

Military Officers Association of America

Green Valley Chapter · Desert Duster Newsletter · Fall Issue: September/October 2021



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



I hope everyone has enjoyed a Covid-free summer. As life slowly begins to return to normal, I would like to bring everyone up-to-date on Chapter activities this past summer and to announce our planned scheduled fall activities (Covid permitting).

First, I would like to congratulate all of our Quail Creek participating members especially Peggy McGee, Marianne and Mike Faust, and Jack Bundy for an outstanding fundraising event at the Fourth of July festivities in Quail Creek. Our Chapter was able to raise \$1040 in cash donations plus a special donation by Steve Rose who donated the entire proceeds of \$542 from the 50/50 Raffle. In addition, approximately 140 lbs. of food donations were collected and dispersed to the 162nd pantry. Kudos to Peggy McGee and her crew.

The upcoming scheduled events for the Chapter are as follows:

- **September 15th Luncheon**, Dominick's Restaurant, Green Valley (11:30 social hour · 12:00 lunch)
- **October 12th Mix and Mingle**, Green Valley Elks Lodge (4:30-6:30 pm)
- **November Membership Dinner**, Location: TBD (5 pm)
- **Christmas Dinner with gift give-away**, Location: TBD

DATES TO REMEMBER

Please note: This is a tentative schedule dependent on the specified venues being able to provide necessary services. Due to Covid ramifications many of the venues are having a difficult time procuring service help. Certainly, we will keep you posted to specifics and/or venue changes.

A new source of Chapter revenue has been obtained by Peggy McGee i.e., the Jim Click Truck Raffle. All proceeds from ticket sales from the Chapter will be retained. This could be a very lucrative fundraising activity. Please consider participating. More details can be found on the next page.

Finally, I wish to thank our newest Board of Directors member, M.G. James Whitehead. who has graciously volunteered to fill the vacant position of Secretary.

Looking forward to seeing everyone again this fall. Meanwhile, stay safe, stay healthy, and stay positive.



Joseph Longo 1st LT USA (Former)
2019-2021 Chapter President · Green Valley Chapter, MOAA

Mission of Military Intelligence Will Be Topic at MOAA Luncheon

Peggy McGee, Treasurer/Public Relations Officer



Have you ever wondered exactly what Military Intelligence (MI) is? You can find out when LTC Dartanion Hayward, Commander, 309th MI Bn, speaks at our luncheon at Dominick's Restaurant in Green Valley on Wednesday, September 15. The 309th is a training Battalion that prepares several MI MOS's for final duty stations within the Army. Doors will open at 11:30 for a social period with the lunch being served at noon.

LTC Hayward is the fourth eldest of nine children. He was raised in North Philadelphia, PA and graduated from J. R. Masterman High School. He earned a BS in Criminal Psychology from Pennsylvania State University. He also obtained a Master's of Science in Strategic Intelligence from the American Military University. LTC Hayward is married to the former Joi L. Frisby and they share three children.

LTC Hayward was commissioned into the United States Army in 2002. As a family, they have been stationed in Fort Knox, Kentucky, Baumholder, Germany, Fort Huachuca, Arizona, and Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He is a member of [Officer's Christian Fellowship](#) and has served two deployments in Iraq and one in Afghanistan.

The reservation form is on page 3 of this newsletter. Meal cost is \$22. Adult beverages will be available for purchase. If you cannot get your reservation mailed in a timely manner, please contact CW3 Jack Bundy at 951-760-8706 or jhbundy@verizon.net. **Deadline to sign up is September 10.**

Jim Click Raffle Can Help Chapter Raise Funds

Peggy McGee, Treasurer/Public Relations Officer



You may have seen advertisements for Jim Click raffles around town and wondered what they are all about. In 2003, Jim Click, Jr. began offering raffles to help charities in the Greater Tucson area raise money. Most years he donated a vehicle as the raffle prize. Eligible 501(c)(3) charities like our Scholarship & Military Assistance Fund are offered the opportunity to participate in the raffle. Only 100,000 tickets are printed and we have been given 100 tickets to sell for this year's raffle. The beauty of this raffle is that we get to keep all the monies collected from those purchasing a ticket. Tickets are \$25 each or five for \$100. On average, the raffle has raised over \$1,000,000 a year for the last 4 years for local charities.

