



# THE EAGLE



## THE MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA PENNSYLVANIA COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS

[www.pa-coc.org](http://www.pa-coc.org)

### *STILL SERVING*

#### 2014 AWARD WINNING NEWSLETTER Marvin J. Harris Communications Awards



### NEWS AND VIEWS April 2014

#### **PRESIDENT'S CORNER**

It was my honor to represent the PA Council of Chapters during this year's "Storming the Hill" in Washington. The four issues we carried to our US Representatives were sustain pay and benefits for our troops, reject the proposed disproportional TRICARE fee hikes and health plan changes, eliminate

harmful sequestration cuts and we reminded them that they needed to address remaining inequities for disabled retirees, survivors and recalled Guard and Reserve.

Pennsylvania has eighteen representatives and two senators. I visited nine representatives and Senator Toomey's office and Nancy Anderson of the General Greene Chapter, a MOAA Board member, visited the other nine representatives and Senator Casey's office. Our representatives understand our views and MOAA delivers the information they need in one page summaries that state the issues.

The link below is to the MOAA web site under the Take Action tab and select Storming the Hill at the bottom. You will find the brochure Slowing the Growth that shows personnel costs have remained at 33 percent for the last ten years. You will also find the four information sheets that we delivered to the representatives. On the right side of the page there is a link to photos posted on MOAA's Facebook page and a YouTube video. I am in the last photo of the video before the group shot in front of the capitol,



Photo by Blair Drake, MOAA - Council president Bob Gray, left, visits PA Congressman Scott Perry during "Storming the Hill"

taking with Representative Keith Rothfus from the western part of the state. It goes by so quick I had to stop it and drag back the red line to see the picture.

<http://www.moaa.org/storming2014>

Regards,  
Bob Gray

## **COUNCIL MEETING DATES**

**May 3<sup>rd</sup> State College**

**July 19, State College**

**September 12, Convention, Pittsburgh**

**November 8, State College**

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## **Federal Legislative Update – Preparing to Storm the Hill**

The hardest part of Storming the Hill is setting up appointments with ten congressional offices starting three weeks prior to the date. You are responsible for contacting the congressional offices and scheduling the appointments prior to arriving. The act of scheduling the appointments within one day is a challenge and then to make sure none of the times overlap. Because of hearing schedules they were not able to make appointment times until they received the listing two weeks before. I still had two offices that I had to coordinate times with the first day of the Presidents Seminar in Alexandria. MOAA provides the issue papers in advance and provides the email addresses for the office scheduling contacts. They also provide a sample letter for you to attach to the email that states the issues you will talk with them about. The one item I learned should always be on any letter you send to your legislator is your name and address. Legislators are mainly interested in working for their own constituents from the home district. The first time I contacted the congressmen's offices I had not put my name and address on the letter. The first thing they wanted to know was my name and address so they could determine if I was from their district. With the eight congressmen that I did not live in

their home district I mentioned the MOAA chapter that was in or near their district to localize my relationship.

During the afternoon before the event you spend time reviewing the legislative goals and their importance to the soldiers and their families. The FY 2015 Defense Authorization Act proposes limiting the military pay raise to 1 % instead of the COLA amount that was written into law a few years ago. The housing allowance would be reduced by 5 % causing soldiers to pay out of their pocket for family housing. The Commissary subsidy will be cut so that the current savings of 33% would be cut to 10% for soldier's families. If that isn't bad enough there are proposed plans to consolidate the all fo the TRICARE programs into one plan. The current TRICARE Prime family plan costs \$539 a year and gives guaranteed access to the MTF. Under the proposed plan of combining all three plans everyone would pay a participation fee of \$527 and active duty dependants would lose guaranteed access to the MTF. Pharmacy co pays would increase and TRICARE for Life would have an enrollment fee that would increase over five years to 2% of retired pay, essentially means testing for the payment amount. No other federal insurance program and few civilian programs use means testing to determine employee costs. These are the main points but there are others fees and costs included in the proposed budget.

