



The Santa Fe Trail Scout  
Santa Fe Trail Chapter  
Military Officers Association of America  
*Serving the Military Community of Leavenworth County and Vicinity in Kansas*

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Chapter Newsletter Number 2005-6 November 2005

**From the chapter president:**

Our dinner on 15 Nov at the Leavenworth Country Club will feature remarks by Kansas Council of Chapters Presidents, a wrap up of 2005 activities and proposed events for 2006.

The State of Kansas has six chapters. Overseeing their activities and linking them to MOAA National is a Kansas Council of Chapters. This Council meets each quarter and changes leadership annually at the last quarterly meeting of the calendar year. This will occur on 5 Nov 2005. The outgoing and incoming Presidents (Major Harry Malnicof and Col Bob Hadley) have accepted our invitation to attend our 15 November dinner and make remarks to our general membership. They will also award the chapter a 5 star streamer for its flag in recognition of the chapter's winning MOAA's highest merit chapter award for 2004.

2005 has been a busy and productive year. There were six general membership dinners every other month and six Board of Directors meetings in the intervening months. Additionally, the chapter supported Leavenworth Main street with Block Captains during Riverfest; JROTC with certificates and a medal; the Kansas Council of Chapters by hosting a quarterly meeting at Ft Leavenworth; the International Officer Sponsorship Program; MOAA legislative affairs by disseminating legislative updates and letters; MOAA recruiting at CGSC student PAIR day; the Frontier Museum by soliciting tour guides; MOAA Travel by inviting them to speak at a chapter dinner; scholarship support to the three local high schools; and MOAA/Chapter recruiting at Retiree Day at Ft Leavenworth.

The 2006 program of activities and events will be proposed and open for comments at our 15 November dinner. The Board of Directors is very interested in providing the general membership activities and events they want to have. Bring your thoughts and ideas to the dinner... we want to hear from the ladies too!

MOAA membership is declining. To reverse this trend, MOAA had initiated a program called "Give Me 10". They want each chapter to sign up 10 new MOAA National members by 31 Dec 2005. The cost is \$24 for 2 years. For each member the chapter recruits, the chapter receives \$10. For meeting the goal of 10 new members, the chapter receives an additional \$100. Given this, the Board of Directors voted to give free Santa Fe Trail Chapter membership for a year to anyone who signs up for a 2 year MOAA

National membership. So, you can help the chapter and MOAA by recruiting a new National member for 2 years at a cost of \$24. Give a son/daughter/relative/friend a gift membership. A membership form is attached to this newsletter. Questions regarding "Give Me 10" can be directed to the chapter secretary or to me. Thanks for your help. I would sure like to recruit our 10 for MOAA.

I particularly enjoy our dinners. It's nice to see everyone and to visit. Judging by the conversation noise level others seem to enjoy them too. See you there, and thanks for your support in 2005. Rich Keller, Chapter President.

## **Levels of Excellence Awards Announced**

Members of MOAA's Council and Chapters Affairs Committee met in July and reviewed 83 entries for the 2004 Levels of Excellence Awards. After carefully evaluating each entry, the judges determined that 35 chapters will receive five-star Levels of Excellence Awards for the exemplary performance, and 35 chapters will receive four-star awards for their strong above-average performance.

We congratulate these award-winning chapters, which will receive special battle streamers, and we wish them continue success in 2005.

### **CATEGORY IV (LESS THAN 75 MEMBERS)**

#### **Five-Star Chapter**

#### **Santa Fe Trail (Kansas)**

The Five-star level battle streamer will be presented to the Chapter and affixed to the Chapter flag at the dinner meeting of 15 November 2005 by the President of the Kansas Council of Chapters, COL Robert V. Hadley, AUS-Ret.

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#### **Attention: Santa Fe Trail Chapter members and spouses:**

(Note: This article, written by Violet Smith, MOAA's Auxiliary Advisory Committee, reaches out to auxiliaries directly. Consider sharing it with them as you reflect on how your chapter interacts with its own auxiliary members.)

What do we mean by "auxiliary"? MOAA uses the term to identify the surviving spouse of a deceased member. Of these survivors, 99 percent are women. In the St. Petersburg (FL) Chapter of MOAA we refer to auxiliaries as "special members."

Regardless of what they are called, we are the surviving spouses of MOAA members and hopefully play an important role.

