



The Salute Online



Monthly newsletter of the Portsmouth Area Chapter, an affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America, serving Portsmouth, Chesapeake, Suffolk, Smithfield, Franklin, and surrounding counties, Virginia, since 1983. Dinner meetings are the Second Thursday of each month except July and August. Although MOAA and PACMOAA actively lobby legislatures for all US uniformed services members, we are nonpartisan and do not participate in political activities.

VOLUME XXXXIV Issue II

LEARN MORE AT PACMOAA.ORG

FEBRUARY 2025

The Mission: PACMOAA supports the Military Community through legislative advocacy, mentoring youth, and community involvement.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



PACMOAA Family: With the installation of our newly elected members of our leadership team at our January Meeting, by one of MOAA Vice President's, CAPT Jim Carman. Thank you Jim. I'm excited about 2025:



Starting with Dr. John Joyce, Executive Director, of Support Portsmouth Public Arts, he will begin a series of monthly historical, health benefits and local military leaders who will entertain and educate us on numerous topics.

I would like to challenge each PACMOAA member to focus on two goals for the year: increased membership and a stronger relationship with our 14

associated JROTC units...

I will talk more at our February 13th dinner meeting--- **Happy Valentines Day...**
Anchors aweigh...Bruce

Bruce LaLonde CPA, CAPT (Ret) USN President Portsmouth Chapter of the Military Officer's Assn 757-241-3026

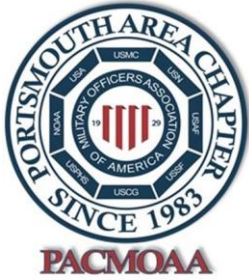


ABOVE: PACMOAA 2025 Leadership Team (L to R): COL Irv Lindley, CAPT Jim Carman, MOAA VP & Installation Officer, CDR Hans Sachse, CDR Mike Riley, MAJ Sherry Ferki, COL Bill Smith, CDR David Von Rump, CDR Ken App, CDR Scott Dickinson, CAPT Bruce LaLonde

VETERAN CRISIS HOTLINE Dial 988 then press 1

**PACMOAA
LEADERSHIP**

Please See Leadership button on
Homepage



CHAPTER NEWS

FEBRUARY 2025

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

- 01 National Freedom Day
- 02 Army Nurse Corps Established 1901
- 02 [Ground Hog Day](#)
- 04 [USO Birthday \(1941\)](#)
- 09 Super Bowl Sunday
- 13 **PACMOAA Dinner Meeting Speaker John Joyce**
- 13 Women Marines Birthday
- 13 [National Salute to Veteran Patients](#) Week of February 12
- 14 [Valentine's Day](#) Ash Wednesday
- 17 [Presidents' Day](#) third Monday in February
- 19 US Coast Guard Reserves Birthday (1941)
- 23 [MOAA Birthday \(1929\)](#)

HAPPY FEBUARY BIRTHDAYS

Dena Cain Traci Green
Gordon Iiams Frank Labrecque
Bob Parker

The February Dinner Meeting

will be held on **Thursday, February 13th** at Roger Brown's Banquet Room, 316 High Street, Portsmouth (757) 399-5377

Sign in and social time begins at 6 PM, with Dinner Served at 6:30 PM.

Buffett Menu

Garden Salad With Assorted Dressing
Homemade Meatloaf
Southern Fried Catfish
Garlic Mashed Potatoes
Sauteed Vegetables
Apple Cobbler
Cornbread And Honey butter

Tea, Sweet Tea, Coffee, Lemonade and Water
Corn Bread and Honey Butter

Cost is \$25 (includes gratuity & tax). Cash bar available. Please make your reservation no later than **Sunday, Febuary 9th** with Sherry Ferki at 757-922-7030 or by email at navmedarmynurse@gmail.com.

A RESERVATION MADE IS A RESERVATION PAID

Right: scan the QR Code to find out more about PACMOAA



LEFT: Gladys Steorts Being presented with CAPT LaLonde's Leadership Bear Award.



PACMOAA TODAY.
PACMOAA, a five star level of exce...
www.pacmoaa.org

SPEAKER

FEBRUARY SPEAKER JOHN JOYCE



He was raised in the mountains of southwest Virginia.

BS in Biology and History from Emory & Henry College, and an MS in Botany from U. of Southwestern Louisiana. He taught for 10 years in several colleges including Tidewater Community College.

He received his MD from EVMS, residency at Portsmouth Family Practice, and served 4 yrs in the U.S. Navy as family physician.

He was a Family physician with Sentara for 27 years and retired in 2021

He has resided in Olde Towne Portsmouth for 28 years and is active in local community: Volunteer at Paradise Creek Nature Park and Olde Towne parks, on the boards of the Portsmouth Historical Association, and Support Portsmouth Public Art.

The theme of the talk is the role of public art in the health of a community and how you can get involved. **Support Portsmouth Public Art (SPPA)** is a non-

profit, founded by citizens in 2010 to install public art such as sculptures and murals throughout Portsmouth. They have produced over 120 pieces of art to date. SPPA also sponsors 2 art markets, 2 art galleries, the First Friday Concerts in the PACC Courtyard, and the Wall Street Mural Festival. This year over 25 more art installations are planned. We are looking for sponsors as well as new friends and members.

