



MOAA®

THE EMERALD VOICE

FIVE STAR CHAPTER



EMERALD EMPIRE CHAPTER OF THE MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

THERE WILL BE AN APRIL LUNCHEON

**April 14th—Veterans’ Memorial Building, 1626 Willamette
11:30—12:00 Social / 12:00 Lunch \$17.00**

MENU

- Slow Roasted Pork Loin with Marsala Mushroom Sauce
- Roasted Rosemary Red Potatoes
- Green Beans with Onions
- Mac’s Caesar Salad
- Grandma’s Rolls and Butter
- Lemon Bars



Who ate my ear?

GUEST SPEAKER

**Zach Goodenough, St. Vincent de Paul
Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program Manager**

Reminder— If you make a reservation for lunch/dinner, you are expected to pay for the meal, even if you do not attend.

GUESTS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME

VOLUME 57, ISSUE 4

APRIL 2021

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Do you remember how to make your luncheon meeting reservations?

Either send an email to moafoeugene@gmail.com

OR

Respond quickly to your caller.

MOAA MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS MANY

2021 CHAPTER OFFICERS

President	Ken Evans	914-6235
1st Vice Pres	Dick Norton	915-5696
2nd Vice Pres	Dick Kimbell	915-0405
Secretary	Jim Koch	719-440-9036
Treasurer	Elaine Callahan	968-1746
Chaplain	Jonathan Landon	946-3888
Membership	Mike Kennedy	463-7951
Newsletter	Pat Harris	942-5274
Webmaster	Ginger Banks	484-3336
Golf Tourney	Floyd Bard	729-7265

Luncheon reservations must be received by 5:00 PM Sunday, April 11th

Printing graciously provided by



CHAPTER LUNCHEON MEETING, 14 APRIL 2021

Thank you all who responded to our callers asking about your interest in meeting in person at the Vets Building on Willamette Street. It will have been approximately 14 months since we last met. There will be one more round of telephone calls about six (6) days ahead of the meeting to confirm attendance and provide any updates should there be any.

The Vets Building and Mac's Catering are excited to have us back and are looking forward to serving us. Even though we are a bit more than two weeks away there will still be COVID protocols to observe as we will continue to want to be safe as this situation improves.

Current attendance count is 39 members. A second round of calls will be made to verify attendance approximately 5-6 days prior to the meeting.

Meeting in Colonial Room, as we normal do, on the first floor.

There will be several hand sanitizer bottles located near the entrance for your use. Several disinfectant wipe containers will be available as well should you wish to grab some.

Tables will be spaced appropriately apart.

Tables will be wiped down prior to our arrival.

Tables will seat no more than 5 persons.

Masks: please wear your mask upon entering the building and keep it on until you seat yourself.

Masks at Table: you may wish to continue to wear a mask while seated at the table and remove it when you eat or drink. This would be similar to the method restaurants are using at this time.

Food: Mac's Catering will have staff on hand to serve you. This will allow only one person to touch utensils as we go through the line.

Food: as we go through the line provide extra space between you and the person in front of you. Try and keep a minimum of three (3) feet apart.

I know we are looking forward to meeting, but at the same time we want to practice good habits and enjoy ourselves while we listen to a speaker, Zach Goodenough, from St. Vincent de Paul provide information on their veterans' programs, and Dick Norton who will provide some information and an update on our special project, the Veterans' Appreciation Golf Tournament. We anticipate having our door prizes and if you are lucky, limited speaking from me. Please watch your email or listen for your caller.

Ken Evans, Chapter President



New Calling Committee

We have made a few changes to the make up our Calling Committee. It is made up of four calling members: John Toensing, Michael Pace, Mark Schibler and Jon Hiltbrand. It is important to know these names as they will be calling you each month requesting information on your attendance for the upcoming luncheon or dinner meeting. We try to call each of you about five days prior to the meeting date and it is very important that you respond as we need a final count for Mac's Catering as well as the number of chairs and tables to set up. We establish a menu a month in advance and the amount of food to order is predicated on the number of members attending. A lot is riding on your quick response and returning your callers message on voice mail.

