



# Ozark Empire News

Ozark Empire Chapter, Military Officers Association of America  
2131 West Republic Road, Box 164, Springfield,  
Missouri 65807



February, 2025

## A Word from the Chapter President

There was a good turnout for our January membership luncheon meeting. Your Board has secured this DAV facility for 6 months and positive feedback was received.

A new slate of officers was sworn in by outgoing President, Ron McCall. Your new Board members are as follows: Becky Hutchings, President, Anthony Willis, 1st Vice President, Frank Bridges, 2nd Vice President, and Dean Smith, Secretary/Treasurer.

In acknowledging past Presidents from our Chapter, 3 plaques were presented by Don Wolfinger, current President of Missouri's Affiliated Councils and Chapters (ACC) and Becky Hutchings, incoming President, OEMOAA, to: Ron McCall, President 2021-2024, Chuck Guy, President 2019-2020, and Frank Bridges, 2015-2016.

Don Wolfinger shared the National Advocacy in Action's (AIA) five key issues, outlined later in this newsletter.

Other state-level engagements include:

- Department of Economic Development: Missouri Military Preparedness & Enhancement Commission
- Missouri Veterans Commission
- Sustaining Ozark Partnership
- Membership Outreach

The military remains the most trusted U.S. institution, according to the latest Reagan National Defense Survey. In the seventh installment of the survey, 51% of respondents said they have "a great deal" of confidence in the military, up from 46% a year ago. *What to Watch: With China and Russia cited as the leading threats, 79% of survey respondents to a survey conducted by the Reagan Foundation Institute, said they want the U.S. to spend more on national defense, while 61% said they believe the military should be large enough to win two wars at once.* The survey is available here: [info.ausa.org/e/784...XDfkFQ](http://info.ausa.org/e/784...XDfkFQ).

This [link](https://www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/newsevents/news/Survivor-SBP-Newsletter/) has a wealth of helpful information about SBP, and might be helpful to those that are interested: <https://www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/newsevents/news/Survivor-SBP-Newsletter/>

Your new Board met following the luncheon meeting and presentation. There were several items of discussion to facilitate a smooth transition. Consensus was reached to donate \$1,500. to Honor Flight of the Ozarks, coming from earmarked donations, as well as our monthly 50/50 drawings. Thanks to everyone for your continued support.

As always, our newsletter is freely available on the chapter website, [www.OEMOAA.org](http://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.*

Good news for those eligible for Social Security benefits that were negatively impacted by the unfair provisions of the Government Pension Offset (GPO) or Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). The Social Security Fairness Act was passed and signed into law on 5 January 2025. Generally the reduction from those provisions amounts to 60 percent.

This law affects those schoolteachers, fire fighters, police, and especially civil service retirees that did not pay SSA because they participated in a private retirement system. That means anyone that has had their SSA benefits reduced can expect a raise. If they had a career with an employer that did not pay social security but earned eligibility by other employment and paid SS for 10 years minimum, or are a surviving spouse of a SSA benefits earner then they will get a raise. Just as a reminder, if you were married for over 10 years you can draw eligibility from their account without affecting their benefits.

If your SSA benefits are being reduced but you are receiving SS pension you will not have to do anything. Your benefits will be recalculated and a check for last year's back pay for 2024 will be sent to you by direct deposit. That includes survivors benefits from your spouse as a widow. If you have been denied any benefits from SSA, I encourage you to speak with the SSA office to see if you might now be eligible.

My main concern are those individuals that applied for SSA benefits and were told they were not eligible. They will not be in the system and will not get money owed to them since they are not currently in the system. Please help get the word out to everyone you know that might not know.

I worked on this as a member of the postmaster's professional organization currently called United Postmasters and Managers of America (UPMA). We had a powerful legislative committee and provided PAC money to support our champions in Congress. It seems to have finally paid off. To say I am surprised it passed is an understatement.

