

Legislative Liaison Report
To Board and Members
WNY Chapter
May 7, 2016

Our chapter recently entertained COL Cherie Zadlo (Ret) from MOAA headquarters in Washington at a speaker breakfast talking on issues relating to benefits and political action. On the latter, COL Zadlo emphasized two issues that MOAA was addressing with their annual “storming the hill” program; pending cuts to Tricare and the so-called widow’s tax elimination.

Readers may recall that we lobbied our federal legislators offices last summer on the widow’s tax inequity whereby spouses of service members killed on duty receive an indemnity only to have it offset when they receive the service member’s SBP insurance when eligible. We lobbied Congressman Higgins who shortly after returning to Congress last fall, answered our call for co-sponsorship of the widow’s tax bill. Senator Schumer was already on board. This left Congressman Chris Collins and Senator Gillibrand as the only ones not yet onboard with a co-sponsorship.

I called both of their local offices in early January as a follow-up and Gillibrand must have immediately responded with her co-sponsorship which I inadvertently missed and incorrectly criticized her at the breakfast. In Collins case, I even called his Washington office to plead for his co-sponsorship which is still not forthcoming, despite recent claims he is always a supporter of veterans and their issues.

The issues we bring to our federal officials each summer in their local offices are generally not the same as those during the spring “storming the hill” by MOAA state officials in Washington. My guess is that the widow’s tax will probably be an exception, as the current bills expire at the end of the current congress.

Whatever we are asked to present, it would be great to get support from the membership. An SOS I had inserted in the recent chapter newsletter and website asking for members to come forward and volunteer was greeted with conspicuous silence.

All of the current benefits we enjoy started with advocates promoting legislation by our representatives. Cuts occur when these same officials perceive indifference by the beneficiaries.

Respectfully Submitted,

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