



Heart of Texas Chapter
Military Officer Association of America
P.O. Box 23964 Waco, TX 76702-3964

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January 2018

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Happy New Year!

The New Year brings us renewed optimism and expectation of what lies ahead for our families, communities, and Nation, and provides us an opportunity to participate in a myriad of ways and activities. Reflecting on the many accomplishments we were able to recognize through our Chapter programs, I join with you to endeavor to recognize more examples of responsible and dedicated citizenry this upcoming year. We celebrated high school accomplishments, college achievement, military training success, lifesaving acts, patriotic service, and continued support for our veterans, and we participated in the development of future leaders for our Nation. I salute you for your involvement and desire to better our community. Your hard work pays lasting dividends and I encourage each of you to "Never Stop Serving"!

I am excited about several opportunities coming in the next several months. We have informative and interesting speakers on the agenda for the next few meetings, and as always, I encourage you to be faithful in attending our monthly dinners. We also have a special luncheon meeting scheduled for 3 April 2018 at the TSTC James Connally Aerospace Center. Through contact made last month, we found out Waco is one of 15 cities selected by the US Navy to host Navy Week. Our guest speaker will be the admiral overseeing Naval Aviator training and the flying training bases. Navy Week participants will include the U.S. Navy Blue Angels, Leap Frogs parachute team, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Teams, Navy Band Southeast,

USS Texas, Navy Medicine, Navy Oceanography/Meteorology Command, Navy History and Heritage Command and more. The culmination of Navy Week will be the Blue Angels aerial demonstration show at TSTC on 7/8 April. I look forward to the excitement and community interaction Navy Week promises, and I am certain you'll find opportunities to participate.

Our annual Freedom Is Not Free fundraising golf tournament is scheduled for 21 April 2018. Planning has already begun, and after a successful fundraising effort last year, we look forward to larger results this year. Let me encourage you to begin recruiting four person teams, consider sponsoring holes, and assisting with the solicitation of prizes for the participants. Through your efforts last year, we were able to award over \$12,000 in scholarships and grants to community heroes and organizations. Your planning team is already hard at work and you may contact me to see how you can help. Truly, our success is a result of your faithful participation and I am in awe of your commitment to "Never Stop Serving"!

As I close, I want to remind you to renew your membership in our Chapter, if you have not yet done so. Membership dues are only \$25 for the year, and you may send your check to Vince Tobola. Although our dues are small, they are important to the function of our Chapter administration. Our operations budget is lean by design so we might be good stewards of our Chapter. Thanks in advance for all you do and the unseen ways you participate to make our Chapter successful.

Respectfully,
Dennis DeGraff

Upcoming Events and Information Items

JANUARY 18 THURSDAY DINNER MEETING
AT RIDGEWOOD BANQUET ROOM
GUEST SPEAKER, JOE COKER, CIVIL WAR
IN SONG AND THEIR BASIS
****SOCIAL HOUR: 6:00 P.M. **, **CALL TO**
TABLES 6:30 P.M. *, *INTRO &
ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INSTALLATION
OF 2018 SLATE, 6:35 P.M. **, **DINNER 6:55
P.M., **DRAWING & GUEST SPEAKER**
7:55 P.M.

MENU: Garden Salad with crisp romaine hearts and iceberg lettuce, cherry tomatoes, English cucumber, red cabbage, parmesan cheese with ranch and Italian dressing, Chicken Fried Steak and Catfish, Chef's choice of starch, vegetable and two desserts, Fresh Rolls and Butter, Fresh Brewed Iced Tea or Hot Tea and Coffee. \$30 per person, payable at registration table, cash or check made to HOT Chapter MOAA. Please call Vince Tobola, 772-5251 or e-mail

vtobola@aol.com, NLT Tuesday 16 January, 6:00 p.m. for sign-ups. After this time, please contact as soon as possible if plans change and desire to attend and we will work to accommodate you at the dinner meeting.

NOTE: The winter dress code is effect with gentlemen in coats and tie and ladies' attire as they prefer.

2018 CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP DUES The Board is always looking for prospects to join the chapter. Please contact Vince Tobola, vtobola@aol.com or call 709-7489 cell if you need an application form or a chapter introduction letter or have questions. Chapter member dues are \$25 and due starting January 1st. These can be paid at the dinner meeting or mailed to the PO Box address on first page of newsletter. Thank you for your ongoing support.

HOT CHAPTER BOARD MEETING

The monthly Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, **January 23, 2018**, 5 p.m., at the Waco Cottonwood Creek Golf Course.

