit per year, in the Spring, to non-scholarship underclassmen.

We have been raising funds for about three weeks and we have done fairly well. We have approximately \$3,200 collected, with the first generous contribution made by Clay's widow, Ardis, followed by several other members of the chapter. However, we have received financial support from less than ten per cent of the over 100 members of our Chapter. Our goal is to open a dedicated Endowment account, which will require \$5,000. We are over halfway to that goal now and you can see that with contribution checks between \$25 and \$50 from each of the other members of our chapter, we can easily make up the shortfall and meet the \$5,000 threshold required for an independent Endowment scholarship account.

I am asking that you carefully consider supporting this important Chapter commitment to support our local ROTC units; that you consider the importance of supporting the young men and women who are training to take their turn as members of the long line of military officers who have led our armed forces in times of war and peace; that you honor one of the founding members of this Chapter.

Please make your checks out to "KU Endowment" and annotate "Comfort Fund" in the memo area of the check, and send to: CAPT Jim Cooper, USN (Ret), 1115 Stone Meadows Drive, Lawrence, Kansas 66049-3961

Thanks for your interest and your support.

Jim Cooper

DUES FOR 2006 ARE NOW PAST DUE

*IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY DONE SO, PLEASE MAIL YOUR CHECK FOR \$20
TO CAPT JIM COOPER, 1115 STONE MEADOWS DRIVE, LAWRENCE 66049-3961
WE NEED TO KNOW YOUR PLANS SO WE CAN PROCEED WITH THE JAYHAWK MOAA DIRECTORY*



Army News

LTC Jeff Maxcy

Greetings, Jayhawk Chapter!

Another outstanding semester is rapidly coming to a close for the Army ROTC unit at Kansas University. The cadets have been very busy participating in training including a three day field training exercise conducted with the cadets from the Pittsburgh State Army ROTC program. The cadets practiced squad situational training exercises, land navigation, shooting the — 16, and ran a confidence course.

Although the cadets are focused on academics with the end of semester flurry of papers, book reports and exams, they still are busy with Army ROTC activities. Many cadets represent the Jayhawk Battalion by participating in spring intramurals. All cadets are involved, either as participants or helpers, in the Best Ranger Buddy Competition held on 29 April 2006 at the KU Campus. Over 95 teams from Universities all over the Midwest are competing in this competition which is the only competition of its type in Cadet Command.

Finally, on 22 May 2006, we will be commissioning 16 cadets as new officers in the United States Army. We are very proud of these cadets' accomplishments during their years with the Jayhawk Battalion and look forward to even greater accomplishments as they begin their careers as officers.

We invite you to attend the Best Ranger Buddy Competition and the commissioning ceremony. Check out our website at www.ku.edu/~kurotc/ for more details on these events.

JAYHAWKS LEAD THE WAY!

LTC Jeff Maxcy



Navy News

CDR Chris Orwoll, USN



Greetings from Mt. Oread and your favorite NROTC unit!

The best part of this assignment for me is the students we are privileged to have in our program, as they continue to impress and amaze us. To give you an idea of what they can do as a matter of routine, in just the recent history, they:

- competed successfully in the Ironman Competition at the University of Colorado
- helped plan and carry out the cleaning of two miles of highway just north of the city of Lawrence
- helped adjudicate a regional NJROTC Drill Meet at the Shawnee Heights High School
- planned, organized, and executed a Dining-In for the Seniors and Juniors. This was a fun and educational experience for all in attendance.

all with minimal guidance and while maintaining their normal course loads and midterm exams! You can be assured that the future of the Navy and Marine Corps is in good hands.

Next month we will commission a number of these amazing students: Midshipman Archer and Officer Candidate (OC) Melville will be going into the Student Naval Aviator pipeline; Midshipmen England, Jevons, Morrow, and Staff Sgt Minnich will be going to The Basic School as Marines; and Midshipmen Clough and OC's Burden, Huls, Ra, and Turner will be going into the Submarine Force. This is the first time in many years that we have no graduates going Surface Warfare, but there are quite a few expected candidates for that field in the Winter and next Spring so no worries there.

