

April 2024

Website: <http://lincolnlandmoaa.org>

Upcoming Events

- April 12, 2024, location, Island Bay Yacht Club, Inside, Springfield
- June 14, 2024, Beach House, Lake Decatur
- 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.

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THE SALUTE—Never Stop Serving...



Next Meeting Information

To the Membership of Lincoln Land Chapter – MOAA:

Our next Chapter dinner meeting will be on Friday, April 12, 2024, held at the Island Bay Yacht Club, Springfield, Illinois.

Information is listed below.

We have a great speaker lined up for the program ... Hope to see you there !!!

Dinner Meeting - Friday, April 12, 2024

Location: Island Bay Yacht Club (Indoors)
76 Yacht Club Road, Springfield, IL 62712

Social Hour at 6:00PM, Dinner at 7:00PM

Cash Bar Available During the Evening

Cost: \$32 Per Attendee - for a GREAT IBYC Buffet and Program.

Dress: Business Casual

Our Program:

Ms. Shannon Yount - Office of the Illinois Attorney Generals Military & Veterans' Rights Bureau (MVRB)

Topic: MVRB Overview, including specific activities and issues of concern to the MVRB.

RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE NOT LATER THEN 5PM on Wednesday, April 10th

Contacting Dave Knieriem

Phone or Text: 217-899-5526

Email: dknieriem@casscomm.com

Let us know how many will attend!

Menu: Buffet Style Dinner:

(Full Listing of Menu Items Coming Soon – Updates will be noted on the website)

SEE YOU THERE !!!!!

Dave Knieriem

President

President's Corner:

Greetings to all Lincoln Land Chapter Members:

My personal and professional objective for the upcoming years is to grow and make our chapter stronger and more viable. As you remember, we sent a survey to you early in the year to get your input on what you want to see the Chapter to do. Our Executive Committee (EXCOMM) has been discussing these areas of interest and working on solutions.

One area that you pointed out is to have more speaker presentations for the meetings on varied topics of interest.

In our April dinner meeting at Island Bay Yacht Club, we have a great speaker: Ms. Shannon Yount from the Illinois Attorney General's Office – Military & Veterans' Rights Bureau (MVRB). Her topic for the evening will be an overview of the MVRB, including specific activities and issues of concern to the MVRB. It should be highly informative, and I encourage you to come to the meeting and ask questions.

In June, we will have our meeting at The Beach House in Decatur. Our scheduled speaker will be Illinois State Representative Dan Caulkins.

In August, at our Summer Outing at Island Bay Yacht Club (Back Patio), we will announce our Scholarship recipient for 2024. Also, we will be receiving a presentation from a member of MOAA National, discussing the latest areas of interest of MOAA National, and their support for the Chapters nationwide. Should be a GREAT program of interest to all.

The Chapter Executive Committee is also considering alternatives for our Scholarship/Vets Program Auction that we hold at our December Meeting. One alternative would be to add a fee to the meal price, instead of buying a gift and auctioning it off at the meeting. That would make it simpler and would potentially save the members some money, while still adequately supporting our obligations and objectives.

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.

We would also like to get your opinions to contact the membership for meetings in addition to emails, and to get your input on future venues.

If you have not done so already you may access the survey at the link below and give us your valued input: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NHZFRWM>

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

Legislative Liaison Update

Congress is still trying to work through all of the funding bills. It will be an interesting visit to the Hill mid-April during MOAA's Advocacy in Action event.

Please visit the MOAA Advocacy page to weigh in on our three targeted issues for this year. They are 1.) The Richard Star Act for those medically discharged before reaching the normal retirement time (20 years); 2.) Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) reform to repair the multiple-year reduction in BAH funding; and finally, 3.) Protecting TriCare for Life (TFL) an important issue for most of us!

On the state level, the VFW hosted a "Veterans' Day at the Capital on March 13th.

There are several bills circulating through the Illinois Legislature.

Be watchful for calls to submit online witness slips when these bills move to decision time in their respective committees or when they make it to the floor.

As the number of veterans continues to decline, it becomes even more important for us to be informed and engaged in continuing to "*Never Stop Serving*" America's (and Illinois) service members.

Semper Fi – Bob Tyler



From The Chapter Chaplain

Kindest Greetings to all as we welcome Spring !!. With its theme of resurrection of the earth from its slumber, so also does it remind us of the resurrection of Christ from the tomb after His well - deserved rest from his suffering and death on our behalf so that we may have eternal life.

I wish to highlight two events - one which has already past and the other to come

The one past was a the very fine Memorial service held on behalf of your Honorary Chaplain, The Rev Justin Everson on Saturday, March 9th at the church where he served as Pastor ,Elm Street Christian Church in Springfield.

There were several fine hymns sung, some equally good special music selections offered in a Gospel/ Country Western Style, appropriate Scriptures read, and, many testimonials offered as to his good character, faithful execution of the pastoral office and his unwavering faith and hope for his salvation in the One who alone can save, Jesus of Nazareth.

Any Nation one can name is remembered by how it honors its Dead, especially its more notable ones. The Rev Everson's Memorial lives up to the high standard of excellence we have set for ourselves in giving honor to those who have lived noble and God - Pleasing lives.