MEMBERSHIP

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE AND RENEWAL REMINDER FEBRUARY 2025

WELCOME ABOARD

MAJ Anna Van Laethem, USA, VET and Surviving Spouse, from Chesapeake

You can pay your dues in-person, by mail, or online. Dues should be mailed to PACMOAA, P.O. Box 5353, Portsmouth, VA 23703. **Only 9 out of 67 members need to still pay dues this year** and I will notify you via email or phone if you owe dues for this year. If you're not sure if you owe dues, check with Hans or Sherry. Thank you all for utilizing the multiyear form of payment, you have made my job collecting dues much easier!! See attached dues renewal form at the end of the newsletter for details.

Your dues enable PACMOAA to pay for things like the newsletter; speaker expenses; VCOC dues and expenses; admin expenses like name tags, printing, postage: and entertainment like the Sounds of Time band that performed at our Christmas Concert.

As I've mentioned in the past, **we need everyone to be a recruiter. Maintaining and/or increasing membership is essential** for a chapter to survive and thrive. Currently, the primary way potential members in PACMOAA's area find out about our chapter is by **word of mouth**. In addition to speaking at veterans' activities, I have had conversations in carwashes, Dr offices, and grocery stores about the importance of all veterans belonging to a Veterans Service Organization (VSO). If appropriate, I also talk to them about MOAA and PACMOAA. I keep membership brochures in my car as well as my business cards as PACMOAA membership Chair. I will bring extra brochures and cards to all meetings and will be happy to mail you some if that would be helpful.

Talking points to encourage potential members to join PACMOAA and MOAA could include:

- Legislative advocacy for veterans benefits on a state (PACMOAA) and national (MOAA) level.
- Working with high school students.

- Recognizing their achievements in their JROTC groups by presenting the MOAA certificate of recognition along with a MOAA medal at their annual award ceremonies.
- Awarding several scholarships each year to high school seniors going into a ROTC program in college!



REMINDER: Many members include donations for our **SCHOLARSHIP FUND** with their dues and/or with dinner payment. This can be done in-person, via mail, or online. The students are very appreciative of any assistance they can obtain to help with their college expenses!! **Picture to left:** 2023 Scholarship Awardee Caroline Lewton, her parents and JROTC instructor as well as Scholarship Committee Co-Chairs.

- Keeping members updated on changes in local benefits, esp. related to pharmacy issues and community activities.

Thank you for any assistance you can provide in helping to increase our membership so we can accomplish the PACMOAA Goals of Membership, Legislative Advocacy, and Community Activities/Service!

Guidelines for Paying PACMOAA Dues Online on PAGE 13.

PERSONAL AFFAIRS/ SURVIVING SPOUSE

OVERVIEW OF SURVIVING SPOUSE VIRTUAL CHAPTER MEETING

The 21 January 2025 Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter (SSVC) meeting was to introduce the SSVC Leadership Team and update members. Forty-eight members were able to attend as well as CAPT Frank Michael, USN (Ret), Senior Director, Affiliated Councils & Chapters. *Pat Green* is the President of SSVC and on the Surviving Spouse Advisory Council (SSAC); *Gail Joyce* is the Vice President of SSVC, 2nd Vice Chair of the MOAA Board of Directors (BOD), and Council Chair of the Surviving Spouse Advisory Council (SSAC); and *CAPT Kathy Thorp, USN (Ret)* is also on the MOAA BOD and on SSAC.

Dr. Vivanne Wersel is on the SSVC BOD and SSAC. She is the Newsletter Editor of the quarterly newsletter that contains a wealth of information for surviving spouses and spouses! Vivianne is looking for a mentee as she plans to retire from doing the newsletter next year. If anyone has any information, they would like to see in the newsletter please send it to her at drviviannewersel@gmail.com. *LTC Roy Yenchesky, USA (Ret)* is the Membership Chair and like me is not a surviving spouse but serves as the Surviving Spouse Liaison for his chapter. He said, "It only took one funeral to understand the significance of the position". He gives an update at every meeting and includes an article in the newsletter. With 266 members, only 12 states are not represented in the SSVC at this time. Roy stressed the importance of educating spouses and surviving spouses and that members need to get their personal affairs in order!

Nora Durham is on the SSVC BOD and SSAC. She mentioned that she utilized ADM Ann Duff, USN (Ret) to assist with one of the surviving spouses in her chapter to find out the status of her VA application and what she needed to do. ADM Duff is the Assistant Director, Office of Survivor Assistance, Pension and Fiduciary service and she spoke at the SSVC meeting last year. She can be reached at ann.duff@va.gov. Information can be accessed on the VA website at <https://www.va.gov/family-and-caregiver-benefits/>.

