

June 2024

Website: <http://lincolnlandmoaa.org>

Upcoming Events

- June 14, 2024, Beach House, Lake Decatur
- Scholarship submissions due to LTC DePue NLT 15 June 2024 (See website for more details).
- August 9, 2024, Island Bay Yacht Club, Outside, Springfield
- October 11, 2024, location TBD
- December 13, 2024, TBD
- 2024 Golf Outing (Sixth Annual), September 21, 2024, Shambole Golf Course—Please advertise this to all members.

Inside this issue:

Next Meeting Information	1
President's Corner	2
From the Legislative Liaison	3
From The Chaplain	5
From the SOS Office	6-8
Chapter Information	9-20

THE SALUTE—Never Stop Serving...



Next Meeting Information

President's Corner May 2024

Greetings to all members of Lincoln Land Chapter of MOAA. As we move out of Spring and into Summer, we have fun and exciting times in store for all. Several items of information to pass on to all of you in this newsletter.

Awards – Communications and Level of Excellence:

Lincoln Land Chapter Wins two 2023 Col. Marvin J. Harris 5-Star Communications Awards. Each year, national MOAA holds the Col. Marvin J. Harris Communications Award Contest to identify councils and chapters that do an outstanding job communicating with their members and community. MOAA affiliates competed in two categories of competition: print and e-newsletters and websites. We won a 5-Star award for each category! A panel of judges scored the submissions based on a set of subjective criteria, looking at both design and content. Thank you to Lt Col Dave Miller for his hard work on our newsletter "The Salute".

Also, Lincoln Land Chapter received the annual 4-Star Level of Excellence (LOE) Awards for performance in 2023. Level of Excellence (LOE) awards are MOAA's most prestigious affiliate awards, honoring councils, and chapters for their efforts across the full scope of our association's mission to support and foster programs that directly support the MOAA mission and their communities. All LOE nomination packages were independently evaluated by two members of the Council and Chapter Affairs Committee of the MOAA Board of Directors. Thanks to all for the hard work and perseverance of our leadership and the Chapter Members!

Membership Survey:

If you recall, I sent a survey to all of you via email in April to capture your thoughts on alternatives for our Scholarship/Vets Program Auction that we hold at our December Meeting. One alternative was to add a donation fee to the meal price, instead of buying a gift and auctioning it off at the meeting. Doing this would make it simpler and would possibly save the members some money, while at the same time raising donations for our projects (Scholarship and Vet Support). This would have the members avoid spending \$50 or more for a gift to bring to the meeting, and to also bid and purchase a gift at the meeting, at additional cost. Simpler and possibly a savings to YOU, while still funding our important chapter goals and efforts. Results of the survey indicated that most of the membership agreed with this idea. So ... the Executive Committee is moving forward to make plans for this for the December meeting ... MORE TO FOLLOW!

We are also looking at alternative venues for meetings, as you suggested in the survey. We will keep you informed as this effort develops.

ROTC/JROTC Awards:

Dave Knieriem and Jim Foreman presented awards at ROTC and JROTC units that we sponsor as a Chapter:

- University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign) (Army/Navy/Air Force ROTC)
- Eastern Illinois University (Army ROTC)
- Danville HS JROTC (Army)
- Mattoon HS JROTC (Army).
- Richland HS JROTC (Army)

There are photos and information on these awards later within the newsletter.

As a side note ... I was honored to present awards at the University of Illinois (U-C) on 25 April. This was a special event for me, as I was the Cadet Commander of the AFROTC Detachment 190 Cadet Corp 50 years ago ... Spring Semester 1974. It was a VERY special time for me personally. I was so VERY proud of my old alma mater and the ROTC Units there!

Again ... to remind you of some of our issues facing MOAA and MOAA Chapters today.

Membership: Our chapter and many chapters nationally are not growing, and many have declining membership. We need to find the root cause and turn that around. ALL of us need to help and assist in recruiting new members for our Chapter (and MOAA National as well) – ALL of us are on the Membership Committee! More Chapter and MOAA members translate into more resources to generate more ideas and support more projects within our local communities. **Meeting attendance and engagement in activities:** With your help, we need to find out what our chapter members are interested in accomplishing and how and when to conduct our meetings. With expanded Chapter coverage area, it does not make sense to have only one location for chapter meetings (such as Springfield and Decatur). We need to reach out and expand to more localized smaller areas such as (for a lack of a better word) “Satellites”. Smaller and more remote groups could have their own meetings and projects of their own choosing, and still be a member of the Lincoln Land Chapter and have the benefit of Chapter support. While this initiative has not been fully explored, our Chapter Leadership will be working hard to get this accomplished during the next year or so.

