



President's Message

By Frank Sparacino
LTC U.S. Army (Retired)

The Advocacy in Action program began in April however, we only had one district to cover and our Representative resigned. I'd like to believe our fellow MOAA Chapters made some impact on encouraging Congressional support on all three Legislative priorities

To all members and their guests, the NYS MOAA Annual Convention is at Peek-n-Peak Resort 15-18 September 2022, 1405 Old Road, Clymer, Ny 14724. I encourage members to at least attend a few days if not the entire 4-day event. Rebecca and I will be attending and plan on doing some personal exploring of our own. Come make a mini vacation of it.

MOAA Chapter dues are due again this year, please make every attempt to renew your membership so we can support our Chapters initiatives such as the VA tailgate social, ROTC & JROTC awards, and our newsletters. The dues are very economical especially if you pay for 3 years at a time and donations are always appreciated. PS. Chapter dues are in addition to the National membership dues.

To reduce costs, the newsletter is now emailed to members. If you know of anyone that does not have an email, please have him or her contact us for paper copies. Please make every attempt to contact me at fjspa26@gmail.com, to update your contact information. It makes it easier for us to reach out to you on upcoming events. Please forward this newsletter to anyone you feel would be interested in MOAA.

The Armed Forces Committee is ramping up for their 2024 May 16th and May 18th events. This year is hosted by the US Air Force. May 16th is at the NFAFB and the 18th Military Ball is at the Hyatt Regency downtown Buffalo. Tickets are available at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/61st-wny-armed-forces-opening-ceremony-and-luncheon-tickets-859026520447?aff=oddtcreator>
Or you can view all AFW events in detail at wnyarmedforcesweek.com.

Finally, our annual meeting which is also our Christmas Social in December is being finalized. More details in our next newsletter.



Future BOD mtg dates June 22, September 7

Personal Affairs

By Richard A. Scalfani
CW4 U.S. Army (Retired)

TAPS:

CPT JOHN KASMER, USA (Ret)

Died January 8, 2024. He was a veteran of the Korean Conflict, served with the prestigious 3rd Infantry Regiment which is the Honor Guard unit that performs ceremonial burial services and is the unit that guards the Tomb of The Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery. He was leader of an Honor Guard Team of the American Legion Post of which he was a member.

Well Wishes to all chapter members and their family members who are experiencing health issues a speedy recovery.

Items of Interest:

Air Guardsmen Oppose Proposal to Move Their Units to Space Force:

Air [National Guard](#) leaders and enlisted Guardsmen called a legislative proposal to move units focused on space missions to the [Space Force](#) a threat to their existence and also said many of those personnel would rather retire or retrain into another job instead.

"Our internal survey indicates about 70% of our personnel would retrain or retire rather than join the Space Force," Air Force Col. Michael Griesbaum, commander of the Alaska Air National Guard's 168th Wing, told reporters Friday. "In our particular case, that would really represent an existential threat to the national security of the United States because the Space Force does not have the experience to replace my space operators who depart."

Air Force officials' legislative proposal 480 to Congress would change the status of Air National Guard units conducting space operations "from a unit of the Air National Guard of the United States to a unit of the United States Space Force; deactivate the unit; or assign the unit a new federal mission" and would do so "without the approval of its governor."

Governors of 48 states as well as five U.S. territories are opposing a plan to transfer Air [National Guard](#) units with space missions into the active-duty [Space Force](#), a move that would effectively remove state authority over those units.

Changes for retirees who pay SBP monthly premiums directly:

Some retirees need to pay monthly Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) or Reserve Component Survivor Benefit Plan (RCSBP) premiums directly to DFAS because their VA disability pay offsets their retired pay. DFAS calls that direct remittance.

Most of these payments are handled by the U.S. Department of Treasury Centralized Receivables Service (CRS), where retirees can make their payments online, or using their bank's bill payment service or through the mail. Recently, Treasury CRS changed their payment processes and their customer service phone number. These changes were included on the monthly statement CRS mails to the retirees.