This year Mr. Click is raffling a 2021 Ford Bronco Sport Badlands Edition. He is also giving away a second and third prize, just as he did in the previous four years' raffles. The second prize is two round-trip, international, first-class plane tickets to anywhere in the world (some restrictions apply), and the third prize is \$5,000 in cash. We will be selling raffle tickets at our September luncheon, October Mix & Mingle, and November dinner. The drawing will be held on December 17 but **all monies and tickets must be turned in by December 10**. If you are unable to make the events but would like to purchase tickets, please contact our treasurer Peggy McGee at pjmccgee@cox.net or 520-207-6188 and she will get tickets to you.



September 15, 2021 · Social: 11:30am Luncheon: 12PM

(New location!) Dominick's Restaurant · 77 E Paseo De Golf, Green Valley, AZ 85614

Please make your reservations by FRIDAY, SEPT. 10th

LUNCHEON RESERVATION FORM

(This reservation form may also be found on the [GreenValleyMOAA.org website](http://GreenValleyMOAA.org))

Reserve _____ places

Cost: \$_____ (\$22 per person)

MENU CHOICES:

#1 – Meat Lasagna

Tender pasta layered with Italian sausage, beef, ricotta, mozzarella, pecorino Romano cheese, herbs and marinara sauce.

#2 – New Mexico-Style Grilled Chicken Sandwich

Includes fire-roasted Hatch green chilies, Pepper Jack cheese, garlic aioli, lettuce, tomatoes, and onions served on a brioche bun.

#3 – Vegetarian Option – available upon request

A mini Cannoli filled with sweet ricotta cheese and mini chocolate chips will be the featured dessert.

Check # _____
Attn: GV MOAA Reservation

Mail check and reservation form to:

MOAA of Green Valley · PO Box 1535 · Green Valley, AZ 85622-1535

Rank: _____

Name: (please print) _____

Menu choice (#1, #2, #3):

Member/Guest name: _____

Member/Guest name: _____

Member/Guest name: _____

If you require a ride to the meeting, program or event please check here:

✂ ----- CUT HERE -----

If you cannot get your reservation and check mailed timely, or **if you have made a reservation and find you cannot attend, PLEASE CALL (leave a message if no answer):**

UNTIL SEPT. 2 – Peggy McGee 520-207-6188 or email: pjmcgee@cox.net
AFTER SEPT. 3 – Jack Bundy 951-760-8706 or email: jhbundy@verizon.net

Your chapter is charged for all ordered meals even if they aren't served. Please bring a check or exact cash amount to the meeting.

Dues Are Coming Due

Elliott Jones, 1st Vice President/Membership



It is that time of the year again, time to renew your membership in MOAA, the Military Officers Association of America. The MOAA Green Valley Chapter and the national organization are important to you, and you are important to them. Each member adds his or her voice for a strong national defense. Our Chapter continues to grow with new members.

Despite Covid-19, our Chapter gave scholarships to students who excel in JROTC.

We also have a military assistance fund that helps the families of Army and Air National Guard personnel. Earlier this year we provided a monetary donation for the food pantry at the 162nd Fighter Wing, AZ Air National Guard. And in July we delivered groceries. On the day of the delivery, the pantry was down to its last three jars of peanut butter so they were delighted to see us pull up with a trunkful of non-perishable foods.

In addition, we also provide support to the following:

Food for Families · Turkeys for Troops
Women Warriors · Honor Flight

Thank you for your support of MOAA of Green Valley. This means a lot to us.

Our early renewal year starts at our September meeting and ends 31 December. If you join or renew during this period, your dues will be paid until the end of 2022. You won't have to pay any more in dues again this year. They are still \$25 for regular members and \$15 for spouses/partners.

You may renew your membership at any of our upcoming events or mail them in using the form on page 11 of this newsletter.

(Dues, continued...)

Your dues help us to support the community and all our veterans. We ask that you consider renewing your membership so we can continue to support these great organizations in the community.

Photo: (L-R) Sam Zucher, Mikie Hoeye, and Nikki Callahan carry and push the groceries towards the Food Pantry.



Tax Victory for Arizona Military Retirees

Darren Venters, Transition Liaison

Military retirees in Arizona scored a victory on June 30 when Gov. Doug Ducey signed the state's budget legislation into law, totally exempting military retirement pay from state income tax.

