



COLUMBIA RIVER CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

5-STAR EXCELLENCE
CHAPTER



MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION of AMERICA
P.O. BOX 1872 VANCOUVER, WA 98668

ESTABLISHED 1970

website: www.moaacolumbiariver.org

March 2016

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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Evelyn Brady
360-721-0865

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Jeremy Baenen
360-281-9998

**2nd Vice-President:
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360-326-3346

Secretary:
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360-607-6015

Treasurer:
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360-882-1275

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360-834-2448

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360-891-5605

Personal Affairs:
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360-608-7789

Public Affairs:
John Donnelly
360-904-8966

Scholarship:
Paul Crosby
360-666-8871

Chaplain:
Rev Max Metcalf
541-961-0869

On February 20, 2016, I had the great honor to be installed as President of the Columbia River Chapter of MOAA. **Major General Buck Marr** administered the oath of office to myself, **Jeremy Baenen** for 1st Vice President, and **Yvette Brown-Wahler** for 2nd Vice President.

We also installed the first officers for our newly formed Columbia River MOAA Foundation (CRMF). **Dave Casteel** was sworn in as President, **Jon Frederick** as Vice President, and **Frank Hill** as Treasurer. The Secretary position is still open.

Quite a bit of other chapter business was completed at our meeting. A motion to change the wording in our by-laws from "auxiliary" to "surviving spouse" was voted on and passed. My personal support system, Jim Brady, was honored for his help to our chapter with an honorary membership – Hooah!

The 2015 annual reports were given by the respective committee chairpersons including recruitment, personal affairs, programs, and scholarships. Dave gave the treasurer's report as Ron Pastor was unable to be there. We sent Ron good thoughts for a complete and speedy recovery.

The chapter membership voted to use \$800.00 of Support the Troops funds to purchase a rug for Fisher House. However, after the meeting, I was informed that



the rug had been purchased by another donor. We may donate that money for other things on their wish list including hair dryers, alarm clocks, and luggage stands. It will be discussed at the next board meeting on March 10. The ribbon cutting for Fisher

House is March 23 and 1:00 pm.

[Continued on page 2]

**17 March
Thursday
40 et 8 Chateau**
7607 NE 26th Ave
Vancouver, WA 98665
Gather 1130
RSVP 10 March
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE continued

As **Terry Babin** reminded us during his report on personal affairs, part of our mission as a chapter is advocacy. As MOAA members, we must stay informed and be proactive in our responses to our legislators when military pay, benefits, and retirement are being eroded. We must, at the very least, sign and return the preprinted letters included in our MOAA magazines. As new issues arise, we will keep the chapter members informed about how best to let our Congress members know our views.

We on the Executive Board are eagerly looking forward to another exciting year for our chapter. Please join us on March 12 at noon at Di Tazza for

new member orientation. Our next chapter meeting is a luncheon at 40 et 8 on March 17. Bob Knight, president of Clark College, is our scheduled speaker. We have other opportunities to maintain a high profile in our community. On April 28 at 6:00 pm at Skyview High School, students going into service right after high school will be recognized and honored. We also have a role at the Memorial Day events and Fort Vancouver. Please mark your calendars and join us if you can.

Remember – Never Stop Serving!

Evelyn Brady
President

***In Memorial* by Evelyn Brady**

I am saddened to report that **Beth Brown** passed away on February 19, 2016. She was an integral part of our chapter and will be greatly missed. She served on the Executive Board for many years in different roles, and always did a great job. She is well known in the veteran community, was a member of CMAC and 40 et 8.

A memorial service is planned at Willamette National Cemetery on March 16 at 11:00 am. Guests are asked to arrive at least 15 minutes early. Following that will be a Celebration of Life at Vancouver Funeral Chapel, 110 E 12th St, Vancouver, WA. The Dignity Memorial Network is coordinating these events and can be reached at 360 693-3633 for questions.

