

**February 2020**

## President's Input

Happy Valentines Day! Don't forget your sweetheart this year.

By this time, you've probably heard that the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) was signed in December just before the Continuing Resolution (CR) expired. You can read more about the content of the legislation in the Legislative Update. There were also some significant legislative changes in Illinois that you can read in the Legislative Update.

February 1 is the deadline for the packages to compete for the Col Marvin Harris Communications Award. Our newsletter has received the 5-Star Award for the last couple of years and this year should be no different. Thanks to our editor, Maj (ret) Rick Sunner, who has done a superb job of keeping our newsletter at a very high quality and kept the Chapter well-informed.

Sad news for the Illinois Chapters. The

*Continued on page 3*

## 2020 USO /Fisher House Donation Drive

By

**The Southwest Chapter of MOAA**

It would be utopian to suddenly have an end to all wars and threats of war or armed conflict. As the ages have taught us, that is not likely to happen. We, the people of the United States of America, will either be eternally involved in war or significantly prepared to wage war. This means uniformed men and women will continue to serve and sacrifice for their/our nation.

Currently, less than one percent of our citizens are voluntarily sworn to defend us and even die for us in armed conflict. In just the past seventy five years since World War II, tens of thousands have died and even more tens of thousands have sustained life-altering mental and physical wounds. In broader fact, throughout our nation's history millions have served and too many of them have made the ultimate sacrifice. Because of them our nation remains free, and our destiny is in our control.

*Continued on page 6*

### Treasurer's Report for December 2019

Checking Account Balance ...	\$685
Savings Account Balance .....	\$8,946
Certificates of Deposit .....	\$15,309
Total .....	\$24,940



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Visit our website: [www.moaa-swil.org](http://www.moaa-swil.org)

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## This Month's Program



For our February meeting, we're back at Cardinal Creek Golf Course. We'll meet at 6 pm for our social hour, and then enjoy a steak dinner buffet.

After dinner, Col (ret) Richard and Starla Smith will tell us about their trip to China.

**8 February 2020**

**Dinner/Meeting**

Cardinal Creek Golf Course Clubhouse, Scott AFB IL

**Steak Dinner Buffet**

Cash Bar

Social Hour: 6-7 pm, Dinner: 7 pm

**Cost:** \$26.00/person

**Attire: Business Casual**

### Steak Dinner Buffet

USGA Prime Aged Steak

Baked Pasta

Baked or Mashed Potatoes and Gravy

Chef's Vegetable Medley

Caesar or Tossed Salad

Bread

Tea & Coffee

Dessert

## Upcoming Programs

Date	Venue	Topic
14 Mar 2020	Cardinal Creek Golf Course Clubhouse	TBD
23 April 2020	Global Brew Tap House (4:30 to 6:30 pm)	SW IL MOAA Happy Hour
9 May 2020	Ann Morey's Home	Annual Business Meeting
13 June 2020	Black Stallion Room, Fairmount Park	Horse Races
12 Sep 2020	TBD	2020-2021 Chapter Kickoff Social

## President's Input (continued)

Quad-Cities Chapter located near Moline has closed shop. The currently serving Chapter board members voted unanimously to not continue beyond the two-year terms of the elected positions and there were no others in the line of succession. This issue is not new. In 2018, the Southern Illinois Chapter closed its doors because their long-term President moved out of the area and nobody offered to continue running the Chapter. Northern Illinois Chapter has been out of communications for about 3 years, although the Chapter has not officially folded. West Suburban Chapter went through a revitalization about 5 years ago and was able to find people to run the business of the Chapter. We provide what I feel is an important service to many others in our local area, from scholarships to contact with legislators to charitable support. We have changed our Chapter By-Laws in the recent past to allow continued operation of the board. However, as the years go by, those who have served on the Board for 10, 15, almost 20 years or more, are aging out. We need your help to keep moving forward as a Chapter. Not just involvement at the Chapter meetings or one-time events, but standing up to take a position in the conduct of business for the Chapter. We recently added Yasemin Koss as our Programs Chair and Maj (ret) Sabrina Luttrell as our Membership Chair. Big thank you to those two. Also to those who take on work with USO fundraising, scholarships, and our JROTC/ROTC ceremonies. We still need to have someone fill the Vice President position and are looking for a replacement for Treasurer. How will you help out today and continue serving so that our Chapter is able to sustain itself as a force in the community? Thanks for helping out and being part of the solution!

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**IN CASE YOU DIDN'T KNOW:** As of Jan. 1, possession of up to 30 grams of marijuana for recreational use will be legal in the State of Illinois. However, use and possession of marijuana on a military installation, or by military members or Department of Defense employees, is still illegal under the Controlled Substances Act.