Remember, if you indicate you will attend and do not show, you will be charged for the missed lunch/dinner. Wish we did not have to have that rule, but the chapter will still have to pay for your meal and our budget will not allow us to cover for you.

ROTC BOOSTERS SCHOLARSHIP FUND

ROTC Boosters The Emerald Empire Chapter ROTC Boosters provide the scholarship monies normally awarded at the annual Cadet Dinner planned for the next May General Meeting. We are now accepting donations for the 2021 scholarships. The following donations have been received:

Frank Balazs, 1st Lt, USMC, (Fmr)	Richard Kimbell, CDR, USNR (Ret)	Ken Evans, CAPT, USPHS (Ret)
Elaine Callahan, CAPT, USPHS (Ret)	Clayton Robson, Lt Col, USAF (Ret)	Pat Harris, CAPT, USCG (Ret)
Darren McMahon, CPT, USA (Ret)	William Kellogg, Maj, USMC (Ret)	Richard Norton, Lt Col, USAF (Ret)
Scott Sandgathe, CDR, USN (Ret)	Lynnette Campbell, MAJ, USA (Ret)	Charles Cole, CAPT, USN (Ret)
Robert Beck, LTC, USA (Ret)	John Abele, Capt, USMC (Ret)	James Armour, CPT, USA (Ret)
Raymond Byrne, Jr., BG, USA (Ret)	Robert Heaton, Maj, USAF (Ret)	Ronald Sticka, Col, USAF (Ret)
Ronald Lechnyr, LCDR, USPHS (Fmr)	James Paschall, Maj Gen, USAF (Ret)	Darlene Thomasec, LTC, USA (Ret)
Donald Simpson, LTC, USA (Ret) in memory of Mike Reuter, LTC, USA (Ret)	Judy Simpson, Associate	William Gutheim, COL, USA (Ret)
Mike Kennedy, CAPT (CHC), USN (Ret)	Ed Daley, Maj, ANG (Ret)	Thomas Stewart, CDR, USNR (Fmr)
Robert Tully, Jr., LTC, USA (Ret)	James Brann, LTC, ARNG (Ret)	Dale Offet, CPT, USAR (Ret)
Mark Schibler, Lt Col, USAF (Ret)	Mike Lee, COL, USAR (Ret)	James Helbling, LTC, USA (Ret)
John Simmons, CH, Lt Col, USAF, (Ret)	Donald Simpson, LTC, USA (Ret) in memory of his twin brother, Patrick Simpson, LTC, USA (Ret)	James Miller, CPT, USA (Ret)
CW2 John Toensing, USA (Fmr)	Eric Watkins, LTC, USA (Ret)	Jon Weck, COL, USA (Ret)
Bert Toepel, COL, USA (Ret)	Alan Keaton, MAJ, USA (Ret)	Erven Kincaid, LCDR, USN (Ret)

Booster contact is John Toensing (541) 345-7535. Checks may be given to the Treasurer at meetings (whenever we have the next one), or mailed to: Emerald Empire Chapter, P.O. Box 767, Eugene, Oregon 97440-0767.



**Check out our chapter website.
It's all new, easier to read.
Give it a try.
www.emeraldempiremoaa.org**

Corrections to the 2021-2022 Directory of Members

Address Change:

Clay and Ann Robson's actual cell phone number is **541-653-5511**. Last month's was a typo.
Associate member Lee Krueger's new email address is kruegerlm@aol.com.

Use of this Directory

This directory is not to be used for the compilation of mailing lists for commercial or political purposes. It is intended for the private, noncommercial use of the members of this club and is not for distribution without prior consent of the Board of Directors.

24 MARCH 2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

PRESENT: A virtual meeting was conducted on Zoom. Officers: President Ken Evans, 1st Vice President Dick Norton, 2nd Vice President Dick Kimbell, Secretary Jim Koch, Treasurer Elaine Callahan. Board members: Frank Balazs, Eric Watkins, Mike Kennedy, Tom Kulick, Chris Warren, Ginger Banks, and Ed Daley. Committee members: Pat Harris. Activities/Events Committee: Floyd Bard. A quorum was established.

