



Dovermoaa.org

March 2023

MOAA is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization open to officers and former officers of the Uniformed Services.

Dinner Meeting March 21, 2024

(Donation to Airman's Attic gratefully accepted on Base)



Figure 1 Patricia (Pat) Cerchio Commander, U.S. Navy, Retired
(Command Photo courtesy USN)

Program:

Cdr. Pat Cerchio "History of Women in the US Military and Accomplishments of Delaware Women"

A native of Wilmington who joined the Navy after graduating college to see the world. Pat served with all three of the Navy's major warfare communities, Aviation, Surface Warfare, and Submarine Warfare.

Her first assignment was a Navy/Marine Aviation Training Squadron as their first woman officer. She always thought about it from her perspective as having less than a year earlier graduated from an all-girls catholic college. In recent years, she realized when she walked in, their world was turned upside down. Most came from the fighter and attack communities and had never served with women officers.

Then she headed to the Navy Command Center in the Pentagon. During that tour, she was selected to be the Business Manager for the Tomahawk Cruise Missile, a 20-something with a \$1.5 B Budget. She

bought all the Tomahawk Missiles used during Operation Desert Storm.

From there she went to the Joint Forces Command Center in Seoul, Korea. Then it was back to DC to be the Installation, and later, the Production Engineer for a Satellite Communications System. She came "home" to be the Executive Officer at a Ship Maintenance Facility at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. But after just over a year the command closed and she was on the road to Newport, RI. and another

Executive Officer Tour.

In 1995, Pat was selected to take charge of the Naval Undersea Warfare Center (NUWC) in New London, CT., which included a large submarine research laboratory and the base it was on, making her the first US Navy Woman to take charge of a submarine centric command. This would be the first of three tours with the submarine community; the second as a Systems Engineer on a Submarine Communications System and the final one just before her retirement as the Chief Staff Officer NUWC Newport, RI.

Unexpectedly, in the middle of those (needs of the Navy) she went to the Naval War College followed by being the Executive Officer at the AEGIS Training and Readiness Center in Dahlgren, VA.

She retired in Newport , RI and remained there for ten years until returning to Delaware. Since retiring from the Navy, she has remained involved with a number of Military and Veterans organizations. She is the Past President of the First State Military Women Warriors, an organization her mother, Elizabeth (Betty) Lawton Cerchio, a WWII WAVE, was a founding member of.

She is currently volunteering her time to help spread the word to Delaware Veterans and Military about the Stellate Ganglion Block (SGB). SGB is a 15 minute procedure used for 100 years for pain management, in recent years it has begun being used to treat PTSD. A grant has been given for Military and Veterans living in Delaware to receive this amazing treatment at no-cost. We have been paired with two Retired Army Doctors in Maryland (Annapolis and Easton), who are considered the world experts on this. Between them they have performed over 4,000 of these procedures. They have patients flying in from around the country and around the world to be treated by them.

Menu:

Baked Ravioli topped with Mozzarella \$30

Meat Tortellini w/ prosciutto & mushrooms in cream sauce \$32

Chicken Piccate in white sauce with yellow sweet peppers, jalapeño peppers, banana peppers, pepperoncini (hot spicy) - \$35

Above meals includes salad, bread, coffee/tea and tip but not dessert or adult beverages.

Bar not extensive, wine and beer easiest. Wine by bottle, can take home what you don't consume.

