



# 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 XLV Issue II**

**LEARN MORE AT [PACMOAA.ORG](http://PACMOAA.ORG)**

**FEBRUARY 2026**

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

## FROM THE PRESIDENT's DESK



**PACMOAA Family**--Thank you to those who attended the PACMOAA January dinner, as we were joined by CAPT Mary Lou Wassel USN (Ret), VCOC President, who installed our newest PACMOAA Leadership team for their two-year term.

At our next dinner meeting on Feb 12th ,we will be pleased to welcome Joyce Bost, a private lecturer, who be addressing issues involved with elder health care and the protection of our assets. She will bring to our attention practical information on documents needed to be in your insurance/health and financial portfolios.

Wear red to support Valentine's Day-- Bring Sweethearts and sweets!

With Roger Brown's restaurant slated for sale in the near future ,we will continue to keep you informed on where we are looking for potential meeting venues.

Anchors aweigh

Bruce

CAPT Bruce LaLonde CPA,  
USN (Ret)  
PACMOAA President  
757-241-3026



**ABOVE (L-R):** LT Joyce Johnson BOD; CDR Hans Sasche, Treasurer; CAPT Jim Hoffower, Secretary, Mrs. Mary Snyder, 1<sup>st</sup> VP; CWO4 Karl Wilson, BOD, CAPT Mary Lou Wassel, VCOC President swearing in Our Newly elected Leadership Team.

**Below:** PACMOAA President, CAPT Bruce LaLonde, Awarding CAPT Mary Lou Wassel a Certificate of Appreciation for the Swearing in of the New Officers.



**Right:** CAPT Bruce LaLonde awarding LT Joyce Johnson the Leadership Bear. Looking on is VCOC President CAPT Mary Lou Wassel.



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PACMOAA  
LEADERSHIP

SEE LEADERSHIP PULLDOWN



PACMOAA

## CHAPTER NEWS

## FEBRUARY

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH

- 01 National Freedom Day
- 02 Army Nurse Corps Established 1901 (125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary)
- 02 [Ground Hog Day](#)
- 04 [USO Birthday \(1941\)](#) (85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary)
- 12 **PACMOAA Dinner Meeting**
- 11 Super Bowl Sunday
- 13 Women Marines Birthday (1943)
- 14 [National Salute to Veteran Patients](#) Week of February 14
- 14 [Valentine's Day](#)
- 16 [Presidents' Day](#) third Monday in February
- 18 Ash Wednesday
- 19 US Coast Guard Reserves Birthday (1941)
- 23 [MOAA Birthday \(1929\)](#)
- 27 Battle of The Java Sea 1942

## HAPPY FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

<b>Dena Cain</b>	<b>Lisa Davis</b>	<b>John Davidson</b>
<b>Traci Green</b>	<b>Gordon Liams</b>	<b>Frank LaBrecque</b>
<b>James Rodney</b>		

**February Dinner Meeting**

will be held on **Thursday, February 12<sup>th</sup>** 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.**

***Buffet 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*

**Cost is \$25** (includes gratuity & tax). Cash bar available. Please make your reservation no later than **Sunday, February 8<sup>th</sup>** with Sherry Ferki at 757-922-7030 or by email at:

[navmedarmynurse@gmail.com.](mailto:navmedarmynurse@gmail.com)

**A RESERVATION MADE IS A RESERVATION PAID**

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



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PACMOAA, a five star  
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[www.pacmoaa.org](http://www.pacmoaa.org)

## GUEST SPEAKER

**Joyce Bost**, who be addressing issues involved with elder health care and the protection of our assets. Bio and Headshot will be sent separately when received.

## MEMBERSHIP

### MEMBERSHIP UPDATE AND RENEWAL REMINDER FEBRUARY 2026

Last month, I said I would notify you via email or phone if you owe dues for this year. I was out of town for several weeks due to a death in the family and so am behind on sending out dues reminders. You should receive a reminder in the next few weeks if you owe dues for this year. You can pay your dues in-person (at dinner meetings), by mail, or online. Dues should be mailed to PACMOAA, P.O. Box 5353, Portsmouth, VA 23703. If you're not sure if you owe dues, check with Hans Sachse or Sherry.

