



## Tennessee Council of Chapters Military Officers Association of America



### Minutes of the Meeting 19 July 2023

Tennessee Council of Chapters, MOAA met 19 July 2023 in person/via zoom, 11:30 AM CST.

Chattanooga (TN01): Ted Jewell, Ray Atkins.

East Tennessee (TN02): Doug Goins via zoom.

Memphis (TN03): Kathy Desjarlais.

Middle Tennessee (TN04): Patricia Bergquist, Doug Minton, Karon Uzzell Baggett via zoom.

Mountain Empire (TN05): Dr. Don Thompson via zoom.

Upper Cumberland (TN06): No Representative

Ft. Campbell (TN07): Ivan Adames. Monroe Gildersleeve, Steve Singleton.

Stones River (TN10): Betty Moshea, Pete Warner, Sandy Warner.

Sumner County (TN11): Steve Petersen.

General Andrew Jackson (TN12): Bobbie Bell.

The meeting did not have a guest speaker.

### ***MARK YOUR CALENDAR: 2023 MEETING INFORMATION IN THE MINUTES!***

Council President Ivan Adames began the meeting at 11:35 am.

Council Vice President Pete Warner led the pledge to the flag. Following the pledge of allegiance to the flag. Monroe Gildersleeve said a prayer of opening for the meeting.

### **Acceptance of Minutes**

Minutes of the 19 April 2023 meeting had been sent out on 17 July 2023 to all the chapter presidents and Council members. Doug Minton moved that the minutes be accepted as is. The motion was seconded by Betty Moshea and approved unanimously.

### **Financial Report**

Monroe Gildersleeve, Treasurer, delivered the financial report for the period of April 01, 2023 to June 30, 2023. Total funds on hand at the end of the quarter were \$6,339.30.

The Council accepted the Treasurer's Report.

### **Surviving Spouse Report written update provided by Patricia Bergquist as follows:**

Chapter Presidents of all Tennessee MOAA Chapters have provided their Surviving Spouse Liaison information except East TN, General Andrew Jackson, and Upper Cumberland. If those Chapter Presidents would send their Chapter Surviving Spouse Liaison information (name,

phone, and e-mail address) to Patricia by e-mail at p\_bergq@hotmail.com it would help in updating contact information.

When a Chapter Surviving Spouse Liaison needs assistance helping a surviving spouse, please call Patricia (615-948-4960) or e-mail her for advice. Our Surviving Spouses deserve accurate information, compassion, understanding, and often handholding through their process.

#### ADVOCACY/LEGISLATION

We need the focus and diligence of all MOAA Chapter members and surviving spouses to personally contact their Congressmen and Senators on these issues as we advocate for more legislative changes for our surviving spouses as follows:

H.R.3232 and S.1588 - "Respect for Grieving Military Families Act" would allow for retention of the full final month's retired pay by the surviving spouse or other designated survivor, of a military retiree for the month in which the member was alive for at least 24 hours.

The legislation would allow for repayment over a 12-month period and gives the Secretary of Defense the option to forgive the payment. This bill is important for all "future" military surviving spouses.

H.R.3232 has 13 co-sponsors (1 from TN: S. Cohen)

S.1588 has 2 co-sponsors (NONE from TN)

H.R.1083 and S.414 - "Caring for Survivors Act of 2023" are to improve and expand eligibility for the DIC Increase from 43% of a single, 100% disabled veteran's compensation to 55%. The 2023 DIC flat rate is \$1,564.74 per month.

H.R.1083 has 41 co-sponsors (1 from TN: S. Cohen)

S.414 has 13 co-sponsors (NONE from TN)

Everyone needs to be aware that the bill has a "special rule" section that penalizes 16,572 (3% of all DIC spouses) pre-1993 rank based DIC recipients. The understanding is that if a rank based DIC recipient is receiving more than the flat rate, there would be no increase, and if he/she is receiving less than the flat rate, then he/she would be brought to flat rate.

Rank-based surviving spouses who would be impacted if the bill becomes law need to call or e-mail Congresswoman Johanna Hayes (202-225-4476), and Senator Jon Tester (202-224-2644) to express concern over this limiting language in the bill.

