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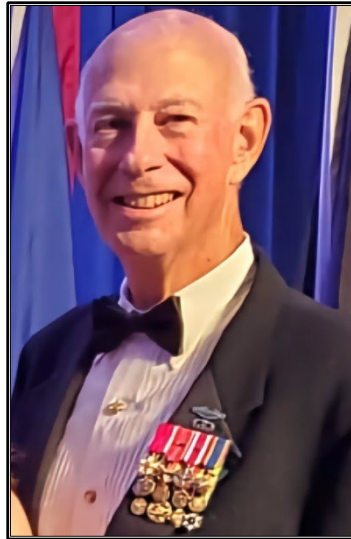
~ Five Star ★★★★★ Chapter ~

President's Message...

February 2024 Issue

Greetings Colleagues,

The January Chapter meeting at Space Center Houston was a huge success. We had a great turnout including prospective new members; a really great astronaut speaker topped off with a guided tour which included a totally reconstructed Apollo Eleven mission control center that took us back to the first moon landing as if we were part of the mission control team. Many thanks to Frank Tricomi for coordinating this event for us.



I also would like to call your attention to Dan Gutierrez's really interesting "lest we forget" article highlighting the many historical events that took place in the month of February. Thank you, Dan.

Finally, our guest speaker for this month is the Commander of the Houston area Army Recruiting Battalion. All of us are acutely aware the Army's as well the other Services recruiting issues and challenges. I hope to see a particularly good turnout for this meeting.

And...if your membership is up for renewal, please do so. Your dues and Chapter assistance contributions are our life blood.

Respectfully,

Rob
Robin P. Ritchie, COL, USA (RET)
President



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February 2024...Chapter Events:

Saturday, February 24th, 2024 @ Noon **MOAA HA CHAPTER MEETING**

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

Tuesday, February 27th, 2024 @ Noon **MOAA HA BOD Meeting**

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



LET'S NOT FORGET!

*By: Dan Gutierrez
February, 2024*

February is certainly a consequential month in American military history. Here are some of the events that come to mind.

February 7 marks the 80th anniversary of the Japanese evacuation of Guadalcanal in 1943. Guadalcanal was part of the Solomon Islands archipelago and the battles for it was the first land campaign against the Empire of Japan during World War II. The battle extended from August 1942 to February 1943 and included seven major naval and three major land battles in and around the island of Guadalcanal. At sea, the battles were fierce and deadly. US Navy losses included two aircraft carriers, six heavy cruisers, two light cruisers and seventeen destroyers. In one battle, two US Navy admirals gave their lives in a heroic effort to stem the Japanese advance at sea. The effort failed and US Marines on Guadalcanal were cut off from supplies and communications for several months. The US Marines of the 1st Division well-earned the sobriquet as the "Battling Bastards of Guadalcanal." We honor them.

175 years ago on February 2, the US and Mexico signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. This ended the Mexican-American War and gained for the US all of the territory that now encompasses Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Utah and Nevada. Many politicians (including President James K. Polk) felt that the war was a culmination of the idea that the United States was divinely ordained (manifest) to expand westward to the Pacific. I leave the validity of this doctrine to others.

February 6 marks the 245th anniversary of the Franco-American Alliance during the Revolutionary War. This alliance is attributed mainly to the diplomacy of Benjamin Franklin and was the decisive diplomatic event of our war of independence against England. If Franklin had achieved nothing else in his life, this one service would have marked him down as a singular figure in the history of our nation.

February 10, 1763 is the 260th anniversary of the end of the French and Indian War. This marked the end of a titanic world-wide war known in Europe as the Seven Years War. The struggle was conducted mainly between the two great powers of the day, England and France, and was carried out in Europe, India, the North American continent and everywhere on the high seas. It was one of several struggles for imperial supremacy involving France, Britain, Spain and others. It is important to us because the war resulted in a victorious Great Britain resulting in France ceding Canada and North American territory to the Mississippi River and Spain ceding Florida. Suddenly, the British colonies along the North American eastern seaboard (13 colonies) had neighboring territory in which expansion could and would be made.

"Remember the Maine!" That was the cry heard from coast-to-coast after the USS Maine exploded in Havana harbor on February 15, 1898 taking down 260 officers and men. Eventually, the event would lead to the start of the Spanish-American War. In just a few months, the US would emerge the victor and commence its overseas colonial expansion by acquiring Spanish territories which included Cuba, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico.

