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~ Five Star ★★★★★ Chapter ~

## President's Message...

July 2022 Issue

Greetings Friends,

I hope that everyone enjoyed celebrating our nation's 246<sup>th</sup> birthday. The slow and HOT summer months are upon us.

Our monthly lunch meeting will be July 30th at Kelly's County Cookin' in Meadows Place near Sugar Land and our speaker is COL Robert Bening, USA (R). COL Bening's talk will primarily center on the early American advisory effort in South Vietnam.



One other item of note is, as many of you know, our Chapter is involved and supports Impact a Hero, a Veteran Support organization. IAH is having a fund raiser on September 3rd, the second annual Over the Edge building rappelling event. Each person going over the edge needs to raise \$1,000.00 (or more) and yours truly is going over the edge (team Rocks). There is a flyer in the newsletter if you would like to contribute to the effort and feel free to contact me for additional information.

As always, tell your colleagues about our Chapter. We would love to have them join us.

Respectfully,

Rob  
 Robin P. Ritchie, COL, Infantry, USAR (Ret)

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### July...Upcoming Chapter Events:

**Tuesday, July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022 @ noon**

**MOAA HA BOD Meeting**

Rudi Lechner's German Restaurant  
 2503 S Gessner Rd  
 Houston, TX 77063

**Saturday, July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022 @ 11:30am-1:30pm**

**MOAA HA Chapter Meeting**

Kelley's Country Cookin'  
 11555 W Airport Blvd  
 Meadows Place, TX 77477  
 RSVP to Rob Ritchie  
 Email: [rpritchie@earthlink.net](mailto:rpritchie@earthlink.net)

## 4 Vietnam Veterans Awarded Medals of Honor in White House Ceremony

JULY 06, 2022



*President Joe Biden shakes hands with Maj. John Duffy, USA (Ret), a Life Member of MOAA, after awarding him the Medal of Honor in the East Room of the White House on July 5 in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Saul Loeb/AFP via Getty Images)*

*Editor's note: This article by Rebecca Kheel originally appeared on Military.com, a leading source of news for the military and veteran community.*

Spc. 5 Dwight Birdwell didn't want to die, but he was ready to as he fought his way through an enemy ambush at an air base near Saigon.

For Maj. John Duffy, calling in airstrikes from a location close to enemy positions even as he was wounded was just part of the job.

And when the children of Staff Sgt. Edward Kaneshiro heard their father had single-handedly cleared an enemy trench so his men could safely withdraw, they were inspired to "be a better person, to be courageous and to have integrity."

"He didn't even think about himself," Kaneshiro's daughter, Naomi Vilorio, told Military.com on Sunday. "He just had one mission, and that was trying to save his unit. It was duty to country."

On Tuesday, Birdwell, Duffy and Kaneshiro, as well as Spc. 5 Dennis Fujii, were awarded the **Medal of Honor** by President Joe Biden for "acts of gallantry and intrepidity" during the Vietnam War, earning the nation's highest military honor after a 50-year wait. For Kaneshiro, the honor is posthumous; he was killed on the battlefield months after his heroic actions.

During the White House ceremony, Biden said the medals were about "setting the record straight" and giving the **Army** veterans the level of recognition they deserve after so many years.

"There's been a long journey to this day for those heroes and their families, and more than 50 years have passed -- 50 years -- since the jungles of Vietnam, where as young men, these soldiers first proved their mettle," Biden said. "But time has not diminished their astonishing bravery, their selflessness in putting the lives of others ahead of their own, and the gratitude that we as a nation owe them."

*President Joe Biden awards the Medal of Honor to Spc. 5 Dwight Birdwell, USA (Ret), during an event in the East Room of the White House on July 5, 2022, in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Kent Nishimura/Los Angeles Times via Getty Images)*

Birdwell, sharing his thoughts in a call with Military.com that included Vilorio, her brother John, and Duffy, ahead of the ceremony, was stoic about the wait.

"Somebody told me long ago these things often take time," he said.

