



Heart of Texas Chapter (TX-07)  
Military Officer Association of America  
P.O. Box 23964 Waco, TX 76702-3964

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Chapter Web Site: hotmoaa.org

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

### *Greetings*

For many of us, the month of April and more specifically, the Easter Season means we may take some time to have peace with the past, joy in the present, and hope for the future. We hope your Easter was meaningful and safe.

Our citizens and our country are currently facing challenges and uncertainty. In fact, throughout history humans have dealt with unbelievable natural and manmade situations. I'd guess that our challenges today hardly compare to what our ancestors faced. Consequently, let's do what we can today to help others and deal with our personal challenges. Above all let us pray for each other and hope for better times in the near future.

Our current situation has led to cancellations and plans for our usual projects are on hold. We have cancelled our membership meeting in April and in May too. Also, we have voted to cancel our annual golf tournament fundraiser for scholarships due to closure of the golf course and time constraints. It is possible that the next tournament will be in 2021. Your Board of Directors will continue to evaluate our options for future activities.

I'd like to give a special thanks to HOT MOAA members who participated in the annual Freedom Ball that was held on March 7. As always, RoseMary and Harold Rafuse and John Wells had key roles in this sold-out event that benefits the local aviation industry and scholarship programs. Additionally, the POW/MIA Recognition Ceremony that involved Harold Rafuse, Jimmie Hanes, Beau Crosby, Bobby Sammon and Robert Lull was most fitting. Highly recommend that MOAA members continue to support this outstanding event next year.

As always, HOT of Texas MOAA Committees play a vital part to ensure our success. We currently have openings on the following Committees: **Objectives, Website, Legislation, Personal Affairs, Fund Raising/Benevolence Foundation, Audit, Budget, Newsletter, Public Relations, Scholarship and Spouse Liaison.** Please contact me to volunteer your time and expertise.

In the future, we hope to continue having interesting speakers lined up for membership meetings. Many thanks to our members for recommending guest speakers and I ask that you give us some recommendations for live entertainment. Please contact Bill Milnor with your recommendations.

As always, we welcome recommendations for new members to our Chapter. Please contact Bobby Sammon or any board member to recommend a new member. Your involvement continues to be greatly appreciated. We have three new members on board so far in 2020.

It is with sadness to learn that Ronda Englander recently passed away. Ronda was a Co-Founder and Executive Director of The Comfort Crew for Military Kids. Many of you will recall her inspiring presentation to our members on the work done by Comfort Crew in support of military families.

Please have a safe April and continue to help your neighbors and fellow Veterans with health issues or are in need of other assistance.

God Bless you, your family, current and former military personnel plus the greatest country on earth, "The United States of America".

Respectfully,

*Gary J. Urban*

# Upcoming Events and Information Items

## PROPOSED SCHEDULE FOR 2020

Ridgewood Country Club (RCC) at 7301 Fish Pond Rd.

- 16 April dinner meeting cancelled.
- 21 May dinner meeting cancelled.
- 5 Jun fundraiser golf tournament cancelled and to be rescheduled in 2021.
- Other monthly meetings currently remain on Ridgewood Country Club schedule for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday except for December with dinner meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday. Schedule again pending to health measures.

## HOT CHAPTER BOARD MEETING

- Board meetings have been postponed until further notice due to current local government health measures in force.

## APRIL SPECIAL DAY RECOGNITION

**Birthdays:** Charles Adamo, Judy Bauer, Gaye Baugh, Mort Bowman, Lori Brubaker, Voncyle Burns, Kathy Endres, Patsy Norman Farr, Jimmie Hanes, Gay Mays, Susan Perdue, Lyn Powers, and Dee Rogers.

**Anniversaries:** Ted and Lyn Lawson, Gene and Sheila Lednicki, Bill and Susan Perdue, and Don and Ann Speed.

## CONGRATUATIONS TO ALL

## WACO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The HOT Chapter is a member of the Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce so chapter members can attend chamber events and not pay non-member costs. Web site is wacochamber.com. However, events are postponed due to health situation.

## COVID-19 ECONOMIC IMPACT PAYMENTS AND SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE

Veterans are not alone in facing economic hardship during the COVID-19 outbreak, and thankfully there is relief coming. Veteran-run small businesses and VFW Posts will be eligible for some economic relief for employees of these businesses through the Small Business Administration. Additionally, veterans and survivors who do not file taxes because they rely on VA benefits are eligible for the economic stimulus checks due in a few weeks. However, there is uncertainty on whether such individuals will need to submit information to the IRS before being able to receive the stimulus checks.

## CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

The Membership Committee, Chaired by Bobby Sammon, intends to introduce to you our newest members each month in this space - hopefully with a short bio and photo of himself or herself and their spouse. The committee is pleased to report that we have three new members, all having joined HOT MOAA since the first of the year. They are: **Kenneth 'Ken' Mays** (USAF) and wife **Gay**; **Joshua 'Josh' Schnelle** (USA) and wife **Amy**; and **Russell Swann** (USAF) and wife **Renee**. You can help increase the number of new members by calling Bobby Sammon at 245-715-2450 with the names of any potential candidates.

## MEDICARE PART B PREMIUM INFO

Your Medicare Part B premium amount (and the Part D premium) is based on the Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) on your tax return from two years ago — the most recent federal tax return the IRS provides to Social Security. The Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amount (IRMAA) is an extra amount added to the base Medicare Part B premium for higher income levels.

Your MAGI is your total Adjusted Gross Income (2019 IRS Form 1040, line 8b) plus your tax-exempt interest income (line 2a). This is your income *before* your standard or itemized deductions.

Some non-paycheck actions that cause an increase in your MAGI include: IRA and retirement account withdrawals, Roth IRA conversions, Withdrawals from insurance annuity policies, Withdrawals (but not loans) from cash value of life insurance, The gain from the sale of a home or securities, Interest, dividends, and capital gains from held savings and investments, Business income, Alimony, Rental real estate, and. Farm income. Please note that some of the above can be managed.

## U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE RESERVES

The U.S. Public Health Service, whose Commissioned Corps officers are deployed across the country and abroad fighting COVID-19, has received the greenlight to build a reserve corps. The CARES Act, which passed into law March 27, includes the U.S. Public Health Service Modernization Act, S. 2629, providing for a ready reserve corps to fill the need for an additional commissioned corps for emergency response missions. Current staffing is at 6,100 and this act would add 2,500 reserve officers.

### **MEMORIAM – WAYNE PURSELLEY**

Wayne Purselley entered Heaven at 15:15 military time on Saturday, February 29, 2020. A praise service was held at 1:00 p.m., Friday, March 13, in the Highland Baptist Church Chapel.

He was born in Loving, Texas, on June 27, 1932, to Herman and Ida Purselley. Wayne attended Texas A&M University and was commissioned as a 2nd Lt. upon graduation. He served 22 years in the Air Force and retired as a Lt. Colonel. He flew 6,000 hours as a navigator and served as a missile launch officer in Bittburg, Germany.

He was a teacher and planetarium director at Richfield High School. He wrote and taught the "Christ Revealed in the Stars" lecture series for many years.

He was a member of Highland Baptist Church for 45 years, serving in numerous leadership and teaching roles. He was past president of the local MOAA chapter as well as the McLennan County Republican Club.

Wayne served his God, his family, his nation and his community with grace and honor.

He is survived by his wife, Barbara Sue Purselley; children, Tim Purselley and wife, Patti, Renee Francis and husband, Tom, Ken Lorenz and wife, Jill, Shannon Grissom and husband, Mike; numerous nieces and nephews; seven grandchildren; and 15 great-grandchildren.

### **BEWARE OF COVID-19 SCAMS**

The White House is warning the public to ignore rumors of a national quarantine due to the COVID-19 virus outbreak, which were circulated by erroneous text messages. "Text message rumors of a national #quarantine are FAKE," according to a March 15 tweet posted on the Twitter page of the National Security Council. "There is no national lockdown." Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Hoffman told defense reporters Monday that he "was not familiar" with any plans of using the U.S. military to enforce a national quarantine to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Social media has been flooded with virus-related rumors, many of which are being perpetrated by cybercriminals, according to U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command.

### **FACE MASKS AT MILITARY BASES**

Starting April 10, visitors to base exchanges and commissaries are required to wear face masks. Visitors must provide their own face masks. The base locations will not provide masks.

### **MEMORIAM – THOMAS ROE**

Thomas Roe passed away Thursday, March 26, 2020. The family has planned a private visitation by invitation only. Honorary pallbearers were to be CSM Russell McCray, Lt. Col. (Ret.) Mark Pearson, Cpt. Steven Brun, and Col. (Ret.) Marshall A. Hagen. Tom joined the HOT Chapter in 2018.

