



### **President's Message**

By Frank Sparacino

LTC U.S. Army (Retired)

Thank you for your trust and confidence in electing me as your President of MOAA of WNY Chapter. I want to thank Bob Pecoraro for his untiring leadership in mentoring me to be his replacement as President of our Chapter.

I have presided over two of our Board meetings thus far and I am pleased to welcome three new members to the Board: Lt Col Kelly Forrest (USAF) as Secretary, Maj Susan Novak (USAF Ret), and CWO5 Michael Niezgoda (USMCR) as Directors. Welcome and I look forward to working with you.

I wish to personally thank BG Anthony Caruana and Col Robert Pecoraro for assisting me in meeting our local Congressmen for the MOAA Advocacy in Action program. Both are veterans with this program, and I welcomed their guidance and enthusiasm. I'd like to believe we made some impact on encouraging Congressional support on all three Legislative priorities. More on this later in this newsletter.

To all members and their guests, the MOAA Annual Convention is at Alexandria Bay 11-15 September 2022, and I would 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. More on this as well in this newsletter.

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 newsletters. The dues are very economical especially if you pay for 3 years at a time. This is in addition to the National membership which the Basic membership is Free.

Please make every attempt to contact Jerry Privitera at 716-693-6121 to update your contact information, address, phone, email, etc. It makes it easier for us to reach out to you on upcoming events.

Finally, **Save the Date**, our Annual Meeting which is also our Christmas Social is December 3, 2022. Please make every attempt to join us at Salvatore's Italian Gardens at 1130 for lunch and a brief meeting. More details in our next newsletter.

## **Personal Affairs**

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

### **TAPS:**

**COL GEORGE F. CROWE, USA, (Ret.)**  
Died July 24, 2021.

**COL DANIEL A. GOUPIL, USA, (Ret.)**  
Died February 28, 2022.

**LTC JAMES G. RAY USA, USA, (Ret.)**  
Died December 29, 2021.

**CW3 MICHAEL P. DUGGAN, USA, (Ret.)**  
Died February 9, 2020.

Prior Member:

**COL JOHN J. KUBISTY, USA, (Ret.)**  
Died March 20, 2022.

### **New York State Veteran's Benefits**

The New York State Division of Veterans' Services (DVS or Division) advocates on behalf of New York's Veterans and their families, as individuals and as a group, to ensure they receive benefits granted by law for service in the United States Armed Forces. Information and referral hotline 1-888-VETS-NYS (1-888-838-7697)—is available to refer Veterans and their families to the nearest Veterans Benefits Advisor Office or to schedule an appointment. To locate a Vet Center near you select your county at <https://veterans.ny.gov/content/contact-division-veterans-services>

### **Veteran Housing**

The N.Y. State Veterans Homes are skilled nursing facilities owned and operated by the N.Y. State Department of Health for veterans and their dependents. There are four homes in Batavia, Montrose, Oxford, and St. Albans. There is also an Adult Day Health Care facility on the Stony Brook University campus in Long Island. New York resident veterans with an honorable discharge are eligible for admission. Some

spouses and unremarried surviving spouses are also eligible for admission.

### **Financial Assistance Income Tax**

-- **Military Pay:** If your permanent home was in N.Y. state before entering the military, active-duty income is not subject to state taxes.

-- **Retired Pay:** Not taxable

### **Property Tax Exemption**

Partial exemption from real property taxes is based on condition of service, with additional benefits based upon degree of service-connected disability. Applications must be filed before Taxable Status Day. Qualifying widow(er)s may file for benefit based on their spouse's service. Exemption applies to local and county property taxes. For more information refer to <https://veterans.ny.gov/content/property-tax-exemptions-veterans>.

### **New York State Blind Annuity**

For information on this program refer to <http://veterans.ny.gov/content/new-york-state-blind-annuity-program>.

### **New York State Gold Star Annuity**

Refer to <http://veterans.ny.gov/content/gold-star-parent-annuity-program> for information on this program and [https://veterans.ny.gov/sites/default/files/gold-star-annuity-app\\_04apr2019.pdf](https://veterans.ny.gov/sites/default/files/gold-star-annuity-app_04apr2019.pdf) for the application.