*(Continued on next page...)*



## 4 Vietnam Veterans Awarded Medals of Honor ...Continued from previous page...



*President Joe Biden presents a Medal of Honor posthumously to the son of Staff Sgt. Edward N. Kaneshiro, USA, in the East Room of the White House in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Sarah Silbiger for The Washington Post/Getty Images)*

Kaneshiro's children, after reading in a newspaper that their father had first been recommended for a Medal of Honor in 1966, wrote a letter to their senator in 1990. When nothing came of that, they wrote another letter to a different senator in 2011.

Two weeks after his wife and their mother died in April, Kaneshiro's children got a call that their father's record was being reviewed and, a few weeks after that, Biden called to say he was getting the Medal of Honor, Vioria said during the phone call.

Their mother didn't talk about her husband at all after he died because her "grief was just so profound," but the children found out about his heroism from other family members and newspaper accounts, Vioria said. John Kaneshiro, who accepted the medal Tuesday on his family's behalf, credited his father with inspiring his own service in the Army.

On Dec. 1, 1966, Kaneshiro and his team entered a village near Phu Huu 2 on a search-and-destroy mission. There, they were ambushed by a large North Vietnamese contingent that had fortified the village with a camouflaged trench and bunker system.

A hail of gunfire killed his platoon leader and several other soldiers, and two other squads were pinned down. Realizing the only way anyone would survive was to stop the gunfire, Kaneshiro directed his men to cover him and crawled alone toward the trench.

While still on the ground, he lobbed a grenade that killed the North Vietnamese gunner. Then, he hopped in the trench and worked his way down its entire 35-meter length, eliminating one group of enemy fighters with his rifle and two more enemy groups with grenades.

His actions were credited with allowing for the "orderly extradition and reorganization of the platoon which ultimately led to a successful withdrawal from the village," according to the award citation read at the ceremony.

Kaneshiro continued serving in Vietnam until he was killed by enemy gunfire on March 6, 1967.

"Today, his memory lives on in the lives he saved, in the legend of his fearlessness and the hearts of the family he left behind," Biden said. "Your family's sacrificed so much for our country. I know that no award can ever make up for the loss of your father, for not having him there as you grew up. But I hope today, you take some pride and comfort in knowing his valor is finally receiving the full recognition it's always deserved."

As Birdwell reflected on getting the Medal of Honor, he expressed pride not for himself, but for the 25th Infantry Division and for the Cherokee Nation, of which he is a member.

"It brings honor and respect not only to the Cherokee Nation, but the Cherokee people," said Birdwell, who served as the chief justice of the Cherokee Nation's Supreme Court for a couple of years in the '90s.

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## 4 Vietnam Veterans Awarded Medals of Honor ...Continued from previous page...

Birdwell's award comes for actions on the first day of what would become known as the Tet Offensive.

On Jan. 31, 1968, a large element of North Vietnamese fighters attacked the Tan Son Nhut Air Base near Saigon, and Birdwell's unit was ringed by enemy fighters. Most of his unit's vehicles were destroyed or disabled, and his tank commander was incapacitated after being hit by enemy bullets.

Without hesitation, Birdwell moved the commander aside and took over, firing the tank's cannon, machine gun and his rifle. When he used up all the ammunition in the tank, he dismounted and went to get two machine guns and ammunition from a helicopter that had been downed by enemy fire.

### [RELATED: [Vietnam Pilot Runs Veterans' Story Group](#)]

When his machine gun was hit by enemy fire and exploded, he was wounded, but refused to be evacuated and kept moving among disabled vehicles, collecting ammunition that he handed out to his brothers in arms. When reinforcements came, Birdwell helped evacuate the wounded until he was ordered to have his own wounds attended to.

"At the time, Birdwell received the Silver Star for his outstanding heroism on the battlefield," Biden said. "It took decades for his commanding officer, then-Gen. Glenn Otis, to realize Birdwell had not received the full honor he had earned. But in retirement, Gen. Otis made sure to correct the record and fully document Birdwell's actions to make this day possible."

Birdwell said there was not much going through his mind during the battle besides "fight, fight, fight," hoping to inflict as much damage on the enemy as possible and hold out until help arrived.

