



# Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter

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## July Program:

Our guest speaker will be Douglas County Administrator Craig Weinaug

★★★★★ CHAPTER  
awarded for  
2002 / 2003 / 2005 / 2008  
2009 / 2010 / 2011 / 2012 / 2013  
★★★★★ CHAPTER  
awarded for  
2004 / 2006 / 2007

## President's Comments. . .

Our Jayhawk Chapter was well represented at the K.U. Joint ROTC Commissioning Ceremony, the setting and retiring of Flags at Maple Grove and Pioneer Cemeteries for Memorial Day, and having our own LTCOL Michael Devlin, USA, RET serve as the Key Speaker at the Dorsey-Liberty Post #14 American Legion Memorial Day Services. Thank you to all who participated in these activities.



If you have read the "From the President" articles in both the May ("Get on Board") and June ("Getting It Right") issues of the Military Officer Magazine thank you, and for those who may not have read them yet please do. These two articles presented an almost overwhelming challenge as far as the scope of issues and potential impacts that must be addressed over the next several months. They also identified opportunity for each of us to be a part of the solution. In the May article, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph Vice Adm. Ryan states "such successful advocacy can be accomplished only with concerted effort from a strong, engaged membership." In the June article, final paragraph, Vice Adm. Ryan announces that he will transition in January, 2016 from his position of more than 13 years as our MOAA President, and that he does "look forward to working with each of you for the remaining eight-plus months of my tenure and intend to make every day count and never stop serving!"

So, what efforts can we as the Jayhawk Chapter do individually and collectively to be a strong, engaged membership? I would suggest that we already are a strong and engaged membership (as evidenced by being a 4 or 5 Star Chapter since 2002), but that we can become a stronger and more engaged MOAA Chapter by setting new and/or updated goals for the future. Some of these could include the following:

- Responding to MOAA Calls for Action by sending the recommended correspondence to your respective legislators, or modifying those to include your perspective on an issue.

(continued on Page 2)

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1 July 2015

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\* Reservations should be sent  
to **Jim Cooper** by  
**15 July**

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**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.**



# JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS



## President's Message continued:

- Including forwarding the Calls for Action to family and/or friends who can provide additional support to a particular issue.
- Increase efforts to recruit new members to join our Jayhawk Chapter.
- Increase participation in our 30-100-5 Comfort Scholarship Fund. As of May 2015 we had 20 Members (of the 30 set as the original goal) signed up to donate \$100.00 annually for a period of 5 years). We need 10 more members to join to reach that initial goal.
- Continue to grow our volunteerism locally by remaining committed to participation in local groups and activities.

Obviously, the above is only a sample of the goals we can set for our future. If you have other ideas for goals and/or activities for our membership please contact any of our Board Members to let them know your thoughts.

Thank you, and I look forward to seeing you at our Dinner Meeting on Tuesday, July 21<sup>st</sup>.

*Mike*

## From Gerald Rutledge:

This is to "officially" let you know that Ruthie and I are staying in Lawrence. We tried Indiana, but it wasn't right for us. Too many friends here in Lawrence. So, we'll see you at the MOAA meetings.

## From Jeremiah Karczewski:

Hello all! I'm Ensign Karczewski and I recently checked aboard DDG 108 USS Wayne E. Meyer out of beautiful San Diego. I spent a week onboard the ship getting to know the crew, and then this past Monday started BDOC (Basic Division Officer School.) I'm looking forward to getting a basic understanding of ship handling and damage control before I report back aboard the Meyer.

I've been informed that I will be taking over as the Electronic Warfare Officer aboard the Meyer. I've met the Cryptologic Technicians that I will be working with, and they are all great people. For that matter, the entire crew of the Meyer has been fantastic to me, and I can't wait to get back aboard and start my first tour as a Division Officer!

## Correction to Jayhawk MOAA Chapter Directory:

For some unknown reason, the listing of Air Force commissionees in the Directory was incorrect. Listed below are the correct new Lieutenants.

- |                             |                         |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2d Lt Justin A. Berndt      | 2d Lt Franklin Painter  |
| 2d Lt Alexander A. DelCurto | 2d Lt Cassandra R. Post |
| 2d Lt Blake T. Denniston    | 2d Lt Kyla L. Thrasher  |
| 2d Lt Peter J. Gordon       | 2d Lt John H. Toner     |
| 2d Lt Teddy Oteba           |                         |

\*\*\*\*\*

The frantic father called the doctor late one night. "Please hurry," he said, "my 12-year-old son just swallowed a ballpoint pen."

"I'll be there in about 20 minutes," the doctor said.

"What shall I do until you get here?" the man wanted to know.

"Use a pencil," the doctor said.

**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.**



## Army News LTC Davis McElwain, USA

### Greetings Jayhawk Chapter!

One word sums up our summer at KU Army ROTC: *TRANSITION*. This year marks the transitional year from the decades-old tradition of the Leader Development Assessment Course (LDAC) to the newly implemented Cadet Leadership Course (CLC) and Cadet-Initial Entry Training (C-IET) programs. CLC, unlike LDAC, is focused primarily on continued development instead of being the capstone assessment course of late. While the program has added three graded exams to the event, they will not receive an assessment that impacts their selection to Active Duty, National Guard, or the Army Reserves. According to Cadet Command, “The 29-day course starts with individual training and leads to collective training, building from simple to complex tasks. This building-block approach permits integration of previously-learned skills into follow-on training.”