To keep you all up to date – One of the problems we have had in membership is identifying those National MOAA members who are not a member of a chapter. Within the state of Illinois, there are over 6,000 MOAA members, but only 338 are members of a Chapter. Currently, the National MOAA database has been unable to fully identify who we need to contact. There have been some snags in the new database access, but as soon as the new Association Management Database (AMS) is available to us, we will be contacting National MOAA members who are not a member of a chapter. This will enable us to contact them and extend the opportunity to join our chapter and stress the many benefits of chapter membership. I will keep you up to date with this information.

We continually need your help to make our Chapter and MOAA a great organization. Here is how you can help now:

Recruit new members – you are ALL recruiters.

Attend as many of our meetings as possible.

Support our fund-raising efforts within the Chapter to support our projects.

Please browse the Chapter Website and our Facebook presence and read our Chapter Newsletter to keep informed concerning events and issues of the Chapter and MOAA:

Website: <https://lincolnlandmoaa.org>

Newsletter – Available on the website and emailed to you.

Chapter Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/MOAAinlincolnland>

ALSO ... “NEVER STOP SERVING”!!

Thank you for your continued support. See you all soon!

President's Corner:

As a reminder, our Chapter has a Facebook page presence on the web: <https://www.facebook.com/MOAAincolnland>

Check it out—Also, it may be accessed through our website by clicking the “F” logo near the top of our web home page (<http://lincolnlandmoaa.org>)

Other areas of interest to our chapter include:

Sixth Annual Chapter Golf Outing—August 26, 2023, at Shamblee Golf Course on Lake Petersburg, Illinois. We need more golfers, sponsors, and helpers. Contact LtCol Dave Miller for additional information.

Help us RECRUIT new members. Members are our best recruiters. Please talk to potential members within your Sphere of Influence about joining us as we NEVER STOP SERVING. 3. Please attend our meetings—We Need Your Support!

MOAA Legislative Action Center: You can help MOAA by visiting their legislative action center and contacting your elected officials regarding pending legislation MOAA is working. You can reach the Legislative Action Center at the following email address: <http://take.action.moaa.org>

Finally, as a reminder, MOAA is the nation's largest and most influential association of military officers. It is an independent, nonprofit, politically nonpartisan organization. While MOAA is permitted by law to lobby—and does so actively—its status as a tax-exempt veteran's organization precludes it from participating in political activities, which are defined as intervening directly or indirectly in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.

Stated briefly: the association may advocate issues, but it may not advocate the election or defeat of particular candidates or political parties. This newsletter follows the policies of MOAA National.

All the best wishes and prayers to all of you. As Always – NEVER STOP SERVING!

Dave Knieriem, Major, USAF (Ret)
Chapter President
Lincoln Land Chapter, MOAA

Dinner Meeting
Friday, June 14, 2024

Location: Beach House

2301 S Lake Shore Dr, Decatur, IL 62521

[\(CLICK HERE FOR DIRECTIONS - GOOGLE MAPS\)](#)

Social Hour (Cash Bar) at 6:00PM

Dinner at 7:00PM

Cost: **\$40.00** Per Attendee

Dress: Business Casual

PROGRAM:

FBI Special Agent Brad Hanner. Chicago Field Office, Former Marine Officer.

Also, a short talk by the Illinois Raptor Center is pending

A GREAT MENU at a GREAT VENUE!

Stuffed Chicken Breast or French Onion Pork Loin Medallions

Garlic Mashed Potatoes

Candied Brussel Sprouts

Garden Salad

Mini cheesecake bites

Brownie bites

RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE NOT LATER THEN 5PM on TUESDAY, June 11th

[MAKE RESERVATIONS ONLINE - PREFERRED METHOD \(CLICK HERE - OPEN NOW\)](#)

or by Contacting by Phone/Text Message/Email:

Dave Knieriem (dknieriem@casscomm.com)

Let us know how many will attend.

Your Host will be: Major (USMC, Ret) Dave Falk - Decatur

THANKS ... see you there!

Dave Knieriem

President

Webmaster

Lincoln Land Chapter, MOAA

Webmaster

Illinois Council of Chapters, MOAA

Email: dknieriem@casscomm.com

Mobile: 217-899-5526

Legislative Liaison Update

The annual Advocacy in Action is over. MOAA members from every state visited their state's congressional offices on April 17th – *all 535!*

It was a productive day confirming support for the Richard Star Act, soliciting support for restoring Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), and informing members of the need to protect TriCare for Life (TFL).

