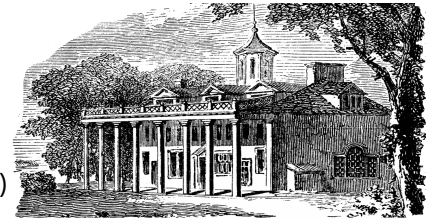


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The Despatch



Mount Vernon, Virginia Chapter - MOAA
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Summary of MOAA's To-Do List for the FY 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)

MAJ Peter Chen, USA (Ret), Editor

Active Duty

- Uniformed Services Pay Raise: By law Congress must raise pay in order for troops to sustain the troops against inflation. Our troops' well being and our ability to recruit new troops depend on it. This includes Basic Housing Allowance (BAH) and Basic Needs Allowance (BNA).
- During a Government Shutdown, measures are in place to ensure members of the armed forces continue to receive pay in the event of a lapse in government funding. However, these protections do not extend to the Coast Guard as it is not under the DoD. MOAA supports the Pay Our Coast Guard Parity Act (H.R. 2693) in the FY 2025 NDAA.

Guard and Reserve

- MOAA supports the Dental Care for Our Troops Act (H.R. 4220/S. 2046), which would provide dental care at no out-of-pocket cost for service members in the Selected Reserve.
- GI Bill Parity for Guard/Reserve. MOAA believes that Congress should ensure time served on active duty for training qualifies for educational assistance under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Retirees

- MOAA continues to advocate for ending the unjust offset faced by combat-injured veterans, many whom remain unable to receive their full DoD retirement pay and full VA disability compensation. MOAA asks lawmakers to include the Major Richard Star Act (H.R. 1282/S. 344) in the base text of the FY 2025 NDAA.
- Currently many applicants leaving uniformed service are ineligible for DoD positions because of a six-month waiting period. The Retain Skilled Veterans Act (H.R. 939/S. 334) will streamline the process by repealing the 180-day waiting period.
- MOAA supports the Expanding America's National Cemetery Act (H.R. 1413), which would authorize the transformation of a VA-run national cemetery into the next location that affords military honors as Arlington National Cemetery reaches capacity.

Survivors

- To better support surviving spouses, the Caring for Survivors Act (H.R. 1083/S. 414) would align payments of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) with other federal programs.
- Surviving Spouse Remarriage: Surviving military spouses who remarry prior to age 55 lose entitlement for DIC and Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payments, as well as access to educational assistance like the Fry Scholarship and the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance program. The Love Lives on Act (H.R. 3651/S. 1266) will help secure the right for surviving military spouses to remarry at any age and retain their benefits.



Smash on Station



Esteemed colleagues,

We have scheduled our JROTC Candidate Scholarship Interviews on the 27th of April at the Richard Byrd Library in Springfield, VA. If you wish to participate, please contact Martin Schaller at 703-346-8347.

Member Spotlight - We've had a few members who have submitted their stories in the past, and I'd like to see us start anew. Send your stories with photos to John Prevar, Peter Chen or me for inclusion in a future *Despatch*.

Final Thoughts:

In these days of divide attention and divided intentions across the Nation, I am reminded of:
"I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, that I will bear truth faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without and mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office upon which I am about to enter; SO HELP ME GOD."

**Never stop serving our great Nation.
Semper Fidelis,
Smash**

NEVER STOP SERVING



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MVCMOAA Legislative Corner

By COL Kevin Catron, Legislative Chair



Higher Enlisted Pay, Full Housing Stipends in new House Plan

The House of Representatives recently unveiled a sweeping military quality-of-life improvement plan. The 31-point plan is the culmination of more than a year of work by a special panel of House Armed Services Committee (“Panel”) and could provide significant financial relief to struggling military families across the Department of Defense. Amongst the proposed changes,

troops would see larger monthly housing stipends, more childcare and health care access and targeted pay boosts for junior enlisted personnel.

According to a RAND study released last year, as many as 1 in 4 troops suffers from some level of food insecurity, either because of low pay or other service-related complications. Under the Panel’s recommendations, all troops ranked E-4 and below would see a 15% pay boost. The Panel noted that while military members generally receive regular pay increases, those pay hikes have not kept up with the real impact of inflation in recent years, especially in the very junior ranks.

Similarly, an increase in troops housing allowance would also provide financial flexibility. Since 2016, the Defense Department has provided a stipend worth 95% of regional housing costs to troops and families. The Panel’s recommendation would boost that to 100%, a move that could provide several thousand dollars annually to some families. This comes at a time when many military families find it financially impossible to purchase a single-family home in the Mount Vernon area due to increased mortgage rates and reduced inventory. Defense officials, however, have warned that the increase could cost the department more than \$1 billion annually at a time that would impact readiness and modernization efforts.

Other panel recommendations include better pay and benefits for Defense Department childcare workers, to help recruit and retain more staffers; expanding eligibility for the military’s Basic Allowance for Subsistence stipend; amending hiring authorities to bring in more medical administrative staff; and improving military spouse career programs.

The House Armed Services Committee is expected to craft its annual defense authorization bill over the next six weeks. Senate leaders have expressed support for some of the ideas in the report but have not committed to any specific plans on military pay or quality-of-life changes.