OPENING: President Evans called the meeting to order at 1203 and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Michael Kennedy gave an opening prayer.

MINUTES: Minutes of the 24 Feb 2021 board meeting were reviewed. Motion by Eric Watkins and seconded by Dick Norton to accept. Motion approved.

TREASURER'S REPORT for 24 February – 23 March 2021

UMPQUA ACCOUNT

Club Operations:

Beginning balance as of 23 February 2021	\$ 4896.52
Deposits: to Club Operations	\$ 150.00
Expenses:	\$ -466.69
Club Operations as of 23 March 2021	\$ 4579.83

***Special Projects Fund:**

*VAGT added \$1100 in registration/donations	\$ 2168.05
VAGT expenses	\$ 1100.00
	\$ -78.89
ROTC Scholarship Booster Fund: added \$150 in donations	\$ 2570.00
UMPQUA CHECKING ACCOUNT grand total as of 23 Mar2021	\$ 10338.99

OCCU ROTC SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENT FUND

Balance as of 31 January 2021	\$ 2958.34
Donations	\$ 0.00
Interest	\$ 0.60
OCCU Total Balance as of 28 February 2021	\$ 2958.94

BENTON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION (BCF)

EMERALD EMPIRE MOAA SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENT FUND

Previous balance as of 31 January 2021	\$ 42738.29
Transfer of funds from OCCU	\$ 3000.00
Market gains	\$ 691.02
BCF Balance as of 28 February 2021	\$ 46429.31

***NOTES: The Veterans Appreciation Golf Tournament (VAGT) will be reported as a subgroup**

“The Emerald Voice”

is published monthly by Emerald Empire Chapter, Military Officers Association of America (MOAA),
PO Box 767, Eugene, Oregon 97440-0767
Email: EmeraldEmpireMOAA@gmail.com

The Emerald Empire Chapter of MOAA is a Eugene-based 501(c)(19) veterans organization that meets regularly at the Veterans' Memorial Building at 1626 Willamette Street. We have 141 regular and associate members made up of active, retired and former members of the nation's seven uniformed services and their surviving spouses. We, and the national organization, are a non-partisan advocate on military personnel matters, especially proposed legislation affecting the career force, the retired community and veterans of the uniformed services. As a local chapter, we focus more on the local military community, e.g., gathering clothing and personal care items for the patients in the VA Hospital in Roseburg. Other areas of emphasis can be found at <http://www.moaa.org/takeaction/>.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING (continued)

of the Special Projects Fund through 2021. Emerald Empire MOAA has contributed \$1000 from the Special Projects Fund towards the Tournament.

Motion to accept by Michael Kennedy and seconded by Tom Kulick. Motion approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Awards – Completed.
2. House Committee Chair – Dick Norton Volunteering – All callers are done.
3. Potential Projects – Habitat for Humanity has no real Veterans' programs. Dick Norton thinks maybe we can donate for the cost of materials and ramps for veterans.
4. Veteran's Appreciation Golf Tournament – Floyd Bard gave update and several issues were discussed. Updated contract with Pine Ridge Golf Course has not been signed yet but will be soon. Our deposit to PR will be \$ 1,040. Applications are beginning to arrive. Floyd is keeping a spread sheet of teams and members. He will send out more flyers and applications. We are on track. Elaine is doing accountability of funds correctly. No expenditures will be made without funds on hand. Sponsorships are coming in and the fees to sponsor various prize holes are set. Floyd will send an attachment with that information.
5. ROTC Scholarship Update – BCF application is in. Two additional available from MOAA – Chris Warren will send two applicants' names. He also discussed that they now have a workable solution for training at Toketee Airfield east of Roseburg. We also talked about the possibility of tying in an awards ceremony before Mother's Day with an end of training exercise.
6. Lunch meeting resumption? With the latest change due to Covid we may be able to resume luncheons in April. There is a possibility it could be a buffet. The Calling Committee will make calls to see how many members would be willing to attend.
7. Website Update – Ginger reported that the old web site is gone. There have been 50 visits to the new one. Everything is encrypted (keeping hackers out) and all links to pages are good. All agree that it is fabulous.
8. Corvallis Chapter is closed. We will have no interaction with them.
9. ROTC awards – Found Certificates and Other Info? Ken Evans has found some. We need 3-MS3 Certificates. Pat Harris asked if we should have medallions for graduating seniors. We discussed buying rank insignia for newly commissioned Lieutenants; the board decided against it. Eric Watkins will check on availability. Dick Norton will check on possible ROTC dinner. The Calling Committee will also ask if members would attend.

