



THE EAGLE



THE MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA PENNSYLVANIA COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS

www.pa-coc.org



NEWS AND VIEWS May 2013



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

My pledge to visit every chapter during my tenure got closer to reality on April 2 when Susan and I sojourned to Erie to dine with our Oliver Hazard Perry Chapter at the fabulous Erie Maennerchor, a private club that lived up to its name as one of the best restaurants in our state's fourth largest city. The wood paneled walls, intimate bars and ornate meeting rooms reminded me of officers clubs of yore. Huge thanks to president Ben Mosier for hosting us as well as giving us a city driving tour. We had never been to Erie, and we were quite surprised by the beautiful waterfront and downtown area. Thanks a bunch, Ben and fellow chapter members!

Some things I learned at the dinner meeting, attended by about 20 members and their spouses:

- They pass around their member roster to update information on both those attending and those who know other members - good way to stay up to date.

• Ben's got the job until they can cajole someone else to take the reins. We've all been in that predicament before.

• Gran Goza, the immediate past president of the French Creek Chapter, also attended - they have joint meetings on occasion since their territories somewhat overlap. We have the same situation in the Philadelphia area, with three Chapters fairly close to each other. Gran passed out a flyer promoting his Chapter's first annual 5K "Walk for Warriors" fundraiser, copy attached.

• Member data being sent from national in Excel format requires you to buy the program; and printing it is a nightmare. Plus they are sending the files zipped (compressed) and you must buy a program, which used to be free, to unzip them. *For more on MOAA's solution to this, please read my Storming the Hill notes.*

I'll be visiting our Bucktail Chapter on May 21 and our French Creek Chapter on May 28, so that will leave only our Pittsburgh, General Green and Pocono Mountains Chapters to visit before my term ends this year. Whew! The

delay was on purpose since I hope to take in a Pirates game while "out west" and view the Fall colors in our great northeast.

As of our publication date we've got the Keystone Capitol and Cumberland Valley Chapters manning our booth at the Pennsylvania National Guard Associations Conference being held May 17-19 at the [Keystone Conference Center](#) in Fort Indiantown Gap. Chapters that participate will share a \$200 donation from MOAA national for their help. Anyone interested in helping should contact Bob Gray.

We welcome Will Conley of our Valley Forge Chapter to our legislative committee - he attended that committee's meeting as well as our follow-on council meeting on April 6, and we appreciate his support. Anyone's welcome to attend our board meetings, just give me the number so we have seats available.

Heard at the April War Council meeting - the American Ex-POW Association has stacked arms. To all those heroes who were forced to endure this imprisonment, we salute you (including my father-in-law, who spent 2-1/2 years as a WWII POW).

Gleaned from the State Veterans Commission April meeting - the site of the defunct Scotland School for Children of Veterans was approved for an historic marker; the dedication ceremony will be held sometime this summer.

The Military Order of the Purple Heart donated \$75,000 to the PA Veterans Foundation, more than doubling its assets. The MOPH has about a half dozen outlet stores in Philadelphia which nets them hundreds of thousands of dollars annually.

Also, the DMVA received its outreach van, which will spend two weeks of every month on the road. Deputy AG Mike Gould said they are still working on the system to make requests, which will include an online application process.

The Memorial Day program at the FIG National Cemetery will be May 26, rain or

shine. Some 800-1,000 attend. We hosted the event during Chuck Anderson's reign at the helm, some 4-5 years ago.

Per our agreement at our last council meeting, I applied to USAA for advertising in our newsletter. Will contact the Pentagon Federal Credit Union, which has an association with USAA, and I'll be looking for other companies as well; suggestions welcome.

The Pittsburgh and General Greene Chapters have agreed to co-host our 2014 convention in Pittsburgh in either August or September at a location with proximity to a shopping site and casino, racetrack, and Tanger Outlets at the Meadowlands. Stay tuned, and be prepared to both support and attend. Our convention last year was very successful, so much so that MOAA national said it would use our event as a model for other states. Stay tuned ... and kudos to Chapter presidents Carmen DiGiacomo and Nancy Anderson for taking the lead on this!

