



Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter



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November Program:

Our guest speaker will be Judy Billings, Director of the Lawrence Convention and Visitors Bureau. Her topic will be "History, Culture, and Landscape within the Freedom's Frontier National."

☆☆☆☆☆ CHAPTER
awarded for
2002 / 2003 / 2005 / 2008

☆☆☆☆ CHAPTER
awarded for
2004 / 2006 / 2007

The President's Corner . . .

Dear Jayhawk Chapter Members and Friends:

As you may remember, in July we were notified that the Jayhawk Chapter had been recognized by MOAA as a Five-Star Chapter for 2008. On October 17, John Halladay, Jim Cooper, and I were extremely pleased to receive the streamer signifying that honor from Col. Lee Lange, USMC-Ret., MOAA's Director for Council and Chapter Affairs, when we attended the MOAA Kansas Council of Chapters meeting in Wichita.



The Council meeting was also notable for at least three other things: All six MOAA chapters in Kansas were honored as Four or Five-Star Chapters – the first time that all the chapters in a state were so honored, Jim Cooper was elevated to the position of Council President (Congratulations Jim!!), and the meeting coincided with the 50th Anniversary celebration of the Wichita Chapter – a very enjoyable affair. The latter serves as a reminder that the Jayhawk Chapter has an important milestone coming up in 2010 when we celebrate our 20th Anniversary!

During our last meeting, our speaker was Lieutenant Commander Richard Federico, JAG Corps, U.S. Navy, who spoke on "The Rule of Law in the War on Terror: Lessons from Guantanamo Bay." Commander Federico gave an excellent presentation describing the chronology of events and lessons learned in the operation of military commissions, and the current policy debates dealing with housing, releasing and/or prosecuting the detainees.

This time of the year, I know that many of you will soon be thinking about charitable giving. I hope that you'll be able to include a 100% tax-deductible gift in support of our Chapter's General Clay Comfort Scholarships, which we present each spring to an outstanding cadet or midshipman in the each of the ROTC programs at KU. Please see the inside of the back cover of the Newsletter for how to contribute.

Finally, please join us for our next meeting on November 17 where our speaker will be Judy Billings, who will speak on the new Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area. Judy led the multi-year effort to gain the federal designation and is managing the development of this 41-county historic area in eastern-Kansas and western-Missouri.

See you soon!

Dave

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1 November 2009

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*** Reservations should be sent
to Jim Cooper by
12 November**



JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS



Our 5th Five-Star Banner:

Presented by LtCol Lee Lange, MOAA Director of Council & Chapter Affairs to John Halladay, David Darwin and Jim Cooper at the Council of Chapters meeting on 17 October

Our November Speaker - Judy Billings:

Judy has been Director of the Lawrence Convention and Visitors Bureau since 1983 and was a founding staff member of the Bureau in 1980. Judy has twice served as President of the Travel Industry Association of Kansas and has received TIAK's Distinguished Service Award. She has also twice received the prestigious Governor's Tourism Award for leadership in the tourism industry in Kansas. Additionally she has served on the Governor's Tourism Council as TIAK's representative, on the Kansas Film Commission and as Chair of the Kansas Humanities Council.

Active in the Lawrence community, she has served as Chair of the Lied Center of Kansas Board of Directors, has chaired the United Way of Douglas County's annual fund drive and the UW Board of Directors. She has served on the board of many local organizations including Downtown

Lawrence, Inc., and the Lawrence Arts Center including serving as Chair of its board.

Most recently Judy has led the multi-year effort to develop the Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area and gain federal designation for that 41-county area in eastern-Kansas and western-Missouri. She spearheaded the grassroots initiative that now involves representatives from each of the 41 counties. Under her leadership, an 18-month public process resulted in a National Park Service required Management Plan that will guide the work of the area over the next 10-15 years.

Billings serves as President and CEO of Destination Management, Inc., of Lawrence. The Freedom's Frontier Board of Trustees has officially selected this organization to manage the work of implementing recommendations set out in its Management Plan.

