

# Legislative Update

January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Leaders Workshop - Orlando, FL

Cory Titus  
Director, Veterans Benefits and Guard/Reserve Affairs,  
Government Relations



# Agenda

- National Legislative Overview
- MOAA Legislative Highlights
- 118<sup>th</sup> Congress – Goals and Road Ahead
- Why Advocacy is Important
- National and Council/Chapter Collaboration
- Key Takeaways

# National Legislative Overview

## Meet Your HQ Team:



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# MOAA Legislative Highlights

- **Pay Raises:** MOAA has fought to ensure those who serve get what they've earned and has been part of efforts in recent years to secure the largest raises in a decade.
- **Widow's Tax:** Repeal of the SBC-DIC offset for surviving spouses in the FY 2020 NDAA.
- **MTF Restructuring:** With the FY 2020, 2021 and 2022 NDAA laws, MOAA has achieved three consecutive halts to planned medical billet cuts along with enhanced congressional oversight to MHS reforms
- **Protecting Tricare Benefits:** MOAA has long fought legislation that would burden TRICARE beneficiaries with additional costs to address budget shortfalls in other areas.
- **Military Housing Reform:** The FY 2020 NDAA provisions improve the day-to-day lives of military families, part of the most sweeping military housing reform in a quarter-century.
- **PACT Act:** Comprehensive toxic exposure reform which expands care and benefits to millions of veterans dating back to the Vietnam War era.
- **MISSION Act:** MOAA fought for this historic bill, providing sweeping reform to VA programs.
- **GI Bill Upgrades:** MOAA secured major victories for servicemembers and military families with the passage of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, better known as the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which was improved by the Forever GI Bill signed into law in 2017.
- **Defeating 'COLA Minus 1 Percent:** MOAA fought and won a repeal of language passed in a late-2013 continuing resolution which would have diminish by 1 percent any cost-of-living (COLA) adjustment for military retirees until aged 62.

# 118<sup>th</sup> Congress Goals

- **Compensation and Service-Earned Benefits**
  - Ensure pay at or above Employment Cost Index, allowances, and programs necessary to recruit and retain a quality force.
  - Ensure pay continues for all eight uniformed services during government shutdown.
  - Concurrent Receipt of military retirement pay, and VA disability pay.
- **Military Housing**
  - Restore BAH at 100% of researched housing costs per Military Housing Area. In 2019 DoD completed their reduction of BAH down to 95% of the housing assessments to save money for other programs.
  - Ensure barracks are a safe and healthy place to live, verified by the chain of command and government-owned work centers.
  - Codify procedures and authorities to increase out-of-cycle housing allowances to address emergencies such as reduced availability of housing and significant fluctuations in utility costs.
- **Health Care for Currently Serving and Retirees**
  - Maintain the hold on medical billet reductions until required reports clarify how any cuts will fully support both readiness and beneficiary access to care.
  - Reverse the degradation of the pharmacy benefit, specifically ensure access and achieve limits to copay increases.
  - Address TRICARE Young Adult parity issue by extending eligibility to dependents up to age 26 with no separate premium to bring TRICARE on par with commercial health plans.
  - Require DoD to establish a transparent and well-publicized problem reporting system for TRICARE beneficiaries experiencing access challenges within the direct care system of military hospitals and clinics. Include an annual report to Congress on the number and types of beneficiary access problem reports by MTF and steps taken by DHA to address systemic access problems.

