



AZ Council of Chapters



Date: 21 April 2015

President: Col Ron Perkins



President's Message

We are looking forward to our spring meeting hosted by Dick Newman and the Green Valley Chapter. They have invited all chapter representatives to join their chapter at dinner on 20 May. Lt. Col Ross Pearson, Commander Predator Units at Davis-Monthan AFB will be the guest speaker for the council meeting. Thank you Dick for the excellent planning for our upcoming visit.

Storming the Hill:

I recently had the honor and privilege as the Arizona State Council of Chapters President to join representatives from all 50 states for the Military Officers Association of America's (MOAA's) annual Council Presidents' Seminar in Alexandria, Va., April 13-16, 2015.

MOAA, the nation's largest association for active duty, National Guard, Reserve, former, and retired military officers and their families, with more than 380,000 members, hosted its council and chapter leaders for four days, with briefings on key legislative issues and meetings on chapter activities.

On April 14, Commander John Chernoski, national board member, and I joined more than 150 MOAA

members, including state leaders and other national MOAA board members and headquarters staff, to visit nearly all 435 congressional representatives and senators to discuss issues and provide information explaining why certain key military personnel issues affect the stability of the all-volunteer force and the well-being of military families. MOAA has participated in the annual Storming the Hill campaign since 1996 and has been recognized as one of the most effective lobbying organizations in the country.

John and I met with Senators John McCain and Jeff Flake, Congressmen Matt Salmon, Ruben Gallego, Congresswomen Martha McSally, and Kyrsten Sinema. We also met with Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick's Legislative Assistant Grace Rodden, Congressman Paul Gosar's Legislative Assistant Michael Mansour, Congressman Raul Grijalva's Legislative Assistant Yesenia Chavez, Congressman David Schweikert's Senior Legislative Assistant Katherina Dimenstein, Congressman Trent Franks' Legislative Assistant Ari Zimmerman of Arizona and asked for their support to:

1. Sustain currently serving military pay and benefits;

- FY 16 proposal rehashes cuts from last year: caps pay, reduces housing allowance, cuts commissary savings, and has retirees pay more for health care
- Represents 7 straight years of pay caps – changes strictly budget driven
- Congress worked hard for 10 years to rebalance military compensation – growth has not slowed, but declined – budget proposals would undo that hard work.

- History shows Pentagon has continued cuts until retention and readiness suffer
- Recent surveys reflect cuts hurting morale

2. Reject disproportional TRICARE fee and changes;

- The FY 16 proposal again calls to consolidate TRICARE programs and shifting \$5.5B in costs over 10 years onto beneficiaries
- Congress rejected disproportional fee hikes/consolidation last year – thank you
- Retirees/military families will pay more and get less
- Military community is already paying higher fees with recent changes
- Means-testing discriminates – longer you serve, the less your benefit

3. Eliminate harmful sequestration cuts.

- Sequestration thought to be so terrible it wouldn't happen
- Pentagon was levied a \$500B bill on top of already agreed 4487B reduction
- Debt reduction is a national priority, but don't balance budget on backs of troops and families
- Defense leaders state: if it remains in place, will require dramatic cuts to pay, benefits, and end strength and puts national security at risk

Retired Navy Vice Adm. Norb Ryan Jr., MOAA President and CEO said *“Our annual MOAA Hill-storming effort is grassroots activism at its best,”* *“There is probably nothing more representative of how democracy works than to see this large group of responsible Americans conveying their concerns to the elected representatives whose actions and votes have a huge effect on our lives.”*

Marvin J. Harris Communication Awards:

On 16 April, National MOAA released the Marvin J. Harris Communications Award recipients. I was very proud to learn that Arizona received a total of five awards. See following list of winners.

- Winner (Tied) Arizona Chapter Printed Newsletter
- Winner Luke Chapter Printed Newsletter
- Winner Superstition Chapter Recruiting Brochure
- 1st Runner up Arizona Council Website
- 2nd Runner up Arizona Chapter Website

Congratulations to all recipients. Well Done!!!!

Level of Excellence Awards: June 1st is the deadline for submitting your input for the 2015 level of Excellence Award. Let's continue the successes we have had over the past few years.