H.R. 3651 and S. 1266 - "Love Lives on Act 2023" This act would allow surviving spouses to remarry at any age without eliminating benefits, and update certain terminology related to marriage under Title 38, US Code Section 101(3) and Section 5120(b) administered by the VA.

Surviving military spouses are not allowed to remarry before the arbitrary age of 55 without losing ALL their benefits. This act seeks to correct this injustice by preventing the termination of benefits to a surviving spouse due to remarriage.

Specifically, we understand the bill provide the following:

- allow retention of Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) upon remarriage at any age.
- allow surviving spouses to maintain eligibility for education benefits under Fry Scholarships and Dependents Education Assistance upon remarriage; and if that marriage subsequently ends in death, divorce, or annulment.
- allow remarried surviving spouse access to Commissary and Exchange benefits.
- allow remarried surviving spouses to regain their TRICARE benefits if marriage subsequently ends due to death, divorce, or annulment; and allow access to electronic medical records, referrals, and prescription refills for remarried spouses with dependent children and ensure remarried surviving spouses are treated as the parents to minor children not just the fiduciary.
- Allow those who have already remarried to get these benefits back without back pay.
- Remove the “hold themselves out to be married” clause from 38 USC, Section 101, Paragraph 3.

H.R.3651 has 6 co-sponsors (NONE from TN)

S.1266 has 11 co-sponsors (NONE from TN)

An Amendment has been filed by Senators Moran and Warnock. There are two ways to get an amendment into the bill. A “manager’s package” where both sides agree on what to include in the bill or a “floor amendment when they vote on every single amendment up and down. A “manager’s package” is the safest and easiest way to get into the bill. Senate Armed Services Committee Republicans appear to be against any amendments related to the Love Lives on Act. As I understand it, money is not the problem. A Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) member’s staffer believes it is “bad policy” and has been able to persuade those Republicans who were supportive of the legislation to step back. Despite repeated explanations by TAPS, policy is opposed.

E-mail campaigns have been underway to both Congressmen and Senators across the United States to garner co-sponsors and support for these three (3) pieces of legislation. Please encourage your membership and surviving spouses to join in these efforts.

To contact your Congressman or Senators, use MOAA Capitol Switchboard 1-866-272-6622, ask to be connected to your Congressman or Senators office, once connected ask to speak with the Military Legislative Assistant.

The most active surviving spouses FaceBook groups following these bills are:

- “DIC Surviving Spouses/DIC Increase Advocacy”
- “Love Lives on Act of 2023 Advocacy”
- “Military Survivors DFAS/SBP Issues”
- “MOAA Surviving Spouses and Friends”

## **TNVET Update written update from report 06/03/23.**

Tennessee Veterans (TNVET) Annual Member Meeting

New business:

Select/elect Chairman & Vice-Chairman, two-year term, by their member organizations based on the rotation. Newly elected Chairman may submit his recommendations for appointment of Secretary and Treasurer at this time – Robin Beamon and Daniel Wilson asked to remain in positions.

(Constitution dated August 2021, Article V). See Voting Strengths Constitution dated August 2021, Article VI).

### **Active Member Organizations 2023**

Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)

2023-2025 Howard French Chairman – Note 1

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) 2023-2025 John

Pollak Vice-Chairman??? – Note 1

Marine Corps League Stephen Baird

National Sojourners

American Veterans (AMVET)

Tennessee Farmer Veterans Coalition

Air & Space Force Association

Women Veterans of America (WVA) 2017-2019

Buffalo Soldiers 2019-2021

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) 2021-2023 - Note 1

Inactive Member Organizations (Removed)

The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA)

Military Order of the Purple Heart

Reserve Officer Association (ROA)

Note 1 - VVA swapped with VFW 2021-2023,

## **Advocacy in Action (legislative) written update provided by Pete Warner as follows:**

MOAA Advocacy in Action Campaign 26 April 2023, Washington D.C.

- 1) Restore the TRICARE Pharmacy Network
- 2) Pay Full Housing Cost for Service Members (Restore BAH to 100%)
- 3) Support the All-Volunteer Force (AVF)

Tennessee Team Members:

Col (Dr.) Don Thompson – MOAA National Board Member

Ms. Nancy Mullins – MOAA National Surviving Spouse Committee Member

Lt Col Pete Warner – TN Council of Chapters

Our team met with designated staffers in every TN delegation office (9 representatives and 2 senators) with one exception – Representative Scott

Representative DesJarlais met with us personally at the end of the day and listened to our pitch.

