



Ozark Empire News

Ozark Empire Chapter, Military Officers Association of America

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



September 2026

Welcome back! Hoping your summer was filled with fun, travels, visiting friends and family, or simply relaxing in your air-conditioned homes.

We had a good turnout for our June meeting. Several attended as a result of the email sent out by Steve Vanderhoof, to several hundred members of National who fall within our Chapter's catchment area. This list was provided to us from MOAA. Most of these people do not belong to a chapter.

Don Wolfinger, President, Council of Chapters, MOAA, requested chapter presidents to share this information with their membership. "Right now, Missouri Council of Chapters has just two elected officials, President and Secretary. The loss of the Treasurer the late Jeff Long, made the situation worse. So it is vitally important that we reconstitute the council".

Along these same lines, our OEMOAA Chapter is currently working without a Secretary, or 1st or 2nd Vice President. We have no slate of officers for 2027 as those currently holding positions will have fulfilled their tenure at the end of this year. We also need to fill Awards Presentations and Newsletter positions. If no volunteers step forward, our chapter will disband as of January 1, 2027.

FROM MOAA:

Higher COLA, Higher Risk

MOAA tracks COLA figures not just for financial planning purposes, but to ensure service-earned benefits (like retirement pay and VA disability benefits) retain their value. Without these inflation-based increases, the purchasing power of this earned compensation would drop sharply over time.

Threats to these benefits are far from theoretical – from “[COLA Minus 1 Percent](#)” in the mid-2010s to fighting off [a COLA repeal for military retirees](#) in the 1980s, MOAA has made securing this adjustment a key part of its advocacy work for decades. And while no pending legislation would target the benefit, ever-present language in a regular Congressional Budget Office [report on deficit-reduction options](#) would re-index the adjustment and possibly weaken the benefit for retirees and other COLA recipients by billions of dollars a year.

Higher COLA projections make the adjustment a more tempting target for lawmakers, but MOAA will continue its work to ensure the full value of uniformed services retirement is preserved.

Keep up with the latest on this issue at our [COLA Watch page](#) and at [MOAA.org/news](#).

September 2026 Military Observances

- September 2: [V-J Day](#) (Victory over Japan Day)
- September 11: Patriot Day (National Day of Service and Remembrance; flags flown at half-staff)
- September 18: U.S. Air Force Birthday (Established in 1947)
- September 18: [POW/MIA Recognition Day](#) (Third Friday in September)
- September 27: Gold Star Mother's and Family's Day (Last Sunday in September)

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

Shutdown Fairness Act ([S. 3168](#))

What it does: Allows the Pentagon and the Department of Homeland Security to continue paying servicemembers during any future funding lapse

Who it supports: Currently serving, including National Guard and Reserve members.

MOAA's take: The best solution remains a timely appropriations process. The bills does NOT include members of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps or the NOAA Commissioned Corps; MOAA continues to advocate for their inclusion.

How you can help: [Send a letter to your lawmakers now.](#)

Improve and Enhance the Work Opportunity Tax Credit Act ([H.R. 6231](#) | [S. 3265](#))

What it does: Modernizes the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), a nonrefundable tax credit employers can take for hiring target group members during the employee's first year on the job, by increasing the amount of the credit and adding military spouses as a target group. The program is intended to reduce the unemployment rate of "job seekers who have consistently faced barriers to employment" by incentivizing employers with a tax credit, according to the Labor Department.

Who it supports: Unemployed veterans and military spouses.

MOAA's take: MOAA has long championed this program, and the addition of military spouses. Continuing to offer this tax credit to employers while enhancing the program will ensure the veteran unemployment rate remains low. Expanding this benefit to military spouses improves financial stability for the currently serving military family, increasing military readiness and retention rates.

How you can help: [Send a letter to your lawmakers now.](#)

Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding (GUARD) VA Benefits Act ([H.R. 1732](#))

What it does: Reinstates criminal penalties for unaccredited claim representatives who charge unauthorized fees while assisting veterans with filing a claim for VA disability compensation benefits.

