



Ozark Empire News

Ozark Empire Chapter, Military Officers Association of America

2131 West Republic Road, Box 164, Springfield, Missouri 65807



December, 2024

A Word from the Chapter President

- We held our requisite chapter business meeting on November 15. We reviewed the pertinent accomplishments from the past two years, including the IRS granting us tax exempt status as a 501c 19 entity, our continued support of numerous JROTC, ROTC, and Bobcat Gold programs, the continued support of Honor Flight of the Ozarks, and the updating of our chapter information on the MOAA website. We have also changed our meeting location to American Legion Post 639, though this is still under review. We also held chapter elections. The new Board, effective with the January chapter meeting, will be Becky Hutchings, President, Anthony Willis, 1st Vice President, Frank Bridges, 2nd Vice President, Dean Smith, Secretary/Treasurer, and Ron McCall, Immediate Past President. A big Thank You to each of those individuals, for volunteering to step up and continue to serve. It is our stated goal to continue to craft our chapter meetings as informative and beneficial for Veterans, Retirees, and Spouses. This may include bringing in local VSOs, representatives of the VA, Tricare, etc. The upcoming login change to VA and other government entities was discussed, as well as the need for some individuals to replace/renew their ID cards, in spite of already having Indefinite expiration dates. More information may be obtained on the MOAA website.
 - MOAA has put in a good deal of effort, and has completely redesigned their Member Information page, found at www.moaa.org. When logging in to the new page for the first time, all members will need to change and update their password. MOAA is also working with a new vendor, finalizing changes to the Member Dues portal. This should facilitate online payment of member chapter dues, as well as potentially other online payments in the future. I have been able to preview the changes, and they appear to be well thought out.
 - Let me take a moment of personal privilege. It has been an honor to serve as your chapter President for the past four years. As those who have gone before can attest, it has not always been easy, but I have tried to render the best service that I can. We need to continue to work to bring in new members, and to serve all our members with our efforts, providing what we hope is valuable information for all, as we each continue to serve our fellow veterans and our Nation. Thank you for the trust that you have placed in me. I hope that I have not been a disappointment.
 - For all who are Premium or Life members of MOAA, a free Survivor's Planning Guide is available for download. It can be obtained at www.moaa.org.
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- As always, our newsletter is freely available on the chapter website, www.OEMOAA.org as well as via email to all members. If anyone wishes to receive this newsletter via US Mail, please make that known to a Board Member or the Newsletter Editor, and we will be happy to accommodate.

Chapter Mission Statement: *To stimulate patriotism in our community and serve those who hold or have ever held a warrant or commission in any of the eight uniformed services, as well as their surviving spouses. The Ozark Empire Military Officers Association of America (OEMOAA) is an affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). MOAA and its affiliated chapters are nonpartisan.*



TRICARE®
OPEN
SEASON
2024

 **NOV. 11 - DEC. 10**

Q&A: What To Know as TRICARE Open Season Begins Nov. 11

TRICARE Open Season begins Monday, Nov. 11—that’s just a few weeks away. If you’re a TRICARE beneficiary, this is the time when you can enroll in a health plan or change health plans for coverage that starts Jan. 1, 2025. You can make these changes through Tuesday, Dec. 10.

[Read the article to learn more](#)

Don't forget to keep your family's information up to date in [DEERS](#).

There are 28 Active Legislative Campaigns on the [MOAA webpage](#). Below are a couple of highlights.

[-- Ask Your Legislators to Support Services for Aging and Disabled Veterans](#)

MOAA joins VA in celebrating the resilience, strength, and contributions of older veterans. According to VA, "Older adults play vital, positive roles in our communities. They are our family members, friends, mentors, volunteers, civic leaders, members of the workforce and more."

A top MOAA health care priority this Congress is to secure funding, staff, and other resources to accelerate delivery of VA home and community-based services (HCBS), long-term care (LTC), and caregiver support while sustaining VA programs and services to meet current and future needs of veterans, their caregivers, and their families.

Like many Americans, veterans want to age in place at home with comfortable and familiar surroundings rather than in residential or institutional care setting like a nursing home, where they can feel disconnected from life and care is more costly.

Congressional champions for veterans and their caregivers reintroduced MOAA-backed legislation that failed in the 117th Congress. MOAA needs our constituents and veteran-caregiver advocates to join our push to get this legislation signed into law this year.

[-- Urge Your Elected Officials To Support Comprehensive VA Health Care](#)

A bipartisan package of veterans legislation was introduced in May in the House and will expand VA assisted living programs, improve caregiver support, remove unfair penalties from surviving spouses, and address a host of other MOAA legislative priorities.

The Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act (H.R. 8371) is the result of months of negotiations and engagement with House and Senate Veterans' Committee leadership and staff by MOAA and other veterans organizations, which have worked nonstop to keep pressure on lawmakers to ensure the package becomes law.