Col Ron Perkins, President



Council President, Ron Perkins meets with his AZ District 9 US Representative, Kyrsten Sinema



Secretary's Message

The 2015 Spring Arizona Council of Chapters meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 21 May at 9 a.m. The location is The Grill on the Green, 5800 S. Camino Del Sol, Green Valley, AZ. The guest speaker will be Lt Col Ross Pearson, Commander Predator Units at Davis-Monthan AFB. Luncheon orders will be taken that morning in the meeting room and payment will be on your own. If you require lodging, rooms have been reserved at the Wyndham Green Valley Canoa Ranch Resort, 5775 S. Camino Del Sol, Green Valley, AZ. The resort is located across the street from the meeting location. Room rates are \$100 + tax/night for a room with 1 or 2 Queen size beds or \$110 + tax/night for a King size bed. The room rate includes a complimentary buffet breakfast at The Grill on the Green. Breakfast begins at 7 a.m. Call 1-520-382-0450 to make your room reservation. Tell them you are with the Arizona Council of Chapters to receive the above Government rate.

Please Notify Dick Newman, Green Valley Chapter President, in advance if you or any member of your Chapter are planning on attending the Council meeting. He will need names, position and which Chapter you are representing. He needs this information for a head count for the meeting room. You can notify him via email at rnewman514@aol.com or Phone 1-520-399-3550.

The evening prior to the AZCOC meeting (20 May) we have been invited to attend the Green Valley Chapter dinner. The dinner will be held at the Quail Creek Madera Clubhouse, 2055 E. Quail Crossing Blvd, Green Valley, AZ. Stop at the guard gate and tell the guard you are attending the MOAA meeting at the clubhouse.

Social and registration is at 5:15 p.m., dinner at 6 p.m. The program will be JROTC awards and music entertainment by the "Classix". The cost of the dinner is \$25.00 per person and you have the choice of Sliced Sirloin Steak with mushroom demi-glaze, Chicken Marsala or Salmon with Buerre Blanc. Return your dinner registration form, payment and your meal choice to GV MOAA, P. O. Box 769, Green Valley, AZ 85622-0769, NLT 15 May.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact 1Lt Dick Newman, President GV Chapter, at rnewman514@aol.com or phone 1-520-399-3550.

I will be sending out the Semi-Annual Chapter Presidents reports around 15 April and would like them returned to me, via email, NLT 9 May. Just a reminder, this time you cannot use your Levels of Excellence report as your Semi-Annual report.

Pam Wojtas, Secretary



Treasure's Report

The Council's finances have continued to improve since the last council treasurer's report in November 2014 and are now in the best shape they have been in the last ten years. Additional revenues include an \$800 USAA/MOAA grant received in January and a \$250 recruiting bonus received in February. These funds will allow the council to continue reimbursements to chapters for hosting council meetings at least through 2015. I will have a more detailed update for all hands at the May 21 council meeting in Green Valley.

Two other items of interest are included in MOAA's chapter webinar program which offers good presentations on numerous aspects of chapter management. I would like to first

highlight the Chapter Tax Exemption Status Webinar prepared by MOAA's General Counsel, MajGen Joe Lynch USAF Ret. While chapter treasurers are very familiar with the tax exempt status of their chapter, the webinar offers a good review and provides contact information for MajGen Lynch as your POC at MOAA for future questions. It's about thirty minutes long but allows you to skip over parts of the presentation if you desire.

The second item is the Online Chapter Membership Dues Join and Renewal Webinar. This program, first launched in 2013, allows chapters to automate members joining your chapter or renewing their membership dues. Dues renewal can be a problematic process for many chapters and is often the time when significant chapter membership losses occur. The online dues renewal tool allows chapter members to renew their membership online using a credit card. This avoids members having to find their checkbook, write a check and put it in the mail. Payment by credit card is how most transactions get done these days and this program provides one more tool to help chapters gain new members and retain the ones they have. The costs of this program are borne by MOAA so chapters receive the full amount of dues paid. Deposits are made monthly to each chapter's bank account. I recommend you watch the webinar or review the FAQ's at www.moaa.org/onlinechapterdues/ and see if this program can help your chapter. Chapters interested in this program will need to first contact MOAA Council and Chapter Affairs Department to set up a special user ID and password.