Now that our spouses are no longer with us, we must remember to look to MOAA for help, guidance and support just as our spouses did. They believed in MOAA, and perhaps your loved one made it possible for you to continue a life membership or annual

membership. MOAA at the national level is there to help you, and so are the officers of your local chapter. Please remember that.

At the chapter level we want special members to feel as much a part of the chapter as the regular members. We would like you to actively participate. I know you all have talent and skills so come forward and share them with us. We need you to know that we want you to be an active part of a chapter and to know that MOAA is for you as well. If you have thoughts or concerns feel free to bring them to a local board member so that they can be addressed. You can always call national MOAA with questions; in most cases they can find an answer or solution for you. They are there for you.

Just a reminder to all the spouses of current members – if your spouse has not shared vital information with you regarding wills, bank accounts and the like, please urge him or her to sit down with you and go over everything. This will make it so much easier for you if or when your partner is no longer with you.

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### **MOAA Santa Fe Trail Chapter Calendar for 2006 (as of 27 October 2005)**

- 17 Jan 06: Chapter Dinner, 1800, Guest Speaker, Leavenworth Country Club
- 23 Feb 06: BOD Luncheon, 1130, Village Square
- 14 Mar 06: Chapter Dinner, 1800, Guest Speaker, Leavenworth Country Club
- 27 Apr 06: BOD Luncheon, 1130, Village Square
- 16 May 06: Chapter Dinner, 1800, Guest Speaker, Leavenworth Country Club
- 22 Jun 06: BOD Luncheon, 1130, Village Square
- 18 July 06: Chapter Dinner, 1800, Guest Speaker, Leavenworth Country Club
- 24 Aug 06: BOD Luncheon, 1130, Village Square
- 19 Sep 06: Chapter Dinner, 1800, Guest Speaker, Leavenworth Country Club
- 26 Oct 06: BOD Luncheon, 1130, Village Square
- 21 Nov 06: Chapter Dinner, 1800, Elections/awards/2006 Wrap Up/2007 Plans

## Give Me 10 Campaign

Do you know an officer of any service, active duty, retired or reserve, who is not a member of MOAA? Now is the opportunity for you to seek his membership in the organization which is ready and willing to serve his needs and represent him and others like him in Washington, D.C. Between now and December 31, 2005 each new member of MOAA recruited by one of us in the Chapter will receive a free one-year membership in exchange for his payment of \$24.00 in dues which will cover his membership for the next TWO years. In addition our chapter will receive a payment of \$10.00 from National for each new member recruited and an additional \$100.00 if we successfully recruit ten new national members. Do your share. Recruit a new MOAA member. A Give Me 10 Membership form for your use is contained in this newsletter.

### MOAA Legislative Update for Friday, October 28, 2005

#### Issue 1: [Medicare, TRICARE Payment Cuts on the Table.](#)

House and Senate negotiators will soon be debating whether to change the current law that will cut Medicare and TRICARE payments to doctors by 4.3% in January. MOAA strongly supports repealing the payment cut, to keep more doctors from dropping Medicare and TRICARE patients. MOAA members and others need to use MOAA's tools to contact their legislators.

#### Issue 2: [Defense Bill, Concurrent Receipt, SBP Fixes Alive.](#)

Senate leaders reached a tentative agreement to act on the FY2006 Defense Authorization Bill as soon as next week. If we want our concurrent receipt and SBP amendments to have a chance, we need a barrage of messages to senators now.

#### Issue 3: [Senate Scrutinizes VA "Unemployability" Growth.](#)

The Senate Veterans Affairs Committee took testimony Thursday from government witnesses and the DAV concerning a doubling since 1999 of the number of veterans the VA has deemed "unemployable."

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## Issue 1: Medicare, TRICARE Payment Cuts on the Table

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Charles Grassley's (R-IA) proposed budget package includes reversal of significant cuts in 2006 Medicare and TRICARE payments to doctors. Under current law, those payments will be reduced 4.3%, starting in January. Grassley's plan would substitute a 1% payment increase.

Congress has recognized that the current payment-setting formula makes no sense - generating payment cuts whenever the national economy slumps. That's why Congress has acted to reverse similar cuts in the past couple of years.

We need to change the law to tie payments to doctors' cost of practicing medicine. If the formula went by that standard, doctors would be getting a 2.7% payment increase next year. Congress hasn't seen fit to change the formula, because they'd have to acknowledge

it would cost billions more each year in the future. They've taken the easier road of enacting annual corrections.