We extend our deepest Sympathies and Christ - Honoring Praise to Rev Everson's Family and Friends in the Hope of the Resurrection.

The other event is the upcoming MOAA Illinois Council meeting on Saturday March 23 in Decatur.

As you are aware, the Council administers MOAA Illinois business on behalf of its chapters in keeping with all MOAA National Goals such as Non-partisanism, expansion, support for existing chapters among them.

The Council has struggled valiantly to " keep the lights on " in Illinois but at the same time seeing many of its candles blowing out-ie, chapters Eastern Illinois, Northern ,Little Egypt ,Quad Cities, and West Suburban.. Of the remaining four, North Shore and Chicago has the largest attendance.

I am proposing that we, continue to strengthen existing chapters by at least attending as many chapter activities as possible, revisit former chapters and encourage them to return to MOAA ILLINOIS promising to supply them with leaders where none are locally available, and, giving me the go-ahead to contact local newspapers in 7 selected cities to see what ,interest there might be in MOAA activity in there areas.

MOAA in Illinois is far from dead. I for one will continue to offer prayer that Our Gracious God will increase our numbers so that our over all goal of ministering to one another will be accomplished.

In Your Service,

Ch Ralph Woehrmann USA RET

Illinois Council of Chapter Presidents

Chaplain.

JROTC/ROTC report:

The Lincoln Land Chapter for the JROTC/ROTC program for Spring 2024 is progressing nicely.

Already the chapter has given out the MOAA JROTC medal and the Lincoln Land Scholarship award this year to the Olney, Richland High School JROTC program.

Upcoming JROTC ceremonies are:

- Mattoon High School on 2 May at 1600
- Danville High School on 5 May at 1600.

If you are interested in presenting at one or both of these ceremonies, contact me at jformanmoaa@comcast.net

For the ROTC programs, I will be presenting at Eastern Illinois University on 25 April at 1530.

Chapter President Dave Knieriem will be presenting at the University of Illinois on 25 April at 1730.

Thanks to the Chapter members for supporting the Lincoln Land JROTC/ROTC program.

Jim Forman, Lt Col, USAF (ret)

Chapter JROTC/ROTC Liaison



Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter

MOAA's Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter is an affinity group whose members share information and ideas with others in a virtual environment.

After starting the virtual meetings through quarterly teleconferences, the Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter now meets monthly through Zoom. Almost 40 states are represented in the membership.

This chapter is intended to be an enhancement to, rather than take the place of, geographic chapters, and there are no dues.

Several weeks in advance of each meeting, members receive an email alerting them to the date and time of the gathering; a follow-on email with instructions for joining is sent several days prior to each meeting.

The session is kept to an hour and a half and members can log on or off according to their schedule.

Topics of discussion and presentations have included Survivor Benefit Plan-Dependency and Indemnity Compensation offset updates, financial information, and updates from MOAA national as well as other items of interest.

Members participate to the extent they are able.

While the chapter is geared toward surviving spouses and surviving spouse liaisons, any MOAA spouse is welcome for membership.

MOAA's mantra "Never Stop Serving" is espoused to make a difference locally, statewide, and nationally.

A membership application can be obtained by sending a request to mssvc02@gmail.com.

Survivor Resources and places to start looking

Many states have made legislative decisions that show appreciation for the sacrifices of servicemembers and veterans and their survivors. Benefits differ in each state, though. To know what the benefits are in your state, you need to do homework. Your research could result in monetary savings and opportunities.

Below are some resources and places to start.

- **Veterans Service Office:** There might be printed materials that enumerate county and state benefits for surviving spouses.
- **MOAA Council and Chapter Legislative Chairs:** Ask about benefits they are aware of that apply to surviving spouses.
- **County Property Appraiser:** Ask about a homestead exemption, a widow (widower) exemption, or an over age 65 exemption on your property tax or school tax. If income caps apply, what are your state's limits and guidelines? In Florida, for example, there is a homestead, widow, and age exemption and property taxes on homesteaded homes. In addition, the property tax for homesteaded homes of disabled veterans is reduced by the same percentage of the disabilities affecting the veteran as certified by the VA. In Florida, that benefit passes to the unremarried surviving spouse and is transportable to a downsized home.
- **State Legislator.** If you have income tax in your state, some or all of your military retirement pay, or Surviving Benefit Plan may be deducted from your reported income. Ask about any other benefits from the state.
- **Mayor's Office.** Call and ask about the benefits the city offers.

Aside from taxes, some additional areas to explore are scholarship opportunities for surviving spouses and dependent children; state, county, or city policies giving employment and/or promotion preference to a surviving spouse; portability of a professional license or forgiveness of fees; and discounts on passes to parks and museums.

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.





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.



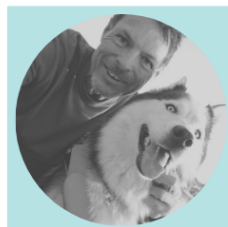
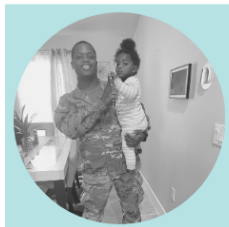
WHY CRISIS RELIEF?

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

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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.

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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: 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
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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