



Ozark Empire News

Ozark Empire Chapter, Military Officers Association of America

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



April, 2026

A Word from the Chapter President

REMINDER: The April 17, 2026 meeting will **not be** held as regularly scheduled. We cancelled our meeting so people would have the opportunity to attend the Veteran Valor event at Evangel University without having to choose between the two meetings. You must register for this event as free lunch will be served. If you are interested in attending the luncheon, at no charge, the link is register is: www.evangel.edu/veteranvalorday

There was a small group of 12 in attendance at our March luncheon meeting. In an effort to encourage higher attendance, some changes were made. The dining/meeting area was transformed into a more friendly, welcoming environment, with table adjustments for improved conversation, colored table covers added, along with centerpieces. A new food vendor was selected who is making our food on-site.

Make sure to attend our May 15 meeting as we will host a speaker from MOAA National. We will also have a short business meeting to vote on the updated bylaws, which have been distributed both electronically and physically at the March meeting. The wording was changed to be consistent with previously voted on meeting changes for 2027.

From the March 26, 2026 MOAA Newsletter: 2027 COLA? The 2.8% prediction [made this month](#) by one statistical model is the same as the model's February figure. The typical Social Security recipient would receive a little less than \$60 more per month should the prediction prove accurate.

The four 2026 priority Advocacy in Action (AiA) items are as follows: (Don Wolfinger, Missouri Council President, will be in Washington for Advocacy In Action, 4/15/26, emphasizing each of these points):

1. Guard VA Benefits Act-Protect veterans from claims sharks.
2. Military Care Act-Improve access to care at military hospitals and clinics.
3. Shutdown Fairness Act-Ensure servicemembers receive pay and benefits.
4. Major Richard Star Act-End the unjust pay offset for combat-injured veterans.

Some Key April 2026 Military Dates:

- April 1–30: Month of the Military Child
- April 5: Gold Star Spouses Day
- April 9: National Former POW Recognition Day
- April 14: Air Force Reserve Birthday
- April 23: Army Reserve Birthday

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.*

OEMOAA Chapter Membership Meeting Minutes

Date: 20 Feb 2026, 1200 hrs

DAV Hall, 1200 hrs.

Members Present: Becky Hutchings, President; Ron McCall (spouse: Carla), Immediate Past President; Frank Bridges, 2nd Vice President, Arlene Chriswell, Bill Pickett, John Hathcock (spouse: Susan), Steve Vanderhoof, Charles Guy, David Reed, Ellen Duvall, Brian Spangler, Larry Henry (spouse: Ann). Guests Present: Don Wolfinger, Missouri Council of Chapters President; Denny Garner, Surviving Spouse Liaison, St Louis Chapter.

Items for Discussion

1. Veteran Valor Event. Hosted by Evangel University. Several of our members attended this event last year, and gave a very good review. Invitations have been extended to members again this year, scheduled for 17 April, which conflicts with our scheduled April Chapter meeting. Several members indicated that they would be attending the Veteran Valor event, instead of our chapter meeting. Motion was made (Steve Vanderhoof) and seconded (Chuck Guy), to cancel our scheduled chapter meeting, to allow members' attendance at the Veteran Valor event. Motion Passed. Online invitation/reservation form will be sent to membership (Ron McCall). Members will individually confirm attendance. Event is held at no cost to attendees, hosted by Evangel University, and includes a chapel assembly, starting at 0945, followed by a meal at 1130.
2. Attendance at regular Chapter meetings has been slowly declining. Additionally, no volunteer candidates have been identified to fill upcoming elected Board positions. Several conflicting factors to consider: Day-time meetings make it very difficult for working individuals to attend, while evening meetings create difficulty among our more senior members to be able to drive after dark. Recruiting efforts to identify and enlist new members have met with minimal results. Consideration has been given to disbanding the Ozark Empire chapter, with disposition of chapter assets. Before facing and answering that question, suggestion was made to move to quarterly chapter meetings in 2027. Meeting time, location, and format to be decided. This would necessitate a change in chapter bylaws, which can be addressed. The chapter members have initiated a monthly informal get-together at a local coffeehouse, which has met with good success. It is anticipated among the attendees that this activity will continue. Motion was made (Steve Vanderhoof) and seconded (Larry Henry), **to continue with monthly meetings through 2026, transitioning to quarterly meetings in 2027**. Meeting format to be determined. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Importance of maintaining a chapter presence in southwest Missouri was emphasized by Don Wolfinger, in terms of keeping in contact with area legislators and their staff, to hold Veterans' issues within their field of focus.

