



Ozark Empire News

Ozark Empire Chapter, Military Officers Association of America

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



June 2025

A Word from the Chapter President

Attendance was down last month. Inclement weather was forecast and several replied they were staying home because of potential storms. There was a glitch with our caterer, and no meal was prepared. Thanks to Chuck Guy for stepping up and bringing sub sandwiches at the last minute. While these situations occasionally happen, we don't expect any further issues. We will continue with our current caterer for the June luncheon and may consider other options for the future. This may be a topic for discussion at the June meeting.

Important dates to remember in June include (taken from June military observances; & veterans.missouri.edu):

June 6, 2025 – Anniversary of the World War II Allied invasion in Normandy, France, now known as D-Day.

Flag Day is June 14 and celebrates as the official symbol for the United States: our Stars and Stripes. Flag Day was first recognized by Congress on June 14, 1777, which became known as Flag Day.

Korean War Veterans Armistice Day (June 27, 1953).

Our chapter was awarded two Level of Excellence certificates at the recent MOAA Central Region Chapter Leaders Workshop in Oklahoma City on May 2-3, 2025.

Combat-injured veterans, representatives from veteran's advocacy groups, and lawmakers (like Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn.) spoke in support of the Major Richard Star Act during a May 21 press event on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

The Major Richard Star Act, a bipartisan bill with more than 340 cosponsors. Despite similar levels of support in previous congressional sessions, the bill has yet to cross the finish line, either as a standalone measure or as part of the annual National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The Wounded Warrior Project organized the Capitol Hill event as part of a renewed push on behalf of not just combat-injured warriors, but for the strength of the future force. This bill could impact 54,000 plus veterans. You can read more about this bill, and the veteran it is named after, in the May 22, 2025 MOAA Newsletter.

This will be our final newsletter until September, as we take the summer months of July and August off. Safe travels if you are planning trips away. Until we meet again.

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.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION REPORT

[TOP PRIORITY: Military Spouses Can't Wait - Add Them to the Work Opportunity Tax Credit](#)

Military spouses face a 21% unemployment rate, five times the national average, due to frequent moves and challenges tied to military life. Congress must incentivize employers to hire military spouses by adding them as a target group under the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program.

[TOP PRIORITY: Ask Congress to Address the Hazardous Unaccompanied Housing Conditions Rampant in the Military](#)

Thousands of servicemembers live in unsafe, substandard military housing due to years of underfunding and lack of oversight. Congress must require DoD to publicly report the condition of unaccompanied housing and ensure funding is used for necessary improvements.

[TOP PRIORITY: Stop the 34-Year Wait - Deliver Toxic-Exposed Veterans the Care They've Earned](#)

Millions of veterans exposed to toxic substances during their service are forced to wait decades –more than 34 years, on average – before they can access VA care and benefits for service-connected illnesses. Congress must pass legislation to bolster the legal framework for creating presumptive conditions, ensuring toxic-exposed veterans receive timely care.

[TOP PRIORITY: Honor Veteran Caregivers - Pass the Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement Act](#)

Veteran caregivers make profound personal and financial sacrifices to care for aging and disabled loved ones. Congress must pass the Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement Act to provide these caregivers with the education, employment, and retirement support they deserve.

[Urge Lawmakers to Resume CFPB Operations for Servicemembers](#)

Contact your representative and urge them to support the continued work of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) in conducting supervisory examinations for the Military Lending Act (MLA) and resuming work in the Office of Servicemember Affairs, which protects military families from predatory financial practices.

[Stand with Our Wounded Warriors: Advocate for the Major Richard Star Act](#)

Contact your representative and senators and urge them to support the Major Richard Star Act, which would authorize combat-injured veterans to receive their full DoD retirement pay earned for years of service and their full VA disability compensation for lifelong injury.

[Urge Your Representative to Cosponsor the Support Military Families Act](#)

Contact your representative and urge them to cosponsor the Support Military Families Act to ensure military spouses who work for the federal government can keep their jobs and support their servicemembers and families.

[Parity for Surviving Spouses: Increase Dependency and Indemnity Compensation](#)

Bipartisan legislation in the House (H.R. 680) 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.