MOAA has estimated that the reduction in pay and benefits for a sergeant with a family of four will lose \$5,000.00 a year and an O-3 with a family of four will lose \$6,000.00.

The Pentagon is being squeezed by sequestration and they have turned to the soldiers that are the true deterrent and started to take away what the Congress has taken ten years to build back up to give our soldiers and their families a better quality of live. The Pentagon risks a drop in retention of mid level officers and NCOs in the all volunteer force in the future.

Bob Gray, Legislative Chairman

## State Legislature Update

Changes in committee assignments in the state senate have resulted in a change in the majority chair of the Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee with the appointment of Senator Robert Mensch. Senator Lisa Baker has been appointed as majority chair of the Labor and Industry committee but still retains a seat on the Veterans Affairs and Emergency preparedness committee.

\* \* \* \*

## Veterans Legislation

Veteran related legislation is moving in the legislature. Three House Bills moved from the House to the Senate in February. House Bill 472 would give active duty, veterans and DOD civilians and their dependants in state tuition rates in state funded colleges and community colleges. This would encourage Pennsylvanians to come back to the state as this benefit would extend their GI Bill funding to take more courses. House Bill 1164 would give veterans the right to priority scheduling of classes. This helps them schedule needed classes so they do not have to go an additional semester to pick up a class because it was full the last semester. The GI Bill limits the time that veterans have to complete their degree and priority scheduling will help a soldier getting off active duty to schedule on line with the school so he can start classes on his return instead of waiting a semester. House Bill 1640 will require colleges to hold students tuition if they are called to active duty during a semester. This will save the soldier money and allows them to complete the class they could not finish. The bill also addresses the transcript showing a "W" code for withdrawal which can affect the soldier getting a job when he completes schooling. The bill directs the colleges to use an "M" for mobilized. This will take negotiation with the colleges and the automated transcript companies to work on changes the code. Senate Bill 1224 will authorize personal care homes and assisted living residences the ability to get the resident medications through the VA pharmacy and

break down the bulk packaging into single unit doses, saving the resident money.

Bob Gray, Legislative Chairman

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## PAY DAY LENDING UPDATE

The Coalition to Stop Pay Day Lending in PA is planning two lobby days at the capitol in May to distribute fact sheets against Pay Day Lending. Senate bill 975 is still in the shadows and we want to keep it there. The best way to do that is to keep a presence at the capital to remind legislators that we are watching.

## Expanded PA Council Legislative Committee

MOAA national's Government Relations department is working with state councils to developing a way to contact every congressman's legislative district in each state, primarily through the chapter system. The PA Council now has an enlarged Legislative Committee with a contact list that includes the name of the US congressmen in each chapter area and /or close to their area and the phone number of their Washington office. The Council has nearly every congressional district covered. Those on the fringe will be worked to find members that live in the district, even looking at recruiting national members from the potentials listing if only to work with the legislative committee. The State Senators and Representatives can be added to the document in the future but most members know how to contact their local state legislator. The new list will be sent out soon.

It was brought to light during the recent Presidents Seminar that MOAA has the largest email letter response of any veteran's organization. Other veteran's organizations have generated 50,000 letters on the same issue when MOAA has generated 147,000 in one day. Don't doubt that we are "One Powerful Voice".

## Pentagon Unveils Major Retirement Reform Options

March 14, 2014 from MOAA Legislative Update

On March 7, DoD unveiled a detailed set of concepts for fundamental and far-reaching changes to the current military retirement system.

The proposal maintains the 20 year vesting for the traditional military retirement benefit, but it would decrease monthly payments in order to establish new forms of compensation prior to reaching career status.

The new models would offer three new forms of compensation in addition to the 20 year retirement option, career servicemembers could see a 10 percent reduction in purchasing power over the course of their lifetime.