**Right:** VCOC President, CAPT Mary Lou Wessel, pinning the MOAA Membership Pin to new members Lisa Davis and John Davidson.



Membership is an ongoing issue for all MOAA chapters and MOAA is trying to help increase chapter membership. At the December and January MOAA Virtual Chapter Roundtables, CAPT Frank Michael discussed the revised privacy policy implementation. The result of this change is that chapters will receive a one-time bulk mailing of member data of potential members. MOAA has 220,000 members in their distribution list. One chapter leader that attended the January Roundtable noted they received 1074 names. The list of potential chapter members included some current members and some deceased members as well as some members listed as current chapter members that the chapter leader had never heard of before. Hopefully, when I receive this list, there will be a significant number of potential new chapter members!

Please remember that MOAA dues are paid separate from PACMOAA dues, and a significant portion of that money contributes to legislative advocacy. **“MOAA advocates with Congress, DoD, the VA, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and other departments to preserve and protect earned benefits for our uniformed services, veterans, their families, and surviving spouses through advocacy, leadership, education, and service, fulfilling MOAA’s promise to “Never Stop Serving.”** From <https://www.moaa.org/content/about-moaa/mission>.

**Maintaining and/or increasing membership is essential** for a chapter to survive and thrive. The PACMOAA Goals in order are Membership, Legislative, and Community Activities. Without adequate membership, legislative advocacy and community involvement are severely impacted! We have already lost 2 members from last year – one moved and one death (see Personal Affairs) and have 12 members 85 or older, 5 over 90!

**Thank you all for helping with recruiting last year!** Please continue to invite eligible colleagues, friends, or neighbors to a dinner meeting. This is a great way to introduce them to PACMOAA. Potential members can attend a dinner meeting for  $\frac{1}{2}$  the usual price. Please consider inviting potential members to our February meeting!! Remind them that MOAA keeps them updated on national issues, PACMOAA provides updates on state and local issues, including pharmacy issues!

#### **Reminder per Guidelines for Paying PACMOAA Dues/dinner/scholarship donation, etc. Online**

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](mailto:PACMOAATreasurer@gmail.com) in the block where it says “name, @username, email, or mobile” and click “next”. Enter the amount to transmit and add “For PACMOAA Dues (or whatever category is appropriate)” 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. Hans Sachse is the PACMOAA Treasurer.

Submitted by : Sherry Ferki, MAJ, USA (Ret) PACMOAA 2<sup>nd</sup> VP/Membership Chair  
[navmedarmynurse@gmail.com](mailto:navmedarmynurse@gmail.com) or 757-630-5608

## PERSONAL AFFAIRS/ SURVIVING SPOUSE

### PERSONAL AFFAIRS FEBUARY 2026

#### TEDDY LYONS



I am very sad to have to say that Teddy Lyons, surviving spouse of Charter Member CDR Jack Lyons, died at noon on 19 January. Teddy frequently attended both the Joint Brunch and Christmas Galas with Jack. It was always a pleasure to see her and Jack together, especially when they were dancing at the Christmas Gala. **Left:** Teddy is pictured to the far right . Please keep her daughter Elaine and the rest of the family in your thoughts and prayers.

The full obituary for Teddy is available at <https://www.bwfosterfuneralhome.com/obituary/edna-l-lyons>. Excerpts appear below:



#### Edna L. Lyons

April 19, 1931 - January 19, 2026

PORTSMOUTH – Edna Lucy McCullough Lyons, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and the widow of Cdr. John Joseph Lyons, USN (Ret.), died Monday, Jan. 19, 2026, after a period of declining health. She was 94.

Teddy is survived by her sons, John P. Lyons (Anita) of Kill Devil Hills, N.C., and Timothy J. Lyons (Conchitina) of Alexandria; her daughters, Elaine M. Lyons of Portsmouth and Patricia L. Reilly (Peter) of Chesapeake; and numerous nieces and nephews in New Jersey who adore their Aunt Teddy.

She also is survived by five grandchildren, to whom she was devoted: Brynn Reilly (Adam Bloodworth) of Austin, Texas; Alison Reilly Tisdel (Daniel) of Newport News; Casey Reilly (Stephen Davis) of Hampton; Aidan Lyons and Evan Lyons of Alexandria; and by great-grandsons Elliott Tisdel and Miles Tisdel of Newport News.

