



Eyes to the Skies

President's Input

Here we are, halfway through the fiscal year (FY), and do we have a budget? At the time of this writing, we finally do. However, President Trump—has told Congress he won't sign another bill like this again. Hopefully, Congress can get their collective act together for the 2019 budget. Not a great position to be in and not a great way to run a country. That's my opinion, I'm sure you have one too.

April is the month of the Military Child. If you have or know an interesting mil-kid, please submit the story to editor@moaa.org or on Facebook at www.moaa.org/standoutmilkids. Get those faces some exposure!

Meanwhile back at the Ranch, I visited the Company Grade Officer (CGO) Leadership Conference at the end of February and spent some time listening to the presentations and questions from the young officers. If all CGOs think like these folks—and about 70 attended the two-day affair—then I think our military is in good hands for the future. Well, that's good for the nation and the military. However, another side of that is how many of those officers think like WE who are part of MOAA do? That's probably a bigger and possibly more pressing issue. MOAA continues to “fight the good fight” on Capitol Hill to inform Congress about the issues that are close to the heart of many of serve. While on the one hand, the actively serving military is treated pretty well, and I've spoken to many who have given me that opinion, there are subtle attempts being made to decrease the deficit on the backs of those who have served and are serving now. In April, MOAA will once again “Storm the Hill” and I'm sure that our elected officials and their staffs will get an earful from the MOAA contingent. But, there's more that we can also do to help the cause....send e-mails on the issues that are highlighted in

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Welcome

The chapter would like to welcome the following new members:

- Colonel Phil Yavorsky (USAF, Retired)
- Christine Yavorsky (CAPT, USA)
- Lt Col Peter Mahoney (USMC, Retired)
- Tracy Mahoney (Spouse)

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Treasurer's Report, March 2018

Checking Account Balance	\$1,539
Savings/Scholarship Balance ..	\$7,246
CDs	\$14,989
Total	\$23,774

This Month's Program

Thursday, 5 April 2018

Taste of the Area

Regency Conference Center

400 Regency Park, O'Fallon, IL 62269

Cost: \$25.00 (pay at the door)

5:00 to 8:00 pm

Join us as well as other organizations from the local area as we sample offerings/specialties of more than twenty restaurants and food vendors from local area

Attire: Business Casual

Benefits the St Clair County Extension Service. Working in cooperation with the University of Illinois, the Extension Service provides educational programs for St Clair County youth and adults in the primary areas of 4-H youth development; home horticulture, agriculture and natural resources; community and economic development; and, nutrition and food safety.

Menu

There will be a variety of menu choices.

Upcoming Programs

Date	Venue	Topic
16 May 2018	Ann Morey's Home	Business Meeting
Jun 2018	Busch Stadium (date tentative)	Watching the Cards!

Please Note: I'm fully transitioning to my duties in Chapter Communications as of January 2018. I'll be planning the May Business Meeting and our June Event. There will be a break in the meetings until we find someone to manage our Programs. If you're interested in helping the Chapter, please contact me at rick.sunner@gmail.com.

President's Input (from page 1)

the Take Action section of the MOAA website. In the last Military Officer magazine, there were letters that only require a signature and a stamp by the military member and spouse imploring our elected representatives to do their part in holding the line or quit stalling progress. Send those in if you haven't already! It does—really really does—make a difference and gets Congress to sit up and listen. You've served or are serving now in some capacity. Don't let this opportunity slip past without making your voice heard along with the many others in MOAA. The military member has never failed our nation, let's not fail them (us) now. God bless you and thanks for your service!

If “pro” is the opposite of “con,” what is the opposite of “progress”? Rhetorical question. We finally have an approved and signed budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 in spite of half the year being almost gone. The good part of this budget is the gain for the military. But the President has given notice to Congress that he will not sign another “last minute, 2,000 page budget again. Hopefully our elected representatives in Congress will get their collective act together for the FY2019 budget activity and there will be less drama and more focus on what is good for the nation as a whole without the party-line in-fighting.

Elections for state, county, and city offices have already taken place. Some Congressional representatives are on the bubble and the Republican party could lose control of the House, which may make a budget for 2018 even less likely. So, if you didn’t get out and vote, you’re too late and will have to live with the consequences of not participating.