"We have a saying in Oklahoma, something to the effect of, 'I want to go to heaven, but just not right now,'" he said. "And I was ready to die that day, but of course, I didn't want to do it then because I knew if I went down, it would be easier for the enemy."

Birdwell was not fazed about 54 years passing between his actions and receiving the Medal of Honor.

"There are still men alive who served on Jan. 31, 1968, and I'm happy to bring honor to them, and it validates what they did that day," he said.

*President Joe Biden awards the Medal of Honor to Maj. John Duffy, USA (Ret), on Tuesday in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Kent Nishimura/Los Angeles Times via Getty Images)*



Duffy similarly brushed off the long wait to be honored.

"It was a different situation back then," Duffy said. "The war was ending, American troops were pulling out, they were downplaying too much publicity, and they were trying to withdraw in an orderly manner. And we were

the last of the fighters over there, the aircrews and advisers. So we understood the situation. And we were not there to make glory and gain a medal."

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## 4 Vietnam Veterans Awarded Medals of Honor ...Continued from previous page...

Noting he was once nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in poetry, Biden called Duffy the "definition of a warrior poet and devotion to those he served with and those who serve our nation still."

Duffy earned his medal for actions in a battle from April 14 to 15, 1972. Two days earlier, his battalion commander had been killed, the battalion command post was destroyed, and Duffy was twice wounded but refused to be evacuated.

Instead, on the morning of April 14 after efforts to establish a landing zone for resupply aircraft, Duffy moved close to anti-aircraft positions to call in airstrikes. He was again wounded, but still refused evacuation. When enemy fighters launched a ground assault and a barrage of artillery fire in the afternoon, Duffy moved from position to position to spot targets for gunship fire.

On the morning of April 15 after an enemy ambush, Duffy led troops, including many who were seriously wounded, to an evacuation area, where he continued to direct gunship fire to enemy positions and marked a landing zone for helicopters. He boarded a helicopter himself only after all the other evacuees were aboard and, once on the helicopter, assisted a couple of the wounded.

"That was our job, and that's as simple as it is," Duffy said of his mindset during the battle. "You're in control. You don't panic. You execute and make the best decisions."



*President Joe Biden awards the Medal of Honor to Spc. 5 Dennis M. Fujii, USA (Ret), on Tuesday in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Kent Nishimura/Los Angeles Times via Getty Images)*

Fujii was awarded his medal for actions during a rescue mission in Laos and Vietnam from February 18 to 22, 1971.

Fujii was crew chief aboard a helicopter ambulance that took enemy fire and crash-landed in Laos. A second helicopter landed and took on everyone from the crash -- except for Fujii. The enemy was directing fire at him, and he told the other helicopter to leave him despite being injured.

"I knew that there was no way I could make it from where I was into the chopper," Fujii said in a 2018 interview released by the Army. "And the longer I stayed there and waited, I was putting everybody at risk so I just waved the bird off."

Other efforts to retrieve him were called off because of heavy anti-aircraft fire. Fujii became the lone American on the battlefield and treated injuries of South Vietnamese allies throughout the night and next day.

Amid an enemy assault on the night of Feb. 19, Fujii found a radio transmitter and called in American gunships to help repel the attack. For 17 straight hours, he exposed himself to enemy fire to get better views of enemy troop positions and call in airstrikes.

"At times, the fighting became so vicious that Spc. 5 Fujii was forced to interrupt radio transmissions in order to place suppressive rifle fire on the enemy while in close quarters," the citation read at Tuesday's ceremony said.

A U.S. helicopter was finally able to reach him on Feb. 20, but was hit and forced to crash-land at a South Vietnamese base four kilometers from his original location. A "totally exhausted" Fujii was at the allied camp for another two days before he was finally evacuated to medical care, according to his citation.