2025 COLA: 2.5%

The September 2024 Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W), released Oct. 10, was 309.046, 2.6% above the FY 2024 baseline of 301.236. This means the average CPI-W for the last three months of the fiscal year (July, August, and September 2024) is 308.729.

The baseline is subtracted from this figure, with the result divided by the baseline (and rounded to the nearest tenth), to determine the **2025 COLA of 2.5%**: $(308.729-301.236)/301.236 = 2.49\%$

-- Why MOAA Tracks COLA

Protecting the value of service-earned benefits has long been a pillar of MOAA's advocacy. MOAA has led previous efforts to rebuff budget plans seeking to reduce or eliminate COLA for military retirees, many of which have taken root shortly after large increases.

The nature of a higher COLA is to preserve purchasing power for retirees, VA beneficiaries, and surviving spouses – not to fund other government programs.

[Learn How Referrals and Specialty Care Will Work as New TRICARE Contracts Start in 2025](#)

Health care delivery under new TRICARE contracts starts on Jan. 1, 2025. This change will affect you unless you have TRICARE For Life, the US Family Health Plan, or a TRICARE health plan overseas.

These new contracts will improve quality and access for beneficiaries in the United States. This includes enhancing referral management and access to specialty care.

[Read the article to learn more](#)

[Readiness, Benefits Remain Under Threat Despite Short-Term Budget Fix](#)

By: Brenden McMahon

OCTOBER 01, 2024

A continuing resolution (CR) passed both chambers of Congress with strong bipartisan support late last month, as both parties were eager to avoid a government shutdown on the eve of the November elections. But while the CR will ensure the government remains open through Dec. 20 by providing most funding at FY 2024 levels, relying on short-term fixes like this one hampers military readiness, delays key projects, and threatens essential services for veterans.

Since Congress adopted the Oct. 1 fiscal year start date with the 1977 budget cycle, it has relied on at least one CR in all but three years. The last time a full fiscal year was funded without the need for a CR [was in 1997](#).

-- Impact on DoD

“The stark truth is that these short-term, temporary funding measures create uncertainty throughout the U.S. military and put us at a strategic disadvantage,” Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said [in a Sept. 26 statement](#) on the CR's passage. This uncertainty affects military operations, readiness, and long-term planning.

-- Impact on the VA

The VA is facing a \$12 billion budget shortfall at a time when the demand for health care and benefits continues to rise, largely due to expanded coverage and access to care provided under the PACT Act ... and the CR will not help the department meet these financial obligations.

[RELATED: [Critical Veterans' Bill Remains Stalled: Ask Your Lawmakers to Back the Dole Act](#)]

The resolution “fails to include necessary funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs, creating a risk that the agency would slow hiring and reduce healthcare services to veterans,” The [Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\) warned](#) in a Sept. 24 statement on the CR.

VA officials have urged Congress to address this shortfall before the end of FY 2025 to avoid any reductions to essential health care and benefit services.

-- What's Next?

While the CR temporarily prevents a government shutdown and ensures funding until December, it leaves unresolved issues that significantly impact the uniformed services and veteran communities.

Congress must act before the December deadline to address these concerns and provide stability for both DoD and the VA in the new year. Further delays amount to a waste of resources which could be used to strengthen the all-volunteer force and provide service-earned benefits.

Keep up with the latest on the budget and other critical legislative topics, including the must-pass FY 2025 National Defense Authorization Act, at [MOAA's Advocacy News page](#).

IMPORTANT CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) Telephone Center - Call DEERS at 800-538-9552, Monday through Friday, excluding U.S. federal holidays.

Defense Finance and Accounting Service - The agency that pays military retirees and annuitants can be reached at 800-321-1080, or through AskDFAS online. Visit the [retired military and annuitants webpage](#) for more information about pay matters such as tax forms, pay verification, Direct Deposit, myPay and more.

Federal Long-Term Care Insurance Program - The program provides long-term care insurance to help pay for the costs of care you need if you can no longer perform everyday tasks (activities of daily living) by yourself because of chronic illness, injury, disability or the aging process. For assistance, call 800-LTC-FEDS (800-582-3337) or TTY 800- 843-3557 to speak with a program consultant. You can also visit <https://www.ltcfeds.com>.

Identification Cards - Call 800-525-0102 for location of the nearest issuing facility, or visit the site locator.

Legal Offices - Assists members with preparing wills and powers of attorney, and answers certain legal questions. Visit the Air Force Legal Assistance website at <https://aflegalassistance.law.af.mil>.

Medicare - 800-633-4227 or visit www.medicare.gov.

