



Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter

This newsletter is published bimonthly by the Jayhawk Chapter of Kansas, Military Officers Association of America, as a service to all members. The Jayhawk emblem is used with the permission of the registered trademark owner, the University of Kansas.

January Program:

Our program will be member Herschel and Jacque Stroud presenting "Abe and Mary: A Family Portrait."

★★★★★ CHAPTER
awarded for

2002 / 2003 / 2005 / 2008 / 2009
2010 / 2011 / 2012 / 2013 / 2014

★★★★★ CHAPTER
awarded for

2004 / 2006 / 2007

President's Comments. . .

2015 was an extremely busy year for MOAA at the National, State (Kansas Council) and local (Jayhawk Chapter) levels. It was very successful at the National level in advocating for benefits in medical, pharmacy, commissary and Surviving Spouse program expansion. There were also some areas that were not as successful, primarily with COLA increases not provided for retired pay, social security and other categories. At the State level there were also successes in the areas of in state tuition for dependents of military members stationed in Kansas, reciprocal licensure for state licensed professions (except lawyers which has been being pursued since mid 2015). We also had numerous successes at the local level primarily through our membership being actively involved in community activities, and additionally by having Jayhawk Chapter represented at the MOAA Chapter Leaders Symposium in Kansas City, and at the MOAA National Meeting in Orlando (where the Five Star Level of Excellence Award for 2014 was awarded to Jayhawk Chapter).



The single most important thing I learned over the past year is that being actively engaged at the local Chapter and state Council levels is critical to the success that MOAA can achieve at the National level for all of us. Thanks to all of you for your efforts in 2015 in keeping current and responding to the multiple "Call for Action" items that came to us from MOAA. National MOAA Leaders have been consistently clear that they need all of us at the Chapter and Council Level to stay engaged, and that by working together we have the best opportunity for success.

Moving forward into 2016 our Jayhawk Chapter MOAA will be very busy starting with our January Board and Membership Meetings. At our January Meeting we will vote for approval of the 2016 Chapter Board of Directors, and follow that with installing the 2016 Officers and Board Members. Our Chapter on February 13 will serve as host for the 2016 Quarterly Kansas Council MOAA meeting which is comprised of six MOAA Chapters.

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1 January 2016

Staff:

- President:
LCDR Michael R. Miller, USN (Ret)
- 1st Vice-President: :
MAJ Andrew D. Bauch, USAF
- 2nd Vice-President:
COL George W. Pogge, USA (Ret)
- Secretary:
COL John W. Halladay, USA (Ret)
- Treasurer:
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- Directors:
RADM H. Edward Phillips, USN (Ret)
Col John Mosher, USAFR (Ret)
LTC Michael R. Devlin, USA (Ret)
LCDR Jeff Mitchell, USN (Ret)
LtCol Bill Pastewait, USAF, ROTC
- Newsletter Editors:
COL John & Shirley Halladay
- Web Master:
LtCol Stanley Sneegas, USAF (Ret)

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* Reservations should be sent
to **Jim Cooper** by
13 January



JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS



**CHAPTER DUES (\$20.00) are due in January.
Please send your check to CAPT (Ret) Jim Cooper
1115 Stone Meadows Drive, Lawrence, KS 66049-3961**

REMINDER: Our January meeting will be at Maceli's (1031 New Hampshire) because Lawrence Country Club is in the midst of a remodeling project and Alvamar just changed hands and cancelled all contracts effective 01/01/16.

President's Message (continued)

I have one final request of the Jayhawk Chapter Members to complete on or before the middle of January 2016 (unless you have already provided it). The MOAA Level of Excellence Recognition Program submission for 2015 due date to MOAA has been moved forward to March 1st (from June 1st in previous years). My request is that you provide me information on what organizations and activities you participate in. This can include anything you do individually or collectively such as volunteer at LMH, volunteer at Watkins Museum, act in theater performances, coach a youth team, participate in local government, serve in a position in your church, mentor and/or give presentations to schools or groups, help place and recover flags for Memorial Day observation, be a "Bell Ringer" for the Salvation Army Red Kettle Drive, or any other things you may be involved with. Please don't be shy with your input. Thank you in advance for doing this.

It has been a distinct honor and privilege to have served and represented our Jayhawk Chapter in 2015. Thank you for this opportunity, and Never Stop Serving.

Mike

CONDOLENCES



Former member, **CDR Martin "Mutt" Henry**, passed away 29 October 2015 at Fairfax, Virginia. Memorial services were held 09 December, at the First Presbyterian Church, Lawrence. Private inurnment took place the preceding day at Pioneer Cemetery.

CAPT John "Buck" Newsom



John "Buck" Newsom passed away 26 November 2015, at the age of 96. Funeral services were held at Plymouth Congregational Church on 04 December. A Celebration of Life followed at Lawrence Country Club.

Buck was born in Durham, NC. He attended Duke University for one year and graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in February 1941. Upon graduation, he reported to the USS Hopkins as Chief Engineer and Gunnery Officer. The Hopkins entered Pearl Harbor on December 9th, 1941, took over the anti-submarine patrol and sank a Japanese submarine. The Hopkins participated in the Guadalcanal and Munda campaigns, receiving three battle stars and the Navy Unit Citation. The Hopkins survived the Battle of Savo Island, the worst sea battle defeat the U.S. Navy ever suffered.