"Fujii downplayed his own contributions and honored the skills of the allied Vietnamese troops he fought with, simply saying, 'I like my job. I like to help other people who need help out there,'" Biden said. "It's amazing. Today, Spc. 5 Fujii, we remember and we celebrate just how many people you helped." ★

# MOAA Member Assisting With Training, Growing EOD Teams in Ukraine

MAY 09, 2022

By Contributing Editor Blair Drake

*MOAA member Lt. Col. John Culp, USA (Ret), arrived in Ukraine in April to assist local bomb technicians as part of the nonprofit Bomb Techs Without Borders. Culp's wife Donna, a former Air Force captain, serves as president of the Western North Carolina Chapter of MOAA. (Courtesy images)*



Lt. Col. John Culp, USA (Ret), walks the streets of Kyiv wearing body armor and looking for unexploded ordnance left behind from Russian assaults on the city. He picks up and moves shells and removes fuses, working alongside bomb technicians from the explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) team of the National Police of Ukraine.

When Culp arrived in Ukraine in early April, he expected to initially assist from behind the scenes, but he was prepared to put his EOD background to use. After all, that background is what brought him the more than 5,000 miles away from home to a war zone. The retired special forces officer and EOD tech is volunteering with the organization Bomb Techs Without Borders (BTWOB), a 501(c)(3) founded in 2018 “to prevent casualties caused by landmines, IEDs, and other explosive remnants of war.”

“Can you imagine being shelled day and night and probably 20% of the ordnance not exploding?” Culp said. “That’s exactly the situation they have here [in Ukraine].”

## **[MOAA INTERVIEW: Former NATO Supreme Allied Commander Talks War in Ukraine]**

Culp, a member of MOAA’s Western North Carolina Chapter, connected with BTWOB after realizing he wanted to do something to help.

“I was watching a video of some guys dismantle a bomb by hand, and I suddenly had this aha moment,” he said. “I said, ‘I can add to that.’ I’m probably not a great asset on the infantry battlefield. When you weigh me down with armor and weapons and a helmet ... I probably wouldn’t last. I’m in pretty good shape ... for 69 years old, but let’s be realistic.”

His background, however, was something he thought could make a difference. Prior to receiving his commission in 1978 and serving a career primarily in special forces, Culp served as an EOD tech. He completed additional EOD training before serving as a missile and biological and chemical weapons inspector with the United Nations Special Commission in Iraq. After retiring from the Army, he worked in the explosives program for a federal agency for 15 years, during which he trained foreign EOD units.

“That was really where I thought I could add something to the mix here,” Culp said. “Because, although my technical expertise in terms of modern EOD tools and things are not as current ... I have something that not everybody else has, which is a lot of experience working for foreign EOD teams on their turf, trying to get them to work together, and trying to move their level of expertise up.”

*(Continued on next page...)*

## MOAA Member Assisting With Training . . . (Continued from previous page...)

### [RELATED: [More MOAA Members in the Spotlight](#)]

As BTWOB country coordinator in Ukraine, Culp is working with a colleague to set up EOD training in the country by the end of May to teach three categories: identification and flagging of ordnance, EOD technicians, and EOD supervisors.

“[The National Police] have a very strong EOD structure, but they don’t have enough [manpower],” he said. “[The training] will allow them to expand rapidly once they have some more personnel.”

To accomplish this, funding is key. It will allow for more EOD technicians to travel to Ukraine to assist as well as replenish the supply of needed tools, which Culp says are being used rapidly for safing and destroying ordnance.



*A man walks past an unexploded tail section of a 300mm rocket which appears to contained cluster bombs launched from a BM-30 Smerch multiple rocket launcher after shelling in Lysychansk, Ukraine, on April 11. (Photo by Anatolii Stepanov/AFP via Getty Images)*

### Support on the Homefront

Back home in North Carolina, Culp has the support of his family and friends, including his wife, Donna, a former Air Force captain who serves as president of the Western North Carolina Chapter of MOAA.

Donna is raising funds to support BTWOB, and the chapter recently held a fundraiser for the Moldova World Children’s Fund, which was formed by a member of the chapter 20 years ago and has diverted all its efforts to supporting Ukrainian refugees.