### **COVID-19 SOCIAL ISOLATION DOES NOT HAVE TO LEAD TO LONELINESS**

It is important for the community to reach out to veterans and their caregivers by using technology to ensure no one is alone during the pandemic. #BeThere can be as simple as making a phone call, text message, or for the more tech-savvy individuals, video chat, email, or a Netflix Party, as Comcast is giving two months of internet service to disabled veterans and low income individuals.

Discussion topics can include the status of their physical and mental well-being, review the checklist of COVID-19 symptoms, ask about the state of their supplies, or a recommendation for a good book, TV show or movie. Remember to follow-up in a day or two to keep that connection going. VFW Posts can stay connected virtually through online meeting programs or conference calls. A conversation can break up the mundane day and provide a sense of connection to the outside world.

### **VA SUSPENDS COMMITAL SERVICES**

As of March 23, 2020, the VA has suspended all committal services, including honors, until further notice at all National Cemeteries. Additionally, volunteer hours are discontinued. However, National Cemeteries are open, and families can still choose to have a burial and witness it from a distance (the 10 or fewer people rule applying) but without honors and without a committal service. Families can also have a committal service at a future time if they choose to go with immediate burial at a National Cemetery.

### **LEGISLATION INTRODUCED TO ADD NEW PRESUMPTIVE DISEASE FOR AGENT ORANGE EXPOSURE**

At end of March, Senator Tester (D-MT) introduced VFW-supported S. 3444, the *Fair Care for Vietnam Veterans Act of 2020*. This important legislation would expand the list of presumptive conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure to include Parkinsonism, bladder cancer, hypertension, and hyperthyroidism.

## **GUARD CALLED UP FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE**

Nearly 10,000 National Guardsmen called up across the United States, with more expected soon, and are performing a variety of missions in response to COVID-19 pandemic response efforts. Some are even federally funded, though they remain under the control of their respective state governors, but none of those Guardsmen are involved in law or quarantine enforcement, the chief of the National Guard Bureau said.

## **USE OF TRICARE HOME PHARMACY**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 virus guidance includes the recommendation to have a supply of necessary medications on hand. TRICARE offers beneficiaries the option to get a 90-day supply of their prescriptions at military pharmacies, via [TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery](#), or at retail network pharmacies. During this outbreak receiving prescriptions at home will help lessen the spread of COVID-19 for vulnerable populations.

## **CONCERN ON RELIANCE FOR CHINA DRUG SUPPLIES**

The coronavirus outbreak continues to dominate the news, with media outlets mixing coverage of global market impacts alongside the growing fears of how this virus will affect our physical, social, and financial lives.

Just below that layer of coverage are concerns about what the response to this virus is doing to the global inventory of medical supplies and pharmaceuticals, and whether U.S.-controlled resources are enough to meet national demand.

MOAA addressed China's dominance as the global leader in medication production back in January 2019, with award-winning medical author Rosemary Gibson. Her article for MOAA outlined the security threat posed by U.S. dependence on Chinese drugs and the decades-long decline in domestic production; these themes are expanded in her book, *China Rx: Exposing the Risks of America's Dependence on China for Medicine*. The issue being discussed over a year ago was the potential for China to weaponize medicines; in fact, China has a virtual monopoly over the production of many of the critical pharmaceuticals we use every day. It is unacceptable for our

Military and civilians to be vulnerable to China's ability to weaponize those pharmaceuticals simply by withholding their shipment or adulterating their ingredients.

The coronavirus highlights the need for our nation to have a more reliable, internal source for essential medications. To mitigate this military vulnerability, Gibson and others have been recommending DoD and the VA change their procurement practices and consider incentives to foster a re-emergence of domestic pharmaceutical manufacturing to ensure the security of our medications.

Fast forward to this year for a clear example of how vulnerable we are as a nation when it comes to relying on China for medications and medical supplies—even outside of the military context. To this point, Sen. Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.) wrote an article for the health-news website STAT suggesting incentives for the private sector to adopt new cost-effective technology to help U.S.-based companies manufacture medicines stateside.