*A Mass of the Resurrection will be celebrated 11:00 a.m. Wednesday, February 4, at the Church of the Resurrection, 3501 Cedar Lane in Portsmouth. The family will receive friends at the church an hour prior.*

Burial will follow at a later date at Albert G. Horton Memorial Veterans Cemetery, 5310 Milners Road in Suffolk.

The family requests that memorial donations be made to either of the following: [Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters](#) in support of the hospital's NICU program; or [ForKids](#) in Chesapeake.

Condolences may be registered at [BWFosterFuneralHome.com](#).

## SURVIVING SPOUSE

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



The Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter is a wonderful resource and now has a website at [www.moasurvivingspousevirtualchapter.org](http://www.moasurvivingspousevirtualchapter.org). It includes their purpose:

To provide:

- a national forum for military Surviving Spouses;
- a common space to communicate with each other;
- information about concerns pertinent to each of us and our families;
- a platform to advocate for protection of rights for our members and our dependents;
- a reliable source for Surviving Spouses who live in remote areas, who are housebound, who have jobs and children, or who might be unable to participate at the chapter level.

The website also includes links to join the virtual chapter and for the quarterly newsletter, advocacy, book club, as well as other resources.



Submitted by Sherry Ferki, MAJ, USA (Ret)  
PACMOAA 2nd VP/Membership Chair  
Personal Affairs Chair and Surviving Spouse Liaison

## MOAA & LEGISLATIVE

### MOAA SITREP: The Major Richard Star Act

By MOAA Staff: <https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2026-news-articles/benefits/moaa-sitrep-the-major-richard-star-act/>

MOAA continues its work to secure passage of the Major Richard Star Act during the 119th session of Congress. The bill would end an unjust pay offset faced by tens of thousands of combat-injured veterans who lose a dollar of earned military retirement pay for every dollar of VA disability they receive.

The Major Richard Star Act remains a high priority for MOAA and other advocacy groups represented in [The Star Act Alliance](#). Contact your [Contact your lawmaker today](#) and demand a vote on the bill.

[RELATED: [New Coalition Forms to End Unfair Pay Offset Facing Combat-Injured Veterans](#)]

#### Why the Star Act Matters

This unfair pay offset, or “wounded veteran tax,” targets a population already facing physical and financial challenges because of their time in uniform – ending the offset could mean an additional \$1,200 a month, on average, for these wounded warriors.

The bill would not create a new benefit – instead, it would fix an oversight from 2004, when Congress ended the offset for wounded veterans who served at least 20 years in uniform.

Under the legislation, veterans would be able to choose between receiving their current compensation – DoD retirement pay and Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) – or receiving their full DoD retirement and earned VA benefits. Of the more than 50,000 veterans eligible under the Major Richard Star Act, it’s expected some may keep the tax-free CRSC, reducing the expected cost of the legislation (about \$8 billion over 10 years).

[TAKE ACTION: [Ask Your Lawmakers to Support Combat-Injured Veterans](#)]

#### Star Act Resources

Learn more about the legislation, bust common myths about concurrent receipt, and more:

- MOAA Issue Paper (2025): [The Major Richard Star Act \(PDF download\)](#)
- MOAA.org Article (2025): [Major Richard Star Act: Fact vs. Fiction](#)

- **Star Act Alliance:** [Bill Overview \(PDF download\)](#) | [Social Media Toolkit](#)
- **Wounded Warrior Project:** [Understanding the Major Richard Star Act](#)
- **Veterans of Foreign Wars:** [Advocacy Talking Points: Retirement and Military Personnel](#)
- **MOAA.org Article (2021):** [Maj. Richard Star, a Voice for Disabled Veterans, Loses Battle to Cancer](#)
- **MOAA.org Article (2024):** [Tonya Star, Widow of Maj. Richard Star, Dies at 51](#)

## Why Hasn't Congress Passed the Star Act?

Despite strong support in the form of co-sponsorship, this bill has not been brought to the floor of either congressional chamber for a vote.

One reason may be the price: An estimated \$8 billion over 10 years. MOAA believes the projection is far higher than the bill's actual cost – many eligible veterans may elect to continue receiving current benefits, for tax purposes and other reasons – but even the full \$8 billion would amount to less than 0.1% of the annual federal defense budget.