Cadet-Initial Entry Training is “An intense four-week introduction to Army life and leadership training of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps” that takes place in the Cadet’s first or second summer in the program. C-IET is intended to provide a solid baseline of training for Cadets across the United States and prepares them for follow on training at their respective universities. The University of Kansas has sent two Cadets to participate in the newly implemented training, as well as two additional MS III Cadets to serve as leader/trainers for the younger Cadets. The rest of our MS III Cadets and select MS I/II's remain busy completing CLC and a myriad of other training opportunities, such as Airborne and Air Assault School, Cadet Troop Leader Training, and academic internships, clinicals, and volunteer work.

We look forward to everyone’s safe return and sharing stories with each of you!



Third Regiment CIET practices drill and ceremony.  
U.S. Army Photo by William Kolb.

**WE BUILD LEADERS!**



Check out our website at [www.armyrotc.ku.edu](http://www.armyrotc.ku.edu) for more details on these events, and take a look here <http://armyrotc.ku.edu/2015-ranger-buddy-competition>.

Additionally, find us on Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/KUArmyROTC> and follow us on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/KUArmyROTC>

**ALL IN!**

**JAYHAWKS LEAD THE WAY!**

**LTC Davis McElwain**



## Navy News CAPT David Schweitzer, USN



*No report until September*



# Air Force News LtCol Brian Salmans, USAF

*No report this issue*

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## 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 Legislative Update, 01 May 2015:**

#### HASC Moves Forward with Retirement Overhaul:

Congress is moving forward with a dramatic overhaul to military retirement. After an 18-hour marathon session, the House Armed Services Committee completed its markup of the FY16 defense bill on April 29.

The bill contains a controversial provision to change the retirement system to a blended plan where troops and the government contribute to Thrift Savings Plan accounts.

If enacted, future retirees face a 20 percent reduction in retired pay. To make up for the reduced retired pay, servicemembers will receive government contributions to low cost government 401k accounts. The expectation is that TSP contributions will make up for any lost retired pay. The proposal is similar to reforms recommended by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC).

- The intent of the proposal is to give troops who serve less than 20 years a nest egg for retirement.
- The changes, if enacted, will go into effect in Oct. 2017.
- The committee rejected the amendment by a vote of 55-8.

Act now to send a MOAA-suggested message urging your legislators not to fast track military retirement changes.

#### White House Cool to Retirement Reform:

The White House said it needs more time to study proposals to overhaul military retired pay.

On April 30, the administration unveiled its positions on the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC) report. The administration was originally scheduled to provide its analysis on April 1, but because of the complexity of the sweeping recommendations, requested an extension for additional study.

#### Congress Acts in Haste

Surprisingly, the House Armed Services Committee did not wait to hear the administration's position before moving forward with changes to military retirement.

MOAA thinks that proposed changes of this magnitude require further analysis.

#### HASC Approves FY16 NDAA:

HASC members rejected recommendations to consolidate TRICARE, establish new TRICARE for Life enrollment fees, and have working age retirees pay to use

military treatment facilities. DoD's budget submission created the first ever means-tested copay system based on military rank.

Legislators also opposed moves to further decrease housing allowances and commissary funding. The administration's request would slash \$322 million from commissary funding.

House lawmakers kept the active duty pay raise at 2.3 percent. The administration's request capped military pay below private sector wage growth for a third consecutive year. The request called for continued pay caps for a total of seven years.

#### Your Grassroots Support Pays Off

Legislators took MOAA's messaging to heart. In April, MOAA chapter and council leaders from across the country "stormed" Capitol Hill to meet with nearly all 535 members of the House and Senate. Stormers asked legislators to support a bipartisan debt-reduction package that avoids disproportional penalties on servicemembers and their families.

Storming the Hill participants specifically focused on three issues:

- \* sustaining military pay and benefits;
- \* rejecting disproportional TRICARE fee hikes and plan changes; and
- \* eliminating harmful sequestration budget cuts.

"Legislators listen when constituents have a compelling message," said MOAA's Director of Government Relations Col. Mike Hayden, USAF (Ret). "Fortunately for us, Congress recognizes that many of the proposals to erode pay and benefits that have come out over the past couple of years are too much for troops and families to face."

#### House Mark Offers Improvements:

The HASC mark includes enhancements and oversight of how the military handles sexual assault cases. It expands financial protections against unscrupulous payday lenders, and rejects another round of base closures.

The bill also includes MOAA-supported language to expand Space-Available travel to dependents of deployed family members. A recommendation from the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC) called for extending privileges to Space-A travel to dependents of family members deployed for longer than 120 days; the House bill reduces the eligibility period to 30 days.

The HASC mark also included the MCRMC recommendation to require a military child identifier for military dependent students, in order to assess the unique needs of military families. The recommendation requiring the DoD and VA collaboration, by establishing a Joint Uniform Formulary was also included.

The full House is expected to take up the defense bill in May.

