



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.

May Program:

**LtCol Nicole Phelan has set up a Zoom meeting for
Tuesday, 18 May 2021, at 7:00 p.m.**

<https://kansas.zoom.us/j/7858641214>

Meeting ID: 785 864 1214

One tap mobile

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President's Comments . .

All:

Spring has sprung with a vengeance and I'm sure you're all happy to see May arrive. We had a great speaker in March – Laura Blanchard, the CEO of Blanchard AE Group, and her team briefed us on her firm's project to provide a nuclear submarine simulator to the US Navy for use at their Nuclear Power Training Unit. It was amazing stuff, and fascinating that a Lawrence firm is a lead contractor in the project. Equally as interesting was the side brief that one of her engineers presented about his time with the National Guard providing security in Washington, DC for the Biden inauguration. We have another meeting coming up on May 18th, and we'll have another great program – Mr. Christian McWhirter, Lincoln historian at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois, will speak on Lincoln's visit to the Kansas Territory in 1859 – I urge you all to join us. The meeting will start at 1900 (7:00 PM) and the Zoom link is:

<https://kansas.zoom.us/j/7858641214>

The Board has agreed to tentatively plan to resume in-person meetings in September, so let me know your thoughts on that, pro or con. Most organizations are starting to look at resuming in-person gatherings. You should all have received both of your vaccine immunizations by now – if you have not and want the vaccine, let me know and we'll get you connected.

And again, my offer stands - in case any of you are in need of any kind of assistance regarding anything please contact myself or one of the other members of the board of directors. And, as always, if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please email or call me: (785) 979-7279 or jscooper36@hotmail.com

Stay smart, stay safe, wash your hands, and wear your face masks when out among other folks.

Coop



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1 May 2021

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* Reservations should be sent
to Jim Cooper by



JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS



DUES FOR 2021

*Dues for 2021 were due 01 January 2021 in the amount of \$20.
If you have not already done so, please send your check to
Jim Cooper, 5216 Brown Lane, Lawrence, KS 66049-5112*

PERSONAL NEWS

From Mike Kelly: Georgiana Beverly and I both obtained our vaccinations without side effects! We are now planning some short trips to visit other vaccinated friends from active duty days in Illinois and Wisconsin. I have been busy e-mailing state legislators regarding a bill for the construction of a new skilled nursing facility for veterans in northeast Kansas. The bill has passed both the House and Senate and appears ready for signature by Governor (no relation) Kelly. We may see a new facility in a few years as we now need federal funding share through the VA. Other MOAA officials across Kansas have been active and effective advocates on this legislation. If you have an idea for a meeting speaker please drop me an e-mail!

From Alan VanLoenen: The only thing I have is that the American Legion Post 14 at 3408 W. 6th Street in Lawrence, is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9AM to 12PM for coffee and conversation for military veterans.

Also every Wednesday and Saturday there are bingo games at 6:45PM; doors open at 4:30 PM for pull tabs games; and snack bar opens at 5PM. All bingo sales go to support the American Legion Post 14 in our efforts to support our military veterans and Lawrence's local youth sports programs and other local community items. There is a progressive black out bingo game that usually has a pay out ranging from \$1,500 to \$7,000 plus pay out as the game advances from session to session.



Army News

LTC John D. Finch, USA

Greetings from the Jayhawk Battalion:

Since the last missive from the Army team, the cadets and cadre of the Jayhawk Battalion have been busy testing our collective mettle and building mountains of character. All the outdoor PT in the sub-zero temperatures over the winter was put to great use in series of icy events. First up was the Northern Warfare Challenge on 20 February in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Temperatures hovered at a balmy 12 degrees for the 16 mile ruck interspersed with a series of challenges like target shooting, starting a fire with a flashlight and steel wool, and knot tying (with frozen hands). Our 5-person team performed admirably and finished mid-pack among the 29 schools that participated. This was quickly followed by Task Force Ranger Challenge in Camp Dodge, Iowa from 25-28 February, also contested in frigid temperatures. This two-day event consisted of ruck marching, skills training, ruck marching, physical tests, and more ruck marching. Our 9-person team absolutely smoked a few of the events and

again finished mid-pack out of the 10 participating schools (and walked close to 25 miles over the course of two days – with rucks on!).

We breathed a collective sigh and then dove straight into the storied Ranger Buddy Competition, a two-person team competition hosted by KU at Rim Rock Farm on 10 April and consisting of a 15k ruck march (over the hellacious terrain of Rim Rock), followed by skills lanes testing everything from knowledge of grenades and machine guns to proficiency at the Army Combat Fitness Test, and topped off with a 5k run (again and sadistically, over the Rim Rock course). Fighting on our own terrain, KU took first place in the Co-ed Division (CDTs Parker and Witt), third place in the Men's Division (CDTs Petit and Guyot), and fifth place in the Women's Division (CDTs Hanson and Kilpatrick). By virtue of these strong finishes across three divisions, KU won the overall competition against the 34 participating schools from across

the country (see KU's write-up here: KU Army ROTC hosts Ranger Challenge Competition | The University of Kansas). Critically, ALL of the cadets participated in the set-up and running of the event. Team Jayhawk kept its foot on the accelerator and marched directly into our Spring FTX in Fort Riley, KS from 15-18 APR.

The Spring FTX is designed primarily to test our Cadets' resolve and prepare the rising seniors for Cadet Summer Training at Ft. Knox. The weather absolutely cooperated – again cold and this time with the welcome addition of a steady rain that started at 0230 Friday morning and didn't stop until around 2300 Friday night. Our Cadets got the opportunity to test their field craft as they conducted graded patrols, repelling, basic rifle marksmanship, several obstacle courses, and (of course!) Day and Night Land Navigation. We slept under the (cloudy/rainy) stars for the duration which meant that the patching ceremony at the end of the event truly highlighted our cadets' grit.