[Love Lives On: Protect Surviving Spouses' Right to Remarry](#)

Contact your representative and senators and urge them to support the Love Lives On Act to secure the right for surviving military spouses to remarry at any age and retain their benefits.

[Improve OB-GYN Access for Military Families](#)

The TRICARE OBGYN Treatment and Access without Lags in Care Act (TOTAL Care Act) would launch a five-year pilot program allowing TRICARE Prime beneficiaries to receive obstetrical and

gynecological care without a referral. Tell your lawmakers to support this effort to reduce delays and strengthen access within the TRICARE benefit.

[Lend Your Support for the MOAA-Backed Bill to Support Military Sexual Trauma Survivors](#)

Contact your representative and senators and urge them to support the Servicemembers and Veterans Empowerment and Support Act to improve essential care and services in the Veterans Health Administration and ensure greater assistance when military sexual trauma (MST) survivors are applying for disability benefits through the Veterans Benefits Administration.

New Survivor Benefit Plan Payment Setup Coming Soon for Some Retirees

By: Kevin Lilley

April 22, 2025

Retirees who pay monthly Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) or Reserve Component Survivor Benefit Plan (RCSBP) premiums via “[direct remittance](#)” instead of having the premium deducted from their retirement pay must change how they submit those payments in the coming months.

Affected retirees should have received instructions on making the change from the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) in March, according to a [recent article at DFAS.mil](#), but some retirees with outdated contact information may not get the materials. **No action is required from those whose SBP/RCSBP payment is deducted from their retirement pay.**

[RELATED: [Change Your Address With DFAS](#) | [Change of Address Request Form \(DD Form 2866\)](#)]

In June, SBP/RCSBP payments that had been submitted to the Treasury Department’s Centralized Receivables Service must be submitted instead to DFAS Retired and Annuitant Pay. Those who receive a bill via postal mail will receive new payment instructions with their June invoice. Those who make automated payments can act early to set up new payment options:

- **Pay DFAS Electronically:** Fill out [this online form](#) with payment information. Retirees will need their billing statement and either bank account or debit card details.
- **Request a VA Deduction:** Those paying by direct remittance often do so because their retirement pay is offset by VA disability compensation. To have SBP/RCSBP premiums deducted from VA payments, fill out [this online form](#) and [upload it to DFAS online](#) or mail it to: Defense Finance and Accounting Service, U.S. Military Retired Pay, 8899 E 56th Street, Indianapolis, IN 46249-1200.
- **Pay DFAS by Mail:** Send monthly premium payments to: Defense Finance and Accounting Service, DFAS-CL, SBP Remittances, P.O. Box 979013, St. Louis, MO 63197-9000.

[MOAA WEBINAR RECORDING: [What You Need to Know About SBP](#)]

For more information on the changeover or other DFAS issues, contact the agency at (800) 321-1080 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Eastern, or visit the [DFAS Customer Service webpage](#).

Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks (VHSO) has received a prestigious 5-star rating for cleanliness from Becker's Hospital Review

Dear Veterans, Stakeholders and Community Partners,

We are pleased to announce that the Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks (VHSO) has received a prestigious 5-star rating for cleanliness from [Becker's Hospital Review](#). This recognition places VHSO among an elite group of only six hospitals in the state of Arkansas that have achieved this distinguished rating.

The 5-star rating is based on the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) surveys, conducted by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). These surveys provide a national, standardized measure of hospital patients' experiences during their recent inpatient stays. The data from these surveys, collected between April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024, was most recently updated on January 8, 2025.

Dr. George Velez, DHA, MBA, FACHE, VHSO Medical Center Director, expressed his gratitude and dedication in response to the award, stating: "We are very honored to receive this recognition. Our team works diligently to maintain a clean and safe environment for our patients and we understand the critical role cleanliness plays in patient safety."

We are incredibly proud of our team's hard work and commitment to providing the highest standards of cleanliness and safety for our Veterans.

Proud to serve our Nations Heroes.

Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks

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.