"MOAA across our state has been in the lead here," said Lt. Gen. John Regni, USAF (Ret), a member of MOAA's board of directors. "It's an enormous success that will surely lure even more military retirees to Arizona for second careers and eventually retirement."

The exemption went into effect July 1 and is retroactive to January 1, 2021. It covers the "uniformed services" and includes SBP.

Regni said MOAA members dialed up the pressure by meeting with lawmakers and the governor (and with then-Gov. Jan Brewer and her staff in previous years) to discuss the legislation. He lauded several MOAA leaders who led efforts to energize members to meet with lawmakers persistently over the last decade. Col. Pete Kloeber, USAF (Ret), state MOAA chair, organized chapter involvement.

Green Valley MOAA Chapter led the effort starting in 2010 with Richard Newman doing dozens of analyses, reports and drafts for legislation to exempt state income tax on military retired pay and benefits. We thank all Chapter members who contacted State legislators urging them to support this initiative.

Chaplain's Corner

Robert Lewis, Chaplain



I had an opportunity to virtually attend the 11th Annual Arizona Coalition for Military Families Symposium on 21 April 2021. This is the first time “attending” the symposium and I was pleasantly surprised by the topics and in particular how well attended. I was especially impressed by the Directors of each of the two Veterans Health Care Systems (North and South), Director, Phoenix VA Regional Office, Director, Arizona Department of Veterans Services and the Director, Governor’s Office of Youth, Faith and Family all in virtual attendance and available for questions.

It was refreshing to hear about the many initiatives to increase the coordination and communication between the various Veterans groups to include the involvement of the Arizona Coalition for Military Families (ACMF) so that no one falls through the cracks.

The ACMF serves not only veterans, but also active duty and family members.

I “attended” two break-out sessions: *Trauma Informed Care in Faith Communities* and *The Role of Faith Communities*. The two biggest take-aways from these presentations involved knowing where to turn for help (because there are lots of avenues for help....but where do I go??).

Even though you might not need assistance for life issues, your role may be to direct veterans or family members to organizations where they can be helped.

The web site www.ConnectVeterans.org or www.beconnectedaz.org are just two that will provide contacts and even phone numbers. Even our own web page www.GreenValleyMOAA.org has links for some veterans’ organizations and even a great link for MOAA Surviving Spouses.

The second take-away involved the crisis veterans feel against our own moral code. Some of us were obviously put into combat situations that required destroying our enemy. At the time you were “just doing your duty” or “what we were trained for”. However, some have experienced grief, regret and even shame for “doing your duty”. These are real feelings. Even if you were not brought up in a Christian environment, you could later have unresolved feelings. Fortunately I was raised in a Christian home and had resolved most of these issues before I left home. But even some of faith have experienced real internal conflict on tackling this issue.

What I know is that God is all powerful and merciful. He is a forgiving Father. What we ask of him He will provide ...that includes forgiveness. If we can forgive...He will forgive. If we pray for wisdom and strength, he will give us wisdom and strength. These will overcome any grief, regret or shame that we have. It doesn't take any special long winded ceremony. The robber hanging on the cross next to Jesus just stated that he believed he was the Christ and asked that he be remembered when Jesus came into his Kingdom. Jesus's reply was today (not next week or next year) TODAY you will be with me in Paradise. Believe... and you will be forgiven.



Chapter Adds New Member to Its Board of Directors

Peggy McGee, Treasurer/Public Relations Officer



Major General James T. Whitehead Jr., who refers to himself as JT, became the newest member of the Chapter Board when he assumed the duties of Secretary on September 1. General Whitehead's last military assignment was Assistant to the Director of the Air National Guard at the Pentagon from 1990-1993. He is a veteran of the Cuban Crisis, Cold War, Vietnam and was assigned to the Pentagon during Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. He has 32 years of senior level management experience in the areas of military, corporate and federal government.

His academic degrees and a few of his senior military schools include: BS from the University of Illinois; extensive Masters level training in Counseling, Monmouth University; NATO Senior Officer's School Omaramagau, Germany; National Defense University and USAF Air War College plus extensive senior management level positions and training at Trans World Airlines (TWA), Orion Airlines and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

As a USAF Command Pilot, General Whitehead has flown many multi, single engine reciprocating and jet aircraft. In 1965 the General was selected for the U-2 program. He was the first African American U-2 pilot and the 129th USAF pilot to achieve combat ready status. He retired in 1993 completing 41 years of military service.