#### VA Strained as More Women Access VA Benefits:

Women servicemembers are leaving the military and seeking veterans' benefits at higher rates, and the VA is struggling to keep up.

There are more than two million women veterans in the United States, making up 10 percent of the total 22 million veterans population. Their number is expected to nearly double by 2040, even though the overall population of veterans is projected to decline.

Women veterans from the Post-9/11 era are coming to VA in significant numbers, requiring a huge demographic shift for VA, and one that requires immediate and sustained attention. 15 percent of all Post-9/11 veterans are women; 61 percent of whom receive medical care from the VA.

Yet, VA officials told lawmakers at two separate chamber hearings in April that they have more work to do to meet the needs of women veterans coming into their system. The message from panelists was clear: the VA must do a better job in acknowledging and addressing the unique needs of women veterans.

"We've seen a 29 percent increase in women veterans accessing health care in the past three years. We are busting at the seams and we need to ramp up our efforts even more quickly than in past years to meet the increase demand," said Dr. Patricia Hayes, Chief Consultant for Women's Health Services at the VA.

#### **MOAA Legislative Update, 08 May 2015:**

##### Congress Passes Budget Resolution:

For the first time in six years, Congress passed a budget resolution. The Senate voted 51-48 along party lines to adopt the budget plan. The House passed its version of the budget submission in late March.

Only two senators broke ranks from their party: Sens. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and Rand Paul (R-KY).

The budget submission increases defense spending above the sequester limits. To avoid triggering the automatic cuts, however, the proposal shifts money to the Pentagon's war accounts, which are not subject to sequester caps.

The non-binding resolution does not need to go to the White House for signature. It serves more as a blueprint for congressional leaders. The ten-year plan seeks to balance the budget by aggressively cutting government spending and dismantling the president's signature health care reform.

While MOAA is pleased that the proposed budget provides defense planners some relief from sequestration, we remain concerned about using contingency accounts for normal DoD functions.

DoD agrees. In late March, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter said that these kinds of budget gimmicks are "undermining basic principles of accountability and responsible, long-term planning."

It's unlikely that some of the central pillars of the budget resolution are politically feasible. "What we want to see is Congress come to a common sense solution to provide permanent sequestration relief," said MOAA's Director of Government Relations, Col. Mike Hayden, USAF (Ret). "If

sequestration remains in place, the services will be on the hook for cutting a quarter trillion dollars in just five years."

Although debt reduction is a national priority, military personnel and their families should not have to shoulder a disproportional share of the rebalancing. They have sacrificed more than any other segment of the American population.

Act now to send your legislators a MOAA-suggested message asking them to eliminate sequestration.

#### The White House supports proposals to change benefits for military survivors:

##### *How SBP Works*

Military retirement pay ends when the servicemember dies. A large majority of military retirees are survived by their spouses, and SBP provides a way to pass on a portion of military retirement pay to survivors.

Under current law, however, military survivors forfeit part or all of their entire military SBP annuity when receiving Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The two programs are paid for very different purposes: SBP is a program administered by DoD that allows uniformed service retirees to elect coverage to provide continuing financial support for an eligible survivor. DIC is paid to survivors of servicemembers who die while on active duty, or to survivors of retirees who die of a service-connected illness.

In many cases, the offset virtually wipes out any SBP payment, leaving survivors with only DIC, a modest payment of about \$15,000 a year.

When military service causes a servicemember's death, indemnity compensation from the VA should be paid in addition to SBP coverage, not subtracted from it.

##### *Proposed Changes*

Under the current system, military retirees contribute up to 6.5 percent of retired pay to ensure their survivors receive up to 55 percent of the sponsor's retired pay. Premiums continue until the sponsor makes 360 payments and reaches age 70. Automatic coverage is extended to survivors of servicemembers who die on duty.

The new tier increases the premium to 11.25 percent - a 73 percent increase. Survivors of retirees choosing the higher tier option will not be subjected to the SBP-DIC offset.

The change could have a significant impact on the amount of money servicemembers contribute to the program:

"The problem with this proposal is that it asks the folks who will most likely be affected by the offset, those who have significant service-connected health issues, to pay even more in premiums to take care of their loved ones," said MOAA's Deputy Director of Government Relations, Col. Phil Odom, USAF (Ret). "These individuals are likely to have serious issues finding gainful employment after military service. We shouldn't be asking them to pay even more money for SBP."

MOAA is also concerned that the new premium is likely to be seen as too expensive for servicemembers, and they may decline SBP coverage altogether. DoD and Congress have worked hard at improving SBP programs over the past 25 years. Participation is currently at record levels and no private insurance on the market can offer equal protection. The 60,000 Survivor Question

Unfortunately, the proposed changes fail to provide relief for the 60,000 military survivors currently affected by

the SBP-DIC offset. These survivors will continue to be penalized by an antiquated Civil War-era law.

"Before we move forward with changes in survivors benefits, it's imperative that we help the most disadvantaged beneficiaries first," said Odom.

Rep. Joe Wilson (R-S.C.) and Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.) have introduced legislation to eliminate the SBP-DIC offset.

#### New Joint Chiefs Chairman and Vice Chairman Nominated:

On May 5, President Obama announced new leadership for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The president nominated Gen. Joseph Dunford, USMC, to be the next Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Gen. Paul Selva, USAF, to be the next Vice Chairman.