“I’m proud of John for following his conviction to ‘do something’ to help the people of Ukraine,” Donna said. “From the moment I realized he was serious about volunteering with Bomb Techs Without Borders and was ready to go to Ukraine, I pushed aside any selfish feelings I had, and we set about getting him ready to go. Knowing what skills he brings to the table as a bomb tech and understanding bomb techs ultimate mission is that of disarming all manner of threatening ordnance, I was ready to support him. He’s that kind of guy. John, like all bomb techs, possess a set of skills that is an art and a science and, particularly in this case, is humanitarian to the core. I respect that.”

### [RELATED: [More About MOAA's Councils and Chapters](#)]

Donna said since word has spread about what John is doing, she has met numerous people from Ukraine or people who have family there, including a young man working in her local packing and shipping store. She recently went into that store while on a video call with John and turned the phone around so he could have a quick chat with some people in there.

“One of the young men behind the counter was all smiles as he explained he has family in Ukraine and personally thanked John for what he is doing over there,” Donna said.

“I am proud of him, and what he and all the bomb techs are doing to help Ukrainians reclaim their lives, homes, and communities.”

*(Continued on page 10...)*



IMPACT A HERO

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**Impact a Hero Mission:** To make a positive impact in the lives of Military Veterans, Active Service Members and their Families through advancing leadership and personal development, strengthening community and encouraging esprit de corps.

**About Impact a Hero:** Impact a Hero builds a strong community of veterans helping veterans by offering opportunities through professional and servant leadership, financial literacy, and camaraderie to enhance their well-being and personal growth. IAH collaborates and partners with other veteran service organizations to reignite the passion of service to our heroes.

**Impact A Hero is a 501(c)3  
headquartered in Houston, Texas.  
Visit us at <https://impactahero.org>**





## Surviving Spouse Corner:



### Get Involved in MOAA's Advocacy Efforts

By: Dr. Vivianne Wersel  
JULY 05, 2022

This spring, MOAA members contacted all 535 members of Congress during the association's annual Advocacy in Action event, conducting more than 235 meetings and sending over 7,500 letters. Due to

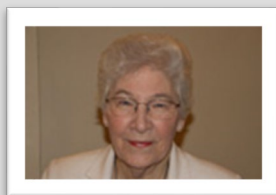
COVID-19 restrictions and the challenges of security on Capitol Hill, MOAA members met with their elected officials either in face-to-face or virtual meetings.

MOAA's three legislative priorities were supporting the Major Richard Star Act, supporting the Stop Copay Overpay Act; and ensuring a competitive military pay raise.

Why get involved with Advocacy in Action? Volunteers are well trained to understand the process of setting up meetings and communicating with elected officials as well as having a better understanding of legislation. In addition, participation cultivates relationships with staffers and members of Congress from your district and state. The experience you gain is beneficial to help support other legislation as a constituent or with a group to help improve survivor benefits.

Military survivors are the stakeholders to the legislation at large. Congress continuously adjusts military survivor benefits. It is important surviving spouse members exercise their rights to educate staffers and members of Congress and remain vigilant to protect and improve survivor benefits. MOAA headquarters' staff does an outstanding job educating members so they can participate in grassroots advocacy efforts.

Here are some ways to contribute and keep MOAA's priorities on Congress' radar:



Judith Thomas  
Surviving Spouse Liaison  
MOAA Houston Chapter  
719-331-8485 (cell)  
[jthomas482@aol.com](mailto:jthomas482@aol.com)

- ❖ Send pre-written letters to Capitol Hill using MOAA's **Legislative Action Center**.
- ❖ Call elected officials using MOAA's direct line to the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at 1-866-272-6622.
- ❖ Engage with congressional members via social media, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.
- ❖ Stay current with MOAA's legislative efforts and subscribe to *The MOAA Newsletter*. Check your MOAA's newsletter subscription preferences **at this link**.
- ❖ Customize your letters and conversations with elected officials; embed a personal story.

Congress will act only if they are inspired by their voters. Join MOAA's effort to help improve benefits for military, veterans, retirees, family, and survivors. ★

## MOAA Member Assisting With Training...

(Continued from page 7)

### 'Everybody Can Spare a Dime or Two'

Culp has given himself a 90-day timeline for his mission in Ukraine. He said, by then, he expects he'll be ready for a break. But he feels grateful he is able to lend his expertise.