Additional aviation experience includes: TWA pilot and Boeing 727, 707 and 747 instructor, FAA Boeing 727 check airman, Greek Civil Aviation Board approved Olympic Airline, Boeing 727 check airman and instructor, Saudia Air Lines Boeing 747 instructor, Senior Director of Operations Orion Airlines and FAA Western-Pacific Region Division Manager. Between military and commercial aircraft, General Whitehead has over 15,000 flying hours.

Prior to his move to Green Valley about 18 months ago, General Whitehead, a native of New Jersey, and his wife Sandra, an Ohio native, resided in Bakersfield for 24 years. Community involvement has been and remains a major focus of his life. Some of the General's past and present activities in Bakersfield include: Chairman of the Community Advisory Board to the President of California State University (CSU) Bakersfield; Member of CSU Bakersfield Strategic Planning and Budget Committee; President, Fox Foundation; Chairman of the Board Minter Field Air Museum; Chairman of the Flying Tiger Historical Association; Mentor, Kern County Probation Department Program for High Risk Youth; MOAA Life Member and 1st Vice President of the MOAA Board of Directors Bakersfield Chapter. We are pleased he has decided to continue that same level of community service in AZ.

General Whitehead has many military awards to include the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Vietnam Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm and PA National Guard Distinguished Service Medal.

General Whitehead's civilian awards include the NAACP Roy Wilkins Renown Service Award, Frederick Douglas Medal for leadership from the Black Faculty Association of Los Angeles Harbor College, C Alfred "Chief" Anderson Award from the National Black Coalition of Federal Aviation Employees, and National Association of Black Military Officers Achievement Award.

Mix and Mingle Coming in October

Peggy McGee, Treasurer/Public Relations Officer

Our Chapter will be hosting another Mix and Mingle on Tuesday, October 12 from 4:30-6:30 p.m. at the Elks Lodge, 2951 S Camino Mercado in Green Valley. The Lodge is just off Camino del Sol, behind the gas station. The purpose of the Mix & Mingle is to give members an opportunity to socialize as well as recruit new members. Please invite your officer friends (active, reserve, National Guard or former) to join us for an evening of fun. Spouses of deceased officers are also invited to join our Chapter. Cost for the event will be \$15. The Chapter is paying the remainder of the cost.



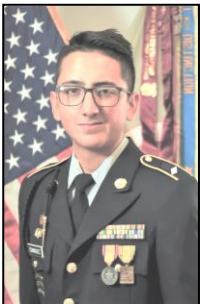
Heavy hors d'oeuvres will be served and a cash bar will be available. Highlight of the evening will be a Trivia contest with prizes for the winning teams. Our former secretary Jadine Hilt is making and sending the prizes from her new home in Florida.

Please use the form on page 8 of this newsletter to make your reservation. You can mail it in or to save a stamp, you can turn it in at the September 15 luncheon. **Deadline to make your reservation is September 30.** If you can't make the deadline because you are out of the area (or you forget to put your check in the mail on time), please contact Jack Bundy at 951-760-8706 or jhbundy@verizon.net to guarantee your spot.

Don't forget to visit our website at greenvalleymoaa.org. You just might find some answers to the Trivia questions there.

Special Thank You from MOAA Scholarship Recipient, Maximiliano Dominguez Aguirre

Received: August 14, 2021



"I would like to thank all the board members for the opportunity to obtain the MOAA scholarship, giving me an opportunity to continue my higher education at the University of Arizona. With the scholarship money I will pay any student fees and take advantage of the multiple programs available for me at the university.

I intend to participate in the university's Air Force ROTC, Wildcat Wing detachment, 020 having been accepted and attending the new incoming cadet orientation August 20th of this academic year. My education is an important component to continuing a life of challenges and success, an opportunity that this scholarship gives me.

Once again, thank you greatly for the benefit of receiving the MOAA Scholarship."



October 12, 2021 · Mix & Mingle 4:30-6:30PM

(New location!) Elks Lodge · 2951 S Camino Mercado, Green Valley

Please make your reservations by THURSDAY, SEPT. 30th

MIX & MINGLE RESERVATION FORM

(This reservation form may also be found on the [GreenValleyMOAA.org website](http://GreenValleyMOAA.org))

Reserve _____ places Cost: \$_____ (\$15 per person)

DETAILS:

Heavy hors d'oeuvres will be served. A cash bar will be available. Highlight of the evening will be a Trivia contest with prizes for the winning teams.