NEW BUSINESS:

Dick Norton and Ken Evans met with Zach Goodenough, St. Vincent DePaul. Summary attached.

1st VICE PRESIDENT REPORT: Personal Affairs (including Surviving Spouse), House Committee. Newsletter, Webmaster, Purchasing Projects. Nothing to add to what was discussed above.

2nd VICE PRESIDENT REPORT: Membership, Awards (General & Levels of Excellence), Legislative Benton Community Fund (BCF). We have 89 members, 70 paid for 2021 and 32 associate members, 12 paid for 2021. Nothing to add to what was discussed above.

COMMENTS FROM THE PRESIDENT: We need to check our storage area and possibly donate items no longer needed.

Chapter Luncheon Meeting: To Be Announced – Checking into April.

Next Board Meeting: 28 April 2021, method to be announced.

Meeting adjourned 1319 hours.

James Koch, Secretary

SPECIAL PROJECTS FUND ALLOCATION MEETING—3 Mar 2021

PRESENT: A virtual meeting was conducted on Zoom. Officers: President Ken Evans, 1st Vice President Dick Norton, Secretary Jim Koch, Treasurer Elaine Callahan. Board members: Frank Balazs, Mike Kennedy, Tom Kulick, and Ginger Banks. Committee Chairs: Pat Harris and Floyd Bard. A quorum was established.

OPENING: President Evans called the meeting to order at 1212 and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Michael Kennedy gave an opening prayer.

The reason for the meeting was to discuss and decide on who would receive any allocation of our Special Projects Funds should we decide to sponsor the Veterans Appreciation Gold Tournament.

Discussion: Two special projects were identified –

Habitat for Humanity – Dick Kimbell checked with them and at this time they have nothing specific in the works for veterans.

St. Vincent DePaul - Ken and Dick Norton reported on the meeting that they had on 26 Feb 2021 with the SVDP Supportive Housing Director and Philanthropy Coordinator. A summary of that meeting is attached, along with SVDP 2019 Impact Report.

Other potential Projects have not been identified.

A motion was made by Ken Evans and seconded by Tom Kulick that we allocate our profits from the Golf Tournament to SVDP with the ability to split with other organizations if identified.

Motion approved by the Board.

Discussion: Shall we proceed with the Golf Tournament?

The initial notes about the tournament from Floyd Bard were provided before the meeting and they will be attached to the 24 Feb 2021 MOAA Board Minutes.

Ken, Dick, and Floyd reported on the meeting they had on 2 Mar 2021 with the Pine Ridge Golf Club Manager and Food Manager. A summary of that meeting is attached.

A concern was raised about other Veteran's organizations. Will they ask for some of the profits and how will we answer? Since our MOAA Chapter is the primary sponsor the profits will go into our Special Projects Fund. They will be identified in other ways.

Ginger wondered about the lack of our board member involvement. She wants to ensure that we have someone to keep us informed. Ken provided the information on the Tournament Board of Directors. The MOAA President, 1st Vice President, and Administrative officer are all MOAA Board members.

Ginger was also concerned whether any of our profits were going directly to veteran's needs in our local community. The SVDP program is local plus the earlier motion gives us the ability to donate profits to more than just SVDP.