Finally, I think it is important to remember that February 23, 1778 was the date when one Friedrich Wilhelm August Heinrich Ferdinand von Steuben arrived at Valley Forge to assume duties of Inspector General of the Continental Army under General George Washington. Major general Baron von Steuben gained his reputation in service to the Prussian army under Frederick the Great. He came to the attention of Benjamin Franklin who referred him to the Continental Congress and General Washington. As Inspector General he reformed, trained and shaped the ragged troops into a disciplined and professional fighting force. He is widely regarded "Father of the American Army."

LET'S NOT FORGET!



DoD Expands Online ID Card Renewal

By: Kevin Lilley
JANUARY 17, 2024



A DoD pilot program allowing the online renewal of Uniformed Services Identification (USID) cards is now open to more cardholders, the department announced Jan. 16.

The program previously limited online renewals to those with sponsors who have a common access card (CAC). The new process will be available to CAC holders as well as USID cardholders with a DoD Self-Service Logon account. Cardholders can create a self-service account at this link, and can begin the renewal process at the RAPIDS ID Card Office Online (IDCO).

Other requirements, according to a DoD information sheet on the program:

- Renewals of active cards only – new cards will not be issued through this process, and expired cards will not be replaced.
- Both the sponsor and the cardholder must have email addresses in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS), and have authorized DoD to contact them at those addresses. Learn how to update DEERS information at this link.
- The cardholder must have a photo on file with DEERS taken within the last 12 years.
- The cardholder must have a mailing address in DEERS and must live in the U.S.

After requesting the renewal, the cardholder and their sponsor will receive an email confirming the card has been shipped or informing them of a problem with the process and providing further instructions. The sponsor can track their card via the IDCO and will receive instructions on how to confirm receipt of their card online; they must do so before the new card will be activated.

ID Card Support

Answers to frequently asked questions about the process are available at this link. While MOAA can provide basic assistance and benefits information, specific questions regarding ID card renewal issues should be addressed to the Defense Manpower. ★



New TRICARE Contracts Set for 2025 Promise Improved Quality and Service

FEBRUARY 06, 2024



An airman restocks medications at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, on Oct. 26, 2023. (Photo by Cynthia Griggs/Air Force)

Editor's note: This article by Patricia Kime originally appeared on [Military.com](https://www.military.com), a leading source of news for the military and veteran community.

New Tricare contracts are now slated to start at the beginning of next year, and beneficiaries should see improvements in provider network flexibility and choice; broader access to telehealth; faster response times for calls; and easier transfers of specialty care during permanent change of station moves, defense officials said.

The new program is expected to begin Jan. 1, 2025, and the companies awarded the contracts to manage Tricare over the next nine years, as well as the Defense Department, are now preparing for the transition, according to the Defense Health Agency.

[RELATED: [Major DoD Health Care Shift: What It Could Mean for Your TRICARE Benefit](#)]

Under the new contracts, the Tricare West Region, which currently serves nearly 2.8 million beneficiaries,

will be managed by TriWest Healthcare Alliance. That region covering the western U.S. also will expand by 1.5 million beneficiaries with the addition of six states that are currently in the Tricare East Region: Arkansas, Illinois, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas and Wisconsin.

Humana will remain as the health benefits management company in the Tricare East Region, covering the eastern half of the U.S., overseeing health services for more than 5 million beneficiaries under a contract worth up to \$70.8 billion over nine years.

The changes in the new contracts include "innovations that will drive improvements in military readiness, health care delivery, clinical quality, patient safety, beneficiary access to health care and beneficiary experience," Defense Health Agency spokesman Peter Graves said in an email to Military.com.

The contracts, held by Humana Government Business in the East Region and TriWest in the West, include changes aimed at improving health care and services "while containing costs for the department," Graves said.

[RELATED: [What the FY 2024 NDAA Means for Your TRICARE Benefit](#)]

With the legal battle ended over the award of the Tricare West Region management contract to TriWest Healthcare Alliance, the Defense Health Agency has started the transition to the new contracts, he said.

According to Graves, defense officials held transition meetings with TriWest and Humana in January.