The Mix & Mingle event is to give members an opportunity to socialize as well as recruit new members. Please invite your officer friends (active, reserve, National Guard or former) and spouses of deceased officers to join us for an evening of fun.

Check # _____
Attn: GV MOAA Reservation

Mail check and reservation form to:

MOAA of Green Valley · PO Box 1535 · Green Valley, AZ 85622-1535

Rank: _____ Name: (please print) _____

Member/Guest name: _____

Member/Guest name: _____

Member/Guest name: _____

Member/Guest name: _____

Member/Guest name: _____

If you require a ride to the meeting, program or event please check here:

✂ ----- CUT HERE -----

If you cannot get your reservation and check mailed timely, or **if you have made a reservation and find you cannot attend, PLEASE CALL (leave a message if no answer):** call Jack Bundy 951-760-8706 or email him at: jhbundy@verizon.net

Your chapter is charged for all ordered meals even if they aren't served. Please bring a check or exact cash amount to the meeting.

Food for the Troops Collection a Smashing Success

Peggy McGee

The annual *Food for the Troops* collection at Quail Creek over the Independence Day weekend went over the top of expectations this year. It was helped by the larger than usual crowd at the solemn flag raising ceremony that morning as many residents all decked in patriotic colors came out for the opening festivities of the holiday. Cadet Lieutenant Julian Almazan and Cadet Lieutenant Shayla Blair, both from the Naval JROTC unit at Sahuarita High School, raised the flags. The care with which they unfolded and raised the flag brought tears to some eyes and instilled a renewed sense of love of Flag and Country in the attendees.



The attendees joined in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and then they were led by Chapter member Betty Atwater in singing the National Anthem. It was a fitting start to the holiday as Quail Creek celebrated the 245th birthday of our Country. And a definite boost to our fund raising efforts!

Throughout the weekend, residents dropped off groceries at the McGee residence and then they filled another three baskets with non-perishable foods on July 4. The rains held off during the morning so Jack Bundy and Marianne and Mike Faust sold 50-50 raffle tickets to the tune of \$542. The lucky winner of the 50-50 raffle was Steve Rose who generously donated his winnings to the *Food for the Troops* fund.

Grocery items totaled approximately 140 lbs. and there was also \$1040 in cash and checks donated.



Cadets Julian Almazan and Shayla Blair raised the American and Arizona flags to officially start the celebration of Independence Day activities at Quail Creek.

(Photo by CDR Brad Roberson, Senior Instructor, Naval JROTC at Sahuarita High School.)

MOAA Treasurer Peggy McGee holds the raffle jar up high to make sure Steve Smith could not see the names when he drew the winning ticket for the 50-50 raffle.

(Photo by Marianne Rogers Faust)



Hats & Scarves Needed for Homeless Veterans

Peggy McGee



If you like to knit and crochet, both the VA Hospital and Women Warriors would appreciate receiving scarves and hats.

The VA uses the hats for homeless veterans as well as hospitalized veterans who tend to get chilled. They give the scarves to the homeless veterans.

Women Warriors would be delighted to receive both hats and scarves for the female veterans and hats for the children of homeless veterans. The boys and girls range in age from 2-15.

All items may be brought to our November meeting so if you have time on your hands while the weather is still too warm to be outdoors, please consider using your talents to help those who have served our Country. If you neither knit nor crochet and wish to purchase hats and scarves, that is A-OK too.

Organize Your Kitchen and Bathroom and Help Homeless Veterans

Peggy McGee

Women Warriors desperately needs gently used pots/pans, glassware, plates, eating and cooking utensils, and small appliances. If you have unmatched or incomplete sets or items in that miscellaneous drawer that you are willing to part with, you may bring them to the luncheon on September 15.

Please let Peggy McGee know at 520-207-6188 or pjmccgee@cox.net if you will be bringing such items so she can make sure she will have enough room in her car.

As you organize your bathroom and find unopened and unexpired toiletries in full and travel size, to include sunscreen that you don't think you will need before winter sets in, please bring them to the September 15 meeting for the homeless veterans at the VA.

MARK YOUR 2021 CALENDARS

January 19 – Luncheon Meeting
Social: 11:30am · Lunch: 12pm.
Location: Quail Creek Madera Ballroom

March 18 – “Mix & Mingle”
POSTPONED, stay tuned for an update.

