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Eyes November to the 2022 Skies

President's Message

Happy Birthday USMC! November 10 marks two hundred forty-seven years of service to the nation!

Election Day is coming up! November 8. You've heard it before. Hopefully everyone reading this newsletter will get the message and act on it! Elections have consequences! You need to get out and vote, not only because it is your civic duty, but because your vote does have an impact.

Veterans' Day recognizes and honors those men and women who stood and stand in the gap to protect the nation. Only about 1% of the population of the US serve in the military. Thank you to you and the many others who voluntarily give of their time to fulfill this auspicious responsibility. The world seems to be getting more dangerous daily in spite of efforts to promote peace. Never Stop Serving the nation and the others who join in that service.

The Honoring Our PACT Act has created a plethora of advertisements from lawyers wanting "to help" those veterans impacted by the toxic environment exposed at Camp LeJeune. While the legislation is a great step

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Treasurer's Report	
Checking Account Balance ...	\$536
Savings Account Balance	\$6,037
Certificates of Deposit	\$15,091
Total	\$21,664



Visit us on Facebook! (click logo on left)

Visit our website: www.moaa-swil.org

Send your comments to moaa.swil@gmail.com



Take Action!

Check out the Advocacy articles in our Council and Chapter News, and at [Legislative Action Center](#).

Another Continuing Resolution Act (CRA) is keeping the government operating through December 16. However, the CR does not fund the MOAA "wins" that we hoped would be included in the FY 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Our Illinois Congressional delegation needs to hear each of us—their constituents—convey the critical importance of passing the FY 2023 NDAA and the various veteran-related House and Senate bills that it contains. Hopefully, sometime between now and December 16, a budget will pass. The House passed their version in July. The Senate now has to

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Program News

Please join us for our November Meeting

10 November, 11:30 am

Peel Pizza, O'Fallon IL

Attire: Casual

RSVP by Thursday, 9 November by e-mailing bykoss72@gmail.com or call Yasemin Koss at 618-628-2968.

ORDER FROM THE MENU

Upcoming Programs (all are tentative due to pandemic restrictions)

Date	Venue	Topic
8 Dec 2022	Cardinal Creek Golf Course, Scott AFB IL	Christmas Dinner
Jan 2023	TBD	TBD
Jan 2023	Global Brew Tap House (next to First Watch)	Quarterly Happy Hour
Feb 2023	TBD	TBD
Mar 2023	TBD	TBD
Apr 2023	TBD	TBD
May 2023	TBD	Annual Business Meeting

If you want to receive the newsletter via email, but currently receive it in the mail, send your name and email address to moaa.swil@gmail.com. You'll receive the newsletter much faster.

A FEW GOOD MEN/WOMEN NEEDED.....

It is time to think about election of officers for the Chapter. The elected positions are president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. Board positions include but are not limited to programs, legislative issues, newsletter editor, surviving spouse liaison, USO/Fisher House drive, and scholarship.

Please consider volunteering for one of the above. If you are interested, or to nominate yourself or someone else, please contact any board member for more information, or email the newsletter editor at moaa.swil@gmail.com. We need new blood!

We'll be taking nominations for each position and voting at our Business Meeting this May.

President's Input (continued)

in providing assistance to those who may have been affected during their assignment, the use of a lawyer to recover the benefits provided under the Act may not be necessary. Those who are covered by the Act need to consult with the VA, in particular a Veteran Service Organization (VSO) or VSO representative to determine what is needed to pursue compensation.

MOAA's foremost mission is to advocate fulfillment of the promises that the nation has made to those who serve in the nation's defense. Informing, advising and influencing the legislation brought forth in Congress is the main avenue, which has been very successful for several years. We do our part by sending messages to our elected representatives in Congress. In the past, only a few thousand members participated, but the results prove the efficacy of their involvement. MOAA relies on the our participation and more significant participation could lead to greater results. Your participation is now becoming part of the objective criteria used for Level of Excellence awards. Read more about this in the Legislative Update section.

We cannot be as successful as we are in the nation, the State, and the community without your participation and service. Thank you for all you do to support this Chapter and the men and women who volunteer to defend the Constitution. God bless you, our comrades and their families, all who serve and served with distinction, and the United States of America.