Regards,
Bill Harris

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Auxiliary Wanted

Any chapter interested in recommending a surviving spouse or current member spouse to serve on the state council as its auxiliary member should connect council president Bill Harris at wthiii3@rcn.com; (610) 217-3511. The person must be a Chapter member in good standing and must be willing to attend council meetings.

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REMAINING COUNCIL MEETING DATES

July 13, State College
September 26, Hershey
November 9, State College (Officer Elections)

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ARMY FIELD BAND JAZZ CONCERT

On July 2 at 7 PM, the U.S. Army Field Band Jazz Ambassador is giving a FREE concert at the Sunoco Theater in the Whitaker Center in Harrisburg. If you order your tickets online, they will charge you a \$7 handling fee. If you pick them up at the Box Office at the Whitaker, it is totally free. Seating is general admission so no reserved seats. It's a great way to support the Army and have a free night out.

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GENEROUS GESTURE TO VETS

Upon their discharge from a San Antonio Army rehab hospital, veterans receive from Ping, the golf club maker, three days of golf instruction and a fitting for every patient. Ping gives each of the discharged veterans, generally about 40 soldiers a month, a brand new set of custom fitted clubs along with first class golf bags. They don't advertise this, but they should be given attaboys for their patriotic efforts!

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VA HEALTHCARE NETWORK

MOAA has been invited to attend the VA Healthcare Network's two annual regional meetings in PA, and we accepted. Tom Tallon and Pete Belisario of our Pittsburgh Chapter will attend the Western Market meeting on May 7, being held at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System facility on the Heinz campus in Aspinwall. Our Keystone Capitol Chapter's Bob Gray will attend the Eastern Market meeting being held at the Lebanon VA Medical Center in Lebanon. We look forward getting feedback from these important meetings.

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VSO PROGRAM TO BE INITIATED

MOAA will initiate a Veterans Service Officers program in the next few months in the

Washington, DC area, after which it plans on extending VSO services elsewhere. The program will have several full-time employees who will oversee the training of volunteer MOAA members, perhaps beginning near major military installations. An initial class of VSOs completed initial training in February and are awaiting VA accreditation; a second class underwent training in April. As most of you know, the "Big 4" veterans organizations, the American Legion, VFW, DAV and Amvets, have extensive VSO programs that in PA are partially funded by state funds under Act 66.

Because our state does not have major military installations, the MOAA model seems to totally bypass PA as a viable location for VSOs, despite the fact that PA has the nation's fourth largest veterans' population. MOAA national has assured council president Bill Harris that PA won't be overlooked as they are still in the process of determining how and where to run the program.

For more on this please read the April 2013 issue of The Affiliate, which is posted on the council website.

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PAY DAY LENDING UPDATE **Bob Gray, PACOC Legislative Chair**

No pay day lending bill has been filed yet during this session of the legislature. I will let everyone know if a bill is introduced. You can take action now to help remind legislators they don't want to support any new bill for pay day lending, read on.

I was lobbying with the coalition at the capitol April 9th and we also met with the Attorney General's director of the Consumer Protection Bureau. She told us that Attorney General Kane is personally against pay day lending. The staff will review any related bill but usually do not comment on legislation unless it receives a request from another state agency. It does not accept requests for review from the legislature.

We visited a few representatives and senator's staff members to see if they have heard anything more on a possible sponsorship letter from Senator Browne asking for sponsors for a new bill. So far nothing has emerged in the weeks since the information was heard.

The coalition asks all organizations to contact their representatives and senators during their upcoming break back in the districts. The coalition to Stop Predatory Pay Day Loans in PA has a web site www.stoppaydayloanspa.com/ and Facebook page www.facebook.com/StopPayDayLoansPA. The web site provides an updated one page summary you can download to provide legislators and for information. The site also has a link to send a suggested email to your state legislator or add your own words. The link is at the bottom of the web page, TAKE ACTION NOW by clicking here.