Treasury CRS NEW Customer Service Phone Number: 888-618-3104

New CRS Payment Processes

Retirees now need a specific invoice number for each month to pay their SBP premiums online, as the invoice number changes each month. In addition, CRS no longer uses Pay.gov. The new payment portal is the Treasury CRS Guest Payment website: <https://crsportal.fiscal.treasury.gov>.

If you are a retiree that pays SBP premiums via CRS and you do not receive mailed invoices, you may need to update your mailing address with DFAS. With the recent changes, CRS no longer sends emails regarding pending bills.

Retirees must contact DFAS Retired & Annuitant Pay to update their mailing address for both the DFAS and CRS records. Updating contact information in DEERS does not update information in the DFAS or CRS systems.

Update Your Mailing Address

See the Quick Tools webpage for convenient options to change your mailing address: <https://www.dfas.mil/raquicktools>.

If You Have Questions About Your SBP Coverage, please contact the DFAS Customer Care Center at 1-800- 321-1080.

If You Have Questions About Treasury CRS Payments, please contact Treasury CRS at (888) 618-3104.

Checking Your SBP Coverage for Your Current or Former Spouse:

Have you recently checked your Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) coverage? If you haven't, it's easy to do. In my Pay, you can review a monthly Retiree Account Statement (RAS), which is available to all military retirees currently receiving retired pay.

By reviewing the RAS, the statement shows your current SBP coverage and the type of coverage your current or former spouse is receiving.

As a retiree, it is important to understand you need to contact DFAS for any life-changing events, such as marriage, divorce, or loss of a spouse. The changes can impact your premium payments; there is a one-year limit for notifying DFAS of any life-changing event.

If you divorced since you retired from the military, review your SBP participation status. Federal law states SBP coverage ends for a spouse when a divorce occurs. In most cases, coverage does not continue until DFAS is notified and the required documentation is received.

There are two alternatives to allow continuing coverage for a former spouse: the military retiree must voluntarily request coverage to be continued or the former spouse must submit a timely deemed election to

request coverage. If the former spouse submits a timely deemed election, coverage is subject to the court order. Time limits apply for all scenarios, whether coverage is elected by the retiree or deemed by the former spouse.

To update your SBP coverage, please note DFAS needs a copy of the official documentation; a marriage license, divorce decree, death certificate, or birth certificate, along with SBP Election Change Form (DD2656-6) to update your account.

Please note: updating your beneficiary for the SBP does NOT update your beneficiary listed for the Arrears of Pay. They are independent of each other and must be updated individually.

SBP for Current or Former Spouse: Have you divorced since retiring? If so, please take a moment and carefully check your SBP participation status. Under the law, SBP coverage for a spouse ends with a divorce. Coverage for a former spouse does not continue after the divorce unless certain actions are taken. To continue SBP coverage for a former spouse, either (a) the retiree must voluntarily request coverage be continued for the former spouse, or, (b) the former spouse must request the coverage (but she/he may do so only if a court order requires the coverage). Certain time limits and other conditions apply.

If those actions were not taken, the coverage for the former spouse has ended. This could have important consequences for your survivors.

To check your SBP coverage status, review your Retiree Account Statement (RAS) carefully. Make sure the “SBP Coverage Type” properly reflects “former spouse” or “spouse” (as applicable to your individual circumstances). We have seen instances of spouse SBP premium deductions that were continued after a divorce but because required actions were not taken, the former spouse was not properly covered, preventing payment of an SBP annuity. There is more information on our website on the SBP Changing or Stopping Coverage webpage: <https://www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/provide/sbp/change>

How Do I Renew a Military ID Without a Sponsor?

1. Make an appointment with a RAPIDS ID office.

You'll want to make an appointment with a Real-Time Automated Personnel Identification System (RAPIDS) office this before your current military ID card expires. This is important because, if your RAPIDS ID appointment is on a military installation, security will confiscate your expired ID at the entrance. Use this [locator tool](#) to find the RAPIDS ID office nearest to your current location.