As we've seen in the MOAA e-newsletter, the overwhelming support for the Richard Star Act has not overcome institutional paralysis as the Bills (HR 1282 & S 344) have not made it to the floor for a vote. The good news is that Congress seems to have taken note of the House Armed Service Committee's Quality of Life Panel Report by making several of its recommendations the basis for the Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement Act and the 2025 NDAA.

The Mark Up session for this act was May 22nd. Be watchful to see if the 15% increase in pay for junior enlisted members gets included with the 4.5% overall pay raise make it into the 2025 NDAA.

Hopefully the Richard Star Bills and the BAH will also make it through the Mark Up session. Log into the MOAA advocacy link to let your congressman know that the recommendations in the Quality-of-Life Act are important for military recruitment and retention. With so few veterans in Congress, our voices become even more important in maintaining America's military preparedness.

Semper Fi – Bob Tyler



From The Chapter Chaplain

kindest Greetings to all as we begin to navigate the summer season. Ours has become busy already as we, this past week, ventured to Ft Wayne Indiana to be honored by the faculty there at Concordia Seminary in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of our ordination to the pastoral ministry in 1974. There were 9 of us from that class present. My actual date of ordination is November 17,1974.

While at Ft Wayne I had the honor of speaking with a former chaplain of ours, CH RADM DANIEL GARD, USNR. He is teaching there and is aware of the troubles MOM is facing nationally in recruiting and retaining members. While he offered no specific solutions, he is aware of a problem facing society in general - the alienation many of us

experience from one another. This led me to reread an excellent article I saw recently titled: "Why Americans Suddenly Stopped Hanging Out" by Derek Thomson. I offer it here in summary form.

In America's earliest decades, we were far more social that we are now, but things have changed in the past

few decades. After the 1970's, people stopped showing up at churches and temples. From 2003 to 2022 American men reduced their average hours of face-to-face socializing by about 30 %. Boys and girls reduced their weekly social hangouts by more than 3 hours per week. Americans in the 2020's saw anxiety and dissatisfaction rising in lockstep. NBC Pollsters said, "we have never before seen this level of pessimism in the 30 plus years of history of the polls. Although COVID 19 clearly increased time alone, these trends pre-date the pandemic. Pet adoption has increased by trading people for pets. The sum of all reasons for this self-imposed isolation is that face to face rituals and customs are pulling our time less, and our face-to-face screen technologies are pulling on our attention more (The end of the article).

While a solution to loneliness may be to get up and do something, at least as a temporary cure, the more lasting cure is in deepening our relationship with our Creator. He made is out of the dust of the ground and breathed life into us. He made us fit for heaven by redeeming is via the Cross, relieving of the guilt of sin and he us His Spirit who enriches us with many gifts and opportunities to be with and serve others. Such a relationship brings us joy and causes others to be infected by it.

This is my hope and I trust is yours.

In Your Service

Ralph Woehrmann Ch

Major, USA (RET)

**Illinois Council of Chapter
Presidents Chaplain**

JROTC/ROTC report:



University of Illinois Air Force ROTC Detachment 190

Where's Dave?



Eastern Illinois 25 April
Army Cadet Dillon Dismas



University of Illinois 25 April
Army Cadet Thomas Franklin



JROTC/ROTC report:



Mattoon JROTC 2 May
Scholarship Award Elizabeth Honn

Mattoon JROTC 2 May
MOAA Award Shelby Pickering



University of Illinois 25 April
Navy MIDN Samuel Baser



University of Illinois 25 April
Air Force Cadet Griffin Costello



University of Illinois 25 April
Air Force PAS Lt Col Scalzitti

From The Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator



Survivor Outreach Services

Happy New Year

Many choose new goals for the beginning of the Year.

Organization is a great place to start. DFAS, BENEFEDS, MILCONNECT and the VA are all great online resources and a great place to start.

As a reminder the Survivor Benefit Plan

Marital Status Update form (Formally Certification of Eligibility) is due annually

on the Annuitants' birthday. If you have questions, contact Michelle Rutherford at

michelle.r.rutherford3.ctr@army.mil or 217-720-9574.



President Joe Biden has awarded the nation's highest military medal to a Vietnam War helicopter pilot who disregarded a direct order.



