

MOAA REPORTER

MOAA Greater Dallas & North Texas Chapter

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Chapter's 2021 Goals



The Greater Dallas & North Texas Chapter will continue to execute and expand its efforts to support the goals and objectives of MOAA National this year. The MOAA National and Chapter goals can be summarized in two categories: Community Service (Never Stop Serving) and Advocacy in Support of Active, Former, and Retired Service Members and their Families (One Powerful Voice). The Chapter's 2021 goals are:

- Provide assistance to Chapter members impacted by COVID-19
- Work with the Veterans Center of North Texas to provide assistance to North Texas Veterans and their families
- Support MOAA National's Legislative objectives
- Work with other Texas Chapters to advocate for Veterans issues before the 2021 Texas Legislative session
- Provide timely information to Chapter members via membership meetings, newsletters, phone calls and the membership directory
- Assist Chapter members obtain eligible military and VA services
- Support the 54 JROTC high school programs in the Dallas Metro and North Texas area
- Provide up to six \$1,000 scholarships to JROTC Cadets who have demonstrated outstanding academic and leadership qualities
- Implement a succession plan to provide new leadership to the Chapter in 2022
- Expand Chapter membership to all persons who support MOAA goals and objectives

MOAA Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter Meeting



The next meeting of the MOAA Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter is Tuesday, January 19 at 1:00 pm EST. Meetings usually last 1 - 1 1/2 hours. The meeting will be virtual on zoom. If you are interested and not already a member of the virtual chapter go to mssvc02@gmail.com to join or contact Gail Joyce at virginiagailjoyce@gmail.com. Or visit the MOAA National webpage www.moaa.org and search for Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter. The Chapter currently has about 140 members from 30 states. Members are surviving spouses and surviving spouse liaisons for chapters. There are no dues and the only requirement is that you must be a member of National MOAA. Shane Ostrom, MOAA, will make a presentation on Scams and Fraud! The latest information on legislation of interest will be available. There is also an opportunity to share information and ask questions. Don't miss this opportunity to meet other surviving spouses and learn how to protect yourself from scammers.

Veterans Center of North Texas



The Veterans Center of North Texas provides referral services and direct assistance to all North Texas Veterans and their families. The Center can connect Veterans to over 150 organizations that offer specialized services to help Veterans and their families maintain healthy life styles. The types of services are endless. Their services include employment assistance, affordable housing, emergency shelter, transportation, VA and other benefits, end of life planning, transition and many others. In 2018 the Center began offering direct assistance to Veterans and their families. Working with partners they were able to offer direct financial aid, food and clothing to Veterans in need. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020 they were able to help over 200 Veteran families pay rent and other bills, eat healthy meals and clothe their children. The Center has served over 5,200 Veterans since it opened its doors in 2015. They provide services to **all veterans** and they **never** charge a fee. The MOAA Greater Dallas & North Texas Chapter is proud to be a partner of the Veterans Center of North Texas. If you know of anyone who needs help for any reason or just wants to talk, have them contact the Center at 214-600-2966. If you would like to volunteer to help fellow Veterans at the Center, contact Dave Schafer at 214-577-4107.

MOAA National 2021 Key Legislative Priorities



Our nation has a rising debt of more than \$27 trillion, and a deficit of more than \$3 trillion. In view of this, MOAA anticipates robust attempts to control federal budgets, reduce or eliminate unprogrammed expenditures, and reduce entitlements. MOAA needs you to be at the ready to reach out to your legislators, and keep that engagement going as needed to make sure your voice is heard. This article summarizes MOAA's 2021 legislative goals.

Click on the following link [MOAA - MOAA's 2021 Legislative Priorities](#) to see more details on the MOAA National website

