



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

Chapter Newsletter Number 2006-1

February 2006

A Message from the Chapter President:

Our chapter was recently awarded the “Volunteer of the Year” award by Leavenworth Main Street for our support of the annual River Fest held on Delaware street. A plaque was presented to us at Main Street’s dinner awards banquet held at the Carousel Museum. I was honored to accept the award on behalf of those who volunteered their time from 6AM-10AM assisting vendors find their assigned slot on Delaware. Special thanks to Tom Brown, Jack Thomas, Dick Pieper, Clyde Huffman, and Bob Storms. Well done.

For some time we have endeavored to have a speaker at dinner who is a recent returnee from Iraq or Afghanistan. We are fortunate to have U S Army Major Michael Sullivan who recently returned from Iraq and is currently a student at CGSC. He will be our featured speaker on 14 March. Hope you can come.

The chapter secretary is spending a lot of time sending out MOAA legislative updates. There are very important issues therein. Some impact us now, and some those who follow us. I urge you to scan the updates and select issues that are important to you. Then, write or phone someone about them. Thanks.

Finally, MOAA National is asking for a show of hands as to how many and who is volunteering on post. Please let the chapter secretary know who you are, and we will advise National. By the way, they may want to talk to you about what you do.

**MOAA Santa Fe Trail Chapter Calendar for 2006
(as of 28 February 2006)**

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



MOAA News Exchange



March 1, 2006

[COLA Watch](#)

The Bureau of Labor and Statistics announced the month-to-month change in the consumer price index (CPI) used to compute retired pay cost-of-living adjustments (COLA).

[MOAA Participates in the DoD Reserve Family Readiness Awards at Pentagon](#)

MOAA leaders joined with members of the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs to honor seven outstanding organizations during the DoD's fifth annual Reserve Family Readiness Awards ceremony at the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes.

[It's Not Too Late](#)

Entries for MOAA's patriotic photo contest are due March 15. Download the official rules and entry form. (PDF)

[Dump the Disabled Retiree "Back Tax"](#)

Most VA disability claims are resolved in less than a year. But lost paperwork, administrative errors, and appeals of rejected claims delay thousands of disability awards for years on end.

[Are You Sharing Your Home With the Fungi Family?](#)

MOAA's "Ask the Doctor," Rear Adm. Joyce Johnson, USPHS-Ret., D.O., M.A., discusses the ill effects of fungi and what you can do to avoid them.

This message was sent to you at the following email address: roberta664@sbcglobal.net

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Alert



Web Maintenance

MOAA is in the process of upgrading its membership database to include new login procedures. Starting March 7, you will need an e-mail address to log into MOAA's Web Base.

Tips From TOPS

Getting Through the Career Transition "Grieving" Process

The process of changing careers can be difficult and stressful for some military members and their families. In fact, making a career change can be one of the most emotionally challenging events in a person's life.

Interactive

Sound Off!

How do you feel about DoD's proposal to increase health care fees? If you're an active duty, Guard, or Reserve member, please take time to complete our three-question survey. MOAA would like to hear your views on this important issue.

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."

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.

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.

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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Santa Fe Trail Chapter, MOAA, meets for dinner on 14 March 2006 at the Leavenworth Country Club, 455 W. Eisenhower Road, Lansing. Hospitality begins at 6:00 PM; dinner at 7:00 PM. Our speaker for the evening will be MAJ Mike Sullivan, an Armor officer attending the CGSC, who recently returned from Iraq where he served as advisor to an Iraqi Battalion. ***Our dinner meetings are usually held on the third Tuesday of the month. This March 14th meeting is an exception to our policy.***

Please make your reservations with menu choices and check payments to Treasurer Stan Johnson, 1101 Holman, Leavenworth, KS 66048, by not later than 10 March 2006. **If you have not paid your 2006 dues please add \$15.00 with meal payments.**

Menu (1): Red Snapper with chili/lime sauce) - \$21.00; Menu (2): Chuck marinated in beer and onion with red cabbage & apple - \$20.00). For all: Consommé Indienne, cucumber salad and Pear Tart dessert. Prices include gratuity. Drinks: Coffee, Ice Tea.

We value your presence. Robert Atkins, Chapter Secretary



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>. We need your support.

SANTA FE TRAIL CHAPTER
THE MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP & INFORMATION CHANGE FORM

Mail to: LTC Stanley Johnson, 1101 Holman, Leavenworth, KS 66048

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| <input type="radio"/> Enroll Me as a New Regular Member
<input type="radio"/> Enroll Me as a New Auxiliary Member | <input type="radio"/> <u>Address or Information change ONLY</u>
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Please print or type * Dues \$15.00 per year

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Street Address			Apt. #	Phone Number
City	State	Zip + 4	SSN/Service Number	

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Member of National MOAA? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No If YES, your card number, please: _____ Spouse's Grade (If Widow(er)): _____ Your Birth date: _____ Active Duty: from _____ to _____ Signature: _____ E-Mail Address: _____(if applicable)	STATUS <input type="radio"/> Active Officer <input type="radio"/> Retired Officer <input type="radio"/> Former Officer <input type="radio"/> Widow(er) <input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female	SERVICE <input type="radio"/> Army <input type="radio"/> Navy <input type="radio"/> Air Force <input type="radio"/> Marine Corps <input type="radio"/> Coast Guard <input type="radio"/> NOAA <input type="radio"/> Pub Health Service
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* 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.