Blackburn backed up her article by introducing legislation to bring pharmaceutical manufacturing back to the U.S. The time is right – the current conditions and uncertainties set the stage for action now. MOAA calls on all members to write their members of Congress in support of S. 3432, the Securing America's Medicine Cabinet (SAM-C) Act, and the companion House bill (when introduced).

## **SOME HEROES AMONG US**

**H** – Hospital workers, each and every one no matter what their day-to-day job is!

**E** – Emergency responders, each and every one who stays on the front lines to keep us safer.

**R** – Retailers, each and every one with anything to do with keeping the lights on and stocks shelved.

**O** – Officials with city, state and national government agencies working to stop the spread.

**E** – Educators, each and every one working to keep students engaged and learning interesting.

**S** – Social distancing, each and every one of us keeping all of at a safe distance while still connection.

All can help by following the local guidance such as staying home except of essential trips or essential businesses, washing hands, coughing into arm not into open, and other developing directions.



## **DOD REDUCTION OF MEDICAL BILLETS**

At end of March, MOAA called on the House and Senate Armed Services Committees to halt all military medical billet reductions and any proposed military treatment facility (MTF) downsizing given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. While we appreciate DOD's assurances that all changes to MTF capacity will be conditions-based, both beneficiaries *and* medical providers must be certain proposals to reduce the military's direct care system capacity are not moving forward at this time. Since the FY 2017 NDAA Section 703 report detailing MTF downsizing was released, MOAA has heard from both providers and beneficiaries with concerns about their local communities' ability to absorb care transitioned out of MTFs.

With medical capacity in extraordinary flux across the civilian health care system, it becomes increasingly prudent to officially halt all proposals to transition military families and retirees to civilian providers. Demands related to the uniformed medical mission have also increased due to COVID-19, since the private sector has little incentive to produce and maintain excess patient care capacity. Governors have called on the administration for military medical assistance, *USNS Mercy (T-AH 19)* and *USNS Comfort (T-AH 20)* will expand capacity for non-COVID-19 patients in coastal areas, and active duty medical units and reserve personnel are on alert or have been deployed to man field hospitals. The military medical response to the COVID-19 pandemic is destined to inform future operational and medical readiness requirements for the medical force.

Rep. Ross Spano (R-Fla.) has already sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Mark Esper urging him to stop the proposed closure and downsizing of clinics in his district given the strain the coronavirus could place on local medical services. Proposed changes to the MacDill Air Force Base Clinic and the Sabal Park Clinic in Spano's district would move approximately 30,000 military beneficiaries to civilian care in the Tampa Bay area.

MOAA position is that given the unprecedented challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic demand all plans to reduce MHS direct care system capacity cease now; they can be reconsidered at a later date once the significant service wide (and nationwide) lessons are processed and applied.

## **VA MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO MISSION ACT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

VA is not pausing the MISSION Act. The department is ensuring the best medical interests of veterans are met by adhering to the law in a manner that takes into account whether referrals for community care are clinically appropriate during the COVID-19 outbreak. VA is taking the following steps in order to ensure the safety of veterans as they access care:

- VA community care referrals for emergent or urgent clinical needs will continue as necessary.
- Veterans with care currently scheduled in the community should continue with this care as clinically appropriate and if available.
- Referral requests for non-emergent care with community providers will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis for immediate clinical need and with regard to the safety of the veteran when being seen in-person, regardless of wait time or drive time eligibility.
- VA is expanding the use of telehealth technologies and telephone sessions to address many of veterans' routine medical needs.

## **SENATE PASSES LEGISLATION TO EXPAND ACCESS TO TELE-HEARINGS**

At the end of March, the Senate passed H.R. 4771, the *VA Tele-Hearing Modernization Act*. This important legislation would permit appellants in disability compensation cases before the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) to appear remotely by picture and voice transmissions, also known as "tele-hearings," from locations other than VA facilities. Currently, veterans may appear via tele-hearing from one of roughly 65 locations in BVA cases. This legislation would undoubtedly improve access for veteran appellants in disability compensation cases and would permit a greater number of veterans to attend their own hearings. The bill passed the House in November and now heads to the president.

## **VA DEBT MANAGEMENT FINANCIAL RELIEF**

At end of March, the VA Debt Management Center (DMC) released a statement asking that any veteran or family member who has a VA debt and is impacted by the COVID-19 virus reach out to them to request temporary financial assistance. The VA DMC can be reached at 1.800.827.0648.



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