June US Military History

- 1775** – US Army founded by the Continental Congress
- 1775** – Continental Congress authorizes a “Chief Engineer” for the Army, the predecessor for what would become the US Army Corps of Engineers
- 1789** - US Constitution, enacted as Sovereign Law, goes into effect
- 1813** – First US flag flown in battle on board frigate USS Essex in the Pacific
- 1800** - Presidential Executive Mansion, later known as the White House, completed. President and Mrs John Adams are the first residents
- 1845** – The Congress of the Republic of Texas votes to accept annexation by the US, after 10 years as an independent Republic
- 1876** – Native Americans, under leadership of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse, wipe out Lt Col George Custer, along with much of his 7th Cavalry, at the Battle of Little Big Horn
- 1877** – Henry Ossian Flipper, born a slave in Thomasville, Georgia, in 1856, is the first African American cadet to graduate from the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. Flipper was never spoken to by a white cadet during his four years at West Point
- 1924** – Indian Citizenship Act signed in to law, conferring citizenship on all Native Americans born within the territorial limits of the country.
- 1942** – Japanese Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, commander of the fleet that attacked Pearl Harbor, launches a raid on Midway Island with almost the entirety of the Japanese Navy.
- 1944** – The U-505 became the first enemy submarine captured by the U.S. Navy under Admiral Dan Gallery.
- 1950** - Armed forces from Communist North Korea, smash into South Korea, setting off the Korean War
- 1963** – President John Kennedy names Winston Churchill an honorary US Citizen
- 1971** – 26th Amendment to the US Constitution ratified, lowering voting age to 18
- 1972** – More than thirty US planes and helicopters fly through heavy fire to rescue Capt R.C. Locher, who had been trapped northwest of Hanoi, since his Phantom jet went down on May 10.
- 1979** - During a summit meeting in Vienna, President Jimmy Carter and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev sign the SALT-II agreement, providing guidelines for limiting nuclear weapons
- 1983** – Space Shuttle Challenger launched, carrying Dr Sally Ride, the first American woman astronaut
- 1991** – Mount Pinatubo (4,750 feet high) erupted, forcing closure of Clarke Air Force Base
- 2003** – North Korea announces that it possesses nuclear arms

May Meeting Recap



Kevin Weaver, CEO of Warrior's Journey, gave us a good presentation about the history, organization, and mission of Warrior's Journey. They are headquartered here in Springfield, Missouri, but have an international footprint. At this time, they have outreach centers in both Germany and Japan. They provide support for veterans facing a wide variety of both visible as well as hidden injuries, sustained as a result of their military service. Their primary focus is in dealing with invisible wounds, helping veterans achieve real strength and resilience. They have been invited by unit commanders in to various military units around the country, as well as overseas, as those units help their members prepare for deployment, and as they return.

The website of Warrior's Journey is www.thewarriorsjourney.org. They provide support through one-on-one interactions, small groups, as well as larger events, including a golf tournament with silent auction, raffle, and dinner. They are always looking for additional volunteers to serve, as well as financial support to help them continue their mission. They also have a variety of articles on their website, as well as links to their excellent podcast.

Thank you, Kevin, for acting on the burden that was on your heart, and for sharing your organization's mission and goals with us.

ROTC/JROTC Awards Report



We have finished all of the Spring Awards Day Ceremonies! Brian Spangler presented Cadet Damian Frazey the MOAA Award at Forsyth High School. Frank Bridges presented the MOAA Award at Hillcrest to Joshua Wascher. Sadly Joshua had a family emergency, but another cadet accepted on his behalf. Colonel Steve Tupper handled both Senior ROTC units at Missouri S & T in Rolla and the Waynesville High School Junior ROTC.

Hollister High School did not host a ceremony, as this is their first year. However their Senior instructor says that it will definitely happen next year. All in all a great year for Senior and Junior ROTC Awards Days.

Frank was present at the Missouri State Commissioning and recognized the top Cadet for 2025, Second Lieutenant Vance Mullins. Due to an error in the ordering process, Lt Mullins will receive his saber at a later date.

Becky Hutchings attended the MOAA Central Region Chapter Leaders Workshop in Oklahoma City on May 2-3, 2025. Some key points from the Chapter Management breakout session are included here.

Affiliated Councils & Chapters Areas of Focus:

- Leadership
- Membership
- Advocacy
- Community Outreach

Health V. Effectiveness

A healthy chapter is an organization that is able to sustain itself over time.

