



The Granite Slate

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



March 2008

Published quarterly for the information of members of the NH Chapter of MOAA
P.O. Box 712, Dover, NH 03821

Volume 30, No. 1

Coming Events: 2008

- April 12 The Oaks, Somersworth
Speaker: Colonel Donald C. Davidson, U.S. Civil Air Patrol, Commander, NH Wing
- June 7 Diamonds Edge North Restaurant, Waterville Valley
- August 2 Clambake, PNSY Sept: TBD Nov 8: Manchester Country Club

DoD Task Force on the Future of Military Health Care

The DoD Task Force on the Future of Military Health Care released its final report on December 20, and the results were pretty much as expected. The report said the relatively low health fees paid by military retirees vs. the growing cost of military health benefits are "out of step with overall trends in the U.S. health care system" and "unfair to the U.S. taxpayer." The task force, co-chaired by Gen. John D.W. Corley, USAF, Commander of Air Combat Command, and economist Dr. Gail Wilensky, recommended retiree fee increases that were patterned generally after those recommended by the Department of Defense for the past two years. Under the task force's plan, fees would be stratified in three tiers, based on the amount of the member's military retired pay. Most retired officers with families covered under TRICARE Prime would pay an annual enrollment fee of \$780 for 2008, with the fee rising steeply to \$1,800 a year by 2011. Those in TRICARE Standard would end up paying about \$1,100 a year in enrollment fees and deductibles. Medicare-eligibles would pay an annual enrollment fee of \$120 per year by 2011. Any beneficiary who didn't pay the enrollment fee also wouldn't be allowed to use military pharmacies.

MOAA's reaction to the proposals is that (a) they impose means-tested premiums that don't apply to other federal health benefits and (b) they focus almost exclusively on DoD costs and very little on what level of benefit career military people earn by virtue of their decades of service and sacrifice. In other words, focusing only on cash fees ignores that military people pay far larger premiums than any civilian - but pay them up front and in-kind. When asked that question directly, one of the commissioners answered, "That's for Congress to decide."

MOAA believes that should have been a key topic in any even-handed report. That's why we've pushed hard for the last two years in support of H.R. 579 and S. 604, the bipartisan Military Health Care Protection Act introduced by Rep. Chet Edwards (D-TX) and Rep. Walter Jones (R-NC) in the House and Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) and Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-NE) in the Senate, which would specify that point in law and put appropriate limits on military health care fee increases. (source www.military.com)

Chapter Officers

- President** CAPT Joan M. Huber, NC, USN, (Ret) (603) 863-5731, joanhuber@aol.com
- Vice President** LTC Gary S. Terhune, USA (Ret) schoonergst@yahoo.com
- Secretary** Col Mary E. Moran, USAF, NC (Ret) (603) 528-5744, moran@metrocast.net
- Treasurer** Col Dyer T. Lennox, USMC (Ret), (603) 523-7479, dyersherri@aol.com

Visit the Chapter's website at: <http://moaa-nh.home.comcast.net/>



President's Corner

By Joan Huber

As you know by now, we were unable to hold the luncheon meeting that was originally planned for February. Due to unforeseeable changes in professional and family circumstances, it was necessary for Ed and Judy Hannigan to resign from the Programs Committee. They volunteered last summer to assume the duties of planning and coordinating the chapter luncheons and the annual clambake. Since that time they conscientiously prepared for their new roles in order to assure a smooth transition. They volunteered in good faith and stepped up when no one else was willing, and they could not have known that changes in the workplace and in their family circumstances would make it impossible to continue. We all understand that family comes first. We appreciate their willingness to serve and the difficulty of making this decision.

The Board of Directors understands that the luncheon meetings are the lifeblood of the chapter, and we want to maintain the very high quality programs we have all come to enjoy. We are disappointed to miss the exciting speaker who was planned for the February meeting, but we will make every effort to have him speak to us at a future event. Members of the Board of Directors are working diligently to arrange for the April luncheon to take place as originally planned. Stay tuned.

