



Ozark Empire News

Ozark Empire Chapter, Military Officers Association of America

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



February, 2026

A Word from the Chapter President

Our January luncheon meeting was well attended. If you were unable to attend, you missed a riveting presentation by Harry S. Truman! Those in attendance know what this means. More information can be found in a later article.

Listed below are some of MOAA's current "call to action" issues (taken from: The MOAA Newsletter January 22, 2026). Remember to let your voice be heard by contacting your legislators.

Shutdown Fairness Act (S. 3168)

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

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.

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.

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.

Key Military Dates & Observances (February 2026 [taken from: AI Overview]):

- Feb 3: Four Chaplains Day – Commemorates the four Army chaplains who sacrificed their lives when the USAT Dorchester sank in 1943.
- Feb 3: USO Birthday – Celebrates the founding of the United Service Organizations.
- Feb 9-15: National Salute to Veteran Patients – A week to honor and pay tribute to veterans in VA medical facilities.
- Feb 13: Presidents' Day Weekend (Starts) – Many military commands observe the Friday before the holiday.
- Feb 16: Presidents' Day (Washington's Birthday) – Federal holiday.
- Feb 19: Coast Guard Reserve Birthday – Marks the establishment of the Coast Guard Reserve.

Please join us for an **important meeting** on **February 20**, at which time we will discuss the future direction of our Chapter.

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.*

MOAA's Current Top Legislative Priorities

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: [Click here](#) and 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: [Click here](#) and 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.

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.

January Meeting Recap



Our January Chapter meeting proved to be quite interesting. We were treated to a visit from a member of the Four States MOAA Chapter, Kavan Stull. He has done considerable research about the person and professional history of Harry S Truman. He was dressed in period correct uniform, for The Great War. In the person of Truman, he related the pre-war as well as wartime experiences of Truman, whose military career began in 1905, at the age of 20, as an artillery officer. Following the conclusion of WWI, he left active duty, and opened a men's haberdashery in Kansas City. He tried to rejoin for service in WWII, but was too old to join. He ended up running for, and winning a seat in the US Senate, and from there was selected as Vice President under Franklin Roosevelt. When Roosevelt unexpectedly died of a stroke, Truman ascended to the office of POTUS, and there was faced with making some monumental decisions, including overseeing the development and deployment of nuclear weapons, which proved to be the turning point in the Pacific theater. He left us with some words of advice from Truman: Work Hard, Do Your Best, Keep Your Word, Trust God, and Never Forget Your Friends.

Thank you, Kavan Stull, for this enlightening presentation.

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.

February US Military History

1779 – John Paul Jones takes command of Bonhomme Richard. Formerly commissioned as Duc de Duras, Bonhomme Richard was a warship in the Continental Navy.

1789 – George Washington, the commander of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War, is unanimously elected the first president of the United States by all 69 presidential electors.

1812 – Russia establishes Fort Ross on the coast north of San Francisco, eventually purchased by John Sutter in 1841

1805 – Sacagawea, the Shoshone Indian interpreter and guide to the Lewis and Clark expedition, gives birth to her first child, Jean Baptiste Charbonneau.

1861 – The Confederate States of America Provisional Congress convenes in Montgomery, Alabama. 1901 – US Army Dental Corps established

1912 – Arizona admitted to the Union, as the 48th state.

1942 – Federal government orders all domestic passenger car production stopped, and converted to wartime purposes

1946 – U.S. Tests begins using the Marshall Islands as a nuclear testing site. These tests would continue until 1958.

1955 – Operation Teapot begins. A series of 14 nuclear detonations at the Nevada Test Site, to determine the effects of nuclear weapons on a variety of materials and in a variety of conditions begins with detonation Wasp. This test evaluated the effects of low altitude detonations.

1962 – The first US Air Force plane is lost in South Vietnam. A C-123 crashed while spraying defoliant. Also, President Kennedy authorizes US military advisors to return fire, if fired upon

1964 – GI Joe debuts a popular American toy

1933 – The USS Ranger becomes the US' first aircraft carrier, built specifically as a carrier.

1962 – President Kennedy begins the blockade of Cuba. US bans importation of all Cuban goods.

1974 – F-16 Fighting Falcon flies for the first time

1978 – 1st "micro on a chip" patented by Texas Instruments

1990 – Central Committee of the Soviet Union agrees that the Party give up its 70-year monopoly of political power

1991 – In the most decisive actions of the Gulf War, VII Corps, moving directly east with three heavy divisions abreast, attacked the elite Iraqi Republican Guard units. At Medina Ridge, an attempted Iraqi ambush of the 1st Armored Division ended with the destruction of over 300 enemy tanks.

2003 – A US Army Black Hawk helicopter on night training crashed in the Kuwaiti desert, killing all four crew members.

2003 – The Bush administration sends supplies of humanitarian aid to the Gulf region to cope with refugees and displaced people.

2013 – Former US Navy Seal and US Sniper Chris Kyle and another man are killed at a shooting range near Glen Rose, Texas



Chaplain's Corner

By Becky Hutchings

As I wrote this, we have quite a nice blanket of snow on the ground and everyone has been urged to stay inside to allow the salt trucks to do their work. If there was any doubt about winter showing itself, those thoughts should now be dispelled. Please use wisdom when going out in this weather and bundle up if you must.

There are several special military dates in February to remind us to pause and remember. Intermingled with those dates falls Valentine's Day. The day of love. There is quite a history behind February 14, way too much to include in this article. However, these are a couple of interesting facts about how Valentine's Day is celebrated around the world (taken from: good housekeeping.com).

Many Latin American countries know the holiday as *el día de los enamorados* (day of lovers) or *día del amor y la amistad* (day of love and friendship). Though couples exchange flowers and chocolate on this day, the holiday's focus is also directed at showing gratitude to friends.

In Japan, it's customary for just the women to give confections to the men in their lives, with the quality of the chocolate indicating their true feelings, according to Fortune. On March 14, exactly a month later, the men repay the favor by celebrating the increasingly popular "White Day."

I love the focus on gratitude toward friends, as the Latin culture celebrates. We Americans focus on the love between two people. But what if we combined love and gratitude and showed both of these qualities to our loved ones and friends. Wow! What a positive impact we could make in our corner of the world (taken from: bfcnaz.org).

How to Practice Gratitude Daily

You don't need a holiday to be grateful. You just need a rhythm. Here are three simple ways to make gratitude a part of your everyday life:

1. *Start your day with thanks* - Before checking your phone or rushing into the day, pause to name three things you're grateful for.
2. *Write it down* - Keep a journal or even a note in your phone in which you jot down moments of gratitude.
3. *Share it with others* - Gratitude multiplies when it's spoken.

Send a quick text or tell someone how thankful you are for them.

The Scriptures have this to say regarding love (taken from: go.illumc.org).

"Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves". – **Romans 12:9-10**

So while you contemplate what you are going to get that special someone for Valentine's Day, remember to also be grateful for them. (I personally like chocolate-covered strawberries!)

May you be blessed and encouraged.

For our February 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.

February 2026 Meeting

DATE: Friday, 20 February 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: Chapter Business Meeting, Discussion about future chapter plans

RSVP: By Monday, 16 February
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

Feb 20:	OEMOAA Chapter Business Meeting
Mar 20:	Kelly McGowan, Master Gardener
April 17:	Kay Monk, State Crime Lab
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.