If you have questions, feel free to contact me, but for a decision on your eligibility you must contact the local SSA office. More information is available on the Internet at <https://ssfairness.org>.

Steve Vanderhoof  
660 886 0205  
[Svanderhoof856@att.net](mailto:Svanderhoof856@att.net)

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We will be touring the new Convoy of Hope facility at 1Convoy Drive on March 25 at 1:30 PM. We can take as many people as we want and may be able to allow non-MOAA members once we get a good count. Frank Bridges went out the facility recently and it is magnificent. The guard at the entry gate stated that, "you will be impressed". This is a great opportunity for us. We will have a sign-up sheet at the next meeting or you can contact Frank via email at [frankbridges@frankbridges.com](mailto:frankbridges@frankbridges.com).

Also, Plan ahead for our annual trip to the Cardinal Baseball Game, Thursday, June 17th at 7:00 PM

Please let Frank know of any other ideas for tours! Those tours would likely be in the Sep to Nov time frame.

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## 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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.va.gov).

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### Past Presidents Status

Any OEMOAA chapter member that has information concerning any of the below listed Past Presidents, please let Frank Bridges know, [frankbridges@frankbridges.com](mailto:frankbridges@frankbridges.com). We are trying to complete and update our historical files.

1986 - LTC Gayle Stephens; 1988 - COL David Morris; 1998 - COL H. L. (Bud) Burkes, USA; 2000 - CWO4 James R. Murphy, USA; 2001-2 - CAPT Danny Tervol, USMC; 2005-6 - MAJ James Echols, USAF.

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### FFTK

Spanning more than 3,360 miles, U.S. Route 20 is the longest road in the United States. Beginning in Boston, the road runs through New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana and Idaho before ending in Newport, Oregon. *What to Watch: This road is being designated as the **National Medal of Honor Highway** to recognize those who have earned the nation's highest military award for valor. The renaming was approved by Congress, passing the House last month and the Senate the year before. President Joe Biden signed it into law on Dec. 17.*

# 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/](http://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/](http://www.moaa.org/content/tmn/the-moaa-newsletter/)

- **Calls to Action:** Please stay alert for any “Calls to Action”. [www.moaa.org/](http://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](http://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®**

Note: Important TriCare updates for 2025 are attached as a separate document.

## February US Military History

**1779** – John Paul Jones takes command of Bonhomme Richard. Formerly commissioned as Duc de Duras, Bonhomme Richard was a warship in the Continental Navy.

**1789** – George Washington, the commander of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War, is unanimously elected the first president of the United States by all 69 presidential electors.

**1812** – Russia establishes Fort Ross on the coast north of San Francisco, eventually purchased by John Sutter in 1841

**1805** – Sacagawea, the Shoshone Indian interpreter and guide to the Lewis and Clark expedition, gives birth to her first child, Jean Baptiste Charbonneau.

**1861** – The Confederate States of America Provisional Congress convenes in Montgomery, Alabama. 1901 – US Army Dental Corps established

**1912** – Arizona admitted to the Union, as the 48<sup>th</sup> state.

**1942** – Federal government orders all domestic passenger car production stopped, and converted to wartime purposes

**1946** – U.S. Tests begins using the Marshall Islands as a nuclear testing site. These tests would continue until 1958.

**1955** – Operation Teapot begins. A series of 14 nuclear detonations at the Nevada Test Site, to determine the effects of nuclear weapons on a variety of materials and in a variety of conditions begins with detonation Wasp. This test evaluated the effects of low altitude detonations.

**1962** – The first US Air Force plane is lost in South Vietnam. A C-123 crashed while spraying defoliant. Also, President Kennedy authorizes US military advisors to return fire, if fired upon

**1964** – GI Joe debuts a popular American toy

**1933** – The USS Ranger becomes the US' first aircraft carrier, built specifically as a carrier.

**1962** – President Kennedy begins the blockade of Cuba. US bans importation of all Cuban goods.

**1974** – F-16 Fighting Falcon flies for the first time

**1978** – 1<sup>st</sup> “micro on a chip” patented by Texas Instruments

**1990** – Central Committee of the Soviet Union agrees that the Party give up its 70-year monopoly of political power

**1991** – In the most decisive actions of the Gulf War, VII Corps, moving directly east with three heavy divisions abreast, attacked the elite Iraqi Republican Guard units. At Medina Ridge, an attempted Iraqi ambush of the 1st Armored Division ended with the destruction of over 300 enemy tanks.

