



Military Officers Association of America
Northeast Florida Chapter
Monthly Membership Newsletter
March 2023 Edition



P.O. Box 442022,
Jacksonville, FL 32222-2022

"Chapter website"

<http://moaafi.org/Chapters/NEFLMOAA/>

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NOR'EASTER Editor

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MOAA Legislative Action Center

<https://moaa.quorum.us/>

This publication is intended for the benefit of our membership and to provide a form of communications to the members by the Officers and Board of Directors of the chapter.

The "Nor'easter" a newsletter of MOAA Northeast Florida Chapter (FL-18); published by the Northeast Florida Chapter, which is an affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). MOAA and its affiliated chapters and councils are **non-partisan**. The advertisements that appear in this publication also do not reflect an endorsement by MOAA or this affiliate.

CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION & RENEWAL

If you would like to join our chapter or renew your current membership go to <https://chapterdues.moaa.org/> by doing so you will be able to pay online using your credit/debit card. Annual membership is ONLY \$25.00 or \$12.50 if you are a surviving spouse. If you have any questions please contact our chapter Membership Chair, Jim Lorenz by email at jim.lorenz84@gmail.com.



The President's Corner

CWO5 Marc Manor, USN (Ret)

I hope this finds you well and in good spirits.

As winter transitions to spring in Northeast Florida, I find myself in the mountains of Negros Oriental in the western part of the Philippines Visayan Island region. We started out on the beaches of Boracay, and later today we will experience some big city life in Cebu. It is truly beautiful here, and I highly recommend the Philippines as a vacation and relaxation spot. Just be prepared for some serious jet lag your first few days!

It's great to hit the reset button every once in awhile, and I hope you are able to do the same sometime soon to the destination of your choice; even if that means a short "staycation." I can't count the number of times retired people talk to me about how busy they are in retirement, so even retired people need a break every now and then!

Cindy and John O'Sullivan are putting the finishing touches on the Scholarship program and I have been seeing a number of program drafts bouncing around amongst the chapter leadership so I am confident a final product will be available soon. Once the final program guidelines are set, it's then time to start finding quality candidates. As we approach the JROTC award season, Bruce Carawan will be asking for volunteers to help with the presentations. This is a great opportunity to talk up our program and solicit candidates. There are other opportunities in the community so as you socialize and network be sure and help get the word out.

I would like to congratulate and thank board members Bruce Carawan and David Kinnett for their recent induction and continued service to our chapter. Both have been cornerstones of our chapter and we are honored you have stepped up for another term!

Thanks to all our members for continuing your membership in the MOAA Northeast Florida Chapter! If the new year snuck up on you and you have not paid your chapter dues, please do so soon so you can be a part of the JROTC/ROTC programs, scholarships, fellowship and all the other great things our chapter has to offer. You can renew online here: <https://chapterdues.moaa.org/>

As I wrap this up, I would just like to share this "postcard" scene I had while I was typing this. It's just too beautiful not to share. I look forward to seeing you all again in March!

Until next month...steady as she goes!

Marc



From Your Chapter 2nd Vice President

CDR Paul Werring, USN (Ret)

MEETING UPDATES. Our February Meeting / Luncheon was at the River Cove Conference Center on NAS Jax on 15 February, and we had 28 people in attendance. The program consisted of the Two Bells Ceremony honoring those Chapter Members we have lost in the past year.

Our March Meeting / Luncheon will be on 15 March and is also going to be held at the River Cove Conference Center. There will be a social beginning at 1100 with lunch being served at 1130. We will then begin our business meeting at approximately 1200.

We are looking at holding either the April or May Luncheon at an offsite location, probably on the east side of the St Johns River to accommodate those of us who live over there. If you have any suggestions for a location, please let me know.

If you have any thoughts or concerns you can always e-mail them to me at pgwerring@gmail.com. Thanks again for your support.

Two Bells Ceremony

Four of our NE Florida Chapter members whose spouses were honored at the February Two Bells Ceremony pose with former Chapter President Wally Bransford following the luncheon.

Pictured, left to right are Wanda Bosworth, Elizabeth Meux, Sam Runyon, and Lora Lewis.

Surviving Spouse members play valuable roles in our chapter's activities and programs and have access to information and assistance MOAA provides.



