



# THE EAGLE



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

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

### *STILL SERVING*



### NEWS AND VIEWS March 2014



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

During the February State Veterans Commission meeting at Fort Indiantown Gap the first order of business was to swear in a new member of the commission. BG Jerry Beck PAARNG (Ret) swore in PA Council of Chapters president Bob Gray in front of the other members and guests of the commission. You will be glad to hear there was not a speech, just a hand shake.



However, the DMVA Legislative Liaison was ill that day and I was asked to cover the legislation portion of his slides. I took full advantage of it and explained recently introduced legislation and what it would do

for veterans and the National Guard. After the meeting I asked the State Veteran's Commission president how I did on my first day. He told me that it was very interesting and he had never learned so much about legislation. Then he told the next time to keep it shorter.

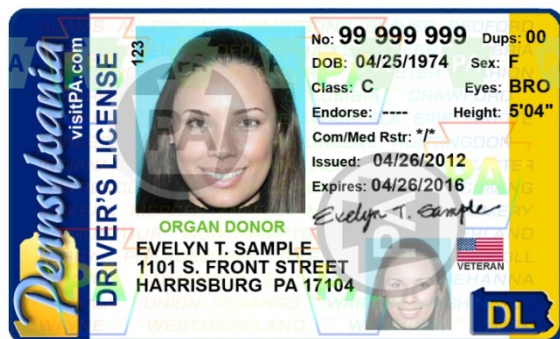
Regards,  
Bob Gray

#### **Veteran's Driver's License**

After legislation was passed and signed by the governor in October of 2012 the task of designing the new veteran's license fell on Penn Dot. The initial idea was a "V" for veteran on the license, seems simple. For design reasons the simple "V" idea would not work. After meeting several times with the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, DMVA, a final design was agreed upon, a US flag with the word veteran under it.



From the passing of the legislation until there was a final design it was close to six months. The new veteran's driver's license and another piece of legislation, the Veteran's Trust Fund, required the redesign of all Penn Dot driver's license and car registration applications and renewals to reflect the veterans designation and the check off box for the veteran's Trust Fund. The new application and renewal forms include a section explaining that veterans can request the veteran's designation on their license and they added the Veterans Trust Fund \$3.00 check off box on all renewal forms. The cost, as described in legislation, was to be paid out of the Veteran's Trust Fund. The DMVA received the final bill from Penn Dot for \$700,000.00. The only money in the trust fund at the time was part of the proceeds from the sale of the Scotland School for Veteran's Children, around \$700,000.00. After negotiating with Penn Dot it was agreed that DMVA could pay back the cost in installments.



### How Do I obtain a Veterans Designation on my Driver's License or Identification card?

Qualified applicants should visit [www.dmv.state.pa.us](http://www.dmv.state.pa.us) and click on the American Flag icon with the phrase "Veterans Designation" beneath it. Applicants will be given the opportunity to renew or order a duplicate driver's license or identification card which will contain the designation.

**FEES WILL DOUBLE ON APRIL 1<sup>st</sup>** when the new Transportation bill doubles registration fees. Your current photo in Penn Dot files will be used for online and mail requests. Veterans must self certify they are a veteran. Misrepresentation of veteran's status

will result in losing your driver's license or ID card. DMVA will audit submissions to verify veteran status of discharge or separation under conditions other than dishonorable. Those applications not able to be verified will be sent a letter from DMVA requesting a copy of the veteran's DD 214. This will actually aid veterans in obtaining a copy if they do not have one and receive assistance in obtaining it. DMVA may not have electronic access to a veteran's records if they have not used the GI Bill or VA services.

### COUNCIL MEETING DATES

**April -, State College – Rescheduling**  
**\*\* Possibly end of April or in May \*\***

**July 19, State College**  
**September 12, Pittsburgh Convention**  
**November 8, State College**

\* \* \* \* \*

### PAY DAY LENDING UPDATE

Senate bill 975 is still in the shadows of the capital. The continued opposition to the bill by the statewide coalition against pay day lending, including community legal aid attorneys, credit counseling firms, faith based groups, housing agencies, the PA War Veterans Council and the State Veterans Commission has kept the bill from being considered by the majority. Continued visits to the capital on veteran's legislation will always include pay day lending as a topic.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Veterans Legislation

Due to the General Assembly conducting budget hearings for the month of February there has been no movement on the bills listed in the February newsletter. A complete update will be provided in the April newsletter of those and new legislation that has been introduced.