The next few weeks will be just as awesome: an awards ceremony/BBQ on 07 May; Commissioning of 20 new 2LTs on 17 May (in front of Allen Fieldhouse at 0800); and a summer filled with training and Army Schools. As in all Army units, the team will transition over the summer. We'll say farewell to MAJ Jon Heller who will retire to the local area, to MAJ Feng Xiang Zhang who will deploy to Kuwait with the 35th ID, and to SFC Jeremiah Wolford, who will retire to West Virginia. In July, we'll welcome CPT Travis Emery, currently an Engineer Company Commander at Ft. Riley, KS. We are already prepping for next semester and the influx of new cadets who want to join the Jayhawk Battalion!

Rock Chalk!

LTC John D. Finch
Professor of Military Science



Navy News *CAPT Trenton Lennard, USN*



Greetings from the Jayhawk Battalion!

Throughout the Spring 2021 semester, the NROTC staff and midshipmen have been working hard and achieving success despite the challenges of COVID-19. The Battalion has maintained our curriculum by safely conducting in-person physical training, lab, and Naval Science classes while maintaining COVID-19 protocols such as social distancing, wearing masks, and obtaining vaccinations as they become available.

This semester, the Jayhawk Battalion's clubs continued to hold their meetings through Zoom and in-person events when safe. Thanks to the hard work of our Midshipmen, the Sailing Club has been able to get back on the water to practice the art of sailing while the Wargaming Society was established to teach students to be critical thinkers while reevaluating historical military operations. The Aviation Club has had many guest speakers, to include former Test Pilot CAPT Al Armstrong and former FA-18 pilot CDR Rick Bestgen. Both aviators addressed the club to speak of their experiences as part of the Naval Aviation community. Members of the Surface Warfare Club conducted shiphandling training using our new specialized Conning Officer Virtual Environment (COVE) ship driving simulator. The COVE system allows students to practice the art and science of navigating a warship in a safe environment. The Nuclear Power club and Semper Fi Society also continue to meet as Midshipmen learn about the challenges and benefits of those specialize communities. All students continue to increase their knowledge and experience level which will help them excel in the Fleet!

Although the annual drill meet at the University of Colorado in Boulder was canceled, we held our own drill meet to continue the tradition and ensure the Midshipmen obtained valuable training from this competition. The first ever KU Drill Meet pitted Alpha Company against Bravo Company in five events: Shooting, Drill, Color Guard, Knowledge, and a nine-mile Endurance Team race around campus. A winner-take-all point system was used to determine the overall victor. It was a very close competition as both Companies put on an outstanding performance, however Bravo Company managed to pull away with the win! Overall, the competition was a huge success and the midshipmen spent countless hours practicing with their shipmates.



Midshipmen compete in Drill at our KU Drill Meet

In early April, the Marines conducted a field exercise (FEX) over one weekend at Clinton Lake. The FEX consisted of night land navigation, small unit leadership exercises (SULE), a nine-mile hike, and camping while standing fire watches. This training was invaluable as the future Marine Officers prepare for the challenges they will face at Officer Candidate School (OCS).

On the 28th of April, the Jayhawk Battalion conducted an awards presentation to recognize many of our talented and hard-working midshipmen. Additionally, on the 17th of May, we will commission

our senior Midshipmen as Ensigns and 2nd Lieutenants in the Navy and Marine Corps. The Midshipmen and my staff are excited to attend the in-person ceremony which is a culmination of all their hard work. Unfortunately, the commissioning will be by invite only due to COVID mitigation.

Overall, I greatly appreciate the support from the Alumni and families of Midshipmen! These young men

and women continue to impress me every day. They are the best the country and the University have to offer; you should be proud of them. We are all in good hands!

Rock Chalk and Fly Navy!

CAPT Trenton Lennard
Commanding Officer, KU NROTC



Air Force News

LtCol Nichole Phelan, USAF

Hello from Detachment 280, the Flying Jayhawks!

The Flying Jayhawk Wing had a successful and busy spring semester that included for the first time ever an Introduction to Flight week. Over the last year, the cadets built their own 3-D flying simulator and bought two drones to use for both public affairs / recruiting and mission scenarios. This semester also included an active shooter demonstration by the KU campus police, a joint Air Force employment exercise with K-State, a socially distanced dining out at the Topeka Air Museum and a field leadership exercise at KC Ropes. Despite COVID restrictions, it has been an eventful semester.

We are keeping our award ceremony this semester small with no outside guests but we thank all of you for the amazing support and awards you have given our cadets this year. We will end the semester with a formal commissioning ceremony scheduled for 17 May 2021.

Half of our cadre members will push out for summer field training this summer along with all the cadets that were deferred last year and the ones chosen this year to attend.

We hope this finds you and your loved ones safe and healthy and we thank you for all the fantastic support from MOAA this year.

Rock Chalk!

Very Respectfully,
LtCol Nikki Phelan
Commander, Air Force ROTC Det 280

MOAA NEWSLETTER ADVOCACY

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

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 11 March 2021: **The VA Wants You! Here's How to Join an Upcoming Listening Session**

[Click this link](#) to find and register for a listening session in your region, and to find out how to email your information to the VA if you are unable to participate in a session.

VA wants your insights on:

How veterans want care to be delivered in the future.
Perception of the quality of health care at the VA and in the VA's community network.

Experience with the ability to get care at the VA and within the VA's community network.

Satisfaction with the condition and location of VA facilities.

The VA's role in research, education, and emergency preparedness.

Why Is VA Doing This?

One of the provisions of the [VA MISSION Act](#), which became law in 2018, required the establishment of a commission to review and recommend realigning resources to strengthen and modernize the VA medical infrastructure for the changing veteran population. This nonpartisan commission will make recommendations and help guide the administration and

Congress in addressing VA's health care infrastructure for the future.

[\[RELATED: VA Expecting Surge of Veterans Needing Care as Pandemic Restrictions Ease\]](#)

Major Reviews in the Works

Members of Congress and administration officials are keenly aware of the timeline leading up to the start of the AIR Commission work next year. By law, the president must appoint members of the commission in May 2021. In addition to the listening sessions, VHA has been conducting market assessments around the country — some of these assessments began before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The market assessments are looking at existing VHA facilities to determine whether to update or replace the infrastructure to meet modernization requirements. The assessments also evaluate care available in the community or other federal health systems, including the military health system and the TRICARE network.