"Not everybody is prepared or physically ready to come over here and offer physical support," he said. "I'm fortunate to feel like I had something technical to offer and that my body is still in good enough shape to come over and actually do it. Not everybody is going to feel that way. Not everybody can go ... I'm not encouraging a wash of retired officers to come flying to Ukraine."

He does, however, encourage his fellow MOAA members to contribute to humanitarian organizations supporting Ukrainians. "Everybody can spare a dime or two," he said.

For Culp, volunteering in Ukraine feels almost personal. "There were lots of guys like me in the Fulda Gap ready to face the Russian invasion of Germany," he said. "And it never happened, and now Ukraine is taking that hit. And I really feel in a way that they're taking the hit that we were all expecting. With all of NATO and all our forces, we were expecting to take that hit in the Fulda Gap, and it never came. In a way, Ukraine is fighting our fight.

"I felt like I had to help," he said. "... I felt convicted."★



# TRICARE Toolkit: Your TRICARE Pharmacy Benefits

By: Paul Frost  
JULY 05, 2022



MOAA's TRICARE Toolkit provides insight and tips for navigating your TRICARE benefits. Have a question or suggestion for an upcoming column? Email [beninfo@moaa.org](mailto:beninfo@moaa.org). Read other TRICARE Toolkit columns at [MOAA.org/tricaretoolkit](https://www.moaa.org/tricaretoolkit). [stevecoleimages/Getty Images](https://www.gettyimages.com)



In 2018, Congress passed TRICARE's pharmacy copay increases for the next 10 years. They are implemented each even year, including 2022.

TRICARE beneficiaries initially may have been surprised to see a bill with their Express Scripts mail-order refills: Generic refills, which had no copay in 2017, now come with copays.

**[RELATED: [Can You Save on TRICARE Meds? Check Out This Price Tracker](#)]**

Beneficiaries living near a military treatment facility pharmacy network continue to receive new prescriptions and refills with no copay. Those using retail pharmacies (new 30-day prescriptions) and Express Scripts mail order (maintenance 90-day prescriptions) have copays on par with civilian counterparts who use an employer-provided medical/pharmacy plan, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation's [2021 Employer Health Benefits Survey](#).

Your TRICARE and TRICARE For Life pharmacy benefits work exactly alike. Your commercial pharmacy copays are the maximum you should be charged for the classification of your prescription (generic, brand, or non-formulary). Non-formulary drugs, when approved, are covered with a higher copay than drugs in the generic and brand-name formularies.

## TRICARE Cost Shares, 2022-2027

- **2022-23:** Retail (30-day supply) – generic, \$14; brand, \$38; non-formulary, \$68. Mail order (90-day supply) – generic, \$12; brand, \$34; non-formulary, \$68.
- **Proposed 2024-25:** Retail (30-day supply) – generic, \$16; brand, \$43; non-formulary, \$76. Mail order (90-day supply) – generic, \$13; brand, \$38; non-formulary, \$76.
- **Proposed 2026-27:** Retail (30-day supply) – generic, \$16; brand, \$48; non-formulary, \$85. Mail order (90-day supply) – generic, \$14; brand, \$44; non-formulary, \$85.

Many MOAA members have found that shopping around may yield a commercial pharmacy that charges less than the prescribed retail amounts above. Here are some other cost-saving ideas:

- Go generic whenever possible (with physician consent).
- Order by mail whenever possible to receive 3 times (90 versus 30) the supply for a reduced cost.
- Use a TRICARE pharmacy network or download the Express Scripts mobile app.
- If TRICARE denies coverage for your prescription needs, look into Rx discount programs such as Good Rx or AARP's Prescription Discounts program.
- If your employer provides a Flexible Spending Account, you have coverage for prescription and over-the-counter medicines with a physician's approval. ★



### Remember Where You Have Been Live Where You Are

We have just finished celebrating our 246<sup>th</sup> year of Independence. Many of us have enjoyed the fireworks. Some have enjoyed the parades. Many have put our flags out or let the Boy and Girl Scouts post our flags. Yet, our country is still reeling from the devastating tragedies of Uvalde, Buffalo and the Ukraine War. Today's freedoms are still fragile. They do not come without sacrifice cost, education and plain hard work. The Fourth of July is a celebration to cause us to remember who we are and where we have been. God's Word also reminds us of who we are, where our faith has been and how God has guided us to what He desires and requires of us. It also reminds us of how much He loves us by what He has done with and through our lives.