Call for Assistance

If you are available and want to volunteer to support presentation of MOAA awards at high school and college award ceremonies this spring, please contact CDR Bruce Carawon by email at Bracar1@comcast.net or by phone at (904) 276-9025. He will be able to fill you in on the specific details of events and sign you up to be one of his regular presenters for the chapter's ROTC/JROTC awards program.

Never Stop Serving!

Thank you in advance for stepping up to help and for continuing to serve!

Surviving Spouse Corner

Vicki McCuiston

Surviving Spouse Liaisons work at the Council and Chapter level to ensure fellow survivors remain connected to the military family and participate in local and national programs and advocacy efforts. Learn more about the position [at this link](#), and learn more about the Surviving Spouse Liaison Excellence Award, including the nomination process, [at this link](#).

Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter

The MOAA Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter [was founded in 2018](#). Interested in applying? Download membership materials [here](#). You can also join MOAA's [Surviving Spouses Facebook group](#).

Vicki McCuiston is our Chapter Surviving Spouse Liaison. You can contact me at vickimcc44@outlook.com or 865-320.5955.

VA Warns Against PACT Act Fraud Targeting Veterans

MOAA Editor's note: This article by Amanda Miller originally appeared on [Military.com](#), a leading source of news for the military and veteran community. Reprinted from the MOAA.ORG web site.

Veterans eligible to apply for [PACT Act](#) money need to be skeptical of any offers by third parties, such as law firms claiming they'll help lock in the benefits for a percentage. [FROM CYBERCRIME SUPPORT NETWORK: [How Scammers Are Targeting Veterans Eligible for New PACT Act Benefits](#)]

The [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) (VA) characterizes the PACT Act as history's "biggest expansion" of veterans benefits. It added 23 conditions related to toxic exposures, including hypertension (high blood pressure), that are now presumed to be related to a veteran's military service. **In an emailed statement, the VA also calls the PACT Act "a monumental opportunity for fraud."** The department has specifically heard of offers to help vets file their claims for fees of up to 40% of a veteran's retroactive award and another 40% of the first year of entitlement payments.

However, the VA stressed that veterans can file their claims directly with the department and that it "will help you gather the necessary evidence to support it," with ["accredited representatives"](#) available: "Do not agree to pay an unaccredited individual."

[MORE RESOURCES: [VA.gov/PACT](#) | [MOAA.org/PACTResources](#)]

Here are ways you can avoid getting scammed out of PACT Act benefits, according to the VA:

- Submit your application [directly to the VA](#), either online or at a regional office. It's free to apply.
 - Aggressive communications by third parties are meant to create a sense of urgency; don't fall for it.
 - Companies that advertise their services in the media, rather than communicate directly, may also be predatory.
 - Some for-profit companies use "VA" in their names to imply an affiliation with the department when there isn't one.
 - Never sign a blank form that someone says they will fill out for you later.
 - Don't give a third party such as a non-VA-accredited law firm full discretion to act on your behalf.
- Report suspected fraud to the [VA Office of Inspector General](#), [Federal Trade Commission](#) and [Better Business Bureau](#).

MAKE YOUR MARCH LUNCHEON RESERVATION TODAY

Join us **MARCH 15, 2023** at River Cove Community Center on NAS Jacksonville. Social hour will be from 1100 to 1130, and lunch starts at 1130 sharp. Dress is appropriate casual.



Menu: Roasted Pork Loin, with Rosemary Gravy, Roasted Red Herb Potatoes, Green Beans, Salad with dressings, Chef's Dessert, Rolls and Butter, Iced Tea and Coffee

Cost is \$25 per person (new price due to increased costs)

Make reservations on line at <https://moaaf1.org/Chapters/NEFLMOAA/Calendar.aspx> . You must have a reservation to eat. Please make your reservation as early as possible so we can provide the caterer an accurate headcount to properly set up the facility and have enough meals prepared. The actual deadline/cutoff date for making reservations is midnight on Sunday, February 12, 2023. You can also make your reservations by calling CDR Paul Werring at (571) 274-6570 or by email at pgwerring@gmail.com .

Cancellation Policy: *All reservations are binding financially unless they are cancelled by the Cutoff Date for making reservations or due to a last-minute hardship that is accepted by the Board of Directors.*

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**Chaplain's Corner—
David McCuiston, CWO , USN (Ret)**

Spiritual Wellness

According to Roger Williams University Health and Wellness Educators, there are five main aspects of personal health and wellness: physical; emotional; social; intellectual; and, spiritual.