May 4 – Dinner Social: 5pm · Dinner: 5:35pm.
Location: Quail Creek Madera Ballroom.

September 14 – Social: 11:30am · Lunch
12:00pm. Location: Dominick's Restaurant, Green Valley.

October 12 – Mix & Mingle 4:30-6:30pm. Location: Elks Lodge, Green Valley.

November 17 – Social: 4:30pm · Dinner: 5pm. Location: TBD.

December 15 – Social: 4:30pm · Holiday Dinner: 5pm. Location: TBD.

The Board of Directors meeting is the 1st Wednesday of each month 8:30-10am at the Friends in Deed Building, Green Valley. Members are welcomed to attend... join us! There will be no Board meetings in June, July or August.

Military Officers Association of America

Green Valley Chapter · Desert Duster Newsletter · Fall Issue: September/October 2021



Military Officers Association of America
Green Valley, Arizona Chapter
P.O. Box 1535 · Green Valley, AZ 85622-1535

2022 CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP DUES

(This Membership Dues form may also be found on the [GreenValleyMOAA.org website](https://www.GreenValleyMOAA.org))

Chapter Dues: (Regular-\$25; Spouses-\$15)

Membership Dues \$ _____ Make check payable to: Military Officers Association of Green Valley (or GV MOAA).

PLEASE PROVIDE THE INFORMATION BELOW:

Name: _____ New _____ Renewal _____

Rank: _____ Branch of Service: _____ National # _____

Spouse/Partner _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip _____

DOB (Month/Day/Year): _____

Phone: () _____ E-Mail: _____

Scholarship & Military Assistance Fund \$ _____ Donation.

Make check payable to **Green Valley MOAA Scholarship and Military Assistance Fund** or **GV MOAA S&MA Fund**.
Dues may be paid at any meeting or mailed to **Military Officers Association of America, Green Valley, Arizona Chapter, P.O. Box 1535, Green Valley, AZ 85622-1535.**

Military Officers Association of America

Green Valley Chapter · Desert Duster Newsletter · Fall Issue: September/October 2021



2021 Officers, Directors & Chairs

(Area code is 520 unless otherwise indicated)

President: 1LT Joseph Longo USA (Fmr)
(509) 645-4993

First Vice-President and Membership:
1LT Elliott Jones USA (Fmr) (847) 366-6466

Second Vice-President and Programs:
CW3 Jack Bundy, USA (Ret) (951) 760-8706

Secretary: Maj. Gen. James Whitehead, Jr., USAF
(Ret) 475-8033

Treasurer: COL Peggy McGee, USA (Ret)
207-6188

Immediate Past President, President, 501(c)(3):
LCDR James Knox, USN (Ret) (605) 941-0335

**Past Member of National MOAA Board, Past
President, Legislative Affairs:**
CDR John Chernoski, USN (Ret) 625-3909

ESGR Representative:
Lt Col Dick Kosnick, USAF (Ret) 867-8999

**Surviving Spouse
Liaison:** Nora Durham
(714) 232-9277

Director, Personal Affairs:
CWO3 James Rundlett, USCG (Ret) (509) 389-4286

Chaplain: Robert Lewis, CWO3 USA (Ret) 481-6994

Director/JROTC Liaison:
COL Marianne Rogers Faust, USAF (Ret) (210) 861-9440

Historian: COL Marianne Rogers Faust, USAF (Ret)
(210) 861-9440

Transition Liaison:
Lt Col Darren Venters, USAF (Ret) 490-4470

Public Relations Officer:
COL Peggy McGee, USA (Ret) 207-6188

Webmaster/Newsletter:
Marianne Cobarrubias, webmaster@greenvalleymoaa.org



Support Chapter Scholarship Fund with AmazonSmile

Elliott Jones, 1st Vice President/Membership



AmazonSmile is a program that donates 0.5% of your eligible purchases on Amazon to the GV MOAA Chapter's Scholarship and Military Assistance Fund. Though 0.5% is not a large donation, it isn't intended to replace the Chapter's regular charitable fundraising activities. This is a great way to take advantage of a service that many already use. Learn how to participate, click [THIS LINK](#).

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and Military Assistance Fund.**

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News contributors this issue:

Elliott Jones, Robert Lewis, Joe Longo, Peggy McGee, Marianne Rogers Faust, and Darren Venters.