- **Recognize the COVID-19 Pandemic Changed the Landscape for Many of Our Priorities** - We will assess programs relative to our priorities and ensure a credible accounting of the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has on service members, families, survivors, and the government entities on which we rely to effect legislation related to these people and their concerns.
- **Protect the Value of the Military Health Care Benefit** - Budget pressures, together with shortfalls in both the Military Health System's readiness and benefit provision missions, led Congress to pass MHS reform legislation in the FY 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). MOAA will not fight to reverse MHS reform laws aimed at addressing medical readiness issues, but we will not stand by if reforms turn into cost-cutting exercises.
- **Protect the MHS Pharmacy Benefit and Achieve Flexibility in TRICARE Pharmacy Copays** - MHS reform legislation has eroded the value of the pharmacy benefit and poses a threat to MTF pharmacy access and zero copay prescription medications. Inflexibility in TRICARE pharmacy copays, which are governed by statute, requires beneficiaries to pay full copays even when TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery is unavailable or the prescription quantity cannot be filled.
- **Address Barriers to Accessing Care Within the MHS, Including TRICARE Coverage Gaps and Mental Health Care Access Challenges** - TRICARE coverage policy is governed by statute and often requires legislation to remain aligned with new technologies and treatment protocols and benchmarks set by high quality commercial plans and other government payers. Access problems with mental health care, validated by an August 2020 DoD Inspector General report, are pronounced and must be addressed.
- **Achieve Concurrent Receipt of Service-Earned Retirement Pay and VA Disability ay** Currently, those with a 40% VA rated disability and those forced to medically retire under Chapter 61 have

their retirement pay offset for every dollar of VA disability received. The Congressional Budget Office estimates fixing concurrent receipt will cost \$33 billion over 10 years. An incremental strategy to break up concurrent receipt into smaller cost brackets can gain progress.

- **Protect Family Support Programs, and Ensure Military-Provided Services (Housing, PCS, Child Care) are Affordable, Readily Available, and Meet Quality Standards** - Programs and services for military and veteran families are often the first to see cuts to staffing, quality, and availability when government funding becomes tight. These benefits are essential to ensure service members can focus on their mission. Military spouses play a vital role in a service member's decision to stay in the military.
- **Reform the Presumptive Process to Support Veterans Claiming Service-Connected Disabilities for Toxic Exposures** - When deploying to defend our nation, we pursue cutting edge weapons, tactics, techniques, and procedures to defeat our enemies. The consequences for service members become apparent later, sometimes decades later. When Agent Orange, burn pits, and other sources of hazardous materials cause illnesses, the current practice is to place the burden of proof and record-keeping on veterans. Many are unable to prove their exposure. While research is done, ill veterans suffer without health care benefits. If veterans pass away early, their widows will not receive the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation.
- **Achieve Equity of Benefits, Protections and Administrative Support for Guard/Reserve Members Consistent With Their Active Duty Counterparts** - Guard and Reserve troops can be activated with little notice. The COVID-19 pandemic response highlights why we need to ensure service members are always ready. Along with this, the transition to the "total force" concept has transformed the National Guard and Reserve troops into an operational force that is an essential part of America's national defense strategy. However, despite conducting the same duties as their active duty counterparts at increasing frequencies, the reserve component is not receiving the same support.
- **Sustain Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Foundational Missions and Services** - Since the VA MISSION Act was signed into law in 2018, VHA has been aggressively pursuing implementing one of the most historic shifts in how VA will deliver care in the coming years. Myriad challenges face the VA as it attempts to sustain its four health care missions (clinical, research, education and training, and emergency management response) and associated programs and services that have earned VHA its reputation as a high-quality health care system.
- **Through Expansion, Protect Arlington National Cemetery as an Option for Those Currently Eligible to Receive Full Military Honors** - The Army secretary has approved draft eligibility changes for interment and inurnment at ANC to extend the life of the cemetery. Unfortunately, if eligibility changes are approved, many who were counting on in-ground burial at ANC will have to change plans.
- **Sustain Pay Raises for Service Members and COLA Raises for Retirees** - Pay raises for service members and COLA raises for retirees represent a commitment on behalf of our government to recognize their service and sacrifice, past and present. Budget challenges often focus on reducing such outlays to help fund weapons acquisition and other programs. No doubt such challenges will appear in coming years.
- **Improve Survivor Benefits** - After the repeal of the widows' tax in 2019, injustices remain on survivor issues.
- **Ensure the Coast Guard Receives Pay During a Government Shutdown** - During a government shutdown, the USCG is not paid. Legislation such as The Pay Our Coast Guard Act would protect Coast Guard service members' pay in the event of a lapse in appropriations or a shutdown. For the 117th Congress, the act will require significant support for inclusion in the NDAA.