Buck went through lighter-than-air training (blimp pilot training) at Lakehurst, NJ and Moffett Field, CA.

He returned to sea on the USS California participating in the Okinawa Third Fleet operation campaigns. As part of the invasion fleet of Japan, the California was the first American ship in the Kobe/Osaka area. Buck served on the inspection team

**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.**

of the Japanese vessels. After assisting in placing the California in the reserve fleet, Buck then spent six months on the USS Saint Paul in China.

He returned to aviation on the staff of Naval Operations and was Commanding Officer of the squadron ZP-2 in Brunswick, GA. He had additional flight training at Pensacola, FL; Hutchison, KS and Olathe, KS. Buck flew sea planes and carrier-based S2Fs.

After a tour as Plans Officer on the staff of Commander Fleet Air Wings, Atlantic, he was assigned as Commanding Officer, Naval ROTC Unit and Professor of Naval Science at the University of Kansas.

Buck ended his Navy career as Fleet Personnel Officer, Pacific Fleet in Hawaii. After assisting in setting up the Navy Support Unit in Saigon, he retired in September 1964 as a Captain in the U.S. Navy.

After retiring, Buck returned to Lawrence to work for Centron Productions for 20 years, followed by a five year association with Corporate Productions, Toluca Lake, CA.

During his years at Centron, he was a member of the Army-Navy Club in Washington, the International Quorum of Film/Video Producers and the International Association of Business Communicators. Buck was a Life Member of the Naval Academy Association, the Douglas County Historical Association and the Naval Museum Foundation.

PERSONAL NEWS

From Don Sheriff:



COL (Ret) Charles Heller, Army Ret., was the guest speaker at the Meadowlark Estates Veterans Day program for all resident veterans and spouses of deceased veterans. COL Heller presented his views of assignments and current Army affairs. His talk was well received, with residents asking to have him back for a more in-depth presentation. A 95-year old lady told me, "she understood everything he was saying as he talked to us." Jerry Sherman and I organized and emceed the program. There are 15 WWII and 10 Korean veterans as well as 26 widows of deceased WWII and Korean veterans out of 120 residents living at Meadowlark Estates.

From Jim Cooper:

Veterans in the Classroom Project: Once again our chapter launched the Veterans in the Classroom project for Veterans Day. We sponsored some ten separate events around the area, speaking to elementary and junior high school students. The students are appreciative and full of questions, and our chapter members get a feeling that they have contributed something to the appreciation these students are learning for veterans.

Army-Navy Game: Jim and Sandy Cooper and Lynn and Debbie O'Neal traveled to Philadelphia for the 116th contest on December 12th. We couldn't have had a better day for it - highs were 66-67 degrees that day, and the temperature really didn't drop much after sunset - we were in shirtsleeves the entire afternoon and night. Philadelphia was very welcoming, the pageantry at the game was grand, the stadium was full, having the opportunity with mix with members of the Corps of Cadets and the Battalion of Midshipmen was unique, and the score was close as Army threatened the entire game. If you haven't yet been to the Army-Navy game, please put it on your bucket list and go: it is an experience not to be forgotten.



From Dean Bevan:

I appeared in a staged reading of local playwright Paul Lim's play, "Flesh, Flash and Frank Harris," at the Lawrence Public Library on December 3rd. I played Old Frank Harris. Judy and I will travel to the Gulf Coast (Ft. Morgan, Alabama) to stay with friends.

BG Victor Braden has been selected as the next Commander of the 35th Division, Army National Guard. Date of promotion to Major General will be announced later.

Welcome New Member:

Bryan, Christopher J., CH (MAJ), MOARNG
2409 Danbury Place, Lawrence, KS 66049
785-393-7427 cjbryan@yahoo.com
Spouse: Cristin

"Abe and Mary: A Family Portrait"



The Lincoln Album was kept by the Lincolns while in the White House. The album was lost, but found again in 1985. Harold Holzer and Mark Neely wrote a book about the album, and the speech is based on their book, and what happened to the Lincoln descendants. We are not Abe and Mary, but Herschel and Jacque, appearing in period clothing and commenting about Abe and Mary.



Army News LTC Davis McElwain, USA

Greetings Jayhawk Chapter!

Jayhawk Battalion Cadet Exchange

The first-ever cadet exchange between University of Illinois-Chicago and KU's ROTC programs occurred November 3, 2015 and November 5-6, 2015. Three cadets from the Fire Battalion arrived on 3 November and attended the MSIV class taught by COL Morgado, our Brigade Commander, and LTC McElwain. Three UIC cadets and 11 KU cadets attended the SHARP conference located at Fort Leavenworth on 4 November to learn strategies to encourage culture change in order to prevent Sexual Harassment and Assault on our campuses. Two KU cadets, Cadets Green and Sims, traveled to Chicago, IL November 5-6 to attend the Defense Entrepreneurs Forum where they had the opportunity to collaborate between emerging military leaders and their civilian counterparts. Cadets Green and Sims will brief their fellow cadets at the beginning of next semester on the knowledge they gained while in attendance.



Cadets from 3rd Brigade stand with COL Morgado, Commander, 3rd Brigade at the Defense Entrepreneurs Forum.