From Don Sheriff - How I spent my summer

Darlene and I took my sister, Bonnie, and her husband, Darrell, on an Alaskan Cruise in June. Darrell and I had taken the inland passage cruise on an Army Transport, Darrell in 1946 and I in 1948. I ended at the Arctic Survival School, Marks AFB, Nome, Alaska. The two of us always wanted to take our wives on the Alaskan Cruise. In February, Princess Cruises made an offer I couldn't refuse. I invited my



sister and her husband to join us. We toured Ketchikan, Tracy Arm inlet, Juneau, Skagway, and Victoria on the Star Princess. I took a photo of the Sun Princess, an identical ship, in the Tracy arm

inlet. We had an enjoyable time and recommend the cruise to all.

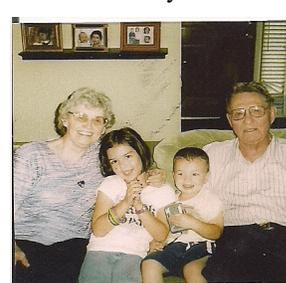
I awoke at 10:15PM, August 2, in pain, My left side of my face was numb. I woke Darlene and told her to take me to Lawrence Memorial. In the ER, it was confirmed I was having a minor stroke. After 36 hours, the paralysis had left my face. No cause was determined by doctors. I was released to continue my normal activities.

On Sept 12, Darlene and I drove to Charleston, SC to attend the 44th Air Refueling reunion. It was my first assignment after graduating Navigation School. The high-

light of the reunion was to spend five hours on the carrier Yorktown. We toured the ship from top to bottom. We had lunch in the CPO mess. I gained a new respect for my Navy friends. The quarters, the working environment, and, most of all, the stairs made me realize how glad I was to be Air Force.



We left Charleston to visit our daughter, grand daughter and her family in Olive Branch, MS, a Memphis suburb. We



enjoyed seeing all, especially our great-grandchildren, Emma, 6, and Grant, 2. From there we went to Little Rock to visit my first Aircraft Commander and later Squadron Commander of the 44th ARS. Lt Col Art Beretzantetti is 92 and was unable to attend the reunion. We have remained friends for over 55 years and stay in touch

monthly. Next stop, a visit to Darlene's sister who lives nearby Branson.

It was a very pleasant summer.



Army News

LTC John Basso

Greetings MOAA,

Fall in many ways is our busiest time of the year. Over the past two months we have completed our 48-hour field training exercise at Fort Riley; sent two nine-cadet teams to the Ranger Challenge competition at Camp Dodge, Iowa; fired a cannon at a KU football game for the first time in years and did pushups as a Joint ROTC force for Military Appreciation Day; did our Combat Water Survival Training; interviewed dozens of high school students for scholarships next year; hosted our brigade commander, COL Sharon Wisniewski and her Sergeant Major, SGM Cedric Moore with the help of MOAA who again did a wonderful job hosting Army ROTC night; took part in the Joint Services Ball; conducted both Family Day and the Jayhawk Battalion Wall of Fame Induction Ceremony; and conducted numerous classroom and leadership laboratory learning exercises.

Through it all, our cadets continue to perform at the highest of levels. We've recently received the Army branches for this year's graduating seniors and I'm happy to report that Jayhawks will lead the way in Armor, Aviation, Ordinance, Field Artillery, Engineers, Air Defense Artillery, Medical Service Corps, Infantry, Signal Corps, Adjutant General Corps and Military Intelligence in the Active Army, the National Guard and the US Army Reserve. Great news for us and for our nation. More about these fine future officers in my next update, but for now, know that we are in good hands.

My best to each of you and Rock Chalk!

LTC John Basso



Navy News

CAPT Carl Carpenter, USN



Greetings from the Jayhawk Navy!

Only two months into my Command tour here at KU Naval ROTC Unit and already half way through the fall semester. The Battalion has enjoyed a busy fall schedule. Highlights include the annual Barn Dance Social, a Battalion drill competition, an intensive day of leadership training at KU's Adams Campus Challenge Course near Clinton Lake, and the annual Tri-Service Ball which was hosted by the NROTC this year. We are eager to resurrect the annual Flag Football game with the Missouri NROTC Unit, and have coordinated with the other KU ROTC Units to conduct the Veteran's Day observances and campus vigil at the Korean and Vietnam War memorials on 06-07 November and the Veteran's Day 5K Run event on 07 November.