Bob Gray, Legislative Chairman

\* \* \* \* \*

## PA War Veterans Council Legislative Breakfast



From left to right: Front row- CPT Bengtson DMVA legislative liaison office, BG Jerry Beck Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs, Senator Lisa Baker Chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, Representative Chirs Sianato Co chair of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Neil Applebee Blind Veterans, Representative Stephen Barrar Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Rick Oleary Director of the House Veterans Affairs Committee and Representative Doyle Heffley Second row: second from left – Rich Hudzinski VVA & MOAA member and fourth from the left – Bob Gray PA COC President and War Council Legislative Chair

The annual legislative breakfast was held on March 11<sup>th</sup> in a Senate conference room off the East Wing Rotunda. There were 14 legislators that stopped by to talk to members of the War Veterans Council and the Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs BG Jerry Beck PAARNG (Ret). Representative Steven Barrar, chairman of the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee and Senator Lisa Baker, chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee talked with War Council members on legislative issues.

After breakfast a legislative team of Bob Gray, Rich Huszinski of Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) & MOAA and Larry Holeman of the VVA went to visit with the legislative staffers of five senators to review the goals of the War Veterans Council. Rich presented the goal related bills to the staffers and suggested that they should look at sending legislative packages with bills related to the same area such as education. All of the bills in the package should address education issues for veterans.



Rich Hudzinski, right, discusses legislative issues with a state representative in the capitol rotunda.

## MOAA attains VSO Status to help file VA claims

January 6, 2014

Alexandria, Va. — MOAA has expanded its support of veterans, survivors and their families by adding VA claims assistance to its suite of transition services. The new status will be officially announced on Thursday, Jan. 9, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at MOAA headquarters in Alexandria, Va. Retired Brig. Gen. Allison A. Hickey, Under Secretary for Benefits at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will be the guest of honor.

“MOAA felt we could not stand on the sidelines of the VA claims backlog without supporting the VA’s good-faith efforts by being part of the solution,” MOAA President Vice Adm. Norb Ryan said. “We are helping to file fully developed claims, providing VA with the information they need to adjudicate the claim and shorten the wait time for the veteran. We are very proud to attain

recognition as a Veterans Service Organization (VSO) and believe that providing this new service is meeting an important need of the military community.”

Due to the significant backlog of VA claims, causing disabled veterans long waits for benefits, the VA has invested in people, processes and technology, all of which is designed to process veterans’ claims more quickly and accurately. The claims process is complex and about 50% of veterans do not use a VSO for help. MOAA is seeking to serve the veterans who do not already have a representative and will provide detailed articles, worksheets and resources for self-help that are available free online at <http://www.moaa.org/vso>.

MOAA has two full-time employees and 7 accredited representatives dedicated to the effort and though not as large as some of the other VSOs, 2,000 claims per year are expected to be completed. MOAA will begin taking claims in the National Capital area first. Through its claim representation efforts, the MOAA VSO staff is learning how to improve access to veteran and survivor benefits. MOAA has created a [MOAA Claims Assistance](#) blog and discussion forum to inform and educate the military community about veteran and survivor benefits. MOAA’s government relations team has made this issue a top priority and, as top advocates on the Hill, will provide comments and suggestions

on proposed laws and regulations. Veterans in need of claims assistance do not need to be a member of MOAA or Voices for America’s Troops to take advantage of these services. Those interested can schedule an initial consultation by calling or emailing MOAA at 1-866-739-3046 (Staffed Monday through Friday, 8 am to 6 pm Eastern) or [vso@moaa.org](mailto:vso@moaa.org). The claims service will be provided at MOAA headquarters office in Old Town Alexandria, Virginia, and satellite office at the Pentagon. An appointment is necessary. From MOAA’s Claims Assistance page:

### Claims Process

There are numerous ways to apply for VA disability benefits depending on the type of

benefit you are seeking. Find more information on how to submit a VA claim, what to expect from the VA claims process, and where to find answers to frequently asked questions about VA claims.