This forum brought military, civilian, industry and academic innovators and entrepreneurs together to discuss challenges in our military and how to overcome them.

Jayhawk Battalion 9th Annual Alumni Association Wall of Fame Induction Ceremony

On October 31, 2015, four alumni from the University of Kansas Army ROTC came back to the program where it all started in order to be recognized for their outstanding accomplishments throughout their Army careers. The four individuals recognized were Colonel (Retired) Kip McCormick, Colonel (Retired) Thomas Trossen, James E. Ferrell and Colonel Thomas Foster. Before the alumni were introduced there was a meet and greet session where cadets had the ability to ask questions and get feedback from the Jayhawk alumni. Later, the alumni were introduced to the Jayhawk Battalion where they all gave speeches to cadets and families about their careers and what it means to be a leader in the Army. All four alumni stayed after they were recognized on the "Wall of Fame" to answer any more questions cadets had. The Jayhawk Battalion is currently accepting nominations for next year's JBAA Induction. Inductee candidates must be Jayhawk Battalion Alumni who commissioned through the KU Army ROTC Program and



have contributed positively to the Military or Civilian workforce.

(Left to right: Colonel (ret) Trossen, Colonel (ret) McCormick, Colonel Thomas Foster, and Mr. James Ferrell)

Veterans Day Remembrance 2015

Jayhawk Battalion cadets stood guard at KU's WWII memorial, the Campanile, alongside Air Force and Navy Cadets in remembrance and honor to those who have served their country. Jayhawk Battalion Cadets and Cadre also participated in the Veteran's Day run on Sunday, November 15th, 2015. All proceeds from the run go to the KU Wounded Warrior Scholarship Fund.



Cadet Hannah Jerome, MS II, stands vigil at the KU's Vietnam War Memorial during the Veteran's Day 5K Run conducted on Campus at the University of Kansas.

Jayhawk Battalion Salute to Service and Swearing in Ceremony

During the University of Kansas Salute to Service football game November 21st, 2015, LTC Davis McElwain swore in 17 new cadets into the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program. These cadets exceeded the academic, physical, and leadership requirements necessary to be officers in the U.S. Army. During this ceremony, each cadet swore or affirmed to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. Additionally, each of these students earned an Army ROTC scholarship covering all tuition and fees while at the University of Kansas.



WE BUILD LEADERS!

Check out our website at 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/KU_ArmyROTC

ALL IN!

JAYHAWKS LEAD THE WAY!

LTC Davis McElwain



Navy News **CAPT Dave Meron, USN**

(No report received)



Air Force News **LtCol Bill Pastewait, USAF**

Hello from Detachment 280, the Flying Jayhawks!

We just had a great finish to the Fall Semester with some strong accomplishments for both our cadre and cadets. First, Captain David Rogers was selected as the Northwest Region Company Grade Officer of the Year for 2015! He's done an outstanding job as our recruiting flight commander and put in a strong showing as a flight training officer at Field Training this past summer. We wish him the best of luck as he competes at the Air Force ROTC HQ level.

Second, Cadet Samuel Anderson from Benedictine College was a recipient of a Type-II Air Force ROTC scholarship for sophomore cadets. This competitive scholarship covers \$18,000 in tuition per year and includes books and stipend payments. Third, Cadet Melanie Mohseni from the University of Kansas was selected as a Cadet Training Assistant for Field Training in Summer 2016. A highly-competitive process, cadets get an opportunity to go back to Field Training to work with officers in providing support and training for sophomore cadets. Finally, Cadet Madeline Ulloa was selected as the Cadet Wing Commander for the Spring 2016 semester. She, along with her Cadet Vice Wing Commander, Cadet Krista Sturm, will plan and run all training and activities for the Flying Jayhawk Cadet Wing during the next 15 weeks.

Detachment update:

Senior cadets received their Air Force Specialty Codes in preparation for active duty. The 10 graduating seniors were classified as follows: 2x Nuclear Operations, 2x Pre-Medical, 1x Pilot, 1x Air Battle Manager, 1x Developmental Engineer, 1x Intelligence, 1x Space Operations and 1x Cyberspace Operations. Cadets are now waiting to receive their base preferences.

We hosted a Career Day on Tuesday, 17 November. There was a strong turnout from Air Force officers at four separate locations (Leavenworth, Whiteman, McConnell and Topeka). The cadets had an opportunity to speak with officers representing over 15 different career fields. The event concluded with a BBQ that allowed cadets to socialize with officers in a more informal environment.

The Detachment completed its three-year inspection on 10 November with passing scores. Captain Rogers' recruiting program received the highest overall rating of all the programs inspected at the detachment.

We are making a big push to increase our alumni involvement. Over 1200 letters were sent out to alumni to obtain contact information and improve coordination and communication. We anticipate a large response and some additional alumni events in the future.

Coming Up:

Cadets are on winter break until the Spring Semester starts. We've got several new events planned for the Spring a big recruiting push to try and improve our numbers in the Fall. Happy Holidays and thanks for your great support of our program.

Very Respectfully,

LtCol Bill Pastewait
Commander, Air Force ROTC Det 280

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, 13 November 2015:

Official Medicare Rates Released

This week, Medicare released the official 2016 Part B premium rates. They're very close to, but slightly lower than, what MOAA projected in an earlier legislative update.