Susan Collins is on the MOAA SSAV also and is the Surviving Spouse Liaison for her chapter and for the PA state council. *Cherly Toland* is the SSVC Treasurer and presents at every meeting and board meetings. She discusses issues for caregivers from ADM Duff, the Elizabeth Dole Foundation (<https://www.elizabethdolefoundation.org/>), TAPS (<https://www.taps.org>), Gold Star Wives (<https://goldstarwives.org/>) and Gary Sinise's Snowball for Kids

(<https://www.garysinisefoundation.org/snowball-express>). **These are great resources!!** She stressed it is important to contact new surviving spouses as soon as possible.

Members were reminded that the March program will be on Advocacy in Action 2025 and how to participate through the website. **Supporting advocacy efforts is essential!** It was suggested that members should check the MOAA website weekly. Out of 360,000 MOAA members, only about 20,000 are registered with the Legislative Action Center at <https://moaa.quorum.us/>. It's easy to sign up and your family members as well as neighbors can also sign up. Be sure to support legislation for surviving spouses.

Some comments made during the meeting include the importance of focusing on spouses more often, need to include caregiving tips in surviving spouse information, and need to recognize surviving spouses and the work they do in the community. Members were encouraged to share their story! This might encourage other surviving spouses to join MOAA and the virtual chapter. Members were also encouraged to talk about the MOAA Scholarship Fund and MOAA Foundation -esp. the Crisis Relief Program. About 2 million dollars has been given away from this fund esp. for recent hurricanes so more donations are needed.

The Surviving Spouse Advisory Council and SSVC Leadership Team are continually updating slides used to brief members at training programs and chapter visits about the role of surviving spouse liaisons, issues surviving spouses face and resources available. A training webinar is also in the works as is a website for the SSVC. Feedback from all seminars is utilized to improve the programs. There will be a New Leaders Virtual Training Program on 5 March and one for senior leaders in August. The February meeting will be a sharing meeting at 5 pm; odd months are training/educational programs at 1 pm and even months are sharing meetings at 5 pm. Multiple times during the meeting it was stressed that it is VERY IMPORTANT to share the information we have with military members spouses and surviving spouses. At every meeting I've attended over the past 5 or 6 years, someone mentions they want to prevent future surviving spouses from going through what they experienced when preparation was not done ahead of time!

Surviving Spouse Corner: 2024 in Review

By: Gail Joyce December 31, 2024 <https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2024-news-articles/member-spotlight/surviving-spouse-corner-2024-in-review/>

The eight members of MOAA's Surviving Spouse Advisory Council (SSAC) — along with many surviving spouse liaisons and individual survivors — impacted thousands of surviving spouses, spouses, and military members during 2024 through our advocacy efforts, training program, special presentations, speaking engagements, chapter meetings, and individual counseling sessions.

We also promoted MOAA's strategic priorities at every opportunity through education, encouragement, and engagement. One of our greatest achievements this year was the writing and publication of the guide [*Preparing for the Loss of A Military Spouse*](#). We also wrote 12 [online columns](#).

Farewells and Welcomes: In 2024, we said farewell to three of our hard-working SSAC members who were with us for six years: Barbara Smith, Renee Matthews, and Nancy Mullen. We will certainly miss their input and experience! We also welcomed three new members: Susan Collins, Cheryl Toland, and Roy Yenchesky, who is the SSAC's first male non-survivor. He has been a surviving spouse liaison for five years and brings with him not only extensive experience in working with survivors but also a fresh perspective.

Liaison Training: SSAC members led Surviving Spouse Liaison (SSL) Training held during five Regional Leadership Workshops -- three in-person (in Florida, South Carolina, and Nevada) and two virtual events. The average attendance for each workshop was 100, with an average of 30 attending each SSL training session. The training got high marks from the attendees. SSAC members continue to fine-tune the training based on evaluations and comments from participants. At our last training in Nevada, we added a session on caregiving led by Linda Wolverton from Arizona.

In addition to our MOAA activities, many of our members worked with other organizations and promoted MOAA values. Roy Yenchsky spoke to the [Judge Advocate Virtual Chapter](#) and the Wichita Retired Officers Wives Club. Nora Durham made a presentation to Partners Losing Partners Outreach group. Pat Green met with the American Korean War League. Many surviving spouses were involved with Wreaths Across America.

Advocacy Efforts: All our members actively promote important legislation statewide and nationally. All SSAC members visited their elected representatives during MOAA's April [Advocacy in Action](#) event. We work closely with our Government Relations team and support the work of other organizations. For example, Nancy Mullen attended the Survivor Day on the Hill that was organized by the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors and supported by MOAA. One spouse from a small state singlehandedly got a bill passed for surviving spouses to get free parking at the airport.

Membership: Membership in the virtual chapter continued to grow, with 285 members from 38 states. The chapter meets on the third Tuesday of each month. Every other month is a business meeting with a speaker, and the other months are informal gatherings to exchange information and ideas. Attendance varies but usually includes 30 at the social meetings and about 60 at a more formal meeting. SSAC members are responsible for the management of the chapter.

[MOAA Surviving Spouses & Friends Facebook Group](#) has over 850 members and provides updated information on important surviving spouse issues — especially regarding legislation important to surviving spouses and their families. Former SSAC member Kathy Prout is the administrator, with Kathy Thorp and Nancy Mullen assisting.