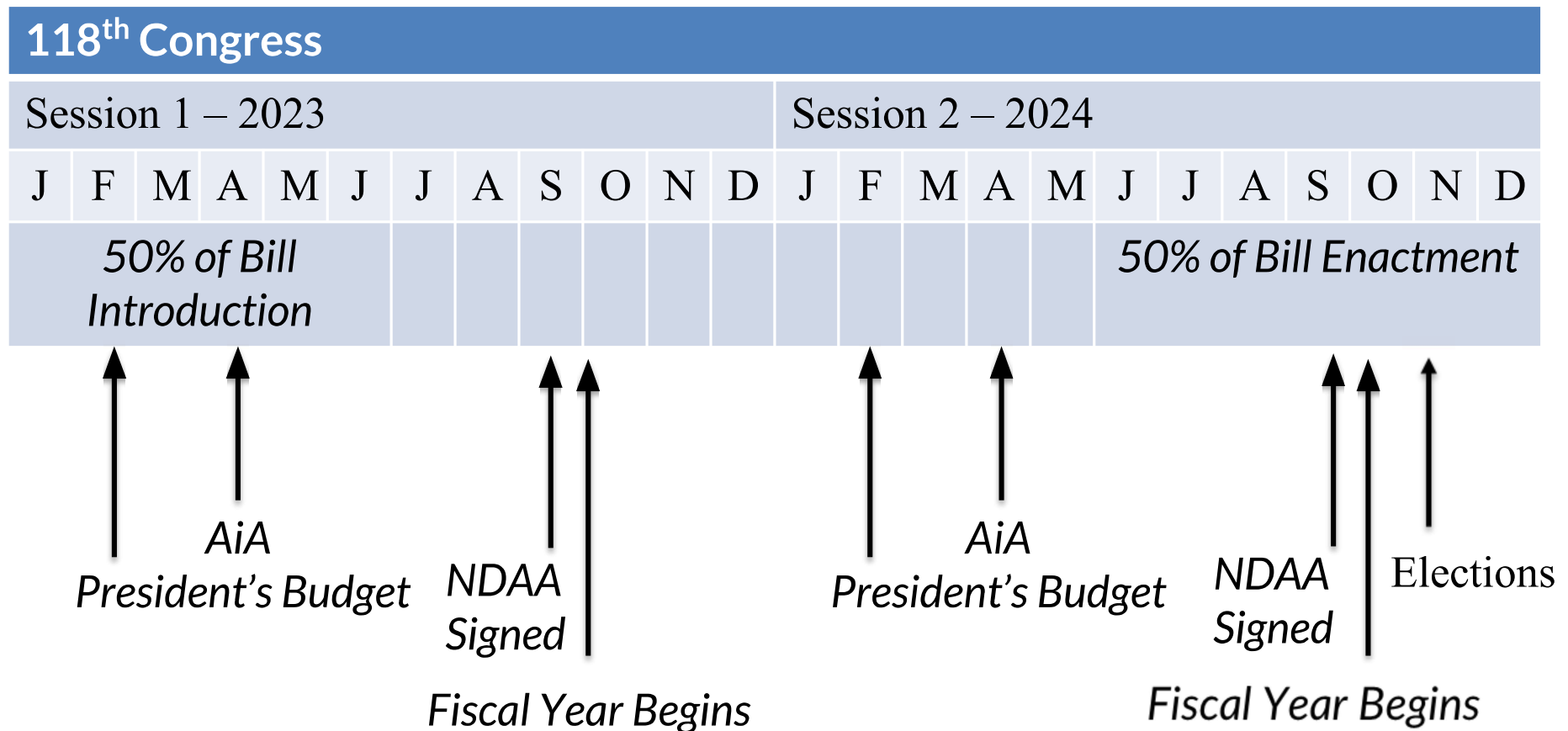
# 118<sup>th</sup> Congress Goals

- **Health Care and Benefits for Veterans**
  - Monitor recent major legislation enacted such as the PACT Act in the areas of health care, compensation, and follow-on support for surviving spouses and families and seek statutory or policy changes as required.
  - Compel Congress and VA to accelerate caregiving and whole health care services, and modernization of VHA workforce and facility infrastructure to improve veterans access to high quality care.
- **Service Families**
  - Improve congressional support for uniformed services families: enhancing programs to support spouse employment, ensuring implementation of an effective basic needs allowance, and providing accessible, affordable childcare options.
  - Overcome ineffective problem-reporting mechanisms and resolution systems in the Military Health System.
- **Survivors**
  - Repeal the recoupment of last month's paycheck after retiree's passing and continue to improve SGLI/VGLI updates to match inflation.
  - Improve DIC baseline to align with other government entitlements' baseline of 55%.
- **Guard and Reserves**
  - Continue to pursue Reserve Component priorities and improvements and coordinate with Guard and Reserve leadership to advance legislative and policy solutions to meet servicemember and force readiness requirements.
  - Overcome the lack of TRICARE coverage for Reserve Component to maintain readiness.
  - Overcome delayed pay for Guard and Reserve when promoted and when retired.