## **Separate Legislative Update**

It is strongly encouraged for the Chapter Leaders, Chapter Officers, and Chapter members to register with the [MOAA Legislative Action Center](#). This helps each member have a connection and to stay in contact with your U.S. Senators and Congressional Legislators.

### **NEXT STEPS:**

**Stay Informed.** Be sure to subscribe to the weekly *MOAA Newsletter* for the latest AIA news and updates. Keep up with all the latest advocacy news at [MOAA's Advocacy News page](#).

Visit the MOAA website and navigate to the Advocacy in Action page to find out about virtual conferences and legislative visits to make your voice heard. Remember that its numbers as well as the message that counts.

### **MOAA discussion**

Chapter officer updates to MOAA Committee Module (CM)

2023 MOAA Leader Workshop – North Central Milwaukee, WI (Sept 15-16); West (Nov 17-18)

**\*\*2024 MOAA Virtual Leaders Workshop - New Leaders (March 13-14)**

**\*\*2024 MOAA Leader Training Workshop – South (May 10-11)**

MOAA Advocacy – August Session – Congressional Representative home district  
East TN Chapter (TN02) - Revitalization (Chapter rescue) (Knoxville area)

Next meeting - October 18, 2023 at Sammy B's restaurant In Lebanon, TN

### **Other Chapter Business:**

Second Vice President volunteer is still needed.

It is strongly recommended and encouraged for each Chapter Leaders and Chapter Officers to register with the MOAA Legislative Action Center. This helps you stay in contact with your U.S. Senators and Congressional Legislators; and gain credit points towards the MOAA LOE Awards. From the Council members: the TN Council President will need to write and to inform the East TN Chapter President, Bill Potter, that the TN Council makes an appeal to arrange a Chapter "rescue" to revitalize the East Tennessee Chapter (TN02).

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR:** VDOH - Veterans Day on the Hill (State Capitol in Nashville, TN) is set for Wednesday, 31 January 2024.

## **Chapter Updates**

### **Chattanooga TN01 - Carol Grohn: Written update provided**

Our board voted to buy liability insurance, including an errors and omissions package. We will buy the package recommended on the National MOAA website. This insurance is a requirement to accept and utilize a \$2500 grant from MOAA National. This grant will help pay for final rites and processing for homeless indigent veterans who are unclaimed by family in the Hamilton County vicinity.

We have reformatted and changed our proposed chapter by-laws. The newest rendition will be presented to the membership by email and voted on by the body at our August meeting. We are gaining new members but also are losing elderly members, our numbers at about 170. We have extraordinary talent among us to help develop TWO new websites and a Facebook page. CW4 Kevin Miller, Webmaster, has two websites in progress because one of them is strictly for the ROTC fundraising veterans golf tournament coming on October 6<sup>th</sup>. We welcome you.

US Congressman Chuck Fleischmann will again be our August dinner meeting speaker. A member of our chapter, Larry Taylor, is awaiting the date for the President's presentation of the Medal of Honor in Washington DC and we would like to have a great showing from throughout TN. Larry has been battling cancer. When our chapter has its celebration along with many of our local elected, we will let you know.

Five years have lapsed since the last memorial service for our deceased members and surviving spouses. The memorial service two weeks ago was poignant, and we thank our chapter Chaplain LTC Phil Sumrall for his short, heartening sermon. The gong pinged 39 times with each name called.

In this first quarter, we received a \$300 grant and won the 5-star Harris Communication award for our newsletter. Thanks to CDR Jim Hargrove and Col Chris Dooley and other contributors for making it happen. Our goals are to also develop an award-winning chapter website, and a social media site. We participated in the 74th consecutive Armed Forces Day parade with a patriotically decorated double-float with a Humvee and a trailer pulled by a truck. Two MOAA tables at the luncheon completed the celebration.

We also enjoyed a local baseball game at the Lookouts Pavilion at the AT&T Field, had a catered lunch, and for the first time we invited several people from local and state veteran organizations. Our TN Council president and his wife came along as well. Our 1VP Ray Mitchell is to be commended for his diligence as Program Chair as his work is very evident in our many events already behind us and more ahead.