Call (301) 904-0228 or email rotorhead65@aol.com to confirm your attendance and select your meal with Tom Smith by noon Jan 16th. (note 301 exchange, not 301)

Location: Franco's Dover

<https://francospizzadover.com/>

Address, directions, menu on website

Agenda:

- 5-6 social hour
- 6-7 dinner
- 7-7:20 program
- 7:30 to 8:00 business meeting

Community News:

WE THE Veterans Day at Leg Hall on March 28. A small team of Legion members from Post 28 in Oak Orchard, Senator Dave Lawson, and Representative Jeff Hilovsky, OD, FAAO Colonel, USAFR (retired) are organizing an opportunity for Veterans statewide to join, and socialize in our common bond, boots aligned in the same direction, and advocate for Veterans issues at Legislative Hall on Thursday March 28 from 1100 – 1400 hrs. Jeff suggests all to consider making appointments with their Senator and Representative in advance of the 28th so they can meet and discuss Veterans issues. He asks for our help in advocating for this event, attending this event, and perhaps helping to sponsor, or find additional sponsors for this event.

Arrangements for a tent, outdoor bathroom facilities, hand washing station, and sandwich lunch for 120 will be provided. As the word is spread, with your help, I am hopeful we will top 200 Veterans in attendance. Senator Lawson has received pledges of \$1,000 total from Credit Unions to help fund this event, but the obligations for the food and required set up will exceed the \$1K pledged, especially if attendance exceeds 125, as more sandwiches will be needed. Additionally, Senator Lawson has negotiated food server volunteers from the DSP Credit Union to help.

There will be a ceremony honoring Veterans in both the House and Senate. Veteran leaders will be invited on the House and Senate Floor, other Veterans will be in the House and Senate Chamber galleries upstairs so they can witness the reading of the Joint Resolutions.

We need to give the organizers an idea of how many of us will attend. And if we are willing to donate some money to make the event nice. . The planning committee, Senator Lawson, and I are looking forward to this event and hope we can team together to make this an annual get-together. I also ask you to visit our website to register as you encourage others to do as well. www.wetheveteransde.com

SEE THE LAST PAGE OF THE NEWSLETTER FOR TALKING POINTS IF YOU GO ON MARCH 28 or SEE A MEMBER OF LEG HALL OTHERWISE. These were developed by Larry Hess Southern DE Chapter President. He did a terrific job.

DVH Dental Clinic. Del Veterans Commissioner Doug Hudson reports: According to the temporary DVH Administrator Sandy Amaker, the dental clinic should be fully operational by mid-January 2024. She's planning to have a reception and invite the Commissioners. Doug will keep the chapter posted. In other news from Doug, V. Potluri, the new VA Hospital Administrator, said that the new radiology wing coming to the Dover CBOC is currently under construction and should be completed by June 2024.



Military service implants shared values and connections in the hearts and psyche of veterans. It's often summed up by "duty, honor, country."

It is shared by common experiences of service, leadership, sacrifice, duties in harm's way, and often reinforced by service-connected physical and psychological injury. It applies to every branch and conflict and includes reaching out to fellow veterans whether at home, overseas, and even behind prison walls.

Representatives of three veterans organizations were invited by **Sussex Correctional Institution's Incarcerated Veterans Group** on October 26 to receive contributions to veterans in need beyond SCI's walls. Held in the chapel, the ceremony was facilitated by the Delaware Department of Correction and included prison staff who work with the group and are themselves military veterans.

Dave Skocik, president of the Delaware Veterans Coalition, addressed 25 incarcerated veterans in SCI's chapel. The invitation was the second one by the Incarcerated Veterans Group in connecting with fellow veterans. Each of the recipient organizations reaches out to incarcerated veterans and their families in conjunction with the courts, service agencies and the Veterans Administration to connect them with benefits earned through military service to facilitate their successful reentry into society. Attending the ceremony was **retired Kent County Resident Judge William Witham**, an Army veteran who oversaw implementation of the Delaware Veterans Court in 2011.

Judge Witham is arranging for us to learn more about the incarcerated veterans group at our September meeting.