Because of the Bipartisan Budget Agreement, beneficiaries not protected by the "hold-harmless" provision will see some relief in premium costs.

Seventy percent of Part B enrollees won't see any change from the \$105 monthly premium they're now paying.

The only people with incomes less than \$85,000 (\$170,000 for a married couple) who will pay the higher \$122 monthly rate are those who first become eligible for Medicare in 2016, or who are not receiving a Social Security Check, or certain lower-income beneficiaries who are dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid.

The budget agreement protected these groups and the higher-income groups from a much larger 52 percent premium increase. Under the new calculations, these groups will only pay what they would have paid anyway if there had been a normal retiree COLA.

2016 Monthly Medicare Part B Premiums

<u>Individual/Joint Income</u>	<u>2015 Premium</u>	<u>2016¹ Premium</u>	<u>2016² Premium</u>
Under \$85K single Under \$170 couple	\$105	\$105	\$122
\$85K-\$107K \$170K-\$214K	\$146	---	\$171
\$107K-\$160K \$214K-\$320K	\$209	---	\$244
\$160K-\$214K \$320K-\$428K	\$272	---	\$317
Above \$214K Above \$428K	\$335	---	\$390

¹Beneficiaries protected by hold-harmless provision

²Beneficiaries not protected by hold-harmless provision

MOAA Legislative Update, 25 November 2015:

House Members Host Survivor Roundtable

House Veterans Affairs Committee ranking members Corinne Brown (D-Fla.), Tim Waltz (D-Minn.), and Raul Ruiz (D-Calif.) hosted a November 17 roundtable discussion of survivor benefits. Both DoD and VA representatives were present as well as MOAA, Gold Star Wives, The Retired Enlisted Association, the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) and others. After the two-hour meeting, Rep. Brown said she wants to continue meeting with beneficiary groups on a regular basis.

Discussion focused on the evolution of survivor benefits, consolidating VA educational assistance programs for survivors, improving VA Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC), and extending the DoD Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA) for SBP-DIC survivors, which is presently set to expire in October 2017. SSIA was authorized by Congress as the first step toward eliminating the current deduction of DIC from Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities.

It was recognized that various survivor benefits evolved over a historical course, extending as far back to the pre-Civil War era, for different reasons. DIC was conceived to replace family income and partially as a reparation for the death of a veteran (1862). The precursor of the Survivor Benefit Plan was enacted in 1953 for retiring military members to ensure their surviving widows were not left penniless after a retiree's death.

SBP as we know it today was enacted in 1972. However, SBP annuities were subject to offsets by both Social Security and VA DIC, thus reducing overall government costs.

"We all appear to be in agreement that the evolution of these benefits addressed different needs in different social

eras, but that the needs of today's survivors are often not adequately addressed by the existing and sometimes conflicting programs. The income provided is simply inadequate and often leaves survivors in poverty," stated Col Phil Odom, Deputy Director of MOAA Government Relations.

There was consensus amongst the non-government participants that DIC should mirror what other Federal agencies pay, 55% of the veteran sponsor's disability compensation; that the age at which eligible widows can retain DIC even if they remarry (currently 57) should be reduced to 55 (the same as all other federal survivor annuities), and that it's critical to extend authority for the Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA) in the coming legislative year to protect eligible widows from losing the \$310 monthly rate of SSIA as of Oct 1, 2017.

Representative Brown agreed the SSIA should be extended, with the ultimate goal of repealing the unfair SBP/DIC offset. The cost of full repeal would exceed \$6 billion.

The group strongly recommended that the Veterans Affairs Committee consider consolidating survivor educational benefits to simplify the program and reduce VA administrative overhead.

Presently there are huge disparities between the three existing survivor educational benefit: Dependents Educational Assistance (DEA), which provides no housing or book allowance; the Montgomery GI Bill, which pays almost \$1,800 more per month than DEA but offers no housing allowance; and the Post-9/11 Gunnery Sergeant Fry Scholarships that pay tuition, housing and book allowances. MOAA's goal is to make all survivors eligible for the Fry Scholarship program.

What's There To Be Thankful For?

As we approach this Thanksgiving Day holiday, there is much to be thankful for, even in this time of war and great fiscal challenges.

First and foremost, we should be thankful we live in a nation where we enjoy freedoms other countries can only dream of.

We are thankful for our men and women in uniform – both past and present. For the past 239 years, the freedoms we enjoy as Americans have been preserved by our uniformed servicemembers. Today, they continue to defend our freedoms all over the world separated from family and friends and sometimes in harm's way – without grumbling or complaints.

Also, we should be thankful for our self-correcting American democracy. While the politicians we elect and the policies we pursue as a nation don't always end up being right, our electorate inevitably ends up tossing out the politicians and policies when they've drifted too far from the national will in either direction.

We're thankful for the legislative champions – senators, representatives, and their staff members – who continue to do their best to support the military and veterans community.

Finally, we're thankful for our loyal members like each of you and your family – who continue to support our vital mission through your leadership and personal involvement.

MOAA wishes you and yours a very happy – and safe – Thanksgiving holiday.

MOAA Legislative Update, 04 December 2015:

Military Health Care: What's Working, What's Not

This week, MOAA President, Vice Adm. Norb Ryan, USN (Ret.), testified before the House Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee on what's working vs not working in military healthcare delivery, and what should be done about it.