### **E-Z Pass for Disabled Veterans**

The N.Y. State Thruway Authority offers free, unlimited travel anywhere on the Thruway to certain, qualifying disabled Veterans. To learn more about this program go to <https://www.thruway.ny.gov/ezpass/veterans.html>

### **Survivors' Benefits**

When a Veteran passes away, surviving spouses, minor children, and dependent parents may be eligible for financial benefits from the U.S.

Department of Veterans Affairs and from the State of New York. Call them at 888-838-7697

For Additional Information about Survivors' Benefits, visit the VA's Family and Information page at <https://www.va.gov/family-member-benefits>.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

### **Disabled Veterans Civil Service Preference**

Ten additional credits are granted on civil service examinations to qualified disabled veterans. For additional eligibility and application information refer to <http://www.cs.ny.gov/vetcredits/>

### **Veterans Preference**

This gives eligible veterans preference in appointment over many other applicants. Refer to <https://www.fedshirevets.gov/job-seekers/veterans/veterans-preference/#content> for more information on this program.

### **Veterans with Disabilities Employment Program**

Section 55-c of the New York State Civil Service Law authorizes 500 positions to be filled with qualified wartime Veterans with disabilities. Go to <https://veterans.ny.gov/content/veterans-disabilities-employment-program-55-c>

### **Military Service Credit for State & Local Retirement System Members**

Veterans may be entitled to receive additional credit toward retirement for your military service through N.Y. State and Local Retirement System. Go to <https://www.osc.state.ny./retirement/members/military-service-credit?redirect=legacy> for information regarding complete eligibility requirements, buy back cost, and instructions to apply can be found on the Office of the State Comptroller website.

## **RECREATION**

America the Beautiful National Park Pass

This pass is your ticket to more than 2,000

federal recreation sites. Each pass covers entrance fees at national parks and national wildlife refuges as well as standard amenity fees at national forests and grasslands, and at lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Reclamation. A pass covers entrance and standard amenity fees for a driver and all passengers in a personal vehicle at per vehicle fee areas (or up to four adults at sites that charge per person). The America the Beautiful National Park Pass is available free of charge to U.S. military members and dependents in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard and also, Reserve and National Guard members. For more information and how to obtain a National Park Pass, visit the National Park Service website.

<https://www.nps.gov/planyourvisit/passes.htm>

### **Lifetime Liberty Pass for NYS Veterans with Disabilities**

The Lifetime Liberty Pass benefits includes free vehicle entry to state parks and DEC-operated day-use areas, as well as numerous state boat launch sites, historic sites, arboretums and park preserves; free golf at 28 State Park golf courses; free swimming pool entrance at 36 State Park pools, and discounted camping and cabin rentals at all 119 State Park and DEC campgrounds.

Wartime veterans with 40% or greater service-connected disabilities are eligible.

To qualify for the pass, the Veteran must be a resident of New York State and provide State Parks with written certification from the United States Veterans Administration or the New York State Division of Veterans Affairs that the applicant is a wartime Veteran with a 40% or greater service-connected disability as certified by the United States Veterans Administration, or who has at any time been awarded by the Federal government an allowance towards the purchase of an automobile or who is eligible for such an award.

**Note:** New York State Veterans with disabilities who currently hold a valid Access Pass will be contacted prior to expiration of their pass for updated information to enroll in the Liberty Pass Program, and will no longer have to reapply every four years. Their current valid Access Passes will remain usable until their distinctive Lifetime Liberty Pass is issued.

**Driver/Vehicle Licensing & Registration Veteran Designation on a New York State Photo Document:** New York offers a Veteran designation on New York driver licenses; learner permits and non-driver photo ID cards for honorably discharged Veterans. There is no additional fee for the Veteran designation, all other regular transaction fees will apply.

Veterans will be required to provide one of the following documents as proof that they received an honorable discharge:

- DD214 that indicates an honorable discharge
- DD215 that indicates an honorable discharge
- If discharged before January 1,1950, an Honorable Discharge form WD AGO 53, WD AGO 55, WD AGO 53-55, NAVPERS 553, NAVMC 78PD or NAVCG 553, or an "Enlisted Separation Paper".