2. Call the DEERS support line.

If your sponsor passes away, make sure the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System updates your sponsor's death in the system to ensure you receive a survivor ID card. Surviving dependents of deceased personnel ages 75 and over can get a permanent military ID card that doesn't expire. To contact DEERS, call [1-800-538-9552](tel:1-800-538-9552). DEERS will notify TRICARE for you.

3. Get your new ID card from the RAPIDS ID site.

Bring a completed DD Form 1172-2 along with two forms of identification to your RAPIDS ID appointment. One of your forms of identification must be government-issued, such as a driver's license or passport. If your sponsor is deceased, you will also need a copy of the death certificate. If your sponsor is living but isn't present, you can

sign in their place using a general Power of Attorney. Be sure to bring your sponsor's legal document with you to the appointment.

If you or any other dependents are physically unable to make the trip, call a local RAPIDS ID office. Options for replacing an ID without the dependent present differ based on location, and your local office will be best able to tell you what to do.

If you have any questions or need our assistance with your military benefits, an AAFMAA Member Benefits Representative can help. Call **888-541-3705**, select option 2, then option 2 again; or email memberbenefits@aafmaa.com.

Legislative Liaison Report

By BG Tony Caruana
USA (Retired)

Since the last report, our MOAA National had been planning for and then executed the annual **Advocacy in Action (AiA)** campaign which took place on April 17, in Washington, DC. This campaign brings together state Council of Chapters leaders from across the nation to meet in-person with their representative(s) and two senators advocating for three critically important issues of MOAA's legislative agenda for the year.

The legislative focus this year was on these three important topics.

1. **Richard Star Act.** Asking Congress to support H.R. 1282 and S. 344, the Richard Star Act, to ensure combat-injured veterans receive the vested retirement pay they earned and are no longer punished financially due to their injuries or illnesses. Authorize the Star Act in the 2025 National Defense Authorization Act.

2. **The Restoring full Basic Allowance for Housing, (BHA).** Asking Congress to help our service members. Our nation expects 100% from them, to ensure they get 100% of their housing allowance by supporting BHA Restoration Act, Cosponsor H.R. 2537, Cosponsor S.1823.

3. **TRICARE for Life issues.** Ask Congress for their help to protect the TRICARE For Life benefit to fulfill our nation's military health care commitment to career service members and retirees.

TAKE ACTION. This is where our voices can make an impact. Your help is needed to convince our own federal legislative leaders to hear our local voices on these and other important items. MOAA National has set up a new **One-Stop Shop for Action Center** on its website, called **Legislative Action Center** at www.moaa.org/takeaction. This site helps us make a difference on Capitol Hill. The action center has the capability to inform you about issues coming up in Congress, to log interactions with your lawmakers, to highlight what bills MOAA supports, to find your elected officials, and how to contact them.

If you are new to the MOAA website you can use this site, www.moaa.org, and click on to the top right bars to pull down the links to **Advocacy** that has the link to the **Legislative Action Center**. You may need to "Sign Up" to create a profile if asked. Your name and address information will then automatically populate on the pre-written letters that then can be emailed directly to your representatives in Congress that support the issues above, and/or any issues that you choose to support from those listed on their website.

If you already have a profile on file, you can go directly to www.moaa.org/takeaction where you can explore the site and send letters MOAA has crafted as mentioned above. You can customize your message by adding a note

with your personal experience to make your request even more effective. This **One-Stop Shop** is an easier way to contact your legislators and doesn't require envelopes, stamps, or a visit to a mailbox.

By using the **Legislative Action Center** to contact our legislators, you help make our voices louder and contribute to making a difference in the lives of service members, veterans, and our military families. Please help in the efforts to get our messages heard and important legislation passed. With more participation from our members

and our spouses, the louder our voices will be. Though not every issue may affect each of us individually, every issue will somehow impact the greater overall state of our military, our service members, retirees, our veterans and our families.

We encourage you to continue to contact your congressional representative and our two senators with your frequent requests for their support for the major issues MOAA and the military coalition of military and veteran organizations deem very important for our service members, veterans, retirees and our families.