I have forwarded this web site to Keystone Capitol chapter members and ask that they use it to contact their legislators. It is easy and the message gets to the legislators to remind them to "Just Say No" if a bill is filed again.

I will be writing a brief summary of legislation that is being reviewed and endorsed by the PA War Veterans Council legislative committee.

Some bills have passed the House/Senate and are in committee. One bill that passed is SB 302 regarding the duties of the county veterans affairs officer. It is now in the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness committee. There is a new report, a white paper, out from the national Consumer Financial Protection Bureau on pay day lending by banks as well as traditional pay day lenders. The report is at this link: <http://www.consumerfinance.gov/reports/white-paper-on-payday-loans-and-deposit-advance-products/>

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NEW LICENSE PLATES AVAILABLE FOR PARATROOPERS and WWII MERCHANT MARINERS

Members and veterans of the United States Armed Forces who have served with a U.S. Military Airborne Unit or as a World War II Merchant Mariner can now display their service with new license plates available from PennDOT.

“These new plates recognize the added challenges faced by the brave service members who served with our nation’s military airborne units and those who served with the Merchant Marines during World War II,” said PennDOT Secretary Barry J. Schoch. “PennDOT is proud to recognize the contributions of all of our military members.”

The legislation establishing the new registration plates provides for a U.S. Military Airborne Unit plate exhibiting the standard registration plate configuration with images of jump and glider wings.

The plate for World War II members of the Merchant Marines features the standard registration plate configuration coupled with an image of the Merchant Marine emblem. Veterans and military personnel interested in these new plates can visit PennDOT’s Driver and Vehicle Services website, www.dmv.state.pa.us, and select the “Military License Plates” link under the “Military Personnel/Veterans” Information Center. A complete listing of available military license plates can also be found on this page. The page provides images of each plate and links to the appropriate application form.

The U.S. Military Airborne Unit plate, along with the majority of military license plates, can be requested by filling out Form MV-150, “Application for U.S. Military Veteran Registration Plate,” which also contains instructions for applying for the plates and the respective fees.

People requesting a WW II Merchant Marine plate must fill out a Form MV-150W, "World War II Era U.S. Military Registration."

In addition to these plates, PennDOT offers a variety of license plates including those honoring individuals who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces and in major conflicts from World War II to Operation Enduring Freedom.

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PA CLAIMS A SAD BUT SIGNIFICANT FIRST

The first person buried in Arlington National Cemetery was a Pennsylvanian from Lehigh County. Army Private Henry Christman, 21, an uneducated laborer, died from peritonitis a month after enlisting in 1864. An article on national cemeteries found on Page 75 of the May issue of the *Military Officer* magazine has the details.

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PA WOUNDED WARRIOR BIKE RIDE

The PA Wounded Warriors is sponsoring a bike ride fund raiser called "Rockin' N' Ridin' 4 Recovery" on May 18. The ride departs from the Susquehanna Valley Harley Davidson dealer at 3 p.m. and ends at the Fort Indiantown Gap social club. A \$10 donation is requested, \$5 for those with military IDs. For more info go to www.rockinandridin4recovery.org.

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VOICES OF VETERANS

Each episode of *Voices of Veterans* on the Pennsylvania Cable Network (PCN) features an interview with a veteran who served in WWII, the Korean War, Vietnam, Desert Storm, Iraq or Afghanistan and shines a spotlight on their story. For more information about the show, please visit the website: <http://pcntv.com/programming/voices-of-veterans-2/>. *Voices of Veterans* will primarily be airing this year from Memorial Day to Veteran's Day.

COPYING RESTRICTIONS ON US GOVERNMENT IDs

See the accompanying pdf from DOD.