Please join me in congratulating MIDN 3/C Paul Bender of Eudora, Kansas, and MIDN 4/C Robert Kreps of Colorado Springs, Colorado, who both qualified for advanced standing this year, based on their academic, physical readiness and leadership performance.

We are preparing for our winter commissioning ceremony. This year we will commission three new officers in December – one future Ensign and two Second Lieutenants. They are:

- Midshipman Darren Elder, a future Navy Aviator
- Midshipman Robert Alley, a future Marine Corps Officer
- Midshipman Stephen Thomas, a future Marine Corps Officer

In closing, I want to again thank the MOAA Jayhawk Chapter membership for your support to the KU NROTC Unit. Your interaction with the midshipmen/cadets contributes significantly in molding the characters of our nation's future officers. Thank you again for the effort you make to recognize all the ROTC programs at KU.

CAPT Carl Carpenter

Air Force News

LtCol Gena Stuchbery, USAF



Greetings MOAA!

The fall semester is now in full swing. We've completed midterms, our PFA (Physical Fitness Assessment) and Career Day.

Our fall PFA – the first major test of our freshman class – went well, completed in spite of the damp and chilly weather on 7 October (just in time for the Fall Break). Pre-assessment nerves were quickly replaced by high-fives and celebration as all completed the task. The stage was set among our elite fleet feet for the upcoming Warrior Challenge which will determine “best athlete” bragging rights. Good luck to all!

For Career Day, ten officers from the C&GSC at Ft Leavenworth briefed cadets on a variety of career field opportunities, from acquisition to aircraft maintenance, air battle manager, civil engineering, intel, space/missiles and, of course – pilot. Cadets were pumped up when the session ended (all too soon). We always look forward to this annual event and seeing the light bulb go on for our younger students.

Cadets also got to experience the social scene, as 10 were invited (and graciously paid for by our hosts) to attend the AF Ball in September and enjoy fellowship and mentoring with the AF Element at the C&GSC. This was followed by our annual Joint ROTC Military Ball at the Holidome, 23 October. The guest speaker was eloquent, the food delicious and the camaraderie outstanding. BONUS: The evening culminated in a surprise wedding proposal for one of my seniors, Cadet Koenig, who said “YES!” A good time was had by all.

Kansas Council of Chapters

I was honored to take the helm as President of the Kansas Council of Chapters at the Council's quarterly meeting in Wichita on October 17th. The Kansas Council represents a very impressive group of Chapters, all of which were awarded 4 or 5 star status by National this year, which is a first for any state in the annals of MOAA (or formerly TROA). We have six vibrant, active Chapters: the Wichita Chapter is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary this month; the Sunflower Chapter is just going on its eleventh year, and the others fall in between in terms of corporate lives.



On the cadre side, I'm pleased to announce that Capt Corey Edmonds was selected the AFROTC Instructor of the Year, 2008. He flew to Maxwell AFB, AL last week to collect his hardware at the AFROTC Commanders Conference. It's nice to see outstanding performance earn recognition at the highest levels. Congratulations, Capt Edmonds – well done!

I also want to brag about our September HQ AETC IG Unit Compliance Inspection. The IG pays a visit every three years to make sure we're following the letter of the law and all our paperwork is accurate. We received the 90-day notice in June – the peak of summer cadre activities (field training, leave, cadet professional development training) – and worked hard to polish our programs as school started up in August to be ready for their visit. Results: the detachment was rated an overall “Excellent”! We're happy with the outcome, and even gladder it's over for another three years!

Looking ahead, we'll be hosting a joint “KU ROTC Day” with the Admissions Office on 4 November. If you know of any interested high school students, please contact Capt Edmonds (edmondsc@ku.edu 785-864-1216). Finally, we'd like to invite the MOAA to our annual KU Joint Service ROTC Veteran's Day Ceremony and 24-hour Vigil, 6-7 November.

Thanks for your continued support and have a great fall!