But things are different this year, as Congress faces big bills for Katrina cleanup and renewed calls for spending cuts. The budget hawks are in ascendancy in the House, and their version of the Medicare legislation would let the payment cuts go through.

That would be terrible for Medicare and TRICARE beneficiaries. Doctors say Medicare and TRICARE already are virtually the lowest-paying insurance plans in the country. A recent American Medical Association survey indicated that one-third of the doctor population would plan on cutting back on seeing Medicare and TRICARE patients if payments are reduced further. Many military beneficiaries already have trouble finding participating doctors, especially where there isn't a large military population.

Please visit <http://capwiz.com/moaa/home/> and click on the "Don't Cut Medicare/TRICARE Payments" link to send your legislators a MOAA-suggested message.

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## **Issue 2: Defense Bill, Concurrent Receipt, SBP Fixes Alive**

Senate leaders finally started to get their wartime priorities straight this week, reaching a tentative agreement to bring the FY2006 Defense Authorization Act (S. 1042) up for consideration as early as next week.

About time. MOAA President VADM Norb Ryan, Jr. (USN-Ret) sent a letter to every senator earlier this week, asking them to make the Defense bill an urgent priority. He pointed out that many initiatives in this bill are essential to meet recruiting, retention and readiness needs, including a 20,000 increase in Army end strength; a doubling of the maximum enlistment bonus; major new accession, affiliation, and reenlistment bonus authorities; and health coverage for Selected Reserve members and families.

"Every day that this vital legislation is delayed," said Ryan, "is another day the Army, the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve are denied the tools they need to achieve their manpower goals."

"Leaders of both parties already have agreed to limit themselves to 12 amendments each - a virtually unprecedented compromise, considering the hundreds of amendments the Senate has managed to dispose of in previous years," Ryan's letter continued. "It's time for action, not further political haggling, on a bill that's this important to national defense."

The Defense bill is also our last chance this year to make progress on our concurrent receipt and Survivor Benefit Plan goals. We're hopeful that the amendments to be considered will include Sen. Harry Reid's (D-NV) plan to pay full, immediate concurrent receipt to disabled retirees rated "unemployable" by the VA, as well as Sen. Bill Nelson's (D-FL) proposal to end SBP penalties for "Greatest Generation" military retirees and for survivors of members who die of service-connected causes.

Please visit <http://capwiz.com/moaa/home/> and click on the "Support Key Senate Amendments" link to urge your senators to vote FOR these two amendments next week.

You can also use MOAA's toll-free Capitol Hill Hot Line (1-866-272-6622) to call your legislators. Just ask the Capitol operator to connect you to your legislator's office.

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## **Issue 3: Senate Scrutinizes VA "Unemployability" Growth**

Senators sparred over what to make of the sharp rise in the VA's Individual Unemployability or IU disability rating at an October 27 Veterans Affairs Committee hearing.

Chairman Larry Craig (R-ID) said, Congress needs to better understand the IU management process – the extent to which VA pushes rehabilitation; whether VA follows up after granting the rating; and whether the rating "incentivizes" veterans not to return to work, which would disqualify them for the rating.

Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) expressed concern that the IU hearing might send the wrong signal - that expressions of skepticism about the unemployability rating system might stigmatize and deter deserving veterans from seeking help from the VA. She urged better access to VA medical and vocational-rehabilitation services. Murray also recommended increased funding for such services and a hearing on transition assistance, reemployment, and financial protections for troops.

The Committee was advised that the number of IU ratings had doubled since 1999, with Vietnam-era veterans comprising 40% of the total.

VA Benefits Undersecretary VADM Dan Cooper, USN (Ret.) testified that there is "no single clear explanation" for the increase in IU ratings. He noted a 384,000 hike (17%) in the overall number of VA disability ratings since 1999 and said that the percentage of veterans with "combined" or multiple disabilities of 60% or higher had risen from 17% then to 29% today. About 221,000 veterans have an IU rating today. The minimum requirement for consideration of an IU rating is 60% for a single disability or a combined 70% evaluation with at least one 40% disability.

The IU rating is a judgment by the VA rating official that the individual veteran is unable to follow a "substantially gainful occupation" as a result of service-connected disabilities. Asked by Senator John Thune (R-SD) how many Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have an IU rating, Cooper said he did not have the data but would submit them for the record.