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A "CALL TO ARMS"

Issued by Tom Bender of our Lancaster Chapter ...

A military couple will be getting married in November 2013, in Lancaster, PA, and they have asked for assistance in providing a "sword/saber arch" as the married couple exits the church. If anyone has a military-type sword or saber that they would not mind lending for use at the wedding, please drop LTG Dennis Benchoff an e-mail at dlbencho@hacc.edu.

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SPECIAL STORMING THE HILL EVENT

The MOAA auxiliary is sponsoring a Storming the Hill event on July 16-17 that will key on only one issue - the DIC-SBP offset. As you know SBP allows uniformed services retirees to elect to provide continuing financial support for an eligible survivor. SBP provides the survivor 55% of the service member's military retired pay. Enrollment is elected at the time of retirement, and the retired member pays 6.5% of retired pay as a premium. Automatic coverage is extended to survivors of service members who die on duty.

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation is a VA program providing a modest annuity of \$1,215 per month (\$14,580 per year) for survivors of veterans whose death is determined to have been caused by military service.

Under current law, survivors who are eligible for both SBP and DIC must forfeit a dollar of their SBP annuity for every dollar of DIC received from the VA. Often, the offset wipes out the SBP annuity the military retiree paid for. In such cases, the survivor receives a

proportional refund of SBP premiums – with no interest on what often has been many years of premium payments.

MOAA would like as many members as possible to help them convince congressmen and senators that this offset should be eliminated.

Anyone interested in going to DC to help in this effort should contact Bill Harris or Bob Gray. Unlike MOAA's official STH event, all expenses must be incurred by the participants. Col Ana Smythe, USMC-Ret., of the national staff is the POC, anas@moaa.org, (703) 838-8104.

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VETERANS PREFERENCE APPROVED

After six years of effort the state legislature finally passed a bill that provides state contracting preference to veteran-owned small businesses. Previously the preferences were granted only to minority- and women-owned small enterprises. And even more helpful is the online self-certification process, which takes about 20 minutes to complete. For more info go to www.smallbusiness.pa.gov

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SPECIAL NOTE FROM THE EDITOR TO ALL CONTRIBUTORS

Please provide all multi-paragraph items for publication as Word document (.doc or .docx) attachments to your email, in Times New Roman font, two column format, and 12-point size. It will help ease the workload considerably!

Many thanks!

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GLORIOUS INSULTS

"I am enclosing two tickets to the first night of my new play; bring a friend, if you have one."
- George Bernard Shaw to Winston Churchill.

"Cannot possibly attend first night, will attend second ... if there is one."
- Winston Churchill, in response.



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ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES IS A SPECIAL REPORT ON THE RECENT STORMING THE HILL BY MOAA

As usual MOAA's annual Storming the Hill event was a smashing success, with more than 150 local and state representatives pounding the halls of Congress on April 17. Council member Nancy Anderson and council president Bill Harris each visited the offices of nine representatives and one senator on that day, and the response they received was very positive regarding the two key issues that were discussed: giving active duty troops a 1.8% pay raise, versus the administration's 1% proposal, and not raising Tricare costs, again being proposed by the White House. The three-day event included an awards reception on Capitol Hill that lauded elected officials and their staffs, a dinner featuring VA senator Tim Kaine, the annual group photo and various council president meetings.

MOAA warned that there is budget pressure to ignore history, even during wartime, and thus compensation and benefits are all on the table. The key argument was you can't replace a serviceperson with 10 years' experience with someone else with the same experience, and thus any perceived loss of benefits will cause recruiting and retention problems, much like what happened in the early 1970s. And, MOAA, emphasized, you cannot equate this to the civilian sector, where you can replace an accountant with 10 years of experience with another accountant with 10 years of experience.