Looking into the coming year, we will have a significant change in the staff makeup of the Unit. I will be leaving to be replaced by Capt Thomas Morrow, reporting here from Commander, Naval Forces, Japan and the new XO, CDR Sean "Gomer" Fox will be reporting in July. SKC Sibley will be leaving us for Tinker Air Force Base in July and YNC

Wheeler will be retiring at the end of this summer. Both of them will be sorely missed...especially as there are no replacements scheduled for them as of yet. Gunnery Sergeant Amadis now has orders to Camp Pendleton, CA, for this June and his replacement will be starting work here within the next two weeks. Lastly, LT Glenn, is in the training pipeline at Norfolk, VA, and will be "boots on ground" in Iraq by mid-May. We wish her "Godspeed!!"

Thank you for your continued support of our Sailors and Marines as they prepare for commissioned service. You can

be very proud of every one of these future new officers, and your interest and assistance have a direct, positive effect on their preparation. Please visit us any time here at the Military Science Building, follow us at our website, and let us hear from you!

**Rock, Chalk, Jayhawk....KU!!!
(Oh, and Go Navy! Beat Army!)**

CDR Chris Orwoll, USN



Air Force News

LtCol Sandra Leiker, USAF

Ola, MOAA folks!

As Spring turns the KU campus into what is surely one of the most beautiful places in the state, I wonder why I am inside typing on such a gorgeous evening! Oh, yes, it is because I am about to miss my MOAA newsletter deadline! And why is that? Simply because the Air Force ROTC cadets here at KU are having SO much fun learning, training, and volunteering that I haven't been able to tear myself away from the action!

I note from review of last newsletter that "my" news hasn't actually changed much – the seniors are still anticipating graduation and commissioning; the sophomores are still "dreading" the rigors of summer Field Training Camp, etc., etc., etc. Maybe I could throw in a few more details? Review the exciting list of upcoming events? Somehow it numbers more than weeks left in the semester, so I haven't figured out where we will fit it all in! Nights and weekends – yes – that must be the ticket! Hmmm, let's see...

Well, as promised, we DID have great fun playing Laser Tag – not to mention the inherent training value (team building, small group tactics, planning/communication.) The 4-day base visit to Tyndall AFB in Panama City, Florida, over Spring Break was a HUGE success, beginning with an 0100 rendezvous time and departure for Forbes Field in Topeka to meet up with cadets from our sister program at KSU. The cadets and cadre boarded a KC-135 aerial refueler in the middle of the night, bound for its target destination over Eglin AFB, Florida, to support an actual AF test mission at daybreak ... just like real-world ops! The trip included officer shadowing in a number of career fields, sim rides, tours, and, I hear, just a few happy hours at the base beach! Thanks again, by the way, to the Kansas "Coyotes" 190th ARW for the airlift support which made the fantastic trip

possible. Just one example of the wonderful support we get from local units and organizations, including the MOAA.

Recent cadet volunteer activity includes directing cars and parking in support of the annual Lawrence "Raintree Run" (5K and half-marathon events), and the Spring blood drive on campus, which I must brag on (since the cadets won pizza for "most volunteers/blood donors"! Oh, heads up – on May 6 we will be hosting the first-ever, Tri-Service "PT for Cause" 5-K run at Dad Perry Park to raise money for the Freedom Alliance Scholarship Fund (charitable foundation that provides scholarships for children of armed forces members who've lost life/limb). Contact us if you want more information about this event. SERE and Dining In (with guest speaker former Governor Hayden) are still to come later this month, along with a Spring Awards Ceremony and formal "Parade" to recognize the commissioning seniors. Then graduation? Commissioning? I'm not sure I'm ready for this great group of cadets to leave the program - they are such an enthusiastic bunch and their leadership and energy will really be missed!

I want to close by thanking MOAA for the wonderful annual support in cadet awards and scholarships that will be presented at the upcoming awards ceremony on 9 May. Your involvement in the awards process and recognition of the outstanding cadets in each of our three ROTC programs is a true motivator. You are directly helping build the next generations of leaders for our country – we could not do it without you! Please come visit and watch the cadets in action ... you are welcome any time.

Lt Col Sandra S. Leiker

MOAA LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for March 3, 2006:

Issue 1: Health Funding Push Is On

MOAA's CDR John Class USN-Ret., Deputy Director for Government Relations, testified on March 1 before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs, the subcommittee with jurisdiction over funding for military and VA health programs.