Retired Army Capt Larry Taylor, now 81, flew his Cobra helicopter into a firefight to rescue four US troops from near certain death in 1968. He had been ordered to return to base, but refused when he learned there was no other rescue helicopter being sent. A Cobra had never before been used for such a mission before, the Army says. He received the Medal of Honor at the White House. On the night of 18 June 1968, the long-range reconnaissance patrol team that then-1st Lt Taylor saved came under heavy fire and was surrounded by enemy troops outside Ho Chi Minh City. Running low on fuel and ammunition, he made low-level attack runs as the enemy returned intense ground fire for about half an hour.



Upon realizing that the team's escape route was a death trap, he radioed with a new extraction point. When the men arrived at the location, 1st Lt Taylor landed the helicopter "with complete disregard for his personal safety" to pick up the four troops, the White House said. The men had to cling to the outside of the two-person aircraft as there wasn't room inside. President Biden said at Tuesday's medal ceremony: "The rescue helicopter was not coming. "Instead, Lieutenant Taylor received a direct order: Return to base. His response was just as direct: 'I'm getting my men out. I'm getting my men out.'

"Lieutenant Taylor would perform the extraction himself, a move never before accomplished in a Cobra." The Tennessee native's aircraft was hit multiple times amid the rescue mission. "He refused to give up. He refused to leave a fellow American behind," Mr Biden said. "When duty called, Larry did everything to answer. He rewrote the fate of four families for generations to come." Only 3,515 US military personnel have received the Medal of Honor, out of 40 million who have served since the Civil War.



PROVIDING **CRISIS RELIEF** TO OUR NATION'S HEROES

Together, we can offer support and stability to the uniformed services and veteran communities during a crisis.



OUR GOAL

Our goal is to raise \$1 million to endow The MOAA Foundation's Crisis Relief Fund and continue our great work.



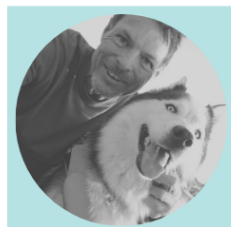
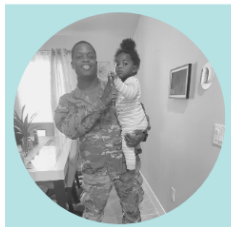
WHY CRISIS RELIEF?

More than 12 million veterans without a VA disability rating have virtually no support when disaster strikes.



CAN YOU HELP?

Our hope is your generous contribution will help us reach our goal to fund this program in perpetuity.



READY TO ASSIST

In April 2020, The MOAA Foundation launched an emergency COVID-19 Relief Fund to support uniformed services families impacted by the pandemic.

As the pandemic has ebbed, we know crisis-related needs of uniformed services families and veterans still exist.

To answer the call for help, we established The MOAA Foundation Crisis Relief Fund — an enduring emergency relief fund to assist uniformed services personnel, veterans, and their families (including caregivers and survivors) in the midst of crisis.

WHAT SETS US APART



Our streamlined application takes less than 20 minutes to complete, saving applicants the time they need to address other urgent priorities.



Funds reach an approved applicant's bank account within days of approval — timely relief when it can have the most impact.



Financial grants are awarded to qualifying applicants to help with housing costs, utilities, medical and insurance bills, groceries, and more.



100% of our Crisis Relief applicants would recommend our program to others in need.



(800) 234-6622



moaa_foundation@moaa.org



charities.moaa.org/crisisrelief

Never Stop Serving

Lincoln Land Chapter MOAA

PO Box 9435
Springfield, IL 62791-9435

David Miller
Phone: (217) 415-2837
or 217-761-3973.

Email:
david.b.miller32.nfg@mail.mil

http://
lincolnlandmoaa.org



Our Purpose—Serving the entire Military Community locally & nationally

Our Motivation—Supporting our most reliable asset—the US military member

Our Means—Informing legislators, supporting local events & organizations

Our Membership—Commissioned Officers of the Eight Uniformed Services (USA, USMC, USN, USAF, US Space Force, USCG, NOAA, USPHS) who strongly believe in supporting a volunteer force for the safety and security of our country

MISSION OF THE LINCOLN LAND CHAPTER

The Lincoln Land Chapter's mission is:

To foster fraternal relations among the retired, active and former uniformed services and their National Guard or Reserve components;

To protect the rights and interest of same to include dependents and survivors;

To further promote useful services for members of the former and current members of the Armed Forces and their dependents and survivors;

and to serve the community to the fullest extent possible.