The nominations are two of the president's most important national security advisors. They represent the top two senior ranking officers in the military and serve as senior military advisors to the president, the secretary of defense, and the National Security Council.

#### **MOAA Legislative Update, 22 May 2015:**

##### COLA Watch:

The May Consumer Price Index of 232.908 increased 0.6 percent compared to last month. It remains .6 percent below the FY 2014 COLA baseline.

The Consumer Price Index for June 2015 is scheduled to be released on July 17, 2015.

Note: Military retiree COLA is calculated based on the CPI for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W), not the overall CPI. Monthly changes in the index may differ from national figures reported elsewhere.

##### MOAA Testified on Veterans Issues:

On May 20, Col. Bob Norton, USA (Ret.), deputy director of MOAA's Government Relations Department, testified at a joint hearing before the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees.

Norton outlined MOAA's key concerns and recommendations to improve veterans' access to VA health services, upgrade existing benefits, and extend special services to disabled servicemembers' full-time caregivers.

Norton also presented MOAA's recommendations on assuring aggressive implementation of the Choice Card for veterans stuck on waiting lists for VA care, and those who live at least 40 miles from a VA hospital or clinic.

MOAA was joined by the national commanders or representatives from the Paralyzed Veterans of America, Blinded Veterans Association, and partners from The Military Coalition: AMVETS, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Vietnam Veterans of America, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, and the Non-Commissioned Officers Association of America.

Norton described outsourced care as "a wobbly, three-layered cake: the first layer is local purchased care contracts, the second layer is the VA national patient-centered care contracts (PC-3), which got some primary care icing added on to the specialty care contract, and the third layer is the Choice Card program for rural veterans and veterans stuck on long waiting lists."

Because purchased care complements VA's direct care system, MOAA recommends Congress engage the Commission on VA Care to map out a long-term strategy to integrate all aspects of VA managed care. Given the importance and scope of designing VA care for the 21st century, the Commission on Care should be given a year to develop a plan.

MOAA also urged Congress to support other changes to the way VA does business, including:

- Building up the capacity to deliver VA care more efficiently in its facilities by hiring and training more providers, fixing the scheduling system, and reengineering clinical space along the lines of leading civilian health care entities;
- Recruiting more mental health providers and training them on the unique needs of veterans;
- Extending the time surviving spouses have to use new GI Bill "Fry Scholarships";
- Authorizing VA benefits to Vietnam War "blue water" Navy veterans exposed to Agent Orange;
- Providing veterans status to career National Guard and Reserve members eligible for non-regular retired pay who are entitled to certain veterans' benefits, but do not have active duty service under Title 10 orders; and
- Extending special services and support to the full-time caregivers of severely disabled veterans who served before Sept. 11, 2001.

Rep. Ralph Abraham (R-La.), chair of the House panel that oversees veterans' disability assistance, questioned what could be done to make further progress on the claims backlog. Norton said that new legislation, S. 1203, offers "practical, low-cost measures" aimed at further improving the claims system. Norton added that MOAA is working with the DAV and other groups to streamline procedures governing appealed claims, which currently take about three-years on average to resolve.

Norton described the plight of Coast Guard veteran Alexis Courneen who suffered a severe brain injury in service in 1999. Her husband Jason is her full-time caregiver, but the couple is ineligible for respite care, CHAMPVA, training, and a stipend under the Caregivers Act. Under current law, those benefits are only available to catastrophically disabled veterans who served after Sept. 10, 2001.

In response to Norton's testimony that, "there's no policy reason to exclude Alexis and Jason from Caregivers Act benefits," Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.) said that the committees were taking up the issue soon.

##### Key Vet Bills:

Several important veterans' bills have been introduced in the 114th Congress. Click on the bill numbers below to send your legislators a MOAA-suggested message in support.

- \* S.1085 : **Military and Veteran Caregiver Services Improvement Act.** This bill allows veterans of all eras eligible for the full range of caregiver support services through the VA.
- \* H.R. 1141 and S. 602 : **GI Bill Fairness Act.** This bill allows members of the National Guard and Reserves to count time spent receiving care in a DoD facility for a line-of-duty illness, injury, or wound incurred during a call-up to count as active duty for purposes of eligibility for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits.
- \* H.R. 1607 : **Ruth Moore Act.** This bill upgrades disability compensation procedures for veterans with mental health conditions related to military sexual trauma.
- \* H.R. 456 : **Reducing Barriers for Veterans Education Act.** This bill allows veterans to apply a small portion of one-month's Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to pay for college applications.
- \* S. 1203 : **21st Century Veterans Benefits Delivery Act.** This bill helps simplify and expedite the VA claims system.

Col. Barry Wright, USA (Ret), MOAA's Director of Chapter and Council Affairs, received the Minuteman award for his leadership. The Minuteman award is given to a MOAA member providing outstanding support and loyal service to the VCOC. Wright expressed his appreciation for the support of the legislators in attendance and thanked members for staying active with MOAA's grassroots advocacy.

The VCOC recognized Rep. Randy Forbes (R-Va.) with its annual legislative award for his support of many of MOAA's top priorities and nearly fifteen years of service in Congress.