The testimony asked the subcommittee to reject the proposed \$250 enrollment fee for VA health care for non-disabled veterans by restoring \$800 million to the VA health budget.

Class also urged the Subcommittee to reject Pentagon proposals to quadruple TRICARE fees for retirees and to reject raising pharmacy co-payments by two thirds. DoD projects these big fee hikes will drive hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries out of TRICARE, and has reduced next year's Defense health budget by \$578 million. Class voiced MOAA's strong opposition to the fee increase and pointed out that many of the Pentagon's own analysts think the fee increases wouldn't generate anywhere near that much beneficiary behavior change.

If that's true (as we believe it is), the DoD health budget will be left vastly underfunded. Class urged Congress to reject the health fee increases and restore the \$578 million.

His testimony also urged funding increases for VA research on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), blast injuries such as Traumatic Brain Injury, prostheses, and construction for polytrauma centers.

Issue 2: No More 20-year Retirement?

The Pentagon's Defense Advisory Committee on Military Compensation (DACMC) used its final public hearing on Feb. 28 to announce preliminary recommendations for sweeping changes to the military compensation system.

The DACMC is supporting a complete revamping of the current military retirement system. The committee's view is that the current 20-year "cliff-vested" system is outdated, overly "generous," inflexible, and inequitable (with no retirement eligibility before 20 years and no incentive to serve beyond 30 years).

DACMC's recommended changes (most of which DACMC envisions as applying only to future service entrants) include:

- * Eliminating the immediate annuity upon retirement and delaying payment until age 60
- * Providing additional retired pay credit (and basic pay increases) through 40 years of service
- * Initiating government contributions to a Thrift Savings Plan or 401K-like plan of 5 to 10% of basic pay
- * Vesting of members between 5 years and 10 years of service
- * Creating a "gate pay" system to provide lump sum payment incentives at specific points of service
- * Vesting in retirement health care benefit at completion of 20 years of service
- * Raising single housing allowances to the "with dependents" rates

Issue 3: Fee Survey Feedback

The three-question survey on the DoD-proposed health fees in last week's legislative update has generated a gratifying response from more than 16,000 people.

Check out the basic feedback at http://moaaonline.org/ct/E7z_irK12zOU/

Responses have been remarkably consistent across active duty, Guard/Reserve, retirees under 65, retirees over 65, and survivors.

9 out of 10 in each category oppose the DoD-proposed fees, and 2 out of 3 would oppose COLA-based increases. Those over 65 express even greater opposition.

Only 4% support the DoD plan, and 22% would support COLA-based adjustments. The remainder were neutral.

If you haven't already taken our survey, we would appreciate your input. You can take the survey at http://moaaonline.org/ct/Edz_irK12zOE/.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for March 10, 2006:

Issue 1: Leadership Letter Reveals Disturbing Trend

Hunter's and Skelton's letter complains that Congress has shaved Defense requirements every year in ways that cut nearly \$25 billion from real defense needs over the last five years.

"Defense spending amounts to a far lower percentage of the nation's gross domestic product than it did five years ago - a projected 4.0% in 2007 compared to 6% in 1985," they said. They further said that this year's "discretionary" defense budget ("for a nation at war") is only 53% of all government discretionary spending - down from nearly 63% in 1985.

Issue 2: Senate Budget Committee Votes Down SBP Fix

We previously told you that Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL) wrote a letter to the Senate Budget Committee leaders urging the Committee to include authority in the FY2007 Budget Resolution to end the deduction of VA survivor benefits from Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities when the death is caused by service. The letter sought similar authority to accelerate implementation of 30-year paid-up SBP coverage.

Our sources tell us that, on March 9, the Budget Committee rejected Senator Nelson's proposed amendment by a party-line vote of 12 to 10. All 10 Democrats voted for the amendment; all 12 Republicans voted against it.

You can find the list of Committee members at:
(Republicans): http://moaaonline.org/ct/Xdz_irK1sz65/
(Democrats): http://moaaonline.org/ct/X1z_irK1sz6v/.