Our Chapter has a Facebook page presence on the web:

<https://www.facebook.com/MOAAlincolnland> Check it out—Also, it may be accessed through our website by clicking the “F” logo near the top of the home page.

MOAA is the nation's largest and most influential association of military officers. It is an independent, nonprofit, politically nonpartisan organization.

While MOAA is permitted by law to lobby—and does so actively—its status as a tax-exempt veterans organization precludes it from participating in political activities, which are defined as intervening directly or indirectly in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.

Stated briefly: the association may advocate issues, but it may not advocate the election or defeat of particular candidates or political parties. This newsletter follows the policies of MOAA National.

**Now and Always
We'll be There.**



90228

1-800-247-2192 • www.moaainsurance.com



MOAA Legislative Action Center

You can help MOAA by visiting their legislative action center and contacting your elected officials regarding pending legislation MOAA is working. You can reach the Legislative Action Center at the following email address: [take action.moaa.org](mailto:takeaction.moaa.org)

Reasons to Join a MOAA Chapter

You know the value of belonging to MOAA and your chapter. But when you're talking to a potential new chapter member, it's important to remember that many officers might have only limited knowledge of MOAA's chapter system.

Creating a dialogue and asking open-ended questions is the best way to find out if and how a chapter membership could help a prospective member.

Find out as much as you can about their priorities in order to tailor a response that is more likely to resonate with them personally.

Here are some aspects of membership that may appeal to them.

- 1. Make yourself heard.** MOAA's chapters provide critical grassroots support for MOAA's national legislative agenda. Chapter members let their legislators know what's on their minds and open doors for MOAA's legislative team in Washington, D.C.
- 2. Give back to the community.** Chapter members are MOAA's ambassadors in their communities, supporting countless programs that make a difference in the lives of others. These members continue to serve and are giving back in the truest sense.
- 3. Value added to chapter members' lives.** MOAA chapters sponsor interesting programs and opportunities to interact with civic, political, military, and business leaders on issues important to members.
- 4. Networking with fellow officers.** Chapters include second-career members in the work force and retired service members who have contacts in their communities that can be valuable to transitioning officers.
- 5. Stay informed.** Chapter newsletters, websites, and meetings provide you with the latest information on local, state, and national issues and changes to military benefits.
- 6. Influencing state legislation.** Most states have a council of chapters that unites chapters in the state. These councils, and independent chapters in states without a council, often lobby for and pass state-level legislation that affects military members and their families, such as exempting military retired pay from state income tax or increasing funding for state veterans' programs.
- 7. Camaraderie with a purpose.** MOAA chapters unite active duty, former, and retired officers from every branch of service, including National Guard and Reserve, as well as surviving spouses, offering the opportunity to connect with others with similar backgrounds and interest and develop close and lasting friendships.

All about MOAA

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) is the country's leading organization protecting the rights of military service members and their families. Those who belong to MOAA not only lend their voices to a greater cause, but they also gain access to extensive benefits tailored to the needs and lifestyles of military officers. MOAA members proudly hail from every branch of the uniformed services. To them, we have made the same promise that they have made to their country: Never Stop Serving. MOAA's greatest mission is to improve the lives of those who serve and their families, which is achieved largely through the tireless advocacy efforts taking place in our nation's capital. MOAA's experts in Washington are there to support legislation that benefits the military community and are equally vigilant when fighting to stop legislation that threatens our livelihood. The larger our numbers, the greater our voice. Membership is open to active duty, former, retired, and National Guard and Reserve commissioned and warrant officers of the uniformed services and their surviving spouses. MOAA is the nation's largest and most influential association of military officers. It is an independent, nonprofit, politically nonpartisan organization. With more than 350,000 members from every branch of service - including active duty, National Guard, Reserve, retired, former officers, and their families - we are a powerful force speaking for a strong national defense and representing the interests of military officers at every stage of their careers. MOAA's highest priority is providing first-class service to our members. We are the leading voice on compensation and benefit matters for all members of the military community. We provide expert advice and guidance to our members. While the association does advocate a strong national defense, it does not, as an association, become involved in matters pertaining to military strategy or individual weapons systems of the various services. The association's board of directors has long believed that such decisions can be made only by those who have all of the facts available to them: today's actively serving military leadership. The association plays an active role in military personnel matters and especially proposed legislation affecting the career force, the retired community, and veterans of the uniformed services. MOAA's overarching goals are captured in its resolutions, which reflect the views of the entire membership. The membership provides input and votes on resolutions every two years (on even years). While MOAA is permitted by law to lobby - and does so actively - its status as a tax-exempt veterans organization precludes it from participating in political activities, which are defined as intervening directly or indirectly in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office. Stated briefly, the association may advocate issues, but it may not advocate the election or defeat of particular candidates or political parties.