MOAA was invited to testify and provide its perspective on recent TRICARE and military health reform proposals, including the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission's (MCRMC) to replace all forms of TRICARE with a commercial insurance plan much like federal civilians'.

Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Joe Heck (R-Nev.), an Army Reserve physician, said he is determined that, "This process is not being driven by budgetary concerns," but by "how we can best maintain readiness and provide the best health benefit to the military community."

Ryan told the panel that the first goal should be to do no harm. Rather than tossing out the whole current system, Congress should focus on preserving what's working and fixing what isn't.

He laid out several key principles, including:

- * Means-testing (e.g., setting premiums based on income) is inappropriate for service-earned military health benefits;
- * Readiness-driven costs (such as when doctors deploy and patients get shifted to more costly civilian care) should not be passed to beneficiaries
- * The military health benefit should be the "gold standard" rather than being made more like civilian plans through higher fees

Ryan debunked the oft-quoted myth that DoD's health care costs are "spiraling out of control", noting that DoD projections of future rising costs have been consistently wrong. In fact, he said, "Military health costs have remained flat or have been declining for the past five years." He showed Subcommittees a chart to demonstrate that fact.

Among things that are working well, he cited combat casualty care; the overall quality of health care, once it's delivered; TRICARE For Life; pharmacy programs, and TRICARE Standard, for the most part.

Key problem areas he cited included:

- * TRICARE Prime's appointment and specialty care referral processes
- * Inconsistent Guard and Reserve TRICARE coverage
- * Provider capacity management in Military Treatment Facilities
- * The inefficiencies of building DoD healthcare delivery around three separate military service programs,
- * Inadequate case-management of the highest-cost or at-risk healthcare users, and Pediatric coverage.

MOAA's recent survey of more than 30,000 beneficiaries found that those who used TRICARE For Life are most satisfied. Among currently serving families and working-age retirees, TRICARE Standard had a higher satisfaction rate and significantly lower dissatisfaction than those who used TRICARE Prime.

In closing, Ryan stated that, "The primary purpose of the military health system is readiness." But he insisted that also includes meeting the needs of and keeping commitments to families and retirees. When a service person goes over the horizon, they want to trust that their family is taken care of, he said, and also trust that when they complete a service career, the promises made about their future care will be kept.

MOAA's written statement for the subcommittee listed 12 specific recommendations, including:

- * Testing a unified budget/oversight authority in major locations with multiple service facilities
- * Setting provider payments to reward quality care, not just patient visits
- * Revamping the Guard and Reserve health care system to make it a better, more consistent, and more flexible benefit
- * Creating more appointment capacity in military hospitals and clinics
- * Ensuring DoD appointment access and timeliness standards are met
- * Adopting more child-centered provider payment for pediatric care, and
- * Fee-setting should include an explicit acknowledgment of the very large, pre-paid premium inherent in decades of service and sacrifice.

MOAA appreciates the invitation to represent our members' in front of Congress. We will continue to work to make improvements to the military health system.

MOAA's TRICARE Reform Survey Results

As part of the FY2016 National Defense Authorization Act, the House and Senate Armed Services Committee Chairmen included language indicating that they anticipate their committees will be undertaking a reform of military health care programs as part of next year's defense bill.

The Chairmen expressed concern that most reform efforts to date have focused on raising beneficiary fees, and that while they believe increased fees will be on the table in their reform consideration, they also want to look at the whole system from top to bottom to sustain readiness, implement efficiencies and deliver better care.

To help prepare for these discussions, MOAA developed a survey and asked for your inputs. MOAA's intent was to gauge beneficiaries' experiences in accessing their health care, what they perceive as a reasonable cost for their care, and the quality of that health care received.

Over 30,000 of you responded.

Once accessed, the vast majority of survey respondents are satisfied with their health care. Here is a summary of satisfaction ratings on several key topics:

	TRICARE for LIFE	TRICARE Standard	TRICARE Prime
Care Quality	95%	86%	81%
Ability to Pick Dr	90%	81%	62%
How Much You Pay	86%	68%	80%

On the ability to get routine care within the 7-day DoD timeliness standard, 20% of TRICARE Prime beneficiaries said they “rarely or never” can get care that fast - almost double the TFL and Standard responses.

Among Prime beneficiaries, those seeking care in military facilities reported much greater problems getting appointments than those seeing civilian providers.

The most consistent responses among all survey takers were on the question, “Is it reasonable to ask military beneficiaries to pay more?” The percentage saying “definitely not” or “probably not” was 76% for TFL beneficiaries, 74% for Prime, and 78% for Standard, with all categories reporting 56-58% saying “definitely not”.

MOAA Legislative Update, 11 December 2015:
MOAA To Congress: Repeal “Widows’ Tax”

MOAA’s Director of Government Relations, Col. Steve Strobridge, USAF (Ret.), testified before the House Armed Services military personnel subcommittee on Wednesday about the huge financial penalty imposed on 63,000 military survivors. Current law unfairly makes military survivors forfeit part or all of their military Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuity when military service caused the member’s death.

SBP provides the survivor 55 percent of the servicemember’s military retired pay. Enrollment is elected at the time of retirement, and the retired member pays 6.5 percent of retired pay as a premium.