# 118<sup>th</sup> Congress – The Road Ahead

Congressional Schedule in Regular Order:



# 118<sup>th</sup> Congress: The Road Ahead



- Advocacy in Action
- Appropriations/Budget
- NDAA
- Additional Key Legislation
- Challenges Ahead



# Why is Advocacy Important?



- Recent National and Council/Chapter Efforts
  - Honoring Our PACT Act
  - Major Richard Star Act
  - Widow's Tax
- National-State legislative efforts/building critical mass through advocacy **WORKS!**

# National and Council/Chapter Collaboration

## Council/Chapter Self-Assessment

How many of these can your C/C do?

- Direct line to lawmakers and primary staff leaders
- Brief lawmakers on MOAA national goals
- Write a letter to lawmakers
- Mass action on legislative action alerts
- Phone banking
- Office visits
- Host town halls
- Collect and share stories of the affected
- Local media contact
- Write an op-ed
- Information sessions
- Coordinate with local MSO/VSOs
- Recruit new advocates



# Council and Chapter Resources

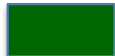



- Council/Chapter Self-Assessment
- State Report Card
- State Legislative Forum
- Legislative Leaders Page
- Legislative Action Center
- Military Officer Magazine
- The MOAA Newsletter
- Social Media
- Capitol Hill Toll-Free Hotline



# Advocacy: State Report Card

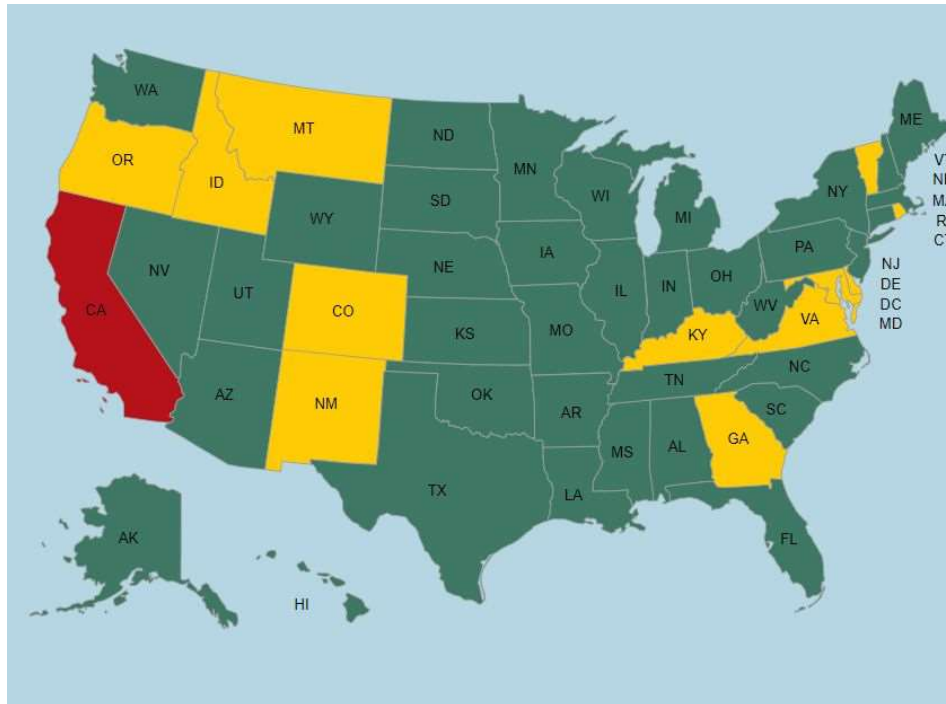
## MILITARY TAX ASSESSMENT MAP

 Both military retired pay (MRP) and Survivor Benefit Plan payments (SBP) are fully exempt from state taxation.

 MRP and/or SBP receive partial exemption from state taxation.

 Neither MRP nor SBP is exempt from state taxation

*Source: MOAA Communications; current as of July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022*



- Dual Maps
  - State Taxation
  - Troop & Family Issues
- Proprietary Analysis
- Member Value
- Marketing Campaign

[www.moaa.org/statereportcard](http://www.moaa.org/statereportcard)

# State Legislative Forum

Online Forum for council and chapter legislative leaders to share their experiences on issues at the state level.