\$\$\$CASH\$\$\$ by Terry Babin

After writing and submitting the article below, I learned of the passing of **Elizabeth Brown**. There is a summary about Beth's service to our MOAA Chapter and our community elsewhere in this newsletter. Still, I want to personally acknowledge Beth's contributions over more than a decade to making Columbia River Chapter the Chapter of Excellence that it now has become. When the Chapter was on the verge of folding in 2003 and 2004, Beth was one of the first to step up to help us go through the Chapter Rescue Process recommended by MOAA National. As our new Secretary, she put in more hours than I can count to get us automated and records updated and reconciled. We had many a conversation over the phone as Beth privately expressed concerns and provided constructive suggestions for some "sensitive" issues to rebuild the

Chapter. Beth continued to be a reliable and "get things done" member of the Executive Board. She will be missed, but her legacy endures in the Columbia River Chapter.

* * * * *

I like having some cash on-hand. Sometimes buying on credit or otherwise deferring payment can be inconvenient, impractical, or even impossible. There are moments when I have been very fortunate to have a rainy day stash available at a critical time. How about you?

I recently learned about a situation which brought to mind the need for all of us to consider easy access to cash in our end of life planning. By cash I mean not only currency, but money in checking and savings accounts—or other assets with quick liquidity available without penalty.

\$\$\$CASH\$\$\$ continued

Government paid retirement, disability, and annuity payments' eligibility terminates on the date of death. There may be subsequent survivor payments, but there are several bureaucratic processes which must be completed first. You should plan for sufficient cash being available to your surviving spouse or other dependents until the cash flow is restored.

The first essential step when a retiree or Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuitant dies is to notify the applicable finance center. Our Chapter webpage has checklists and information about contacting the finance centers and other government agencies. Very little happens to generate payments to eligible survivors until this step is completed. While the wheels of the bureaucracy seem to turn slowly, the government can move with surprising and unsettling swiftness when there is an overpayment due to failure to report a death in an expeditious manner.

There are many potential sources of income, and cash flow, for your eligible survivors. My intent in this article is not to try list all possible benefits and sources. Rather, my intent is to remind you that the most common sources of income to your survivor(s)—for example SBP, Dependents Indemnity Compensation (DIC), “due and unpaid pay,” and Social Security (SS) rate changes—take time before the payments begin.

Based on my experience over the past 5 years, a realistic planning number for the period from when a retiree member dies until the recurring government payments commence is usually 60 to 90 days—sometimes more. If DIC from the VA is involved, this might increase the timelines for SBP and SS settlement.

Many of you already have made your financial plans with supporting insurance and savings to cover this period. If you have not, consider the following general guidelines published by many financial advisors:

1. Calculate what your household expenses average monthly. Be realistic, and do not underestimate the “little things that add up.” Have 3 to 6 months (6 months is best if you are in a position to do so) of savings based on your calculation. Make sure you savings accounts are accessible by your surviving spouse upon and after your death (same for a safe deposit box).
2. If you have a life insurance policy, make sure your beneficiaries have that information readily available. If you do not have savings or other assets which can be quickly and easily converted to cash, and you are young enough that term insurance premiums are affordable and reasonable for you, you might want to look at an insurance policy which can cover basic, near-term funeral, medical, and other expenses.
3. What I do not recommend, if you can avoid it, is to plan to just run up charges on credit cards with the expectation that you can pay the balance off quickly when the benefit payments start.

So, though the days of putting away cash in the empty coffee can are over, the days of having that rainy day fund are not.

As a final comment, Personal Affairs is no longer a “stand alone” function in the Chapter. During the past 3 years the Membership Services Committee has performed this service and several other functions within the Chapter. A copy of the Committee's 2015 Annual Report is included beginning on page 6 of this Chapter newsletter. Please take a moment to scan that report.

Terry Babin
Membership Committee Chairman



Newsletter Editor

Newsletter Editor: Rich Wersinger. You can contact him at 360-901-1915 or e-mail him at rich@rjwconsulting.org.

Our Chapter Secretary Rod Heidelberg, (360) 607-6015 roderickjheidelberg@yahoo.com coordinates calendar inputs and newsletter distribution.

Newsletter Distribution

We continue to distribute our newsletter by e-mail, so if you are receiving this via postal service and would prefer e-mail please notify our Chapter Secretary, Rod Heidelberg.