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) is a VA program providing a \$1,254 monthly annuity for survivors of veterans whose death is ruled service-connected. SBP payments are reduced dollar-for-dollar by DIC. This is often called the “widows’ tax.” MOAA has been seeking repeal of this unfair law for decades.

Rep. Joe Wilson (R-S.C.), whose proposed legislation to end the offset (H.R. 1594) has gathered 171 bipartisan cosponsors, reiterated his determination to see an end to the offset at the hearing.

In 2008, Congress authorized a modest Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA) for SBP-DIC widows as a first step toward phasing out the offset.

“Because of budget issues, our hope has been Congress would do that by steadily increasing the SSIA amounts,” Strobridge said. “As of FY 2017, the \$310 monthly SSIA will restore about 25 percent of the offset.”

However, SSIA is set to expire Oct. 1, 2017, and Congress needs to extend the SSIA in the upcoming FY17 defense bill or survivors will forfeit the \$310 monthly allowance.

“You have [our] support because you have been so effective outside of this hearing in our offices... the argument that you’ve made in my opinion is incontrovertible, and you’ve made it on its merits, on the facts,” said Rep. Beto O’Rourke (D-Tex.) to the panel.

Though committee members acknowledged the inequity of the offset, Ranking Member Susan Davis (D-Calif.) pointed out that a full repeal has a price tag approaching \$7 billion, and securing funds will be difficult.

“We’re sensitive to the [funding] challenge,” said Strobridge. But he noted, “When congressional leaders recently managed to find far larger [funding] to provide Medicare premium relief to millions of wealthier beneficiaries, it’s hard to explain to SBP-DIC widows - who have suffered five-digit annual losses for decades - why their situation gets lower priority.”

Even in a budget-constrained environment, fair treatment for survivors of servicemembers who gave their lives for their country shouldn’t be last in line for funding. Congress needs to extend and increase the SSIA in the FY17 National Defense Authorization Act.

Congress Can’t Meet Deadline

As negotiations over a \$1.1 trillion dollar funding bill fell apart, Congress quickly scrambled to put together a short-term deal to keep the government funded until Dec. 16. Without the measure, the government faced a shutdown at midnight on Dec. 11.

Five additional days gives Congress scant time to resolve their differences on how to fund the government. The White House has said that it will sign the five-day continuing resolution (CR), but won’t support a long-term one.

The government has operated under a CR since Oct. 1 as part of a wider deal to increase the debt ceiling and lift defense spending caps.

Unfortunately, CRs aren’t an uncommon phenomenon.

GI Bill Housing Benefit Cut

The Post-9/11 GI Bill includes a generous housing allowance that enables student veterans to pursue their education or training goals on a full-time basis in most cases.

The benefit is pegged to the active duty housing allowance for an E-5 family of four at the location of the college or training facility where the student is enrolled. Full-time online students get a set rate for their housing.

Service men and women who serve six or more years in a uniformed service and agree to reenlist or extend their service for another four years earn the right to transfer their new GI Bill entitlement to their spouses and dependent children.

But the housing allowance will be cut in half for future GI Bill transfers to children.

Senate lawmakers matched House action this week by levying a 50 percent housing cut for children with transferred Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. The change does not apply for members who already have transferred benefits to their children.

The House version of the provision would also raise the minimum service requirement to 10 years’ service with an agreement to serve two more years to secure GI Bill transfer rights. The final Senate language was not available at the time of this writing, but is expected to be the same.

MOAA testified earlier this year that DoD and the Services should retain the authority to set the service requirements for transferring the GI Bill to match force needs, not the Veterans Affairs Committees. In the end, the House adopted a recommendation of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC) to change the transfer rules.

Spouses with transferred benefits may use their GI Bill immediately. Children must be 18 years old and the sponsor must have completed at least 10 years’ service before they can access the benefit under current rules.

The housing allowance cut applies only to children with (future) transferred benefits. Spouses will receive the current rate going forward.

Transfer contracts in place prior to 180 days after the date of enactment of the legislation will be grandfathered. Transfer contracts signed after that date will be subject to the lower housing rate.

The MCRMC found that the GI Bill housing benefit often exceeded the actual cost of housing at colleges and recommended it be ended for dependents. But the Veterans Affairs Committees agreed to keep the current benefit for spouses and reduce the amount by 50 percent for children.

MOAA urges families who meet or exceed the current six year service requirement to carefully consider their options on GI Bill transferability. They will have only six months after the bill is signed into law to decide if they want to preserve the current housing rate for their kids by agreeing to serve another four years (after completing at least six) under a transfer-of-benefits reenlistment or service extension contract.

Social Security Retirement Benefit Claiming Strategies Eliminated

As soon as the public started to understand the mysterious Social Security strategies for enhancing their retirement benefits, the rules are changed. Just goes to show that Congress can work together and quickly when they want to.

The legal changes eliminate strategies that allow couples to maximize their Social Security retirement benefits over their lifetime. These strategies are known as the "restricted benefit" and "file and suspend."