An effective chapter is one that positively impacts MOAA's mission.

Effective Councils

- Represent the consensus of member chapter leaders
- Provide a forum for exchange of ideas
- Lead and coordinate state legislative matters in interest of the military and veteran community
- Support MOAA's legislative and other priorities
- Visit chapters, participate in virtual meetings
- Help monitor and maintain healthy affiliate system of chapters

Effective Chapters

- Have a clearly stated chapter purpose/mission statement
- Focus on leadership pipeline and best practices
- Impact legislation through advocacy and engagement
- Engage in impactful community service
- Promote membership growth through recruitment and retention

One statistic that unfortunately stood out, was that less than 10% of national members belong to local chapters.



Chaplain's Corner

By Becky Hutchings

Here we are in June, the month that officially kicks off summer. While I do not want to complain about the rain, it seems like we have received our fair share. It is nice to see the green grass and vivid colors expressed in the floral blooms resulting from that rainfall.

Have you ever heard the expression, "Bloom where you are planted"? While this is not a direct biblical verse, it encapsulates the core themes of faithfulness, contentment, and making the most of one's circumstances, which are central to many biblical passages and teachings. Scripture encourages contentment with one's lot in life, trusting that God has a purpose for each person's place. This is reflected in passages like Philippians 4:11-13, which speaks of being content in any circumstance. (Taken from: AI Overview bloom where you are planted).

As we go our separate ways over the next couple of months, let us become intentional about how we live, breathe, and interact with those around us. May we remain rooted in faithfulness, and be content in our circumstances. Our Lord is walking beside us during every situation we face, in the good times or the bad. May we exhibit kindness each day to those around us. People are starving for someone who cares.

May you enjoy each day, whether or not you plan to travel or stay close to home this summer. I pray you will be blessed and likewise be a blessing to others.

May you be encouraged and blessed.

Coffee With Chuck (CWC), a non-OEMOAA event, just a time to gather and swap stories, will be on the first Monday of the month at Traveler's House Coffee & Tea, 2151 W Republic Rd. September will be an exception as the first Monday is Labor Day. Traveler's has a meeting room, which will be reserved for us. They have available coffee, tea, and pastry selections. Come for a time of casual conversation.

From our Chapter Travel Agent **Frank Bridges**

On all of our tours, please feel free to bring a friend or two. If we start getting larger numbers this may have to be reconsidered.

Our Tour Schedule:

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------|---------|----------|
| ○ Cardinals Baseball Game | (Thursday Evening) | June 19 | 7:00 PM |
| ○ OTC Center for Advanced Manufacturing | | Sept 16 | 1:30 PM |
| ○ Greene County Emergency Management Center | | Oct 14 | 1:30 PM |
| ○ Air & Military Museum of the Ozarks (\$6/Person) | | Nov 19 | 1:30 PM |
| ○ Wreath Laying MO Vet Cemetery | | Dec TBD | 11:00 AM |

May 2025 Meeting

DATE: Friday, 20 June 25

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

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

MENU: Luncheon Meal, options as outlined on page 6

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

Program: Amber Allen, “Wits Workouts”

RSVP: By Monday, 16 June
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: Becky Hutchings

1ST VICE PRESIDENT: Anthony Willis, Colonel, 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, Colonel, USAF, Retired

AWARDS COORDINATOR: Frank Bridges, LtCol, USA, Retired

SURVIVING SPOUSE LIAISON: Becky Hutchings

AMBASSADOR: Chuck Guy, Colonel, USA, Retired

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

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

2025 Dates

June 20: Amber Allen, “Wits Workouts”

June 27: **Springfield Cardinals Game**

Summer Break – July & August

Sep 19: Jennifer Henderson, VSO Briefing

Oct 17: Great Southern Bank, “Fraud Avoidance”

Nov 21: Missouri State Parks

Dec 12: DAV Hall. Program TBA

Jan 2026: Kavan Stull, Harry Truman in WWI

Ships are safe in the harbor, but that’s not what they are built for

You can’t have a new reality with an old mentality

If someone could only see your actions and not hear your words, what would they say are your priorities?

Fear doesn’t stop death – it stops life.

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 (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.