### **Benefits and Eligibility**

There are many benefit programs offered by the VA. Each benefit has different eligibility criteria. If you have questions about whether or not you are eligible for a benefit you should contact a VSO or email us at [vso@moaa.org](mailto:vso@moaa.org).

### **Tips and Tools**

You should always seek the advice of a trained professional when filing a claim for VA benefits. If, after seeking advice, you decide to file a claim on your own, we have you covered. Use our checklists and fact sheets to determine what benefits you are eligible for and what evidence is required to file a successful claim. Send an email to [vso@moaa.org](mailto:vso@moaa.org) if you have questions about filing your claim.

- See more at:

<file:///C:/Users/Robert%20PC/Documents/MOAA%20attains%20VSO%20status%20to%20help%20file%20VA%20claims%20%20%20MOAA.htm#sthash.muPshB0A.dpuf>

## **Governors to Obama:**

### **Don't Cut Guard**

Governors oppose the possible cuts to the Army National Guard and have made their feelings known in a letter to President Barack Obama.

The letter, which was sent through the National Governors Association, was mailed to the president Friday. The letter, which can be read [here](#), has the signatures of 50 governors, including those from Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

The governors reject portions of the defense budget revealed last week that cut the size of the Army Guard, making it, the governors claim, more like a pre-9/11 strategic reserve than an operational force. The budget also

removes much of the Army Guard's aviation fleet.

"A return to a pre-9/11 role squanders the investment and value of the Guard and discredits its accomplishment at home and as an active combat force," they wrote.

They ask the president to reconsider cuts to the manpower in the Guard and the force's aviation fleet and work with the governors to determine the proper structure of the Army Guard.

## **Excellence Awards**

The deadline to enter the Levels of Excellence Awards, which recognizes MOAA's best councils and chapters, is June 1. Winners will be invited to attend MOAA's 2014 annual meeting in Arlington, Va., where they will be honored at a special dinner and presented with award streamers.

Affiliates will be judged on their activities for calendar year 2013. Councils and chapters that score between 220 and 240 points will receive five-star Levels of Excellence Awards, while those with scores between 200 and 219 points will receive four-star awards.

Entry information and judging criteria can be found on MOAA's Web Base. Read "[MOAA Levels of Excellence Award](#)," and submit your entry today!

\* \* \* \* \*

# Show your support of PA's nearly one million **VETERANS!**

The Veterans' Trust Fund (VTF), administered by the PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA), provides funding to assist and support Pennsylvania veterans and their families. The VTF will issue grants to statewide charitable organizations that assist veterans, veterans service organizations and county directors of veterans affairs. The fund can assist veterans in need of shelter and with necessities of living.

## **How can you help?**

The next time you apply for or renew your Pennsylvania driver's license or photo ID or renew your motor vehicle registration, you will have an opportunity to make a \$3 tax-deductible contribution to the VTF. You don't need to be a veteran to show your support of veterans by purchasing the "Honoring Our Veterans" license plate. This plate is available for passenger cars and light trucks up to 10,000 pounds and costs \$35. Fifteen dollars from the sale of each license plate goes to the VTF. You can make a tax-deductible grant, gift or donation directly to the VTF.

## **Learn more at:**

**PA Veterans' Trust Fund**

**Bldg. 0-47 Fort Indiantown Gap, Annville, PA 17003**

**Phone: 717-861-6491 | Fax: 717-861-8589 | [www.vtf.state.pa.us](http://www.vtf.state.pa.us)** 11-2013

veterans service organizations and county directors of veterans affairs. The fund can assist veterans in need of shelter and with necessities of living.

## **How can you help?**

The next time you apply for or renew your Pennsylvania driver's license or photo ID or renew your motor vehicle registration, you will have an opportunity to make a \$3 tax-deductible contribution to the VTF. You don't need to be a veteran to show your support of veterans by purchasing the "Honoring Our Veterans" license plate. This plate is available for passenger cars and light trucks up to 10,000 pounds and costs \$35. Fifteen dollars from the sale of each license plate goes to the VTF. You can make a tax-deductible grant, gift or donation directly to the VTF.