A U.S. Court of Federal Claims judge ruled Jan. 31 in favor of TriWest in a lawsuit filed by Health Net Federal Services, the current regional manager for Tricare West, in a dispute over the award of the next-generation contract, worth more than \$65 billion over nine years.

Until the turnover on Jan. 1, Health Net Federal Services and Humana will manage Tricare in their respective regions.

[RELATED: [MOAA's TRICARE Guide](#)]

"We remain dedicated to providing exceptional health care to the people we proudly serve through the end of our current contract," Health Net President and CEO Kathleen Redd said in a statement last week.

The contract decisions do not affect most Medicare-eligible Tricare beneficiaries who utilize Tricare for Life, managed by WPS Military and Veterans Health. ★

Planning Ahead for a VA Cemetery Burial

By: Kate Horrell
JANUARY 31, 2024

Burial in a cemetery associated with the VA is important to many veterans. It honors their military service, plus it can decrease the costs of their final arrangements.

However, jumping through the VA's eligibility determination can be hard for a grieving family. If a veteran chooses to, the veteran can make the process easier for their survivors by obtaining a Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility for Burial in a VA National Cemetery.

[AT VA.GOV: Application and Instructions for Pre-Need Determination]

In general, veterans and servicemembers and their spouses and certain children might be eligible for burial in a VA national cemetery. The qualifying veteran must not have received a dishonorable discharge.

Spouses may be buried in a VA cemetery even if they remarry after the veteran's death. Minor children are eligible, as are some unmarried adult children.

The VA requires a form and documentation to verify eligibility to be buried in a VA cemetery. Verifying your eligibility in advance will make the process smoother for your survivors. In addition, it will help you make other decisions about your final wishes. If you are pre-planning and pre-paying your arrangements, a pre-need determination can help you know what services you will need to plan and pay for.

[MOAA MEMBER BENEFIT: Save on Estate Planning Resources From Everplans]

Note that filling out this form in advance is optional. If the task isn't done before the veteran dies, survivors just need to provide the veteran's DD Form 214 to the funeral director. The funeral director can then handle coordinating the veteran's burial in a national VA cemetery.

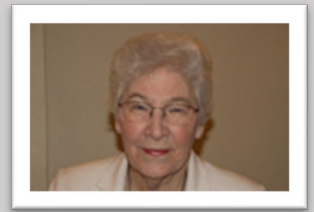
For those who choose to plan in advance, to obtain this documentation, you will need to fill out an application for pre-need determination of eligibility. This can be done online (there is an option to do it without logging into your VA account), or you can print, fill in, and mail a paper copy (download it here). You will need your DD Form 214 or other separation documents. Once the VA has reviewed your application, you will receive a written determination via the regular mail.

When you receive your determination, add this to your burial planning paperwork. When it is necessary, your survivor or the assisting funeral director will call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at (800) 535-1117. Having a preneed determination of eligibility should eliminate the need for a new application and extra paperwork.

While a pre-need determination will speed the process, it does not guarantee which national cemetery you will be buried in. Availability will be assessed at the time of need. ★



Wreaths are placed on headstones at Sacramento Valley National Cemetery in Dixon, Calif., as part of the 2022 Wreaths Across America event. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Daniel Peterson/Air Force) (This article originally appeared in the January 2024 issue of Military Officer, a magazine available to all MOAA Premium and Life members. Learn more about the magazine [here](#); learn more about joining MOAA [here](#).)



Surviving Spouse Corner:

Know Your Benefits

By: Pat Green
JANUARY 30, 2024

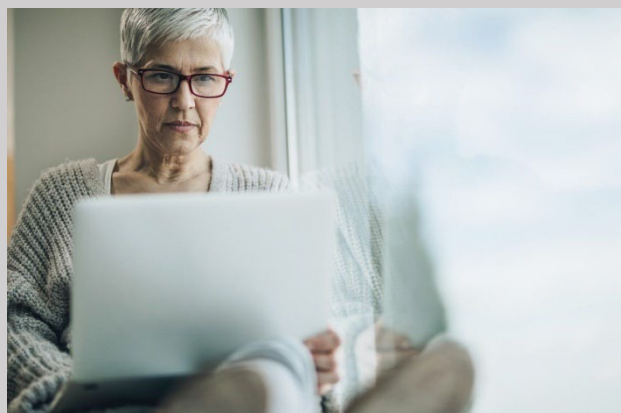
Many states have made legislative decisions that show appreciation for the sacrifices of servicemembers and veterans and their survivors. Benefits differ in each state, though. To know what the benefits are in your state, you need to do homework. Your research could result in monetary savings and opportunities.