### **MOAA Legislative Update, 05 June 2015:**

#### **The Bottom Line - 86 BAH?**

June 5, 2015

By Col. Mike Hayden, USAF (Ret)

A contentious new proposal cuts housing allowances for more than 40,000 troops.

In language approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee, servicemembers married to other servicemembers living off base will no longer receive two Basic Allowances for Housing (BAH).

How much will this "marriage tax" cost a married couple? If you're stationed in any of these cities, a lot:

The proposal received serious flak from MOAA and other advocacy groups, troops, and the administration.

The marriage tax restricts BAH to the spouse of higher rank, eliminating the benefit entirely for the other spouse. The proposal is particularly detrimental to women servicemembers, 20 percent of whom are in dual-military marriages, compared to less than 4 percent of their male counterparts.

If that wasn't enough, the marriage tax also includes a provision that cuts BAH by 25 percent to troops sharing an apartment or home. When I was a junior airman, a cut this steep would be significant enough to dissuade me from getting a place with someone in my squadron.

**The Bottom Line** : Changing housing allowances based on marriage or cohabitation significantly undermines the fairness of military pay and puts troops at a competitive disadvantage to their private sector peers.

86 BAH? What the heck?

*[EDITOR'S NOTE: What the Supreme Court did agrees with the Senate!]*

#### **DoD Echoes MOAA'S Concerns in Retirement Reform:**

DoD is giving Congress cautious approval on moving forward with retirement reform. After months of internal deliberation, one of the Joint Chiefs of Staff came out in support of recent proposals on some of the biggest changes to military compensation in a generation.

On May 21, in a virtual town hall with enlisted airmen, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Welsh used messaging similar to what MOAA has been saying on Capitol Hill over the past two years: "Don't reward people who stay less than 20 by hurting people who stay more than 20."

Since January, Congress has been weighing the merits of a report by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC) that calls for reductions in military pensions and moving troops to a blended retirement system. As part of its list of recommendations, the MCRMC proposed cutting military retirement by 20 percent. In exchange, troops would receive government contributions to Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) accounts, the federal employee equivalent to a 401(k) account. Government contributions would stop after 20

years of service, regardless of whether or not the servicemember continues to remain in uniform.

Welsh and the other Joint Chiefs will ask Congress to support another MOAA position: extend government contributions to TSP accounts to troops serving more than 20 years. According to Welsh, stopping contributions at the 20-year mark makes "no sense."

"This is what MOAA's been saying all along. We're glad to see the Joint Chiefs are not only hearing, but echoing our talking points," said MOAA's Director of Government Relations Col. Mike Hayden, USAF (Ret.).

MOAA supports providing a portable career device for those who leave the service prior to the 20-year point, but we have serious concerns that the MCRMC's proposal will fail to provide the necessary draw to retain members to 20 years of service.

Congress is currently considering two options for military retirement. Members of the Senate Armed Services Committee essentially adopted the MCRMC's retirement proposal in its version of the FY16 defense bill.

House lawmakers, however, wisely understood that stopping TSP contributions at the 20-year mark would provide a disincentive to remain in uniform. When the House passed its version of the defense bill in May, they voted to extend government contributions for troops serving more than 20 years.

"What we'd really like," said Hayden, "is for Congress to take more time to study the second- and third-order effects of these retirement proposals."

Discrepancies between the two bills will have to be resolved in conference committee later this summer.

#### **Lawmakers Face Uphill Battle on Pay Raise:**

House lawmakers approved a 2.3 percent active duty pay raise.

On June 2, the House Appropriations Committee approved funding for the FY16 defense bill. Included in the bill was support for a fully funded active duty pay raise and funding to maintain 100 percent of troop housing costs through housing allowances.

On passage of the bill, Defense Subcommittee Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-N.J.) said, "I am proud that we have kept faith with the brave men and women, and their families, who selflessly serve our country."

But they'll face an uphill battle getting the provision signed into law.

#### **Will Troops Accept New Retirement Reforms?**

As momentum to overhaul the military retirement system gains speed on Capitol Hill, a new report by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) provided predictions on if currently serving troops would convert to the new system.

House and Senate lawmakers are proposing overhauls to military retirement by combining the existing defined benefit with a portable retirement device. In exchange for cutting military retirement by 20 percent, lawmakers would provide government-matched contributions to 401(k) accounts.

The House proposal provides a government match up to 5 percent and continues the match throughout an entire career. The Senate proposal provides only a 4 percent match (after two years of service) and stops government contributions at 20 years of service.

Neither proposal requires currently serving troops to participate in the plan. Troops would have the option to opt in to the program. Once adopted, new servicemembers would be automatically enrolled in the new system.

Proponents of the plans say both proposals offer a better deal for the 83 percent of troops who do not serve until eligible for a military retirement, and currently receive no retirement benefits from the government.

For a much smaller portion of the force - the mid-grade officers and non-commissioned officers planning to serve a full career - the benefits of a blended system are more complex.

Members with more than 12 years of service would have little or no incentive to switch to the new plan. CBO estimates that none of those members would make the switch.

The report estimates that about 50 percent of servicemembers with 12 years of service or less during the opt-in period would make the switch to the new system.