Meanwhile, there is other activity on Capitol Hill that might just pique your interest. First, MOAA will “Storm the Hill” on April 16-19, providing information to our elected officials (Representatives and Senators) on the top issues for this year. If you recall from an earlier newsletter, the list of advocacy items was presented (10 issues) and the focus of this year’s Storming will be from that list. Go to www.moaa.org/2018Goals/ to see more details.

Did you know that MOAA was instrumental in getting reversed an error in calculation of the new Tricare fees for actively serving and retired service members? The Defense Health Agency (DHA) used an incorrect methodology in some fee calculations in Tricare Select. Active duty primary care and speciality care visits were reduced from \$27 to \$21 and \$34 to \$31 respectively. For retirees, the reduction for those visits was \$35 to \$28 and \$45 to \$41. See more cost changes at www.tricare.mil/costs/healthplancosts.

On the issue of Survivor Benefit Plan-Dependency Indemnity Compensation (SBP-DIC), “... a separate law, validated by the courts, terminates the offset for SBP-DIC-eligibles who remarry at age 57 or later. So current law punishes survivors who remarry before age 55 by ending their SBP and DIC eligibility - and punishes survivors age 57 or older who don't remarry by imposing the SBP-DIC offset.

No other federal surviving spouse is required to forfeit his or her federal annuity because military service caused their sponsor's death. Further, the offset does not apply to surviving military children - only to the spouse. And no other federal survivor is required to remarry to avoid a reduction in his or her survivor annuity eligibility.”

The FY2018 National Defense Authorization Act permanently extended Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance payments at \$310 per month, which will be adjusted annually according to COLA. Learn more at <http://takeaction.moaa.org/survivors>.

A Senate bill (S 66) is currently gaining momentum to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit certain retired members of the uniformed services who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or Combat-Related Special Compensation, and for other purposes.

COLA Watch: The January 2018 CPI is 241.919, 0.9 percent above the FY 2018 COLA baseline. The CPI for February, 2018 is scheduled to be released on March 13th, 2018. An update will be provided at the March meeting, and in the May newsletter.

Congressman Mike Bost (IL-12) is the Chairman of the House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs. His responsibilities as chairman include management of our national

Federal Legislative News



cemeteries, reforming the claim appeals process, and reviewing the quality and training methods of the Veterans Benefits Administration. On March 8, Congressman Bost and a bipartisan group of House Committee on Veterans' Affairs members introduced legislation to prevent misuse of VA's purchase cards.

“This vitally important legislation not only punishes bad actors at the VA who misuse funds, but also will prevent future misuse of taxpayer dollars,” said Bost. “We can’t always predict bad behavior, but we can put in place systems that lessen taxpayer exposure to it.”

The Veterans Affairs Purchase Card Misuse Mitigation Act would prevent misuse of purchase card spending by requiring the VA Secretary to revoke the purchase card from any employee who is found to have knowingly misused their card or approval authority. This safeguard would prevent further misuse of government funds while existing penalties, ranging from suspension to demotion to removal, are considered for the wrongdoer.

On December 3, 2018, Illinois will celebrate 200 years of statehood. See this link for more information: <https://illinois200.com>.

The link for Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs is <https://www.illinois.gov/veterans/Pages/default.aspx>.

The mission of the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs (IDVA) is to empower veterans and their families to thrive. We do this by assisting them in navigating the system of federal state and local resources and benefits; by providing long-term health care for eligible veterans in our Veterans' Homes; and by partnering with other agencies and non-profits to help veterans address education, mental health, housing, employment, and other challenges.

The IDVA team consists of more than 1,200 staff – many of whom are veterans – who are committed to serving the Illinois veteran community.

- Veteran Service Officers
- Veterans' Home Staff
- Central Office
- Special programs, including the Illinois Warrior Assistance Program & Veterans Cash
- State-Approving Agency (SAA)
- Grants/Records

IDVA is NOT a part of the US Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA – or “the VA,” as it’s often termed). VA medical centers (Jesse Brown, Hines, etc.) and USDVA benefits (disability compensation, etc.) are administered and funded by the federal government. IDVA is an Illinois executive agency, funded and administered under the auspices of the Governor, and operates independently of USDVA.