What happens to your credit card account when you die? by Dave Casteel

I received a call from the recent widow of a commander I had the privilege to be executive officer for. She said she used their credit card to charge her husband's funeral expenses. The next thing she knew she received a notice from a collection agency for the amount (\$14,900). When she called the credit card issuer she was told this was "policy."

I called the issuer and told them her problem. Of course, because I did not have her account information (nor power of attorney to ask about it), I could not learn what exactly happened. However, what I learned was very eye opening.

I learned there are two ways basic husband and wife accounts are set up with the card issuing company with a BIG difference between them.

First case. If the member who opens the account simply selects or checks the box "add spouse" then the spouse becomes an **"authorized user."** This means the spouse can charge on the account but has NO rights to inquire or receive account information. Upon death of the member, the account closes and the spouse has to reapply for a credit card in their name and charges on the card after death could/would become collection agency issues. The issuer told me the widow should have received several notices before the account ever went to a collection agency.

Second case. The spouse is the **"secondary account holder"** and therefore has "joint rights" to the account and when the member dies, the account stays open and the spouse can continue to use the credit card and receive account information.

Which are you? A simple call to your credit card issuer can make sure you are a "secondary" account holder. The card holder needs to call to change / authorize this registration. It is simple to do. Your spouse will be glad you did.

While I don't know if this applies to all credit card issuers, I assume it might. If you are not sure of your status, take 10 minutes to call for peace of mind and future seamless continuity. The card issuer in this case was USAA.

**ADVANTAGES
OF
MILITARY OFFICERS OF AMERICA ASSOCIATION (MOAA)**

WITH MOAA MEMBERSHIP YOU GET ALL OF THIS

WHAT YOU GET	PRICE
✓ Membership in national MOAA and local chapter <small>(First 3 years free with National. 1st year free in Chapter, thereafter \$15.00/yr)</small>	FREE
✓ 12 month associate membership for your spouse or partner	Included
✓ MOAA Magazine (290,000 circulation)	Included
✓ On line access to MOAA national and state legislative activity and news bulletins	Included
✓ Access to exclusive products: long term health insurance, medical products, and exclusive materials	Included
✓ Volunteer opportunities in your state or community chapter	Included
✓ Discounts on hotels, airline, cruises, car rental, home security and more	Included
✓ Representation in Washington, DC and all 50 states. Advocating for and protecting pension rights and benefits for active and retired military and spouse or partner.	Included™

TOTAL ONLY: FREE

Learn more: Contact the Columbia River Chapter today. Contact our **Membership Chair, Jeremy Baenen** at 360-281-9998 or Jeremy.Baenen@gmail.com or our **President, Evelyn Brady** at 360-721-0865 or evelynbrady@rocketmail.com

Membership Update by *Jeremy Baenen*

I want to thank **Evelyn Brady** for the excellent job she has done recruiting and transitioning new members into our chapter. As you are undoubtedly aware, adding members directly increases our chapter's ability to actively engage on military issues affecting our local community. As the newly elected 1st Vice President, I intend to continue her efforts and ask your assistance in doing the same. If you know someone who is expressing interest in our organization, please don't hesitate to pass their information to me so I can personally contact and invite them into our chapter.

Since our last newsletter, I would like to welcome and introduce **John MacDonald Sr.** and his wife **Virginia** who goes by **Ginnie**. John retired from the Coast Guard in 1980. Among many other things, he and **Ginnie** volunteer helping stroke patients in local hospitals, have taught English to foreign speakers for the last 18 years, and have mentored elementary school children in mathematics for the last 12 years.

I also would like to welcome and introduce **Andrew "Woody" Woodrow** and his wife **Angela** who goes by **Angie**. Woody retired from the USAF this last December and is currently the Officer in Charge of the JROTC program at Battle Ground High School. When he is not busy teaching classes he is still interested in Physiology, which was his specialty in the Air Force. Incidentally, I found out that Woody and I crossed paths at the 173FW when he was TDY presenting a class on G-tolerance in fighter aircraft and physical conditioning.

Thank you both for you and your family's service to our country and welcome to the chapter! I apologize in advance if I may have missed anyone. As I start this new trend of introducing our new members in the newsletter, I found that I have to start somewhere.