Regards,

Lt Col Gena Stuchbery

It is a pleasure to get together with the leaders of the others chapters and our state organization, and to share ideas and compare notes on chapter activities. We do mourn the sudden passing of a former Kansas Council President and former President of the Sunflower Chapter, CWO3 David Kennedy, USMC (Ret). He was very active in MOAA activities and we will miss his energetic and vibrant voice.

The Jayhawk Chapter is a Council trendsetter and you should all be proud of your accomplishments as we go forward. I look forward to a challenging year and to representing the Kansas Council at the annual "Storming of the Hill" in April.

Jim Cooper

MOAA LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

This is a summary of the many items MOAA produces each week on legislative activities. Those who have e-mail receive the full Legislative Updates each week.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for September 4, 2009:

MOAA Participates in Family Readiness Conference. MOAA offered seminars for 1500 attendees at a Chicago conference on needs of military families in the current high-stress environment.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for September 11, 2009:

Scam Targets Vets

The VA reports that a reprehensible scam is targeting veterans.

Scammers are calling VA beneficiaries under the guise of a phony "Patient Care Group". The caller claims that VA prescriptions are being administered by this company.

The scammers ask for personal information, including credit card information, claiming that this is necessary for the beneficiary to keep receiving prescriptions through the VA.

This is completely bogus.

The VA does not call vets and ask them to disclose personal information over the phone, and the VA hasn't changed any prescription dispensing rules.

Be safe. Never give out personal information to any unsolicited phone caller.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for September 18, 2009:

Discussion Panels Provide Riveting Testimony. Also at the symposium, three panels of unit leaders, mental health professionals, and family members/caregivers provided ground-level insights on progress and continuing needs, including some urgent cries for help.

Packed House Attends Wounded Warrior Symposium

An overflow crowd of more than 600 people attended the day-long symposium sponsored by MOAA and the U.S. Naval Institute on Sept 16 to highlight continuing challenges facing America's wounded warriors, their units, families, and caregivers.

<http://echo4.bluehornet.com/ct/5431119:6408765314:m:3:230981068:5505201D75666956C035EF8242602A3C>

The event featured a special focus on the unseen injuries of traumatic brain injury (TBI), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and depression.

Three key speakers set the tone in expressing government actions and intentions.

Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman ADM Michael Mullen, USN, kicked off the event with a powerful statement of the nation's obligation to those who have suffered the brunt of wartime sacrifice.

"We need to create a system [not just in the military and the VA, but] throughout America that sustains their needs for the rest of their lives," said Mullen. "We have a sense of urgency to turn research into implementable solutions...I've pledged to do all I can to avoid creating another generation of

homeless veterans. Shame on us if we don't make sure that happens."

LTG Jack Stultz, Chief of the Army Reserve, highlighted the need to provide help for children of the deployed and wounded, who often experience suppressed and confusing fear and anger. For servicemembers, "Every returning soldier has suffered stress," he said. "Counseling should be mandatory, not voluntary." He is working to create "virtual installations" to assist families in areas with significant military populations but no military installation.

Assistant VA Secretary Tammy Duckworth, a medically retired Army helicopter pilot who lost both legs and partial use of one arm in Iraq, said, "On any given night, there are 131,000 homeless veterans on the streets of America, and we're all dishonored by that." Duckworth said the VA is making a special focus on mental health outreach (including a 24/7 chat line to improve access to therapists), accelerated disability determinations, and upgraded care for female veterans.

Panel Examines VA Rating System

Government witnesses, researchers and advocacy groups offered different perspectives at a Sept. 17 Senate Veterans Affairs Committee hearing on calculation of compensation for service-caused disabilities. Senator Daniel Akaka (D-HI), Committee Chairman, said recent studies suggest some vets are undercompensated while others may be overcompensated, and that a "deliberate approach" is needed in reforming the system.

Sen. Richard Burr (R-NC) pointed out that the Veterans Disability Benefits Commission (2007) and the Dole - Shalala Commission both concluded that the rehabilitation aim of the VA disability program was not being met. Those studies also recommended that veterans should be compensated not only for lost earnings capacity but for lost quality of life.

Dr. George Kettner, PhD, President of Economic Systems, Inc. testified that veterans with PTSD experience greater earnings loss than veterans with physical disabilities. For example, veterans with a 100% rating for PTSD earn 92% less than their physically disabled counterparts. For other mental disorders, earning loss can be even more significant.