One more issue was whether allocating money for the tournament from our Special Programs Fund was a proper use. Based on the budget projections, the expected profit for our SPF is \$ 5,500.00

A motion was made by Dick Norton and seconded by Jim Koch to donate \$ 1,000.00 to the tournament from our Special Projects Fund.

Motion approved by the Board with one abstention.

A summary of the meeting between Ken Evans, Dick Norton, Pat Harris, and Floyd Bard on Golf Tournament Needs and Tasks Review on 2 Mar 2021 was received 5 Mar 2021. It is attached.

Meeting adjourned at 1308.

James Koch, Secretary

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Effective Friday March 26th, Lane County will move to the Low Risk category for the COVID health risk. Many places of business are beginning to reopen with up to 50% capacity or 150 people whichever is less. This is good trending news and hopefully, between the drop off in cases and the ever-increasing number of people having received at least one vaccine shot, life will contain a lot more in person activities. I am optimistic that April may allow us an opportunity to restart our lunch meetings.

The Emerald Empire Chapter has in the past looked to the community for special projects that can assist or help veterans. The Moving Wall and Camp Alma, Veterans Legacy have been two projects along with a donation to Food for Lane County. As people continue to cope with 2020 and early 2021, we have begun to look closely at how we can support veterans in Lane County in a meaningful way; where our donations and efforts can make a tangible impact. Board members have spoken with several groups, but most notable is St. Vincent DePaul (SVdP). Dick Norton and I have had several meetings with staff of the Veterans Support Program and have learned a number of things. The SVdP program serves veterans in Lane County. They work with homeless veterans on finding shelter but do so in a comprehensive way. The program is building itself to be a "wrap around" service. In other words, they look at homelessness, job potential, skills of the veterans, application assistance, job placement, health care referral and financing education and budgeting. Veterans served are followed-up on and worked with to maintain their budgets, to learn better food shopping skills and nutrition values and even basic cooking skills that allow for better meals at less expense than seeking out fast food/takeout meals. The SVdP program also looks at substance abuse issues and works to eliminate this problem. Of particular note is their program to identify problems such as impending loss of shelter and then assisting to keep that from occurring. Their GAP fund allows them to assist in certain bills and rents, as it is far less expensive to keep a veteran in housing than to obtain housing once the veteran becomes homeless. This seems to be a very worthy endeavor.

Several funding mechanisms for our special projects in the past were the MOAA Garage Sale and the 5-Star Holiday Sale. Manpower and COVID removed those opportunities over the past two years. To jump start special project funding going forward, the chapter is sponsoring a Veteran's Appreciation Golf Tournament on September 11, 2021. Please see the newsletter and the website for more information. With these proceeds and continuing contributions from members we will be better able to support special projects such as the SVdP Veterans Support.

Speaking of the garage sale and 5-Star holiday sale, I would like to express my gratitude and that of the Board of Directors to Marcy Previc and to recognize her for her years of dedication to support the chapter through these fundraising activities and her contributions to the ROTC scholarship program. Thank you Marcy for your thoughts, efforts and actions to serve this community.

Submitted by: Ken Evans, President



Honorary Member Marcy Previc holding her award for her years of dedicated fundraising for the ROTC Scholarship Fund.

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS: MOAA Works With New Congress

Every two years before a new Congress is sworn in the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) releases a report offering ways to tackle the nation's growing deficit. While this does draw a picture to calculate the options, it does nothing to calculate what the bottom line may mean to us; the Veterans. Of 83 items addressed, our MOAA leadership thinks there are 13 we should know about. Some of which are:

- 1. Mandatory Spending:** Enrollment fees for "Tricare for Life" of which there are now none. Increase fees for Medicare parts B and D. Raise retirement SSI age (no age given). End VA's individual unemployability payments to disabled veterans at the full retirement age. Narrow VA's disabled eligibility compensation. Change SSI and other programs to change COLA calculations.
- 2. Discretionary Spending:** Reduce DoD budget. Cap increases in basic pay for military service members. Reduce Basic Allowance for housing to 80% of average housing costs.
- 3. Revenues:** Include disability payments as taxable income. Increase payroll tax rate for SSI.
- 4. Capping Pay Increases:** Capping basic pay increases to 0.5% below the ECI (Employment Cost Index) starting January 2022. Example, an E-7 could lose over **\$44,000** over a twenty year career if this is enacted. The seriousness of this is that the same E-7 would lose \$1,700 in the first year of retirement alone.
- 5. Reducing BAH:** If enacted (example) an E-7 with a monthly benefit of \$3,144 would be reduced to \$2,674 causing a loss of \$5,964 over a **one-year** period.

Source: MOAA magazine March 2021, pages 14-16. Col. Dan Merry USAF (Ret)

Add to these proposals cutting medical billets. Speaking of medical, this legislation does **not** include new Tricare fees. Keep track of MOAA's ongoing Advocacy news page online. This and much more can be found on the MOAA national website.

Again, to reach members of our government's legislatures:

Sen. Ron Wyden

<https://www.wyden.senate.gov/contact/>

Sen. Jeff Merkley

<https://www.merkley.senate.gov/contact/>

Rep. Peter Defazio

<https://www.defazio.house.gov>



Local Oregon State Legislature:

Sen. James Manning:

Sen.JamesManning@oregonlegislature.gov

Lawandamanning@oregonlegislature.gov

This is what "Storming the Hill" is all about: our MOAA leadership making contact with all of the members of Congress each year to make our collective voices heard. We are approximately 355,000 veterans, which makes us a strong voice on what our future veterans may be living with concerning the constraints of budget. "MOAA will not stand idly by while the new Congress gets read in on these options." There is danger that a smaller retirement amount may mean a different lifestyle in a different environment optimal to the veteran and their family. An article worth reading.

My wife and I are relocating in the next few months to the east coast (Florida). This has been an enjoyable commitment as I have had to do some reading, writing, and a little research to get hopefully accurate articles out to the Emerald Chapter membership. However, this will be the end of something that has led to much satisfaction and a little accomplishment. I want to thank our MOAA Board and membership for trusting me with this important and enjoyable undertaking. I wish you all well, and hopefully, with summer coming and vaccines coming aboard, we can look to a brighter future.

With Respect,

Ed Daley, Legislative Chair, Emerald Chapter, MOAA. Never Stop Serving

Surviving Spouse Corner: How to Become an Effective Advocate

By: Dr. Vivianne Wersel for MOAA

It can be very frustrating to find yourself in a position when legislation needs to be changed, but you are unsure where to start. My nearly 16 years' experience in legislation as an advocate affords me the opportunity to share with you how you can become more involved in improving military survivor benefits. Many surviving spouses already are seasoned advocates, thanks to MOAA and other veterans service organizations. However, for those who are new to this frontier, the following guidance can help you learn to advocate and navigate the process with confidence.

Find your passion. Choose an issue that directly affects you. This will have more of an impact when telling your story.

Gather information. Construct a simple blog regarding how this issue impacts you as a military surviving spouse. Be yourself. It is important you feel comfortable discussing the issue, even if you do not have all the details. Information can be sent later.

Determine whether the issue is local, state, or federal. Some examples include:

Federal: Improve VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, remarriage law

State: Professional licensure, property tax exemption, benefits of military surviving spouses

Local (City/County): Noise abatements, zoning ordinance

Cultivate relationships with staffers. This is important because staffers are the ones who will make a difference to move the effort forward. Again, tell your story (brief). Prepare a short bio to help connect you with a staffer and or member when setting up a meeting.

Establish a meeting. During COVID-19, meetings will be held via a virtual platform. If you do not feel comfortable with a virtual meeting, call the elected official's office and asked for a phone conference appointment with the appropriate staffer or ask to leave a message on staffer's phone. Even though you did not virtually meet with the staffer or member, what is important is you raised awareness about your issue. Remember, the elected official and staffer — whether it is federal, state or local — work for you.

