



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

Volume MMXX, Issue VI

June 2020

Chapter Web Site: hotmoaa.org

**DEPARTING PRESIDENT'S COLUMN –
GARY URBAN**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

As with all of us there comes a time when hard choices need to be made. Simply put, due to unforeseen circumstances I must resign as President of the Heart of Texas Military Officers Association of America.

After much soul searching and discussions with my family about very recent revelations concerning health and family issues, it is time to make some necessary changes. Consequently, I have to devote the bulk of my time taking care of family and personal obligations. In addition to MOAA, I have also stepped away from other civic and military related organizations. Like many of you, it is hard to believe just how many organizations we belong to and support.

You can all be proud of the things that you have accomplished in your varied careers in the military and life after wearing the uniform. There are so many great memories about this MOAA Chapter. As I mentioned to several of you this past week, I especially enjoy the membership meetings at Ridgewood CC and at the Baylor Stadium. We sure have had diverse and informative guest speakers, great entertainment and were able to provide some financial assistance to very impressive young folks in Central Texas. Most of all it was always nice to be associated with so many accomplished professionals like each of you.

The best news is that the Chapter is in good hands and you will continue to do meaningful things for the community. All this despite a few sit backs like what our country is experiencing at this time. In time, lives will get back on track.

In the meantime, remember the special days in June.
June 6: D-Day Allied Invasion of Europe (1944).
June 14: U.S. Army founded (1775). Fly the Flag.
June 20: 50th Wedding Anniversary of Antoinette and I, parents of two accomplished children, Karen and Matthew, both Texas A&M Grads. By the way, we named Matt, who is currently an Army officer, after a man you Army folks may recognize. Lt Col Matthew Urban, WW-II highly decorated Army Officer, AKA the "Ghost". Somewhere I have the letter from him thanking us for naming Matt after him.
June 21: Father's Day. Please fly the American Flag on this Day.
June 22: Pledge of Allegiance Recognized by Congress (1942).
June 24: Korean War Began (1950).

Sometime in the future I hope to again join you at our monthly meetings. Your Board of Directors is blessed with talent and great dedication to our Country and MOAA's missions. Help them by your involvement and support.

God Bless you all and accept my gratitude and respect.

Respectfully

Gary J. Urban

NOTICE ON OFFICER SUCCESSION

Per the Heart of Texas Chapter bylaws, the article on Vacancy in Office states: "If the President shall not be able to perform his/her duties, for any cause, the 1st Vice-President shall automatically fill the vacancy." The 1st Vice-President, William "Bill" Milnor will fill the position of President.

Upcoming Events and Information Items

JUNE SPECIAL DAY RECOGNITION

Birthdays: Charles “Doc” Anderson, Stan Brubaker, Dennis DeGraff, Markham Dossett, Willie DuBose, Mary Gee, Mary Hanes, Ted Lawson, Gerry Milnor, Sarah Preddy, Sally Robinson, Margaret Ross, Renee Swann, Susie Rowe, Billie Sawyer, Don Schreiber, and Kay Sullivan.

Anniversaries: Pike and Marcia Anderson, Charles and Patsy Norman Farr, Jim and Kay Gompper, Don and Sally McErlean, Bill and Gerry Milnor, and Bob and Margaret Ross.

CONGRATUATIONS TO ALL

HOT CHAPTER BOARD MEETING

Board meetings have been postponed until further notice due to current local health safety measures.

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 for updates.

MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2020

Monthly meetings are on hold and are pending ongoing health safety measures and review of the ongoing COVID-19 scenario. For now, we have the available schedule of dinners on 3rd Thursdays (August – November) and 2nd Thursday in December.

LOCAL AREA CHANGES ON BUSINESSES PER GOVERNOR ABBOTT ANNOUNCEMENT

On June 3rd, Governor Abbott announced his 3rd phase on reopening businesses. Restaurants already can open at 50% capacity and can now immediately increase their table size from six people to ten, and on June 12, they can ramp up capacities to 75%. On bars, they were previously capped at 25% capacity, can immediately go up to 50% as long as customers remain seated. No mingling allowed.