Legislative News (continued)

consider their version, which will lead to reconciling the bill in Conference. And the President will have to sign the bill when it hits his desk. Knowing that Congress has been away from the Capitol since the end of September to work on re-election, little time remains before the Lame Duck session begins, which probably doesn't bode well for anything other than another CRA being passed that will carry into the next year. We need to keep engaging and corresponding with the Illinois delegation repeatedly as this serves as a powerful tool to inform them of these important issues. Please Take Action now to send a message to our elected representatives in the US Congress (Senators and Representative) to pass the NDAA sooner rather than later. You are also encouraged to share the links to those advocacy campaigns on the MOAA Legislative Action Center with any non-MOAA members in their respective networks that support military/veteran issues to increase constituent engagement with Congress. MOAA's Capitol Hotline at 866-272-MOAA (6622), a toll-free line to the US Capitol switchboard – can also connect folks with their legislators' offices directly.

The biggest influence you can have on the passage of legislation is by voting during the upcoming election. Be sure to get out and vote, in-person if you're able, to be sure your vote is counted.

In case you missed it, MOAA is trying to capture objective criteria to measure the effectiveness of their advocacy campaign on military/veterans issues. Last January, a new process was implemented, described below. If you already know about the changes and have registered, thank you. It should be easier to be able to send messages to our elected Representative and Senators. This new system—Quorum—is not connected to the MOAA member database, though, so a separate login is required. Your participation is now measurable as an objective criteria for our Chapter's involvement in legislative proposals, which is a criteria in Level of Excellence (LOE) awards beginning in 2023. So, if you haven't yet, please follow the instructions in the article below found in the Action Center Tutorial and register.

Meet MOAA's New Legislative Action Center

By MOAA Staff | January 4, 2022

If you frequently engage with your lawmakers on issues key to MOAA's mission, first please accept the sincere appreciation from everyone here at MOAA – your efforts are critical to our success protecting and expanding the earned pay and benefits for the uniformed services and veteran communities.

Legislative News (continued)

Second, you may notice some changes at our [Legislative Action Center](#) and on individual “Take Action” messages. Our new system is designed to make it even easier to reach out to your lawmakers on these issues, as well as track what MOAA is engaging on in the halls of Congress.

Here are some answers to some of the questions you may have about the new setup:

Q. Why do I have to re-enter my information?

A. The changeover to the new system will require all users to enter in their details, but they will be able to create an account with those details the first time they visit the site. First-time users can sign in at this [link](#); you’ll need to provide your information again if you sign in from another browser or device.

Q. Why do you need my cell phone number?

A. The new Legislative Action Center allows MOAA to provide members with up-to-date information on issues of interest, as well as inform them of new or urgent legislative action items via text message. It’s just one more way of mobilizing our 350,000-plus members. Signing up using your phone number is optional, and you can opt out of these messages at any time.

Q. The system asked me to “enter a more specific address.” Why won’t it accept my address?

A. The Legislative Action Center allows you to contact your legislators on issues of critical importance. It requires your full address to match you with the right lawmakers. A drop-down list of suggested addresses should appear as you enter your information; choose the closest option from that list to ensure your letters and actions are being directed to the right individuals. Still having trouble? Email legis@moaa.org for assistance.