Senator Carl Levin (D-MI), the senior Democrat on the Armed Services Committee, also sent a letter to the Budget Committee urging positive action on SBP as well as additional funding for:

- * Army and Marine Corps strength increases;
- * an extra .5% in the military pay raise (from 2.2% to 2.7%);
- * full Manning of Army National Guard units; and
- * Combat-Related Special Compensation eligibility for members forced into medical retirement before attaining 20 years of service.

At the time this article was being written, we had no word about Budget Committee action on these issues.

Issue 3: Senate has CRSC Champion

Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) introduced a new bill (S 2385), the "Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) Act of 2006," this week that would correct the inequity in the current law that excludes military members who are combat-injured and subsequently medically retired before 20 years of service from receiving both VA compensation and retired pay.

"A military retiree who spent at least 20 years in uniform and who has any combat-incurred disability no longer suffers deduction of VA disability compensation from his or her earned retired pay," said MOAA President VADM Norb Ryan, Jr. (USN-Ret.). "But a service member who suffers a 100-percent disabling combat injury and is forced into medical retirement with 19 years and 11 months of service can still lose his entire retired pay. I believe strongly that people in that circumstance should be 'vested' so they don't suffer that penalty."

We're grateful to Senator Reid for championing this cause and going this extra mile to make sure our Nation's wounded heroes no longer suffer such indignities.

An identical bill (HR 1366) already has been introduced in the House by Representative Mike Bilirakis (R-FL).

Both Senator Reid and Representative Bilirakis have supported significant gains to concurrent receipt legislation over the past three years. "Ending the ban on concurrent receipt remains one of my highest priorities," said Reid. "I'm proud of the progress we've made so far, but we need to keep chipping away at the unfair policy in place now. I am committed to that goal 100-percent." To read Senator Reid's full press release that also quotes VADM Ryan go to http://moaaonline.org/ct/X7z_irK1sz6t/.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for March 17, 2006:

Issue 1: Edwards, Jones Champion Bill to Ban Fee Hikes

On March 15, Reps. Chet Edwards (D-TX) and Walter Jones (R-NC) joined with 46 other cosponsors to introduce H.R. 4949, the Military Retirees Health Care Protection Act. They were joined by 13 association leaders at a press conference held to announce the new bill.

"I believe that keeping our promise of quality, affordable health care for military retirees is the right thing to do and the smart thing to do," said Edwards. "To win the war on terrorism, we must keep faith with our warriors and stop this military retiree tax."

Jones agreed, stating, "I don't understand any Administration, Republican or Democrat, that can ask you to go to war and raise fees for military health care. Military families are watching what we're doing; it's an issue of trust. We have to protect those who protect us from our enemies."

Edwards and Jones sit on the three committees that control the issue. Edwards is on the House Budget Committee and is the senior Democrat on the Appropriations subcommittee that oversees military health care. Jones serves on the Armed Services Committee.

Speaking at the press conference, MOAA President VADM Norb Ryan, Jr. offered the two legislators his "profound

thanks for your leadership and vision. You know what the Pentagon is forgetting - that the All-Volunteer Force is at risk. To those who think military people have such a great health care deal, I ask why there aren't lines around the block at every recruiting station? It's because few Americans are willing to pay the heavy premiums that career servicemembers pay, and pay up front: the decades of sacrifice that are the price of earning that health benefit."

Please visit http://moaaonline.org/ct/dpz_irK1xm6M/ and enter your ZIP code to urge your U.S. Representative to cosponsor this important bill.

MOAA is working with a potential sponsor for a companion bill in the Senate.

Issue 2 : Mixed Results on "People Issues" in Senate Budget Resolution

The week didn't start very well as the Senate Budget Committee revealed its version of the FY2007 Budget Resolution (S. Con. Res. 83) - the spending plan that, in theory anyway, sets budgetary limits on Congressional action for the coming year.

Armed Services Committee Chairman John Warner (R-VA) and senior Democrat Carl Levin (D-MI) had asked the Budget Committee for additional "headroom" to fix a variety of inequities, from survivor benefits improvements to a reduction in the Reserve retirement age for Guard and Reserve members mobilized since 9/11. But the Budget Committee ignored their requests.