Last week, House appropriators on the military construction and VA subcommittee held a hearing to examine the department's progress in its infrastructure review.

[\[RELATED: Lawmakers Want to Make All Vets, Some Caregivers Eligible for VA COVID-19 Vaccines\]](#)

According to the VA, there are more than 1,000 underused facilities in the system — many of these VA-owned buildings are almost 60 years old, on average. The VA is not authorized to close these facilities without approval from Congress.

The subcommittee leadership acknowledged the poor state of some VHA buildings, yet also noted others are quite modern and provide a welcoming environment for veterans and employees. While more money is needed to address facility issues, the VHA must have the staff to support existing and future facility requirements.

When Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.), chair of the subcommittee, asked VA's executive director of the office of asset and enterprise management, Brett Simms, what portion of VHA facilities are in poor condition, he told lawmakers the department's backlog has grown to over \$22 billion.

Simms said 69 percent of VA main hospitals are over 50 years old, and "VA's 'skip list,' a list of everything VA would like to do and is needed for patient and employee safety, is between \$49 and \$59 billion."

The VA recognizes the need for more investment in building new medical facilities and modernizing existing infrastructure, but also the need to change how it delivers care to be more in line with the private sector. Additionally, the market assessments and the AIR Commission must consider the impact the pandemic has had on delivery of care in the VHA and the civilian sector, including the department's role in executing its [Fourth Mission](#), a critical element in the nation's response to war, national emergencies, and national disasters.

Simms told subcommittee members VHA's infrastructure is core to national security. He further suggested facility requirements the VA needs to support its mission are expected to be considered in a large infrastructure package by the administration.

Here's How Some MOAA Members Are Going Local With Advocacy Efforts

A growing number of MOAA members looking to make a difference in their communities are using their voices to pass legislation in their home states.

MOAA has launched a virtual space for councils and chapters to come together to share their success stories and strategize around obstacles relating to state-level legislation. MOAA members can take that knowledge a step further to advocate alongside members of Defense State Liaison Offices (DSLOs).

"It's so important to me that states support the military community and the military knows that they're valued," said Capt. Pat Williams, USN (Ret), MOAA's director of engagement and career transition services.

Williams began hosting the webinars, which are held quarterly, in late 2019. During the webinars, MOAA members from different states share what legislation they're working on in their state, opening the conversation to share wisdom or seek help from states with similar legislative agendas.

"They highlight what they're doing, and that might spark efforts in another state," Williams said. "We're bringing states together to share their common goals in support of the military."

The MOAA State Legislative Forum is the brainchild of MOAA members Col. Tom Robillard, USAF (Ret), and Lt. Col. Don Wolfinger, USA (Ret), to facilitate the discussion of state-level issues. The webinar is used to advance the initiative and share ideas among MOAA members.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 18 March 2021:

Bipartisan Legislation Would Repeal TRICARE Select Enrollment Fee for Some Retirees

A bipartisan bill would provide a partial fix for the new TRICARE Select enrollment fee, which took effect Jan. 1.

[The TRICARE Select Restoration Act \(S.625\)](#), introduced by Sens. Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), protects the military retiree health care benefit by eliminating

the TRICARE Select enrollment fee for those who retired prior to 2018 and their dependents.

MOAA appreciates the efforts of both senators and supports this partial fix for the TRICARE Select enrollment fee.

[TAKE ACTION: [Ask Your Senators to Support S. 625](#)]

"MOAA fought the new TRICARE Select enrollment fee years ago when it was proposed as part of military health system reform, because it fundamentally devalues the benefit and reduces health care protections for military retirees," said MOAA President and CEO Lt. Gen. Dana T. Atkins, USAF (Ret). "We appreciate Sen. Tester and Sen. Murkowski's efforts to eliminate the enrollment fee and reinstate full health care protections for those who retired before 2018. We thank Sen. Tester and Sen. Murkowski for taking this step to reverse the unacceptable move of cutting TRICARE benefits after servicemembers have fulfilled the obligations of a full career."

The new TRICARE Select enrollment fee was passed into law with the FY 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) as part of a package of military health system (MHS) reforms. It went into effect Jan. 1, 2021, and has led to a significant number of retirees and their families being [disenrolled](#) from TRICARE coverage for failure to pay the fee. Disenrolled families have until the end of June to request reinstatement of TRICARE coverage.

[RELATED: [MOAA's 2020-21 TRICARE Guide](#)]

In a [press release](#), the bill's sponsors explained the importance of this legislation.

"No military retiree should ever be at risk of losing their health care coverage -- especially during a global pandemic," said Tester. "Our bipartisan bill will ensure that retired veterans aren't burdened by costly enrollment fees that put themselves and their family's health care in jeopardy. This legislation is a critical step in supporting more folks during these tough times, and I'll keep fighting until every man and woman who has selflessly served our nation has access to affordable, high-quality care."

Murkowski said the fees came as a surprise to many of her constituents, and she was "glad to join Senator Tester in support of legislation to eliminate unnecessary annual enrollment fees for certain retired veterans and reduce those fees for individuals and families."

"[COVID-19](#) has had significant impacts on America's veterans and their families," Murkowski added. "We must guarantee their hard-earned medical benefits are protected throughout this public health crisis, and beyond."

MOAA Joins Forces to Ensure Health Care for Children of Disabled Veterans

A year has passed, and the COVID-19 and economic crises continue to bring tremendous financial uncertainty to far too many Americans, including veterans, their families, caregivers, and surviving family members stricken by the fallout of the pandemic.

MOAA has again joined forces with 43 other military and veterans service organizations and stakeholders to help one small but deserving cohort during these difficult times. The goal: to secure health care for children whose veteran parents are disabled or who have died from a service-connected disability.

The group recently sent a letter of support for the CHAMPVA Children's Protection Act — legislation once again introduced by Rep. Julia Brownley (D-Calif.) and Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio). And you can help MOAA's efforts by [sending a similar letter to your lawmakers](#) seeing their assistance.