Both proposals offer continuation pay at the 12-year point in a career. However, what the report fails to mention is that servicemembers are unable to invest their continuation pay back into their TSP accounts.

"Troops at this stage in their careers face a very tough decision," said MOAA's Deputy Director of Government Relations, Col. Mike Barron, USA (Ret.). "They won't be able to make up the difference in lost TSP contributions by twenty years of service."

#### **MOAA Legislative Update, 12 June 2015: Pentagon Supports Retirement Changes:**

After months of delays, Pentagon officials came out in support of changes to the military retirement system. Their endorsement sets the stage for major reforms later this year.

House and Senate lawmakers already introduced retirement reform proposals earlier this year. Their proposals are currently being negotiated as part of this year's defense bill.

Pentagon officials are asking Congress to make changes to their retirement proposals. Sharing the same concerns that MOAA has raised with lawmakers over the past year, they are asking Congress to make changes to disability retirement, the length of government contributions to retirement accounts, lump-sum proposals, and COLA reducing measures.

One of MOAA's earliest concerns with retirement reform proposals was their effect on disabled retirees. Changing the multiplier used to calculate military retirement could diminish a disabled retiree's pension. Defense officials asked Congress to grandfather disabled retirees under the current system. "This prevents more senior members from receiving less in a disability retirement annuity than the current system," according to DoD.

Defense planners agreed with MOAA that Congress continue contributions to retirement accounts throughout military service. The Senate's retirement proposal stops government matching at 20 years. MOAA thinks ending government contributions at 20 years will dis-incentivize continued service.

The Pentagon also agreed with MOAA's criticisms on potential lump-sum retirement benefits. This option provides a discounted, small lump sum while forgoing significant lifetime annuity payments. In its memo to Congress, Pentagon officials said that a lump-sum payment at retirement is a "smart financial decision in very limited circumstances." MOAA took a stronger stance, equating the payments to unscrupulous payday lending practices.

In exchange for comprehensive retirement reform, DoD also asked Congress to eliminate an unfair penalty on working age military retirees. Under current law, military entrants who joined after Jan. 1, 2016 will have their future

COLAs reduced by one percentage point until age 62. The military said that even by restoring full COLAs, the Defense Department could achieve savings with the new retirement system.

"Thankfully, the Pentagon provided its recommendations in time for House and Senate leaders to consider when they conference later this year," said MOAA's Director of Government Relations, Col. Mike Hayden, USAF (Ret).

Though the Pentagon addressed some of our concerns, MOAA still worries that a 20 percent reduction in retired pay will fail to draw members to 20 years of service and beyond.

#### **"Antiquated" Pentagon Looks to the Future:**

A new generation of troops could mean big changes in how the military operates.

According to Navy officials, in a decade, 98 percent of the force will consist of millennials. In order to preserve the all-volunteer force, senior leaders say the services must adapt to meet their needs.

At a conference with defense officials this week, Undersecretary of Defense Brad Carson called the Pentagon's personnel program "antiquated," stating that "oppressive bureaucracy exists" when it comes to force management. Carson emphasized his concern that "great dissatisfaction" of the system could lead to an exodus of talented leaders.

Drawing comparisons with corporate America, Carson said that although DoD can't pay as much as companies like Google, it must give troops new missions to inspire continued service. In order to recruit and retain troops, Carson wants "the services [to] be beds of experimentation."

To address this, the Pentagon is in the midst of conducting a six-month study of DoD's personnel management system. Some things being considered are common private sector practices, like flexibility in choosing assignments, and talent-based, rather than time in service, promotions.

Secretary of Defense Ash Carter hopes to implement findings from the study within the next 18 months.

"It's an ambitious timeline," said MOAA's Director of Government Relations, Col. Mike Hayden, USAF (Ret) "that seems based more on how much time folks have left in office rather than feasibility in implementation."

#### **MOAA Legislative Update, 19 June 2015:**

##### **COLA's Steady Rise:**

The May Consumer Price Index of 232.908 increased 0.6 percent compared to last month. It remains .6 percent below the FY 2014 COLA baseline.

The Consumer Price Index for June 2015 is scheduled to be released on July 17, 2015.

*Note: Military retiree COLA is calculated based on the CPI for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W), not the overall CPI. Monthly changes in the index may differ from national figures reported elsewhere.*

##### **Defense Bill Clears Senate:**

On Thursday, the Senate overwhelmingly passed its version of the FY16 defense bill, defying a veto threat from the administration. The 71-25 vote means the Senate has enough support to override the veto, should that occur.

The administration threatened to veto the defense bill because it exceeds budget caps put in place by sequestration. The bill attempts to circumvent the budget

caps by funding base operations using special war accounts. War accounts are not subject to sequestration.

In a surprising move, lawmakers rejected the Senate Armed Services Committee's recommendation to privatize commissaries. However, many of the committee's original proposals remain in the final bill.

Although lawmakers submitted over 600 amendments, only a handful made it into the final bill.

Several significant amendments, which would have prevented further erosion to pay and benefits, never saw the light of day. Left out were amendments that would have granted a full active duty pay raise, blocked a five percent reduction to housing allowances, prevented further cuts to commissary benefits, and prohibited increased TRICARE pharmacy fees. We thank the senators who introduced these amendments.