Since our dinner meetings do not fit the current rules, we remain on hold probably until August.

HOUSE AND SENATE PASS LEGISLATION TO HELP SMALL BUSINESSES STAY AFLOAT FROM CONGRESSMAN FLORES

The House overwhelmingly passed H.R. 7010, the Paycheck Protection Flexibility Act. This legislation makes improvements to the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) that was created in March to help small businesses affected by COVID-19. The PPP has loaned more than \$500 billion to over four million small businesses and is a lifeline that has kept millions of Americans employed. It became clear, though, that changes and adjustments would need to be made to the program, and this legislation does that.

H.R. 7010 extends the timeframe for businesses to use their PPP money to 24 weeks, extends the repayment period for new loans from two years to five years, and allows businesses to use funds in a more flexible manner by adjusting the 75/25 ratio for payroll/expenses to 60/40.

The PPP has saved millions of jobs and local businesses in every county and state around the country. Both Congress and the Trump Administration have adjusted the program to make it work better. Looking forward, Congressman Flores indicated he will continue to support necessary improvements based upon small business feedback, to help local businesses continue to reopen safely, protect jobs, and serve their communities.

As a further update, the Senate has also passed the bill so the legislation has been forwarded to the President, who is expected to sign the bill into action.

BILL SUPPORTING SPACE LAUNCHES

On Tuesday, Congressman Darren Soto (D-FL) and Congressman Bill Flores (R-TX) introduced H.R. 7021, the bipartisan Leveraging American Understanding of Next-generation Challenges Exploring Space (LAUNCHES) Act. This bill will eliminate unnecessary barriers that hamper the ability of private companies to launch rockets from U.S. soil into space.

This legislation will dramatically modernize outdated regulatory barriers to efficiently and safely support space flight as we build a future of space travel and exploration that is not reliant on the technologies or manpower of foreign nations.”

COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCE HOUSE BILL

The House on May 28 passed by voice vote an annually required measure to increase cost-of-living adjustments tied to veterans' benefits in parity with the COLA approved by the Social Security Administration. Senate passage and the president's signature would normally be mere formalities, but those could face delays this year as Congress deals with the COVID-19 pandemic that has disrupted regular schedules.

Veterans' benefits affected by the COLA increase include disability and dependent compensation; clothing allowances; and dependency and indemnity compensation to surviving spouses and children. Veterans retirement pay is also covered by the COLA increase.

The 2018 COLA increase for both veterans and Social Security recipients was 2.0%; it was 2.8% in 2019, according to SSA. Last year saw an increase of 1.6%. It is difficult to project what it might be for 2021 in an economy ravaged by the novel coronavirus.

Since 1975, Social Security COLA increases have been guaranteed by law, but veteran benefits COLAs are not, requiring annual bills to be passed by Congress. Last year, the COLA increase for veterans was approved with no opposition.

The Social Security Administration bases the annual COLA increase for its recipients on the Consumer Price Index, as determined each December by the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

On the active duty 2021 pay raise, the 2020 pay raise approved for the military was 3.1%. Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, said in a May 7 roundtable with defense reporters that he expects next year's military pay raise to be in the same range.

2021 DOD BUDGET CONCERNS

It is nearly impossible to have a discussion regarding policies, budgets, or appropriations without the pandemic 5-meter target eclipsing all other subjects. But we must find a way past that target to address significant challenges that lie beyond – specifically, funding our government to avoid another shutdown.

And the window of opportunity to act is narrowing. MOAA needs your help to engage your members of Congress to look over the near horizon

toward what could be the next crisis – funding the government while simultaneously responding to COVID-19.

There are only 38 days when both the House and Senate are in session between June 1 and the end of September, when funding runs out. There are five more House-only days and 16 Senate-only days. And the national party conventions (proposed July 13-16 for the Democrats, proposed Aug. 24-27 for the Republicans) will compete for time and attention beyond those scheduled sessions, not to mention a robust summer and fall campaign right up to the Nov. 3 elections.