Social Security Office - Call toll free 800-772-1213; commercial 410-965- 8019; or write to Social Security Administration, Office of Public Inquiries, Windsor Park Building, 6401 Security Blvd., Baltimore, MD 21235. Visit the website www.ssa.gov for more information.

TRICARE Mail-Order Pharmacy Program (Express Scripts, Inc) - In United States, call toll free 800-282-2881; or overseas, call 866-275-4732. Visit www.express-scripts.com/TRICARE/index.shtml for more information.

Veterans Affairs - For benefit inquiries call 800-827-1000; life insurance 800-669-8477; status of headstones and markers, 800-697-6947; special issues such as Gulf War/radiation/Agent Orange/Project Shad call 800-749-8387; GI Bill and education matters call 888-442-4551. Visit the website at www.va.gov.

Sign Up for MOAA “Newsletter” and Legislative “Calls to Action”

*We encourage all chapter members and spouses to always, please stay alert, and respond to MOAA **Calls to Action** at least monthly, preferably weekly! Yes, two votes per household are better than 1.*

Signing Up for the MOAA “Newsletter” and Legislative “Calls to Action”:

- **Newsletter:** Sign up for the MOAA Newsletter. www.moaa.org/ Check “News & Info” on Menu, then, on drop-down menu, check “Newsletters”

Or go directly to this link: www.moaa.org/content/tmn/the-moaa-newsletter/

- **Calls to Action:** Please stay alert for any “Calls to Action”. www.moaa.org/ Check “Advocacy” on Menu, then, on drop-down menu, check “Legislative Action Center”

Contact your Federal elected officials by using the following link: takeaction.moaa.org/?0

WHEN COMPLETING “CALLS TO ACTION” **PLEASE LOGIN TO THE MOAA WEBSITE**, WHICH WILL ALLOW YOU TO ENTER OUR **OZARK EMPIRE CHAPTER #** IN THE BLOCK AT THE BOTTOM OF THE LETTER PRIOR TO SENDING. THE CHAPTER # IS: **MO05** (MO is “alpha character” and 05 is “numeric” zero 5).

Phone calls matter; Emails matter; Online petitions matter; In-person meetings, when practical, matter. We want to ensure our elected representatives receive local constituents concerns for maximum national impact. (call them via MOAA’s toll-free Capitol Switchboard: 1-866-272-6622).

CONTACT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

The Honorable (name), U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510 • Phone: (202) 224-3121

The Honorable (name), U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515 • (202) 225-3121

Collectively we make a difference - **Never Stop Serving®**

December US Military History

1674 – Father Jacques Marquette, French missionary, built the 1st dwelling at what is now Chicago.

1773 – In Boston Harbor, a group of Massachusetts colonists disguised as Mohawk Indians board three British tea ships and dump 342 chests of tea into the harbor.

1776 – Patriot General George Washington crosses the Delaware River with 5,400 troops, hoping to surprise a Hessian force celebrating Christmas at their winter quarters in Trenton, New Jersey.

1791 - Adoption of the Bill of Rights

1803 – U.S. and French governments finalize a little land transaction known as the Louisiana Purchase, a \$15 million deal, doubling the size of the United States.

1835 – Cherokees were forced to move across the Mississippi River after gold was discovered in Georgia. Relocation was completed by 1838. This became known as the Trail of Tears March

1860 – South Carolina officially leaves the United States when a convention ratifies an article of secession, the first state to secede.

1896 – “Stars & Stripes Forever” was written by John Philip Sousa.

1951 – U.S. Air Force George A. Davis, flying a F-86 Sabre jet out of the 4th Fighter-Interceptor Wing, was credited with four aerial victories against MiG-15s, the largest number of kills by a single pilot in one day during the war in Korea.

1987– At a summit meeting in Washington, D.C., President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev sign the first treaty between the two superpowers to reduce their massive nuclear arsenals.

1996 - Mars Pathfinder is launched from Cape Canaveral. It would arrive July 4, 1997

2010 – With the second launch of the SpaceX Falcon 9 and the first launch of the SpaceX Dragon, SpaceX becomes the first private company to successfully launch, orbit and recover a spacecraft.



Chaplain's Corner

By Becky Hutchings

Sincerely hoping your Thanksgiving was bountiful and that you were able to spend time with family & friends. This week our pastor had us reflect on 2024 and ponder the high points and low points. He encouraged everyone to realize no matter the circumstances, God remained near us at all times. We can be thankful to God for our blessings even during the lean times.

It is hard to believe we are soon preparing to close out 2024. Many of you may have your trees up and homes decorated for Christmas. I am behind this year, but it will all come together.

This is a good time of year to reevaluate our lives and take note of how much progress we've made in personal. There are countless people in our community that are sad and sometimes just a smile or kind word can lift them up.

