

## 2023 AIA VISIT SUMMARY

Some quick background, we in New Hampshire are extremely lucky they will folks from other chapters and councils who were coverings 7 to 11 elected officials during the day, many are happy to get 5 to 15 minutes in the congressional office. We spent a minimum of roughly 30 hours in every one of our four offices, and, in fact, we had to cut two visits short because I had scheduled visits too close together and got almost a full hour in Sen. Hassan's office. Based on the training provided on Tuesday before we went to the hill we also asked for sponsorship on specific bills where appropriate and made sure to educate on the difference between "Armed Forces" and the more inclusive "Uniformed Services". MOAA national asked that we try to keep focused on BAH and TRICARE but our state staffers had made clear that our delegation wants to hear about those issues that are of greatest concern to their constituents and we had made the three position papers available well in advance so most were familiar with them. As a result, we covered just about every issue that has been raised by MOAA with special emphasis on the following items: BAH, TRICARE, the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) encompassing multiple specific pieces of legislation, a/the national Cemetery system, PACT act flaws with a focus on the elimination of the tort cap and a secondary concern with hypertension and implementation of the act, and, VAMC Manchester. I was accompanied by Ryan Hogan from MOAA national. Talked to many of the MOAA leadership team including General Kelly General North, General Lynch, Jim Carman, Cory Titus, Karen Ruedisueli, Rene Campos Dan Merry, Frank Michaels, Suzanne Walker and some of the current MOAA BOD. As was to be expected only three of the four DC staffs had actually seen the three position papers I had sent down well in advance of AiA

- A. First visit was in Sen. Shaheen's office where we briefly saw the senator but spent most of our time with three staffers: Michael Kans, Sophia Hays, and, Quentin Miller. Covered BAH TRICARE AVF Cemeteries, the Retain skilled vets, VAMC, PACT act flaws with a focus on the elimination of the tort cap and a secondary concern with hypertension and implementation of the act, and, a new commissary for Pease. Basic response was lukewarm support for most of the issues we raised and a lack of commitment of any sort on BAH. Nonetheless the staffers were genuinely interested in responsive and took extensive notes. It would appear that military and veteran service issues while of concern to the senator and her staff are not among their top priorities. Made it a point to thank the senator in person her comments the previous Saturday in Manchester concerning eliminating CRs.
- B. Second visit was with Sen. Hassan and her primary staffer for this area Melissa Reilly-Diakun. Covered BAH TRICARE AVF Cemeteries, the Retain skilled vets, VAMC, PACT act flaws with a focus on the elimination of the tort cap and a secondary concern with hypertension and implementation of the act, and, a new

commissary for Pease. The senator did spend time with us but did have to go back to the floor while Melissa spent an extended period of time with showing interest and support across the board. We specifically suggested that the senator help push for national academies study on the impacts of the TRICARE pharmacy cuts on the entire supported community. This was a result of a combination of the training we received prior to our day on the Hill and also represents discussions I have had at the last two national events with various members of MOAA national's leadership team. Karen Ruedisueli and/or other MOAA national staff need to follow up with the senator and her staff on this issue. Also asked for consideration to be a cosponsor in Sen. Warnock introduces his companion Bill to the house resolution

- C. third visit was in Congressman Kuster's office. Covered BAH TRICARE AVF Cemeteries, the Retain skilled vets, VAMC, PACT act flaws with a focus on the elimination of the tort cap and a secondary concern with hypertension and implementation of the act, and, a new commissary for Pease. We had already been told that the Congresswoman simply would not be available but Milla Anderson spent the full half hour with us and was knowledgeable and supportive on all issues. We did have to cut this one short because of the close timing of the next appointment but got the full half hour we planned on
- D. Fourth and final visit was with Chris Pappas in his office with his staffer Jake Friedman. Covered BAH, TRICARE, AVF, Cemeteries, the Retain skilled vets, VAMC, PACT act flaws with a focus on the elimination of the tort cap and a secondary concern with hypertension and implementation of the act, and, a new commissary for Pease. Chris was waiting for us in his very first question was "when is the clam bake?" Might pay for MOAA government relations team to circle back with Jake and Chris on VA issues and the TRICARE study. Bottom line is that Maggie Hassan and Chris Pappas work together regularly on veterans' issues and have done an outstanding job for all veterans as well as extending their concerns well beyond just VA issues.