If you would like to reach me, you can e-mail me at Jeremy.Baenen@gmail.com or call my cell 360-281-9998.

Jeremy Baenen
Membership Recruitment Committee

Chapter ~ Membership Eligibility

Chapter membership is open to active duty, National Guard, Reserve, retired, and former commissioned officers and warrant officers of the following uniformed services: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Public Health Service, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Surviving spouses of deceased officers are also eligible to join.

Columbia River Chapter ~ Affiliate

Our chapter is an affiliate of the 390,000 member national MOAA which is the nation's largest and most influential association of military officers. MOAA and the chapter are nonprofit, politically nonpartisan organizations. Our chapter is an IRC 501(c)19 war veterans organization.



**COLUMBIA RIVER CHAPTER
MEMBER SERVICES COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2015**

Committee Overview:

1. Committee Mission: Develop and support activities which encourage active participation and long-term membership in the Chapter.
2. Committee Members:
 - Chairman—also serves as the Chapter’s Personal Affairs representative.
 - Service Representatives
 - Auxiliary Representative
 - Immediate Past President

Responsibility: Establish and maintain a program for welcoming new members and their spouses.

1. There were two New Member Orientations held:
 - Brunch at an Italian coffee and pastry shop during January.
 - Wine tasting social at a local vineyard in June.
2. Planning currently ongoing for the next orientation in March 2016.

Responsibility: Support a system to keep contact with members—designated as the “Keeping Connected” system.

1. Updated Call Lists, added 4 new callers to the subcommittee of volunteer phone callers, and distributed updated instructions for the system.
2. Made phone calls in September--our third series since activating the system in 2014.
3. First time we used e-mail follow-up when unable to make phone contact.
4. 14 action items were identified, and action taken, by Chapter officers.

Responsibility: Provide personal affairs services.

1. Provided casualty assistance for two families of deceased members.
2. Sent sympathy and “get well” cards to five members and spouses.
3. Provided personal affairs planning pamphlets and local checklists for survivors to two of our members.
4. Published, and distributed an updated Packet for Assisting Your Survivors which augments National publications with information, check-lists, and local contacts for assistance.
5. Published, and distributed an updated checklist, Recommended Steps When a Widow/Widower Dies, to help survivors and personal representative with personal affairs for our Surviving Spouse members.
6. Submitted updates to the information, and the aforementioned packets and checklists, for the Chapter’s website. Members can now download and print the information and checklists themselves.
7. Published two articles in Chapter’s newsletter during the year on personal affair’s planning and decedent affairs.

[Report Continued on page 7]

MEMBER SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT (continued)

Responsibility: Coordinate with Membership and Program Committees.

1. Membership Committee Coordination: Refined procedures for transitioning from the recruiting phase to beginning the process of introducing the new members to the MOAA and the Chapter, meeting its officers, and encouraging participation in Chapter activities and events.
2. Program Committee Coordination: Participated regularly in planning Chapter programs.

Additional Note:

1. The Committee was assigned three Action Items generated by the Chapter's Planning Conference held in July 2014.
2. First Action Item—to develop and maintain a system to identify and contact members who have been inactive, absent, or non-participating—was implemented in October.
3. Second Action Item—to continue and strengthen our outreach program for personal affairs—is ongoing with the latest phone call series collecting information about members' interests.
4. Third Action Item—to develop a "sponsor/mentor" program for new members—is in the development stage:
 - A process concept and proposed procedures have been written.
 - Service Representatives and Surviving Spouse Representative to review draft in early 2016.
 - Implementation expected in September 2016 for new members recruited during the summer of 2016.