SPECIAL PROJECTS... by 1st VP Dick Norton

Several years ago, our Chapter received a number of donations obtained by the efforts of John Toensing with the hope that we would find a suitable institution to receive a financial gift. We began a search for a Veteran's organization that would benefit from a donation. That was some time ago and we have not, up until now, defined what organization we can offer as a Special Project. Our Board all agreed that it had to be a local Veteran's oriented organization, and all proceeds had to benefit only Veterans. That type of organization was hard to find as most all of those we researched, had a National affiliation that controlled the distribution of all donations.

Then our Chairman of Special Events, Floyd Bard, came forward and suggested that our Chapter host a Veteran's Appreciation Golf Tournament on the Anniversary of 9-11 at the Pine Ridge Golf Course with all proceeds going to a Veterans Organization. This idea led to our meeting with the Director of Veteran's Support at St. Vincent de Paul here in Eugene. We found that this organization met all of our requirements. They employ 32 people that work directly with Veterans and provide a multitude of services. We hope to have a sizeable donation as a result of the Golf Tournament. We have not ruled out Camp Alma or any other organization that comes to our attention and meets the Chapter requirements to receive a donation. We will provide additional information as we proceed with the planning of the Golf Tournament in September.

MOAA Outlines TRICARE Mental Health Advocacy Goals

By: Karen Ruedisueli for MOAA

For years, military families have reported barriers to getting mental health appointments in both military treatment facilities (MTFs) and the TRICARE network. As MOAA [reported](#) last year, an August 2020 DoD Inspector General [report](#) validated those claims and underscored the need to address mental health care access problems. MOAA recognizes the shortage of mental health providers is a national problem and contributes to access challenges, so our recommendations focus on actionable goals to achieve incremental improvements, including:

Mental Health Appointment Schedulers: MOAA seeks a pilot program to test the effectiveness of mental health appointment schedulers in assisting beneficiaries with making mental health appointments. This “ask” is consistent with an IG report recommendation but expands the pilot to cover the direct care system as well as the TRICARE purchased care network. The pilot would not only provide direct assistance to beneficiaries seeking mental health care but also could serve as a data collection tool to gain a better understanding of barriers to access. In response to the IG recommendation, the Defense Health Agency (DHA) stated plans to develop such a pilot.

Enhanced TRICARE Contract Requirements: MOAA will advocate for more robust mental health network adequacy and provider directory requirements in the next generation TRICARE contract (T-5) including:

- Ongoing mental health provider certification/credentialing to continuously build the pool of TRICARE-authorized mental health providers even if overall network adequacy requirements are met.

- Provider directory accuracy requirements specific to mental health care to eliminate duplicates, providers no longer practicing, and inaccurate provider categorization.

- A comprehensive list of institutional behavioral health providers across all regions, accessible to all beneficiaries. This list is critical for families who must seek inpatient care outside their geographic area due to limitations on local options.

Telehealth Licensure Flexibility: MOAA seeks a study on the impact of COVID-19 national emergency licensure waivers allowing providers to practice telehealth across state lines, and the feasibility of making such waivers permanent.

Reduced Mental Health Copays: MOAA wants a targeted fix to reduce mental health and other therapy copays that does not result in increases to other TRICARE Prime or Select copays, enrollment fees, or other out-of-pocket costs. TRICARE mental health copays more than doubled in 2018, and military families now pay more per visit than federal employees covered by their health plans. The combination of high copays plus the frequent visits required for mental health care treatment creates a barrier to access for some families. We cannot allow cost to prevent families from seeking care. The mental health of servicemembers and military families is a readiness issue. MOAA is committed to improving access to mental health care for all military beneficiaries.

This Key Military Pay Indicator Is Bouncing Back. But Will It Matter? By: Kevin Lilley for MOAA

The Employment Cost Index (ECI) for private-sector wages and salaries, a metric that guides future military pay raises, ticked up slightly in the first quarter of this calendar year – good news for servicemembers, but not a guarantee. The quarterly ECI of 2.8% was up from the [2.7% report-ed Oct. 30, 2020](#). That October figure is used yearly as a guideline in setting the military pay raise – the 2020 figure, for example, should offer a hint at the FY 2022 raise. And while the October number was down from 2018 and 2019 figures, it would still represent the third-largest raise in the last 12 years. The 2.8% figure released in January sets a good trend for servicemembers, who could see future raises in line with a growing index.