We will continue to work on increasing surviving spouse membership for national MOAA, local chapters, and the virtual chapter. Currently, surviving spouses represent about 12% of MOAA membership — that is approximately 44,000 voices, voters, and volunteers. We are a significant force in the organization.

Awards: In 2024, two excellent finalists were the recipients of the Surviving Spouse Liaison Excellence Award: [Linda Wolverton from the Luke \(Ariz.\) Chapter](#) and [1st Lt. John Glenn, USMC \(Ret\), from the Missouri Council of Chapters](#). Linda works around the clock helping the members of her chapter to be better prepared for the future along with attending to everyday needs such as caregiving. John has been a solid leader for the Missouri Council of Chapters and was one of the leaders to help organize Missouri's new seminar for all servicemembers and their families and survivors about being prepared for the future.

The SSAC looks forward to an exciting and promising 2025, including supporting MOAA's [TotalForce+ conference](#) in October, participating in April's Advocacy in Action event, and growing the [Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter](#).

PERSONAL AFFAIRS UPDATE FEBRUARY 2025

COL Hal Hostetler, USA (Ret) has not been able to attend meetings in a while. I spoke with Hal today and he would welcome visitors. He had surgery and is still in rehab at Portside Health & Rehab Center at 4201 Greenwood Drive in Portsmouth. He is in room 212.

I know of several other members/spouses that are suffering from significant medical issues. Please keep Hal and our other members facing illness in your prayers. Some of our members may need help with transportation or simple tasks. If so, please reach out and let me know if we can help you.



Submitted by: Sherry Ferki, MAJ, USA (Ret)
PACMOAA 2nd VP/Membership Chair
Personal Affairs Chair and Surviving Spouse Liaison
Cell 757-630-5608

MOAA & LEGISLATIVE

MOAA's Legislative Priorities for the 119th Congress

By: Jeff Goldberg <https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2025-news-articles/advocacy/moaas-legislative-priorities-for-the-119th-congress/>

(This article originally appeared in the January 2025 issue of Military Officer, a magazine available to all MOAA Premium and Life members. Learn more about the magazine [here](#); learn more about joining MOAA [here](#).)

As the legislative slate resets for the 119th Congress, MOAA member engagement will become even more vital to achieving our advocacy objectives.

Your advocacy ensures that MOAA and the broader community of military and veteran service organizations (MSOs/VSOs) maintain momentum for existing priorities such as the Major Richard Star Act, [which would benefit tens of thousands of combat-injured veterans](#).

We also need your help to build support for new objectives and emerging issues, often via immediate action, to respond to the sporadic nature of the legislative process.

First step: Register as an advocate in [our Legislative Action Center](#). If you're already registered, send the link to a family member or friend. Remember, the Legislative Action Center is open to all who support the uniformed services community.

While our advocacy team remains active on many issues not listed here, our priorities are shaped throughout the year depending on policy developments or emerging issues that necessitate an all-hands approach. Additionally, we share many interests with [The Military Coalition](#) and other stakeholders. MOAA leverages those relationships to expand our reach on Capitol Hill.

These are among MOAA's priorities for this year

Currently Serving

Military housing: Recent reporting from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) reveals the myriad challenges servicemembers in unaccompanied housing are facing. The health, safety, and privacy concerns outlined by GAO show the need for action.

[RELATED: [GAO Report Finds Flaws in DoD's Approach to Housing Challenges](#)]

MOAA seeks to improve funding and condition transparency for unaccompanied housing by requiring an annual, publicly available report, which will highlight areas that require the most attention from both DoD and Congress.

Retirees/Veterans

Toxic exposure: MOAA will focus on capitalizing on our recently released report, [Ending the Wait for Toxic-Exposed Veterans](#), to advocate for veterans exposed to toxic materials during their service.

While the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act has made major improvements to how toxic exposures are treated by the VA, additional measures are required. In cooperation with other VSOs, MOAA will advocate for Congress to pass legislation that shortens the time veterans must wait before their toxic exposures are acknowledged and conceded by the VA.

Family/Survivors

Spouse employment: Rates of unemployment for military spouses continue to be four to five times higher than the national average. This persistent challenge requires not only providing education and employment resources for spouses, but also incentivizing businesses to hire someone who will likely move in two to three years.

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit program was established to support populations who face significant barriers to employment, and adding a military spouse target group is long overdue. Passing the Military Spouse Hiring Act will provide another important lever needed to address the critical issue of spouse unemployment.

DoD Health Care

Access to care: DoD has acknowledged that congressionally directed reforms to the Military Health System (MHS), together with U.S. medical workforce volatility, exacerbated long-standing access challenges and led to a destabilized MHS that does not consistently deliver timely care to beneficiaries.

[RELATED: [What a Major DoD Health Care Shift Could Mean for Your TRICARE Benefit](#)]

Current patient resources for reporting access problems and getting assistance navigating the MHS are inadequate. Also, it is unclear if there are mechanisms for reporting up to the Defense Health Agency so systemic access challenges can be identified and addressed.

MOAA seeks a digital MHS assistance platform allowing beneficiaries to report access-to-care challenges and receive help navigating the MHS, including reporting requirements to increase visibility on barriers to access so fixable issues can be addressed.