Several determined senators pressed floor votes hoping to add key initiatives to the Budget Resolution, with mixed results. First, the good news:

- * Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP). Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL) pressed his amendment to restore funding to end the deduction of VA survivor benefits from SBP and implement 30-year paid-up SBP coverage as of Oct. 1. Nelson reminded the senators of the overwhelming Senate vote for the measure last year. Asked if he would accept a voice vote, he responded, "I will as long as it passes." He did, and it did. Way to go, Sen. Nelson!
- * VA Health Fees. Sen. Conrad Burns (R-MT) won Senate approval (by a 100-to-0 vote) of his amendment to eliminate a proposed \$250 enrollment fee and a pharmacy copay increase for certain non-disabled veterans using the VA health system. That effectively kills the fee again this year, since the House Veterans Committee already nixed it.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for March 24, 2006:

Issue 1: MOAA Highlights Reserve GI Bill Inequities

Hearings held in the nation's capital and in Arkansas on March 15 and 22, respectively, offered contrasting perspectives on a proposal to modernize educational benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB).

The Partnership for Veterans Education - a broad-based group of military, veterans and higher education associations (including MOAA) - is urging Congress to combine the reserve and active duty MGIB programs, which are now overseen by different committees under different laws. We think synchronizing benefits to the length and type of service

performed will better support military recruiting, reenlistment, and readjustment objectives.

Reserve MGIB benefit value has fallen far behind its original relationship to active duty benefits. And many Reservists say they really can't use the benefit -- they deploy too much to be able to use it while serving, and their eligibility under current law ends when they get out.

Unfortunately, senior DoD officials who testified before the full House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC) on March 15 don't share those concerns. They told the Committee they see no "significant shortcomings" in the Reserve GI Bill program.

Rep. Vic Snyder (D-AR) noted the disconnect between that input and the statements of National Guard and Reserve commanders at the same hearing. Committee Chairman Steve Buyer (R-IN) and Snyder were skeptical of DoD's argument that it would hurt retention to let Guard and Reserve members use their benefits after leaving service.

A second panel testified on problems in administering MGIB benefits, including lengthy delays in processing Reserve benefits.

MOAA Deputy Director Bob Norton (USA-Ret) urged the Subcommittee to work with the House Armed Services Committee to forge a total force MGIB that scales benefits in proportion to service performed and allows a post-service use by reservists who earn mobilization upgrades to their MGIB benefits.

Norton noted that failure to raise Reserve benefits along with active duty benefits has cost Reservists about \$200 a month. Rather than the current \$297 monthly maximum, they'd have been eligible for \$500 a month. As for barring use post-service use, he noted that current law will make the earlier Guard witnesses forfeit the \$22,300 benefit they earned during mobilization.

Norton's statement can be viewed on MOAA's Web site at: http://moaaonline.org/ct/P1z_irK1ezWz/.

Issue 2: Disability Commission Hits the Road

On March 16-17, the Veterans Disability Benefit Commission (VDBC) heard feedback from visits to Tampa/St Petersburg and San Antonio and received interim study updates from the Center for Naval Analysis (CNA) and the Institute of Medicine (IOM). The trip reports will be posted on the VDBC website at

http://moaaonline.org/ct/Pdz_irK1ezWS/.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for March 31, 2006:

Issue 1: MOAA Storms Hill

MOAA Council and Chapter Presidents from the 50 states and Puerto Rico, accompanied by members of the national Board of Directors and headquarters staff, swarmed Capitol Hill on March 29 to visit representatives' and senators' offices on key MOAA legislative initiatives.

This year, the "Hill stormers" focused on two main issues, supporting legislation to:

- * Prevent large TRICARE fee increases proposed by the Department of Defense, and
- * Fix Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) inequities that impose major financial penalties on survivors of members who died of service-connected causes and

"Greatest Generation" retirees who enrolled in SBP in the early 1970s.

TRICARE: http://moaaonline.org/ct/l1z_irK1BXOI/

SBP: http://moaaonline.org/ct/ldz_irK1BXOk/

Hill-stormers reported very positive feedback from most legislators, and we've already seen 41 more House members sign on this week to cosponsor Reps. Chet Edwards' and Walter Jones' "Military Retirees Health Care Protection Act" (H.R. 4949). Check your representative's cosponsorship status at http://moaaonline.org/ct/o7z_irK1BXOn/. Enter your ZIP code in the box to send your legislator a MOAA-suggested "please cosponsor" or "thank you for cosponsoring" letter, as applicable.