MOAA's chapter webinars can be accessed through the Chapters link on MOAA's home page at www.moaa.org and then clicking on Council and Chapter Management. You will need to log in with your user ID and password to access the webinars.

Lee Lange, Treasurer, lflange48@gmail.com



VETERAN LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

While not a partisan issue per se, **predatory State HB 2611 'consumer flex loans'** passed in the House on 4 March in a very politically divided 31 to 29 vote with 5 republicans voting with all 24 democrats against it. It was scheduled for a vote in the Senate Finance Committee meeting on Wednesday 18 March but was pulled from the agenda by the sponsor (and only sponsor) of the Bill when he apparently wasn't able to pin down the 3 of 5 votes needed to pass it.

There was strong indications that he would attempt to introduce it as a Strike Everything Amendment to another Bill in the Senate Appropriations Committee. However, that didn't happen prior to the 1700 Friday 20 March deadline to do so, apparently due this time to his inability to line up the 5 of 8 votes needed to approve such an amendment in the Appropriations Committee.

While there was still a remote possibility that HB 2611 might be included as a strike everything amendment in the House or Senate, it did not materialize. So the predatory Flex loan issue is dead for this legislative session.

With 218.5% in interest and fees, a nearly \$700 payment the first month on a \$3,000 loan, and over \$3,100 in payments by the end of the fifth month with over \$2,300 still owed on the loan at that time, and a total of over \$13,000 in payments to be paid over the 5 year term of the loan, it's is not what Arizona needed

Back in 2008, through our State Veterans Legislation Update petitioning process we were instrumental in eliminating exorbitant interest rate Payday Loans in Arizona. I have been told that our efforts this year have helped preclude it

from happening again. And if it raises its ugly head sometime in the future we will have it on our radar.

At the Federal level, 2016 pay and benefits forecast among other issues is cloudy. The House Armed Services Committee is expected to mark up its first draft of the annual Defense Appropriation process that will set defense spending limits and priorities for fiscal 2016. It will signal whether any of the military budget goals pushed by the Administration and Pentagon — ending sequestration, reining in personnel costs, sidelining the A-10 — might actually happen.

House lawmakers aren't expected to include any major initiatives from the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission's (MCRMC) recent report to Congress in their early drafts of the defense authorization bill. Since February, the House committee has been discussing those proposals, which include replacing the current military retirement system with a 401(k)-style plan, an overhaul of the military health system and more. But many lawmakers are still unsure how those changes will be received, and seem content to continue debate on the ideas for now. There is some concern that Congress not rush that process without fully vetting both the recommendations and their second- and third-order effects. But that could change by the time the authorization bill winds through the full House and Senate, which likely won't happen until sometime this fall.

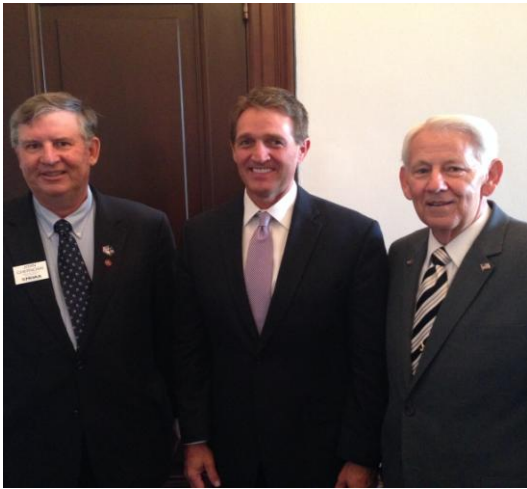
Pentagon planners have asked for a 1.3 percent military pay hike next year, which is above the 1 percent pay raise troops saw the last two Januarys but still about 1 percentage point below the expected rise in average private-sector wages, the gauge against which military pay raises have been measured for many years. Despite Pentagon pleas that holding down the raise will save billions that can be redirected to modernization and training accounts, House Armed Services Committee members have been reluctant to go along with the lower raises in recent years, at least in their initial authorization

bill drafts. But House efforts to plus-up military pay have run into opposition in Senate negotiations in each of the last two years, with House members eventually agreeing to go with the lower Pentagon figures in the end. So if the initial House committee draft of the authorization bill agrees to the Pentagon's call for a smaller raise, that likely would all but end any real consideration of bigger paychecks for the troops next year.