The "restricted benefit" is typically used by the spouse with the lesser earnings record. To set the stage, if you apply for the Social Security spouse benefit (50% of your spouse's benefit amount if you wait until your Full Retirement Age (FRA)), by law your personal benefit amount (based on your own earnings record) is paid before the spouse benefit amount to bring you up to the 50% level. In other words, the spouse benefit formula is actually a combination of your personal benefit and the spouse benefit thereby bringing you up to 50% of your spouse's benefit amount.

Just so you know, if you apply for the spouse benefit prior to your FRA, you don't get the full 50% of your spouse's amount. You get a reduced early benefit amount. And you can't use the restricted benefit method.

The "restricted benefit" strategy allows spouses to collect the spouse benefit only and not use their personal benefit as a part of the 50% formula if you wait until FRA. By restricting yourself to the spouse benefit only, it allows your delayed personal benefit to continue to grow until age 70. The strategy is useful when your personal benefit will grow to be larger than the 50% spouse benefit over time.

The restricted benefit strategy is eliminated for everyone turning age 62 after 2015.

The "file and suspend" strategy opens the door to use the "restricted benefit." You can't file for the spouse benefit unless the spouse whose earnings record is used for the 50% spouse benefit amount has first filed for their own benefit. The "file and suspend" strategy permits a spouse to file for his/her benefit which opens the door for the other spouse to file for the restricted spouse benefit and then turn around and suspend his/her personal benefit so it can continue to grow until age 70. The "file and suspend" spouse has to be at FRA or beyond to use file and suspend method.

Elimination of the file and suspend strategy is effective on 1 May 2016. You may still use the strategy if you turn FRA prior to 1 May. FRA for people born between 1943 and 1954 is 66. If you are over your FRA or turn 66 prior to 1 May, go talk to Social Security as soon as possible to determine your potential file and suspend options.

People already receiving benefits under the strategies are not affected.

MOAA Legislative Update, 18 December 2015: Falling Into The COLA Hole

A deeper dive into red.

Unfortunately, it looks like the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is following the trend of the past few years by dropping significantly at the beginning of the fiscal year.

Last year's October-to-January drop was particularly steep, and the slide is disturbingly similar for FY2016 so far.

The November CPI is 231.721, declining to 1.1 percent below the FY 2014 COLA baseline. Because there was not a positive COLA in FY 2015, the FY 2014 baseline is used.

The CPI for December 2015 is scheduled to be released on January 20, 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.

Your Personal Cost To The Government

By: Col. Steve Strobbridge, USAF (Ret) Director, Government Relations

One way or another, it always ends up being about the money.

For years, Pentagon leaders have complained about personnel costs "spiraling out of control."

MOAA's rebuttal showed personnel and health care costs have been stable at a relatively constant 30 to 32 percent of the budget for the past 30 years.

Now the comeback from Capitol Hill is, "OK, it's true the percentage of the budget has been constant, but the cost per person is well beyond where it used to be. What's your answer to that?"

Yes, the cost per person has risen. But so has the cost of doing everything else. In particular, the cost per ship, cost per bomber, cost per personnel carrier ... and cost per whatever unit of nut, bolt, service, and equipment ... is what truly has skyrocketed.

For example, an aircraft carrier cost \$6 billion in 2009, but the cost has now shot past \$13 billion — a 117-percent increase in six years.

The big problems with the defense budget are contract inflation, gross oversight failures, and stunning accounting lapses on the part of those charged with managing defense programs of all kinds.

For decades, dozens of Government Accountability Office, Inspector General, and other reports have documented that DoD cost accounting systems are so flawed, they're unauditible, with billions having gone unaccounted for. Massive cost overruns have been the rule rather than the exception. But the system goes unfixed.

So the bang for the procurement buck gets smaller quickly. But because the defense industry has built-in lobbyists with deep pockets, and because legislators with plants and jobs in their districts have vested interests in keeping even wasteful contracts alive, the target gets shifted to people programs.

There aren't any big campaign contributions supporting people programs, so they're easy to attack. And DoD leaders have shown little hesitation in using numbers selectively to make it look like people are the problem.

One popular way has been to use the year 2000 as a starting point to measure cost growth — conveniently forgetting that was a retention low point brought on by more than a decade of pay, health care, retirement, and other cutbacks. The funding increases in subsequent years were needed to restore career retention incentives and improve readiness and quality of life.

Another favorite stratagem has been to pile every possible nickel into the calculation of "cost per troop" to drive that figure as high as possible.

For example, many such calculations include a present value for all future expected VA disability and health care

costs for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans — as if the troops were at fault for exposing themselves to combat.

They almost universally include a figure for PCS costs — as if there's a benefit value in being required to move across the country periodically and be reimbursed less than it costs you and your family (without even counting issues like lost spousal income) to make the move.

The bottom line here is that many of the figures attributed as personnel benefit costs have nothing to do with compensation value for military people. An amputee would rather have his or her leg back than a monthly check from the VA. Military families would be far better off financially if the government never required them to move.

Military people understand the facts of life inherent in a military career. But they don't expect to be handed a bill for their sacrifices.

There's a massive difference between benefit value to the troops and the government's inherent cost of doing military business.

Economists and budgeteers want to count every penny of what they see as your cost to the government.

What those exercises consistently fail to do is split out the government's cost of readiness or acknowledge the flip side of the issue — the costs your service imposed on you and your family.

Congress Keeps The Lights On

Today, Congress was able to reach an agreement on a budget deal to keep the government funded for the next ten months.