Meeting Adjourned: 1330

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.

March Meeting Recap



At our March meeting, we were visited by Kelly McGowan, a representative from the University of Missouri Extension. She is a Field Specialist in Horticulture, and has served in this capacity for the past 12 years. Her topics included grasses, flowering plants, and trees. She discussed the favorability of fescue grasses, as they are hardy enough to withstand our winters, and typically green up early in the Spring. She also recommends coral honeysuckle as a favorite of pollinators and hummingbirds, and swamp milkweed for the benefit of monarch butterflies. We live in the Fall migratory flyway for monarchs, and having milkweed, one of their favorite food sources, as well as their favorite place to lay

eggs, is very beneficial for them. She also discussed some preferred, as well as bad practices for trees. She spoke strongly against topping of trees, but does recommend other, proper pruning methods. She also discussed proper planting methods for new trees. As Thank You gift, she was presented with a fresh floral arrangement. Also, our meeting room was warmly decorated with table covers and fresh cut flowers, by Chuck Guy. A Big Thank You to Chuck for this nice gesture.



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®**

As High School JROTC Awards season approaches, Frank Bridges will be reaching out in the near future, asking for volunteers to act as presenters at the various high schools around the area where we support their JROTC programs. When Frank contacts various ones of our membership, please try to make yourselves available for the evening. This is a great way to get MOAA’s name out, and to encourage the young members of these JROTC units, in their educational pursuits. Thank you for your support and assistance in this effort.

April US Military History

1803: Louisiana Purchase completed

1805: US Marines engaged in Battle of Derna, leading to the line in the Marine Corps Hymn - The Shores of Tripoli. This marks the first time the Marines fought on foreign soil.

1861: US Civil War begins, when Major Robert Anderson refused to surrender Fort Sumter, leading Brig Gen P.G.T. Beauregard to fire on the fort

1865: US Civil War ends, with the surrender of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia to Ulysses S. Grant, at Appomattox Courthouse. This brings to a close the devastating loss of 620,000 American lives.

1865: Abraham Lincoln assassinated

1923: Colonel Jacob Schick receives a patent for Schick razors

1942: Following surrender of Luzon to the Japanese, 75,000 Filipino and American troops begin a forced march to a prison camp near Cabanatuan, known as the Bataan Death March

1944: While vacationing in Warm Springs, GA, President Roosevelt suffers a stroke and dies

1948: Berlin Airlift commences to provide relief to the surrounded city

1960: USS Triton, a nuclear-powered submarine, completes the first submerged circumnavigation of the globe. This took place between February 24, and April 25, covering 26,723 miles

1961: Bay of Pigs invasion

1963: USS Thresher, nuclear-powered submarine fails to surface 230 miles east of Boston, claiming 129 lives

1970: Apollo 13 suffers a severe malfunction on its journey to the moon on April 13, safely returns to Earth on April 17.

1973: C141 Starlifter dubbed the Hanoi Taxi, makes the first flight of Operation Homecoming. A

total of 54 such missions flew out of Hanoi. Each plane carried 40 former POWs. To this day, there continue to be over 1,000 individuals still unaccounted for.

