



THE EAGLE



THE MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
PENNSYLVANIA COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS

www.pa-coc.org



JUNE 2024

MOAA Advocacy in Action in Washington, DC



Photo: Courtesy of Rep. Chrissy Houlahan’s staff

From left, Rep. Houlahan’s Communications Director Aubery Stuber, PA Council of Chapters Legislative Chairman Bob Gray and MOAA staff escort Kevin Lilley. Aubery is a Lieutenant in the PA Army National Guard Aviation Brigade looking forward to attending flight school.

Topics were to support the MAJ Richard Star Act to pay veterans disabled on active-duty 100 percent of their military retirement pay, Pay 100 percent of Servicemembers Housing Allowance and to Protect the TRICARE For LIFE program.

MOAA Highlights from Advocacy In Action 2024

By Bob Gray, Editor, PA Council of Chapters

Council President Nick Taylor was accompanied by Bob Gray to Washington, DC for the annual MOAA Advocacy in Action Campaign. They visited all of Pennsylvania's 18 Representatives offices and two Senators offices that day. Due to last minute schedule changes in the House, they only meet Representatives passing in the hall or in the office while we met with staffers. Prearranged meeting times had been scheduled with Representative's staff, and they were very knowledgeable about our issues. The two teams left issue papers with the main facts and the MOAA legislative staffer that is working on the issue.

While most of the congressional staff are young, they are very knowledgeable about the issues. It was a long day but very rewarding talking with congressional staff. MOAA legislative staff say it is five miles of walking between offices during the day of meetings.

Both PA Senators and some PA House members support passing the MAJ Richard Star Act. You can call your members of Congress to ask if they support the MAJ Richard Star Act and if not currently a cosponsor, are they willing to support it if it comes to a vote. All of PA's members of Congress supported paying service members 100 percent of their housing allowance. Not all the congressional staff were aware of what the TRICARE For Life benefits are for retired servicemembers. We explained the program and how vital it is to support military retirees that served 20 years or more in uniform. There has not been any talk of changes to the program, but MOAA sees it come up each year in the Congressional Budget Office report on cost saving measures. MOAA decided to get in front of any thought of changing the benefit and decided to explain to staffers how important the coverage is for retirees and their spouses over age 65.

Just prior to AiA a congressional report on the Quality of Life in the US military was released. It verified everything that congress has been told by advocates and veteran organizations. The result is ammunition to get many quality-of-life issues funded in the NDAA to improve living conditions in the barracks, in family housing as well as funding for childcare and employment for active-duty spouses. The cochair of the House Committee that conducted the hearing and gathered information was PA Representative Chrissy Houlahan, a member of the House Armed Services Committee. We were fortunate to have Chrissy Houlahan as the guest speaker for the MOAA dinner on Wednesday evening. She is uniquely qualified to be a member of that committee as she was an Air Force officer that had a child on active duty and had the stress of finding childcare. It was only through her civilian supervisor during an assignment to a research university that allowed her a flexible work schedule to pay for part time childcare and work from home part of the week. When she and her husband talked about a second child, she realized she would have to leave the service, and she did.



The PA Crew



MOAA's Pennsylvania Council of Chapters Advocates in Washington for AiA 2024. From left, Council President Nick Taylor, MOAA Board Member Chuck Anderson from General Greene Chapter and Council Legislative Chairman Bob Gray. Photo by Nancy Anderson, Secretary PA Council of Chapters.

PA COUNCIL 2024 MEETING DATES

The June Council meeting will be held June 8, 2024 at Biddle Hall, Fort Indiantown Gap. Directions will be sent out prior to the meeting. Further dates will be emailed to chapters. All MOAA members are welcome to attend any Council meeting. If you have a question, contact Bob Gray at rl_gray@hotmail.com or (717) 623-8715.

Find a Chapter: www.pa-coc.org or through the national MOAA web site, www.moaa.org .

Non-Partisan Statement: The Military Officers Association of America is a nonpartisan military nonprofit organization that does not engage in partisan politics and works with all political leaders in moving military and veteran's legislation that will help the men and women who currently serve in the active, Guard and Reserve, those who previously served and the retired, their families and survivors. Pennsylvania Council of Chapters is a nonpartisan military organization that does not engage in partisan politics. The views presented in the Eagle newsletter are those of the editor, not those of the Council officers and Council's Chapters or represent the views of MOAA's national officers, staff, or Board of Directors.