[READ THE LETTER | WRITE TO YOUR LAWMAKERS]

Employer-sponsored health care plans have been required to cover adult beneficiaries' children up to age 26 with no separate premium since 2010, when the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) became law. A year later, Congress established the TRICARE Young Adult Program to provide health care coverage for adult children of currently serving and

retired servicemembers for a monthly premium that covers all program costs.

Unfortunately, adult children of veterans were not offered a similar option through the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA), as intended by the ACA. Instead, these young adults remain stuck with outdated CHAMPVA regulations, which provide health care coverage up to the age of 18 (or age 23 for beneficiaries enrolled as full-time students). Coverage ends for these young adults once they marry or are no longer enrolled as a full-time student.

“MOAA is extremely grateful for Rep. Brownley’s and Sen. Brown’s dedicated commitment on this issue by continuing to champion H.R. 1801 and S. 727, the CHAMPVA Children’s Protection Act,” said MOAA’s President and CEO, Lt. Gen. Dana T. Atkins, USAF (Ret). “Our collective veteran and military community partners remain determined to do all we can to assure veteran parents are given the same opportunity to provide life-saving health care to their children.

Expanding CHAMPVA coverage has been a top priority for MOAA, The Military Coalition, and other veteran groups for much of the last decade. It is now time to finish the job and get the legislation signed into law, so these children can remain under the program until age 26 and get a meaningful assist on their path to a brighter future.

[Click here](#) to join forces with MOAA — send a letter to your members of Congress and request they pass the CHAMPVA Children’s Care Protection Act and enact it into law this year.

COVID-19 Relief Bill Includes Long-Sought Change Helping Military-Connected Students

A MOAA-supported passage in the \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package will close a loophole in federal education regulations that had made military-connected students the target of predatory practices by bad actors in for-profit education.

The so-called “90-10 Rule” requires for-profit schools to secure at least 10% of their funding from non-federal sources. However, a loophole in the rule allows these schools to count DoD and VA education benefits, most notably GI Bill benefits, as non-federal income. This made student-veterans (and their benefits) tempting targets for schools focused on profits over a quality education.

MOAA and other advocacy groups have teamed with legislators to seek a fix, protecting student-veterans from falling victim to aggressive recruitment efforts followed by [schools collapsing](#) and benefits spent toward unfinished or less-than-useful degrees.

H.R. 1319, which passed the House on March 10 and was signed into law by President Joe Biden the next day, includes language that will remove this loophole, classifying DoD and VA benefits the same as other federal education assistance such as Pell Grants. MOAA joined more than 30 advocacy organizations in [a letter to key lawmakers in both chambers](#) seeking the change.

[RELATED: [Download MOAA’s GI Bill White Paper](#)]

Closing the loophole “is even more imperative now as COVID has increased predatory colleges’ targeting of military-connected students,” the letter states. “Closing the loophole removes the recruiting target from the backs of military-connected students and protects taxpayer funds from propping up failing colleges.”

The change would not apply to schools until “institutional fiscal years beginning on or after January 1, 2023,” according to the legislation.

“MOAA is pleased to see a major step taken toward protecting student-veterans and their dependents from predatory institutions,” said Cory Titus, MOAA’s director of government relations for veteran benefits and Guard/Reserve affairs. “MOAA has [long supported closing this loophole](#), and

we look forward to working with VA and other institutions on its implementation.”

Learn about MOAA’s ongoing advocacy efforts on [our Advocacy News page](#).

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 25 March 2021: Help Extend TRICARE Benefits to Some ‘Gray Area’ Reserve Component Retirees

Bipartisan, bicameral legislation would extend TRICARE benefits to reserve component retirees who receive retirement pay before age 60 due to deployment credits but don’t get retiree TRICARE coverage until they reach age 60.

The TRICARE Fairness for National Guard and Reserve Retirees Act ([S. 829](#)), introduced by Sens. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and the House companion bill ([H.R. 1997](#)), introduced by Reps. Bill Johnson (R-Ohio) and Dean Phillips (D-Minn.) would ensure these “gray area” retirees who qualify for retirement pay before age 60 are eligible for the TRICARE retiree benefit. Under current law, gray area retirees who want TRICARE coverage must purchase [TRICARE Retired Reserve](#) (TRR), an expensive premium-based plan, even if they are receiving retired pay.

[TAKE ACTION: [Contact Your Lawmakers Today](#)]

MOAA supports this legislation ensuring all uniformed services retirees who receive retired pay are also covered by the TRICARE health care benefit. Reserve component members who have earned early retirement pay through deployment credits should receive the full retirement package, including health care coverage.

“Our nation asks a lot from the reserve component, both abroad and at home. The least we can do after a career of service and sacrifice is to ensure fair health care access for all retirees who are drawing retirement pay,” said MOAA President and CEO Lt. Gen. Dana T. Atkins, USAF (Ret). “MOAA strongly supports the TRICARE Fairness for National Guard and Reserve Retirees Act and urges swift passage.”

Eligibility for retiree TRICARE translates into significant savings for reserve component retirees under age 60 who are receiving retired pay. For 2021, [TRR monthly premiums](#) are \$484.83 for the member only or \$1,165.01 for the member plus family.

[RELATED: [Bipartisan Legislation Would Repeal TRICARE Select Enrollment Fee for Some Retirees](#)]

MOAA appreciates lawmakers’ efforts to bring parity to health care coverage for gray area retirees receiving retired pay. In a [press release](#), Sens. Portman and Warren explained the importance of this legislation.

“We owe our servicemembers a great debt of gratitude for the safety and freedom we enjoy every day. We must continue to correct the disparities in how they receive their benefits,” Portman said.

MOAA Joins With Lawmakers, Advocates Seeking Improved Toxic Exposure Care

MOAA is standing shoulder to shoulder with the country’s most influential veterans service organizations to protect the health care and benefits of generations of servicemembers who have been exposed to toxins.