2024 Lincoln Land Chapter

MOAA Chapter Events

THESE ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE!

Friday, April 12, 2024 – Island Bay Yacht Club (Inside)

Friday, June 14, 2024 - Beach House, Decatur, IL

Friday, August 9, 2024, Island Bay Yacht Club, Springfield, IL (Outdoor Patio)

Saturday, September 21, 2024 - 2024 MOAA Golf Outing, Shambole Golf Course, Petersburg, IL (**need everyone to push golfers and sponsors**)

Friday, October 11, 2024 – TBD (Annual Business Meeting)

Friday, December 13, 2024 TBD (Christmas Event and Scholarship Auction)



MOAA's Legislative Priorities for the 118th Congress

Here is a look at MOAA's priorities, in support of the 50th anniversary of our all-volunteer force and to address the challenges facing our uniformed community. Note: Our advocacy team remains active on many other issues not listed here; our priorities will be shaped throughout the year depending on concurrent successes or emerging issues that warrant an all-hands approach. Additionally, we share many interests with The Military Coalition and other stakeholder groups and leverage those relationships to expand our reach on Capitol Hill.

Compensation and Service-Earned Benefits
Military Housing
Health Care for Currently Serving and Retirees
Health Care and Benefits for Veterans
Service Families
Survivors
Guard and Reserve

Compensation and Service-Earned Benefits

Problems: The ongoing recruiting crisis and unit level personnel shortages create a “do more with less” Personnel “Perfect Storm” for the force and further erode the quality of life for servicemembers and their families. DoD is in a war for talent and is struggling to recruit the force we need to defend our country.

Compensation and quality of life remain relevant to our nation's recruiting challenges. Servicemembers deserve compensation competitive with the private sector. Congress has allowed the White House to shortchange troops in the past, leading to a 2.6% pay raise gap – something we cannot allow to happen again as servicemembers struggle to make ends meet. Funding the government on time and strictly keeping to the congressional schedule seems to be a bridge too far for both parties and both chambers. This could lead to a federal shutdown, which would hit Coast Guard, U.S. Public Health Service, and NOAA servicemembers hard since their pay is not guaranteed like those in DoD. We need to fix this: All eight of our services continue to work when the government shuts down, and our servicemembers deserve to be paid for their service. MOAA also continues to advocate against offsets for some disabled retirees and veterans. Existing legislation places an unfair tax on retired pay to fund a servicemember's own disability.

Actions:

Ensure pay at or above the Employment Cost Index and ensure all allowances and programs necessary to recruit and retain a quality force.
Ensure pay continues for all eight uniformed services during a government shutdown.
Provide for concurrent receipt of military retirement pay from DoD and disability pay from the VA.

Military Housing

Problems: The Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) is designed to cover 95% of housing costs, a steady drop from 100% that took place between 2015 and 2019. This left military families to cover anywhere from \$100 to \$184 out of pocket each month. With rising housing costs – both for rental properties and home sales – an estimated 75% of military families are paying over \$200 out of pocket each month, according to a Blue Star Families survey. BAH should be restored to 100%, the BAH calculation methods should be revised to keep pace with rapid changes in the market, and the housing profiles used in the calculation should be reviewed to reflect current military demographics.

The Military Privatized Housing Initiative was a gamble by Congress and DoD to leverage private dollars to quickly build on-installation housing after years of neglect and deferred maintenance in appropriations. Although the speed of the construction was an initial success, the public-private partnership failed to ensure servicemembers and their families were provided safe and adequate housing. As problems emerged, commanders learned they were left with ineffective tools and questionable authorities to address housing complaints from servicemembers. Mold, pests, and other unsafe conditions in privatized military housing persist. The Tenant Bill of Rights, an initiative adopted by most privatized housing companies, is not widely known nor enforced. Many families were forced to turn to the media after their chain of command was unable to fix their housing problems. The initiative resulted in partnerships with landlords and investors that require agreement by all parties to implement changes. The nature of the partnership undermines the chain of command, resulting in the loss of trust in leadership. Accountability was not designed into the process, leading to unsafe and inadequate housing.