PENNSYLVANIA LEGISLATURE

Bob Gray – Legislative Chairman
Legislative Information from the
General Assembly web site:
<http://www.legis.state.pa.us>

Draft Goals for 2023-2024 by the
PA War Veterans Council, Bob
Gray PA War Council Legislative
Chairman: Current Era War
Bonus Issuance, Disabled Veterans
Real Estate Tax Exemption
Expansion, Veterans
Transportation Network - Proper
Maintenance, Veterans Justice
Fairness Improvements

Current veteran legislation is
introduced in the Pennsylvania
House and Senate.

HB 1227 Rep. Sappy/ Rep. Hill-
Evans **Expanding Disabled**
Veterans' Real Estate Tax
Exemption Program (Similar to SB
177 Baker)

[https://www.legis.state.pa.us/CFDOCS/L
egis/PN/Public/btCheck.cfm?txtType=PD
&sessYr=2023&sessInd=0&billBody=H&
billTyp=B&billNbr=1227&pn=1318](https://www.legis.state.pa.us/CFDOCS/Legis/PN/Public/btCheck.cfm?txtType=PD&sessYr=2023&sessInd=0&billBody=H&billTyp=B&billNbr=1227&pn=1318)

Introduced May24, 2023. Assigned to
House VA&EP Committee. This bill
moved suddenly in late November,
passing the House Veterans Affairs

Committee without amendments. **On
June 4, 2024 the amendment was
introduced to add Missing in Action
and Prisoner of War** as conditions of
entitlement for spouses whose husbands
were on active duty and were listed in
those categories by the Defense
department. The floor amendment will
be passed before the House votes on
the bill. They hope to move the bill this
session, but no timeline is set by House
leadership at this time.

This bill would remove wartime service
requirements for a Pennsylvania veteran
that has received a disability rating of
100% by the U.S. Department of
Veterans Affairs. The language also
ensures the surviving spouse of a
member of the U.S. Armed Forces who
was killed in action or missing and
presumed dead, or who received a
disability rating of 100% by the U.S.
Department of Veterans Affairs and
subsequently passed away, has access to
this property tax relief. Both bills do not
include Prisoners of War (POW) or
Missing in Action (MIA). A POW is a
member of the armed forces of a nation
who is taken by the enemy during
combat. MIA is a missing military
member unable to be confirmed as
captured or killed following military
action. A military or civil person, who
disappeared during a military conflict,
can be declared dead no earlier than 2
years after the conflict is over. POW
and MIA should be added to both bills to
protect the servicemembers

spouse. PWVC Legislative Committee sent a letter requesting POW and MIA be added to the bill.



SB 126 Mastriano Disabled Veteran Benefit Payment Exclusion

Passed Senate March 2023 Passed the House June 5th, 2024. The

House added an amendment to exclude any amount of the VA payment in the veterans checking account as being counted as a resource for any commonwealth program. The bill must go back to the Senate for concurrence disabled veteran for commonwealth assistance programs or rebates.

The income calculation exclusion will also apply to an unmarried surviving spouse upon the death of a veteran for any compensation or payment the unmarried surviving spouse is entitled to receive.

Passed Senate June 5th and referred to the House Judiciary Committee June 7th, 2024

This legislation will seek to exclude federal VA Aid and Attendance benefits as income when calculating eligibility for

with the amendment. Only then can it be sent to the governor for signature.

<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/CFDOCS/Legis/PN/Public/btCheck.cfm?txtType=PDF&sessYr=2023&sessInd=0&billBody=S&billTyp=B&billNbr=0126&pn=0016>

This legislation that will exempt 100% of a disabled veterans' benefit payment from income calculations for any Commonwealth program or benefit.

A disabled veteran' benefit program shall be defined as any compensation or payment received by a veteran that is directly related to or the result of the veteran's service-connected disability.

This bill will ensure that these rightfully earned federal payments will no longer be used to potentially disqualify a

the 100% Disabled Veterans' Property Tax Exemption.