The book of Joshua tells the history of the conquest of Israel seizing the Promised land. God promised this land to Abraham about 500 hundred years earlier when He called Abraham to leave Haran and follow His lead and plan. Joshua Chapter 4 tells how Joshua commanded twelve men to carry 12 large boulders from the Jordan River across to the other side and build a memorial to remember what God has done in getting them to the West Side of the Jordan River. The memorial was to remind them and their children that God stopped up the Jordan River during flood stage so the Israelites could cross the river on dry ground, no Bridge! This was just as their parents and grandparents had done when they crossed the Red Sea on dry ground when they fled from the Egyptian Army 40 years earlier. The new generation of Hebrew People were told that when their children saw the memorial and asked, "What do these stones mean?" They were to answer by telling the stories of their slavery and escape from Egypt, their journey through the wilderness, their entry into the Promised Land and God's faithfulness to His promises.

The stories of our country, the people who have gone before us; the sacrifices they have made as well as our own sacrifices are important to us and should be told to our families and friends. We sold War Bonds in WWI and WWII. Millions of Soldiers died. We rationed gas in WWII and in the late 70's to support Americans. One of the sacrifices we are making today as a country is to support the Ukrainian People during the terror of the Russian campaign. Our current inflationary economy is a result of many things, including the war in Ukraine and COVID. All of these variables have greatly impacted the world's economies as well as our own economy. Yet we have yet to understand that as a nation we must come together as the United States, make sacrifices and fight these enemies. We have not, as a nation embraced our own sacrifices in support of these realities. We are still struggling to come to grips with this reality.

Perhaps as we recall the sacrifices and stories of our forefathers and all the rest of those who have gone before us, we will remind ourselves of where we have been. We have the freedom to tell those stories. Our personal memorials are much smaller than those boulders. They may be plaques hung on our walls or in each of the coins we have gathered during our tours. They may be in photographs or books or letters written long ago about our experiences. They may be in the trip we had to postpone. We can share those experiences and what they mean to us with our families and friends as we share those coins, letters or just the stories. We can give ourselves permission to embrace the sacrifices we and others are making in order to make this nation a "more perfect union."

As we share these stories and memories we can join with Joshua, the great Hebrew leader in challenging those around us to have faith in our country and faith in the Creator who brought us into this great nation. Our own nation and Independence Day is a memorial of God's faithfulness and His work in our lives. It is our mission to make this memorial a part of our lives. We do that by the way we live.

~ *David Essells, USAR, MAJ, RET*

# ***PACT Act Update: Sweeping Toxic Exposure Reforms Back on the Move in Congress***

By MOAA Staff  
JULY 13, 2022  
Army photo



After an unexpected delay caused by a procedural issue, a MOAA-backed bill set to provide health benefits to millions of toxic-exposed veterans has been put on course for quick passage.

By a 342-88 vote, the House on July 13 overwhelmingly passed a bill including the text of the Senate-passed Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our PACT Act – bipartisan legislation expanding toxic exposure benefits and supporting the VA as it provides those benefits. The bill’s text overrode another Senate-passed bill under consideration by the House Rules Committee (**S. 3373**); this maneuver helped the House take the bill to the floor on very short notice.

**[TAKE ACTION: Ask Your Senators to Vote for the Honoring Our PACT Act | Call Your Senators Today]**

The approach will also speed things up in the Senate, but final passage is not a done deal. The Senate passed the bill 84-14 last month (after the House passed the initial version 256-174), and MOAA and the dozens of other advocacy groups supporting the legislation will keep pressure on the chamber to keep this moving.

