



# Ozark Empire News

Ozark Empire Chapter, Military Officers Association of America

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



September 2025

**September Meeting:** Noon, Friday, 19 Sept 25, DAV Hall, 2525 E Division, Springfield.

**Speaker:** Sabrina Bonnette, **VSO Briefing.**

**RSVP to LtCol Dean Smith, USMC, Ret.**

Welcome back after a nice and hot summer break. Hope you were able to enjoy the time off and perhaps travel, enjoy time with family, or simply relax.

As we resume our regular gatherings, here are a few priority issues listed in the recent MOAA Newsletter from August 21, 2025.

Lt. Gen. Brian T. Kelly, USAF (Ret), urged lawmakers to ensure important servicemember- and military family-focused provisions remain intact as the FY 2026 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) moves toward floor consideration. The letter was sent to every member of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees – panels that play a pivotal role in shaping defense policy.

## **MOAA-Backed Caregiver Aid, Plus Other VA-Focused Legislation, Moves Through Key Committee:**

A legislative lifeline for veteran caregivers who face an uncertain future as their caregiving duties end was among six MOAA-backed bills advanced through the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee late last month.

The committee's efforts will result in progress across critical areas of veteran and caregiver support. The bills moving forward as of July 30:

- **S. 879, Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement (3R) Act:** Provides job training, professional relicensure support, retirement planning, and bereavement counseling to family caregivers who are enrolled in VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC), which will assist them after their caregiving duties conclude.
- **S. 275, Veterans' Assuring Critical Care Expansions to Support Servicemembers (ACCESS) Act:** Expands residential rehabilitation treatment program for veterans with mental health and substance use disorders, particularly in geographic areas where VA services are limited or not available. It also enhances veterans' access to community care.
- **S. 607, Improving Veteran Access to Care Act:** Requires VA to establish an interdisciplinary patient team to modernize scheduling, coordinate services, and cut wait times.
- **S. 1245, Servicemembers and Veterans Empowerment and Support Act:** Strengthens health care and benefits for survivors of military sexual trauma and assault.
- **S. 1383, Veterans Accessibility Advisory Committee Act:** Creates an independent advisory body to improve accessibility for veterans with disabilities.
- **S. 2392, Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act:** Authorizes an annual cost-of-living adjustment to protect the value of veterans' compensation and benefits.

**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.

### [Ensure Servicemembers Can Afford Housing—Restore Full BAH](#)

Our troops don't get to choose where they serve—but they should always be able to afford a home. Tell Congress to restore full Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) and support military families.

### [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.

### [Don't Let Veterans' Life Insurance Fall Behind Inflation](#)

Contact your senators and urge them to support the Fairness for Servicemembers and Their Families Act, which will require the VA to regularly review and update life insurance coverage limits for servicemembers and veterans, ensuring they keep pace with inflation and rising market costs.

### [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.

## [Support Leave Parity for USPHS Servicemembers](#)

MOAA is committed to addressing parity gaps in U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps benefits and personnel policy. Please join us in urging members of Congress to support legislation that would align USPHS Commissioned Corps leave policy with that of the other uniformed services.

## [Expand TRICARE Eligibility for Guard and Reserve](#)

The Servicemember Healthcare Freedom Act would bring health care savings to thousands of servicemembers and their families by allowing Guard and Reserve members who are also federal employees to enroll in TRICARE Reserve Select.

## [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.

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## **New Survivor Benefit Plan Payment Setup Coming Soon for Some Retirees**

By: Kevin Lilley

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](#).

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## **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](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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## September US Military History

**1783** - The Treaty of Paris between the United States and Great Britain officially ends the American Revolutionary War.

**1787** - The United States Constitution is signed by 38 of 41 delegates present at the conclusion of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia

**1814** - In a turning point in the War of 1812, the British fail to capture Baltimore. During this battle, Francis Scott Key composes his poem "Defense of Fort McHenry", which later becomes the US National Anthem

**1862** - Confederate General Robert E Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, and Union General George McClellan's Army of the Potomac fight to a standstill along a Maryland Creek, on the bloodiest day in American history. Between the two armies, a total of 22,807 casualties. At the end of the day, both armies simply quit fighting along Antietam Creek, due to exhaustion

**1863** - Battle of Chickamauga Creek, one of the bloodiest battles of the American Civil War. Each side lost about 28 percent of their forces.

**1908** - Orville Wright begins two weeks of flight trials that impressed onlookers with his complete control of new Type A Military Flyer.

**1917** - The 26th "Yankee" Division (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT) becomes the first American division to arrive in Europe during World War I.

**1939** - In response to Hitler's invasion of Poland, Britain and France, both allies of the overrun nation, declare war on Germany.