In making its case, MOAA produced

a handout which countered DoD's claim that personnel and health costs were going to bankrupt the military - in fact, it shows that personnel and health care costs have been a constant 29-31% of the DoD budget for the past 30 years. MOAA argued that DoD can save money in many other areas by operating more efficiently and wisely, and included many cost-saving suggestions regarding the delivery of military health care services. In fact, the military's health care facilities are about 25% underutilized and are 25% less expensive than their civilian counterparts.

In keeping with the times, photos of the meetings were emailed to MOAA where they were quickly posted on their website, a video was produced and "tweets" were launched.



PA Congressman Scott Perry and council president Bill Harris go over MOAA's positions on military pay and health care. Perry is a colonel in the PA Army National Guard.



Council member Nancy Anderson meets with PA Congressman Mike Fitzpatrick.



Council president Bill Harris makes a point with PA Congressman Glenn Thompson.

Some tidbits Bill Harris picked up at the Storming the Hill event in April:

- **USAA will provide speakers for your chapter meetings if you are interested.**
- **A San Diego-based company called GovX has formed an alliance with MOAA. They sell high-end products including ballgame tickets. You can contact them by either going through the MOAA website, where you must**

log in, or by going directly to their website, www.govex.com. If you go directly to their website you'll have to create a separate password and login.

- **The Pentagon Federal Credit Union has a MOAA credit card that gets you 5% back on gas charges and .25% on everything else you use the card for. The rebates are credited to your monthly statement.**

- **USAA will sponsor your events including manning booths at various events and your themed chapter meetings like ROTC/JROTC awards dinners, Toys for Tots night, etc. The application form is online on the MOAA website under the Councils and Chapters section. Key is they require a 45 business day lead time.**

- **MOAA will launch a mobile app; no time frame provided.**

- **We have a friend in the DoD State Liaison offices - council member Harold Cooney is the area rep for PA so he can tell you more about what he is doing, but some of the things they are working on with our state legislature are licensure for separating service members and military spouses (separate legislation) and interstate tuition rates.**

- **MOAA's travel agency, ICE (International Cruises and Excursions) pays chapters \$50 for every room members book through them. Some chapters have made a bunch of bucks with this program. ICE can be reached on the MOAA website.**

- Of the 110,000 MOAA national members who have emails and are not chapter members, about 10,000 said it's OK for chapters to contact them. MOAA will continue to ask more members to grant permission in followup emails.

- MOAA is one of the few national VSOs that is not losing members, with about 396,000 members worldwide.

- MOAA's goal is to have a chapter in every Congressional district - currently that exists in 298 of the 435 districts. To do this they are contemplating creating virtual chapters, where members only meet and conduct business electronically.

- MOAA will provide up to \$250 for chapters to place ads in their local newspapers. The application process is provided in the Council and Chapter section of the MOAA website.

- National Guard OCS commissioning ceremonies are good opportunities to recruit new members.

- MOAA sponsors virtual career fairs on the last Wednesday of the month, for more goto the MOAA website.

- Chapters that are having trouble unzipping the MOAA member files may get a reprieve: MOAA will be using a new program called ShareFile to send out the data; hopefully that

will solve issues with some chapters not being able to open the lists.

- Chapters that are interested in using advertising to help defray newsletter production and mailing costs should read the guidelines about what kinds of ads are acceptable based on a chapter's non-profit status. MOAA spells out the difference between an "advertiser" and "sponsor" since using the incorrect phraseology, or placing ads that violate state and/or federal regulations regarding non-profits, may cause chapters to lose their status.

- Chapter recruiting and retention incentives will be posted on the MOAA web site shortly, if not by press time. Emphasis is on keeping chapter numbers up through both recruiting and retention, and the competitive awards are up to \$1000.

When signing up newly commissioned officers, since they have "basic" member status, having their emails on their applications is mandatory - if their emails are not included, chapters do not receive credit.

Additionally, MOAA suggests that the new officers do not use their school email addresses, usually ending in "edu," since they usually lose them as soon as they graduate. Recommended is a gmail or similar account, one that they will keep with them regardless of where they are stationed.

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