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In case you've been visiting another planet or out of the country in the last six weeks, the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) was passed prior to the expiration of the Continuing Resolution (CR) on December 20, 2019. As reported last month, there were a number of "wins" for all military members and families. Significant among them were the 3.1% pay raise for actively serving and repeal of the widow's tax, the Survivor Benefit Plan – Dependent Indemnity Compensation (SBP-DIC) issue. Funding the raise should not be too difficult to do, but how to fund the SBP-DIC offset for the 63,000 surviving spouses will be a challenge for a little while. In fact, implementation of the change doesn't take place until 2021. There is more to be discussed and considered on this issue.



Additionally, cuts to military medical billets, although halted, are still on the table as Congress still pushes for Military Health Care reform. Part of the language in the FY2020 NDAA reads,

*Over the past four years, Congress has enacted several provisions designed to guide the Department of Defense in implementing a major reform of the military health system to make it more effective, efficient, and less costly. ... The conferees expect the Secretary of Defense to fully implement the law and to accomplish these critically important reforms expeditiously.*

The 2015 Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC) Report highlighted shortfalls in readiness and beneficiary care. The FY2017 NDAA stipulated that DoD restructure the MHS to address these shortfalls and others, such as inability to maintain currency skills needed for

## **Legislative News (continued)**

combat casualty care, low surgical volumes leading to surgeon skill degradation and patient safety concerns, patient dissatisfaction with access and quality of care at Military Treatment Facilities (MTF), and lack of focus on value and patient outcomes in TRICARE networks. Congressional intent is to produce greater efficiencies and lower total management costs of the Military Healthcare System (MHS). Their three main elements of MHS reform include TRICARE reform that has already increased TRICARE Prime copays, Transition to the Defense Health Agency (DHS) which combines administration and management for all US military hospitals and clinics effective October 1, 2019, and Transformation, which hasn't officially started, but will include converting some uniformed medical billets to civilian positions and expanding eligibility for MTF care to some veterans and civilians based on medical case. MOAA's top priority is to ensure that beneficiary out-of-pocket cost and access to quality care are protected. Health care advocacy will continue to focus on this issue.

In an article by Jim Absher on Military.com, he wrote about a proposal from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to help all veterans access free or discounted dental services in their local community. Currently, dental care is provided to only former POWs or totally disabled as a result of military service, which equates to only 8% of veterans eligible for VA dental care. A 2014 program designed to offer reduced rates for veterans through the VA Dental Insurance Program is scheduled to end in 2021 and is only available to veterans enrolled in VA healthcare or CHAMPVA. Now, VA is looking to begin a five-year pilot program to connect veterans with dentists in their area who offer free or discounted dental care to all veterans. Veterans would access a website to make recommendations and coordinate care, but not provide any additional services or expand existing eligibility. In 2018, VA spent over \$1.1 billion for dental care to only eligible vets. Under the pilot program, veterans would be responsible for making appointments and covering all costs.

According to Department of Defense data, 24% of the military spouse labor force remains unemployed. That's six times higher than the national unemployment rate. In 2020, MOAA will continue to support making military spouses eligible for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), a federal tax credit available to employers for hiring individuals from certain target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment. Military spouses still hear sentiments today heard decades ago from potential employers: "Why should I hire you when you will probably just move?" Investing in a military spouse is still seen as an economic loss for small and medium-sized businesses. While President Trump signed an executive order in July 2018 to encourage non-competitive hiring of military spouses, we still hear spouses have difficulty obtaining federal jobs. When it comes to federal hiring, the government should continue to find ways to reduce red tape and barriers to military spouses gaining employment or transferring jobs during a PCS move. MOAA will also continue to push for expanding DoD's Military Spouse Career Advancement Account (MyCAA) scholarships intended to ease the educational and employment challenges military spouses face. The MyCAA scholarship is currently available to spouses of servicemembers who are E-1 to E-5, W-1 and W-2, and O-1 to O-2, and provides up to \$4,000 of financial assistance for associate degrees and occupational certifications/licenses.

## **State Legislative Issues**

Starting January 1, 2020, a new Illinois law will cost you big bucks if you decide to trade in a vehicle. Prior to Senate Bill 690, Illinois did not collect tax on a vehicle's trade-in value. But, under the new law, trade-in credits greater than \$10,000 will be subject to state and local taxation. This tax applies even if you go to another state to trade in your car.

So what does this mean for your wallet? Let's run some numbers.

## Legislative News (continued)

For example, if you trade in an old vehicle worth \$18,000, the first \$10,000 of it is tax-free, but everything after that (\$8,000) will be taxed. The average sales tax rate in Illinois, combining both state and local taxes, is 8.74%. That means you could pay approximately \$700 extra in sales tax when you trade-in this vehicle.

