



The Granite Slate

The Official Newsletter for the
New Hampshire Chapter of The Military Officers Association of America



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Programs for 2011

April 16th Ashworth-by-the-Sea, Hampton Beach, CDR Timothy A. Salter, USN
Commanding Officer, USS Virginia (SSN 774)

June 4th Indian Head Resort, Lincoln NH; Ms Maggie Stier

Old Man of the Mountain Legacy Fund and Plans for the Old Man of the Mountain Monument

August 6th Clambake Oct 1st Lakes Region Nov 5th Annual Meeting Bedford

Pentagon Backtracks on TRICARE Fee Hikes

(source: MOAA Take Action 2/18/2011)

When Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) Dr. Clifford Stanley called a meeting with MOAA President VADM Norb Ryan, Jr. (USN-Ret) and other association leaders on Feb. 14 to outline the TRICARE fee proposals included in the new FY2012 Defense budget, the bottom line of his briefing was, "We listened."

The new plan entails no changes for TRICARE Standard or TRICARE For Life, and no means-testing of fees. It proposes what Stanley described as "modest, gradual" changes in TRICARE Prime enrollment fees, and would exempt military disability (chapter 61) retirees and survivors from those changes. Specifically, the plan calls for:

- Raising the 2012 Prime enrollment fees by 13% -- from \$230 single/\$460 family per year to \$260/\$520 (survivor and chapter 61 retiree fees would remain at current rates)
- Indexing those fees in 2013 and beyond to a medical inflation index (based on a measure of Medicare cost growth projected to rise at 6.2% per year)
- Changing TRICARE pharmacy co pays as follows (changes indicated in parentheses):

Retail Home Delivery (Mail Order)

Generic \$5 (+\$2)	Zero (-\$3)	Brand Name \$12 (+\$3)	\$9 (no change)
	Nonformulary \$25 (+\$3)	\$25 (+\$3)	

MOAA is encouraged that the new proposal avoids the draconian TRICARE fee increases proposed in the past. While some areas warrant additional adjustment, it makes a better effort to recognize that career military people pre-pay a very large price for their lifetime health coverage up front – through decades of service and sacrifice. MOAA strongly supports the proposed elimination of co-pays for use of generic drugs via TRICARE's Home Delivery (mail-order) program and appreciates that survivors and medically retired personnel would be exempt from the proposed Prime increases.

However, MOAA objects strongly to the proposed annual adjustment methodology that would inappropriately tie fee increases for non-disabled military beneficiaries aged 38 to 64 to healthcare cost growth for a more elderly and disabled Medicare population. MOAA believes, in recognition of military beneficiaries' lengthy service and sacrifice, any such adjustments should be capped closely to the percentage increase in their military compensation.

Chapter Officers

President	CDR Peter S. Burdett, USN (Ret)	(800) 778-4251, peter_burdett@ml.com
Vice President	CDR Bruce F. Avery, USN (Ret)	(603) 526-2854, bruceavery@tds.net
Secretary	MAJ Patricia A. Graham, USA (Ret)	(603) 644-1630, smowcy@comcast.net
Treasurer	CAPT Joan M. Huber, NC, USN (Ret)	(603) 863-5731, joanhuber@aol.com

Visit the Chapter's website at: www.moaa-nh.org



President's Corner

Pete Burdett

The NH Winter is always an adventure and so is arranging for the NH Chapter of the MOAA to stay successful. Your Board of Directors (BOD) is working hard to provide the best of lunch meetings though-out the year and also provide other programs to enhance the value of the dues you pay to be a New Hampshire Chapter member.

We deal with lots of details and our volunteer teams are getting the job done for you. As you read though the remainder of this newsletter, please be thinking about who you could ask to join you for one of the events. To maintain our legislative influence in Washington and Concord, we need to have the numbers. So, once they have heard about all the ways we are helping to protect our pride in our military service, they will be asking for a membership folder. Dues are still only \$15 per year. Ask any BOD member for the form or download from the web: www.moaa-nh.org. Lots of good stuff on our website, check it out.