Take action: [MOAA’s Legislative Action Center](#)



Summary of 2024 JLC Initiatives

Policy Papers: <https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/dvs/joint-leadership-council-veterans-service-organizations-2>

To track bills and to contact your legislators, visit: <https://viriniageneralassembly.gov>



<i>Initiative</i>	<i>Summary</i>	<i>Bill/Resolution</i>
JLC 2024-01 <i>Expand Tax Relief for Surviving Spouses of Military Service Members to also include "Died in the Line-of-Duty"</i>	Constitutional amendment (voter referendum); real property tax exemption; surviving spouses of soldiers who died in the line of duty. Provides for a referendum at the November 5, 2024, election to approve or reject an amendment to the Constitution of Virginia that would expand the real property tax exemption that is currently available to the surviving spouses of soldiers killed in action to be available to the surviving spouses of soldiers who died in the line of duty with a Line of Duty determination from the U.S. Department of Defense.	HB 558 (Hernandez): 2/8/24 Passed House ; 2/28/24 Passed Senate Governor's Action Deadline: 11:59 p.m. 8 April 2034 SB 4 (McPike): 2/6/24 Passed Senate ; 2/21/24 Passed House ; 4/4/24 Approved by Governor (on November ballot)
JLC 2024-02 <i>Veterans' Services Protection Act</i>	Creates the Veterans' Services Protection Act to prohibit any person from receiving compensation for preparing, presenting, prosecuting, advising, consulting, or assisting any individual regarding any veterans' benefits matter, as defined in the bill, except as permitted under federal law. The bill provides that a violation of its provisions constitutes a prohibited practice under the Virginia Consumer Protection Act.	HB 736 (Sewell): 2/5/24 Passed House ; 3/6/24 Passed Senate with substitute ; 3/7/24 House REJECTED ; 3/8/24 Amended by conference committee; 3/8/24 conference report passed Senate and House respectively; 3/25/24 House Enrolled; 3/25/24 House: Bill text as passed House and Senate (HB736ER); 4/8/24 Approved by Governor (effective 7/1/24)
JLC 2024-03 <i>Va. Nat'l Guard State Tuition Assistance Program; provisions relating to eligibility for grants</i>	Institutions of higher education; tuition grants; Virginia National Guard State Tuition Assistance Program. Makes several changes to the Virginia National Guard State Tuition Assistance Program, including (i) making the provisions relating to the requirements and conditions for eligibility for and award of grants under the Program subject to regulations as prescribed by the Adjutant General, (ii) eliminating the requirement to satisfy financial obligations with the institution of higher education at the beginning of each semester, (iii) simplifying the requirements relating to academic performance and good standing, and (iv) providing that any grant awarded shall be in an amount equivalent to the difference between the full cost of tuition and fees at the institution of higher education less any other educational benefits for which an individual is eligible as a member of the National Guard.	SB 219 (Sturtevant): 1/25/24 Reported from Senate Committee on Education and Health with amendment (15-Y 0-N); rereferred to Finance and Appropriations; 1/31/24 Continued to 2025 in Finance and Appropriations (10-Y 5-N).
JLC 2024-04 <i>Service Members; Active-duty status for any member injured while in the line of duty</i>	Provides that the Adjutant General may maintain state active-duty status for any service member injured while in the line of duty during the course of a state active-duty mission who is unable to return to civilian employment for a period of up to 90 days after the date of the service member's injury.	HB 1513 (Fowler): 2/13/24 Passed House ; 2/28/24 Passed Senate ; 3/5/24 House Enrolled; 3/5/24 House: Bill as passed House and Senate (HB1513ER); 3/11/24 Enrolled Bill reported to Governor; 3/28/24 Approved by Governor (effective 7/1/24)

Note: Three out of this year's four JLC initiatives were passed by the General Assembly and approved by the Governor.



MVC-MOAA 2024 Events-Calendar



DATE	LOCATION	EVENT / SPEAKER / TOPIC
Sat. Apr 27 1 pm – 5 pm	Richard E Byrd Library 7250 Commerce St, Springfield	Scholarship Candidate Interviews.
Wed. May 1 7 pm-9 pm	Virtual	BOD Meeting: IRS reports due; Scholarship certificates/checks, JROTC medal presentations; 2 nd QTR VCOC Report; VA Corp. Commission fee; renew PO box rental.
Sat. May 18 11 am-1 pm	Glory Days Grill 3141 Duke St, Alexandria	Lunch brunch. (Speaker) Lunch served at 11:30 am, Speaker is LTC Elmontenal Allens, USA (Ret)
Wed. Sep 4 7 pm-9 pm	Virtual	BOD Meeting: Appoint Nomination Cmte for Nov Officer election; need volunteers for Ft. Belvoir Retirees Activities Day in Sep; confirm speakers.
Wed. Sep 25 6 pm-9 pm	The Fairfax Community CTR (tentative)	Dinner. Speaker TBD. <i>Social Hour (Cash Bar) 6-7 pm. Buffet served at 7 pm, Speaker at 8 pm.</i>
Wed. Oct 2 7 pm-9 pm	Virtual	BOD Meeting. 4 th QTR VCOC report; Legislative Cmte proposes Natl objectives;
Sat. Nov 16 11 am-1 pm	Glory Days Grill 3141 Duke St, Alexandria	Lunch Brunch. Annual Business Meeting. Speaker TBD. <i>Lunch served at 11:30 am. Officer Installation and Speaker to follow.</i>
Sat. Dec 14 (Tentative) 1130 am-3 pm	Alexandria Natl Cemetery; Social	 Wreath Laying  Holiday Social <p>This is becoming an annual tradition for the Mount Vernon Chapter. Please join us for the annual Wreaths Across America day at Alexandria National Cemetery. We will be joining veterans from local VSOs, Boy Scouts, various military affiliated youth organizations, and numerous supporters from around the community. Following the wreath laying, we will conduct our holiday social at a place to be determined.</p>

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