Before Jan. 1		After Jan. 1	
New car price	\$40,000	New car price	\$40,000
Trade-in tax credit	\$18,000	Trade-in tax credit	\$10,000
Taxable amount	\$22,000	Taxable amount	\$30,000
Sales tax	\$1,923	Sales tax	\$2,622
		<b>Difference</b>	<b>\$699</b>

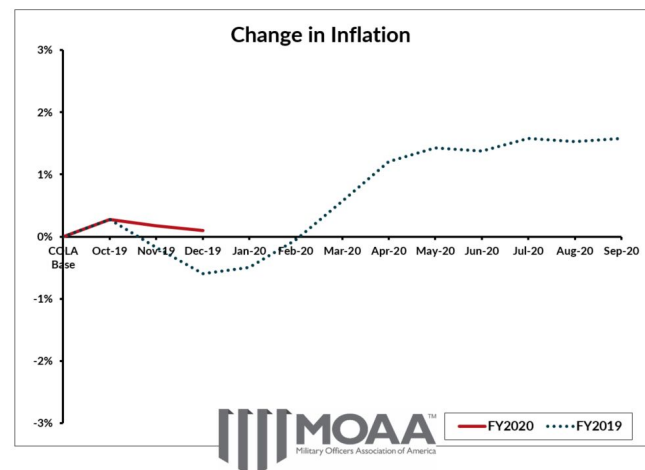
Another of the changes that have occurred in Illinois as of January 1, 2020 is the legalization of recreational marijuana. Lines to purchase and amount of sales have headlined in the news since the new year. In fact, the only store in southern Illinois—Collinsville—probably continues to experience long lines. Something to keep in mind, though. While marijuana in the amount of 30 grams is legal in Illinois, possession of marijuana remains a federal offense. That means no amount of marijuana may be carried onto a military installation. Caveat Emptor! Buyer beware. Not for the purchase, but if you carry any around in your automobile, or even have someone in the car who has purchased or smoked marijuana, you should probably not try to get onto a military base.

## COLA Watch

[moaa.org/content/take-action/cola-watch](http://moaa.org/content/take-action/cola-watch)

The December 2019 CPI is 250.452, 0.1 percent above the FY 2020 COLA baseline.

The Consumer Price Index for January is scheduled to be released Feb. 13, 2020. The CPI baseline for FY 2020 is 250.200.



Chapter Officers	
President	Col (ret) Bob Norman
2nd VP/Communications	Maj (ret) Rick Sunner
Secretary	Lt Col (ret) Ann Morey
Treasurer	Col (ret) Dick Glogowski
Membership	Maj (ret) Sabrina Luttrell
Programs	Yasemin Koss
ROTC Liaison	CDR (ret) Tim Grout
Spouses Liaison	Narni Cahill

**Call for Articles!** If you want to submit an article for the Eyes to the Skies, just send the draft article to me at [rick.sunner@gmail.com](mailto:rick.sunner@gmail.com). Please keep these things in mind:

- Submit your article by the 10th of the month prior
- The article must be in MS Word or text format

We reserve the right to edit the article so it fits in the newsletter and meets our (and MOAA's) editorial policy.

## 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.





## USO/Fisher House Drive (continued)

In the past eighty years, two organizations, the United Services Organization (USO) -- 1941 and the Fisher House Foundation -- 1970, were founded to provide support in their own distinctive ways a continuum of service and support to those who are actively serving, those who have served, especially the injured, and their families. It becomes our duty as active and retired military and military spouses to support these two dedicated organizations.

This will be our chapter's thirteenth year of supporting the USO of Missouri and eleventh year of supporting St. Louis Fisher House with as much financial help and as many "Wish List" individual and bulk items as we could muster in the time block set aside to do so. This year, **the clock started on Thursday, January 16, and it winds down on Saturday, March 14.** That gives us eight weeks to get the whole job done.

What is the whole job for 2020? To try to excel a little from last year's record setting year, **the overall goal for cash contributions becomes \$5,500**, a modest increase of just \$500 over last year. That should derive from sub-goals of more than **\$3,000 from the chapter members** and **over \$2000 collected at St. Michael's Episcopal Church.** Where does the meager extra \$500 really come from? It is from the initiative and extra effort made by chapter members and church parishioners to reach out to people and organizations (your family and friends, your place of worship, your social and fraternal clubs, et cetera) for whatever contribution they will make. Do you realize how sky high our collections would go if each individual tried? Tell them what you are doing and why, and then ask the question! (Please direct all questions and issues about monetary matters to Nick Wartonick.)

