



Ozark Empire News

Ozark Empire Chapter, Military Officers Association of America

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



March, 2026

A Word from the Chapter President

Thank you to everyone who attended the February 20 meeting. Don Wolfinger, Missouri Council of Chapters President, and Denny Garner, Surviving Spouse Liaison, St. Louis Chapter, also traveled in to attend the meeting.

The gradual decrease in attendance, as well as difficulty identifying new candidates for officer positions on our Chapter Board, prompted this discussion. Following a good discussion, a vote was taken and passed by acclamation, to continue meeting monthly for the remainder of 2026 and move to quarterly meetings in 2027, during which time further decisions can be made regarding the OEMOAA Chapter.

Don Wolfinger reminded us that the primary reason MOAA exists is to lobby for maintaining the benefits that are currently in place for retirees AND active duty personnel. MOAA is the largest advocacy group for the military. He further stressed that our local chapters are important in being able to reach legislators in our areas to keep these issues in front of them, and hopefully moving forward.

There is a copy of the minutes of this meeting, on the following page of this newsletter.

We will soon be sending out proposed revisions to our Chapter Bylaws in accordance with changes voted on and approved at our February meeting. Copies of the proposed revisions will be circulated at the March meeting and a vote will be held at the May meeting.

Evangel University has reached out, regarding a Veteran Valor event, which will take place on April 17. Although this date conflicts with our scheduled meeting, several members have attended in the past and found this event worthwhile. The event itself consists of a very nice lunch and speaker, with an optional chapel service preceding. The chapel service is scheduled to begin at 0945, in the main chapel on the Evangel University campus, with lunch following at 1130, directly behind the chapel. A vote was taken, that passed by acclamation, to cancel our usual chapter meeting in April, allowing people to attend this event instead. A registration form is attached for this event, as they need a head count for the luncheon as provided. Registration can be done online, via [this link](#)

From MOAA Affiliated Councils and Chapters received on Friday, February 20. A rule was quickly **rescinded** that could have impacted veterans on disability. Veterans' advocates stated the rule could have allowed the VA to lower disability ratings (and compensation) for veterans whose conditions are controlled or improved by medication. Such a rule could lead to unintended consequences and may not account for a medication's side effects or other ways a veteran's daily life may be impacted by their ailments or their treatment.

More information will be forthcoming in a future Newsletter regarding top Advocacy In Action (AIA) priorities.

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 2025, transitioning to quarterly meetings in 2026. 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.

February Meeting Recap

A lively discussion was held regarding the state, and potential future, of our Ozark Empire Chapter. This discussion is reviewed elsewhere in this newsletter. Please be checking your email in the coming weeks, as we will be sending proposed bylaws changes for everyone's review. The current plan, in accordance with our existing bylaws, is to publish the proposed changes during the month of March. Copies will be available at the March meeting as well. Since we have opted to not hold our scheduled April meeting as a chapter, as noted earlier, a vote will be planned during the May meeting. Per our bylaws, proxy voting is not authorized.

Any questions about these matters can be directed to the Chapter Board of Directors

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.