My next big event is the MOAA "Storm the Hill" in Washington DC on 13 April. This event is to demonstrate strong grassroots support for our most important MOAA legislative goals. My goal is to visit with each of our four members of Congress and their staffs for veterans and military affairs. You will receive a full report on my return on these pages in the next newsletter, so stay tuned! If you have thoughts about the issues bothering you to share with your Congressmen or Senators, call me. I'll be available until 8 April at 1-800-778-4251. If I can't answer right away, just leave a message

Cell Phones for Soldiers. Please help and support our troops by bringing your unwanted cell phones to the luncheons. We will donate them to **Cell Phones for Soldiers** to turn them into pre-paid phone cards to help our troops call home. We accept cell phones, Blackberries, Palms, etc., and their accessories. Each old cell phone turned in translates into about 60 minutes of free talk time for our troops and their loved ones at home. Our goal is to recycle at least 40 old phones. The cell phone drive will last until Sep 30, 2011, with the final results announced at the MOAA Annual Meeting in San Antonio in October 2011. A donation box will be in the registration area. Donations are tax deductible. For more information, contact Cindy LeFebvre at 603-356-7296

New Chapter Members

Welcome Aboard !

LTC Lee Borden
USA (ret)
PO Box 341
Glen, NH 03838

MAJ Pauline Dawson
USAR (ret)
14 Woodbury Lane
Boscawen, NH 03303

Lt Col William Gebow
ANG (ret)
Spouse: Debra
PO Box 244
New Castle, NH 03854

CW2 James Plouffe
USA (ret)
17 Brendan Lane
Jaffrey, NH 03452

Mrs. Joyce Prowse
USA (Civ)
42 Lyndon St
Concord, NH 03301

COL Joseph Wallace
USA (Act)
PO Box 2686
New London, NH 03257



Mar 2011 Tap

Lt Col Charles L. Vaughn, USAFR (Ret.)
Portsmouth, NH

Mrs. Lois Aplington
Cumberland Center, ME

Lt Col Arthur W. Bostick, USAF (Ret.)
Nashua, NH

COL John N. Canonico, USA (Ret.)
Barrington, NH

Lt Col Stephen A. Mazur, USAF (Ret.)
Northfield, NH

Col Lawrence H. Miller, USAF (Ret.)
Errol, NH

LTC Norris W. Stilphen, USAR (Ret.)
Rochester, NY

LTJG Arthur R. Fantaci, USN
Wolfeboro, NH

LTC Robert P. Kelsey, Jr., USA (Ret.)
New London, NH

CAPT Robert W. Rieseberg, USN (Ret.)
Sunapee, NH

VA Urges Veterans to Sign Up for Direct Deposits
Treasury Publishes Final Regulation to Phase Out Paper Checks by 2013
(source: *Veteran's Administration Press Release Dec 21, 2010*)

WASHINGTON - The Department of the Treasury announced a new rule that will extend the safety and convenience of electronic payments to millions of Americans and phase out paper checks for federal benefits by March 1, 2013. Officials at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) urge Veterans to sign up for electronic payment of their benefits.

"Receiving VA benefits electronically will increase the security, convenience and reliability of these vital payments," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "VA encourages Veterans who are now receiving their benefits in paper checks to set up direct deposits before the deadline."

On March 1, 2013, VA will stop issuing paper checks. People who do not have electronic payments for their federal benefits by that time will receive their funds via a pre-paid debit card. Called the Direct Express card, it is issued by Comerica Bank as the financial agent of the U.S. Treasury. Along with payments for VA benefit, the change will also affect recipients of Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Railroad Retirement Board, and Office of Personnel Management.

Another deadline affects people receiving VA's compensation or pensions for the first time after May 1, 2011. Those people will automatically receive the benefits electronically. Anyone already receiving federal benefit payments electronically will be unaffected by the changes. To learn more about the federal government's switch to direct deposit -- or to change VA benefits to direct deposit --

visit www.GoDirect.org.

For more information about VA benefits and programs,
go to www.va.gov or call toll free 1-800-827-1000.