A day after the concepts were made public, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel made it clear that he wants to wait until next year before asking Congress to make fundamental changes to the current retirement system.

The changes are detailed in a white paper report sent to Congress and to the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC), which is conducting a detailed study of military pay and benefits and will report their findings and recommendations in February 2015.

These retirement proposals are not formal recommendations, and are not included in the [Pentagon's FY 2015 budget proposal](#).

"These are the department's views on the potential options for modernizing retirement," said a senior defense official who helped write the report.

On a positive note, the concept paper does recognize the need to fix three areas of great concern to MOAA:

- the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP)/Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) offset;

- a 401k-style benefit for all service members who serve at least six years;
- a retention bonus at around 12 to 16 years of service; and
- a lump-sum payment provided upon retirement to those who serve 20 years or more.

Also discussed are several possible changes to the reserve compensation and retirement system. One concept would allow members to draw a partial annuity prior to age 60, but at the cost of revising the computation of drilling points downward.

Overall the proposals distribute pay over a wider swath of a military career, but likely reduce total compensation.

- concurrent receipt of military retired pay and VA disability compensation; and
- the Integrated Disability Evaluation System. Even though the white paper addresses these areas, the devil is in the details. For example, DoD's concept to eliminate the SBP/DIC offset would significantly alter and devalue the benefit by decreasing the SBP annuity while increasing the premium retirees would pay.

Any changes to military retirement would require the approval of Congress, and lawmakers are unlikely to take any action until after the MCRMC submits its final report – a prudent step MOAA supports.

At the release of the proposal, DoD senior leadership reiterated its strong support for grandfathering all currently serving troops and retirees under the current system.

MOAA will continue to monitor these proposals and initiatives regarding military retirement and will stay engaged with the MCRMC, DoD, and Congress throughout the process.

- See more at:

[http://www.moaa.org/Main\\_Menu/Take\\_Action/Top\\_Issues/Serving\\_in\\_Uniform/Compensation/Pentagon\\_Unveils\\_Major\\_Retirement\\_Reform\\_Options.html#sthash.1y6OHZ1C.dpuf](http://www.moaa.org/Main_Menu/Take_Action/Top_Issues/Serving_in_Uniform/Compensation/Pentagon_Unveils_Major_Retirement_Reform_Options.html#sthash.1y6OHZ1C.dpuf)



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## Air Force JROTC Reinstatement in Coatesville

By **Kristina Scala**, *Daily Local News, Pottsville*



Staff Photo by Vinny Tennis In this file photo, cadets in the Joint Services Military Corp prepare to march in the parking lot of the high school in Coatesville on Tuesday, Dec. 3, 2013. The JSMC replaced the Air Force ROTC program which will return next school year.

CALN — Air Force Junior ROTC at Coatesville Area Senior High School, a 36-year tradition placed on a temporary hiatus during the 2013-14 school year, is back.

Coatesville Area School Board members approved the program's reinstatement last week and it's expected to be back in full swing starting in the 2014-15 school year. School board members moved quickly on the item, unanimously voting to bump the program's approval to the special board meeting on April 8.

"I am on cloud nine," said Coleen Beckershoff, Joint Service Military Club parent and area resident. "It's been two years almost to the day when I wrote that letter to the school board telling them how ROTC changed my son's life and taking it away would be devastating not only to him, but to the entire

school district. Ironically, I wrote that letter on April 4, and on April 8 it was back on the budget for the next school year."

According Beckershoff, former Superintendent Richard Como told parents the program would be reinstated for the 2012-13 school year if the group managed to raise \$157,000 in two months.

The deadline arrived, and the group fell \$20,000 short until donations came in last minute to help the group meet its goal, Beckershoff said. (The PA Council of Chapters contributed \$50.00 to this Air Force JROTC unit during this fund drive)

The program managed to stick around for that year until the lack of funding for the 2013-14 year and retirement of both U.S. Air Force instructors for the AFJROTC program didn't play in the program's favor.