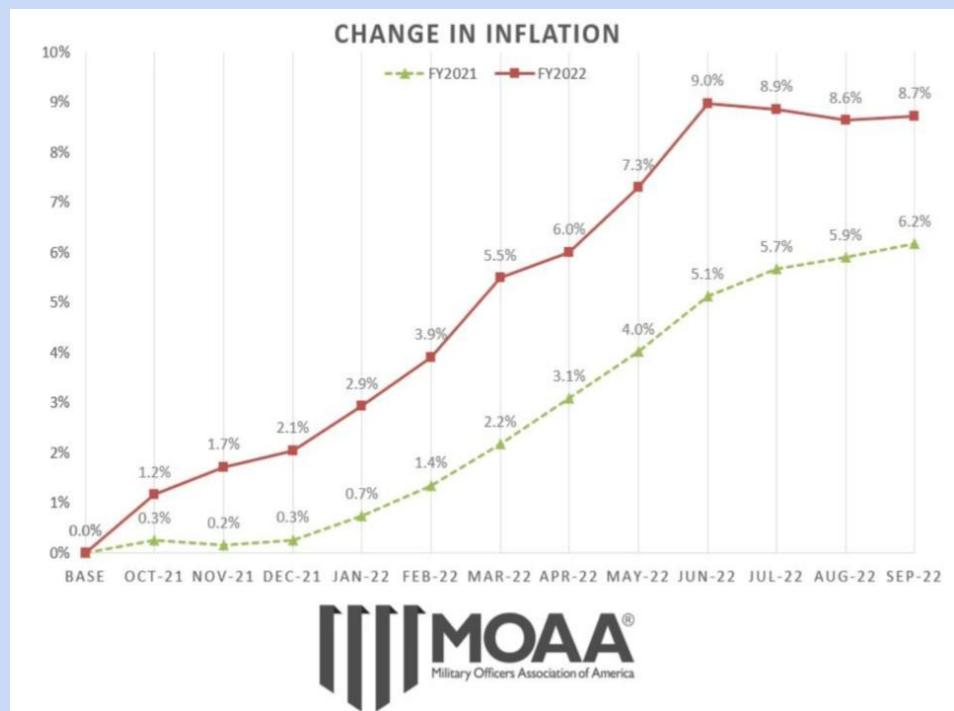
Q. I want to update my information, or check to make sure I’ve entered all the details properly. How do I do that?

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COLA Watch (moaa.org/content/take-action/cola-watch)

The FY 2023 COLA baseline will be 291.901, compared with the FY 2022 baseline of 268.421, resulting in the above percentage increase. This baseline is determined by averaging the monthly Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) for the final three months of the fiscal year (July, August, September).

The September 2022 CPI-W, released Oct. 13, is 291.854, which is also 8.7% above the FY 2022 COLA baseline. The CPI-W for October 2022, the first of the new fiscal year, is scheduled for release Nov. 10.



Legislative News (continued)

A. Once you've signed into the Legislative Action Center, a greeting should appear in the top right corner of the homepage. Hover over the greeting or click on the arrow next to it and select the "Update Information" option to check all your details.

Q. I am not a member of MOAA. Can I still sign up and "Take Action" on bills?

A. Yes, anyone can sign up and use MOAA's Legislative Action Center. MOAA advocates for the entire uniformed services/veteran communities. You can read more about MOAA's key advocacy issues [here](#).

Q. What happened to the old "Take Action" items?

A. We've imported the old items into the new system – all of MOAA's ongoing legislative engagement efforts made the move. However, some of our engagements have expired as part of the regular legislative session, or for other reasons. Look for an expanded list of engagement opportunities as more bills are proposed in the coming year. Clicking on any of the old links should take you to the new Legislative Action Center website, where you'll be able to find an updated way to engage your lawmakers.

Q. I liked the old platform. Why did MOAA change platforms?

A. The new system not only offers an easier-to-navigate, user-friendly setup for our members and supporters, it also offers MOAA staff members multiple ways to track these advocacy actions, and to log interactions with staffers, representatives, and others. The change will mean an overall improvement in MOAA's ability to represent the needs of its members on Capitol Hill.

Q. I had an interaction with my representative on a topic of interest for MOAA. Can I let you know about it?

A. Yes! Click the "[Log an Interaction](#)" button at the Legislative Action Center and follow the prompts – these meetings not only show lawmakers how engaged MOAA's members are on key issues, they can be taken together as a show of strength for the organization on a national level.