Chamber of Commerce Upcoming Events:

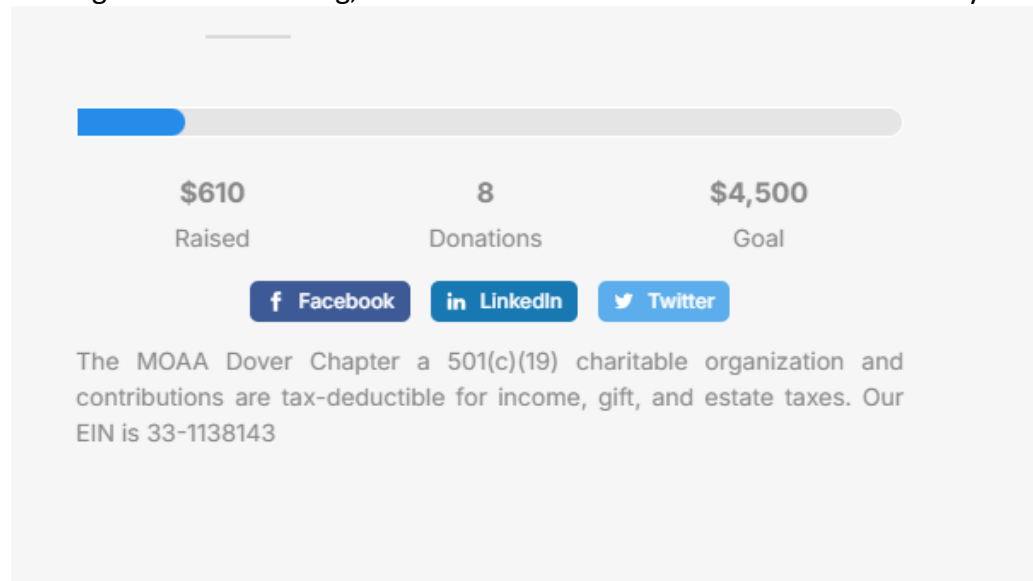
Remember we belong to the Chamber! Register for events via Chamber Website. We sponsored the Military Affaire, it was quite nice!

Chapter News:

DUES! It's PAST that time of year again....We are holding our rate to \$15.00

While you are in a giving mood, don't forget to [click this link](#) to donate to Wreaths Across America. The chapter receives \$5 for every wreath you buy if you use this link. Consider donations of Wreaths for Christmas gifts for folks who don't want any more "stuff" in their homes!

JROTC Fundraiser. We did not make as much money this year as we did at Roma's, but on the other hand, Roma did not give us but one of two checks! However, we doubled the money by several members posting on social media and talking to friends. VERY COOL! Tom will give us a final figure at our meeting, here is what has been raised online so far this year:



<https://dovermoaa.org/annual-jrotc-fundraiser> is the link to donate online. You get an instant "thanks" for your taxes and save Treasurer Tom some work!

Member **Eugenia Thornton** will present a speech to the Friends of the Kent County Library on March 20, beginning at 6: 30pm. Location: Kent County Library on Hwy 13. In preparation for this, Gene was interviewed by WBOC. I'm about mid-way through this broad cast.

<https://www.facebook.com/WBOCTV16/videos/779956807362523> Of course, I talked for 30 minutes and they took 30 seconds...also the photos and content were from my speech, so it was informative, at least.

Advocacy:

Carlton and Letty Cannon will represent Delaware at this year's Advocacy in Action week in DC. Congratulations Carlton!

Click [HERE](#) to learn about MOAA's top 7 priorities with "how to help" links embedded.

Click [HERE](#) to see what is in the National Defense Authorization Budget...including the largest pay raise in two decades.