Legislative Contacts

MOAA Legislative Action Center

<http://www.moaa.org/Legislative/>

MOAA Capitol toll free hotline at 1-866-272-6622

White House

Comments: 202-456-1111 Switchboard: 202-456-1414
FAX: 202-456-2461 E-mail: comments@whitehouse.gov

Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler

Washington's 3rd Congressional District

<http://herrerabeutler.house.gov/>

The U.S. Government's Portal: <http://www.usa.gov/>
U.S. Senate: <http://www.senate.gov/>
U.S. House of Representatives: <http://www.house.gov/>



Washington, DC Office: U.S. House of Representatives 1130 Longworth House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202) 225-3536 Fax: (202) 225-3478	Vancouver, WA Office: O.O. Howard House 750 Anderson Street, Suite B Vancouver, WA 98661 Phone: (360) 695-6292 Fax: (360) 695-6197
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Contact Congresswoman Herrera Beutler via email:
<https://herrerabeutler.house.gov/contact-me/email-me>

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell <http://cantwell.senate.gov/>

WASHINGTON, DC 511 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510 202-224-3441 202-228-0514 - FAX 202-224-8273 - TDD	SW WASHINGTON The Marshall House 1313 Officers Row Vancouver, WA 98661 360-696-7838 360-696-7844 - FAX	SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 915 Second Avenue Suite 3206 Seattle, WA 98174. 206-220-6400 206-220-6404 - FAX
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Contact Senator Cantwell via email: <http://cantwell.senate.gov/contact/>

U.S. Senator Patty Murray <http://murray.senate.gov/>

WASHINGTON, DC 173 Russell Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510 Phone: (202) 224-2621 Fax: (202) 224-0238	SW WASHINGTON The Marshall House 1323 Officer's Row Vancouver, Washington 98661 Phone: (360) 696-7797 Fax: (360) 696-7798	SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 2988 Jackson Federal Building 915 Second Avenue Seattle, WA 98174 Phone: (206) 553-5545 Toll Free: (866) 481-9186 Fax: (206) 553-0891
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Contact Senator Murray via email: <http://murray.senate.gov/email/index.cfm>

Vancouver Area Washington State Legislative Districts and Representatives

Legislator	District 49	District 17	District 18	District 14	District 20
Senator	Annette Cleveland 786-7696	Don Benton 786-7632	Ann Rivers 786-7634	Curtis King 786-7626	John Braun 786-7638
Representative, Position 1	Sharon Wylie 786-7924	Lynda Wilson 786-7994	Brandon Vick 786-7850	Norm Johnson (509) 454-7210	Ed Orcutt 786-7990
Representative, Position 2	Jim Moeller 786-7872	Paul Harris 786-7976	Liz Pike 786-7812	Gina McCabe 786-7856	Richard DeBolt 786-7896

Note: All phone numbers are 360 area code, except where otherwise noted. Toll free **1-800-562-6000**
More info at www.leg.wa.gov/legislature

Legislative Affairs: by Rod Williams**MOAA's Top 10 Legislative Goals for 2016**

1. Ensure any TRICARE reform sustains top-quality care. MOAA will strive to ensure the problems with TRICARE are addressed in a systemic manner, programs that are working well are sustained, and problem areas are addressed to improve care, coverage, and readiness.

2. Prevent disproportional TRICARE fee increases. Any fee-adjustment formula must recognize that military beneficiaries prepay very large premiums for their lifetime coverage through decades of service and sacrifice, and the country must have a higher obligation to them than what corporate employers demonstrate for their employees. To that end, a percentage increase in military beneficiaries' health care fees in any year should not exceed the percentage increase in their military compensation. MOAA adamantly will resist proposals to make military health care programs more like those offered by civilian employers and that add thousands of dollars a year to military beneficiaries' costs.

3. Sustain military pay comparability with the private sector. For 2016, the military pay raise was capped at 1.3 percent, 1 percentage point below the 2.3-percent private-sector pay growth, as measured by the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Employment Cost Index (ECI). This is the third consecutive year of capping military raises below the statutory ECI standard, and the president's budget envisioned additional caps for six consecutive years. Past history with military pay-raise caps shows they continue until they hurt retention and readiness. MOAA strongly objects to further planned pay caps. This unwise process generated retention crises in the 1970s and '90s. Sustaining pay comparability is essential to long-term retention and readiness.

4. Block erosion of compensation and commissary benefits. Protect against privatization, consolidation, reduction in services, or elimination efforts in commissary and exchange programs. Sustain funding support, and guard against diminution of this substantial benefit for active duty, reserve, and retired service members and their families and survivors.