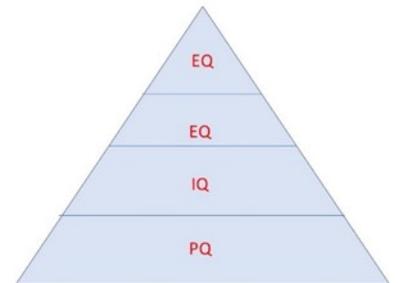
Physical includes exercising, eating healthy, sleeping, and avoiding excessive drinking and drug abuse. *Emotional* is maintaining a positive attitude, time management, building trustful relationships, and seeking professional help when necessary. *Social* is being involved with social clubs and activities, having good friends, and avoiding unhealthy relationships and activities. *Intellectual* is being a life-long learner academically and being abreast of current affairs.



Spiritual wellness connects the four above through human traits endowed from a higher power. Cicero writes that man, i.e., humans, possessed with abilities of foresight, intelligence, memory, full of reason and prudence, is given a *distinguished status* by the Supreme God who created them. He points out that each of us living beings have the power of reason and thought that contributes to our *wisdom*, when applied to human interactions and relationships becomes *justice*, which in turn unites people through a universal covenant of love and respect to obey the all-wise Creator. This is referred to as *True Law*, or the *Natural Law* of God.

Jesus, when asked of the great commandment in the *Law*, He said, "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with thy soul, and with all thy mind." He then said, "And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:36-40).

Cindy Wigglesworth, in her book *SQ21: The Twenty-One Skills of Spiritual Intelligence*, defines *Spiritual Intelligence* as "The ability to behave with wisdom and compassion, while maintaining inner and outer peace, regardless of the situation. She goes on to show, similar to Maslow's Hierarchy, how PQ – Physical Intelligence, EQ – Emotional Intelligence, and IQ – Intelligence are interconnected with SQ – Spiritual Intelligence.



Spiritual wellbeing includes spirituality, religion, understanding of people, which is a necessity in leadership, and value system of morals and ethic of which all are major contributors to one's health and wellness.

The Chaplain asks that sickness and distressed updates and passings news be send to David McCuiston, email da-vidmcc44@outlook.com.

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

“Turbulent Times”

By Kathy Spain

CAN CONGRESS PASS THE RICHARD STAR ACT IN 2023? MOAA and The Military Coalition (TMC) have long advocated for *THE MAJOR RICHARD STAR ACT* in order to end the unjust pay offset of more than 50,000 combat-injured veterans. Despite the bill having wide bipartisan support last year, it failed to receive a floor vote. Consequently, the legislation ‘died’ at the end of the 117th Congress. Now, however, the bill has been re-introduced in the Senate of the 118th Congress. On Feb. 9, Senators Jon Tester (D-MT) and Mike Crapo (R-ID) re-introduced bill S.344—which would allow medically retired, combat-injured veterans with less than 20 years of service to receive full DOD retirement pay and VA disability pay concurrently. The House is also expected to re-introduce its bill (H.R.1282) in the very near future, and advocates are hoping the bill can finally be passed this year as standalone legislation or as part of the *National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)*.

MOAA and TMC advocates plan to gather Feb. 28 for in-person meetings with lawmakers on Capitol Hill for the purpose of garnering additional support and co-sponsors for this legislation. You can help get this bill across the finish-line in 2023 by making your voice heard. Please reach out to your senators and representatives by calling MOAA’s toll-free Capitol Hotline—(866)-272-(MOAA) (6622)—at the U.S. Capitol switchboard.

START OF BUDGET PROCESS DELAYED AGAIN THIS YEAR: Although the federally mandated deadline for submitting the president’s budget request is the first Monday in February, the Biden administration has announced that it will not send the FY 2024 budget to Congress until March 9. Every year, the president’s budget request marks the beginning of the Congressional budget process. However, with every missed deadline along the way, it becomes more and more likely that lawmakers will fail to meet regular order and end up passing continuing resolutions (CRs) and a huge omnibus spending bill no one has read at the end of the year.

In 2022, Congress did not finish the FY 2023 budget process until the end of December and *after* the passage of 3 CRs. The final result was a \$1.7 trillion omnibus appropriation package of more than 4,000 pages, which President Biden signed into law on Dec. 30—three months after the deadline of Oct. 1. So.....a late start to the budget process again this year could portend another year of congressional dysfunction and budget woes. Stay tuned!