VA Health Care

Support for caregivers: MOAA has long advocated for legislation that would improve caregiving support for veterans' families. This includes enhancements to the VA Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) and expansion of home health and long-term care services to meet current and future needs of veterans, their caregivers, and families.

This year, MOAA strongly supports the reintroduction and enactment of the Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement Act. This legislation acknowledges caregivers' invaluable contributions while addressing the significant economic and emotional burdens they face. By offering education, employment, and retirement opportunities, the legislation empowers caregivers to achieve financial security while potentially reducing the federal government's long-term economic burden.

Persistent Efforts

There are certain issues that MOAA will always advocate for until they are passed. Among these are concurrent receipt for combat wounded (Major Richard Star Act), Arlington National Cemetery access, and cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs).

[RELATED: [MOAA's COLA Watch](#)]

MOAA will also continually monitor certain issues and will immediately mobilize the entire association, our membership, and VSO/MSO allies to ensure these issues are not negatively impacted. These issues include:

- Decrements to scheduled pay increases.
- New TRICARE or TRICARE Pharmacy Program fees.
- TRICARE cost-sharing increases that exceed military retired pay COLA or TRICARE Pharmacy Program cost sharing that exceeds common industry practice.
- Unequal decrements of compensation and benefits based on rank, age, family composition, retirement status, or disability benefits

As the work of the 119th Congress gets underway, MOAA will continue its efforts to advocate on behalf of our members and the entire uniformed services community. We will leverage our experience and our relationships on Capitol Hill and with our partners to navigate an increasingly partisan environment.

Through our efforts, MOAA will seek to ensure that servicemembers, veterans, and retirees and their families — who have sacrificed so much — continue to receive benefits earned through their service.

When MOAA Speaks, Congress Listens

Learn more about MOAA's key advocacy issues, and contact your elected officials using our messaging platform.

[TAKE ACTION](#)

New Congress, New Opportunities: Sign Up for MOAA's Legislative Action Center

By: Brenden McMahan January 22, 2025 <https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2025-news-articles/advocacy/new-congress,-new-opportunities-sign-up-for-moaas-legislative-action-center/>

As the 119th Congress begins its work, MOAA is ready to champion critical issues for the uniformed services and veteran communities. With new legislative priorities in focus, now is the perfect time to join the effort and ensure your voice is heard.

MOAA's Legislative Action Center makes it easy to connect with your elected officials and advocate for meaningful change. Whether you're new to the platform or a seasoned user, registering ensures you're prepared to support upcoming campaigns. [Visit the center today to create or update your account.](#)

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

At MOAA, people are our cornerstone. Our priorities for the 119th Congress reflect our commitment to protecting compensation and benefits, ensuring access to top-tier DoD and VA health care, and addressing the unique challenges faced by military families and veterans. These efforts underscore MOAA's unwavering dedication to those who serve and have served. You can review those priorities [at this link](#).

In the coming weeks, MOAA will roll out new campaigns via the Legislative Action Center, allowing you to contact your legislators with just a few clicks. Stay tuned for updates at MOAA.org and in *The MOAA Newsletter* to learn how you can take action.

Once you've logged into the center, you can stay logged in by enabling cookies on your browser; this allows the site to remember your login details and provides streamlined access to MOAA campaigns. Avoid clearing cookies, as doing so will require you to log in again the next time you visit the site. Following these steps ensures you're always ready to take action quickly and efficiently when MOAA campaigns launch.

[VIDEO: [MOAA's Advocacy Update Series](#)]

We deeply appreciate your commitment to MOAA's mission. Your advocacy plays a crucial role in advancing the priorities that matter most to the military and veteran communities. Together, we can make a lasting difference for those who serve and have served.

When MOAA Speaks, Congress Listens

Learn more about MOAA's key advocacy issues and contact your elected officials using our messaging platform.

[TAKE ACTION](#)

What a Key DoD Report Gets Right About Pay, Benefits, and Quality of Life

By: Cory Titus January 22, 2025 <https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2025-news-articles/advocacy/what-a-key-dod-report-gets-right-about-pay,-benefits,-and-quality-of-life/>

Many of the recommendations found in DoD's latest look at military pay and benefits echoed MOAA's advocacy efforts to secure compensation improvements and a better overall quality of life for those who serve.

The congressionally mandated [14th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation](#) (QRMC), released last week, serves as a cornerstone of the continuing discussion on military compensation and sets the stage for many of MOAA's legislative goals. While the report is due every four years, the marker that kicks off DoD's work is a memorandum from the president detailing specific issues to examine. Past reports have been limited in their scope; for the first time, this QRMC took a more expansive look at dual-income households and the real-world challenges facing servicemembers and their families.

RELATED: [MOAA's Legislative Priorities for the 119th Congress](#)]

Some of the QRMC findings:

- **A Step Above:** The report found service members are better compensated, on average, than their civilian peers. Given the high standards of the military and the low propensity to serve, this finding is expected; this level of compensation is necessary to recruit and retain the all-volunteer force.
- **An Unstable Setup:** Despite the high compensation level, the report raises concerns over "pay volatility." Methods used to determine housing allowances and cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs, found overseas and

in high-cost U.S. regions), to include frequent surveys and flawed models, lead to large increases and decreases in pay that negatively affect servicemembers and their families when their duty location changes.