The following table shows where we currently are with the House and Senate-passed defense bills:

What's Next?

Now that both chambers have passed their respective versions of the defense bill, House and Senate lawmakers will go to conference to iron out differences. Leadership from the Armed Services Committees announced that they hope to complete their work before the August recess.

When conferencing begins, we will need your help. During this process, we'll ask you to contact your legislators in support of the House version of the defense bill.

We sincerely appreciate all of our members who take the time to contact Congress. We need your effort and support to remind Congress not to balance the budget on the backs of the military.

#### Top Docs Squash Privatization Talks:

The military's top doctors told lawmakers they do not support proposals to privatize TRICARE. In Congressional testimony, senior military medical leaders addressed health care reforms recommended by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC). The report, released earlier this year, recommended privatizing TRICARE and creating a new Joint Readiness Command.

Although the surgeons general all expressed appreciation for the time and effort put forward by the MCRMC, they were unanimous in rejecting the TRICARE privatization proposal. They cited several reasons for rejecting the proposal, including increased costs and the negative impact to readiness training.

Under the MCRMC proposal, known as TRICARE Choice, millions of TRICARE beneficiaries would move to commercial, private sector health plans. The plans, administered by the Office of Personnel Management, would be similar to those offered to federal civilians. According to the MCRMC, TRICARE Choice would give servicemembers and their families more choices in health care coverage. However, the commission says that military families would pay up to four times more in health care costs.

According to Army Surgeon General Patricia Horoho, TRICARE Choice "would negatively impact the readiness of our entire health care team and present financial challenges for active duty families and retirees."

Having TRICARE compete with the private sector "would drive up administrative costs and significantly detract from the operational mission of our medical facilities," said Air Force Surgeon General Mark Ediger.

"It is critical to understand that our direct health care system connects with the battlefield and exists to provide health readiness to our soldiers and their families," said

Horoho. "This is what separates us from the civilian health care system."

This message echoes what MOAA President, VADM Norb Ryan, USN (Ret) told lawmakers in February. Ryan said that problems with TRICARE "can be addressed in a systemic manner without resorting to its elimination."

The surgeons general also rejected the creation of a new Joint Readiness Command, saying that current and existing reforms are providing the desired changes. The surgeons general said the recent establishment of the Defense Health Agency (DHA) aims to standardize common or shared services between the three military medical commands, such as a joint Health Information and Technology service.

MOAA agrees, and has consistently said that the largest barrier to an efficient and highly reliable health care organization is the three-service system. Instead of creating a far-reaching command tasked with handling the entire scope of joint readiness, MOAA suggests building upon the current DHA structure and establishing a unified medical command with a single budget authority, one that can reduce redundancies and produce cost savings.

MOAA appreciates the time Congress is taking to analyze the MCMRC health care proposals before taking action, and supports initiatives that strengthen TRICARE for beneficiaries and sustains military medical readiness.

At the conclusion of the testimony, Rep. Joe Heck (R-Nev.) emphasized Congress's desire to improve TRICARE, saying they "look forward to continuing to work ... to make TRICARE the premier health care provider in the nation."

#### Agent Orange Airmen:

Earlier this year, a report by the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine concluded that crews operating on C-123 aircraft during the Vietnam War were exposed to Agent Orange. In congressional testimony provided in May, MOAA recommended that Congress and the VA act on the IOM report.

The report found evidence that those who served aboard or worked on the C-123 aircraft associated with Operation Ranch Hand (ORH) were exposed to the herbicide, both during and after Vietnam, when many of the aircraft remained in service for aeromedical transportation and other missions.

The VA published an interim final rule on June 18 to allow veterans to apply for disability compensation and VA care for any of 14 presumptive medical conditions due to exposure to Agent Orange. The ruling applies to active Air Force and Air Force Reserve veterans assigned to specific C-123 units from 1969-1986 who have developed one of the Agent Orange conditions.

In a press release, the VA said that "Air Force and Air Force Reserve flight, medical and ground maintenance crewmembers who served on the contaminated ORH C-123s are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides during their service, thus making it easier for them to establish entitlement for some VA benefits if they develop an Agent Orange-related presumptive condition. In addition, for affected Air Force Reserve crew members, VA will presume that their Agent Orange-related condition had its onset during their Reserve training. This change ensures that these reservists are eligible for VA disability compensation and medical care for any Agent Orange-related presumptive condition, and that their surviving dependents are eligible for dependency and indemnity compensation and burial benefits."

MOAA recommends any Air Force veteran who served in a C-123 squadron during or after the Vietnam War

contact a Veteran Service Organization that represents and assists veterans in the VA claims process.

### **MOAA Legislative Update, 26 June 2015: Supreme Court Rules on Health Care:**

In a 6-3 decision, the Supreme Court ruled that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) can continue to provide subsidies for health insurance to qualifying individuals. The decision upheld a centerpiece of the ACA and national health care reform.

The issue before the Court was whether individuals purchasing health care insurance through federally run exchange systems, rather than state run exchanges, are eligible to receive subsidies. Thirty-four states currently rely on the federal marketplace for health insurance plans.