HEARINGS FOR THE ANNUAL NDAA HAVE BEGUN IN THE HOUSE: On Feb. 2, the full House Armed Services Committee (HASC) held their organizational meeting for the 118th Congress and welcomed new members. On Feb. 7, the full Committee held its first hearing in preparation for the markup of the *FY 2024*

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT (NDAA). The hearing was on “*The Pressing Threat of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to U.S. National Defense.*” In his opening statement, Chairman Mike Rogers (R-AL) pointed out the growing number of security threats posed by China and concluded his remarks by saying, “*We no longer have the luxury of time.*” Additional full committee and subcommittee hearings are ongoing.

(continued on next page)

PUTIN BACKS OUT OF THE NEW START TREATY—FOR NOW: On Feb. 21, in an annual ‘state of the nation’ address to Russia’s National Assembly, Russian president Vladimir Putin announced he was ‘*suspending*’ his country’s participation in *The New START Treaty*—which limits the number of deployed intercontinental-range nuclear weapons that the U.S. and Russia can have. In his remarks, Putin stressed that Russia was not ‘*withdrawing*’ from the Treaty, and hours later Russia’s Foreign Ministry said the decision to suspend participation was “*reversible*” if Washington will “*make conscientious efforts for a general de-escalation and create conditions for the resumption of the full functioning of the Treaty.*”

The Treaty was signed in Prague in 2010 and took effect in 2011. In 2021, the Treaty was extended an additional 5 years. Russia is believed to have about 5,977 nuclear warheads, and the U.S. has about 5,559. The Treaty caps the number of deployed warheads at 1,550, and there are ceilings on the individual number of deployed missiles, bombers and launchers as well. Under the Treaty, both the U.S. and Russia are permitted to conduct inspections of each other’s weapons sites, though inspections had been halted since 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

SOUTH AFRICA HOSTS NAVAL WAR GAMES WITH CHINA & RUSSIA: South Africa hosted China and Russia for 10 days of war games Feb. 17 – Feb. 26. The naval exercises—called *Mosi* (which means ‘smoke’ in the Tswana language)—took place in the Indian Ocean, off the South African coast. Russia announced it would send its *Admiral Gorshkov* warship, which carries Russia’s Zircon hypersonic missiles. These fly at 9 times the speed of sound and have a range of 620 miles. The war games provide Russia a stage for showcasing its military might on the anniversary of its invasion of Ukraine (Feb. 24). South Africa was among the 35 nations abstaining from a UN vote in October that saw member nations overwhelmingly condemn Russia’s invasion.

XI & PUTIN PLAN MOSCOW SUMMIT: Chinese president Xi Jinping is planning to meet with Russian president Vladimir Putin in the coming months in Moscow. Reportedly, Xi wants to push for multilateral peace talks to end the war in Ukraine and stress the importance of keeping nuclear weapons off the battlefield. The CCP’s top diplomat, Wang Yi, has deployed to Moscow to set up the summit for April or early May. Xi’s future visit to Moscow follows President Biden’s surprise visit to Kyiv on Feb. 20 (with an additional aid package of \$500 million) and Russia’s pause in participation in *The New START Treaty*. Security analysts say China is burnishing its credentials as a world power by assuming the peacemaker role.

ADVOCACY-IN-ACTION (AIA) WILL RETURN TO CAPITOL HILL IN APRIL: MOAA just recently announced that *Advocacy-In-Action (AIA)*—formerly known as *Stormin’ the Hill*—will return to in-person meetings with elected officials in their DC offices on April 23. Chapters will have an important role in advance of these meetings and as the legislative process moves forward on MOAA’s targeted issues. STAND-BY for more information in the coming weeks.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Two eternal truths for Americans to ponder in this day and age: (1) DIVIDE AND CONQUER; (2) UNITED WE STAND AND DIVIDED WE FALL.

---NEVER STOP SERVING---

From Your Transition Liaison Officer

David Kennett, CDR, USN Retired

Greetings, Everyone! I am providing several different benefits and resources to you this month, starting with a **great article addressing some pre-conceived notions about veterans employment** followed by 2023 Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) changes. The PACT Act and Toxic Exposure Awareness/Screening overviews are included again as they remain very current/significant.