While efforts are underway to draft a National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2021 and other bills – all of which are also competing with the pandemic's demand signal – there is little visibility to date on efforts to appropriate funds for the next fiscal year. Sen. Richard Shelby (R-Ala.), chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, reportedly has indicated he will energize the process following the Memorial Day weekend

As you may recall, funding our government over the past few years has been a challenge, lowlighted by the government shutdown from Dec. 22, 2018, to Jan. 25, 2019. Currently, all of our uniformed services are funded by these two pieces of legislation, both of which have funds ending Sept. 30:

- **The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020** (H.R. 1158, signed Dec. 20, 2019, into Public Law 116-93) funds DOD, the Commerce Department (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) and the Department of Homeland Security (Coast Guard).
- **The Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020** (H.R. 1865, signed Dec. 20, 2019, into Public Law 116-94) funds the Department of Health and Human Services (U.S. Public Health Service, military construction, and the VA
- It is important to start the narrative beyond the shadows of the current pandemic.

Members of MOAA can go to the legislative page for more information and proposed information for contact with our elected representatives on this issue.

LEGISLATION INTRODUCE TO EXPAND SURVIVOR'S BENEFITS

On May 23rd, Rep. TJ Cox (D-CA) introduced VFW-supported H.R. 6933, the *Caring for Survivors Act of 2020*. This important legislation would increase Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payments to an amount equal to 55 percent of the permanent and total disability monthly compensation rate, and would make survivors eligible for DIC after a veteran has consistently held a permanent and total disability rating for five years. This idea was put forth in the *Independent Budget Report*, co-authored by the VFW, Disabled American Veterans, and Paralyzed Veterans of America. The VFW thanks Rep. Cox and all cosponsors for their efforts to expand survivors' benefits.

VA INSPECTOR GENERAL HIGHLIGHTS

VA's Office of Inspector General (OIG) released its semiannual report to Congress on May 26, outlining the agency's activities from Oct. 1, 2019 through March 31, 2020.

A 112-page report was developed. Among the highlights:

- OIG reported nearly \$867 million in "monetary impact" over the six-month span, with more than half that total coming from "better use of funds" and the rest stemming from fines, cost savings, and other means. With a budget of just more than \$83 million, OIG claimed a 10-to-1 return on investment.
- The office made 142 arrests, referred 158 cases to the Department of Justice for prosecution, and referred 29 cases to state or local authorities.
- OIG fielded 14,747 hotline contacts over the six-month span, opening 895 cases and closing 686. It issued 531 corrective actions or administrative sanctions relating to the claims and reported a 36% "substantiation of allegations" rate. (You can contact the OIG at 800-488-8244 or at www.va.gov/oig.)

TRICARE TELEHEALTH CHANGES

TRICARE announced temporary policy changes May 19 that expand access to telehealth care. After hearing about telehealth barriers from our members, MOAA urged the Defense Health Agency (DHA) to increase telehealth options for beneficiaries.

The move comes as providers across the nation's health care system are concerned patients with chronic conditions or other medical issues are not seeking care. Some patients, particularly those with underlying conditions, may fear visits to provider offices will expose them to the coronavirus. Others don't want to contribute to an overburdened health system. Still others are concerned about costs.

Three important changes to telehealth coverage will allow more of these beneficiaries to access needed health care services. Some details on the changes, which went into effect May 12 and will remain in place through the end of the COVID-19 national emergency:

1. TRICARE will cover audio-only telehealth visits, consistent with Medicare's coverage expansion during COVID-19. This allows beneficiaries to consult providers who typically don't offer telehealth services and expands access for those beneficiaries who don't have video capability or broadband internet service.
2. TRICARE has eliminated out-of-pocket costs for covered telehealth services. This copay/cost sharing waiver applies to all covered in-network telehealth services, not just services related to COVID-19. Please consult your managed care support contractor if you have any questions about covered telehealth services. It will take some time to update claims processing, so you may have to pay a copay/cost share up front and submit for reimbursement.
3. TRICARE has expanded the number of providers able to offer telehealth services by allowing reimbursement for interstate care as long as the care is permitted by federal or state licensing laws.