LTG Terry Scott, USA-Ret., who chaired the VA Advisory Committee on Disability Compensation, testified that his committee has informally recommended to VA Secretary Shinseki that the Deputy Secretary [Scott Gould] should be tasked to oversee a "systematic review and update process" for the VA Schedule of Rating Disabilities (VASRD) and a permanent staff to accomplish that "high priority" task. Scott also said that quality of life compensation should be limited to "clearly defined and very serious disability."

Scott noted that it takes about one year to do a complete review of one of the 15 "body systems" in the VASRD. He urged that work get started to review and update three or four body systems per year and that the work should be done internally by the VA.

Lt Col John Wilson, USAF-Ret., testifying for the Disabled American Veterans, pointed out that the VA's strategic plan doesn't address revising the VASRD, so tactical execution of the task could be questionable.

MOAA believes strongly that the VA rating system needs to be modernized, with priority emphasis on improving rating criteria for TBI, PTSD and other behavioral wounds that occur in military service.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for September 25, 2009:

MOAA Pushes Guard, Vet, Spouse Rights. MOAA offered testimony and mobilized members in support of proposed legislation being considered at a Veterans Affairs Subcommittee hearing this week to assist veterans, Guard members, and military spouses.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for October 2, 2009:

Family Readiness Council Provides Recommendations. The DoD Military Family Readiness Council met Thursday to provide SecDef with recommendations to improve military family readiness.

Pentagon Starts HAP Applications Processing

The Pentagon finally started processing applications for the expanded Homeowner Assistance Program (HAP) this week - more than seven months after Congress authorized partial reimbursement of certain military homeowners for losses on sales of their primary residence.

The Pentagon program provides benefits in the following priority order:

- Wounded service members relocating for treatment or medical retirement

- Survivors of those who have died while on deployment
- Military and DoD civilians affected by the 2005 BRAC round
- Qualifying military permanent change of station (PCS) moves

To qualify in conjunction with a PCS move, active duty members must have purchased their residence before July 1, 2006 and have received orders to relocate between February 1, 2006 and December 31, 2009, with a reporting date on or before February 28, 2010.

Losses on private home sales will be reimbursed at 90% of prior fair market value (PFMV - normally the purchase price) for those making PCS moves, while wounded warriors and surviving spouses will be reimbursed at 95% of PFMV.

If the member can't sell the home and the government has to take it over, the reimbursement rate for PCS moves will be 75% of the PFMV. Wounded warriors/civilians and surviving spouses who cannot sell under reasonable terms and conditions will still receive 95% of the PFMV.

Unfortunately, HAP benefits are taxable under current law, because of an inadvertent error in the February legislation. However, MOAA is strongly supporting House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Charles Rangel's (D-NY) new Service Members Home Ownership Tax Act of 2009 that would restore the benefit's tax-exempt status. Write your legislator to urge co-sponsorship of this important bill.

Additional information on HAP can be found on the Army Corps of Engineers website.

<http://echo4.bluehornet.com/ct/5568393:6530048421:m:3:230981068:54B0F1E26F79DE6E8E3B86EE513F4397>

Senate Approves MOAA Charter

Thanks to Senators Bill Nelson (D-FL), the sponsor of the Senate bill (S. 832), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), the Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman, and 39 other bi-partisan cosponsors, the Senate approved the MOAA Federal Charter bill last week by unanimous consent.

This isn't just an honorary issue. At least 10 states have laws limiting participation on state veterans' advisory panels to members of federally chartered organizations.

The House companion bill, H.R. 2017, sponsored by Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) and Walter Jones (R-NC), has 127 bi-partisan cosponsors so far.

You can help advance the MOAA Charter bill campaign by visiting MOAA's website and sending a message to your Representative.

<http://echo4.bluehornet.com/ct/5568395:6530048421:m:3:230981068:54B0F1E26F79DE6E8E3B86EE513F4397>

"Real Warriors" Destigmatize Mental Health

MOAA attended two events this week that focused on the issues of mental health, substance abuse, and suicides in the military in advance of Mental Illness Awareness Week, which begins Oct 4.