- **Valuing ‘Noncash Compensation’:** The QRMC recognized benefits such as housing, health care, and child care, as well as morale, welfare, and recreation (MWR) programs, for role they play in our community. Its authors found that “targeted noncash compensation may offer better returns on investment” for servicemembers and military families.

This last, important finding follows with what MOAA and other military service organizations have been saying about these programs and their impact on quality of life issues. MOAA was able to testify before the House Armed Services (HASC) Quality of Life panel, which included many of [our recommendations](#) in [its report](#). Many of the report’s recommendations were adopted as part of the FY 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

QRMC Recommendations

The panel report proved valuable for DoD, and the QRMC recommended “a periodic quality-of-life review” that could “inform the Department of trends in the quality of noncash compensation and benefits to assist in targeting investments.”

Additionally, the QRMC report called for expanding a [MOAA-backed provision](#) that would offer tax credits to small businesses for waiving retirement vesting periods for military spouse employees. Current law restricts these tax credits to businesses with less than 100 employees.

[RELATED: [How MOAA’s Work to Boost Spouse Employment Will Take Shape in the 119th Congress](#)]

The report also recommends a review of entitlements for deployed servicemembers – another recommendation in support of MOAA’s advocacy work. Combat-zone tax exemptions work as an additional tool to recognize the service and sacrifice of those in harm’s way, but this designation is not reviewed regularly, meaning hotspots like Africa are not given the tax exemptions while places where servicemembers no longer serve remain on the list. The report also identified areas for improvement in housing allowance and COLA calculation. MOAA highlighted the need for these improvements to the HASC Quality of Life panel given the volatility many service members and families experienced, especially during the pandemic.

The QRMC also recommended:

- Updating the regular military compensation benchmark from the 70th to the 75th percentile.
- Improving communications with servicemembers regarding their total compensation package and its comparative quality to comparable civilians.
- Improving “constructive credit” afforded to lateral entrants who join the military with already established and much-needed skill sets, such as surgeons.

The QRMC is a valuable resource for MOAA’s advocacy work and when its recommendations align with our priorities, we will work to advance them. To stay current on MOAA’s work, **be sure to sign up for the Legislative Action Center and subscribe to *The MOAA Newsletter*.**

ADVOCACY IN ACTION 2025 UPDATE

CAPT Frank Michael, USN (Ret), MOAA Senior Director, Affiliated Councils and Chapters, spoke briefly at the Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter meeting on 21 January and again later that day in more depth at the MOAA State Legislative Forum on the 2025 Advocacy in Action (AiA) plan. The approach will be different this year, targeting key legislators versus meeting with all legislators and there will be 5 key issues. Three of the five issues most relevant to the district will be discussed by each group with legislators in their district.

Major General April Vogel, USAF (Ret), Vice President, Government Relations reviewed AiA for 2025 at the MOAA Monthly Chapter Leaders Roundtable on 23 January. The scheduled activities/logistics were discussed with the same slide show Frank Michael used at the State Legislative Forum the previous day.

Maj G Vogel noted that AiA is only 1 day out of 365 so the focus will be on Tier 1 priorities that will be aligned with the 5 pillars of the legislative advocacy page – (1) Currently Serving, (2) DoD Health Care, (3) Families &

Survivors, (4) Retirees & Veterans, and (5) VA Health Care. Topics and priorities will tailored to specific office visits. The goal is to talk with legislators about topics relevant to them. Initially certain committee members will be targeted. Some attendees expressed concern that these changes will leave out many of the chapter members active in previous years, but Maj G Vogel assured members that was not the intent! The Government Relations group was trying to remove some of the heavy workload of previous years. Since some states have had stronger teams than others during previous AiA campaigns, all their legislators were not always covered.

MOAA is hiring a new contractor (SOAPBOX) who will be scheduling key visits – for example, with Committee Chair hearing certain bills. After the meetings are set, MOAA will reach out to Council and Chapter members to let them know who has already been scheduled. Members are encouraged to visit the remainder of their state legislators. Maj G Vogel stated the issue papers would be given to members when they arrive in DC and could be left in the legislator's office when they visit. Multiple members expressed concern that MOAA would not send the issue papers when visits scheduled so the legislator's staff and MOAA Council & Chapter members could review as well! Maj G Vogel said she would need to be educated on that.