The Toxic Exposures in the American Military (TEAM) Act was introduced March 23 by Sen. Thom Tillis (R-N.C.) and Sen. Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.). Cory Titus, MOAA’s director of government relations for veteran benefits and Guard/Reserve affairs, was one of seven VSO leaders to pledge support for the bill during a virtual press conference.

[TAKE ACTION: [Ask Your Lawmakers to Support the TEAM Act](#)]

Ask your lawmakers to support the TEAM Act, and bookmark [MOAA’s Advocacy in Action page](#) for updates on toxic exposure legislation and more.

Setting a Clear Path Forward

While the proposed eligibility changes are under review, current eligibility standards remain. Reaching out to your members of Congress today is key, as members and staffers develop their NDAA recommendations and finalize the House and Senate drafts.

[\[READ THE PROPOSED ELIGIBILITY CHANGES\]](#)

With no change to eligibility, even with the planned southern expansion, ANC will reach capacity by 2050. [A 2017 report to Congress](#) presented options, other than reducing eligibility, to maintain current operations.

Option 3.2.2.3 in the report would require legislation to establish a new DoD national cemetery in a new location:

“ANC, as it operates today, cannot endure forever in its current space. Looking 100-200 years into the future, how and where will we honor our Nation’s heroes? Another option, which the Army recognizes would represent a significant change, is establishing a new Department of Defense-run national cemetery in another location. This would mean building a new cemetery in a suitable place that would offer the same burial honors as ANC. While it is impossible to recreate the aesthetic appeal and history of ANC, this new cemetery could grow to become iconic over time, in the same way that ANC has gradually evolved over the past 150 years. Operating ANC as an active burial ground for as long as possible would allow a phase of overlap and continuity while establishing the new space.”

It’s not too late for Congress to intervene. And the path forward may be clearer with a new Defense Advisory Council on Arlington National Cemetery – Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin released all of the council’s members as part of a [zero-based review of DoD advisory boards](#). The old board had supported the eligibility changes.

[Make your voice heard today](#), and stay tuned for further developments on ANC at [MOAA.org](#).

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 01 April 2021:

[Letter to SECDEF Warns Against TRICARE Fee Hikes, Medical Billet Cuts](#)

The Military Coalition (TMC), a group of military and veterans service organizations representing a combined 5.5 million-plus membership, urged DoD leadership in a March 8 letter to protect the military health system from proposals that threaten the health care benefit, medical readiness, and the pipeline of uniformed health care providers.

MOAA co-chairs TMC and many of its committees, including the health care committee.

The letter addressed three topics DoD leaders will consider as they undertake the FY 2022 administration budget request: medical billet cuts, funding for the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences (USU), and, potentially, TRICARE fee increases as a means of reducing military health system (MHS) spending.

“The current pandemic has highlighted the risks of eliminating surge capacity within the medical system,” said the letter, sent to Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin. “Proposed billet cuts risk compromising not only combat casualty care, but also DoD’s ability to effectively provide healthcare and humanitarian support in times of crisis. Medical end strength reductions could also lead to access to care problems for beneficiaries if civilian medical systems lack capacity to absorb patient care moved out of military treatment facilities.”

[\[READ THE TMC LETTER \(PDF\)\]](#)

VA Secretary Focuses on Restoring Trust, Helping All Veterans

The new VA secretary has been hard at work in his first 45 days in office assessing the department’s transformation efforts and laying a path forward to get veterans into the system and create welcoming, safe facilities.

“I promised to be a fierce advocate for veterans at all stages of their lives,” Secretary Denis McDonough told lawmakers during a three-hour House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs hearing March 25. “This includes greater outreach to those most at risk of poor health, suicide, and other issues, especially veterans within historically underserved populations.”

McDonough who is all about [restoring faith and trust with veterans](#), spoke extensively about his plans for doing so and what Congress can expect from him and the department over the coming months. He said he recognizes the tough job before him but spoke about how inspirational it has been during his short time in office.

The rapid enactment of essential legislation like the [American Rescue Plan Act of 2021](#) and the [SAVE LIVES Act](#) will help his department provide health care and economic relief to veterans impacted by the pandemic, and gives the department the authority to provide COVID-19 vaccinations to veterans regardless of their enrollment status with VA health care, as well as to their spouses and their caregivers.

[\[RELATED: How the VA Plans to Spend \\$17 Billion in New COVID Relief Money\]](#)

Four fundamental principles serve as a guide for the secretary’s vision for the future. The VA will:

- Serve as the premier advocate for veterans.
- Provide timely access to resources and services.
- Ensure veteran outcomes drive the department’s actions.
- Seek excellence in all it does to leverage the diversity of veterans, the organization, and the country.

[\[READ MOAA’S STATEMENT\]](#)

McDonough has committed to full openness and transparency on his watch. He is focused on many other priorities important to veterans, their families, Congress, and veterans organizations like MOAA, including:

- Improving cultural competency and evidenced-based treatment among community providers.
- Implementing a process for routinely considering new data on the science of toxic exposures and building the case for presumption for veteran claims.

[House Panel Tackles Growing Backlog of VA Compensation and Pension Exams](#)

A March 23 House committee hearing addressed a critical VA exam backlog preventing hundreds of thousands of veterans from receiving earned benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Almost 350,000 veterans are awaiting their compensation and pension (C&P) exams, a figure that’s more than tripled since early 2020. These exams are a critical step in the VA disability claims process, determining a veteran’s eligibility for access to VA health care, disability benefits, and other VA services. The exams were paused VA-wide in April 2020 because of the pandemic and [restarted late the next month](#) at some locations.

The Path Forward

During a March 25 HVAC hearing, VA Secretary Denis McDonough outlined four guiding principles for his vision of the future of the department. You can learn more about his approach and other plans for the VA [at this link](#).

[\[RELATED: MOAA’s Testimony Outlines Legislative Priorities for Veterans\]](#)

McDonough is committed to improving VA’s outreach and engagement with veterans, their caregivers, their families, and survivors. More work is required to address the backlog and the quality of contracted C&P exams, but the secretary has been hard at work, in his first 45 days, to address all areas of veteran health care and benefits.