Veterans can apply at any New York Department of Motor Vehicle Office <https://dmv.ny.gov/offices/county-offices> or by mail to DMV License Production Bureau, 6 Empire State Plaza, Room 331 Albany, NY 12228. Refer to <https://dmv.ny.gov/more-info/veteran-status-designation-photo-document> for more on New York ID's.

**Customized Military and Veteran License Plates** Specialty plates for veterans and military members are available for all branches of service, Medals and awards, military and veteran communities, and wars & battles. All vehicles that are registered in NYS as a passenger class vehicle or as a commercial class vehicle are eligible.

## BURIAL

The below National cemeteries are established for veteran use. There are no state veteran cemeteries in New York:

### Cemetery

Cemetery	Address	Contact	Burial Space
Bath National Cemetery	San Juan Avenue	Phone: 607-664-4853	Open Bath, NY 14810 FAX: 607-664-4761
Calverton National Cemetery	210 Princeton Boulevard	Phone: 631-727-5410	Open Calverton, NY 11933 FAX: 631-369-4397
Cypress Hills National Cemetery	625 Jamaica Avenue	Phone: 631-454-4949	Closed Brooklyn, NY 11208 FAX: 631-777-7017
Gerald B. H. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery	200 Duell Road	Phone: 518-581-9128	Open Schuylerville, NY 12871 FAX: 518-583-6975
Long Island National Cemetery	2040 Wellwood Avenue	Phone: 631-454-4949	Cremation Only Farmingdale, NY 11735 FAX: 631-694-5422
Woodlawn National Cemetery	1825 Davis Street	Phone: 607-732-5411	Cremation Only Elmira, NY 14901 FAX: 607-732-1769
Albany Rural Cemetery	Cemetery Avenue	Phone: 518-581-9128	Albany, NY 12204 FAX: 518-583-6975
Soldiers' Lot			Closed

### Newly Opened:

WNY National Cemetery  
1254 Indian Church Rd.  
Corfu, NY 14037  
Phone: (585) 297-1300

The main National Cemetery scheduling office phone number is 800-535-1117.

## TAXATION

### Personal Income Tax

- Personal Income Tax Rate Range: Eight brackets from 4.0% to 8.82% (top bracket on income greater than \$1,077,550)
- Standard deduction: Single Filing Status: \$8,000. Married Filing Jointly: \$16,050
- Personal Exemption Allowance: Dependent \$1,000
- Itemized Deductions Allowed? Yes, subject to limitations.
- Retirement Income
  1. Social Security: Exempt
  2. IRAs: Taxable at ordinary income tax rates\*
  3. 401Ks/Defined contribution employer retirement plans: Taxable at ordinary income tax rates\*
  4. Private pensions: Taxable at ordinary income tax rates\*
  5. Public Pensions: Most are exempt\*
- Military Pay
  1. Active Duty Pay: Taxable to the extent included in federal Adjusted Gross Income
    - o Military Retirement Pay: Exempt
    - o Military Disability Pay: Exempt
    - o VA Disability Dependency & Indemnity Compensation Benefits: Exempt
    - o SBP/SSBP/RCSBP/RSFPP: Exempt
  2. Income Tax Comments: \*For a taxpayer over 59 1/2, an exemption of \$20,000 of private pensions or out-of-state government is available. State allows county- and city-level income tax.

### Property Tax

- Local municipalities average 1.72% of the property's assessed value.
- Calculation of assessed value: 6% of fair market value. Cannot increase more than 20% in five years.
- Relief programs for:

1. Owner-occupied (STAR): Up to \$30,000 reduction of assessed value from school taxes if combined income less than \$500,000. Enhanced programs for seniors available.
2. 65 and over: Up to 50% reduction in assessed value if meet income and other requirements.
3. Veterans: Reductions in assessed value available based on designated time of war.
4. Disabled: Up to 50% reduction in assessed value based on income. • Personal Property Tax: Yes. Rates and exemptions vary.

### New York State Cold War Certificate:

This Certificate may be awarded to Veterans that served in the U.S. Armed Forces during the Cold War from September 2, 1945, through December 6, 1991. Certificates may be awarded posthumously to a designated survivor of a deceased Veteran, no more than one certificate may be awarded. Veterans must meet the following requirements to be eligible:

- Served in the U.S. Armed Forces during the Cold War from September 2, 1945, through December 6, 1991
- Current New York State resident or was a New York State resident at the time of qualifying service
- Received an Honorable Discharge or General Discharge under Honorable Conditions.