In our deliberations, the Board has come to the conclusion that the responsibility for coordinating all the chapter programs is too big a job for one couple. It is not fair to the Program chairs and it is not a good plan for the chapter to have all the responsibility reside in one couple. We have been somewhat complacent because Michael and Faith McLean did such a spectacular job for so many years. But, as we have learned (the hard way), if something happens to the couple's availability, we are seriously compromised.

We have decided to form a number of teams, based on New Hampshire geography, to share the responsibility for planning our chapter activities. We envision a team of 4 to 6 people from each of four major regions of the state (Seacoast, Northcountry/Lakes Region, Monadnock/Dartmouth-Sunapee, and the Concord-Manchester-Nashua axis) who can plan and coordinate one luncheon in their geographic area every one to two years. We will continue to conduct our annual meeting in Manchester and hold our World Famous Clambake every summer at the shipyard in Portsmouth. We are considering the possibility of having these two programs plus two other luncheons, for a total of four program activities per year. That is less than we have enjoyed in the past, but sustains the chapter without placing undue burden on the planning process. If the teams work well and we have enough participants, we could possibly support six programs per year.

New Chapter Members Welcome Aboard !

LT DJ B. Lavoie
USNR -former
Spouse: Robert
PO Box 896
New London, NH 03257
603-526-2687

Lt Col Philip G. Chesley
USAF (ret)
Spouse: Judy
PO Box 172
Jackson, NH 03846
603-383-4402

New Hampshire MOAA Chapter assists NH Veteran's Home in filling "unfunded" need

According to the Commandant, Barry Conway, the Veteran's Home is always in need of TheraGlide rocking chairs, which allows residents to enjoy the soothing motion of rocking, and because they lock when the person stands up, it helps prevent instability which could lead to falls. This chapter made a donation of \$800 to the NH Veterans Home enabling another TheraGlide to be added for the benefit and enjoyment of the residents.

Some links and websites which may be of interest to MOAA members

(Passed along for information only, no endorsement implied or intended)

MOAA Discussions and Blogs

www.moaa.org/comm/comm_discussions/index.htm

Information about current military issues

www.military.com

Finding Members of Congress

capwiz.com/moaa/dbq/officials

We need your help! Can you identify facilities in your area that would make a great location for a luncheon? Prepare the text of a flyer? Maintain a list of responses? Purchase centerpieces? Identify and contact guest speakers? Then please volunteer for one of the teams. Everyone can help in some way. Without your assistance, we will not be able to sustain the high quality programs in the future that we have all come to enjoy.

Please consider being 'part of the solution' and let us know of your willingness to serve on the planning team for your area. You can call me at 863-5731 (leave a message), send an email to joanhuber@aol.com, or drop a note to the chapter address. We are anxiously waiting to hear from you!

Guard and Reserve Commission Report

After two years' study, public hearings, scores of interviews, the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves has released its final report to Congress. The final report includes six major conclusions and 95 recommendations that address roles/missions, training, equipment, compensation/benefits, funding and sustainability.

The recommendations match many of MOAA's recommendations to the Commission, including:

- Increasing resources to secure enough manpower, equipment and training to sustain "operational reserve" missions
- Reducing the number of duty statuses from the current 29 to 2 -- on active duty or off active duty (inactive duty)
- Streamlining pay systems to allow smooth transition on and off active duty (MOAA believes this can be done without compromising the current compensation value of the traditional "2 for 1" base pay mechanism for reserve drill duty)
- Improving family health coverage continuity by allowing a choice to have the government subsidize continuation of a private employer's family coverage during activation
- Enhancing reserve retirement and GI Bill benefits

MOAA was surprised and disappointed that the Commission endorsed the proposals of last year's Defense Advisory Committee on Military Compensation that would make major changes in the active duty retirement system, including requiring members to serve until age 57 or older in order to draw retired pay immediately. A much more modest change enacted in 1986 had to be repealed in 1999 when the Joint Chiefs complained it was hurting career retention.