SPOUSES BRIDGE CLUB LUNCH

The next Bridge Club session will be held on 25 January 2018. The contact is Carole Hardeman, 744-1198 and also thanks to Carole as the club sponsor for the bridge activity.

THE CHAPTER ELECTION FOR 2018 HELD AT DECEMBER DINNER MEETING

The Board has approved the proposed 2018 slate of officers and directors for the annual election. The election was conducted at the 14 December 2018 dinner meeting and the following slate of officers, directors, and positions to be appointed were approved by acclamation. The installation ceremony will be conducted at the January 18, 2018 dinner meeting. The slate of officers and directors for 2018 follows:

President – Dennis DeGraff
1st Vice President – Gary Urban
2nd Vice President – Bobby Sammon
Treasurer – Vince Tobola
Secretary – Paul Thronburg – Appointed
Immediate Past President – Jim Milam
Chaplain – John Wells – Appointed
Auxiliary Liaison – Carol McHaney – Appointed
Legislative Liaison – Jon Ker - Appointed

DIRECTORS:

Jimmie Hanes	Jim Milam
Michael Slavens	Roland Duty
Billie Sawyer	Bob Lull
Dr. Harold Rafuse	Don Speed
Dr. Mike O'Bric	

HEADS-UP NOTE ON SPRING AIR SHOW

The Heart of Texas Airshow will be held at TSTC Airport on April 7 -8, 2018 with the main feature being an air performance by the NAVY Blue Angels.

JANUARY SPECIAL DAY RECOGNITION

Birthdays: Lynn Bratton, Rita Dampier, Mary Aileen Edwards, Golda Eldridge, Patsy Norman Farr, Kay Gompper, Hope Hacker, Carole Hardeman, Hugh Henson, Joe Herbelin, Sheila Lednicky, Linda Pitzer, Rosemary Sancton, Pam Schreiber, and Paul Thronburg.

Anniversaries: Joe and Penny Flood, Jimmie and Mary Hanes, Bill and Vicki Matta, and Mike and Karen O'Bric,

Congratulations & best wishes to all on your special day.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES AND ISSUES **RECENT HOUSE BILLS**

Congress recently passed three pieces of legislation supported — [S.1393](#), the Jobs for Our Heroes Act, [S.925](#), the Veterans E-Health and Telemedicine Support (VETS) Act of 2017, and [H.R.4323](#), the Supporting Veterans in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Careers Act. S.1393 amends existing law in order to allow VA physicians and nurse practitioners to provide medical certifications to veterans who currently operate or wish to operate commercial vehicles. Additionally, it applies commercial driver's license standards for former members of the armed forces to current members. Passed by both the House and Senate, this bill now goes to the president. S.925, passed by the Senate, amends Title 38 to improve the ability of licensed health care professionals employed by VA to treat veterans via telemedicine at any location in any state, regardless of where the professional and patient are located. H.R. 4323, passed by the House, directs the National Science Foundation (NSF) to promote veteran involvement in STEM education, computer science, and scientific research by increasing outreach to veterans and by expanding certain NSF scholarships, grants and fellowship opportunities to veterans and military families.

NOTABLE SUCCESSES FOR MILITARY

- A 2.4-percent active duty pay raise
- Unchanged Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) calculation
- More troops authorized
- Permanent extension of Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA)
- Defeated VA's proposed elimination of individual un-employability benefits for veterans after they reached Social Security retirement age; MOAA pushed back, and the VA decided to not pursue the cuts.
- Defeated a Congress-proposed bill to require service members to buy into the Post-9/11 GI Bill; MOAA spoke out in opposition, and Congress found the needed funds elsewhere

Note, additionally, both the Senate and the House Veterans' Affairs committees passed their respective pieces of legislation to reform the VA health care system and community care programs.

Unfortunately, passing tax reform and stop-gap funding caused the sidelining of these bills until January 2018.

MILITARY RELATED ITEMS FROM NEW TAX REDUCTION AND JOBS ACT

Exception to the repeal of the moving expense

deduction: While the deduction is generally suspended through 2025, the provision retains the deduction for moving expenses and exclusions for in-kind moving and storage expenses (and reimbursements or allowances for these expenses) for members of the armed forces (or their spouse or dependents) on active duty moving pursuant to a military order and incident to a PCS.

Striking the change to the exclusion of gain of sale of a principal residence: This provision would have lengthened the time requirements for principal residency in a home such that service members, who move more frequently than civilian counterparts, would not have any reasonable expectation of benefiting from tax-preferred gains on the sale of a home. The provision was dropped from the bill.