Please see attached "**support for SB 201 and beyond**" for more details about the benefits of tax free retired military pay. This is updated from the last month, because two things changed: 1) this is NOT 100 percent tax free for retired pay, but it does DOUBLE the current tax deduction and it is regardless of age. 2) After hearing our member Jason's impassioned plea to include the Uniformed Service, Senator Buckson amended the bill. Way to go Jason! 3) The chair of the joint finance committee and several others have told Eric this bill will cost too much for very little gain. (Their words, not MINE OR ERIC's!) There will be a hearing about this on SB 201 with S1 amendment will be heard in Executive Committee on Wednesday at 3pm. Or on line. If you want to attend or speak, it is open to the public. Reach out to Buckson, Eric (LegHall) <eric.buckson@delaware.gov>

Future Meetings:

March 21: Cdr. **Pat Cerchio** "History of Women in the US Military and Accomplishments of Delaware Women"

Baked Ravioli topped with Mozzarella \$30

Meat Tortellini w/ prosciutto & mushrooms in cream sauce \$32

Chicken Piccate in white sauce with yellow sweet peppers, jalapeño peppers, banana peppers, pepperoncini (hot spicy) - \$35

April 18 – Gene Thornton and **Dolly** will present "The Magic of a Therapy Dog"

Fettuccine with Chicken and Vegetables in white sauce \$33

Ziti alla Vodka sauce \$33

Veal Parmigiana with Spaghetti (red sauce) \$34

May 16 – JROTC Awards Banquet

Personal Pizza, Veggie Deluxe Broccoli, mushroom, zucchini, onion, green pepper, tomato, ricotta cheese, mozzarella cheese, touch of garlic \$23

Grilled Shrimp Salad \$25

Spaghetti with Meat Sauce \$29

September 19—Incarcerated Vets

Fettuccine with Shrimp & Mushrooms in a white sauce \$32

Baked Lasagna, \$31

Grilled Chicken Salad, no sides \$22

Photos of our last meeting:

I was at the VII Corps Desert Storm Reunion so was not on hand to take photos. If anyone snapped any, please send them to me.

Help us Grow & Stay Informed!

Why not share the news of membership in our great chapter with your friends and with any eligible military folks with whom you come into contact? Here's the link to our membership form: <https://dovermoaa.org/chapter-membership> .

To keep up to date between monthly newsletters and meetings, don't forget to check out our Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/850935569172190>

Our lazy newsletter editor, JB, has been relaxing by the fire instead of attending to duties. If anyone wants to replace him, he will step down. There is no requirement to have as cute a face or as fuzzy a tubby tummy as JB to be our newsletter editor.

Never Stop Serving,

Gene

Eugenia "Gene" Thornton
Dover Chapter President



Respectfully submitted,

JB

Newsletter Editor

Talking Points, Veterans' Day at Legislative Hall March 28, 2024

GOAL: Encourage legislatures to support critical veteran legislation. With as many as 71,000 veterans living in the state, this would ensure all our veterans, uniformed service members, and their families get the state and federal benefits and services they have earned and deserve.

AUDIENCE: House and Senate leadership, legislators, and chairs and vice chairs of committees with little-to-no deep knowledge about veteran concerns.

KEY TAKEAWAY: Delaware veterans are counting on you to create legislation and push it across the finish line. I urge you to support veterans, uniformed service members, and their families,

ESTABLISH A DELAWARE CABINET-LEVEL POSITION FOR SECRETARY OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

- 1. The Need: Creating a department would directly serve veterans, uniformed service members, and their families by:**
 - a. Assisting in obtaining the benefits to which they are entitled
 - b. Coordinating the efforts of all state agencies that provide a service to veterans, uniformed service members, and their families
 - c. Advocating for veterans, state military installations, and uniformed service members and their families serving in Delaware
 - d. Informing and educating the public, state and local officials and veterans on matters relevant to all veterans
- 2. The Problem: Many veterans, uniformed service member and their families are unaware of the range of state and federal benefits, e.g. financial counseling, career services, state tax benefits, housing assistance, etc. that are also available to them.**
 - a. Only a fraction of the veterans who need these benefits are receiving them.
 - b. Veterans appear to have a high degree of satisfaction with the benefits they do take advantage of, but a lack of awareness may be keeping them from accessing even more services that could make a big difference in their lives and livelihoods.
- 3. The Solution: Establish a Department of Veterans' Affairs**
 - a. Champion a cabinet level position that directly advises the governor on veterans' matters.