**2003** – A US Army Black Hawk helicopter on night training crashed in the Kuwaiti desert, killing all four crew members.

**2003** – The Bush administration sends supplies of humanitarian aid to the Gulf region to cope with refugees and displaced people.

**2013** – Former US Navy Seal Chris Kyle and another man are killed at a shooting range near Glen Rose, Texas

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We are in the early stage of starting a CWC (Coffee With Chuck) on the first Monday of each month. This is intended as a purely social get-together among friends, and is not affiliated with MOAA. The February CWC will be at 10:00 AM at Panera on South Campbell near Primrose. In March, we plan to meet at Neighbors Mill on Independence. They have a room that we can use until around 11:30 and we can close the door to help reduce background noise. We will be doing some “planning things” at the February meeting.



## January Meeting Recap



KY3's Investigative Reporter, Ashley Reynolds, was our guest speaker. She gave a very good presentation about some of the many ways that scammers attempt to dig in to our lives. Some of these include phishing emails, frantic-sounding phone calls whether purportedly from our grandchildren, various government agencies, or whomever. With the advancing technology of Artificial Intelligence (AI), spoofing of someone's voice is even possible, making the call recipient believe that the real person is

indeed on the line. She was able to relate instances of people losing sometimes thousands of dollars to scammers. Even legitimate-sounding charity names may be scams. She discussed how to investigate charities, to try and determine how much of their contributions actually reach their intended purpose. A big OEMOAA Thank You to Ashley Reynolds for a very informative, heartfelt presentation.



Don Wolfinger, LTC, USA (Ret), President of the Missouri Council of Chapters gave a short presentation about MOAA's upcoming Advocacy In Action campaign for 2025, slated for April, when he will personally be in Washington DC, to meet with legislators regarding MOAA's focus issues. These include:

1. Retirees/Veterans Toxic Exposure
2. Family/Survivor Spouse Employment
3. DOD/Healthcare Access to Care
4. VA Healthcare Support of Caregivers
5. Standby for Any Other Key Issue Papers

He also stressed the need for local members to interact with legislative offices in our district, to also help convey our message. This may be done by scheduling a visit with the local staff. Additionally, he discussed that our chapter may be asked to help sponsor a sub-chapter in the Ft Leonard Wood area, as we try to get an active chapter started there.



New Chapter Officers were installed, including President Becky Hutchings, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Anthony Willis, COL, USAF (Ret), 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Frank Bridges, LtCOL, USA (Ret), and Secretary/Treasurer Dean Smith, LtCOL, USMC (Ret). Let's all thank them for stepping up to serve in this way. We also need to support them, and continue to reach out to others to expand our membership.

Recognition was given to outgoing Chapter President Ron McCall, for his four years of service as President, as well as Chuck Guy, and Frank Bridges, for their past service as Chapter President.



## Chaplain's Corner

By Becky Hutchings

Here we are in February, and where the meteorologists take us, nobody knows! Winter certainly rose up to the challenge during January. Here's hoping you are staying inside and keeping warm and cozy!

The month of February marks two of our important leaders' birthdays, those of Presidents George Washington (Feb. 22) and Abraham Lincoln (Feb. 12). States vary on how these birthdays are celebrated. Missouri acknowledges them separately, giving state employees 2 days off work. The following offers a little history regarding Washington's Birthday.