As regards "Wish List" individual and bulk item collections, Ann Morey directs that effort. It was an outstanding accomplishment last year. She makes the initial contacts. After that, she will need volunteer help in follow up and with collections. Please pitch in if you can. Also, Ann has "Wish Lists" copies for both organizations for chapter members who can plan to seek contributions from outside the chapter or desire to go "Wish-List" shopping on their own. (Please coordinate all activities about "Wish List" contacts, purchases and collections with Ann Morey.)

Make your **checks payable** to the **USO of Missouri** and to the **St. Louis Fisher House**. Give them to either Ann Morey or Nick Wartonick. You can mail them to Ann at 811 North Lincoln Drive, O'Fallon, Illinois 62269, or to Nick at 7342 Timberpoint Court, Fairview Heights, Illinois 62208. Please don't delay. Do so ASAP.

Let's make the theme of this year's campaign **"THE RIGHT SPIRIT"** for all that those few words imply, and with all of us pledging to get this job done to the very best of our collective abilities.

THANK YOU!

Ann Morey, 618-628-0268, ram204@att.com

Nick Wartonick, 618-628-0858, wartonick-59@charter.net

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# COUNCIL AND CHAPTER NEWS

## TAKE ACTION!

For more information about the articles in this month's newsletter and how you can get more involved, visit the MOAA [Take Action Center](#) webpage.

## MOAA NATIONAL NEWS

For other MOAA News Articles, visit the [MOAA News & Info](#) webpage.

- [moaa.org/.../moaas-year-in-review-legislative-gains-and-big-moves/](http://moaa.org/.../moaas-year-in-review-legislative-gains-and-big-moves/)
- [moaa.org/.../moaa-issues-call-for-new-resolutions/](http://moaa.org/.../moaa-issues-call-for-new-resolutions/)
- [moaa.org/.../how-moaa-is-working-to-improve-quality-of-life-for-military-families/](http://moaa.org/.../how-moaa-is-working-to-improve-quality-of-life-for-military-families/)

For more information about MOAA's advocacy and how you can take part, as well as other information, visit the [MOAA webpage](#).

- [moaa.org/.../tricare-expands-list-of-drugs-it-wont-cover/](http://moaa.org/.../tricare-expands-list-of-drugs-it-wont-cover/)
- [moaa.org/.../moaa-remains-cautiously-optimistic-on-commissary-exchange-merger/](http://moaa.org/.../moaa-remains-cautiously-optimistic-on-commissary-exchange-merger/)
- [moaa.org/.../ready-reserve-corps-for-public-health-service-gets-senate-ok/](http://moaa.org/.../ready-reserve-corps-for-public-health-service-gets-senate-ok/)
- [moaa.org/.../dozens-of-spouses-benefiting-from-new.-moaa-backed-relicensure-programs/](http://moaa.org/.../dozens-of-spouses-benefiting-from-new.-moaa-backed-relicensure-programs/)

## STATE AND LOCAL NEWS

For Illinois veteran news, please visit the state website at [illinois.gov/veterans/Pages/](http://illinois.gov/veterans/Pages/).

- [illinois.gov/veterans/Pages/Serving-Those-Who-Served-a.aspx](http://illinois.gov/veterans/Pages/Serving-Those-Who-Served-a.aspx)
- [illinois.gov/veterans/Documents/Choice of projects to volunteer 11.4.19.pdf](http://illinois.gov/veterans/Documents/Choice%20of%20projects%20to%20volunteer%2011.4.19.pdf)

## SW IL VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE

The [VSO](#) provides free assistance to veterans, their dependents, and survivors in navigating complex services and benefits. The nearest VSO is in Belleville, and can be contacted at 618-233-8445/5140.

## VETERANS AFFAIRS

Visit the [Veterans Benefits Administration](#) for all the latest information for veterans benefits.

- [VA Solid Start](#), veterans in their first year of military to civilian transition will learn about VA programs and benefits through this new program (includes the **Veterans Crisis Line**).
  - [Fisher House: A Home Away From Home](#), for families of patients receiving medical care at major military and VA medical centers.
  - [Quilts of Valor: Reaching Out and Comforting a Fellow Human Being](#)
- .....

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

## Meeting Announcement

This month's meeting will be held on Saturday, 8 February 2019 at the Cardinal Creek Golf Course Clubhouse on Scott AFB. (See Program News for details.) Cost for the meal will be **\$26.00**.

RESERVATION FORM FOR SW IL MOAA CHAPTER MEETING

**Reservation deadline (mail, e-mail, or phone call received by): 3 Feb 2020**

E-mail to [swimoaa@charter.net](mailto: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:** \_\_\_\_\_