As mentioned earlier, there will be 5 topics, but members will present 3 of the 5, the ones most appropriate for their legislators. The MOAA staff members (many new to MOAA since AiA last year) assigned to each pillar discussed the most relevant issues under each pillar/category. (1) *Cory Titus*, Director, Currently Serving Affairs, discussed Currently Serving – Military Housing Improvements, esp. unaccompanied housing like the barracks are in poor condition. (2) *Karen Ruedisueli*, Director, Health Affairs, discussed DoD Health Care- Improve Health Care System Access to Care, noted Military Health System is now trying to get 7% of dependents back into their system. (3) *Jen Goodale*, discussed Family & Survivors – Military Spouse Hiring Act (<https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2025-news-articles/advocacy/urge-your-lawmakers-to-secure-federal-job-protections-for-military-spouses/>). Military spouse unemployment is 20%. (4) *Jeff Goldberg*, Director, Veteran and Retired Affairs, discussed Retiree & Veterans – Ending the Wait Report Priorities written by DAV & MOAA per PACT Act and extended wait time between original exposure and VA recognizing exposure as relating to toxic exposure. The current wait time averages 34 years until presumptive diagnosis. (5) CDR Renee Campos, USN (Ret), Senior Director of Government Relations, discussed VA Health Care – Caregiving Support Improvements, continue efforts for passage of Veterans Caregiver Education and Re-Employment Act introduced late last year.

There was a question per why the Richard Star Act wasn't mentioned. It is still an issue for MOAA. This issue was supported by 2/3 of Congress last year. Tier 1 priorities, the issues being addressed this year, are ones that we will be newly educating Congress on. Each team will have one board member and one staff member. The 3 of 5 topics addressed will be tailored to the Committees the Congressional Delegate is on.

When looking at the Legislative Action Center at <https://moaa.quorum.us/bills> on 28 Jan, there are no bills listed for the 119th Congress. The explanation under MOAA-Supported Legislation notes MOAA thoroughly reviews bills before endorsing them and members should check back in the coming weeks as more legislation is introduced.

Reminder: In previous years, there were usually 1 – 3 legislative priorities for AiA and Council and Chapter members tried to visit all legislators for their state. The Virginia Council of Chapters (VCOC) usually took the lead and made sure all the legislators were visited. It sounds like we will now try to visit the legislators not selected by SOAPBOX.

The meeting started with an update on the Committee Module and Near Real Time Report (NRT) – Frank Michael said he believed they are very close to opening, probably “within weeks”. So far, 69 participants have signed up representing 47 states for AiA 2025. Frank reviewed the award submissions for LOE (26), Communication (61), Strowbridge (for legislative effort excellence- 3), and Surviving Spouse (3).

The Council and Chapter Monthly News will be transitioning as of 1 February. Instead of all the council/chapter news being presented in one document in the 1st Thursday of the month weekly *MOAA Newsletter*, some of the content will be shared across the weekly newsletter with greater exposure. Different types of grants and stipends were mentioned. The importance of encouraging members to upgrade their membership was discussed. There are 3400 basic members in chapters. No data on % of chapter members that are basic. Chapters can receive \$15.00 if

a member upgrades to premium and \$30.00 if upgraded to life member!



The Liability insurance update was that MOAA is very close to closing a deal to get an underwriter that will give members a better deal than AMBA, which will probably be \$300-\$400/year. The IRS travel rate increased to \$.70/mile. The next roundtable will be on 27 February on the Committee Module/NRT!

Submitted by: MAJ Sherry Ferki, USA (Ret) Assistant Legislative Representative

VCOC AND JLC

Virginia Council of Chapters (VCOC) had its first Quarter Virtual Meeting on Tuesday, January 14th, at 3PM virtually. CDR Ken App was in attendance as well as our President, CAPT Bruce LaLonde, VCOC Treasurer, MAJ Sherry Ferki, and Legislative Representative, Mrs. Mary Snyder. All Chapters bi-annual reports were due, which include the end of year membership numbers. These numbers determine the dues for each Chapter. MAJ Sherry Ferki, VCOC Treasurer, recommended that the dues be kept the same for this coming year.



CDR App also volunteered to update the VCOC Directory of the Chapters personnel & requested input from all Chapters by February 1, 2025. I have updates from 5 of the 13 Chapters changes.

Submitted By: Ken App

CDR USN (Ret)

PACMOAA Legislative Representative

VCOC Legislative Report

VCOC Board of Directors held their quarterly meeting on January 14. There was no legislative report given at that meeting, so there are no new updates on the JLC 2025 Initiatives.

The JLC 2025 Initiatives were previously published in the December 2024 and January 2025 newsletters. Further information regarding the JLC, please visit [Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations | Virginia Department of Veterans Services](#)

Submitted by: Mary L. Snyder, PACMOAA Legislative Representative

COMMUNITY

Help Us Help Service-Connected Families: Support MOAA's Crisis Relief Program

January 21, 2025 By MOAA Staff <https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2025-news-articles/recommended-reads/help-us-help-those-who-serve-support-moaas-crisis-relief-program/>

Many residents of Southern California -- including tens of thousands of servicemembers, veterans, and service-connected families -- will face incredible challenges in the coming weeks, months, and years as they rebuild from the ongoing wildfires.

MOAA's Crisis Relief Program offers emergency financial assistance for service-connected households. Currently serving personnel and their spouses, veterans, surviving spouses, and military and veteran caregivers can apply for this aid, which is open to all ranks and branches of uniformed service. Aid can be used to cover housing and automobile costs, utilities, and other bills connected to financial emergencies.