Under current statute, this pass-through benefit is calculated as part of a disabled veteran's income to determine eligibility for property tax exemption, preventing some from qualifying. Some of the veterans receiving VA Aid and Attendance have the greatest need for the property tax exemption and receive this disability benefit to assist them in paying for everyday functioning, care services, medication management and renovations to their residence to accommodate their disability.

Senate Resolution 196

A resolution directing the Commission on Sentencing and other stakeholders to conduct a thorough and comprehensive study on the effects that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) have on veterans in the criminal justice system and recommend improvements based on the study.

A small percentage of military veterans become involved in criminal justice, over 313,000 military veterans have experienced some type of TBI related to their service. Having an accurate picture of the number of veterans involved in Pennsylvania's criminal justice system, and their needs relative to PTSD and TBI will facilitate policy discussions around how to best accommodate their unique needs.

System. Research has found evidence of an association between PTSD and criminal justice involvement among military veterans. The Department of Defense estimates that

HB 1747 Guentz Creating the Women Veteran License Plate (Auto and Motorcycle) Introduced October 10, 2023,

Passed the House Oct. 31st and referred to the Senate Transportation Committee October 31, 2023, no movement.

Our country's history is filled with remarkable women who answered the call to serve in armed conflicts when America's needs were great. To recognize the extraordinary service and sacrifice of women in the military, I have introduced legislation creating the Woman Veteran License Plate. This plate will give the nearly 66,000 women veterans in Pennsylvania the option to proudly display their service on their passenger vehicle or motorcycle.



The Keystone Capital Chapter in Harrisburg received a MOAA Community Grant for \$1,010.00 to purchase clothing. Over 26

veterans stopped to pick up jeans, coats and underwear at the Just For Today Recovery and Veterans Support Services in Lemoyne.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Bob Gray, PA Council Legislative Chairman, rlgray@hotmail.com 717-623-8715



Photo by Bob Gray, MOAA PA Council of Chapters

NDAA Checkpoint: Where the Bill Stands, and What It

Could Mean to Your Benefits

By: Mark Belinsky, MOAA Staff, June 18, 2024

Both the House and Senate reached milestones in the creation of must-pass defense legislation in recent days, with the House passing its version of the FY 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) on June 14 by a 217-199 margin and the Senate Armed Services Committee advancing its version to the full chamber by a 22-3 vote on June 13.

Despite the progress in both bodies, the NDAA is far from its final form – the full Senate will offer amendments before voting on its version, and both chambers will form a conference to turn the vastly different pieces of legislation into a single bill.

Here's a look at where some of MOAA's provisions of interest stand:

Pay and Benefits

- **Enterprise-Wide Pay Raise:** Both versions of the NDAA support a 4.5% pay raise, which keeps pace with the Employment Cost Index.
- **Junior Enlisted Pay:** The House NDAA called for servicemembers E-1 to E-4 to receive a 15% pay raise beyond the 4.5% earmarked for all in uniform. The proposal is opposed by the White House, DoD, and congressional appropriators, and is not matched on the Senate side. The Senate version calls for an additional 1% increase for servicemembers E-1 to E-3 (beyond the 4.5% raise).
- **Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH):** The House version would restore BAH to 100% for FY 2025 – a move toward MOAA’s goal of full repeal of the BAH reduction, but not a permanent fix. The Senate version does not address the issue.
- **Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS):** The House NDAA would require DoD to evaluate BAS rates to determine whether they are sufficient, and whether other factors should be used to determine rates and provide recommendations for improving the allowance.

[TAKE ACTION: [Ask Your Lawmakers to Restore BAH to 100%](#)]

Health Care

- **Pregnancy Qualifying Life Event (QLE):** Both the House and Senate bills address expanding TRICARE QLEs to include pregnancy – a MOAA priority which would allow military families to overcome care challenges. Greater flexibility in switching between TRICARE Prime and Select will help ensure access to vital prenatal care.
- **Reserve Component Dental Coverage:** The House NDAA includes language from the [MOAA-supported Dental Care for Our Troops Act](#) that would provide TRICARE Dental Program coverage to Guard and Reserve members with zero premiums and cost sharing to support dental readiness.
- **TRICARE Young Adult:** Neither version of the NDAA includes language that would fix the parity gap for TRICARE families with young adult dependents to align TRICARE with requirements for private sector plans that must cover young adult dependents up to age 26. This remains a MOAA priority.