The GAO testified that private sector insurers focus on return-to-work practices in their disability assessment processes, including incentives for claimants and employers to encourage and ease return to work. Senator Daniel Akaka (D-HI) asked how much it would cost to increase the VA's vocational rehabilitation program, but the GAO had no answer.

Asked whether there should be an age cutoff for the IU designation, Rick Surratt of the Disabled American Veterans asserted there should not be. MOAA strongly agrees. If a disabled veteran can't pursue a second career, that reduces his or her available retirement income. Further, stock market slumps and corporate failures have left more and more older Americans needing to return to work at least part time to make ends meet. If their service-connected disabilities preclude that, they need and deserve the IU compensation.

Senator Craig closed the hearing by saying that the IU issue should be closely monitored. He signaled no legislative action by his Committee.

None of the senators or the witnesses addressed the fact that disabled retirees with an IU rating (which entails payment at the 100% disability rate) are precluded from receiving their full, earned military retired pay, even though others with 100% ratings have their full retired pay restored. As indicated in Issue 2 above, MOAA is pushing hard to win legislation to compensate them on a par with other 100% disabled retirees.

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## Membership Application

**Yes! Sign me up as an MOAA Member.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Branch of Service \_\_\_\_\_ Rank \_\_\_\_\_

- Retired     Active     Former  
 Reserve     National Guard     Auxiliary\*

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Chapter Name \_\_\_\_\_

Chapter Recruiter \_\_\_\_\_

**SPECIAL HALF-PRICE OFFER:**  
**Two Years for \$24**

### Method of Payment

- Check (please make payable to MOAA)  
 VISA                       Discover  
 MasterCard               AMEX

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Surviving spouse of eligible officer.  
 Dues to MOAA are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal tax purposes. Annual membership dues include a \$12 subscription to MILITARY OFFICER magazine.*

**Send To**  
 MOAA, P.O. Box 1488, Merrifield, VA 22116-9820

## OPERATION INTERNATIONAL

"Operation International is a program of the Leavenworth-Lansing Area Chamber of Commerce. This program fosters international understanding and creates a rich cultural diversity by providing civilian sponsors for the international officers attending the Command and General Staff College (CGSC) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Operation International's goal today remains as clear and simple as it was when first founded in 1952: to provide a warm welcome to the international officers and their families on their arrival in the Leavenworth-Lansing community and to sustain that hospitality throughout their year with us. As a volunteer effort Operation International sponsors benefit greatly from the cultural exchange provided; often finding the beginning of lifelong friendships with their sponsored international officer. Anyone interested in the sponsorship program, please contact Connie Brown, 913-682-1355 or <[lu@kc.rr.com](mailto:lu@kc.rr.com)>. We need your support.

SANTA FE TRAIL CHAPTER				
THE MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA				
<u>APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP &amp; INFORMATION CHANGE FORM</u>				
<b>Mail to: LTC Stanley Johnson, 1101 Holman, Leavenworth, KS 66048</b>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Enroll Me as a New Regular Member		<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Address or Information change ONLY</u>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Enroll Me as a New Auxiliary Member		<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Dues payment &amp; Information Update</u>		
Please print or type * Dues \$15.00 per year				
Last Name	First Name	Middle	Grade	Name of Spouse
Street Address		Apt. #	Phone Number	
City	State	Zip + 4	SSN/Service Number	
<b><u>PLEASE CHECK APPROPRIATE BOXES:</u></b>			STATUS	SERVICE
Member of National MOAA?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Active Officer	<input type="checkbox"/> Army
If YES, your card number, please:	_____		<input type="checkbox"/> Retired Officer	<input type="checkbox"/> Navy
Spouse's Grade (If Widow(er)):	_____		<input type="checkbox"/> Former Officer	<input type="checkbox"/> Air Force
Your Birth date:	_____		<input type="checkbox"/> Widow(er)	<input type="checkbox"/> Marine Corps
Active Duty: from _____ to _____			<input type="checkbox"/> Coast Guard	
Signature: _____			<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> NOAA
E-Mail Address: _____(if applicable)			<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Pub Health Service

\* After 1 May dues are \$10.00 for the balance of the current year. After 1 September dues are only \$5.00 for the balance of the current year. Annual chapter dues are due and payable on 1 January.