“We would like to thank all the House and Senate lawmakers and staff who worked tirelessly to overcome this procedural issue,” said Cory Titus, MOAA’s director of government relations for veteran benefits and Guard/Reserve affairs. “We’re grateful to see the bill moving forward and need to get this to the president’s desk as quickly as possible.”

The PACT Act will benefit 3.5 million veterans who currently do not have access to VA care and do not have their toxic-exposure related illness recognized by the VA. While this bill does a lot for burn pit-exposed veterans, this is a multi-generational bill helping veterans dating back decades, including those exposed to Agent Orange and other toxins. Learn more about the wide-ranging effort **at this link** and via **this fact sheet** from the office of Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.), chair of the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs and a critical supporter of the legislation.

This comprehensive bill is backed by over 60 groups supporting our veterans and is a compilation of the needs these groups shared with Congress. **Call** or **write** your senators today and ask them to fast-track this legislation and get it to the president’s desk. ★



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# MOAA HA Chapter Meeting Saturday, June 25, 2022



**Rob Ritchie**



**Paul Nation  
NASA Guest Speaker**



**Dan Gutierrez**



**Dave Essells**



**Louise Essells**



**Judith Thomas and  
Rob Ritchie**



**Stancie Chamberlin**



**Dan Clinton**



**Lawrence and  
Charleen Rathbun**



**Red O'Laughlin**



**Edmund Memi**



**John and Linda  
Nicholson**



**Teresa Otto**

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*We need YOU...  
to remain a  
MOAA HA Member!*



*Debating whether to renew your chapter membership?*

*Talking to a potential new member?*

Benefits to belonging to a chapter:

- Camaraderie and Connections: when you attend chapter functions, actively serve on a committee, or take a prominent leadership role, you forge lasting ties with other MOAA members.
- Community Involvement: Membership provide opportunities to contribute to your community in a variety of ways, from providing scholarships to local students, to supporting causes that support wounded warriors and their families.
- Legislative Advocacy: We advocate for the entire military community-all ranks. Members play a critical role in advancing legislation in both Austin and Washington, D.C. This grassroots advocacy is key to MOAA achieving its legislative goals.

Chapter dues reminders will be emailed/sent out in November to those members needing renewal. We are on a calendar year for our chapter dues.

Annual renewal is \$30 for one year, \$20 for each additional year paid with renewal. Surviving Spouse \$15 initial membership; \$10 annual renewal.

Membership Application on the last page!

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FORM

### MOAA's Core Mission

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) is the country's leading organization protecting the rights of uniformed servicemembers and their families. MOAA's constituents proudly hail from every branch of the uniformed services. To them, we have made the same promise that they have made to their country: Never Stop Serving.

MOAA's greatest mission is to improve the lives of those who serve and their families, which is achieved largely through the tireless advocacy efforts taking place in our nation's capital. For more than 90 years, MOAA has supported legislation that benefits the uniformed services community and has remained equally vigilant when fighting to stop legislation that threatens our livelihood. The larger our numbers, the greater our voice. For more detailed legislative actions see [MOAA | Take Action Center \(quorum.us\)](https://www.quorum.us)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please print)      Last                      First                      Initial                      Rank

Branch \_\_\_\_\_ Status \_\_\_\_\_ MOAA Nat'l ID \_\_\_\_\_ \*

Spouse's First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. for Directory \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Dues:** Regular Membership – \$30 first year; annual renewal \$30 (Discount for multiple years if paid with renewal: \$20 for each add'l. year **paid with renewal**)

Surviving Spouse – \$15 first year; annual renewal \$10 (same discount for multiple years)

#### Chapter Assistance Fund

\$100.00     \$50.00     \$25.00     Other \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to MOAA-HA and mail to:

MOAA-HA  
PO Box 18372  
Sugar Land, TX 77496



For more information, call COL Robin Ritchie, 713-818-0408

*\*If not a MOAA national member, another benefit of chapter membership is the opportunity to become a national MOAA member at the BASIC LEVEL for free! If you would like to do so, please indicate here:*

YES     NO

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_