[TAKE ACTION: [Urge Your Elected Officials to Fix the TRICARE Young Adult Coverage Gap](#)]



Spouse and Family

A full breakdown of the House NDAA version is available [at this link](#). Some highlights:

- **Enhancements for DoD Child Care Providers:** Last year, DoD required the services to implement a policy designed to incentivize more people to become child care providers (a nationwide challenge). This policy offered child care providers a 50% discount on child care for their first child. The Air Force went above and beyond, offering a 100% discount for the first child and subsequent discounts for additional children of child care providers. This year's House NDAA would ensure parity across the services, with providers all receiving the 100% discount.
- **In-Home Child Care Pilot Expansion:** The House NDAA would expand [the pilot](#) to four more installations: Fort Drum, N.Y.; Holloman Air Force Base, N.M.; and Naval Air Station Lemoore and Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms in California.
- **Military Spouse Employment in the Federal Government:** The House NDAA seeks to improve military spouse employment conditions in the federal government by expanding benefits and opportunities upon receipt of PCS orders.

Other MOAA Priorities

- **Military Housing and Barracks:** Both the House and Senate NDAA include provisions to invest in deteriorating barracks. Both also include a provision allowing junior enlisted sailors on sea duty to be authorized BAH in response to extended ship maintenance periods and the [USS George Washington \(CVN-73\) scandal](#).
- **Major Richard Star Act:** Neither NDAA draft includes the Major Richard Star Act, a bill which would end an unjust financial offset faced by tens of thousands of combat-injured veterans who lose a dollar of earned DoD retirement pay for every dollar of VA disability compensation. A House amendment to the NDAA including the text of the bill was not found "in order" by the House Rules Committee. Learn more about the next steps in the Senate, including how you can make your voice heard to your legislators, [at this link](#).
- **Arlington National Cemetery (ANC):** The Expanding America's National Cemetery Act of 2023, H.R. 1413, is not included in either version of the NDAA. The proposed eligibility reduction for ANC remains on hold in the federal rulemaking process.

[RELATED: [MOAA's Work Continues to Preserve Earned Burial Benefits](#)]

MOAA has worked with legislators and staff members in both chambers, from both parties, as the bills have moved forward, and that work will continue – our legislative team will advocate for provisions already in one or both pieces of legislation to assure their survival through the conference process, and we will look for opportunities in the Senate next month to move forward with proposals not included in the NDAA that will benefit the uniformed services community.

Consider calling your elected officials via MOAA's toll-free line to the U.S. Capitol switchboard – 866-272-MOAA (6622). Ask to speak with the military legislative assistant and encourage them to support the quality of life for our servicemembers through BAH restoration, a targeted enlisted pay raise, and a Senate floor vote on the Major Richard Star Act. You can read more on MOAA's advocacy efforts at our [Advocacy News page](#).

MOAA's TAKE ACTION CENTER: www.moaa.org/takeaction

All MOAA's Legislative action topics are listed on this page, and you can send a letter to your member of Congress and Senators. Register to send a letter now.

Chapter members can contact their U S Congressional office and request a meeting with a staffer from the DC office, by phone or in person at a district office.



Don't forget your MOAA Benefits!! There are financial resources, banking, Travel services to go anywhere in the world, Discounts on PODS moving and storage containers as well as discounts on GE appliances and much more. Go to www.moaa.org/benefits to learn more about your earned benefits as a MOAA member.





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GLORIOUS INSULTS

I feel so miserable without you; it's almost like having you here.' -
Stephen Bishop

PA MOAA chapters have 1,400 members and another 31,100 MOAA national members live in PA and are not in chapters. That means our total PA membership is 32,500 and climbing. Thank you for staying involved!

To find a Chapter or view Council newsletters go to our website:

www.pa-coc.org

Never Stop Serving

The Eagle is published quarterly 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 chapter articles and audio-visual submissions to the Editor, Bob Gray, at rl_gray@hotmail.com or pacocnewsletter@gmail.com.