Actions:

- Restore BAH at 100% of researched housing costs per Military Housing Area.
- Ensure barracks are safe and healthy places to live, verified by the chain of command and government-owned work centers.
- Codify procedures and authorities to increase out-of-cycle housing allowances to address emergencies such as reduced availability of housing and rising utility costs.

Health Care for Currently Serving and Retirees

Problems: The military health care benefit is at risk. TRICARE beneficiaries are paying more for prescription drugs while the value of the TRICARE Pharmacy Program has been slashed via a growing list of non-covered drugs, more restrictive prior-authorization policies that are out of step with best practices, and a 25% reduction to the retail pharmacy network. These cuts disproportionately impact the elderly and those with chronic medical conditions, making it more difficult and costly to adhere to medication regimens. Military health system (MHS) reforms directed by Congress have resulted in higher fees and copays, particularly for working-age retirees, yet TRICARE coverage policies have failed to keep up with evolving policies, technologies, and treatment protocols. Beneficiaries are paying more for TRICARE coverage that is years behind commercial plan benchmarks. The direct care system of military hospitals and clinics has undergone a massive reorganization accompanied by changing policies at the military treatment facility (MTF) level and capacity reductions due to the MHS Genesis electronic health record implementation – yet there is minimal visibility on impacts to patient access, quality of care, and the patient experience. Access to care metrics have disappeared from MTF websites, and patients lack a consistent and effective problem-reporting mechanism which would allow their challenges to be tracked and addressed.

Actions:

- Reverse cuts to the pharmacy benefit and establish policy guardrails to ensure access to prescription medications and limits on copay increases.
- Fix the TRICARE Young Adult parity issue by extending eligibility to dependents up to age 26 with no separate premium to bring TRICARE on par with requirements for commercial health plans.
- Require DoD to establish a transparent and well-publicized problem reporting system for beneficiaries experiencing MTF access challenges, including an annual report to Congress on the number and types of beneficiary access problem reports by MTF and steps taken by the Defense Health Agency to identify and address systemic access problems.

Health Care and Benefits for Veterans

Problems: Passing the comprehensive toxic exposure reform bill, the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act was a monumental victory. Now comes the hard part of ensuring it works as Congress intended. Veterans rely on long-term and home- and community-based care services for everything from occasional help around the house to around-the clock assistance. The VA delivers 14 different types of long-term care (LTC) programs in both institutional settings (like community living centers or nursing homes) and non-institutional settings (like a veteran's home or through community adult day care services called HCBC). Purchasing or providing the care is placing increased demand on the department's health care system. The VA has designated 2023 as "The Year of the Caregiver." The department will focus on continuing to implement the expansion of caregiver support in the MISSION Act, conducting an overall program review, and making systemwide improvements, to include cases being appealed through the Veterans Health Administration and Veterans Benefits Administration. Additionally, a strong VA workforce and facility infrastructure are critical components to VA's long-term success. The aging infrastructure and high level of vacancies put the success of bills like the PACT Act and caregiver programs at risk. MOAA is committed to working with the VA, Congress, and stakeholder groups to monitor and assist the department in meeting the needs of veterans, caregivers, families, and survivors, and ensuring full implementation of major legislation enacted in recent years to modernize the VA across the enterprise.

Actions:

- Monitor recent major legislation enacted such as the PACT Act in the areas of health care, compensation, and follow-on support for surviving spouses and families, and seek statutory or policy changes as required.
- Compel Congress and the VA to accelerate caregiving and whole health care services, and modernization of Veterans Health Administration workforce and facility infrastructure to improve veterans access to high quality care.

Service Families

Problems: Spouses struggle with employment across the board and are constantly fighting to find and maintain employment through PCS moves. The unemployment rate among active-duty spouses has hovered between 22% and 24% for over a decade. Efforts to address this issue have focused primarily on providing educational and professional development opportunities for military spouses; however, the other side of the coin is incentivizing businesses to hire someone who will likely move in two or three years. A multipronged approach is necessary to address the high unemployment rate. Additionally, spouse underemployment continues to negatively impact military families. Ensuring companies define work as both remote AND portable is necessary to allow military spouses to keep a career on the move and progress within their career path. A recent survey of servicemembers showed 39% of respondents cited concerns with spouse employment as a reason for leaving service. Compounding this issue is the lack of accessible, affordable childcare. In 2020, DoD reported nearly 9,000 military children were on waiting lists for childcare. The nationwide shortage of childcare providers, combined with a lack of investment in renovating and constructing military child development centers, has exacerbated this issue in the post-pandemic environment. DoD has instituted unique programs such as the In-Home Childcare Fee Assistance to address this issue, but despite 250 spots available for this program, just 23 families were receiving the fee assistance as of late 2022. This is due to a lack of understanding of program requirements and slow application processing times. Standardizing childcare programs across the services is necessary to ensure families have clear guidance on the support available.