Last year, defense budget officials pitched plans to trim Basic Allowance for Housing rates by 5 percent over five years as another personnel cost-savings measure, leaving troops to pay a larger share of their monthly rent out of their own pockets. Lawmakers approved the idea in concept but authorized only a one-year, 1 percent reduction. The issue will be up for consideration again in the new authorization bill drafts. Like the pay raise issue, House lawmakers last year initially opposed the idea, then dropped that challenge in negotiations with the Senate. Opponents have argued that the move — along with the pay raise and proposed pharmacy co-pay increases — amounts to significant lost income for military families. Pentagon leaders have countered with arguments that growing personnel costs must be checked before they overrun other defense priorities. Lawmakers have begun to slowly embrace defense leaders' arguments, and a lack of opposition to the ideas this year could signal even steeper benefits trims in years to come.

And of course the debate over eliminating the A-10 Warthog from the war fighting inventory continues, with some growing support for at least slowing down the process.

Gene Fenstermacher, Legislative Affairs



L-R CDR John Chernoski, National MOAA BOD, Senator Jeff Flake, Col Ron Perkins, President AZ COC, meet during "Storming the Hill"



L-R Col Ron Perkins, Senator McCain and CDR John Chernoski National MOAA BOD



Transitions Liaison

Training:

During this period, I was able to participate in an overview training session on Transition Liaison from the National Level view. It was quite informative. Made the slides available to

each of the Transition Liaison Coordinators with the perspective of providing training later in the year.

Job Postings:

This past 5 ½ months, there were more than 525 specific jobs announced with two multiple listings for multiple positions (no numbers) published.

Job Fairs:

There were 24 Job/career fairs identified for veterans. The most interesting fact was that there was an increase of engineering and technical positions over the previous six months where we saw the majority of job vacancies in the health care arena. Of the 24 job fairs posted this past 5 ½ month period; 10 were in Phoenix, 4 in Sierra Vista, 4 in Tempe, 2 in Douglas, 2 in Mesa, and 2 were in Glendale.

New Activities:

We started this month (April) working with the Transition Assistance Programs (TAP) office at Fort Huachuca and the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserves (ESGR) to provide information on TAP activities around Arizona. It is requested that any chapter hearing of an upcoming event of special interest for transitioning personnel pass this information to the MOAA Transition Liaison Coordinator for consolidation and publication to the membership.

Issues:

One issue that continues from last report period is the lack of input from the various chapters, other than the Superstition Mountain and Coronado chapters who have provided all of the employment and career fair information. In order to help our members, we need input from all chapters. Need the Transition Liaison Personnel to get companies to identify positions that we can publish to our membership. I urge you to look to your communities and let us know when there are opportunities for our membership.

Harry Bowen, Transition Liaison



Personal Affairs

Later this year, MOAA will launch a new publication titled *The Survivor's Guide*. The purpose of *The Survivor's Guide* is to assist surviving spouses as they accomplish the actions needed following a loved one's death. It will be available in print and as a download from the MOAA website.

The guide was developed by the six surviving spouses who comprise the Auxiliary Member Advisory Committee (AMAC). During the past year, the AMAC brainstormed on helping others when they experience a loss. The committee decided that a guide with a list of needed actions and phone numbers and a place to record dates, points of contact, and pending actions would fill the gap they had experienced.

The Survivor's Guide is similar to a worksheet. It includes a place to record burial or cremation arrangements, such as the name of a funeral home and a cemetery. There is a place to list names and phone numbers of attorneys, certified public accountants, insurance agencies, and other service providers. The guide includes phone numbers for agencies such as the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, the Social Security Administration, the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System, and others.

As AMAC members developed the guide, they realized it would help if both spouses worked together to fill in the guide before it would be needed. One AMAC member said the most helpful advice she received from other widows was to keep a notebook to record phone calls. She learned that some agencies do not respond

as promised and that a written record was valuable.

AMAC members emphasize the importance of telling family members or a friend about *The Survivor's Guide*, where it is located, and what it contains. AMAC members also stressed that the Guide is not intended to replace other methods of record keeping. However, the guide is different because it includes information on both military and civilian agencies.