Competing priorities across Capitol Hill and [myths about the Star Act](#) that continue to circulate have plagued efforts to move this bill across the finish line. Numerous partners in the veterans advocacy community will continue to work together to achieve this enduring priority – whether standalone passage or inclusion in a "must-pass" bill. These efforts extend beyond the Hill and into the halls of the Pentagon. Gaining support from Pentagon leadership is essential.

MOAA will keep reminding lawmakers that the cost of caring for our combat-injured veterans by passing the Star Act pales in comparison to the cost of breaking faith with those who sacrificed limbs, health, and futures in service to this nation. And what impact does this have on our ability to recruit an all-volunteer force from a population who has seen the most vulnerable warriors struggling?

## Star Act Legislative History

*119th Congress:* The House version of the bill (H.R. 2102) had 313 cosponsors as of Jan. 29, 2026; the Senate version (S. 1032) had 77 cosponsors. The House bill was referred to House Veterans' Affairs Committee's disability assistance and memorial affairs panel in April 2025. The Senate bill was referred to the Senate Armed Services Committee in March 2025.

The bill was introduced in the Senate on Oct. 8, 2025, for [consideration of unanimous consent](#), but it was blocked by an objection. Text of the legislation was put forward as an amendment to the FY 2026 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) in the Senate but was not included in the final bill.

*118th Congress:* The House version of the bill had 326 cosponsors at the end of the session. It was placed on the House's Union Calendar (for scheduling bills with financial components) but did not reach the House floor. The Senate version had 74 cosponsors at the end of the session; it was referred to the Senate Armed Services Committee in February 2023, about a month into the session, and did not advance further.

*117th Congress:* The House version of the bill had 335 cosponsors at the end of the session. It was placed on the House's Consensus Calendar (for bills that have met a certain sponsorship threshold but have not received floor consideration) on Oct. 25, 2022, but did not reach the House floor. The Senate version had 66 cosponsors at the end of the session; it was referred to the Senate Armed Services Committee in March 2021 and did not advance further.

*116th Congress:* The House version of the bill had 101 cosponsors at the end of the session. It was referred to the House Veterans Affairs' Committee panel on disability assistance and memorial affairs in March 2020 and did not advance from that committee. The Senate version had 31 cosponsors at the end of the session; it was referred to the Senate Armed Services Committee in March 2020 and did not advance further.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE JANUARY 2026 MUSNAVC MEETING

The MOAA Uniformed Services Nurse Advocates Virtual Chapter (MUSNAVC) held its monthly meeting on 21

January, reviewed 2025 and discussed plans for 2026. MUSNAVC still has 539 members, covering 221 legislative districts and members in all 50 states, D.C. and Puerto Rico. It was noted that MUSNAVC will be involved in America's 250<sup>th</sup> Birthday and information per activities will be posted on the website at <https://www.musnavc.org/>. Membership in MUSNAVC is open to anyone that is currently serving or has served as a nurse in one of the uniformed services (Army Navy, Air Force, Public Health Service) and is a member of MOAA.

All board members and committee chairs present were introduced and reviewed their jobs. Throughout the meeting, support for each other and the community was discussed multiple times as was the importance of legislative advocacy. One of the programs discussed was the "We Care Outreach Program" with examples of its relevance. Several members had been affected by hurricanes or other weather events in the last few years and the outreach from this program helped them deal with the difficult situations they were in. This program was started in 2020 as the Buddy program to help members keep in touch and deal with the isolation during the pandemic. The variety of volunteer activities members can be involved in were reviewed: We Care Team, Early Push Team, Healthcare Issue Team, Speakers and Education Team, State Level Advocacy Team, Wreath Across America Team, Women's Healthcare Team, and Membership Team.

The current Early Push Legislation issues for the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress include *S.607/H.R.6038 – Improving Veterans Access to Care*, *S.1320/H.R.2717 – Servicewomen and Veterans Menopause Research Act*, and *H.R.2201 - Improve VA Training for Military Sexual Trauma Claims Act*. Each entry includes a summary of the bill, a link to actual bill text and sponsors. There is also a link to find your representatives in the U.S. House and Senate as well as the MOAA direct Capital number (866-272-6622). This information is accessible to everyone on the MUSNAVC website.