A Wednesday morning symposium and an afternoon virtual teleconference discussed suicide prevention efforts and ways to build resiliency within the military and veterans' communities. Both highlighted that incidents of mental health issues, drug use, and suicides are on the rise. Suicides alone are now considered a national public health problem.

Almost one third of combat troops are experiencing some level of psychological or unseen injuries due to multiple and prolonged deployments. 10 to 20 percent of troops who had combat exposure may have sustained a concussion during their deployment.

With suicides at a 10-year high in the military, DoD has launched the "Real Warriors" campaign. "This is a program aimed at wiping out the stigma associated with getting mental health care in the military," said Army Brig. Gen. (Dr.) Loree Sutton, a psychiatrist who heads the Defense Center of Excellence for Psychological Health and TBI. "We want people to seek help the same way they would if they had a physical wound."

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for October 8, 2009:

House Passes Military Tax Relief. New legislation would restore the tax-exempt status of military homeowner assistance program payments and extend another year to use the first-time home-buyer tax credit for personnel assigned overseas.

Coalition Recognizes Key Legislators and Staffers. On Oct. 6, The Military Coalition hosted a Capitol Hill reception to present its annual awards to two legislators and two Congressional staff members who have championed compensation and benefit improvements for military members and families.

New Defense Bill has Pluses and Minuses

There will be plenty of cheers and plenty of jeers, depending on which issues are most important to you, for the final version of the FY2010 Defense Authorization Act announced this week by House and Senate Armed Services Committee leaders.

First the good news. Among other provisions, the legislation will:

- * Authorize a 3.4% pay raise for active duty, Guard and Reserve members (vs. the budgeted 2.9%)
- * Bar the Pentagon from implementing any TRICARE inpatient care copay increases for FY2010
- * Authorize an extra 30,000 troops for the Army (15,000 above the budget request), and an additional 30,000 in FY2011 and FY2012, provided the Pentagon budgets for the increase
- * Authorize premium-based TRICARE coverage for "gray area" reserve retirees who haven't yet attained age 60
- * Authorize special compensation on behalf of caregivers of severely wounded warriors while on active duty (tracks with VA "aid and attendance" payments for vets who need caregivers)
- * Require retention of wounded Guard/Reserve members on active duty through completion of disability determination process, unless they request earlier release
- * Require a medical examination before administrative separation of members affected by traumatic brain injury or PTSD
- * Mandate a long list of initiatives to protect absentee voting rights for military members and families
- * Extend family medical leave rights to employees who are family members of deploying active duty members
- * Expand the window of active-duty TRICARE eligibility for activating Guard/Reserve members/families
- * Require a variety of measures to expand beneficiary access to mental health providers
- * Authorize \$49 million to assist school districts with significant populations of military children
- * Authorize active-duty-level dental coverage for children of members who die on active duty
- * Establish formal requirements for needs assessment and delivery of assistance to military families with children with special needs
- * Authorize a pilot program to create federal internships for military spouses
- * Express the sense of Congress that DoD should authorize Flexible Spending Accounts to let currently serving military members set aside pre-tax dollars to cover out-of-pocket medical and dependent care expenses
- * Require a DoD plan to improve access of beneficiaries to health care providers
- * Establish a new DoD Task Force to assess progress on care, management and transition of recovering wounded, ill and injured servicemembers

Unfortunately, the new legislation also produced some significant disappointments in that it:

- * Dropped the House plan to phase out the disability offset to retired pay for medically retired (chapter 61) members.
- * Reduced the Senate-approved Army manpower level by 15,000 for FY2010 (though it did provide extra increases in 2011-12).
- * Dropped a House-passed provision to authorize shipment of a second personal vehicle for members on PCS orders to Hawaii, Alaska, or US territories.
- * Authorizes daily proration of combat and hazard pays (under current law, any part of a month in a combat zone triggers pay for the month). MOAA believes this is an over-reaction to reports of abuse (e.g., scheduling two-day in-theater trips starting the last day of the month) that would have been better addressed by a requirement to spend more than 30 days in theater to receive more than one month's pay credit.
- * Dropped a Senate-passed provision that would have allowed military spouses to choose to establish the same domicile as their servicemember for voting and tax purposes
- * Dropped a Senate-passed provision expressing the sense of Congress that military retirement and health benefits are the primary offset to the extraordinary demands and sacrifices inherent in a military career, that career members deserve a health benefit commensurate with their sacrifices, and that DoD needs to look at other ways to reduce health care spending than shifting more costs to beneficiaries.