Coverage changes will not be retroactive. For instance, if you had an audio-only telehealth visit before May 12, that claim will not be reimbursed by TRICARE.

Changes to regulation involving publication to the Federal Register usually take months to implement. DHA expedited the process due to the urgency of expanding access to care while beneficiaries try to limit their person-to-person contacts.

EARLY INFO ON DATES FOR TEXAS PRIMARY VOTING

Early voting for the Democratic and Republican primaries in Texas will start on Monday, June 29 and end on Friday, July 10. Election Day is Tuesday, July 14.

VA TRIAL TEST OF DRUG FOR TREATMENT OF MEN WITH COVID-19

Researchers at the Department of Veterans Affairs and University of California-Los Angeles are studying whether a chemotherapy drug for prostate cancer can help reduce the severity of COVID-19 in men.

The VA announced that it will test degarelix, also known by its brand name Firmagon, in nearly 200 veterans hospitalized with the novel coronavirus at VA medical centers in Los Angeles, New York City and the Puget Sound area of Washington.

The goal is to determine whether the medication, which suppresses the production of testosterone, plays a role in disrupting the development of a protein that serves as a gateway to the coronavirus in the lungs.

Studies show that, worldwide, more men die of COVID-19 than women. There are many theories as to why this is occurring, including that men often have higher rates of underlying health conditions or possess a weaker immune response than women.

The VA is exploring whether reducing the production of a protein that serves as a gateway to the coronavirus in the lungs could affect health outcomes. The protein's growth is thought to be fueled by testosterone. According to the VA, the drug will be given only to veterans "in need of immediate care.

NATIONAL GUARD COVID-19 PANDEMIC DEPLOYMENT EXTENDED

The Trump administration is extending the federal deployment of over 40,000 National Guard troops aiding COVID-19 pandemic relief efforts, reversing plans for an earlier cutoff following bipartisan backlash and pressure from top defense officials. The federal government will now keep funding Guard troops through mid-August. The administration was previously planning to terminate the deployment on June 24 — one day before thousands of Guard members would have qualified for key retirement and education benefits.

FOCUS ON NEW MEMBER – RUSSEL E. SWANN, MD

Russell joined the Army Early Commission program in 1971. Besides making the commitment, I was able to avail myself of clinical clerkships at William Beaumont in El Paso, Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii, and Walter Reed, all completed while in Medical School at Tulane in Louisiana. During this time, he became interested in Ophthalmology. After completing his surgery internship, Russell was accepted into the Flight Surgery program and then completed a tour in Hanau, WG, where he received the Commendation Medal. He was accepted into Ochsner's Ophthalmology Residency program and finished his formal training in 1981.

Russell and his wife, Renee, put up his shingle in Waco and grew the practice into one of the best practices in central Texas. His son, Beau, does the intraocular surgery now specializing in refractive cataract surgery including FLACS and LASIK

MILITARY HISTORY NOTE ON KOREAN WAR (THE WAR THAT NEVER ENDED)

Seventy years ago this month, the U.S. went to war when North Korea, abetted by the Soviet Union, invaded South Korea. The resulting three-year "police action" would cost millions of lives, and conclude with an armistice but no peace treaty. This was signed on July, 27, 1953.

Total U.S. casualties: 33,651 hostile deaths; 103,284 wounded-in-action; 7,140 prisoners of war.

HISTORY NOTE ON D-DAY LANDING

On June 6, 1944, more than 160,000 Allied troops landed along a 50-mile stretch of heavily-fortified French coastline, to fight Nazi Germany on the beaches of Normandy, France. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower called the operation a crusade in which, "we will accept nothing less than full victory." More than 5,000 Ships and 13,000 aircraft supported the D-Day invasion, and by day's end, the Allies gained a foot-hold in Continental Europe. The cost in lives on D-Day was high. More than 9,000 Allied Soldiers were killed or wounded, but their sacrifice allowed more than 100,000 Soldiers to begin the slow, hard slog across Europe, to defeat Adolf Hitler's crack troops.



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