5. Protect military retirement/COLAs. Proposals to cap annual COLAs below inflation or to redefine and depress the Consumer Price Index for the purpose of geometrically depressing successive annual adjustments would break long-standing statutory commitments to them. MOAA will continue to exert every effort to preserve the congressional intent, as expressed in the House Armed Services Committee Print of Title 37, U.S. Code, "to provide every military retired member the same purchasing power of the retired pay to which he was entitled at the time of retirement [and ensure it is] not, at any time in the future ... eroded by subsequent increases in consumer prices."

6. Sustain wounded-warrior programs and expand caregiver support. A recent RAND Corp. study of caregivers found more than 1 out of 6 of our nation's 5.5 million caregivers are caring for post-9/11 veterans. Nearly 40 percent of these caregivers are under the age of 30 and will remain in the role of caregiver for decades to come. We must do more to support these caregivers who are providing an estimated \$3 billion a year in services to our wounded, ill, and injured service members and veterans. Improvements to respite care, employment accommodations, and health care are a priority. Full-time caregivers of severely disabled veterans from conflicts prior to Sept. 11, 2001, must be included in Caregiver Act services, support, and respite care. More must be done to ensure medical and benefit systems are providing continuity of care and coverage for wounded warriors of all services and components, including reasonable assistance, training, mental health and family-marital counseling, and compensation for their dependent and nondependent caregivers.

[Continued on page 10]



MOAA Legislative Goals continued

DoD and the VA have made progress toward increasing the number of behavioral health care providers, but timely access to qualified, appropriate mental health intervention and treatment remains difficult in many DoD and VA health care facilities. The shortage of mental health care providers results in increased referrals to civilian providers, many of whom have little knowledge or understanding of military culture and the unique needs of military families. Specialized training and military cultural-awareness programs should be expanded for community providers to improve efficiency when working with service members and veterans and their families.

The health and well-being of the all-volunteer force has never been more critical. DoD and the VA must have viable and effective systems of care and support that address all warrior physical, mental, and emotional issues, including managing pain, substance use, and complex trauma conditions. Senior commanders must continue to strengthen efforts to establish a command climate that eliminates stigma associated with seeking mental health care. Establishing a culture that encourages individuals to seek help as an act of strength rather than as a sign of weakness is central to transforming the willingness of service members to seek treatment.

7. End disabled/survivor financial penalties.

MOAA supports a plan to phase out the disability offset to retired pay for all disabled retired service members, with initial priority for those who were prevented from serving 20 years solely because they became severely disabled in service. MOAA will work with Congress, DoD, and the administration to advance this proposal as a further important step toward ending the offset for all disabled retirees. In addition, MOAA will continue to fight for full repeal of the deduction of VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) from Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities for survivors of service members who died of service-connected causes. MOAA strongly believes when military service causes a service member's death, DIC should be paid in addition to SBP rather than being subtracted from it. To the

extent funding cannot be obtained for immediate, full repeal, MOAA will seek interim steps to extend and substantially upgrade compensation for these most deserving survivors by supporting legislation to extend the Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA) beyond the current statutory expiration date of Oct. 1, 2017. Congress enacted SSIA as an interim means of easing financial penalties for survivors affected by the deduction of DIC from SBP. Since October 2008, qualifying surviving spouses have received gradually increasing monthly payments. The FY 2017 monthly allowance will be \$310. It will be essential to include an extension provision in the FY 2017 defense bill to keep these survivors from experiencing a significant income loss.

8. Fix Guard/Reserve retirement. Guard and Reserve families cannot be indefinitely burdened with irreconcilable tradeoffs between civilian employment, personal retirement planning, and family obligations. Operational Reserve policy requires reservists to serve one of every five years on active duty, though many already have served multiple combat tours equal to active force deployment cycles. Regardless of reemployment protections, periodic long-term absences from the civilian workplace can only limit these service members' upward mobility and employability, as well as personal financial security. The new hybrid retirement plan (for service entrants on or after Jan. 1, 2018), composed of reduced retired pay and a matched 401(k)-style system, will require robust financial education of all service members, including guard members and reservists, to protect their retirement interests.