March US Military History

- 1789** – The first session of the U.S. Congress is held in New York City as the U.S. Constitution takes effect.
- 1863** – The first Army Medal of Honor is presented to PVT Jacob Parrott of the 33rd Ohio Infantry. Four others are so honored this day as well
- 1865** – General William Sherman and his forces occupy Fayetteville, N.C.
- 1939** – Georgia finally ratified the Bill of Rights, 150 years after the birth of the federal government. Connecticut and Massachusetts, the only other states to hold out, also accepted the Bill of Rights in this year
- 1941** – Lend-Lease Bill becomes law, when signed by President Roosevelt.
- 1942** – War Relocation Authority is created to “Take all people of Japanese descent into custody, surround them with troops, prevent them from buying land, and return them to their former homes at the close of the war.”
- 1942** – Philippine Islands abandoned to Japanese forces by Gen Douglas MacArthur
- 1944** – The U.S. Eighth Air Force launches the first American bombing raid against the German capital.
- 1948** – The first successful tornado forecast predicts that a tornado will strike Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma. The 1948 Tinker Air Force Base tornadoes were actually two tornadoes which struck Tinker Air Force Base on March 20 and 25, 1948.
- 1961** – Elvis Presley (26) performed live at Pearl Harbor, a fund raiser for the construction of what is now the USS Arizona memorial. Col. Parker, Presley’s manager, came up with the brilliant idea to have Elvis Presley give the benefit concert in the 4,000-seat Bloch Arena next to the entrance to Pearl Harbor. This concert raised \$64,000. The budgeted cost of the memorial was \$500,000.
- 1962** – After requesting the evacuation of a seriously injured crewman, the Russian merchant vessel Dbitelny transferred a patient to the Coast Guard LORAN station on St. Paul Island in the Bering Sea. Meanwhile, a Coast Guard aircraft flew a US Navy doctor and a hospital corpsman there to perform an emergency operation. Afterwards, the injured man was flown to Elmendorf Air Force Base, where he was admitted to the US Air Force hospital.
- 1973** – Two months after the signing of the Vietnam peace agreement, the last U.S. combat troops leave South Vietnam as Hanoi frees the remaining, admitted, American prisoners of war held in North Vietnam (total: 591 released)
- 2001** – A US Navy fighter dropped an errant 500-pound bomb in Kuwait that hit an observation post and killed five Americans and one New Zealander. Cmdr. David Zimmerman was later reprimanded and relieved of command.
- 2004** – In Madrid, Spain, a series of bombs hidden in backpacks exploded in quick succession at 3 stations, blowing apart four commuter trains and killing 202 people and wounding over 1,450
- 2006** – USS Winston Churchill engages pirates off the coast of Somalia, killing one, capturing 12, after action by the U.N. Security Council on March 15, encouraging any naval forces near Somalia to take action against suspected piracy.

Irish toast: “May the enemies of Ireland never eat bread nor drink whisky, but be tormented with itching without benefit of scratching.” — Traditional St. Patrick’s Day toast.



Chaplain's Corner

By Becky Hutchings

Can you believe we will roll over to spring this month? We've experienced harsh, cold days, this winter and some almost record-breaking warm days. In 2026, the March equinox happens on March 20 at 10:46 A.M. EDT. This falls on a Friday and is the astronomical beginning of the spring season in the Northern Hemisphere and the autumn season in the Southern Hemisphere. (Taken from: [almanac.com](https://www.almanac.com)).

Some Key Highlights of March include (taken from AI):

- St. Patrick's Day (March 17): Irish culture celebration, often involving parades and green attire.
- Pi Day (March 14): A celebration of the mathematical constant (though an irrational number) 3.1415926, often celebrated with enjoying a slice of pie.
- International Women's Day (March 8): A global day celebrating women's achievements and advocating for equality.
- Lent, a 40-day period of prayer and fasting, began on Ash Wednesday, February 18, 2026.
- Holy Week in 2026 starts with Palm Sunday on March 29 and includes Maundy Thursday on April 2 and Good Friday on April 3. (The last two facts taken from: [indystar.com](https://www.indystar.com)).

We are now into Lent and close to the beginning of Holy Week.

What is the meaning of Maundy Thursday? (Also taken from: [indystar.com](https://www.indystar.com)).

The Last Supper, recognized on Holy Thursday, refers to the last Passover meal Jesus ate with his disciples prior to His arrest, trial, and crucifixion. During the meal, he used wine and bread to represent His body and blood, blessing it and giving it to His disciples, laying the foundation of what would become the Eucharist, according to [Alimentarium](https://www.alimentarium.com). Jesus also showed the importance of servant-leadership, when He washed the feet of His disciples, and shared a foreshadowing of Judas' betrayal later in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Most of us understand the meaning of Easter, when Christ arose from the grave three days after His crucifixion on the cross and that the purpose of His death was to provide atonement for our sins that we might have the opportunity of eternal life with Him. Which is the greatest story ever told!

Let us enter into this new season with joy and remembrance of what Christ did for us. May we live as He lived and love others as He did.

May you be blessed and encouraged.

Our March 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.

March 2026 Meeting

DATE: Friday, 20 March 26

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

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

Program: Kelly McGowan, Master Gardener

RSVP: By Monday, 16 March
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

Mar 20:	Kelly McGowan, Master Gardener
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.