My faith is in God, so my greatest goal is to please Him more. When Jesus walked this earth, He cared about people. He didn't differentiate between race or gender as many did in that day. (And we still do that today). As December 25th approaches, please join me in giving thanks to God for all He has done for us and especially for sending Jesus to be born of the Virgin Mary, so all may be redeemed and spend eternity in heaven.

I'm also so very thankful to have been born in the United States of America and for all the freedoms we enjoy as citizens because of the protection of our armed forces. All gave some, and some gave all.

As you celebrate with family and all the little ones start tearing off the wrapping paper, with bright and gleaming eyes, remember how fortunate we are. Teach the children the more important lessons in life-things that are far more valuable than just the momentary excitement of getting that special gift. Teach them to respect self, love God and others, and to do good in this world-leaving their community circles better than when they came into them.

May each of you have a blessed holiday season. Be encouraged!

Blessings,
Becky Hutchings

For our December Chapter meeting, we will once again convene at Twin Oaks Country Club, in their Mulligan Room. We anticipate hearing from Springfield Sound, starting at 1830. So, please arrive in plenty of time to socialize, and enjoy their musical entertainment. Dinner will then begin at 1900.

Our menu options this month are: Chicken Marsala, or Dijon Pork Tenderloin. Both will be served with mash potatoes and Asparagus, as well as dinner rolls and table beverages. Dessert will be Apple Pie, or Chocolate Cream Pie.

Cost will be \$25 per plate.

December 2024 Meeting

DATE: Friday, 13 December 24

PLACE: **Twin Oaks Country Club, Mulligan Room**
1020 E Republic Rd
Springfield, Missouri 65807

TIME: 1800 – Social Hour (Drinks may be purchased from the bar). 50/50 voluntary donations, to support Honor Flight of the Ozarks. Drawing at the close of the presentation.
1900 – Meal

MENU: Dinner Meal, options as outlined on page 10

Cost: \$25/plate. (NOTE: 50/50 Drawing, and Donations for Honor Flight of the Ozarks will also be accepted)

Program: Chapter Business Meeting, Elections

RSVP: By Monday, 9 December
To: LtCol Dean Smith, USMC, Retired
417-761-1816 or das1302@icloud.com

LtCol Smith will acknowledge ALL reservations received. If you do NOT receive a confirmation, please contact him directly.

ELECTED CHAPTER BOARD OFFICERS

PRESIDENT: Ron McCall, Capt, USAF, Retired

1ST VICE PRESIDENT: Becky Hutchings

2ND VICE PRESIDENT: (Open)

SECRETARY/TREASURER: Dean Smith, LtCol, USMC, Retired

IMMED PAST PRESIDENT: Chuck Guy, Colonel, USA, Retired

APPOINTED CHAPTER OFFICERS

CHAPLAIN: Becky Hutchings

LEGISLATIVE CHAIR: Anthony Willis, COL, USAF, Retired

AWARDS COORDINATOR: Frank Bridges, LtCol, USA, Retired

SURVIVING SPOUSE LIAISON: Becky Hutchings

AMBASSADOR: Chuck Guy, COL, USA, Retired

MEMBERSHIP CHAIR: Chuck Guy, Colonel, USA, Retired

WEBMASTER: Keith Oxby, W/O British Navy

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Ron McCall, Capt, USAF, Retired

2024 OEMOAA Monthly Schedule

Chapter monthly meetings will be held on the 3rd Friday, unless otherwise noted.

2024 Dates (Subject to change)

Dec 13, 1800hrs: Christmas Music with Springfield Sound

2025 Dates

Jan 17: Ashley Reynolds, KY3, Scams & Prevention

Feb 21: Kavan Stull, "President Harry Truman, WWI"

Mar 21: Kelly McGowan, "Simple Gardening"

Apr 18: Amber Allen, Alzheimer's Association

May 16: Kevin Weaver, The Warrior's Journey

June 20: Amber Allen, "Wits Workouts"

June: Springfield Cardinals Game

Quotes from Yogi Berra:

The Future ain't what it used to be.

If you don't know where you're going, you might end somewhere else

You can observe a lot by watching

Why buy good luggage? You only use it when you travel

We encourage all eligible members to also join our National organization, Military Officers Association of America. Information regarding membership options can be accessed at www.moaa.org

Our chapter maintains a presence on Facebook. We strive to keep this page current with information about chapter activities and opportunities. Members can access that page by following this link: www.facebook.com/groups/712416736284579

OEMOAA NAME TAGS

Some members and their spouses prefer a solid plastic name badge with a magnetic clasp. The member cost is \$10 per badge, payable in advance. Order forms will be available at the next two meetings. You can also email Dean Smith anytime and he will send you the form by return email. Please return completed forms to Dean at a meeting with the \$10 per badge fee. Nametags will be ready at the next regular dinner meeting. Yes, the name tags with the pin clasp will continue to be provided at no cost.