The dates for Advocacy in Action in April were discussed and that all the virtual chapters can participate. The **MOAA Legislative Action Center** and the importance of using it was discussed also as well as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter report on its use by chapters and councils. The ongoing issue with the inaccuracy of the reports was noted and that President Joe Gollasch has been discussing this with MOAA for some time. The third quarter report showed that MUSNAVC only had 76 members registered even though there are 539 members and legislative advocacy is one of our key priorities! The report is supposed to show the level of participation in legislative advocacy of chapters through its use.

**NOTE:** At this meeting and the MOAA Chapter Monthly Virtual Roundtable on 22 Jan, it was mentioned that a new virtual chapter is forming – **MOAA Healthcare Providers** that can include pharmacists, veterinarians, radiologist, etc. This along with MUSNAVC will provide a broader perspective on healthcare issues. MOAA



members can belong to more than one chapter. I belong to PACMOAA, MUSNAVC and SSVC (Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter).

Above Articles Summittted by:

Sherry Ferki, MAJ, USA (Ret)

PACMOAA 2nd VP/Membership Chair

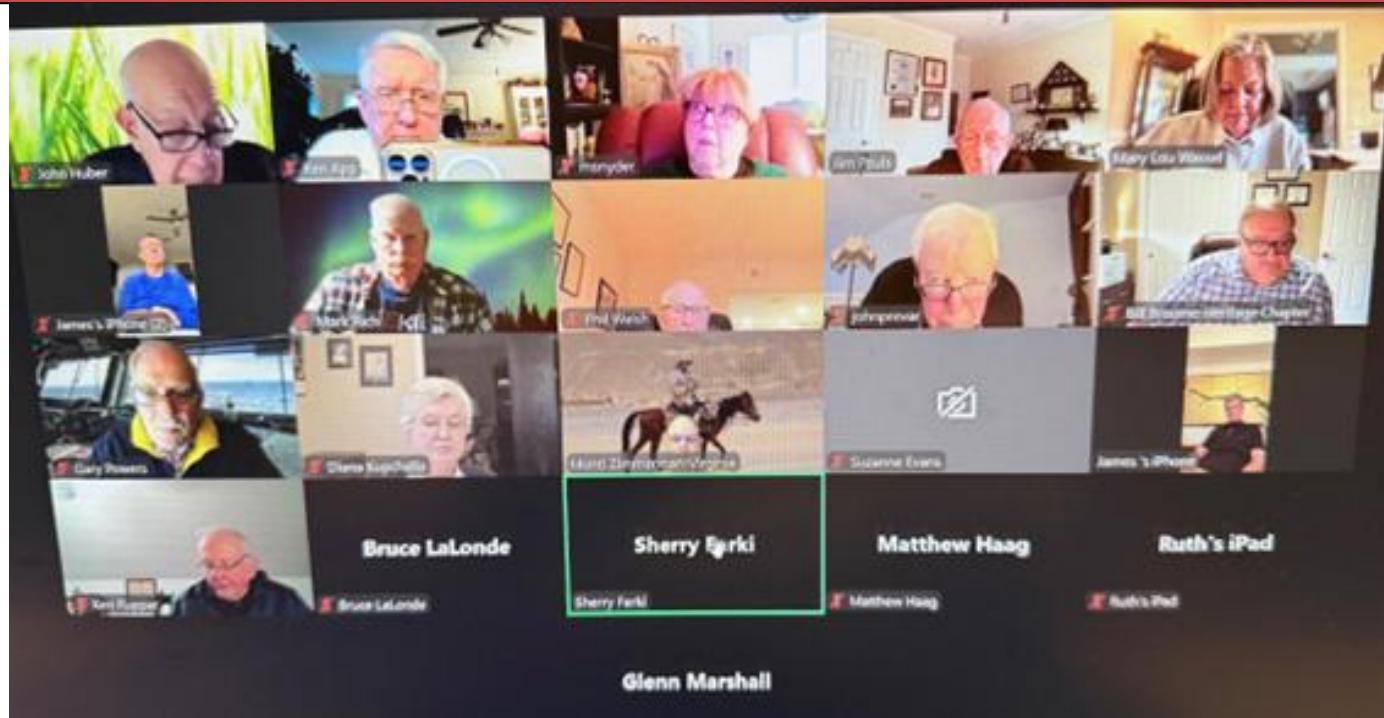
Asst Legislative Rep // Retired Army Nurse and member of MUSNAVC