MOAA is concerned that such proposals don't adequately address long-term sustainment requirements for decades of arduous service in the all-volunteer force.

Selected Legislative Gains for 2007-from the MOAA perspective

Health Care Issues

- Ban TRICARE fee/pharmacy copay increases for FY2008
- Require comprehensive plan for care, management and transition of wounded members, and plans for PTSD and TBI treatment and prevention
- Establish joint electronic health records, seamless transition plan, and single separation physical for disabled service members transitioning between DoD and VA
- Establish joint office to implement DoD/VA electronic health record
- Review all post 9/11 disability separations for retirement reconsideration
- Require DoD to include all unfitting conditions in disability retirement ratings
- Allow three years of active-duty-level health care for disability retirees/families
- Bar outsourcing of military medical positions

Retirement/Survivor Issues

- 2.3% retired pay/SBP COLA
- Raise minimum SBP annuity to 55% of covered retired pay (as of 1 Apr 08)
- Establish \$50 per month allowance to survivors of service-connected deaths for FY09
- Expand CRSC eligibility to disability retirees with less than 20 years of service
- Require single notice of SBP recoupment amount for DIC widows
- Reduce reserve retirement age 3 months for each 90 days on active duty (prospective)
- Allow up to 130 (vs. 90) annual drill points creditable for Reserve retirement
- Full concurrent receipt for those rated "unemployable" eff. Jan 05 (payable Oct 08)

Active/Reserve Force Issues

- 3.5% military pay raise as of 1 Jan 08
- Increase force levels for active duty Army/USMC and Army/Air National Guard
- Authorize DFAS to make mid-month contributions to Thrift Savings Plan
- Reimburse up to \$300 in drill-travel expenses for short specialties/units or relocated units
- Authorize Selected Reserve members 10 years after separation to use MGIB benefits
- Allow carryover of 75 (vs. 60) days accumulated leave (expires Dec. 31, 2010)

Military Family / Veterans / Other Issues

- Allow family members of mobilized personnel to use family medical leave
- Bar courts from vacating child custody agreements based on member's deployment

The NH Chapter of MOAA
P.O. Box 712
Dover, NH 03821 -0712

NONPROFIT ORG
AUTO
US POSTAGE PAID
DOVER, NH
PERMIT 615



Retiree At Cost Hearing Aid Program

Audiology programs available to active duty and retired military personnel

Portsmouth Naval Shipyard is listed by the Military Audiology Association as providing services related to hearing loss for Naval and retired military from any service. While the information is current, contacting them for the latest information before incurring significant travel expenses. Retirees can use any facility that will accept them; you don't need to return to your service affiliation to participate in this program. Dependents of military retirees are generally ineligible to participate in this program at the current time

Portsmouth, NH ; 684-2081 1-888-NAVY-MED More information: <http://www.militaryaudiology.org>

What do MOAA members think?

Findings from a December 2007 survey of more than 3,000 MOAA members conducted by MOAA and the Center for a New American Security. Selected results from the survey:

- 66% believe America's elected leaders are either "somewhat uninformed" or "very uninformed" about the U.S. military
- 74% think civilian leadership set unreasonable goals for the military to accomplish in postwar Iraq
- Nearly 90% say the war in Iraq has "stretched the U.S. military dangerously thin", but 56% disagree that the demands of the war have "broken the military"
- 78% support expanding options for legal, foreign permanent residents of the United States to serve in exchange for U.S. citizenship
- 53% agree and 44% disagree with the statement "Torture is never acceptable."
- 77% believe the level of U.S. defense spending should be increased over the next 5 to 10 years
- 64% believe that the morale of the U.S. military is "somewhat high" or "very high"
- Only 21% see foreign nation reconstruction operations as a core mission of the U.S. military