Q. How do I find what bills MOAA supports in the current session of Congress?

A. Click the "[MOAA-Supported Legislation](#)" button on the homepage of the Legislative Action Center to see what bills MOAA has publicly supported for the current session of Congress. The organization's

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Chapter Officers	
President	Col (ret) Bob Norman
1st VP	Vacant
2nd VP/Comm	Maj (ret) Rick Sunner
Secretary	Vacant
Treasurer	Col (ret) Phil Yavorsky LTC (ret) Bob Koss
Membership	Maj (ret) Sabrina Luttrell-Andrews
Programs	Yasemin Koss
ROTC Liaison	CDR (ret) Tim Grout
Spouses Liaison	Narni Cahill

If you aren't a member of the SW IL MOAA Chapter, visit our Membership Page:

moaa-swil.org/pages/membership.html

To join MOAA: <https://www.moaa.org/why-join-moaa/>

Call for Articles! If you want to submit an article for the Eyes to the Skies, just send the draft article to moaa.swil@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.



Legislative News (continued)

endorsement process is deliberative; MOAA will not support or oppose any legislation without a thorough review of its potential effects, positive or negative.

Q. I have more questions about the Legislative Action Center.

A. MOAA's Member Service Center can field all manner of technical questions about the website; visit [MOAA.org/contact](https://moaa.org/contact) for full details on the best way to get in touch. Have a question about the bills themselves, or about MOAA's advocacy work? Email legis@moaa.org.

Currently there are 33 active legislative campaigns for MOAA members and any other interested parties to act on and send a message to Congress. Yes, anyone can use the site to send a message to Congress. Your support of the issues is critical as has been seen in the past with the influence that numbers of messages have had on our legislators' support. Here are some of the issues now:

- Concurrent Receipt—Maj Richard Star Act
- Military Pay Keeping Up with Inflation
- Military Family Access to Mental Health Care (Advocacy in Action issue)
- Halt Cuts to Military Medicine
- Protect Pay and Benefits in FY2023 NDAA (Advocacy in Action issue)
- TRICARE Young Adult Gap
- Hunger Prevention Act for Military Members
- Repeal TRICARE Select Enrollment Fee
- Military Spouse Hiring
- Protect the All-Volunteer Force and Personnel Strength in the NDAA
- Military Retiree Survivor Comfort Act

Register now to make a difference for the military/veteran community and to support Chapter activities!

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

MOAA's Advocacy in Action in May successfully connected the majority of legislative offices through either the principal or their staff with MOAA representatives. Col (ret) Richard Smith and Col (ret) Bob Norman met with Representative Bost and made Zoom calls to Senator Duckworth's staff, and several other Illinois Representatives this year. Following is a short recap of where the activities stand:

Major Richard Star Act

The Major Richard Star Act ([H.R. 1282](#) | [S. 344](#)), which would allow combat-injured veterans to receive both DoD retirement pay and VA disability pay without a dollar-for-dollar offset, had grown to 227 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives and 58 in the Senate as of May 10. Reaching 290 in the House remains the goal.

Your continued advocacy is needed to push this legislation over the tipping point to ensure it is included in this year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). This path succeeded recently in repealing the Survivor Benefit Plan/Dependency and Indemnity Compensation offset, better known as the "widows tax."

Stop Copay Overpay Act

MOAA's spring campaign built awareness and support for the Stop Copay Overpay Act ([H.R. 4824](#)), a bill that would reduce TRICARE mental health copays. We are still seeking an office to introduce a Senate companion bill and are addressing legitimate concerns about direct spending impacts. MOAA will not support a solution that raises any other TRICARE fees to fund a mental health copay fix.

Continued next page

Legislative News (continued)

During Advocacy in Action, MOAA members also helped raise awareness of medical provider strain and burnout following two-plus years of uncertainty and demands associated with COVID-19.

Military Pay Raise

Ensuring a 4.6% pay raise for all uniformed servicemembers – a figure in line with federal statute and included in the president’s budget – has seen strong support from members of Congress for this year. While that figure is tied to the Employment Cost Index (ECI), it has fallen significantly behind [inflation rates](#).

Continued advocacy is needed to ask lawmakers to ensure the pay raise keeps up with inflation, and to close the “pay gap” – the 2.6% gap between the raise and the ECI created over three years (FY 2014-16) of shortfalls.