Striking the repeal of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC):The WOTC has been a critically important tool assisting in solving the problem of veteran unemployment. Department of Labor statistics show 35,904 veterans were certified for WOTC during the three-year period before the Veterans Opportunity to Work Act of 2011. By contrast, 278,611 veterans were certified during FYs 2013-15, an increase of nearly 700 percent. The provision repealing WOTC was dropped from the bill.

Adjustments to and extension of the medical expense deduction:

Contrary to the original proposal to completely eliminate the medical expense deduction, the deduction floor will be decreased from 10 percent of adjusted gross income to 7.5 percent for 2017 and 2018. After that, it will return to the 10-percent floor.

WWI MEMORIAL UPDATE

On Nov. 9, the U.S. WWI Centennial Commission hosted a ceremonial groundbreaking for the National WWI Memorial at Pershing Park, a block from the White House on Pennsylvania Avenue. The memorial could cost up to \$40 million and is expected to be completed by Nov. 11, 2018. Fundraising, including sales of a WWI commemorative coin produced by the U.S. Mint, is underway. Keynote speakers used shovels to turn dirt from the Meuse-Argonne battlefield in France, site of the largest military battle in U.S. history. More than a million Americans fought in the offensive.

PROPOSED SCHEDULE FOR 2018

18 January, Thursday Dinner Meeting, RCC, Guest speaker, Joe Walker, "Civil War in Song and Their Basis".

15 February, Thursday Dinner Meeting, RCC, Guest Speaker, Kenneth Stevenson, "The Shroud"

15 March, Thursday Dinner Meeting, RCC, David Smith on "Audie Murphy".

3 April, Tuesday Luncheon, TSTC James T. Connally Aerospace Center, Guest Speaker RADM James Bynum

21 April, Saturday, Annual Scholarship Fundraiser Golf Scramble, Cottonwood Creek GC 17 May, Thursday Dinner Meeting, RCC, Joyce Denke, "Donut Dolly"

Ridgewood Country Club is at 7301 Fish Pond Rd.

WACO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The HOT Chapter is a member of the Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce so chapter members can attend chamber events. The Chamber is located in downtown Waco at 101 S. 3rd Street (254 757-5600).

- **Wed - Thurs., Jan. 10-11, Mid-Tex Farm, Ranch and Garden Show, Extraco Events Center, Free Admission, Hosted by Chamber of Commerce.** Wed. hours are 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Thurs. hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Mid-Tex Show offers exhibits on products and services for Central Texas farmers and ranchers, as well as the "the weekend farmer" and gardeners. The garden show is new added feature for ways to spruce up yards, one-of-a-kind gifts, must-have plants, new garden tools, hand-crafted art and furniture and other items.
- **Wed., Jan. 17, Waco Chamber of Commerce, 10:30 – 11:30.** 1000 Friends of Waco would like to invite the community to participate in our monthly roundtable discussion focusing on Greater Downtown Waco. This monthly meeting series includes updates from various stakeholders working in the greater downtown area including: the city of Waco, the Downtown Merchants Association, the Public Improvement District and the Greater Waco Chamber, among others.

GUEST SPEAKER- JOE WALKER

Joe is currently a part-time volunteer docent at the Texas Civil War Museum. His specialty includes weapons and uniforms. He also performs period music. Joe is a researcher and enjoys helping those interested in civil war history.

Joe was born and raised in Atlanta Georgia, Joe joined the Navy shortly after high school and served in two fighter squadrons during the Vietnam War. After the Navy, he received his BA degree from Georgia State University and moved to Texas. He retired in 2005 as a vice-president of a national distribution company.

Joe is a member of the Company of the Military Historians, Sons of Confederate Veterans, Order of the Southern Cross, and the Sons of the American Revolution. Joe was a reenactor for over 35 years including participation in living history events at many national and state battlefield sites. He has contributed to several books and has served as an advisor for civil war artists. Joe received the Jefferson Davis Gold Medal for confederate flag research from the United Daughters of the Confederacy. He has been a collector of civil war memorabilia for many years. He has served on the advisory board of the Heritage Museum at Hill College. Joe and his wife have three grown children and have lived in Woodway since 1979.