MOAA NATIONAL NEWS

“KEEP PROMISES MADE” IN AFGHANISTAN

Evacuating all American citizens and allies from Afghanistan “is necessary to ensure we keep our promises” as a nation, a MOAA official said during a bipartisan press event Monday in Washington, D.C., hosted by a group of more than two dozen veterans serving in Congress.

“MOAA’s stance remains for our nation to keep promises made,” said Lt. Col. Mark Belinsky, USA (Ret), MOAA’s director of government relations for currently serving and retired affairs, during the [For Country Caucus](#) event. “Our currently serving members and those who previously served in Afghanistan developed very close relationships with interpreters and Afghan Security Forces. Many fought shoulder to shoulder, and it is a matter of national conscience to evacuate our citizens and allies.”

Belinsky, whose service included deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq, joined For Country Caucus members from both parties as well as veterans representing the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans Association, and Non Commissioned Officers Association for the Monday event. The 25-member For Country Caucus sent an Aug. 20 [letter to President Joe Biden](#) seeking a commitment “to evacuating all Americans and Afghan partners.” That request was echoed by all who spoke at Monday’s event.

“There are Americans that are literally trapped behind enemy lines ... and we believe, all of us, that every single American should come home. That we should bring our allies home,” said Rep. Van Taylor (R-Texas), a caucus co-chair and Iraq War veteran.

Caucus vice-chair and Marine Corps veteran Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-Calif.) stressed the immediate need to focus on the evacuation effort. “There’s plenty of time to finger-point,” Carbajal said. “There’s plenty of time to examine, have hearings, and all that. What today is about is the United States honoring our word. ... We as a country today need to stand by our allies.”

Rep. Jack Bergman (R-Mich.), a retired Marine Corps lieutenant general and the highest-ranking combat veteran ever elected to Congress, pointed to the bond of service held by the caucus members and how it shapes their efforts in this cause. “The commonality is, we all understand the mission,” Bergman said. “We all understand leadership. ... And above all, you never leave anyone, *anyone* behind.”

Members of the caucus stressed the need to move the Aug. 31 deadline if necessary to complete the evacuation mission, and to understand the national security threat created by falling short in this endeavor – not just in Afghanistan, but in future conflicts.

“If we don’t stand by those friends and allies right now, we will find ourselves dealing with future threats and challenges alone,” they wrote in the Aug. 20 letter.

As Congress holds the administration to account in evacuation efforts, it must also live up to other commitments made to those who fought in Afghanistan and in other battles, Belinsky said.

“This tragedy is also a time for us to reflect: To reflect on keeping promises to our currently serving and retired servicemembers —especially those we lost and those who were injured in combat,” he said at the press event. “As

Congress works to complete the National Defense Authorization Act, we ask that they consider [inclusion of the Star Act](#) for combat injured, and consider [improving reserve component compensation](#) as the active and reserve component secure Kabul International Airport and conduct evacuation operations.”

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR VETERANS UNSETTLED BY AFGHANISTAN NEWS

Advocates are reminding veterans that help is available if headlines about the disastrous end of the [U.S mission in Afghanistan](#) and the looming Sept. 11 anniversary are triggering anxiety and mental health issues.

“Veterans should be on the lookout for red flags if news of [Afghanistan](#) starts changing behavior,” Dr. Sonya Norman, director of the Department of Veterans Affairs’ PTSD Consultation Program, said in a statement late last week. “These include isolating, using alcohol and drugs or any increase in unhealthy behaviors compared to normal.”

Even before the collapse of the Afghan government over the weekend, VA officials had been preparing for increased requests for mental health care and trauma assistance amid the ongoing U.S. military withdrawal from the country. Health officials said they have already seen an uptick in the number of veterans seeking help, and expected even more demand “as [veterans] come to terms with their service and as the Afghanistan withdrawal comes to completion.”

About 1.9 million post-9/11 veterans are currently enrolled in health care with the department. A 2014 study by department officials found that nearly 16 percent of all veterans who deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan screened positive for post-traumatic stress.

Both VA and Defense Department officials in recent years have worked to eliminate the stigmas surrounding mental health care, noting that PTSD and related issues can be handled if individuals acknowledge they are facing personal difficulties. The department has been running a [series on mental health issues](#) on its official blog, including a feature on lessons learned from the aftermath of the Vietnam War for veterans struggling with unresolved medical issues. The Veteran Crisis Line is also available around-the-clock at 1-800-273-8255 (veterans should select option 1 for a VA staffer.) Veterans, troops or their family members can also text 838255 or visit [VeteransCrisisLine.net](#) for assistance.