Below are some resources and places to start.

- **Veterans Service Office:** There might be printed materials that enumerate county and state benefits for surviving spouses.
- **MOAA Council and Chapter Legislative Chairs:** Ask about benefits they are aware of that apply to surviving spouses.
- **County Property Appraiser:** Ask about a homestead exemption, a widow (widower) exemption, or an over age 65 exemption on your property tax or school tax. If income caps apply, what are your state's limits and guidelines? In Florida, for example, there is a homestead, widow, and age exemption and property taxes on homesteaded homes. In addition, the property tax for homesteaded homes of disabled veterans is reduced by the same percentage of the disabilities affecting the veteran as certified by the VA. In Florida, that benefit passes to the unremarried surviving spouse and is transportable to a downsized home.
- **State Legislator.** If you have income tax in your state, some or all of your military retirement pay, or Surviving Benefit Plan may be deducted from your reported income. Ask about any other benefits from the state.
- **Mayor's Office.** Call and ask about the benefits the city offers.

[RELATED: [MOAA's Military State Report Card and Tax Guide](#)]

Aside from taxes, some additional areas to explore are scholarship opportunities for surviving spouses and dependent children; state, county, or city policies giving employment and/or promotion preference to a surviving spouse; portability of a professional license or forgiveness of fees; and discounts on passes to parks and museums. ★





Army developing new Arctic doctrine

For the first time in more than 50 years, the Army is developing Arctic-focused doctrine to help soldiers contend with and operate in the harsh but increasingly competitive region.

Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-90.96, Arctic and Extreme Cold Weather Operations, will give soldiers information "to overcome the Arctic environment and succeed in temperatures as cold as -40 degrees Fahrenheit," according to the Mission Command Center of Excellence. It is slated to be released in mid-2024.

The Arctic is becoming an "increasingly active security environment" as Russia upgrades its "large-scale, credible Arctic military capabilities" and China grows its "economic and

scientific activities in the region," according to a recent report from the Rand Corp on the U.S. military's Arctic capabilities.

The upcoming Army Techniques Publication is the culmination of over a year of Arctic and extreme cold weather operations research by the Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate. It takes into account training at the Northern Warfare Training Center in Alaska, historical records and consultations with other Arctic nations, including Canada, Norway, Finland, Sweden and Denmark. The directorate also worked closely with the 11th Airborne Division, which is stationed in Alaska, to develop the doctrine.

"Arctic and extreme cold weather operations are about more than being

able to survive, you have to be able to thrive," said Capt. Edward Garibay, the lead doctrine author. "As the Arctic warms from climate change, it's going to become more and more accessible in the coming decades and take on new importance."

The doctrine will have a tactical focus, and it will help soldiers adapt the concepts and experience they know for the Arctic and the subarctic.

"We have a lot of localized knowledge that isn't easily shared across the Army," Garibay said. "We have pockets of individuals and units that are experts, but their knowledge is only available in local [standard operating procedures] and only passed down from one command to the next.

See **Arctic doctrine**, Page 5

We're consolidating all that knowledge in one place and providing a foundation for everyone to build on."

Unique aspects of the region that may affect soldiers' operations also will be incorporated into the doctrine. For example, solar storms in the Arctic can affect GPS capabilities, metals and plastics are more brittle and batteries do not last as long, according to the Mission Command Center of Excellence.

This winter, the doctrine will be put to the test during the 11th Airborne Division's Joint Pacific Multi-national Readiness Center rotation. The exercise, which will replicate large-scale combat conditions, will validate doctrine concepts and provide essential feedback to the Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate.

Maintaining Arctic dominance is essential to the Army's readiness.



Soldiers assigned to the Army Reserve's 88th Readiness Division descend the Whitetail Ridge Ski Hill Jan. 21 during snowshoe training at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. (U.S. ARMY/CHRISTOPHER HANSON)

"The U.S. Army has to be ready to fight and win in extreme cold and mountainous environments in order to deter conflict, and the 11th Airborne Division is the foundation of

that capability," said Maj. Gen. Brian Eifler, the division commander. "To build sustained Arctic readiness, we need to [be] ... sharing best practices and lessons learned."