MOAA will continue to engage with VA, Secretary McDonough, Congress, and our VSO partners to improve the quality of, and timely access to, VA health care and benefits. The growing backlog of C&P exams must be addressed by the VA, the training of VBA-contracted examiners must improve, and GAO and VA OIG recommendations for these areas must be fully implemented.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 08 April 2021:

Help MOAA Fix the TRICARE Young Adult Coverage Gap

MOAA continues efforts to build support for The Health Care Fairness for Military Families Act of 2021 (H.R. 475), introduced by Reps. Elaine Luria (D-Va.) and Michael Waltz (R-Fla.). This bipartisan bill would expand TRICARE eligibility to young adult dependents up to age 26, bringing TRICARE in line with commercial plan requirements.

[TAKE ACTION: [Contact Your Representative Today](#)]

The bill is gaining momentum, picking up eight co-sponsors since its February introduction. MOAA's goal is to advance the legislation to the FY 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to ensure children from military families transitioning to adulthood have the same health care protections as those afforded to their peers in civilian families.

The TRICARE young adult parity issue will be one of three topics championed by MOAA members during our upcoming [Advocacy in Action](#) campaign. MOAA members from across the nation will meet virtually with their elected officials throughout the month of May to urge support for TRICARE young adult coverage parity as well as other key issues.

Please help MOAA generate awareness and support for TRICARE young adult coverage parity as we lead up to our annual advocacy campaign. [Contact your representative](#) and urge them to support The Health Care Fairness for Military Families Act.

The Military Coalition (TMC), a group of military and veterans service organizations representing a combined 5.5 million-plus membership (MOAA serves as a co-chair), has added its support with a letter endorsing H.R. 475 and thanking Reps. Luria and Waltz for their leadership on this issue.

[[READ THE FULL TMC LETTER](#)]

The letter highlights the financial burden military families face from TRICARE Young Adult monthly premiums: "For young people whose childhoods were marked by repeated military-ordered moves and frequent separation from their service member parent, and whose educational plans and employment prospects have now been derailed by the pandemic, this cost is an additional blow. We fear the cost will prove to be too much for many families, forcing them to forego health insurance for their young adult children."

As part of MOAA's role as co-chair of TMC's Health Care Committee, we also have been conducting outreach to Senate offices to generate support for a companion bill.

Ensuring TRICARE coverage evolves to keep with changing technologies, treatment protocols and coverage benchmarks established by high quality commercial plans is a top priority for both MOAA and TMC. [Contact your representative today](#) to show your support for H.R. 475.

An Embarrassing Problem

Families of young enlisted members – especially E-3s and E-4s with two or three dependents – truly struggle. The days of the adage: "if the (insert your service) really wanted you to have a family, they would have issued you one" are over, and demographics have changed for our junior enlisted. This enduring compensation problem has been heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has increased spouse unemployment rates and complicated life for all military families.

It's an embarrassing problem, one that has garnered media attention in recent months:

CBS News reported on military families relying on food banks in San Diego and Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. (video and transcript [at Yahoo! News](#))

Texas Public Radio addressed the [high rate of food insecurity](#) among military families in that state.

What Is the Real Issue?

Junior enlisted military families with two or three dependents face food insecurity, rely on food banks, and fear the stigma of seeking help. Imagine being an E-4 with a struggling family who is banking on the next promotion board to E-5. These hard-working enlisted families often do not seek help because they don't want to jeopardize their promotion out of poverty.

And many who do seek help can't qualify for it. Because the Department of Agriculture counts the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) as income, many military families aren't eligible for assistance under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps). This enduring problem for young military families has been intensified by reduced child care availability that drove up spouse unemployment rates.

The 13th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation ([Volume 1 PDF](#)) found most junior servicemembers promote out of this problem and recommended no change to compensation related to this issue. Unfortunately, this assessment does not consider the physical and mental developmental impacts of food insecurity on military children. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates 10,200 families of servicemembers would benefit from a Basic Needs Allowance (BNA) to combat food insecurity – H.R. 2339 would provide such an allowance.

Under this legislation, a BNA automatically tied to a calculation of income and the poverty line would provide an estimated \$400 a month of much-needed help for military families with food insecurity. This systemic solution will remove the stigma of asking for help for junior enlisted families, with a relatively low cost (\$44 million a year).

[Click here](#) to ask your lawmaker to support the Military Hunger Prevention Act, and visit [MOAA.org/AiA](#) for updates on this issue and other Advocacy in Action topics.

Every Officer Has Two Families Understanding MST

The term "military sexual trauma" (MST) is used by the VA to refer to sexual assault or sexual harassment occurring in the military or uniformed service, whether the individual was on or off duty, or serving on active duty or in a reserve duty status. Such trauma is not defined by gender, sexual orientation, or background.

While not a diagnosis or a mental health condition, MST, like other traumatic experiences, can affect veterans in a variety of ways. While MST reactions for men and women may be similar, other factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and other cultural determinants may cause different responses to, or struggles following, a traumatic experience.

Like other life-changing traumatic events, many individuals recover without professional help. Others may experience intermittent difficulties or have strong responses to certain situations. These eventually may take a toll on the veteran's physical or mental well-being, affecting their quality of life over time.

'We Believe You, and We Believe in You'

"It can be very healing for survivors of any kind of trauma to feel heard, validated and supported as they recover," [according to a VA](#) message marking Sexual Assault Awareness Month. "This can be especially true for survivors of MST, many of whom may be suffering alone — feeling ashamed, disconnected or unable to talk with anyone about their experiences."

During Sexual Assault Awareness Month, VA wants MST survivors to know: "We believe you, and we believe in you."

VA has been a strong advocate and provider of MST-related services for many years. It screens all veterans seen in its medical facilities to find out whether they have experienced MST. [Department data](#) indicates 1 in 4 women and 1 in 50 men reported some form of MST while in service, highlighting how common the trauma is among the veteran population.