Who it supports: Veterans and retirees.

MOAA's take: Veterans deserve trusted, ethical, and accountable support when filing disability claims – support that protects their privacy, respects their service, and preserves their earned compensation. The goal is not to limit veterans' ability to seek help, but to guarantee that when they do, the assistance comes from accredited professionals bound by high ethical and professional standards ... and that our veterans will not be forced to surrender a portion of the benefits they earned in service to the nation.

How you can help: Keep following [MOAA advocacy news](#). A call to action is coming soon.

Military CARE Act ([H.R. 6796](#))

What it does: Requires the Pentagon to establish a digital system designed to improve access to care at military treatment facilities (MTFs) by providing beneficiaries with a standardized platform to report barriers to MTF care and creating a data record that does not exist today to give Defense Health Agency leadership and Congress the insights needed to address systemic access challenges.

Who it supports: All TRICARE beneficiaries, but especially military families.

MOAA's take: We advocated aggressively for this priority in 2025 as part of our spring Advocacy in Action campaign. Military families must have a more effective option for reporting access problems — an option that also increases transparency to beneficiary challenges and leads to greater accountability and oversight of the MHS.

How you can help: [Send a letter to your lawmakers now.](#)

Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement Act (H.R. 2148 | S. 879)

What it does: Expands health care coverage and career transition support for caregivers, and would require a study designed to provide caregivers with a path toward financial security in retirement.

Who it supports: Millions of caregivers.

MOAA's take: “Just as our veterans answered the call to serve our nation, their caregivers also answered the call to step up and serve them,” said Lt. Gen. Brian T. Kelly, USAF (Ret), MOAA's president and CEO. “These dedicated individuals put their own futures on hold — sacrificing financial security, career advancement, and personal well-being — to fulfill the nation's promise to take care of our veterans and provide the care veterans deserve.

How you can help: [Send a letter to your lawmakers now.](#)

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.

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

Sept 11 Memorial Observance

There will be a Memorial Ceremony, in observation and remembrance of the September 11 terrorist attacks, at College of the Ozarks, 0900 hrs, Sept 11. College of the Ozarks always does an honorable job in presenting and conducting memorial observances. A contingent of OEMOAA members is planning to attend. Contact Chuck Guy for more information.

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.

Surviving Spouse Corner: Find Support Wherever You Live

By: Roy Yenchesky

AUGUST 05, 2026

A military surviving spouse who lives far from a military installation or VA facility still has access to a wide network of national organizations dedicated to providing support, guidance, and community. One of the most accessible starting points is [Military OneSource](#), which offers 24/7 phone and online assistance, confidential counseling, financial guidance, and help navigating survivor benefits. Because services are delivered virtually, surviving spouses can receive personalized support without traveling long distances.

The [VA’s Office of Survivors Assistance](#) also provides extensive online tools, benefit explanations, and direct inquiry support. Surviving spouses can explore programs such as Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, education benefits, and health care options through online guides, downloadable resources, and telephone support. The VA also offers virtual counseling, caregiver resources, and grief support through its Vet Centers and hotlines.

Several national nonprofit organizations play a major role in supporting surviving spouses regardless of location. [MOAA](#) offers survivor-specific guidance, legislative advocacy, and access to both local and virtual chapters. [MOAA’s Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter](#) is especially valuable for those who do not live near a military community.

Veteran Visit Program

Submitted by: Col. Chuck Guy

At the last OEMOAA monthly meeting it was agreed that the Chapter would embark on a Veteran support program consisting of visiting Veterans in assisted living facilities in and around the Springfield area. Veterans in assisted living situations were selected as the most likely to benefit from a visit as they generally live alone, do not drive and have limited visitor experiences. A major care facility was approached to see if they would support our plan to meet with and to encourage their Veterans to discuss their military experiences and they happily agreed.