Day care challenges are a contributing factor to food insecurity in our ranks. In September 2022, DoD released a report on the military and food insecurity, stating 24% of servicemembers and/or their families had experienced some level of food insecurity within the timeframe studied. The implementation of the Basic Needs Allowance (BNA), an allowance designed to provide monthly financial assistance to families falling below 130% of the federal poverty guideline based on income and family size, is a start. Unfortunately, the law establishing the BNA allows DoD leadership to determine which military housing areas will include BAH in the eligibility calculation. The FY 2023 NDAA increased the threshold to 150% of the federal poverty guideline, but MOAA continues to advocate for exclusion of BAH in all housing areas to ensure maximum reach.

Actions:

- Improve congressional support for uniformed services families: Enhance programs to support spouse employment, ensure implementation of an effective basic needs allowance, and provide accessible, affordable childcare options.
- Overcome the lack of effective problem-reporting mechanisms and resolution systems in the Military Health System.

Survivors

Problems: When a retired servicemember passes, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service recoups their last month of retirement pay. This is frequently a terrible surprise for a new survivor and adds unnecessary financial stress to a grieving widow. Oftentimes, survivors have their checking account cleared out due to the recoupment and are put under extreme financial duress in the wake of their servicemember's passing.

This is far from the only financial hurdle faced by survivors. Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) and Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) have not kept up with inflation; although the maximum coverage recently increased from \$400,000 to \$500,000, it is still more than \$100,000 behind where it should be. Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) also has fallen behind the levels of other federal survivor programs. DIC is 43% of the compensation of a 100% disabled veteran, compared with 55% of other federal programs.

Actions:

- Repeal the recoupment of last month's paycheck after retiree's passing.
- Continue to improve SGLI/VGLI updates to match inflation.
- Improve DIC baseline to align with other government entitlements' baseline of 55%.

Guard and Reserve

Problems: The reserve component is facing a recruiting crisis. Our nation relies upon these servicemembers to respond to disasters at home and remain in the rotation to deploy worldwide in support of the active component. Members of the National Guard and Reserve must sustain their readiness, and medical care is required to keep the force deployable and support recruiting and retention. Reserve component retirees also wait excessively long to receive their first paychecks. After a career of service, retirees deserve prompt payments. DFAS and service personnel divisions must stop the finger-pointing and seek to fix this problem.

Actions:

- Overcome the lack of TRICARE coverage for the reserve component to maintain readiness.
- Overcome delayed pay for Guard and Reserve members when they are promoted or when they retire.
- Continue to support Guard and Reserve leaders, and advance legislative and policy solutions to support the total force.



Sixth Annual 2024 Golf Outing Honoring our Military Heroes and Families

AT SHAMBOLEE GOLF COURSE IN PETERSBURG

We honor all of our veterans, active military and military families who have served our country.

Saturday, September 21, 2024

442 South Shore Drive, Petersburg, IL 62675

\$75.00 per player: 18 hole shotgun start

Cart and two drinks per person

11:30 sign in, lunch, and 12:00 noon start

Proceeds benefit: Gold Star Families, Gold Star Youth Scholarships,
Chapter Scholarships

Sponsoring Organizations:

MOAA
Military Officers Association of America
Lincoln Land Chapter
www.moaa.org/chapter/lincolnland

**GOLD
STAR
MISSION**
www.GoldStarMission.org



Send Registration
and Payment to:

Lincoln Land Chapter, MOAA
Attn: Golf Outing Committee
P.O.Box 9435
Springfield, IL 62791-9435

REGISTRATION FORM

Honoring All Our Military Heroes Golf Outing
Saturday, September 21, 2024
Shamblee Golf Course
101 South Shore Drive, Petersburg, IL 62675

Captain: _____ Phone#

Golfer 1: _____
Golfer 2: _____
Golfer 3: _____
Golfer 4: _____

Please remit full payment of \$75.00 per
player with Registration Form mailed to:

Lincoln Land Chapter, MOAA

Attn: Golf Outing Committee

P.O. Box 9435

Springfield, IL 62791-9435

Deadline is a week prior or until full
for questions contact

Steve Cadle at 217-741-9297 or

Dave Miller at 217-761-3973