What Veterans Can Expect From the VA

MOAA's work with [The Military Coalition to improve the climate and culture](#) for those serving in uniform and monitoring VA's and DoD's treatment and care of victims is a high priority. We are encouraged by [VA Secretary Denis McDonough's](#) and [Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's](#) work in forming a new commission to help eradicate long-standing systemic problems and improve accountability across the uniformed services so servicemembers and veterans receive the services and benefits they've earned.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 15 April 2021:

The White House Budget: What Early Figures Mean for You and Your Benefits

President Joe Biden unveiled his top-line FY 2022 budget request April 9, which includes plans for a small increase in overall DoD funding and a significant uptick in VA spending.

[The 58-page document](#) sent to Congress outlines the administration's plans for the federal budget to "lay a foundation to reinvest in the Nation's strength," it states.

The president is required by law to submit the federal budget to Congress by the first Monday in February, but this is usually delayed when a new administration takes office. The White House is expected to lay out a more comprehensive budget within the next several months.

Congress will begin its review of the budget proposal this week, with hearings that will question administration officials about their requests. MOAA will monitor this process closely to ensure our legislative priorities are at the forefront of both Congress and the administration's agenda.

[RELATED: [The Latest Advocacy News From MOAA](#)]

While initial details are scarce, below are takeaways from the so-called "skinny budgets" of the federal agencies MOAA is tracking:

DoD

Young Adult Children of Veterans Need Your Help. Join MOAA's Efforts Today

The legislation continues to gain momentum. More lawmakers are signing on as co-sponsors thanks to MOAA members and our partners' efforts to educate members of Congress (and others) about the unacceptable inequity and the critical need for extending health care coverage to young adult children eligible for the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA).

These children often struggle for decades with the challenges of living with a loved one suffering with permanently or totally disabling conditions, or with the loss of a parent who died because of their service.

The added health and financial stressors from the pandemic are especially difficult for these adult children and their veteran parents already struggling to manage their finances and health conditions. CHAMPVA can potentially save veterans and their families thousands of dollars a year, and extending coverage to young adult children also can provide great peace of mind and stability for the veteran and the family.

Beyond getting sick, the coronavirus can affect young adults' social, emotional, and mental well-being. A recent survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicates the [pandemic's mental health burden is heaviest among young adults](#). The survey reveals 63% of 18-to-24-year-olds reported symptoms of anxiety or depression, with 25% reporting increased substance use to deal with the stress and the same percentage saying they had

seriously considered suicide. In recent weeks, CDC data is also showing hospitalization rates are up among younger adults.

Unlike employer-sponsored health care plans where adult beneficiaries' children are covered up to age 26, adult children of veterans were not offered a similar option through CHAMPVA, as directed a decade ago in law through the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. For adult children of veterans, coverage under CHAMPVA ends at 18, unless the child is a full-time student; students can remain covered until age 23, but lose coverage if they get married or lose full-time student status.

TRICARE offers coverage for young adult dependents up to age 26 through the TRICARE Young Adult (TYA) plan, but unlike young adults covered by their parents' commercial plans, TYA enrollees must cover the full cost of the program through a separate monthly premium – [a parity gap MOAA is also trying to fix this year](#).

[RELATED: [MOAA's Advocacy in Action](#)]

Like TRICARE, CHAMPVA coverage includes a range of services such as mental health care, pharmacy benefits, outpatient medical services, durable medical equipment, and more if delivered through authorized providers. And CHAMPVA costs for specific services and supplies generally are equivalent to Medicare and TRICARE payment rates.

Expanding CHAMPVA continues to be a high priority for MOAA and our partners. It is time to ease the minds of veterans and their young adult children. MOAA urges Congress to enact the CHAMPVA Children's Protection Act once and for all – doing so would give adult children of veterans, many of whom have spent much of their lives in crisis, hope for a brighter future.

[Click here](#) to join forces with MOAA — send a letter to your members of Congress and request they pass the CHAMPVA Children's Care Protection Act this year.

MOAA Board Member Outlines Need for Comprehensive Toxic Exposure Reform

Improving the care of veterans dealing with the effects of toxic exposure should be a priority for both Congress and the VA, a MOAA board member wrote in a recent commentary published by *The Hill*.

The need to reform this process comes as the long-term effects of burn pit exposure after the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan come into focus, writes [Rear Adm. Tom Jurkowsky](#), USN (Ret), citing [media reports on the issue](#) as well as active legislation that would make critical changes to determining benefits eligibility, among other areas.

"Our organization believes the time has come for action on this issue – not for more studies and data collection efforts," Jurkowsky writes for *The Hill*, a news outlet based in Washington, D.C., covering federal policy, defense, finance, and technology.

[TAKE ACTION: [Ask Your Lawmakers to Support Comprehensive Toxic Exposure Reform](#)]

Comprehensive toxic exposure reform is one of three issues that make up [Advocacy in Action](#), MOAA's signature advocacy campaign. MOAA supports multiple pieces of legislation that will improve these benefits for deserving veterans, their families, and survivors, to include the bipartisan Toxic Exposures in the American Military (TEAM) Act. Learn more about the legislation [at this link](#).

Jurkowsky also outlined the benefits of another bipartisan bill, the Veterans Burn Pits Exposure Recognition Act. Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska), who introduced the bill with Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) said the legislation "does away with the unreasonable burden on veterans to prove that they were exposed to burn pits while serving at an installation where the pits were in use."

This reform and others are key to a new generation of veterans avoiding some of the problems still faced by Vietnam veterans dealing with the effects of Agent Orange exposure.

MOAA has worked to ensure those veterans receive the benefits they've earned, both with ongoing legislative efforts as supporting successful improvements in the [treatment of Blue Water Navy veterans](#) and the expansion of the [list of conditions presumed connected to Agent Orange](#).

Read Jurkowsky's commentary [at this link](#), and bookmark [MOAA's Advocacy in Action page](#) for future updates on this and other key issues.