Three of our members – **Ellen Duvall**, **Dean Smith**, and **Chuck Guy**, formed the Veterans Visit Team and, to date we have visited Veterans in six assisted living facilities with very positive and encouraging results. In many situations, these Veterans have never sat down to talk with the other Vets where they live. The Team has heard some amazing stories from Veterans who served in Korea and Vietnam, as well as those who were not deployed to a war zone, but who served in other ways. Two of the Vets are in their 90s and could remember some amazing details.

During the visits, we noted that some Vets exhibited different levels of cognitive ability, but they stayed with the group. In time, after listening to the stories being told by other residents, quieter Vets were able to open up and were very willing to share some “war stories”. Several had a very vivid recall of their service time.

The meetings last only an hour, but it brings them out of their rooms and gives them an opportunity to share their history. The Team reports that the experience has been very rewarding, so more visits will be planned for the coming months. If you would like to be a part of the program, let one of the team members know of your interest. There is no training required. Your personal military experience and an interest in helping our local Veterans qualifies you. We encourage others to take part. You won't regret it.



Military Lanes



TSA honors our nation's heroes by providing special security screening privileges to service members, veterans, and their families. Our military community enjoys access to dedicated military lanes or front-of-the-line service at over 30 airports.

Using Military Lanes

You do not need to be in uniform to use the military lanes. At airports with dedicated lanes, simply show your valid military or veteran ID to enter the lane. In airports without dedicated lanes, show your valid military or veteran ID to the lane monitor for front-of-the-line service.

If you need extra assistance during the screening process, please contact [TSA Cares](#) at least 72 hours before your flight.



Chaplain's Corner

By Becky Hutchings

Well here we are in September! It seems almost impossible to realize that fall will begin on Tuesday, September 22nd. This summer has been so hot, it is hard to believe the season will really change. However change is inevitable.

Humans are organic, which means our bodies are made up of proteins, fats, carbohydrates, and DNA. Our cells continually die and renew, until we eventually die. If we consider nature, the same goes for creatures, vegetation, and even the earth itself. These are changes that God built into His creation.

He created humans in His image. So we were designed with a higher level of intellect as well as a responsibility to take care of the rest of creation. In other words, we are capable of creating change within ourselves. Many changes occur without human intervention. We are able to think, process situations, and develop appropriate responses and actions. This means we can adapt our actions and become better. We all make mistakes. We are also capable to learn and make better choices (ie change).

According to: <https://www.crossway.org>

Core Concepts of Change

- **Unchanging God:** Passages like Malachi 3:6 establish that God's core character, love, and justice remain absolute and perfect.
- **Human Mutability:** People experience physical aging, shifting values, and mental renewal.
- **Theology of Transformation:** Romans 12:2 teaches that spiritual change happens through the renewing of the mind rather than worldly conformity.
- **Reordered Loves:** As [Augustine theology](#) notes, true lasting change occurs when human affections are reshaped by experiencing divine love.
- **Historical Shifts:** Covenantal theology discusses how God's methods or administrative eras change over time, moving from old sacrificial systems to the New Covenant in Christ.

The Bible holds before us that hope that we can change, and in so doing, act and speak in new and better ways. And although the Bible clearly presents that change generally is a process and not an event, it does call us to do all that we can do to participate in God's work of change.

It is my hope to be flexible enough to change for the better and be able to admit my weaknesses. Will you join me in making changes that improve your/our human condition.

May you be encouraged and blessed.

September 2026 Meeting

DATE: Friday, 18 Sept 2026

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: LtC Brennan Cook: JROTC, Logan-Rogersville HS

RSVP: By Monday, 15 September
To: LtCol Dean Smith, USMC, Retired
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: (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

2026 OEMOAA Monthly Schedule

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

2026 Dates

Sept 18: LTC Brennan Cook, "JROTC, Logan-Rogersville HS"
Oct 16: Missouri Veteran's Home
Nov 20: Nutrition for Seniors
Dec 11: TBA

The shortest distance between two points, is usually under construction

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 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.