[Pre-Conceived Notions on Veterans Employment](#) – Here is a great article that addresses a few of the significant pre-conceived notions about the search and selection process for Veterans Employment. Thanks very much to Wayne Elliott for sharing this with us. **[Let's Stop Pretending: What Makes Me Crazy About Veteran Employment | Military.com](#)**

Survivor Benefit Plan — 2 Significant Changes :

1) **[The 2023 Survivor Benefit Plan \(SBP\) Elimination of the Optional Annuity for Dependent Children and Reversion of SBP Annuity to Surviving Spouses \(in NDAA 2023\)](#)** **[The National Defense Authorization Act \(NDAA\) for Fiscal Year 2020 directed that as of January 1, 2023, the “Optional Annuity for Dependent Children” was eliminated and the SBP monthly annuity payment must be reverted to the surviving spouse \(if the surviving spouse submits documentation confirming eligibility\).](#)**

2) The first SBP monthly payment to surviving spouses documented as eligible was on February 1, 2023. Because the SBP entitlement is paid the following month, the January 2023 entitlement was paid on February 1, 2023. The last SBP monthly payment to a child under the Optional Annuity for Dependent Children was the December 2022 entitlement that was paid on January 3, 2023 (unless the surviving spouse is documented as deceased or not eligible). Additional info/guidance is here: **[September 2022 SBP Optional Annuity Dependent Children 2023 Changes \(dfas.mil\)](#)**

2) **[SBP Open Season \(in NDAA 2023\)](#)** The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2023 includes a Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) Open Season. The SBP Open Season began on December 23, 2022 and ends on January 1, 2024. The SBP Open Season allows for **retirees receiving retired pay, eligible** members, or former members awaiting retired pay who are currently **NOT enrolled** in SBP or RCSBP (Reserve Component Survivor Benefit Plan) to enroll. It also allows for eligible member and former members who are currently enrolled in either SBP or RCSBP to **permanently discontinue** their SBP coverage. For retirees currently receiving retired pay, the **SBP Open Season Discontinuance Form** and FAQs surrounding discontinuing participation in the Plan are now available on the DFAS special focus webpage at: **<https://www.dfas.mil/sbpopenseason23>**. DFAS has prepared the forms, policies and processes required for enrollment during this SBP Open Season. Please check out the special focus webpage for the most up to date news and information: **<https://www.dfas.mil/sbpopenseason23>**.

[Honor our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics \(PACT\) Act](#) – A great health care and disability benefits & eligibility overview titled “2022 PACT Act: Understanding Health Care Eligibility and Benefits” can be accessed here: **[2022 PACT Act: Understanding Health Care Eligibility And Benefits | VA Kansas City Health Care | Veterans Affairs](#)** & **[PACT Act and Gulf War, Post 9/11 Era Veterans Info Sheet \(va.gov\)](#)**

[Toxic Exposures Awareness and Screening](#) – Another great resource linked to the recently passed PACT Act and potential, new disability claims is the “Toxic Exposure Screening Information” fact sheet which can be accessed here: **[FAST FACTS: New Toxic Exposure Screening for Veterans \(va.gov\)](#)**

V/r & Best Regards,

Dave Kennett
Transition Liaison Officer / 904.790.1630 / **ddkennett@yahoo.com**

Northeast Florida Chapter, FL-18

Elected Officers/Board Members, Appointed Committee Chairs and Support Staff

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Director: Mrs. Kathy Spain, SS, twin_oaks@comcast.net
Director: CDR Bruce Carawon, USN Ret, 904-276-9025 brcar1@comcast.net
Director: CDR David Kennett, USN Ret, 904-790-1630, ddkennett@yahoo.com

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Personal Affairs: Mrs. Pat Sundt, SS, 904-384-6316
Public Affairs: Vacant
Surviving
Spouse Liaison: Mrs. Vicki McCuiston, 865-320-5955, vickimcc44@outlook.com

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A Note From The Editor

Each chapter member can help with the publication of the “Nor’Easter”, our chapter newsletter, by providing content and articles that they feel would be informative. The preferred format for your input is WORD doc for written input and jpg for pictures. I will make every effort to include your input in the next monthly newsletter if content is appropriate and timely.

The deadline for input to the March issue of the Nor’Easter is COB Friday, 28 March 2023



Thank you for reading and supporting our monthly
membership newsletter

“The NOR’EASTER”



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