MOAA continues to be extremely frustrated by Congress' selective application of budget rules. In recent years, those rules have been routinely waived to pass trillions of dollars in tax reductions, stimulus packages, and bailouts of all sorts (which, to be fair, have included such things as the new GI Bill and military homeowner tax relief), while denying relief to tens of thousands of even more deserving groups whose military service cost them their health, their livelihood and the very lives of their loved ones.

We pledge to continue beating against this arbitrary budget wall until it comes down.

Many in Congress are, in fact, doing their level best to get these things done, and share our frustration at being turned back again and again by budget rules that seem to get tougher each year for our disabled and survivors simply because Congress has kept waiving the rules for so many others that deficits continue to mount ever higher.

That rationale simply doesn't fly when, year after year, so many big-ticket, politically expedient issues continue to be exempted from the so-called rules while disabled retirees, military widows and Guard/Reserve members with multiple combat tours since 9/11 repeatedly get left with the short end of the budget stick.

Coalition Recognizes Key Legislators and Staff

On Oct. 6, The Military Coalition (TMC) presented its highest awards (first announced in August) to two legislators and two Congressional staff members who have championed legislative improvements for military families.

Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) was presented the TMC Award of Merit for her leadership in sponsoring legislation to

improve National Guard and Reserve GI Bill benefits, provide tax relief for certain disabled military retirees, and improve compensation for military widows.

Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC) received the same award for his leadership in supporting military pay comparability with the private sector; retirement equity for Guard and Reserve members activated since Sept. 11, 2001; military health care improvements; and elimination of compensation inequities for disabled retirees and military survivors.

Michael Cline, TMC President and Executive Director of the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States, said, "As Ranking Minority Member of the House Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee, Rep. Wilson has played an influential role on almost every aspect of military personnel and compensation improvements this year. We're especially grateful for his leadership in working to improve this year's military pay raise and seeking fairer retirement and health care coverage for the Guard and Reserve community."

Congressional Staff members Ms. Allison Witt, Legislative Director for Rep. Robert Latta (R-OH) and Mr. Tony McClain, Military Legislative Assistant for Sen. Lincoln were presented the annual Freedom Award for their work promoting support for military issues behind the scenes.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for October 16, 2009:

Congress Clears VA Advanced Funding Bill

Over the past 23 years, Congress has approved funds for veterans' health care just four times before the start of the fiscal year (October 1). Almost every October, that lack of timely funding slowed veterans' access to VA services and thwarted needed construction, facilities upgrades, national research efforts and VA - DoD collaboration on "seamless transition" initiatives for wounded warriors and their caregivers.

The practical effect of the law-change is that Congress will approve year-ahead funding for VA healthcare to guarantee a smooth transition from one year to the next. The legislation provides mechanisms to adjust the approved funding to take into account the impacts of growing eligible populations and rising prices.

MOAA's and other military and veterans' groups' years of efforts to get that fixed finally bore fruit when the Senate unanimously approved the "Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009" (H.R. 1016) on Oct 12. Earlier, the House cleared the bill by a 419-1 vote.

On Oct. 14, MOAA's COL Bob Norton joined House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), MILCON-VA Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Chet Edwards (D-TX) and House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner (D-CA) at a Capitol Hill signing ceremony. The bill now goes to the President.

MOAA and other members of the Partnership for Veterans Health Care have signed a letter to the President requesting a White House signing ceremony for the bill. We are pleased to have worked with many service organizations on this issue and are very grateful for the overwhelming bipartisan support of this long-overdue legislation.

MOAA's LEGISLATIVE UPDATE for October 23, 2009:

Senate Punts on Medicare/TRICARE Fix - For Now

Despite a strong push from MOAA, the American Medical Association and others, the Senate failed to muster enough votes this week to repeal the flawed statutory formula that will impose a 21% cut in Medicare and TRICARE payments to doctors this coming January unless the law is changed.