While the military pay raise has reflected ECI in every National Defense Authorization Act

Time to Renew? DoD Retirees/Dependents Getting Redesigned ID Cards

The Next Generation USID military retiree card incorporates an updated design and security features to deter counterfeiting and fraud, and it is printed on a plastic cardstock. (Defense Department)

Military.com | By [Patricia Kime](#), 3 Mar 2021

Military retirees and family members renewing or getting their first military identification cards this year are nearly guaranteed to receive the Next Generation Uniform Services Identification, or USID, Card, the first update to Defense Department IDs for [non-active duty beneficiaries in nearly 30 years](#).

According to Pentagon data, 97% of the DoD's ID renewal offices, known as RAPIDS, sites worldwide are issuing the new cards, which more closely resemble Common Access Cards used by the troops .

More than 200,000 new cards had been issued as of Feb. 28, according to Pentagon data

Read Next: [Lawmakers Push VA to Provide Service Dogs to Vets After a Decade of Failed Efforts](#)

The USID cards are more durable than the previous laminated cards since they are hard plastic and feature advanced security measures that make them less susceptible to counterfeiting and being used for fraud, according to defense officials.

The cards are being issued to new retirees and family members, as well as beneficiaries whose cards have expired. The transition to the new cards is expected to be completed by January 2026.

Those eligible for the ID cards include dependents of active-duty troops; Reserve members; retirees and their dependents; [Medal of Honor](#) recipients and their dependents; 100%-disabled veterans and their dependents; and dependents of Reserve members activated for 30 days or more.

As anyone with a military ID knows, the cards are necessary to access military bases easily, shop at commissaries and exchanges, and use on-base amenities.

In April, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, [Pentagon officials announced that dependent and retiree cards](#) that were to expire in 2020 had been extended automatically through September. This allowance has been extended again through June 2021 to help eliminate the need to visit a RAPIDS site in person.

Beneficiaries who have the current ID card should not seek a new card solely for the purpose of obtaining the new style, DoD officials said. The old style ID cards will remain valid through their expiration date, according to the Pentagon.



(NDAA) since the fiscal year 2017 version, there is no rule that Congress or the administration must tie proposals or the final raise to that figure. One doesn't have to look far into the rearview to see the administration ignored this guidance in the following NDAs:

ECI Q3 FY 2012: 1.8%, FY 2014 raise: 1.0%

ECI Q3 FY 2013: 1.8%, FY 2015 raise: 1.0%

ECI Q3 FY 2014: 2.3%, FY 2016 raise: 1.3%

Fiscal pressures could lead elected officials to seek savings in many corners of the budget. And while these figures may seem small to those outside the uniformed services community, MOAA and other groups are well aware of the damage undercutting military pay can do to those in uniform – not just meeting short-term financial obligations, but suffering from thousands in lost retirement funds as pay cuts ripple into the future. MOAA tracks these figures and others to ensure budgets are not balanced on the backs of the military community.

**MILITARY OFFICERS
ASSOCIATION OF
AMERICA**

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MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

MOAA is the largest veterans' organization for military officers in the United States, with approximately 355,000 members.

The organization represents those on active duty, former officers, members of the National Guard, Reserve, Retirees and their surviving spouses.

Chapter Mission Statement:

The mission of the Emerald Empire Chapter of MOAA is to advocate for our military community and connect it to the nation we serve.



Though **DOD** no longer allows us to display the seals or logos of the various services, we are allowed to say this: "This activity supports the U.S. military and its veterans; however, it is not officially connected to or endorsed by the U.S. Department of Defense or any of its branches." So, imagine if you will, a colorful display of the symbols of the services to which we have devoted more than 2,000 years of duty.