## **Learn more at:**

**PA Veterans' Trust Fund**

**Bldg. 0-47 Fort Indiantown Gap, Annville, PA 17003**

**Phone: 717-861-6491 | Fax: 717-861-8589 | [www.vtf.state.pa.us](http://www.vtf.state.pa.us)** 11-2013



# Indian River Colony Club

"The Place Patriots Call Home"



55+ Friendly, Active  
Military Retirement  
Community

Time to retire? No, it's time to start the next adventure! Enjoy the lifestyle you deserve. Located on sunny Florida's beautiful Space Coast... with NO state income tax!



*Maintenance Free Living,  
leaving time for you!*

*Single Family,  
2-4 BR Homes*



**\*\$99  
Getaway  
Package!**  
\*Per person-Call  
for details.

Toll free: (877)-780-7058

[www.IndianRiverColonyClub.com/usmilitary](http://www.IndianRiverColonyClub.com/usmilitary)

FOUR STAR  
real estate

1936 Freedom Dr. • Viera FL 32940

Click here for more information: [www.indianrivercolonyclub.com/USmilitary](http://www.indianrivercolonyclub.com/USmilitary)

## Women Veterans Hotline

The Department of Veterans Affairs has launched a new hotline — **I-855-VA-WOMEN** — to receive and respond to questions from veterans, their families and caregivers about the many VA services and resources available to women veterans. The service began accepting calls on April 23, 2013.

The hotline provides information about benefits including health care services for women. Callers can be linked to information on claims, education or health care appointments as well as information about VA cemeteries and memorial benefits. The hotline will also answer urgent questions and provide referrals to homeless and mental health services.

Women Veterans are entitled to apply for the same benefits as their male counterparts, which include health care and pharmacy benefits as well as education benefits, disability compensation, home loans, employment assistance and more.

Veterans can also receive information and apply for benefits online at VA's [www.eBenefits.va.gov](http://www.eBenefits.va.gov) and manage their health care at [www.MyHealtheVet.va.gov](http://www.MyHealtheVet.va.gov).

## Veteran's Trust Fund \$3.00 Check Off - MOAA Member Makes a Difference

by **Bob Gray**

One of our MOAA chapter members was renewing his vehicle registration. He noticed the Veterans Trust Fund \$3.00 check off, checked the box and sent in his payment for the registration plus three dollars for the trust fund. A few days later he received his registration but it has a duplicate registration card he did not request. He wondered if the \$3.00 he sent went to the Veterans Trust

Fund. He followed directions and sent an email to the Penn Dot customer service center stating his problem. He received a reply that he should hear back in a week. He received a call, not an email, that his registration had not been processed correctly and the \$3.00 did not go to the Trust Fund. The processing mistake was due to the processor not turning the form over to see there was a check. The old forms did not have information on the back. The supervisor told the member that they would remind processors that they must look on the back of the form to see if the \$3.00 Veterans Trust Fund block is checked. She also told the member that they were going to review all of the new registrations to see if any other errors had occurred.

I received an email from the member on March 4th after the Penn Dot press conference for the new veteran's driver's license and DMVA pushing the \$3.00 check off on the registration renewals. That fact alone made me send the member's email to BG Jerry Beck that afternoon. I spoke to BG Beck on March 11<sup>th</sup> and he told me that he called the Deputy Secretary of Transportation to make him aware of the problem and told him he was losing money for the Trust Fund.

After the response from the member that it was a processing error and there were others found I sent another email to BG Beck to make him aware of the problem. I also sent an email to Senator Baker's legislative director. I received a thank from her for letting them know there was a problem and they will follow up. Senator Baker was already scheduled for a meeting with the Transportation Secretary next week and she will ask him about it. Senator Baker is very interested as she was the sponsor that introduced the bill to create the Veteran Trust Fund and the \$3.00 check off to aid in funding the Trust Fund for veteran's programs.

## **Military Sexual Assault Bill Clears Senate**

March 14, 2014 from MOAA Update  
The Senate voted 97-0 on Monday, March 10 to approve legislation that would make a half-dozen changes to help combat military sexual assault in the military. The military has struggled with this pervasive problem, and both military and civilian leaders concede it could cost the services the trust and respect of the public and make it harder to attract men and women to serve in the all-volunteer force if it isn't eliminated.

The measure – which now heads to the House – comes on top of more than 30 changes that Congress approved and the President signed into law as part of the FY 2014 National Defense Authorization Act just four months ago.