If you would like to learn more about the benefits and services you may be eligible for as a Veteran, servicemember, or as a family member of a Veteran or servicemember, please call the N.Y. State Division of Veterans' Affairs Help Line at 1.888.838.7697 (VETSNY), where you may also schedule an appointment with a State Division of Veteran Counselor. Visit the New York Division of Veterans Services website

<http://www.veterans.ny.gov> for contact information and benefits assistance.

## **Legislative Liaison Report**

By Tony Caruana

Brig. General U.S. Army (Ret.)

### **Advocacy in Action (AiA) 2022**

This year again, MOAA National did not do a Storming the Hill event in Washington, DC. To adapt to the on-going pandemic restrictions and tightened security measures on Capitol Hill, MOAA conducted a hybrid model for this year's event. MOAA council and chapter leaders from across the country held meetings with members of Congress and staffers in their home districts throughout April and early May. Teams conducted virtual meetings when in person meetings were not possible.

Our NY State Council of Chapters broke down our states 27 congressional districts and 2 senators into 8 teams. We were to contact our own local representatives and asked to volunteer to contact 2 others to make up for areas that do not have MOAA chapters. This year's event, as was last year's, was called **Advocacy in Action** or **AiA**.

Our local team was represented by our current president LTC Frank Sparacino, our immediate past president, COL Bob Pecoraro, and me as our legislative liaison.

We were assigned our two local representatives, Congressman Brian Higgins of District 26, Congressman Chris Jacobs, of District 27 and two New York City area Districts, 3 and 8 represented respectively by Congressmen Tom Suozzi and Hakeem Jeffries.



Bob Pecoraro, Frank Sparacino, Chris Fahey, Deputy Chief of Staff, & Tony Caruana

This year the 3 main issues for which MOAA seeks congressional approval are:

**The Major Richard Star Act (H.R. 1282 and S. 344).** The act would allow combat-injured veterans to receive both DoD retirement pay and VA disability pay without dollar-for-dollar offset. Passage would ensure that these combat-injured veterans received retirement pay they earned and would no longer be punished financially because of their injuries or illnesses.

**The Stop Copay Overpay Act (H.R. 4824).** This bill would reduce the health copays for mental health visits. The increasing copays exacerbate access challenges during a mental health crisis.

**The 4.6% Military Pay Raise.** This is part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) being worked on in both houses. The figure is in line with federal statute and is included in the president's budget, but it can be lowered by the President or the Congress. Even though the figure is tied to the Employment Cost Index (ECI), it has still significantly fallen behind inflation rates and the public sector. It could negatively affect recruiting and retention efforts if these and other benefits continue to be in decline. On 14 April, we met in Congressman Higgins' office in Buffalo. He was not available and several of his staffers had contacted COVID, fortunately nowhere near the office. We had a great meeting with Chris Fahey, his Deputy Chief of Staff. Several days later I was called to say the Congressman is onboard with all three issues and would co-sponsor them.

We met on 21 April in Congressman Jacobs' office in Williamsville. Although he was not available, we had a very positive meeting with his 2 key staffers, George McNerney, the District Director and Michael Hicks, his constituent services director.

On April 26 I had email contact with Congressman Jeffries' Legislative Council, Michelle Ortega. We emailed over several days, but the Congressman and staff were tied up in government appropriation meetings all week and unable to meet. She did readily agree to

read the three issue papers and review them in detail with the congressman.

Then 4 May, we had a very successful ZOOM meeting with Congressman Suozzi's Legislative Director and Tax Council, Conor Walsh and Owen Toomey who set up the very positive and informative meeting. Congressman Suozzi has co-sponsored all the bills.

MOAA National has stated on these efforts that after hundreds of meetings and thousands of letters the spring campaign concluded on a successful note. Despite not being able to convene on Capitol Hill, the campaign contacted 535 members of Congress thanks to more than 235 meetings and over 7,500 letters to Congress during that time.