[Continued on page 11]



MOAA Legislative Goals continued

9. Improve spouse and family support. Preserve funding for family support; morale, welfare and recreation; exchange; commissary; and other critical support services and quality-of-life programs. Improve and enhance access to affordable, quality child care. MOAA recognizes the significance of continued crucial support of military family members bearing the brunt on the home front of over a decade at war. MOAA will work with Congress, DoD, and others in ensuring necessary family support and quality-of-life services across all components, installations, and communities. Military families with a special-needs member face additional stressors. More must be done to enhance support services and health care for these families.

10. Assure timely access to the VA, and eliminate the VA claims backlog. The VA must aggressively implement reforms to assure timely access to the quality care most enrolled veterans experience. Changes in leadership in some facilities, recruitment of separating DoD medical professionals, upgrades of clinical space, and an overhaul of the out-of-date scheduling system are needed. MOAA supports a comprehensive, strategic plan for VA health care delivery in the 21st century. The VA must double down on efforts to improve mental health care delivery and address the number of veteran suicides. The VA and DoD need to strengthen their collaboration in delivering long-term medical and benefits counseling and caregiver support for catastrophically disabled veterans. To sustain VA services to the nation's veterans, two-year funding across all VA accounts must be enacted. MOAA will continue to be watchful against any initiative that would force dual-eligible beneficiaries, solely as a cost-savings measure, to choose between the DoD and VA health systems.

If you have questions or concerns about MOAA's legislative goals please call the Member Service Center at 1-800-234-6622 or email legis@moaa.org. See more at: [MOAA's Top 10 Legislative Goals \(http://tinyurl.com/grdn8uo\)](http://tinyurl.com/grdn8uo)

Rod Williams
Chapter Legislative Chair



Washington State Legislative Affairs

Update: by *Dave Casteel*

Representatives to the Veterans Legislative Coalition (VLC) meet weekly on Friday in Olympia from the start of the Legislative session until the end (which is expected to be March 11 this year). We actively monitor, discuss, and follow bills that affect veterans and their families. Each week that a bill receives a hearing, a member of the VLC will attend the hearing and sign in as "present" in support of, or against, the bill. At some hearings, if testimony is allowed, the VLC representative will make a brief statement in support of, or against, the bill.

Two recent bills the VLC urged the legislature to move forward (to keep them from dying in committee) are HB 2534 and HB 2496/SB 6300. HB 2534 "creates a community care and supportive services program for veterans" especially in rural and remote areas. HB 2496/SB 6300 sets up a "pro bono legal services program for military service members, veterans and their families." It would be administered by the State Attorney General's office.

As the Washington State Council of Chapters VP for State legislative affairs, I represent MOAA at the VLC meetings. I am a "freshman" on the VLC, so I am learning a great deal. One challenge for me is how to get bill information to MOAA members in a timely manner to act/comment. Many of the opportunities for action are only announced days before action is required.

As always, I am open to your opinions and thoughts and will work to get your voice heard in Olympia. You can always reach me, **Dave Casteel**, by phone at 360-834-2448 or by e-mail at shilohcamas@comcast.net.

Note: My previous MOAA e-mail address is no longer in service.



2016 CHAPTER CALENDAR

17 March
Thursday **Luncheon Meeting at 40 et 8 Chateau**, Gather at 1130 Lunch at Noon.
Program: Bob Knight, President Clark College.
Topic: Community Colleges Today; Looking to the Future

21 April
Thursday **Luncheon Meeting at TBD.**
Program: David Cacchione
Topic: Deep Sea Submersibles

19 May
Thursday **Dinner at Club Green Meadows**
Program: Joseph Cavalli
Topic: Overview of the Viet Nam War

Chapter Luncheon Meeting

17 March 2016

at **40 et 8 Chateau**
7607 NE 26th Ave
Vancouver, WA 98665

Arrive 1130 to 1200
Lunch served at Noon
Cost: \$15 per person at the door

RSVP: NLT 10 March
Call or e-mail Ron Pastor
882-1275 pastor2718@comcast.net

Program

Bob Knight, President Clark College
Topic: Community Colleges Today; Looking to the Future

A raffle will be held.