COUNCIL AND CHAPTER NEWS

News from National MOAA

For more information about the articles in this month’s newsletter and how you can get more involved in other issues, visit the MOAA [Legislative Action Center](#) or [News](#) webpages. Also, here is one of the active Legislative Campaigns MOAA is engaged in. *(Click on the link next to the title to read more about this article.)*

- **Ask Your Lawmakers to Seek Ways to Better Care For Servicemembers and Their Families** ([link](#)), while DoD seeks ways to better care for our servicemembers and their families today, increased funding dedicated to continued and enduring improvements may be necessary to turn the tide of disinterest from those few who are even eligible for service.
- **Urge Your Elected Officials to Support FY 2023 NDAA Provisions to Improve Mental Health Care Access** ([link](#)), many military families have reported difficulties accessing mental health care as surging demand outstrips supply. A 2020 DoD Inspector General report validated these complaints, showing more than half of military treatment facilities studied did not meet the 28-day access to care standard for mental health care each month.
- **Protect the All-Volunteer Force and Personnel Strength in the NDAA** ([link](#)), ask Congress to keep up our personnel strength so our troops can safely do their job.
- **Ask Your House Member to Adjust SGLI and VGLI for Inflation With the Supporting Families of the Fallen Act** ([link](#)), servicemembers’ Group Life Insurance (SGLI) and Veterans’ Group Life Insurance (VGLI) coverage amounts have not been updated since 2005. This law would raise the level from \$400,000 to \$500,000 – a necessary move to preserve the value of this program in the face inflation. The bill passed the Senate by a voice vote in late March. Ask your House member to lend their support today.

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MOAA Crisis Relief Fund: Disaster Notification

We are reaching out to make you aware that FEMA has declared a Major Disaster Designation in Illinois regarding the July Severe Storm and Flooding in St. Clair county IL.

The MOAA Foundation recently established a Crisis Relief Fund program ([at this link](#)). This program is designed to provide small grants to servicemembers/veterans and their families who are financially affected by natural disasters or crisis situations.

If you know of anyone in your local military or veteran community who might need financial assistance as a result of this current natural disaster or crisis situation, they can apply for financial assistance of up to \$500 by filling out The MOAA Foundation’s Crisis Relief Fund Grant application at this [link](#).

Council and Chapter News (continued)

- **Share Your Story: Impact of TRICARE Pharmacy Network Changes** ([link](#)), We want to hear from MOAA members who will lose access to their community pharmacy. Your feedback is vital to our advocacy with DoD leaders and on Capitol Hill as we continue our fight to preserve and improve the military health care benefit.
- **Urge Your Senators to Support Legislation Halting Cuts to Military Medicine** ([link](#)), the House version of the NDAA includes an important provision (Sec. 780) halting medical billet cuts for three years and increasing DoD reporting and congressional oversight. As the FY 2023 NDAA moves toward conference, where differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill will be resolved, please join MOAA by contacting your senators and urging them to ensure the final bill includes Sec. 780.
- **Act Now to Improve Survivors' Benefits** ([link](#)), bipartisan legislation in the House and Senate (H.R. 3402/S.976) would align Dependency and Indemnity Compensation payments with other federal survivor benefits. Ask your legislators to show their support and make a long-overdue correction to this injustice.
- **Ask Your Lawmakers to Support the Military Retiree Survivor Comfort Act** ([link](#)), financial concerns and stress can be a terrible burden on top of an already stressful situation for a newly widowed spouse. For some, when they discover DFAS may take part or all of that last retirement check back, it can be an overwhelming event. The Military Retiree Survivor Comfort Act (H.R. 2214 and S.1669) will allow survivors to gradually repay the amount over the next 12 months and have an opportunity to request for debt forgiveness through DoD.
- **Support the Elizabeth Dole Home and Community Based Services for Veterans and Caregivers Act** ([link](#)), contact your representative and senators and urge them to support H.R. 6823 and S. 3854, the *Elizabeth Dole Home and Community Based Services for Veterans and Caregivers Act*. This a comprehensive piece of legislation that will improve VA home and community-based services to care and support veterans and their caregivers.