AMAC members suggest that following the guide might prompt spouses and retirees to review their personal files. To do this, spouses should obtain the MOAA *Personal Affairs Action Guide*. For information about MOAA publications, go to www.moaa.org/infoexchange or call MOAA at (800) 234-MOAA (6622). I encourage MOAA chapters to include in their newsletters information about *The Survivor's Guide*. While the guide is in development, MOAA members can refer to the shorter *Survivor's Checklist*.

I hope to have this new Survivor's Guide for distribution to Chapter Presidents at the upcoming May Council Meeting.

Steven Abel, Personal Affairs



ESGR News

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a Department of Defense agency, announced 65 Arizona Guard and Reserve members nominated their employers for the 2015 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. The agency received nearly 3,000 nominations nationwide. The Freedom Award is the Department of Defense's highest recognition for employers supporting members of the Guard and Reserve. Up to 15 recipients will be announced this summer and honored in

Washington, D.C. in August at the 20th annual Freedom Award Ceremony.

The ESGR Employer Awards Dinner will be recognizing 65 employers for their outstanding support and showcasing their organization to our community partners, business leaders and major military commands here in Arizona.

Several of the employers honored will be receiving the ESGR "Above and Beyond" and the ESGR "Seven Seals" Award. The three Arizona finalists for the Secretary of Defense Employer Freedom Award will also be receiving the ESGR "Pro Patria" Award. All branches of the Reserve Component will be represented during this event.

The awards dinner on April 24, 2015 will be at the Doubletree by Hilton 2100 South Priest Drive, Tempe Arizona 85281. Please call 602-629-4387 or email Krista.1.titus.ctr@mail.mil for any questions that you have.

The Freedom Award was instituted in 1996 under the auspices of ESGR to recognize exceptional support from the employer community. In the years since, 205 employers have been honored with the award. Established as a DoD agency 43 years ago, ESGR develops and maintain employer support for Guard and Reserve service. ESGR advocates relevant initiatives, recognizes outstanding support, increases awareness of applicable laws, and resolves conflict between service members and employers. Paramount to ESGR's mission is encouraging employment of Guardsmen and Reservists who bring integrity, global perspective and proven leadership to the civilian workforce.

You can also visit www.freedomaward.mil to see information on the Freedom Award and the awardees all across the country that will were nominated by their military employees.

Darren Venters, ESGR Chairman



AUXILIARY NEWS

Another day another scam. A few weeks ago it was my turn when I received a call from a confident, professional sounding young man, Bob Pine. He said because of recent changes to TRICARE prescription coverage he had to update my info. He asked to verify the information on my Medicare card. No way I told him. He sounded less confident but asked me to repeat my checking account number and routing code. He also said it would not be used to debit my account for prescriptions. No! Now he was stammering. Time to hang up. I sure miss the old phones you could slam down in anger.

The military is being targeted so the message is the same: **DO NOT GIVE ANY INFORMATION TO ANYONE WHO CONTACTS YOU OVER THE PHONE. DOD OR TRICARE WILL NEVER ASK YOU FOR INFORMATION BY PHONE.**

By now you have received your April issue of the Military Officer magazine. Inside the front cover you can read about the erosion of military pay and benefits. This affects not only our active duty troops but also you as military widows. Please take a few minutes to sign, stamp and mail the postcards on the back cover. We must stop this eating away of our benefits. Let your voice be heard.
Shirley Phillips, Aux Rep

2015 AZ COC Meetings

- 1) May 20-21st 2015: Hosting Chapter Green Valley Dinner meeting May 20th and the AZ Council meeting will be held on May 21st 2015
- 2) Nov. 13th, 2015 AZ COC Meeting, Arizona Chapter Hosting
- 3) Nov. 14th, 2015 Arizona Chapter Luncheon Meeting. National MOAA BOD Speaker



The May 21, 2015 Council of Chapters MOAA meeting is sponsored in part by a USAA/MOAA grant

Important upcoming Dates

- 1) September 10-12 2015: Mid-West Regional Chapter leaders symposium, Kansas City, MO
- 2) October 28-31 2015 National MOAA Annual meeting, Orlando Fla. (4/5 Star LOE awards).