Numerous lawmakers and congressional committees shared the crisis line number on social media on Monday, thanking veterans for their service and letting them know help is available. Veterans service organizations are also stepping up their outreach efforts in light of the unsettling news overseas.

In a statement Monday, officials from [Wounded Warrior Project](#) noted that “developments in Afghanistan may bring back difficult memories for warriors and their families.” The group urged anyone needing assistance to contact their counselors at 888-997-2586 or through the organization’s web site.

Officials from [Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America](#) said veterans who served in the recent wars should remember that their service “was important and mattered.” The organization’s Quick Reaction Force for help is available online and at 855-917-274. In a statement, VA Secretary Denis McDonough said that all Americans should remember the debt owed to veterans for their service. “They made our world infinitely safer,” he said. “Their service did not come without sacrifice as some carry physical and emotional wounds. We must ensure they get the world-class care they’ve earned and deserve.”

AUGUST RECESS IS NO TIME TO TAKE A BREAK ON CONCURRENT RECEIPT

Although your representative and senators are home on recess, this is no time to take a break in seeking their support on progress toward concurrent receipt. The Major Richard Star Act has the support of 52 senators and 116 House members. When Congress returns to work, these lawmakers must complete the FY 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) – the traditional vehicle for progress on concurrent receipt. Pieces of legislation such as the Star Act will be proposed as amendments to the NDAA; increased support for the bill, especially in the House, is crucial to secure a win on the concurrent receipt problem.

This effort is timely as the news is replete with tragedies in Afghanistan, leaving many veterans thinking of the sacrifices and those we have lost. Servicemembers forced to retire because they were injured in combat – like Maj. Richard Star, USAR, who [passed away earlier this year](#) – had their retirement pay reduced for every dollar of VA disability compensation they were awarded. It is an acknowledged injustice and a painful reminder of this generation's "long war" along with the injustices many from the Vietnam era still endure.

What Is the Concurrent Receipt Problem?

Retired pay is for vested years of service paid by DoD, while disability compensation is for lifelong injury paid by the VA. To reduce retirement pay because of a disability is an injustice. [Title 10 of the U.S. Code](#) requires a reduction, referred to as an offset, in retirement pay for every dollar of disability received. This cost-saving measure is borne on the back of retirees.

In 2004, MOAA and The Military Coalition (TMC), a group of organizations representing a combined 5.5 million members of the military community, secured concurrent receipt for retirees who served at least 20 years and have a VA disability rating at 50% or higher. Left behind after that 2004 change are those 20-year retirees with a 40% disability rating and below, and those who were medically retired under Chapter 61 with less than 20 years of service. Previous efforts and advocacy opportunities have not moved us any closer to full concurrent receipt for all those with 40% disability and below and those forced to medically retire before reaching 20 years under [Chapter 61](#). The total cost to fix concurrent receipt is estimated at \$33 billion over 10 years; that is why incremental progress is necessary.

What Is the Star Act?

[H.R. 1282/S. 344](#) would authorize concurrent receipt of retirement pay and VA disability for those forced to retire from injury or illness in a combat zone under Chapter 61. According to the DoD actuary, the number of combat related Chapter 61 Retirees as of Sept. 30, 2020, is 48,193. It is a small segment of the larger population of retirees still waiting on concurrent receipt and targeted to make incremental progress.

Constituents Matter

Continued engagement from constituents is still necessary to gain co-sponsors for the Star Act. Numbers of co-sponsors matter: Ask your lawmaker to join their ranks, even if he or she doesn't serve on the House or Senate Armed Services committees. And don't just send an email: Call (866) 272-MOAA (6622), MOAA's toll-free line to the U.S. Capitol switchboard, to be connected with your legislators' offices. There are still many lawmakers who would support this legislation if they heard from constituents. Click the links to see whether your [senators](#) or your [House](#) members support this legislation. Sometimes it can take multiple engagements to get through to the correct staff member. Multiple forms of communication can make a real difference: Consider sending a copy of your correspondence to the Armed Services Committee leadership in both chambers, as well ([House](#) | [Senate](#)).