TRICARE beneficiaries are unaffected by the decision. At the urging of MOAA and other military and veterans organizations, Congress passed the TRICARE Affirmation Act in April 2010, providing a statutory regulation saying that TRICARE satisfies the minimum essential coverage requirements of the ACA. Congress passed subsequent legislation a month later to exempt VA and CHAMPVA beneficiaries from the coverage requirements. These plans are also excluded from so-called "Cadillac taxes" on high-value plans.

Importantly, the ACA will not affect TRICARE or the VA's health administration, eligibility, or cost to beneficiaries.

### **Data Breach Notifications Sent:**

A cyberattack on the Office of Personnel Management exposed sensitive information of millions of Americans.

It is currently unclear exactly how many are affected by the data breach; some reports speculate as many as 32 million people have been victimized by the attack. So far, officials at OPM have confirmed at least 4 million government workers had their personal information compromised.

The ongoing investigation has revealed military records were not involved in the breach; however, the personnel records of current, former, and prospective federal employees' and some contractors' background investigations may have been compromised.

OPM's investigation continues with the help of the Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

OPM is offering free credit-monitoring services, similar to MOAA's Identity Guard, to affected employees. So far, the services have cost the government \$20 million.

DoD is the largest federal employer of military veterans. About forty percent of all DoD civilians are veterans.

### **Budget Shortfall Threatens Veterans Health Care:**

The VA is facing a \$2.6 billion budget deficit this year, according to VA officials. Sloan Gibson, Deputy Secretary of the VA, told lawmakers the department needs the money to bridge the gap of the projected shortfall.

According to Gibson, the budget deficit is largely a result of increased demand for care outside of VA facilities and the rising costs of expensive hepatitis C treatments. A full round of hepatitis C treatments can run upwards of \$100,000.

### **MOAA Attends Mission Transition Event:**

Earlier this week MOAA had the tremendous opportunity to attend Mission Transition: Creating Employment Opportunities for Post-9/11 Veterans and Military Families. The event was held in downtown Washington, D.C. at the Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with the Bush Institute and Hiring Our Heroes, a Chamber of Commerce Foundation.

The purpose of the event was to unveil the first meaningful roadmap to assist servicemembers with reintegration into civilian society and the workforce.

### ***Former President George W. Bush***

Former President George W. Bush provided opening remarks at the summit about the challenges servicemembers face when transitioning out of the military. President Bush cited the alarming statistic that, within the next five years, one million troops will complete their service and return to civilian life. Bush said he has dedicated his post-presidential life to helping those who have served our country. In closing, the former president said, "Skills are teachable, but what matters most is the character of the human being."

Later in the summit, Former First Lady Laura Bush expanded on her husband's remarks, talking about some of the difficulties inherent in military life. "When one family member suffers everyone suffers," she said.

She went on to address the dilemma created by frequent moves military families endure. On average, military families move every two to three years, making meaningful employment a serious challenge for spouses.

### ***Former First Lady Laura Bush***

Following her remarks was a discussion panel highlighting why spouse employment is necessary for the health of the all-volunteer force.

Other notable speakers at the event included Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez, Medal of Honor recipient former USMC Sergeant Dakota Meyer, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Peter Pace USMC (Ret.), CEO for Starfish Media Group and broadcast journalist Soledad O'Brien, and David Plouffe, former campaign manager and advisor for President Barack Obama and now Chief Advisor for Uber.

While the content of the messages differed, the underlying message was clear: hiring vets and their families is not only the right thing to do, but it's the smart thing to do!

Thinking About Your Next Career? So Are We®!  
Learn more about MOAA's Transition services at [www.moaa.org/career](http://www.moaa.org/career)

# HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY



# JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA



A membership meeting will be held **Tuesday, 21 July 2015**, at the Lawrence Country Club.

Dinner cost is **\$24.00/meal**.

**The Program:** *Our guest speaker will be Douglas County Administrator Craig Weinaug.*

*Social Hour: 1800 hours      Dinner: 1845 hours*

**The Menu:** Tossed salad, grilled sirloin, rosemary whipped potatoes, seasonal vegetables, dinner rolls, coffee, dessert

*Send your reservation and check payable to Jayhawk Chapter MOAA to arrive no later than **Wednesday, 15 July 2015**, to: **CAPT Jim Cooper, 1115 Stone Meadows Drive, Lawrence, KS 66049***

*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 Cooper 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 **\$24.00 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 Jim Cooper, 1115 Stone Meadows Drive, Lawrence, KS 66049**

MOAA WEBSITE: [www.moaa.org](http://www.moaa.org)  
KANSAS COUNCIL WEBSITE: [www.kansasmooa.org](http://www.kansasmooa.org)  
JAYHAWK CHAPTER WEBSITE: [www.jayhawkmoaa.org](http://www.jayhawkmoaa.org)

**Thank you for receiving  
the newsletter via e-mail !!  
It saves the Chapter for both  
printing and postage.**

**Tentative 2015 Meeting Schedule:**

Tuesday 21 July 2015

Tuesday

15 September 2015

Tuesday

17 November 2015



*One Association, One Voice. Yours.*

*Newsletter Editor  
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***IN GOD WE TRUST***