Cell 757-630-5608



Left: CWO4 Karl and Angela Wilson, LT Joyce Johnson, and Mrs. Lois Yandle

## VCOC AND JLC



The First Quarter VCOC Meeting was Virtual and held on 13 January 2026. In addition to myself, attendees included: PACMOAA President, CAPT Bruce LaLonde,, MAJ Sherry Ferki, VCOC Treasurer & Surviving Spouse Liaision; Mary Snyder, PACMOAA 1<sup>st</sup> VP & Legislative Rep, and CAPT Jim Hoffower, PACMOAA Secretary.

A quorum of Chapters was attained. A new Schedule of Dates for reporting at the January meeting was discussed to make it easier on Chapter to get the report in. An inperson meeting was suggested for the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Meeting. MAJ Sherry Ferki presented the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2025 Financial Report and proposed budget for 2026.



Submitted By:

Ken App  
CDR USN (Ret) PACMOAA VCOC Representative  
757-630-0886

### VCOC LEGISLATIVE REPORT & JLC UPDATE

The 164<sup>th</sup> Virginia General Assembly convened on January 14, 2026. This legislative session began on January 14 and is set to adjourn on March 16, 2026.

#### JLC UPDATE

The Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) is composed of one representative from qualifying veterans service organizations (VSOs), to be appointed by the Governor. The Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services and the Chairs of the Board of Veterans Services and the Veterans Services Foundation or their designees, serve as nonvoting *ex officio* members. *The mission of the JLC is to provide advice and assistance to the Governor, General Assembly and the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) on matters of concern to the veterans community and provides a conduit of information to and from the veterans service organizations on policy and legislation, pending and enacted, as well as information on existing services.*

At the September JLC meeting, five initiatives for 2026 were confirmed and ranked. A sixth initiative was added at the December meeting and the rank order was adjusted. The 2026 initiatives are as follows:

**JLC Initiative 2026-01: Secure the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program**

**(VEMSDEP)**

**Objective:** To keep Virginia's 95-year promise to surviving dependents of servicemembers and of disabled veterans by saving and securing the Military Survivors & Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP)

**JLC Initiative 2026-02: Stop Unscrupulous Firms from Exploiting Veterans**

**Objective:** Prohibit 'Claim Shark' companies from preying on veterans seeking to obtain or modify their VA entitlements.

**JLC Initiative 2026-03: Veteran Suicide Death Information Access**

**Objective:** To ensure access to Vital Record death certificates, medical certifications, and investigations by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for the Department of Veteran Services Suicide Prevention Program (the Program). This data will be used by the Program to review, analyze, and disseminate timely federal, state, and local data on the quantity, common causes, and methods of suicide utilized among military members, veterans, and their family members.

**JLC Initiative 2026-04: Veteran Textbook Support Grant**

\*\* At the time of newsletter distribution, a new development for one of the JLC 2026 Initiatives: **JLC Initiative 2026-04 below was withdrawn by its JLC sponsor due to lack of Patron in either the House or the Senate.**

**Objective:** To establish a Veterans Textbook Support Grant in Virginia, providing financial assistance for textbooks and course materials to address a critical unmet need among student veterans, strengthen educational outcomes, and align Virginia with neighboring states that already offer veteran-specific education benefits.

**JLC Initiative 2026-05: Exempt Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) from Limits on Use of Proceeds from Charitable Gaming**

**Objective:** Exempt 501(c)(19) Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) from limits on Use of Proceeds from charitable gaming.

**JLC Initiative 2026-06 Inclusion of USPHS and NOAA in Income Tax Subtraction**

**Objective:** To ensure the continued commitment of the Commonwealth of Virginia to amend and reenact SS 58.1-322.02 of the Code of Virginia to expand eligibility to all Uniformed Services, including the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Commissioned Officer Corps.