MOAA Newsletter Advocacy, 22 April 2021:

State Tax Update: The Latest From 4 States on Exempting Military Pensions

Is your state still fully taxing retirement pay? **NO.**

Another exemption in the law will include some Social Security payments, but military retirees can claim only one new income exemption per tax return. Retirees with multiple sources of income will be allowed to exempt military retirement payments from the total income when filing taxes.

Here's How Toxic Exposure Reform Could Help This Marine Veteran and Her Family

Last week, council and chapter leaders who volunteered for MOAA's Advocacy in Action campaign received training on key national issues for the year. Among MOAA's asks for this year are for comprehensive toxic exposure reforms focused on fixing the presumptive process, expanding health care for those who served in the Global War on Terror (GWOT), and conceding exposure to hazardous chemicals. Each part of MOAA's approach provides a critical pillar for comprehensive toxic exposure reform.

[TAKE ACTION: [Write Your Lawmaker Today to Support Toxic Exposure Reform](#)]

Ten years after deploying to Iraq, Dr. Kate Hendricks Thomas, a Marine Corps veteran, was diagnosed with stage 4 breast cancer. As her husband, Shane, [described](#) when looking at her scans, it "looked like somebody had taken Kate by her hair and dipped her in cancer. It was from head to toe, every bone in her body. That oncologist says we're looking at about 6 to 10 years [to live]."

[VIDEO: [More About Dr. Thomas](#)]

Dr. Thomas is one of the GWOT veterans whose burn pit-related claim was denied by the VA, despite having medical opinions linking her illness to burn pits during her service. In addition to fighting her breast cancer and being a mother to her son, Matthew, she must now fight with the VA.

"One of the things that's been really hard for us is we went from being a dual income family" to a single paycheck, Dr. Thomas said. "Now [Shane] has to shoulder the burden not just of taking care of me and Matthew, but of supporting us financially."

If the Veterans Burn Pits Exposure Recognition Act passes, veterans like Dr. Thomas would have one less barrier to receiving direct service connection for their illness. Being able to point to chemicals she was exposed to would help increase the likelihood of a successful appeal for her and future claims for others.

Passing the Toxic Exposure in the American Military Act would require the VA to respond as conditions emerge. This is a needed fix for presumptive process; the current setup does not require the VA secretary to examine and respond to new illness as the scientific community reaches a consensus. As of now, Dr. Thomas and other veterans face an uphill battle to connect their conditions as new presumptives.

You can help MOAA's Advocacy in Action campaign by [writing your lawmakers](#). Interested in getting more involved with advocacy? [Find and join your local chapter](#) and get involved!

Advocacy in a Virtual Environment: How to Make Your Voice Heard

The global pandemic caused many organizations, including MOAA, to adjust advocacy strategy. In MOAA's efforts to never stop serving, the organization continues to be a voice for our members and the entire uniformed service community in a virtual environment.

[MOAA's Government Relations team](#) regularly meets with lawmakers and their staffs in remote settings to ensure that servicemembers past and present, their families, caregivers, and survivors remain a priority for the 117th Congress. There are many ways MOAA members can support these efforts by advocating from your home.

[GET INVOLVED: [MOAA's Advocacy in Action 2021](#)]

Call

One of the easiest ways to engage with your lawmakers is to call their office. You may do so toll-free via MOAA's direct line to the Congressional switchboard at (866) 272-6622. Just ask the Capitol operator to connect you with your legislator's office. You likely will talk to a staff assistant or a legislative assistant for your member of Congress; their job is to hear your concerns and relay this information to the senator or representative.

Send a Letter

Another way to make your voice heard is by writing a letter to your elected official. Typically, a member of Congress prefers letters on legislative issues be sent to their Washington, D.C., office. Click these [House](#) and [Senate](#) links to find your elected officials' D.C. addresses. Elected officials often receive a lot of correspondence from their constituents, so it may take a few weeks for you to get a response.

[RELATED: [Advocacy in Action: Details on MOAA's Spring Campaign](#)]

Send an Email

Members of Congress may also be reached through email. An effective way for MOAA members to contact their elected officials through email is by using our [Take Action Center](#). Not only can you use the Take Action Center to find out who your elected officials are, you can also use our pre-made templates to send messages to Congress on important issues to the uniformed service community. Messages on the Take Action Center can be customized, and MOAA encourages our members to add personal notes to these emails.

These messages are part of this year's Advocacy in Action campaign. Send them to your lawmakers today, and share the links with fellow MOAA members and nonmembers alike:

[Support Comprehensive Toxic Exposure Reform Legislation](#)

[Fix the TRICARE Young Adult Coverage Gap](#)

[Support the Military Hunger Prevention Act](#)

Engage on Social Media

Connecting with your elected officials on social media is an excellent way to stay up to date on their priorities as a legislator. Popular social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram allow for lawmakers and their staff to stay connected with their constituents on what issues are most important to their district or state. A Congressional Management Foundation [survey](#) from August 2020 found that some Senators and representatives increased their engagement on Facebook to better address larger groups of constituents during the pandemic.

MOAA often participates in social media campaigns to interact with members of Congress. Elected officials often provide their social media information on their website.

Experience is the name everyone gives to their mistakes.



JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA



A Zoom membership meeting will be held at **7:00 p.m. Tuesday, 18 May 2021**

Mr. Christian McWhirter, Lincoln historian at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois, will speak on Lincoln's visit to the Kansas Territory in 1859

(Specific information is given at the top of Page 1)

Annual Chapter Dues (\$20.00) were due and payable 01/01/21 \$ _____

Clayton L. Comfort Award program contribution \$ _____
(Separate check made out to "KU Endowment")

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JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA

CAPT Jim Cooper, 5216 Brown Lane, Lawrence, KS 66049-5112

MOAA WEBSITE: www.moaa.org
KANSAS COUNCIL WEBSITE: www.kansasmooa.net
JAYHAWK CHAPTER WEBSITE: www.jayhawkmoaa.org

Tentative 2021 Meeting Schedule:

Tuesday, 18 May

Tuesday, 21 September

Tuesday, 20 July

Tuesday, 16 November



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NEVER STOP SERVING!

IN GOD WE TRUST