Spc. Charles Conrad, of the 11th Airborne Division, maintains watch during an exercise at the Yukon Training Area, Alaska. (U.S. AIR FORCE/SENIOR AIRMAN PATRICK SULLIVAN)

Chaplain's Corner...



FREEDOM AND LEADERSHIP

"I will walk about in freedom
For I have sought out your precepts."
Psalm 119:45

We are proud to be members of MOAA. We enjoy the camaraderie of the military family and the service we enjoy and provide to those around us. In the community of faith most religions provide frameworks for service, sacrifice and moral service. As members of MOAA we have all served as leaders and we recognize the qualifications of good judgment, moral character, honesty and good hard work.

Our faith structures provide many requirements for morality and the above qualifications. Christianity is no different. Christ used the standards of the Ten Commandments and then in the Sermon on the Mount, He set the bar even higher (Matthew Chapters 5-7). In those chapters He said, "Unless your good works exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven."

Our standards of leadership are always set high. High enough to exceed the requirements and accomplish the mission. Christ's standard of even thinking of a sin, is sin. My inadequate paraphrase makes it hard; impossible to follow. But our faith and our government allows us to build a relationship with God which gives us the power to accomplish that mission by living our lives, asking His forgiveness and moving forward.

Christianity, however, like other religions gives our spirituality and lives meaning and goals. Like other religions there are spiritual and eternal rewards. Our faith (whatever it is, whatever religion we choose) gives us power to live our lives within our faith framework and enjoy the abundant life and rewards that our faith offers. The problems with freedom of religion is that we are all free to choose as long as we live within the confines of the rules set by our government. And God has given us the freedom to make that choice. Sometimes the debate goes out of bounds, both to the government and to God.

Freedom is the foundation of our country. God has chosen to give mankind freedom in order that His love can be chosen by us. He wants our love for Him to be our choice not his. His choice is to love us all, unconditionally. When we seek God's precepts, His truth and his laws, we are guided by the words He has spoken and those truths become a part of our lives, our conscience and our heart. His truth becomes our guidance. Freedom is not unconditional however. It comes with limitations. We are not free to do anything we want to do. That would bring chaos and anarchy. That is why we have government, laws and responsibility for our actions. God also limits our choices even though His love for us is unlimited.

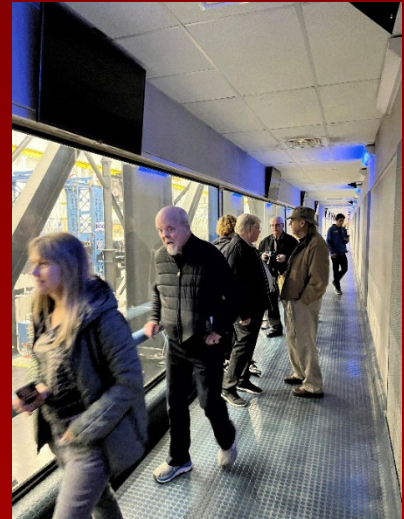
James chapter 2:12 says, "Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom." When we live knowing His law and His guidance we are acting according to that guidance. We experience the peace and freedom only God can provide. But we have to know what he desires and requires. That is why our religion depends on our relationship with Christ. So does our Christianity.

Educators understand the power of positive reward for positive actions. They use behavioral modification and other forms of guidance to motivate their students to make good choices and reward good behavior. They also use negative rewards to curtail or punish poor choices and bad behavior. God also disciplines us and rewards us for following His guidance. He warns us of the consequences of our unacceptable behavior which we know as sin, literally, missing the mark.

As good leaders we don't flaunt our good behaviors and choices. We are taught humility and that God honors our humility when we do good. Scripture tells us that when we do our good deeds our Father will keep track and Jesus tells us we will be rewarded in heaven, not necessarily by our peers. Some of our peers tell us that we should do all our labors as if God is watching us. He is.

~ *David Essells, USAR, MAJ, RET*

Houston Space Center Monthly Member Meeting Saturday, January 27, 2024



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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 December 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 \(quorum.us\)](http://MOAA | Take Action Center (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: _____