Retiree Appreciation Day at Scott AFB

(An open letter to the chapter)

By Col Bob Norman, USAF, Retired

All,

Thanks to Ann Morey for joining me at the MOAA table this morning. We both capitalized on meetings with about 4 or 5 folks who really seemed genuinely interested in being part of the Chapter membership. In addition, a couple of other vendors at the event provided some good ideas about a presentation for one of our Chapter meetings. Specifically, Ann learned some details about a therapy dog trainer. And I have a couple myself: Shannon Yount from the IL Attorney General's office who works on veteran benefits for IL vets and servicemembers; and Magen Westenberger, a counselor from the Metro East Vet Center. I'll have more information to share with our Board, as well as the Chapter.

This was the first Retiree Appreciation Day in 3 years, the last one being in 2018. Not too many attendees, maybe about 40, but lots of support and vendor activity. No flu shots this time, but the Military Personnel Facility was open for people to renew their ID cards, since everyone has to have the new CAC by 2026, I think, and Security Forces was at the Event Center to get people set up with the Scott Pass.

We'll be invited back next year, so let's plan to set up a good showing from the Chapter. It might be a good opportunity for new member signups, again.

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Council and Chapter News (continued)

FREE MOAA WEBINAR 2023 Medicare, TRICARE, and FEDVIP Open Season Tuesday, November 1, 2:00 - 3:00 PM EST

Thinking about making changes to your coverage? Open season is your only chance to do it, unless you have a qualifying life event. On Tuesday, November 1st, join Capt. Paul Frost AFC[®], USN (Ret), MOAA's financial and benefits counselor, for an in-depth review of the following topics:

- Open season dates for Medicare, TRICARE and the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP)
- Original Medicare vs. Medicare Advantage plans
- The Uniformed Services Family Health Plan (USFHP)
- FEDVIP plan terminology

Can't make it at the scheduled time? No problem. Register now ([at this link](#)) and we will send you a recording of the live event within 5 business days.

SW IL VETERANS NEWS

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.

Visit the **Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs (IDVA)** by following this [link](#). Here are some of the services and benefits for IL veterans and their families:

- **Advocacy** – IDVA Veterans' Service Officers are qualified benefits specialists trained to help veterans and their family gain their earned benefits. We provide counseling to individuals and their families and offer a complete referral service to provide veterans with accurate and current information on the entire range of issues associated with veterans' benefits and entitlements. Visit the page [at this link](#) for more information.
- **Programs** – The State of Illinois is committed to making sure that our military heroes and families receive the benefits they rightfully deserve when they return home. Check out this [web page](#).
- **Veteran's Homes** – Illinois veterans and eligible spouses seeking skilled and domiciliary care are offered five unique veterans' homes located across Illinois: Anna, Chicago, LaSalle, Manteno, and Quincy. You'll find more information at this [page](#).
- **Healthcare** – Veterans deserve the highest level of healthcare and benefits. We've gathered resources and referrals to help veterans find care that align with their unique needs. Visit [this page](#) for more information.

State of Illinois General Assembly – Recent Legislation

- **Executive Branch (20 ILCS 2805/) Department of Veterans' Affairs Act**, this act:
 - Creates the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA)
 - Creates the Division of Women's Veterans' Affairs within the DVA to .serve as an advocate for women veterans, in recognition of the unique issues facing women veterans.
 - Will assess the needs of women veterans with respect to issues including compensation, rehabilitation, outreach, health care, and issues facing women veterans in the community
 - Will review the Department's programs, activities, research projects, and other initiatives designed to meet the needs of women veterans and make recommendations to the Director of Veterans' Affairs concerning ways to improve, modify, and effect change in programs and services for women veterans.

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

Meeting Announcement

This month we will be holding our Chapter Kick-Off meeting on 10 November 2022 at 11:30 am at Peel Pizza in O'Fallon IL. (See Program News for details.)

RSVP Reservation Deadline: (mail, e-mail, or phone call received by): 9 Nov 2022

To RSVP, send e-mail to bykoss72@gmail.com, call Yasemin Koss at 618-628-2968, 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.

RESERVATION FORM FOR SW IL MOAA CHAPTER MEETING

Number of Reservations Desired: _____

Member's/Spouse's Name(s): _____

Guests: _____