“Unanimous agreement in the U.S. Senate is pretty rare, but rarer still is the kind of sweeping, historic change we've achieved over the past year in the military justice system,” said Sen. Clair McCaskill (D-Mo.), who joined with two Republicans — Sens. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.) and Deb Fischer (R-Neb.) — in writing the legislation.

The newly-passed legislation would change the military rules of evidence to prohibit the accused from using good military character as a defense in court martial proceedings unless it was directly relevant to the alleged crime. The provision now moves to the House of Representatives. The legislation could be incorporated into the FY 2015 National Defense Authorization bill that will be drafted in the spring.

“The entire House is proud of the bipartisan reforms on this important issue included in last year's defense authorization bill, and we will review this legislation to determine the best way to consider additional reforms in the House,” said Michael Steel, a spokesman for House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio. Some changes have already been made in the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Last year Lawmakers stripped commanders of the ability to overturn military jury convictions and now requires a civilian review if a

commander declines to prosecute a case and requires that any individual convicted of sexual assault face a dishonorable discharge or dismissal.

The law also provides alleged victims with legal counsel, eliminates the statute of limitations for courts-martial in rape and sexual assault cases and criminalizes retaliation against victims who report a sexual assault. MOAA will continue to provide updates as this legislation proceeds in the House this spring.

- See more at:

[http://www.moaa.org/Main\\_Menu/Take\\_Action/Top\\_Issues/Serving\\_in\\_Uniform/Compensation/Military\\_Sexual\\_Assault\\_Bill\\_Clears\\_Senate.html#sthash.gJrDvWCy.dpufb](http://www.moaa.org/Main_Menu/Take_Action/Top_Issues/Serving_in_Uniform/Compensation/Military_Sexual_Assault_Bill_Clears_Senate.html#sthash.gJrDvWCy.dpufb)

## **Medicare/TRICARE Cuts Approaching**

March 14, 2014 from MOAA Update  
Congress has until April 1 to pass legislation to eliminate or postpone a scheduled 24 percent cut in Medicare and TRICARE payments to physicians. Allowing such cuts would devastate access to healthcare for beneficiaries.

To add to the urgency, Congress is adjourning for a week long recess on March 14, and when legislators return they will only have six days in session before the cuts take effect.

It's not uncommon for Congress to stave off action until the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, but it's discouraging that recent attempts to pass a permanent Medicare/TRICARE reimbursement solution have gone nowhere.

The major stumbling block continues to be the \$138.4 billion in offsets to pay for the full fix. With a long term fix unlikely another temporary patch will be needed.

There is one silver lining. When Congress restored military retirement COLA cuts last month the legislation also established a \$2.3 billion fund to help pay a Medicare/TRICARE physician reimbursement rate fix. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that a fix for the rest of 2014 would cost \$5 billion.

\* \* \* \* \*

### ***GLORIOUS INSULTS***

"He is not only dull himself; he is the cause of dullness in others." - Samuel Johnson



\* \* \* \* \*

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

**President – Bob Gray**  
[rl\\_gray@hotmail.com](mailto:rl_gray@hotmail.com)  
(717) 623-8715

**1st Vice President - Bob Cudworth**  
[drrobert2@comcast.net](mailto:drrobert2@comcast.net)  
(570) 344-4609

**2nd Vice President – Harold Cooney**  
[Harold.Cooney@gmail.com](mailto:Harold.Cooney@gmail.com)  
(717) 240-0428

**Secretary - Nancy Anderson**  
[LeadHers@aol.com](mailto:LeadHers@aol.com)  
(724) 837-2784

**Treasurer – John Whalen**  
[whalenjohnf@yahoo.com](mailto:whalenjohnf@yahoo.com)  
(610) 420-0633

**Immediate Past President – Bill Harris**  
[wthiii3@rcn.com](mailto:wthiii3@rcn.com)  
(610) 217-3511

*The Eagle* is published monthly by the Pennsylvania Council of Chapters, Military Officers Association of America. Its content does not reflect the official position of the DoD, any branch of the US Armed Forces, NOAA, USPHS, nor MOAA National. Please send articles and audio-visual submissions to the Editor, Bob Gray, at [pacocnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:pacocnewsletter@gmail.com).