



MECMOAA CHAPTER NEWS



The focus of this month's newsletter is Advocacy in Action, brought to you by our Chapter's Legislative Liaison, Col (Ret.) Don Thompson. Don will speak with us at brunch on March 20th, and this is a preface to that discussion. Remember, proper care of our active/guard/reserve military members, veterans, and all their families requires active MOAA members and spouses.



Col Don Thompson,
USAF (Ret.)

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

"Advocacy in Action"

The MOAA Board of Directors has determined that the 2022 Advocacy in Action (AIA) event will be virtual due to the coronavirus pandemic, as it was the last two years. We are hoping that we can return to an in-person campaign in 2023 as the pandemic winds down. The April issue of the *Military Officer* magazine will include an in-depth description of the three issues we are addressing this year along with tear-out letters to send to House and Senate leaders. The MOAA AIA website at [MOAA.org/AiA](https://www.moaa.org/AiA) (hotlink) will go live in mid-

March so we can begin to lobby our legislators on these three important topics. The three topics are:

1. The Major Richard Star Act which addresses concurrent receipt for combat-injured servicemembers. This effort is the next step to addressing concurrent receipt for all retirees who receive VA disability. The House legislation is H.R. 1282, which has 193 cosponsors as of 27 February 2022, but only 3 Tennessee cosponsors (Harshbarger (CD-1), DesJarlais (CD-4) and Cohen (CD-9). The companion Senate bill is s. 344 which has 55 cosponsors as of 27 Feb 2022. Neither Senator Blackburn nor Senator Hagerty are cosponsors yet.

- A key talking point for this issue is “Servicemembers should not have to fund their own disability.”

2. TRICARE Mental Health Copayments. MOAA is supporting the Stop Copay Overpay Act (H.R. 4824) as access to mental health services for Active Duty and beneficiaries is limited, and the copays for those on TRICARE Select have become a financial barrier to

care even when mental health services are available. There are only four cosponsors to this House bill and none of our Tennessee legislators are cosponsors.

3. Maintain a Military Pay Raise at 4.6%. This will be addressed in the 2023 NDAA, and is crucial to maintain some degree of parity with private sector wages. The military pay raise is always a target for DoD and Congressional budget hawks and is more important this year as inflation erodes the value of our wages, benefits, and pensions.

The congressional working period is April 11-22, 2022, and our legislators will be in Tennessee hard at work campaigning. We should seek every opportunity to attend events in-person and virtually and should raise these issues every change we get.

If you are interested in participating in this year's AIA activities, contact me at drdonaldthompson@gmail.com, and I will put you on the short list to be notified of any opportunities. If you already have access to Representative Diana Harshbarger, Senator Marsha Blackburn, or Senator Bill Hagerty, please contact me so I can let you know of particular

needs. Keep up with MOAA legislative activities at the MOAA Legislative Action Center (hotlink to <https://moaa.quorum.us/>).

TENNESSEE LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES

The Tennessee Veterans (TNVETS) sponsors and/or supports several bills at the state level. If you are able to attend committee hearings in Nashville or would like me to forward the schedule of these hearings, drop me a note at drdonaldthompson@gmail.com and I will forward emails from TNVETS to you.

Some of the current discussions include:

- Increase property tax relief for 100% Disabled from \$175K to \$250K
- IMMUNE 501(c)(19) Veterans organizations from being sued
- Veterans' Day as a non-paid Holiday for Veteran employees
- Restore 2nd Disabled Vet and Purple Heart tags
- No Fee for 2nd Disabled Vet Tag with a service-connected disabilities
- Military Electronic Voting Study

As organizations exempt from federal taxation under Sec. 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue Code, MOAA and its affiliates must take care to avoid engaging in partisan political activities. Under IRS rules, we are prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.

Chapter Dues Update

Our Treasurer, Brett Monette, is in the initial stages of establishing online Chapter dues payment through a MOAA platform. We'll announce details when that capability is ready. In the meanwhile, please signal your intent to remain an active MECMOAA member by remitting your 2022 dues, if you haven't already done so. Members pay \$20 per year, and Surviving Spouses' dues are waived.

Did you miss the recent change to our brunch gatherings?

We'll continue meeting over Sunday brunch at Blackthorn Club in The Ridges. Cost per person remains \$25 at the door. However, based on your feedback, we've coordinated the following change with the club staff:

You may enter the brunch line and eat, drink and socialize
anytime from 12 - 1 pm,
with our formal meeting starting promptly at 1:00.

Here's the 2022 brunch schedule...please mark your calendars:

March 20

May 15

July 17

September 18

November 20 (Annual Business Meeting)

Note: Nametags are funded for members and spouses through membership dues. Once you pay your 2022 dues, we'll order you and your spouse a new nametag, if you did not receive yours in late 2021.

We'll see you at brunch on March 20th!

We hope you enjoyed this newsletter. Please send any comments or suggestions to mecmoaa@gmail.com.

Never Stop Serving.

Mountain Empire Chapter (MECMOAA) is an affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America

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