**1942** - President Franklin Roosevelt mandates gasoline rationing

**1947** - National Security Act provides for formation of US Air Force

**1960** - The USS Enterprise (CVN 65), the first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, is launched at Newport News, VA

**1963** - 20 Black students entered public schools in Birmingham, Tuskegee, and Mobile, Ala, following a standoff between Federal authorities and Gov. George Wallace

**1972** - NASA unveils its first space shuttle, Enterprise.

**1978** - Camp David Accords, between Egypt's President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachim Begin. signed at the White House

**1984** - Twelve people killed when a suicide car bomber attacks the US Embassy complex in Beirut, Lebanon.

**1991** - Mount Pinatubo produces a massive volcanic eruption, resulting in the US abandoning Clark Air Force Base, PI



## June Meeting Recap



Our June 20th speaker was again Amber Allen from the University of Missouri Extension in Greene County, presenting to our group for the third time. Her topic was “Wits Workouts”. It dealt with keeping your mind active and involved. The first exercise was called “Mind Math”. Numbers got assigned to several different categories such as your age; the number of countries that you lived in; have you had dance lessons; 7-8 hours of sleep, and the list goes on. The point is that the higher the number, the more likely you will be mentally alert. Another exercise was filling in the missing word in title of older movie which gives an indication about the quality of your memory. All of Amber’s presentations have dealt with the needs of folks in our age range. We may have her again as she is working on some other related topics.

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Our next Community Facility Visit is on September 16th, before our next meeting, at 1:30 PM at the OTC, Center for Advanced Manufacturing. If you are planning to attend, please let Frank Bridges know as you will need a parking permit. Frank will be there early with the permits in front of the building at the corner of National Ave and Chestnut Expressway. However, the front doesn’t face Chestnut. You will need to come around “back” which is the “front”. If you need clarification, call Frank 573-308-7272. Frank has had a preview of the tour and had discussed with some of the staff regarding “clean room manufacturing”. It is an amazing facility and the Springfield area is fortunate to have it. Please plan to attend and let Frank know, [frankbridges@frankbridges.com](mailto:frankbridges@frankbridges.com)

The October tour will be of the Emergency Management Facility at 330 W. Scott which is just off of Booneville. The November Tour is at the Air and Military Museum 2305 E. Kearney St, and December will be wreath laying at the Missouri Veteran’s Cemetery. More later. We have some ideas for 2026 tours but if you have an idea for a place to visit, please let Frank know.

Also, at the present time, we have three open dates for speakers in 2026. These are February, June, and November. Please forward ideas to Frank. 573-308-7272, or [frankbridges@frankbridges.com](mailto:frankbridges@frankbridges.com)



## Chaplain's Corner

By Becky Hutchings

Greetings! It is good to reconnect after our summer break. I hope your summer has been a time of refreshing (even with the extreme temperatures).

Our pastor has started a new sermon series on Seasons. Threaded throughout the past few weeks he has encouraged us to be refreshed, no matter what season in which we find ourselves. As we approach the fall season, those with children are beginning a new school year. Others may be preparing for marriage and yet others are empty nesters.

An important truth to remember is that no matter what season of life we are in, we add value to our circle (or communities). Sometimes age brings with it a feeling of uselessness. Age can make us move a little slower and wear out a lot faster. However, the value of wisdom we have stored up over the years is priceless.

On a personal note, my house is one of multiple generations. My daughter and son-in-law, and a grandson share my home. More recently a granddaughter and her new baby (Isaiah, less than a week old), are residing in my home most of the time as she learns about motherhood. While many have commented that I might be crazy-I am truly blessed. We are all learning from each other and housing four generations under a single roof can be hectic, but also extremely rewarding.

While this living situation would not work for everyone, it represents the various seasons of lives.

The Bible speaks of seasons in two primary ways: physical seasons and seasons of life. Physically, the Bible highlights that God established the cyclical nature of seasons (seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter) as a testament to His faithfulness and order in creation. In terms of life, the Bible uses the imagery of seasons to illustrate the different phases and experiences individuals go through, emphasizing that there is a time for everything and that God is present in every season. (Taken from: What Does Scripture Say About Seasons).

The phrase "I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint" from [Jeremiah 31:25](#) means that God promises to provide rest, strength, and renewal to those who are tired and depleted, both physically and spiritually. It signifies God's compassion and willingness to offer comfort and restoration to those who are burdened and weary. (Taken from: scripture on refreshing).

Where do you stand right now? Do you need to be refreshed? Do you relish the season of life you are currently in? Or do you need to be refreshed? Reach out in prayer if you need to readjust where you are in life. God will answer.

Blessings and be encouraged.

Our April meeting was not as well attended as previous meetings. Several responded they would be out-of-town. We also have some that have been ill or are recovering from surgery. The DAV staff have welcomed us to continue meeting for the rest of this calendar year at their facility. December meeting is still not settled, however this will be announced soon.

- Our caterer has been willing to accept meal suggestions and a few have mentioned they would like to have healthier options. This information will be shared with her.

## September 2025 Meeting

**DATE:** Friday, 19 Sept 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:** Sabrina Bonnette VSO Briefing

**RSVP:** By Monday, 15 September  
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, 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 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday, unless otherwise noted.

### 2025 Dates

Sep 19: VSO Briefing

Oct 17: Great Southern Bank, "Fraud Avoidance"

Nov 21: Missouri State Parks

Dec 5: Twin Oaks, Mulligan Room, 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](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 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.