2012 NH MOAA Travel Program

Our 2012 Travel Program opens in May with a 13 day **Alaska Discovery** trip. This trip starts in Fairbanks with a cruise on the Stern Wheeler **Discovery**. We then go to Denali National Park for 2 days. The **Denali Express** train takes us from Denali to Whittier where we board the **Island Princess** for a 6 day cruise past the Hubbard Glacier through Glacier Bay to Skagway. Then on to Juneau, Ketchikan, down the Inside Passage ending in Vancouver. The price for this trip is \$3,040 which includes round trip airfare from Boston.

In October, we travel to the **Imperial Cities** of Prague, Vienna, and Budapest. We start with 3 days in Prague and see the Hradcany Castle, St Vitus Cathedral, the Charles Bridge, and the Old Jewish Quarter. Then on to Vienna for the Schronbrunn Palace, St Stephen's Cathedral, a cruise on the Danube and Melk. Our final 3 days are in Budapest for a Hungarian Horse Show and visits to the Mathias Church, the Fishermen's Bastion, Heroes Square, Szentendre and Visegrad. The price for this trip is \$3,149 including airfare from Boston.

We are also working on an 8 day summer trip to America's Music Cities of New Orleans, Memphis and Nashville with details available by April 2011.

Please note that reservations for the October 2011 **Discover Tuscany** trip close on 14 April 2011. A deposit of \$250 for each traveler is required with your reservation.

MOAA-NH is now a member of **Collette's World Connect Program**. Our members can now select from any of Collette's over 140 escorted tours to more than 50 countries on 7 continents. You select where and when you want to travel and we will make the arrangements for your reservations and tickets. You can review all of your travel options at www.collettevacations.com. Family and friends are welcome to join our members on all of our trips.

Your point of contact for the Travel Program is Bruce Avery at (603) 526-2854 or bruceavery@tds.net. Brochures for our 2012 trips will be available at future Luncheons. Let Bruce know if you would like to receive brochures and other Travel Program information by email.

The New Hampshire Chapter of the MOAA
PO Box 712
Dover NH 03821-0712

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Upcoming “Bills of Interest”

The following newly introduced bills have MOAA's endorsement.

- H.R. 237 (Rep. Connolly, D-VA) would let DoD expand the period of eligibility for the homeowner assistance program (HAP) for members of the Armed Forces reassigned during the mortgage crisis
- H.R. 493 (Rep. Jones, R-NC) would authorize survivors of retired service members to keep the full retired pay amount for the month in which the member died (currently, the amount is recouped from the bank account, and the survivor later receives pro-rated payment only for the days the retiree was alive)
- S. 146 (Sen. Baucus, D-MT) would provide a \$2400 tax credit to employers who hire a veteran who has served over 180 days of active service in the last 5 years
- S. 260 (Sen. Bill Nelson, D-FL) would repeal the SBP/DIC offset and allow survivors to receive both their survivor benefit plan annuity from DoD and their dependency indemnity compensation from the VA
- S. Res. 17 (Sen. Inouye, D-HI) to designate the month of November 2011 as "National Military Family Month"

Coburn Protects the People

Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) sent a letter to the Joint Chiefs of Staff this week calling on the Pentagon to improve the transparency of its bookkeeping by providing auditable financial statements. Dozens of GAO, DoD Inspector General and other reports over the last decade and more have repeatedly found that Pentagon books are so fouled up as to be “unauditable”, and that DoD can't identify how billions have been spent on a wide range of programs.

Coburn's letter said improved bookkeeping could produce savings that might otherwise come at the expense of military personnel programs. To create pressure on Pentagon leaders to making these changes, Coburn proposed freezing the defense budget for all non-military personnel accounts until DoD complies.

MOAA has repeatedly cited these same reports as ironic evidence that the Defense leaders who feel such urgency and determination to shift more costs to military people and families seem so uninterested in ending the well-documented waste of hundreds of billions of dollars by its own incompetent management practices

(Source MOAA Legislative Updates Feb 2011)