Issue 2: MOAA Awards Recognize Heroes

Tuesday evening, MOAA held a Capitol Hill reception to honor eight men and women for their leadership on a wide range of issues affecting the military community in the past year, and to honor thousands of America's wounded heroes, past and present. MOAA Board Chairman Gen. Jay Hendrix (USA-Ret) and President VADM Norb Ryan, Jr. (USN-Ret) presided at the ceremony.

Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL) received MOAA's Arthur T. Marix Award for his leadership on fixing SBP inequities in both 2005 and 2006.

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Reps. Gene Taylor (D-MS) and Tom Latham (R-IA) also received Marix Awards for championing legislation that extended fee-based TRICARE eligibility to drilling Guard and Reserve members and their families.

The Marix Award is named after MOAA's founder, Colonel Arthur T. Marix (USMC-Ret).

Sears, Roebuck and Co., represented by Mr. Aylwin B. Lewis, CEO and President of Sears Holdings Corporation, was honored with MOAA's Distinguished Service Award-presented each year to an individual outside of Congress who makes an outstanding contribution to the military community. Sears continues corporate benefits coverage and makes up any salary loss suffered by Sears employees mobilized in the war on terror, and has donated more than \$2.5 million to provide summer camp activities to children of deployed servicemembers. Mr. Lewis announced proudly that his son is in training to become an Army warrant officer.

Issue 3: Subcommittee Cites MOAA Letters in Panning Fee Proposal

There was positive news on several fronts at the March 29 TRICARE hearing before the House Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee.

Heaped on the front row of desks were several thousand letters that we recognized as tear-out letters from the February issue of Military Officer magazine urging Committee leaders to stop the Pentagon-proposed TRICARE fee increases. (see photos on MOAA's web site at http://moaaonline.org/ct/opz_irK1BXO8/.)

Chairman John McHugh (R-NY) began the hearing by noting that these were just some of the 40,000 letters received by Armed Services Chairman Duncan Hunter on this topic. He made it clear that Committee leaders are paying attention to those constituent inputs and are very skeptical

about Pentagon "claims to 'save the benefit' by raising charges for beneficiaries."

"TRICARE is not an insurance policy and shouldn't be compared to civilian benefits," he said.

Ryan expressed great concern that, in this already difficult recruiting and retention environment, "A \$1,000-a-year cut in retirement benefits can't help." He cited MOAA survey results of 40,000 inputs, of which 95% opposed the DoD plan. He noted that the 6,000 active duty responses were at least equally opposed, and offered MOAA's list of 16 ways the Pentagon can help reduce health care costs without hurting beneficiaries.

Also testifying was former DoD Comptroller Dov S. Zakheim, who reinforced what MOAA has been saying - that the Administration is skirting FY2005 Defense Authorization Act (which shifted responsibility for all TFL trust fund deposits to the Treasury Department) by continuing to charge TFL fund deposits against the defense budget. Zakheim argued, as MOAA has, that these deposits should not be counted, as a matter of law or policy, against the defense budget.

Zakheim also said he was struck by the difference in the positions being taken by today's military leaders and those of five years ago. Back then, he noted, the Joint Chiefs urged Congress to increase retiree health benefits because broken promises to retirees were hurting active duty retention. At this week's hearing, all four Service Vice Chiefs of Staff supported charging retirees higher fees.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for April 7, 2006:

Issue 1: TRICARE Fee "Summit"

MOAA President VADM Norb Ryan, Jr. USN (Ret) was among the association leaders invited by the Senate Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee Chairman to an April 4 meeting with DoD leaders.

This was the second such meeting Graham has convened to try to get a better handle on the differences of opinion between Pentagon leaders who want large increases in retiree TRICARE fees and association leaders who argue that the increases are inappropriate. MOAA feels strongly that the Defense Department has failed to pursue many other available options to reduce health costs without penalizing beneficiaries.

Graham said at the outset that he thinks the answer lies somewhere in the middle. He believes fees probably should be increased to some degree, but he agreed that that shouldn't happen until Defense health officials have wrung out all possible savings from other options. He told Defense leaders point-blank that he won't support increases of the size they're proposing.

One thing MOAA and the other associations have suggested is an independent review of DoD's budget numbers and an objective look at ways to contain costs besides raising beneficiary fees, including consultation with Defense Department and association leaders.