MANDATE INCREASE FUNDING TO CARE FOR OUR VETERANS IN OUR VETERANS HOME

- 1. Key Message: Make improvements to the Delaware Veterans Home**
 - a. Invest in a workforce and enhance operational effectiveness to maximize service that meet veterans' unique needs
 - i. Improve staff to resident ratio (Eagle's Law - Amends Title 16 relating to minimum staffing for nursing home facilities and training for certified nursing assistants)
 - ii. Recruit quality health care providers and staff
 - iii. Increase pays and benefits so it is commensurate with the private sector
 - iv. Implement modern information technology solutions that use modern methods and technology to enhance the delivery of care to residents, e.g. easy access to medical records, pre-packaged medications, medical alert systems, etc.
 - b. Improve quality of care by:

- i. Providing continuing education and training to ensure the staff is current in the latest treatments and procedures.
- ii. Engaging residents and families as an important part of “patient-centered care”
- iii. Improving communication among staff and between staff and residents and their families
- iv. Having leadership keep staff engaged by soliciting ideas and elevating issues

2. The Solution:

- a. Ensure the recommendations the Delaware Veterans Home Assessment report submitted by Gibbous Consulting on October 17, 2022, are acted on
- b. Establish a Director for Veterans Health that directs and coordinates with other state agencies veterans’ health care.

SB 201 - INCREASE RETIREMENT TAX EXEMPTION

1. Key Message: Support phasing in, over 3 years, an increased exemption for military pensions from state income taxation, regardless of age, so that in taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2026, the exemption will be \$25,000 for all military pensioners

- a. Recognize the sacrifice of military service and build on the momentum of Delaware’s ongoing effort to make Delaware the most military-friendly state in the union.
- b. The bill helps active-duty members and their families decide where to set their state residency.
- c. Assist with National Guard recruitment
- d. Helps retirees build their second careers and their lives here in Delaware
- e. Would be an economic generator with retirees paying taxes in post-military careers.
- f. Bring in more federal dollars for things like Medicaid, education and roads.
- g. Retirees would bring many skills and personality traits to the workforce
 - Quick Learners
 - Leadership
 - Operational Knowledge
 - Problem-Solving
 - Relationship-Building
 - Stress Management
 - Ethical
 - Loyal
 - Goal-Oriented

2. The Solution: Back this bill.

- a. Retirees put their lives on the line for our country and state and served us in many cases in very dangerous environments. It is a good thing to give back to those who have served us.

HB 272 – AMEND TITLE 6 OF THE DE CODE RELATING TO VETERANS’ BENEFITS AND TRADE PRACTICES

1. Key Message: Support House Substitute for House Bill No. 272, An Act to Amend Title 6 of the Delaware Code Relating to Veterans’ Benefits and Trade Practices.

- a. Protect veterans from persons or businesses from receiving compensation for advising or assisting with veterans' benefits.

- b. A veteran should never be charged for veteran claims or services available from the VA or its accredited agencies
- c. If an appeal is necessary, a veteran should not be charged excessive fees for that service.
- d. Claims sharks are circumventing the existing outdated law and taking excessive fees from vulnerable veterans.

2. **The Solution: Back this bill.**

- a. Eliminate the gray area where these unaccredited representatives operate and have them abide by the same standards as veterans service officers, accredited representatives, and attorneys.

MOAA position on this can be found at [Nov 2022 in an article by Cory](#)

b.

CALL TO ACTION:

- Share these views with you legislators
- Spread the word about veterans' concerns!

WHAT NOT TO SAY:

Don't get in the weeds. For this conversation, keep message tight to the problem and solution. Also do not say that we need a new secretary because the secretary of state is not doing a good job. He has a lot on his plate, and he is not a veteran. We need a veteran who will focus on us and our needs