Naval Annual Congress in Buffalo

By Father Michael Zuffoletto
CDR-USN (Retired)

Calling All Naval Persons

The Navy Order of the United States (NOUS) will hold their annual Congress in Buffalo this coming October 2-6, 2024. The headquarters for the Congress is the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Buffalo. All present and retired members of the Naval Forces of the U.S., which encompasses the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Merchant Marines, Public Health Service and NOAA, are welcome to attend and learn about the history of our Naval Services especially in the Western New York Area. For more information and/or register, please see NOUS' web page at <http://www.nousorder.org>. left-hand menu "Congress 24".

Tailgate Party at VA Hospital

By Stanley Lichwala
CDR U.S. Navy (Retired)

Once again our Chapter will partner with the Home of the Brave to sponsor our 15th Tailgate Party in Freedom Hall at the Buffalo VA Hospital for patients. When the Bills announce the schedule, we will establish the date so look for it in our Fall newsletter. Providing pizza, wings and pop brings cheer to the patients who greatly appreciate this Chapter outreach.

Online Dues Payment

By Stanley Lichwala
CDR U.S. Navy (Retired)
WNY Chapter Treasurer

Again this year, you will be able to pay your chapter dues online. All you need to do is go to www.moaa.org click on Chapters and then click on click on Chapter Dues. The one-year renewal fee is \$16 and your Board of Directors has provided a discount for members who want to renew for more than one year. The fee for a two-year renewal is \$30 and for a three-year renewal is \$44. Those choosing to make charitable contributions may do so online. Please continue to pay dues online.

Royal Naval Military Institute (RNMI), Canada

RNMI ceases operations. We have been informed that the Canadian Royal Naval Military Institute has ceased operations effective May 15, 2024. Our Chapter has enjoyed our association with the members of the RNMI over many years and we wish them the very best.

2024 EVENTS CALENDAR

May

- 12 Mother's Day
- 16-18 Armed Forces Celebration
- 27 Memorial Day

JUNE

- 14 Flag Day
- 16 Father's Day

JULY

- 4 Independence Day
- 14 Canal Fest Begins

AUGUST

- 7 Erie County Fair Begins

SEPTEMBER

- 2 Labor Day

OCTOBER

- 14 Columbus Day
- 31 Halloween

NOVEMBER

- 5 Election Day
- 28 Thanksgiving Day

December

- 14 Annual Holiday Party



THE MILITARY OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION OF WNY

P.O. Box 472

North Tonawanda, NY 14120

APPLICATION FOR REGULAR CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP

LAST NAME, FIRST NAME, MIDDLE INITIAL		SPOUSE NAME OR N/A	
RANK	COMPONENT & BRANCH OF SERVICE	STATUS	
DATE OF RANK		FULL RETIREMENT DATE (if applicable)	
PLEASE MARK THE FOLLOWING AS APPROPRIATE			
Active Duty	Retired from AD	Retired from Guard or Reserves and Receiving Retired Pay	
National Guard	Retired from Guard or Reserves	Former Officer (not in any other category)	
Street and/or P.O Box	City	State	Zip
Business Phone	Home Phone	Cell Phone	
E-mail Address	MOAA Membership Number (found on magazine label)	Date of Birth	
Date of Application	Signature		

AUXILIARY MEMBERSHIP is open to the surviving spouse of a former member. You are encouraged to maintain your membership in MOAA in order to continue to receive the important information published in the Military Officer magazine and to receive notices sent from time to time by national headquarters.

Chapter Dues are waived for AUXILIARY Members

If you are applying for Regular Chapter Membership: return this form with payment in FULL to:
 The Military Officers' Association of WNY, Inc.
 P.O. Box 472
 North Tonawanda, NY 14120 OR
 Chapter Dues may also be paid ONLINE at:
www.moaa.org —Chapters and Councils —Echapter Dues

Chapter Dues

Regular Membership Fee—January-December	\$16.00
Regular 1-year Renewal Fee	\$16.00
Regular 2-Year Renewal Fee	\$30.00