TOP TEN GOALS OF NATIONAL MOAA

1. Ensure any TRICARE reform sustains access to top-quality care.
2. Prevent disproportionate TRICARE fee increases.
3. Sustain military pay comparability with the private sector.
4. Block erosion of compensation and non-pay and quality-of-life benefits.
5. Protect military retirement and COLA's.
6. Sustain wounded warrior programs and expand caregiver support.
7. End financial penalties to survivors and the disabled.
8. Ensure the Guard and Reserve system adequately supports the requirements for an operational reserve.
9. Ensure spouse and family support programs are aligned with current and emerging needs of an all-volunteer force.
10. Ensure timely access to VA health care and preserve earned veterans benefits.

FIVE KEY POLICY DECISIONS IN THE FY 2018 NDAA

A 2.4-percent active duty pay raise: This pay raise, equal to the Employment Cost Index (ECI), helps keep troops' pay competitive with private-sector wages. The administration originally requested a 2.1-percent raise - MOAA influenced Congress through a very effective and successful campaign to fully support the higher pay increase. This is the highest pay increase for troops since 2010. Even with this pay increase, a 2.6-percent pay gap remains because of capped pay raises in FYs 2014, 2015, and 2016.

TRICARE: Despite yearlong efforts to prevent TRICARE fee increases, the final NDAA included progressive year-over-year increases in pharmacy copayments. Beneficiaries will see steady increases in their cost shares across all medication tiers, which will save DOD more than \$2.1 billion by 2022 and fund improvements in military readiness and the Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA). Most of the increases will be through the retail pharmacy sector, but **beneficiaries still can obtain medications at military pharmacies for free.** The new fees will include mail-order generic prescriptions as well. By 2026, costs are projected to top off at \$14 for a 30-day supply of a generic medication at a retail pharmacy and a 90-day supply by mail. Further, a 30-day supply of a nongeneric medication at a retail pharmacy will be \$48, and a 90-day supply by mail will hit \$44.

Additionally, outside of the NDAA provision, the Defense Health Agency has introduced a new TRICARE fee structure that will be applied to the new TRICARE Select option. Increased fees also will apply to the existing TRICARE Prime option. Beneficiaries can view these changes at <https://tricare.mil/About/Changes/Costs>.

These changes to the TRICARE fees and program options will take effect Jan. 1, 2018.

Unchanged Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) calculation: The Senate tried for the second year in a row to tweak the calculation for BAH in a way that would have negatively impacted service members, particularly dual military families. BAH is a component of each individual service member's earned compensation, so the calculation will stay as it currently is in law.

More troops authorized: The FY 2018 NDAA authorizes an additional 20,000 troops - much needed by the services in the current and projected national security environment. The Army will increase by 7,500, the Navy by 4,000, the Marine Corps by 1,000, and the Air Force by approximately 4,100. Reserve forces across-the-board will grow by about 3,400.

Lessens the "widow's tax": Congress included a provision in the FY 2018 NDAA that provides a permanent extension to the SSIA. Without congressional action, 67,000 military survivors would lose \$2,100 in 2018 if the allowance expired in May, as it was set to, and over \$3,700 a year after that. By extending the SSIA and indexing future increases to COLA, Congress shows it is making a good-faith effort to address the widows' tax.

LOWER TRICARE ELECT COPAYMENTS

The Defense Health Agency (DHA) reduced copayments for the new TRICARE Select plan. DHA initially announced the new copay concept and costs, which will replace the percent-of-services-used model in place under TRICARE Standard and Extra, in the Interim Final Rule released in September. The new copay scale released today shows a reduction in the cost of Group A primary care visits from \$27 to \$21 for active-duty family members, and from \$35 to \$28 for retirees. Group A beneficiaries are those who were in uniform or retired prior to the Jan. 1, 2018, implementation date. Similar reductions will be seen in specialty care, urgent care, emergency room visits, and ambulance service. The new copay amounts were included in the "Notice of TRICARE Prime and TRICARE Select Plan Information for Calendar Year 2018." The document also includes details on new covered care, enrollment requirements, and a change in the urgent care referral requirements.

NOTE ON KILLEEN MOAA CHAPTER GUEST SPEAKER – MOAA PRESIDENT

Lt. Gen Dana Atkins, USAF, (ret), President of MOAA, will be the guest speaker at the Central Texas Chapter MOAA lunch on March 8th, 11:30 a.m. in Killeen. The location is the Shilo Inn, 3701 S W S Young Drive. RSVP to <http://centexmoaa.org/> or e-mail Reggie Bass rebass@hot.rr.com. For more info, contact Jeff Davison, jdavison@firsttexasbank.com, 254-939-3701.



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 Michael Slavens, LtCol, USAF (ret) (Marsha)

ELECTED OFFICIALS

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