Although MOAA members have contacted every Capitol Hill Office regarding these advocacy topics, they will continue to engage with them to build support for including them in the NDAA. Work on the NDAA and the FY 2023 Budget will pick up in late June, which means MOAA will continue to work with lawmakers from both sides of the aisle on key issues important to service members, their families, retirees, veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors.

### **Tailgate Party at VA Hospital**

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

Our twelfth annual Western New York Chapter "Tailgate Party" for the patients at the VA Hospital has been scheduled for Nov. 13. We will once again partner with the Home of the Brave organization to provide pizza, wings and gifts to the veterans. Because of the COVID restrictions we have been unable to be present but we are hopeful that there will be no restrictions this year and we will be able to meet these patients in Freedom Hall.

### **Online Dues Payment**

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

The collection of dues for 2022 has been well below the amount of dues collected in previous years. Our dues provide our chapter's only source of income and we need our members to keep current with their dues. You can determine if you are current with your dues by contacting our Membership Chair, Maj Jerry Privitera at 716-693-6121. Keeping your dues payments current will ensure the financial stability of our chapter.

Again, this year you will be able to pay your chapter dues online. All you need to do is go to [www.moaa.org](http://www.moaa.org) click on Chapters and Council and then 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 the fee is \$44. Those choosing to make charitable contributions may also do so online.

### **Saving the Sullivan**

A Fund Raiser for Saving the Sullivan was held at Seneca One Tower. Our Chapter donated a \$1,000 to this fundraiser.



Frank Sparacino, Douglas Jemal, Terry McGuire, Paul Marzello, Sr., Stan Lichwala



Father Mike Zuffoletto, and Terry McGuire

### **New York State Council of Chapters MOAA 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention Sunday, Sep 11-Thursday, Sep 15**

This years' convention will be held at  
Riveredge Resort Hotel  
617 Holland Street  
Alexandria Bay, NY 13607

Package pricing information and/or Ala Carte  
Registration is available on a **First Come First  
Served** basis. Package Registration and a 50%  
deposit is due by June 30, 2022. Final payment is  
due NLT August 5, 2022.

If you have any questions you may contact:  
President Skip Bebernitz  
[ebeberni@nycap.rr.com](mailto:ebeberni@nycap.rr.com)  
Phone: 518-237-4738

VP Norma Weissend  
[nweissend@me.com](mailto:nweissend@me.com)  
Phone: 585-727-6190

Additional information is also available on our WNY  
Chapter website: [ww.wny.moaa.org](http://ww.wny.moaa.org) in the "Whats  
New" link or the NY State Council Face Book page.

**WNY National Cemetery**  
By Stanley Lichwala  
CDR U.S. Navy (Retired)

During a recent visit to the cemetery, I was  
provided a copy of the following article which

explains the custom of leaving coins on  
headstones.

#### **Coins Left on Headstones**

While visiting some cemeteries you may notice that  
headstones marking certain graves have coins on  
them, left by previous visitors to the grave.

These coins have distinct meanings when left on  
the headstones of those who gave their life while  
serving in America's military, and these meanings  
vary depending on the denomination of coin.

A coin left on a headstone or at the grave site is  
meant as a message to the deceased soldier's  
family that someone else has visited the grave to  
pay respect.

- Leaving a penny at the grave means simply  
that you visited.
- Leaving a nickel indicates that you and the  
deceased trained at boot camp together.
- Leaving a dime means that you served  
together in some capacity.
- Leaving a quarter at the grave, you are telling  
the family that you were with soldier when  
they passed.

According to tradition, the money left at graves in  
national cemeteries and state veterans cemeteries  
is eventually collected, and the funds are put  
toward maintaining the cemetery.

In the U.S. this practice became common during  
the Vietnam war, due to the political divide in the  
country over the war, leaving a coin was seen as a  
more practical way to communicate that you had  
visited the grave than contacting the soldier's  
family, which could devolve into an uncomfortable  
argument over politics relating to the war.

Some Vietnam veterans would leave coins as a  
"down payment" to buy their fallen comrades a  
beer or play a hand of cards when they would finally  
be reunited.

The tradition of leaving coins on the headstones of  
military men and women can be traced to as far  
back as the Roman Empire.