While the USDVA provides the bulk of healthcare and financial benefits for the nation’s veterans, IDVA provides critical augmenting programs and services for Illinois veterans. Additionally, IDVA’s Veteran Services Officers are experts in both federal and state benefits and resources; they stand by to assist veterans in navigating and applying for USDVA and IDVA programs and benefits.

Chapter Officers	
President	Col (ret) Bob Norman
1st Vice President	Open
2nd Vice President	Maj (ret) Rick Sunner
Secretary	Lt Col (ret) Ann Morey
Treasurer	Col (ret) Dick Glogowski
Communications	Maj (ret) Rick Sunner
ROTC Liaison	CDR (ret) Tim Grout
Spouses' Liaison	Narni Cahill

OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE IN THE LOCAL AREA

2018 USO/Fisher House Donations Drive

Thank you all for your generous donations to our annual USO and Fisher House drive. We were able to deliver checks totaling about \$4,955 split almost evenly between the two sites. We also delivered a pick up truck and a trailer load of goodies collected by the Dupo High School Air Force JROTC Cadets to the USO and a van load of goodies collected by the Dupo and Cahokia High School Army JROTC Cadets to Fisher House. Then we delivered second pickup loads to USO and Fisher House, all collected by the OTHS AFJROTC. Once again we had great support from St Michael's Episcopal Church, as they donated about half of the total check amount. Nick and Sonja Wartonick worked very hard on the project and I hope they are enjoying the well-deserved vacation. Bob Koss and Narni Cahill helped me pick up the HUGE load from Dupo and I hope Narni's foot has recovered from a run away bottle of water... Thanks again!

May God bless you and keep you in the palm of his hand. Ann Morey

Upcoming ROTC/JROTC Ceremonies

Thanks to those of you who've already volunteered, but we need additional presenters for these upcoming ROTC/JROTC graduation ceremonies:

- Date/Time TBD, Dupo/Columbia High School JROTC Awards Ceremony
- 26 April, 3:30pm, SIUE Army ROTC Awards Ceremony (Presenter: Ed True)
- 28 April, 5:00pm, Alton High School AFJROTC Award Ceremony
- 3 May, Time TBD, SIUE Army ROTC Commissioning Rehearsal
- 5 May, 5:30pm, OTHS Milburn Campus, AFJROTC Awards Ceremony (Presenter: Ed True)

If you're interested in presenting, please contact Tim Grout (CDR, USN, ret) at grouttj@gmail.com.

State and Local Veteran News

Visit <https://www.illinois.gov/veterans/pages/default.aspx> for details about these and other IL programs.

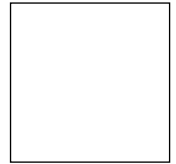
- State Benefits Information, <https://www.illinois.gov/veterans/benefits/Pages/default.aspx>
- Illinois Joining Forces, <https://www.illinois.gov/veterans/programs/Pages/IllinoisJoiningForces.aspx>
 - Statewide network of veteran/military serving organizations ... collaborating in person/online to help service members/veterans/families identify/marshal resources/services available to them throughout the state
- Illinois Veterans Homes, <https://www.illinois.gov/veterans/homes/Pages/Default.aspx>
 - Four Illinois Veterans' Homes, run by Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs (IDVA), fully staffed, provides quality long-term skilled care and services to resident members
 - Volunteers from veteran service organizations/local community provide additional services/activities

Editorial Policy

The Southwest Illinois Chapter Newsletter is published monthly by the Southwest Illinois Chapter which is an affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). MOAA and its affiliated chapters and councils are nonpartisan.



Southwest Illinois Chapter
Military Officers Association of America
P.O. Box 735
O'Fallon, IL 62269



Meeting Announcement

Our April meeting will be at the Taste of the Area on **Thursday, 5 April 2018**, at the Regency Conference Center in O'Fallon IL. (See Program News for details.) Pay \$25.00 at the door

RESERVATION FORM FOR SWI MOAA CHAPTER MEETING

Reservation Deadline (Mail received by, email, or phone call): 2 April 2018

E-mail to swimoaa@charter.net, or complete this form and mail it to: Southwest Illinois MOAA, P.O. Box 735, O'Fallon, IL 62269 **to be received by the deadline**. Alternatively, phone Dick Glogowski at 618-624-6115.

Number of Reservations Desired:

Member's Name: _____

Spouse/Guest: _____