The pending Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016 includes funding for the following provisions, among others:

- * an active duty pay raise of 1.3%;
- * \$32 billion for the Defense Health Program;
- * housing allowances for active personnel reflecting the 1% increase in out of pocket expense;
- * \$86 billion for veteran benefits;
- * advance funding for all VA programs, and
- * permanent health care coverage for 9/11 first-responders.

MOAA is especially appreciative it provides advance appropriations for veterans benefit programs. That means, beginning in FY 2016, veterans and their families won't see any break in their health care, disability compensation, survivor benefits, or GI Bill payments, even if congressional gridlock causes a federal shutdown.

Congress also passed a \$622 billion package of business and individual tax provisions. The tax extender package includes extension of the expanded earned income tax credit, additional child credit and the American Opportunity tax credit for education expenses.

The President has expressed support for both bills, and it should be signed into law shortly.

New V.A. Ruling Covers Camp Lejeune Cases

After years of controversy and review, the Veterans Administration (VA) has finally issued a ruling that certain diseases incurred by people with past service at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, will be presumed to be service-caused.

VA investigators recently finished a study of medical conditions that could have been related to drinking water at Lejeune. They concluded contaminated drinking water at the base directly affected health conditions of roughly a million people - servicemembers, family members, and civilians stationed there during specific dates (1950s to the '80s).

Specifically, they found eight different diseases are linked to contaminated drinking water at Lejeune: kidney cancer, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, leukemia, multiple myeloma, scleroderma, Parkinson's disease, and aplastic anemia.

As a result, the VA will now presume that any of those conditions experienced by people who served there were caused by that service.

The ruling applies to servicemembers, family members, and civilians with one of these conditions and who served at Camp Lejeune between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987. It also includes Reserve and National Guard members.

The new announcement doesn't mean all claims for the affected diseases will be approved immediately or that there will be any retroactive approvals. The VA first has to issue an updated regulation, and the new rule will be applied to new disability claims.

The VA will put any pending Lejeune-related claims on hold until the new regulation is issued.

People who have submitted potentially eligible claims that were denied previously can resubmit claims for consideration under the new rules.

This is good and important news for many, many MOAA members and others. If you know of others who are potentially affected, please forward this information to them.

We'll keep you posted when the VA publishes the updated regulations.

MOAA Vets Help Health Commission

This week, MOAA's Deputy Director of Government Relations, CDR. René Campos, USN (Ret.), met with the Commission on Care to share the views and experiences of MOAA members using the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities in their communities.

In May of 2014, reports of waiting list manipulation at VA facilities led MOAA to urge the President and Congress to establish a high-level commission to examine VA health care delivery issues for the 21st century. This suggestion led to the passage of the Veterans' Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Choice Act) and the establishment of the Commission on Care.

The Commission is charged with providing recommendations to Congress on how best to organize the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), locate health care resources, and deliver care to veterans over the next 20 years.

Last month, MOAA President Vice Adm. Norb Ryan, USN (Ret.), sent a letter urging the Commission to hear from veterans and their families about their needs and concerns, and the Commission has done just that.

On Monday, Campos provided commissioners recent testimonials of MOAA members using the VA health system. Most veterans are very satisfied with the quality of health care they receive, once they're able to access the system.

A wounded Iraq and Afghanistan veteran told MOAA how helpful his VA medical center was in getting disability benefits and the health care he needed to ease his family's transition out of the military.

But member inputs also highlight the confusing and inconsistent policies, procedures, and bureaucratic barriers they face in trying to access that care.

"The vets on the bottom of this avalanche of bureaucratic insanity are worse off than ever in their access to timely health care," wrote an 80 year old female Vietnam veteran describing her frustration with the Choice Program.

Any reform of VHA must ultimately improve access and provide high quality and comprehensive care.

"The system must be designed to support and engage not only the veteran, but also their caregivers and family members. And it must be simple and easy to navigate," said Campos.

The Commission wants to hear about your personal experiences and thoughts about VA health care. To share your views, click on the Veterans' Voices tab on the Commission on Care website.



JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA



A membership meeting will be held **Tuesday, 19 January 2016**,
at **Maceli's, 1031 New Hampshire**
(parking street-side and in lot across the street).
(NOTE CHANGE OF LOCATION FOR THIS MEETING.)

Dinner cost is **\$25.00/meal**.

The Program: Our program will be mrmber Herschel and Jacque Stroud
presenting "Abe and Mary: A Family Portrait."

Social Hour: 1800 hours Dinner: 1845 hours

The Menu: Buffet (beef main course), salad, dessert, coffee and tea
(cash bar available)

Send your reservation and check payable to Jayhawk Chapter MOAA
to arrive no later than Wednesday, 13 January 2016, 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.

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

The cost is \$25.00 per meal. I am enclosing a check for \$ _____ for meal(s).

Dues (\$20.00) \$ _____

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
KANSAS COUNCIL WEBSITE: www.kansasmooa.org
JAYHAWK CHAPTER WEBSITE: www.jayhawkmoaa.org

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

Tentative 2016 Meeting Schedule:

Tuesday	19 January	Tuesday	19 July
Tuesday	15 March	Tuesday	20 September
Tuesday	17 May	Tuesday	15 November

Happy New Year !!!



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