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  - Greater St. Louis Chapter/ MO Council, Legislative Affairs
  - Mobile: (636) 484-0248
- Lt. Col Shelly Kalkowski, USAF (Ret)
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  - Chair – State Legislative Committee Colorado
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- COL Harold Cooney, USA (Ret)
  - Harold.cooney@gmail.com
  - Past President, Pennsylvania Council
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# Legislative Leaders Page

This site is an enduring resource for Council and Chapter Leadership to provide necessary tools for your federal advocacy efforts, including:

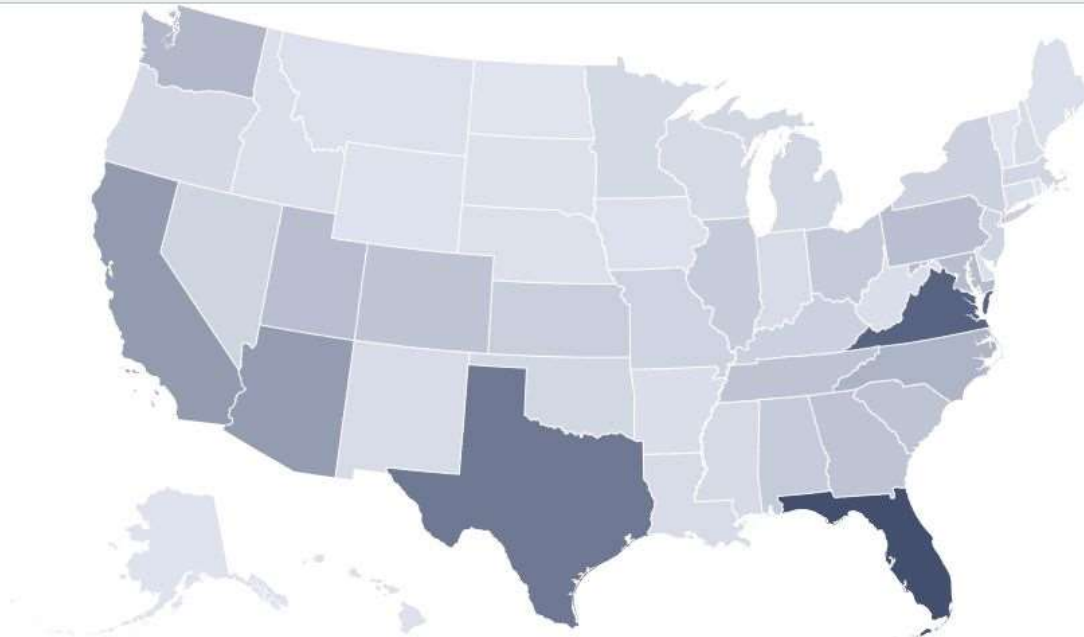
- Federal Advocacy Resources
- Advocacy in Action Materials
- State Advocacy Resources

## Grassroots Actions Taken

111K  
Actions

Total number of calls made, meetings reported, and letters sent from our Legislative Action Center.

## Actions By State



## Daily Activity

Weekly Activity On Our Legislative Action Center.





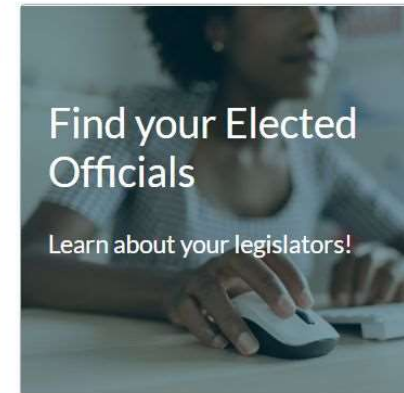
# MOAA's Legislative Action Center



Action Center Tutorial

Return to MOAA.org

Hello, Allison! ▾



## Active Legislative Campaigns

### Help Support Military Family Access to Mental Health Care

Help MOAA build support for H.R. 4824, the Stop Copay Overpay Act, which would reduce TRICARE copays for mental health visits and address the financial barrier to accessing mental health services.

Write

**\*Example** 'Call to Action' Campaign

[Action Center Link: moaa.quorum.us](https://moaa.quorum.us)



# Key Takeaways

- National and Council/Chapter Collaboration = mutual benefits
  - Can shape the membership dimension
- Share ideas and best practices
- Grassroots advocacy matters: You make the difference!!





**MOAA<sup>®</sup>**

Military Officers Association of America