[DONATE TODAY | APPLY FOR AID TODAY]

"Uniformed servicemembers, veterans, and their families work hard everyday to protect our great nation, and we here at MOAA are dedicated to working hard to protect them," MOAA President and CEO Lt. Gen. Brian T. Kelly, USAF (Ret), said in a recent video supporting the Crisis Relief Program.

Last year, The MOAA Foundation experienced record-setting grant disbursements totaling nearly \$500,000, with more than half of the grants supporting hurricane relief. We hope to continue to provide relief efforts for those in California but can't do so without continued support from MOAA members and other donors.

[RELATED: [MOAA Charities 20243 Impact Report](#)]

Don't wait: [Click here to donate to the Crisis Relief Program today](#). Learn more about the fund at the [MOAA Charities website](#).

Please Memorize the **VETERAN CRISIS HOTLINE Dial 988 then press 1**

Artful Living at Lake Prince Woods

An award-winning senior living community in Suffolk offering a continuum of services:

- Residential Living
- Transitional Rehabilitation
- Memory Support
- Home health and Hospice
- Assisted Living

Lake Prince Woods

 EveryAge Senior Living™

Call us today!

757-923-5500

LakePrinceWoods.org



Thank you Lake Prince Woods for being a PACMOAA Sponsor

PROGRAMS

Please mark your calendars NOW for the remaining Dinner Meetings listed below.

- 13 February 2025** Dr. John Joyce, President of Non-Profit Support Portsmouth Public Art
- 13 March 2025** Lindsey Jones, Advocate for the Chesapeake Bay Naval, Maritime, and Transportation Museum and leading point of information for Portsmouth Early Maritime Leaders
- 10 April 2025** CAPT Derrek Burrus, USCG, CO US Coast Guard Base Portsmouth
- 8 May 2025** LTC Frank Labrecque, USA (Ret) -VA Health Care System vs VA Disability
- 12 June 2025** Annual Scholarship Dinner
- 13 or 20 July 2025** Joint Brunch - Location To Be Determined
- 11 September 2025** TBD
- 9 October 2025** TBD
- 13 November 2025** Annual Business Meeting
- 11 December 2025** Christmas Gala

PACMOAA Membership listening intently

to CAPT Carman's comments



Please Memorize the **VETERAN CRISIS HOTLINE Dial 988 then press 1**



Left: CAPT LaLonde wearing a Navy Football Jersey in honoring the Naval Academy win Over Army, pictured with CAPT Bob Kennedy USN (Ret)

Below Right: CAPT Bruce LaLonde, with new & re-elected officers, CDR Mike Riley and CDR David Von Rump as New BOD, and CDR Ken App re-elected 3rd VP Communications.



In center is CAPT Jim Carman, MOAA VP and Installation Officer.

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

For our winter days I offer a Poem by Vada Whitmore from the Salesian Collection of POEMS OF JOY

A Home...
 Is where there is warmth and love
 When blasts of ice and snow
 Crash our skyward hopes and dreams
 into ruins below.
 And through some cold may penetrate
 round a sagging door;
 Or clouds may cover up the sun
 Slanting across the floor;
 Yet a home is the place where faith returns
 To pierce the deepest gloom;
 Where kindness changes the atmosphere
 Of a frigid room.
 It's a place where we are understood,
 Even as we are blind
 To all the priceless values,
 Within our heart enshrined.
 A home is the place where God is found
 Using the finest art:
 As He brushes over the winter scene...
 And paints flowers in the heart.



Submitted by
CAPT Bob Brewer, USN (Ret) Chaplain



**CDR Ken App, USN (Ret)
 Salute Editor**

Please fill out the form below if any contact information has changed and submit to Sherry Ferki or Ken App.

PACMOAA MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL FORM 2025

FULL NAME: _____ NICKNAME: _____

GRADE/RANK: _____ SERVICE: _____ BIRTH DATE: _____

STATUS: Active Retired Former Surviving Spouse

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

HOME PHONE: _____ CELL PHONE: _____

MOAA Membership No.: _____ (From MOAA card or Military Officer Mailing Label)

Spouse's Name: _____ Spouse's Nickname: _____

Are you willing to serve as board member or on a committee? () Yes () No

<u>Please circle payment plan you select:</u>	Discount	15%	20%
			<u>Best Value</u>
Membership Category	1 Year	2 Year	3Year
Retired/Active/Vet Regular (Voting Member)	\$25.00	\$42.50	\$60.00
Surviving Spouse (Voting Member)	\$20.00	\$34.00	\$48.00
Active Duty (Non-Voting Member)	\$5.00	\$8.50	\$12.00

Mail payment to: PACMOAA at PACMOAA, PO Box 5353 in Portsmouth, VA 23703

Or pay via PayPal: Members need to create and/or login to their PayPal account: From the Account Overview page, click the Send button. If prompted for whether the money will be sent to a business or friend, enter "friend". Type PACMOAATreasurer@gmail.com in the block where is says "name, @username, email, or mobile" and click "next". Enter the amount to transmit and add "For PACMOAA Dues" in the note section and click "continue". Review the information, including the bank account or credit card you want the funds to come from. Press "Send payment now" when everything looks correct.

DATE: _____ SIGNATURE: _____