"Until 1968, Washington's Birthday had always been celebrated on February 22. It was tradition and a powerful reminder of the man who helped create what we have today in the United States. On June 28, 1968, Congress passed the "Uniform Monday Holiday Act". This law was to provide uniform annual observances of certain legal public holidays on Mondays. The act was also created to provide federal employees with more three-day weekends. Under this new law, Washington's birthday would be celebrated on the third Monday in February, partially losing the value and identity of the importance of his birthday. Washington's birthday has not been celebrated on the actual day of his birth since the law took effect in 1971". (Taken from: mountvernon .org).

We also celebrate "LOVE" and on February 14. Although tradition tells us that love pertains to romantic relationships, I like to think of it on a more global scale. The act of true love includes kindness, gentleness, and selflessness. We can look to the Bible to find out just how much God values love:

- 1 Corinthians 13:4-8: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.
- John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

Jesus Himself tells us that the greatest commandment revolves around love as expounded in Matthew 22:37-40, where He says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind". Jesus also states a second commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself". Jesus says that these two principles are the most important and summarize all the laws and commands in Scripture.

So as you celebrate February 14 with your special person, or people, or quietly alone, remember that God loves you and me! You are enough!

My kids are getting me chocolate covered strawberries to keep the tradition going that my Bryan started some 28 years ago! Shhhh! Don't tell them I know!

Be encouraged!

**For our February Chapter meeting, we will again convene at DAV Hall, Chapter 11, located at 2525 E Division Ave, Springfield. This is located directly across from Downtown Airport, between Glenstone and US 65.**

**Our menu this month will again be a catered buffet, consisting of chicken alfredo (gluten free), and lasagna, salad, dessert, and beverage. Cost will be \$20 per plate.**

## February 2025 Meeting

**DATE:** Friday, 21 February 25

**PLACE:** **DAV Hall, Chapter 11**  
**2525 E Division Ave**  
**Springfield, MO**

**TIME:** 1100 – Social Hour  
50/50 voluntary donations, to support Honor Flight of the Ozarks. Drawing at the close of the presentation.  
1200 – Meal

**MENU:** Luncheon Meal, options as outlined on page 7

**Cost:** \$20/plate. (NOTE: 50/50 Drawing, and Donations for Honor Flight of the Ozarks will also be accepted)

**Program:** Kavan Stull: “President Harry S Truman’s WWII Experiences”

**RSVP:** By Monday, 17 February  
To: LtCol Dean Smith, USMC, Retired  
417-761-1816 or [das1302@icloud.com](mailto: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:** Becky Hutchings

**1ST VICE PRESIDENT:** Anthony Willis, COL, USAF, Retired

**2ND VICE PRESIDENT:** Frank Bridges, LtCol, USA, Retired

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

**IMMED PAST PRESIDENT:** Ron McCall, Capt, USAF, 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

**MEMBERSHIP CHAIR:** Chuck Guy, Colonel, USA, Retired

**WEBMASTER:** Keith Oxby, W/O British Navy

**NEWSLETTER EDITOR:** Ron McCall, Capt, USAF, Retired

## 2025 OEMOAA Monthly Schedule

Regular Chapter meetings will be held at Noon, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of the month, unless otherwise noted.

### 2025 Dates

Feb 21: Kavan Stull, “President Harry Truman, WWII”

Mar 21: April Eilers, VA Fayetteville

Apr 25: Amber Allen, Alzheimer’s Association

May 16: Kevin Weaver, The Warrior’s Journey

June 20: Amber Allen, “Wits Workouts”

June 27: **Springfield Cardinals Game**

Summer Break – July & August

Sep 19: Tricia Keltner, Compassus, “We Honor Vets”

Oct 17: Great Southern Bank, “Fraud Avoidance”

Nov 21: Missouri State Parks

Dec 5: Twin Oaks, Mulligan Room, TBA

Quotes from Yogi Berra:

I never said most of the things I said

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

When you come to a fork in the road, take it.

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](http://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](https://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 ([das1302@icloud.com](mailto:das1302@icloud.com)) 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.