A representative from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) attended the meeting and accepted Sen. Graham's tasking to conduct such a review. MOAA looks forward to working with the GAO on this important effort and appreciates Sen. Graham's efforts to ensure beneficiaries are treated fairly.

Issue 2: More Drugs Shifting to Higher Copays

On March 30, the DoD Beneficiary Advisory Panel (BAP) met to review proposals to move certain medications for overactive bladder, hypertension, and neuropathic pain from the \$9 copayment category to the list of \$22 "third tier" drugs.

The BAP concurred with the pharmacy panel's recommendation to move Detrol, Oxytrol, and Sanctura, used for treatment of overactive bladders, to the third tier. Several other equally effective but less costly drugs would remain available for the \$9 copay. The beneficiary panel recommended a 120-day implementation delay -- rather than the 60 days recommended by the pharmacy panel - to ensure notification of beneficiaries taking those drugs.

The panel's recommendations will be submitted to Dr. Winkenwerder, Director of the TRICARE Management Activity, for a final decision, but we expect the changes to be approved.

For information, you may contact the TRICARE retail pharmacy (TRRx) customer service line at (866) DOD-TRRX, (866) 363-8779, or visit:

http://moaaonline.org/ct/X1z_irK14XIH/.

For the TRICARE mail order pharmacy (TMOP) go to http://moaaonline.org/ct/Bpz_irK14XIT/ or call (866) DOD-TMOP, (866) 363-8667. For additional information, go to the Formulary Search Tool for additional information about medications, their availability and cost at: http://moaaonline.org/ct/Xdz_irK14XIG/.

A chart of drugs already approved for the third tier can be found at: http://moaaonline.org/ct/B7z_irK14XIY/.

Issue 3: Senator Lincoln Fights Disability "Back Tax"

On April 4, Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D-AR), with Sen. Craig Thomas (R-WY) as original co-sponsor, introduced S. 2503, a bill aimed at fixing a long-standing tax problem faced by disabled retirees who win retroactive VA disability awards.

The VA disability award is retroactive to the date of the application – making some portion of past military retired pay tax-free. But to get a refund of back taxes already paid, disabled retirees must file an amended tax return for each applicable year.

That's when retirees run into a major problem: the IRS Code bars filing amended returns beyond the last three tax years. As a result, VA claims processing delays and insensitive tax laws cost disabled retirees thousands of dollars through no fault of their own.

MOAA believes this unfair situation should be corrected and has been seeking a legislative solution. Earlier this year, Rep. Sam Farr (D-CA) introduced H.R. 4727 to get the ball rolling on this effort.

Sen. Lincoln's bill, like Farr's, would make an exception to the IRS statute of limitations and allow disabled retirees to file amended returns for more than three tax years in cases where the VA approval is retroactive to an earlier date.

Please visit http://moaaonline.org/ct/Bdz_irK14XIR/, scroll down to "Retirement Issues", and click on S. 2503 and H.R. 4727 to send MOAA-suggested messages urging your senators and representative, respectively, to cosponsor these important bills.



JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA



A membership meeting will be held **Tuesday, 9 May 2006**, at the Lawrence Country Club.
Dinner cost is **\$20.00** per meal.

The Program: Coach Bonnie Henrickson, KU Women's Basketball Coach, will be our speaker.

Social Hour: 1800 hours

Dinner: 1900 hours

The Menu: *Chicken, 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 3 May 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 John Halladay at 843-6184.

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 \$_____

MG Clay Comfort Scholarship program contribution \$_____
(Checks made out to "KU Endowment")

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.**

**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 went up in January.

If you received this issue by mail and would prefer e-mail, please let us know at

jwhalladay@sunflower.com.

2006 Jayhawk MOAA Calendar:

<u>Tuesday</u> <u>9 May</u>	MOAA meeting	Tuesday	19 September	MOAA meeting
<i>(note date change)</i>	Coach Bonnie Henrickson	Tuesday	21 November	MOAA meeting
Tuesday	18 July			
	MOAA meeting			

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



*Newsletter Editor
Jayhawk Chapter, MOAA
2403 Manchester Road
Lawrence, KS 66049-1646*

***Remember
Memorial
Day***