1983: Space Shuttle Challenger made its maiden voyage, carrying the first US female astronaut, Sally Ride

1989: Battleship USS Iowa's Number 2 gun turret explodes while on maneuvers northeast of Puerto Rico

1990: Space Shuttle Discovery places Hubble telescope into orbit, with an orbital period of 97 minutes

1995: A massive explosion at the Alfred P Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City kills 168

2001: US Pentagon destroys its last canister of napalm

2003: Baghdad falls.

2009: Captain Richard Phillips of the MV Maersk Alabama, who was abducted by Somali pirates, is rescued by the US Navy

2014: A shooting spree at Fort Hood, Texas, leaves four dead, including the gunman, and 16 others injured.



Chaplain's Corner

By Becky Hutchings

Here we are and Spring has sprung us right into April! As this article is being written, it is 89 degrees outside. It feels like we skipped over Spring and moved directly from Winter to Summer. Hopefully Mother Nature will figure all of this out soon so we can settle into some lovely Spring weather.

Regardless of the weather, we are approaching Easter, the time of year when we celebrate the day Christ rose from the grave. Passover is a significant Jewish holiday associated with Easter that is celebrated with a feast. (Following taken from: vojisrael.com). This feast day commemorates God's divine deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Its name comes from the story of the tenth plague (the death of the firstborn), at which time, the Death Angel passed over the Israelites' homes, sparing the firstborn of their families.

Passover becomes even more significant when we realize it points to an even greater event, the death of the ultimate Passover Lamb, Yeshua (Jesus). His death corresponded to the Old Testament sacrifice in many ways. Like the Passover lamb, He was a mature male (Luke 3:23), none of His bones were broken (Ex. 12:46; John 19:36), He was thoroughly examined and found spotless (1 Pet. 2:22), and He was slain for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3; Rev. 1:5). We boast that we've been redeemed, "not with perishable things like silver and gold – but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Pet. 1:18–19).

Just as the Jewish people were saved from the death of the firstborn by applying the Passover lamb's blood to their homes, those who place Yeshua's (Jesus') blood on the "doorposts" of their hearts will be saved from spiritual death. Passover reminds us of God's faithfulness in delivering His chosen people from bondage in Egypt and delivering us from our sins by sending the Lamb of God, Yeshua, our Messiah. It is why God can say to us, "When I see his blood, I will pass over you."

L'Shana HaBa'ah B'Yerushalayim or "Next Year in Jerusalem!" also has significant meaning to followers of Yeshua, the Messiah, because we expect Him to return at any moment! We do not know the day or hour of His second coming, but we wait in hope, knowing that just as the Messiah came once to free us from sin, He will come again to establish His kingdom.

The Jewish traditions from old as well as the modern day correlation between the old and new are fascinating to me. It shows us about the love of our great God for His people. That love for the Israelites is extended to all of humanity through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

May we all live in His love and accept the greatest gift of all-Jesus, who died for our sins that we might live with Him forever someday.

May you be encouraged and blessed.

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Our May 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.

April 2026 Meeting

DATE: **We WILL NOT be meeting as a Chapter this month.**

PLACE: **Veteran Valor Day, Evangel University**

TIME: 0945 – Chapel Service, Spence Chapel

1100 – Luncheon, on Evangel Campus

MENU: Luncheon Meal – Evangel University

Cost: No cost to attend, but reservations are needed

Program: Evangel University Veteran Valor Day

RSVP: Online to Evangel University at www.evangel.edu/veteranvalorday

2026 OEMOAA Monthly Schedule

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

2026 Dates

April 17: (Veteran Valor Day, Evangel University)
May 15: Leslie Saylor, Senator Schmitt's Office
June 19: Elder Law
Summer:
Sept 18: LTC Brennan Cook, "JROTC, Nixa HS"
Oct 16: Missouri Veteran's Home
Nov 20: Nutrition for Seniors

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

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.

ELECTED CHAPTER BOARD OFFICERS

PRESIDENT: Becky Hutchings

1ST VICE PRESIDENT: (OPEN)

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: (OPEN)

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