Hearing Highlights Military Personnel, Health Costs

House Budget Committee Chairman John Spratt (D-SC) held a hearing on Oct. 19 to discuss projected defense budget cost growth in coming years.

Spratt began the hearing with an observation that defense spending comprises more than half of the government's discretionary spending. That's Congress's term for spending subject to annual appropriations, as opposed to "mandatory" spending on programs prescribed by law, such as Social Security, Medicare, interest on the national debt, military and federal civilian retirement and survivor programs, and interest on the national debt).

Since 2001, he said, the country has doubled what it spends on defense (MOAA comment: no surprise, given the cost of two wars and the necessity to repair compensation and benefit shortfalls that led to retention problems in the late 1990s).

Stephen Daggett, a witness from the Congressional Research Service, testified that one reason for the rising budget is that the average cost of a servicemember rose 45% between 1998 and 2009, after adjusting for inflation. Matthew Goldberg of the Congressional Budget Office said one reason for that is that military pay raises have exceeded those of private sector workers. (MOAA comment: a more balanced testimony would have reminded the committee that these pay raises were essential to recover from the adverse retention effects of capping military raises below private sector raises almost every year during the 1980s and '90s.)

Daggett suggested that some tradeoffs may be required to balance personnel and weapons needs - including possible manpower cuts. He suggested that the Navy and Air Force personnel levels could be reduced because of technological efficiencies that require fewer people. Another alternative, he said, would be to increase the defense budget.

Goldberg testified that the growing deficit and the cost of other needs such as health care reform make it almost inevitable that Defense spending will be put under great pressure.

Asked about DoD's health care budget, Daggett said that currently amounts to \$45 billion, or 9% of the defense budget. Over the next five years, he said it will likely rise about 5% a year - in line with health cost growth in the private sector.

One source of savings, said Goldberg, could be implementation of a truly universal electronic health record for both DoD and the VA.

He also said something could be done to give military beneficiaries an incentive to economize on their health care and "not go to the doctor for every minor problem." He observed that Congress hasn't allowed the Pentagon to increase retiree cost shares, saying, "It's very hard to get folks to control their utilization when they don't face a co-payment."



JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA



A membership meeting will be held **Tuesday, 17 November 2009**, at the Lawrence Country Club.
Dinner cost is \$20.00/meal.

The Program: Our guest speaker will be Judy Billings, Director of the Lawrence Convention and Visitors Bureau. Her topic will be "History, Culture, and Landscape within the Freedom's Frontier National."

Social Hour: 1800 hours

Dinner: 1845 hours

The Menu: *Chicken, 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 **Thursday, 12 November 2009**, to:
CAPT (Ret) Jim Cooper - 1115 Stone Meadows Drive, Lawrence, KS 66049-3961

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

If you have any questions, you may contact Jim at 842-7037 or John Halladay at 843-6184.

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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).

Clayton L. Comfort Award program contribution \$_____

(Separate check made out to "KU Endowment")

TOTAL: \$_____

Name

Telephone

**IF YOU NEED A RIDE TO MEETINGS, PLEASE LET US KNOW HERE _____
AND GIVE US YOUR TELEPHONE NUMBER _____**

**TEAR OFF AND RETURN THIS FORM WITH A CHECK PAYABLE TO:
JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA
CAPT (Ret) Jim Cooper, 1115 Stone Meadows Drive, Lawrence, KS 66049-3961**

MOAA WEBSITE: www.moaa.org

KANSAS COUNCIL WEBSITE: www.kansasmooa.org

JAYHAWK CHAPTER WEBSITE: www.jayhawkmoaa.org

*We are making progress,
but we are still asking for members
who can/will receive the Newsletter via e-mail.*

*Please let us know at
jwhalladay@sunflower.com*

2009 Jayhawk MOAA Calendar:

Tuesday 17 November MOAA meeting

2010 Jayhawk MOAA Calendar:

Tuesday 19 January MOAA meeting

Tuesday 16 March MOAA meeting

Tuesday 18 May MOAA meeting



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*We wish each and every one
of you a joyous
Thanksgiving & Christmas !!!*