Details of each of these initiatives including the background information can be found on the JLC website. There is a new website for the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations. It can be found under Boards and Foundations at the following:

<https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/about-us/boards-foundations/joint-leadership-council-of-veterans-service-organizations>

**LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS REPORT – VCOC MEETING**

At the January 12, 2026 VCOC meeting the following report was given by Co-chair COL Monti Zimmerman –

- COL Zimmerman explained changes to legislative awards, including Executive of the Year Award, which was created to recognize unique circumstances in a recent legislative year.
- COL Zimmerman discussed the JLC Initiatives including the efforts to ban 'claim sharks' and the integration of USPHS and NOAA into military retirement subtraction exemptions.
- COL Zimmerman presented a possible change to the by-laws for awards. After some discussion, it was determined that this information would be as a document for historical reference instead of a by-laws change. COL Zimmerman will work with CAPT Wassel to find a suitable site for this historical document.
- COL Zimmerman and LTC Down have both been working to make the JLC Initiatives more relevant. The Virginia Assembly will have about three weeks to consider 2000+ bills. Groups have to be aggressive and ready to provide legislators with the necessary information for each initiative to move the respective legislation forward.

Information provided by notes taken from attendance at VCOC meeting, January 12, 2026

Submitted by

Mary L. Snyder, PACMOAA VCOC Legislative Representative

## VIRGINIA MILITARY SURVIVORS AND DEPENDENTS EDUCATION PROGRAM (VMSDEP) UPDATE

As of 28 January 2026



**LEFT:** VMSDEP Friends in General Assembly on 15 January to advocate for JLC Priorities especially #1 - Secure the Virginia Military Survivors & Dependents Education Program.

MG (Ret) Tim Williams, new Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and John Maxwell, the new Department Veterans Services Commissioner, met with legislators on 28 January. One briefing was “General Assembly Military and Veterans Caucus briefing” and the other one was on “VMSDEP”. The DVS Program Manager Montwrance Cunningham was the principal briefer. Grace Khattar, SCHEV Assistant Director of Finance Policy and Government assisted with the briefing. The Legislators were in and out during the briefings and some left early. None heard both full briefings. Both presentations were well done and questions on VMSDEP were answered well by BG Williams and John Maxwell. It is important to remember that a new team is in charge in Richmond. “We need to be practical, with sound financial considerations if we are to provide advice that the legislators will accept”. Update and direct comment on meeting from Glenn Yarborough, JLC Rep from Association of the U.S. Army.

the briefings and some left early. None heard both full briefings. Both presentations were well done and questions on VMSDEP were answered well by BG Williams and John Maxwell. It is important to remember that a new team is in charge in Richmond. “We need to be practical, with sound financial considerations if we are to provide advice that the legislators will accept”. Update and direct comment on meeting from Glenn Yarborough, JLC Rep from Association of the U.S. Army.

**NOTE:** SCHEV (State Council of Higher Education for Virginia) presented data that was very misleading 2 years ago when the issue of VMSDEP funding changed to become part of the budget process. One of the primary issues for VMSDEP Friends was to help obtain more accurate data to assist in deciding how to go forward in funding VMSDEP.

We will keep members updated as soon as possible to let you know when you need to contact your legislators per voting on VMSDEP. There may be a short turnaround time. Making sure your senator and delegate know your stance on VMSDEP would be helpful. I will be happy to share the white paper on VMSDEP with anyone interested in it.

Submitted by: Sherry D Ferki, MAJ, USA (Ret)  
PACMOAA 2<sup>nd</sup> VP/Membership Chair/Assist. Legislative Rep.

## COMMUNITY

### PACMOAA SCHOLARSHIP FUND HISTORY & UPDATE

The Portsmouth Area Chapter was chartered as an affiliate of The Retired Officers Association on 22 April 1983 and a Scholarship Fund was established on 4 January 1984. Originally it was set up with 2 awards – the COL Frank J. Robertson and the PACTROA (Portsmouth Area Chapter of the Retired Officers Association) Scholarships. The original scholarships were both \$500.00. At some point the scholarships were combined and both were called the PACTROA Scholarship. Since 2001, when I took over as Chair of the Scholarship Committee, PACMOAA has awarded 1-3 scholarships each year, ranging from \$1000.00 to \$2000.00 for a total of \$60,500!