When the program failed to be reinstated for the 2013-14 school year, parents, administrators, and some teachers assembled to form the JSMC — an after-school program that educates students on all branches of the military.

Some light shined on the AFJROTC reinstatement when school board member Stu Deets motioned to place the program back on the budget during a meeting on the 2014-15 budget.

The district's 2014-15 proposed budget contains about \$80,000 for the program, according to a school district official.

Now the high school will offer both the JSMC and AFJROTC programs to students.

Read the full story at the link below:

<http://www.dailylocal.com/general-news/20140414/coatesville-school-board-approves-reinstatement-of-air-force-junior-rotc>

## Pre-K for PA

**Mission:** Readiness is the nonprofit, nonpartisan national security organization of more than 400 retired generals and admirals and other senior military leaders who have mobilized in response to deeply troubling Department of Defense figures regarding our future military preparedness.

The Department of Defense reports that 75 percent of all young Americans between the ages of 17 and 24 are unable to join the military primarily because they are too poorly educated, physically unfit, or have disqualifying criminal records. Mission: Readiness members are concerned that if left unchecked, this distressed state of our youth could seriously undermine future recruiting efforts and thereby future national security.

I am sure you would agree that highly skilled and physically fit soldiers are the backbone of our US Armed Forces. As a result, Mission: Readiness advocates for investments in the health and education of our next generation that will help ensure America's youth succeed academically, stay physically fit, and abide by the law today so that military service and productive citizenship are an option tomorrow.

One goal of Mission: Readiness is to expand access to high-quality early childhood education for at-risk children. As described in the attached brief, national long-term research shows that children who participate in high-quality early education programs are up to 44

Pennsylvania who believe that providing more children the opportunity to enter school ready to succeed is the right course of action and an urgent necessity. The bipartisan Campaign will not endorse nor oppose candidates for

elected office, but rather advocate on behalf of this vision to expand access to high quality pre-k across the Commonwealth.

As we work to grow this Campaign, we ask the Pennsylvania Council of Chapters of the Military Officers' Association of America to approve signing on as a supporting organization of the Pre-K for PA campaign. There is no cost or minimum required commitment to sign on as a supporting organization. We would simply ask to add your organization to our list of supporters on our website and ask that you consider informing your membership about the campaign. More details can be found at this link: <http://www.prekforpa.org/join-as-a-supporting-organization/>

A vote will be taken at the May 3<sup>rd</sup> Council meeting to approve support for the program.

## Veteran activities throughout the Commonwealth

**Veterans Expo**  
**Norco Fire Co.**  
**May 15, 2014 10AM – 12 Noon**  
Government agencies and organizations specializing in veteran programs and services  
144 W. Schuylkill Road  
Pottstown, PA

**Pittsburgh Fisher House**  
Join us for our very first Public Open House on Saturday, May 17.  
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System  
412.360.2030  
[www.pittsburghfisherhouse.org](http://www.pittsburghfisherhouse.org)

Here is the link to the DMVA page on Tax Exemption for Disabled Veterans: [http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/veterans\\_benefits/11386/disabled\\_benefits/567405](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/veterans_benefits/11386/disabled_benefits/567405)



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### ***GLORIOUS INSULTS***

"He loves nature in spite of what it did to him." - **Forrest Tucker**

## **2014 Marvin J. Harris Communications Awards**

The "Eagle" placed 1<sup>st</sup> Runner Up in the Council print newsletter category. Congratulations to Col Bob Broyles of the Cumberland Valley Chapter who took on the job of editor for the first year. The award will be presented at the May 3<sup>rd</sup> Council meeting in State College.



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The Lancaster Chapter took  
**First Place for its Recruiting Brochure**  
in the 300-399 Chapter member category.

### **PA COUNCIL OFFICERS 2014-2015 Term**

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