Seven students had to drop out of school and/or ROTC for a variety of reasons over the past 24 years. The scholarship is awarded over the first two semesters in school and is contingent upon continued enrollment in an ROTC type program. The scholarship money may be used for tuition purposes and/or other school related

expenses as well as room and board. *Unlike the MOAA scholarships, the students do not have to come from a military family.*



**Left:** *2024 Awardee Naza Agbasi in fatigues at ODU.* Information pertaining to this scholarship is emailed to local high schools in Portsmouth, Suffolk, Franklin, Chesapeake, Southampton and Isle of Wight. It is also sent to the 14 local JROTC groups in our area and many of our past awardees have been JROTC cadets. CDR Scott Dickinson, USN (Ret) joined the Scholarship Committee in 2016 and the next year implemented an online application and review process that greatly improved our system. He has been the Committee Co-Chair since 2017.

The number of scholarships to be awarded for the year will be voted on at the April Board Meeting and is based on donations from PACMOAA members. The Scholarship Committee, consisting of MAJ Ferki, CDR Dickinson, CAPT LaLonde, and CAPT Hoffower, will meet in late May to evaluate the applicants and select the awardees. The scholarship awardees and their parents will then be invited to the annual Scholarship Recognition Dinner in June.



**Left:** *2025 Awardee Charlise Albers at June dinner.* College expenses are increasing as are all other expenses. Most families have fewer resources than in past years. **Please consider donating some money to help these students out in their quest for a career in the military.** *This can easily be done by including extra money with your dues check or adding more to your dinner check. The 50/50 usually adds \$30.00 to \$40.00 to the Scholarship Fund from each dinner meeting.* All donations are greatly appreciated and will be most helpful!

Submitted by MAJ Sherry Ferki, USA (Ret), Scholarship Committee Co-Chair

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## PROGRAMS

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

12 February 2026	Joyce Bost- Eldercare and Insurance, Health, and Financial Documents
12 March 2026	TBA
09 April 2026	TBA
14 May 2026	TBA
11 June 2026	Scholarship Dinner, Speaker TBA
19 July 2026	Joint Brunch, Tentatively at Atlantic Shores Retirement Community

### Right-The 2026

#### Leadership Team (L-R):

PACMOAA President  
 CAPT Bruce LaLonde, Lt  
 Joyce Johnson, BOD, CDR  
 Mike Riley, BOD; CDR  
 Hans Sacshe, Treasurer;  
 CAPT Jim Hoffer, Secretary, Mary Snyder 1st  
 VP Programs; COL Bill Smith, Immediate Past

President; VCOC President CAPT Mary Lou Wessel; CWO4 Karl Wilson BOD; CDR David Von Rump, BOD; CDR Ken App 3<sup>rd</sup> VP, Communications. **NOT Pictured:** MAJ Sherry Ferki, 2<sup>nd</sup> VP Membership was not present due to a death in the Family.



## CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

With the chaos and division that we see in our World, National and Local news, I believe it is time to reflect on a higher power for guidance today. Let us ask our Eternal God who loves all mankind to continue to love us even when we look down on others. This is especially true if we are angered and cannot see their points of view. We should seek to love others even if anger clouds our feelings. Therefore, I ask God please help us stay grounded, find understanding and love for our neighbors.

*“But I have trusted in you merciful love;  
 My heart shall rejoice in you salvation” Psalm 13:5*



Submitted by  
**CAPT Bob Brewer,**  
**USN (Ret) Chaplain**

**CDR Ken App**  
**USN (Ret)**  
**Salute Editor**  
**Editor's Avatar >**



**HAPPY VALENTINES DAY! Bring Your Sweetheart AND Sweets to this Month's Meeting!!! Wear RED!!!**

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

### PACMOAA MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL FORM 2026

**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 help on a committee? ( ) Yes ( ) No

<u>Please circle payment plan you select:</u>	<u>Discount</u>	<u>15%</u>	<u>20%</u>	<u>Best Value</u>
Membership Category	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	
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**

**NOTE: For members joining after July 1<sup>st</sup>, \$12.50 for Regular Members or \$10 for Surviving Spouse**

**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 [PACMOAA.Treasurer@gmail.com](mailto:PACMOAA.Treasurer@gmail.com) in the block where it says "name, @username, email, or mobile" and click "next". Enter the amount to transmit and add "For PACMOAA Dues/dinner/etc." 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.

**NOTE: CDR Hans Sachse, USN (Ret) is the PACMOAA Treasurer.**

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_