**East Tennessee TN02 (Knoxville) - Written update not provided.**

**MOAA Memphis TN03 – Kathy Desjarlais: written update provided as follows:**

The chapter raised money to purchase display items for the Lt. Col. Luke Weathers, Jr. display at the newly renamed Lt. Col. Luke Weathers, Jr. VAMC in Memphis. The historically accurate items will be on permanent display in the Bedtower lobby. Lt. Col. P.Z. Horton, USAF (Ret), lead the charge to obtain the items; while Lt. Col. Jim Thomasson, USAF (Ret), lead the successful fundraising effort. The official ceremony will be Monday, 24 July. We plan to get a photo op with the VAMC director once the display is in place.

We scheduled the president of Memphis Light, Gas, & Water (MLGW) for June. He was a “no show” despite a call two days prior confirming him speaking and letting us know he had to leave at a specific time due to other commitments.

We heard from a retired NASA engineer and teacher in May. He spoke about why we are returning to the moon and planning to go to Mars and beyond.

We continued our streak of authors in April, learning about The Sultana Tragedy from Jerry O. Potter.

We successfully recruited Harold Beaver as a new board member and as our legislative representative. We look forward to good things from him.

The State Veterans Home in Cleveland, TN held its ribbon cutting on 22 June. The home in Arlington, TN erected its first vertical beam on 19 June and anticipates an August 2024 ribbon cutting. After its completion, the next planned home is in Bristol, TN.

The Fisher House Foundation began ground preparation, for the Memphis Fisher House on 10 July. The build is anticipated to take 9 months.

Our scholarship committee will be meeting soon with plans to revamp our scholarship program from the ground up. What worked years ago no longer is working. Apparently \$1,250/year for four years is not worth the time or effort to apply for most high school seniors who are part of JROTC. We will explore various options including only offering the scholarship to young men and women already in ROTC, not graduating high school students.

#### **Middle Tennessee TN04 - Karon Uzzell - Baggett: written comments as follows:**

##### **Luncheon Meetings**

April 2023 – Chapter members gathered to hear Major Chris Johnson, USMC, Retired, and Elder Care Lawyer, who delivered our annual Personal Affairs briefing. There were over 40 attendees at the meeting, which focused on legal issues that members should prepare for as they get older. Slides were provided to several members who requested them for follow-up actions.

May 2023 – The chapter gathered to honor military and surviving spouses during Military Spouse Appreciation Month. Our group of 41 attendees was thrilled to hear from Mrs. Alex Denis, State of Tennessee Department of Children's Services Director of Communications, former WKRN evening anchor and military spouse. Both Mrs. Denis and our chapter Surviving Spouse Liaison, Mrs. Patricia Bergquist, received special gifts and flowers. There were 15 military and surviving spouses honored with certificates of appreciation and lapel pins.

June 2023 – Chapter members honored the service of military women at our chapter meeting. There were 44 attendees at the Old Natchez Trace Country Club to hear Colonel Beverly L. Lee, USAF, Retired, discuss her career, entrepreneurial pursuits, and philanthropy. Colonel Lee received a picture commemorating the service of military women in honor of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act. Nine women veterans were honored with certificates of appreciation and special lapel pins from the Military Women's Memorial (MWM). All chapter members received information about MWM service registration.

##### **Advocacy**

Members received reminders about advocating for various legislation benefiting the military community at every meeting. The MOAA Legislative Action Center was frequently mentioned. A

summary of approved state legislation impacting veterans was briefed during the chapter luncheon.

The Legislative Liaison highlighted critical issues pending before the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress through insightful columns. He was nominated for the Colonel Steven Strobridge Legislative Chair/Liaison Award, and we await the final results.

#### Community Outreach

Three new grant requests for 2023 were researched and submitted to MOAA.

The chapter was one of four chapters who received two grant awards totaling \$4,250. Our grants will impact food assistance for military families and self-care for caregivers supporting military members.

#### Award

The chapter received a Four-Star Award for the Colonel Marvin J. Harris Communications Award.

#### Other

The chapter received a \$300 grant under the MOAA Community Outreach Sponsorship program and purchased a tablecloth and flag emblazoned with the chapter's name. These items will be used during chapter recruiting events and were displayed at our June 2023 chapter luncheon.

A Second Vice President was identified for the chapter. Colonel Jacqueline Tubbs, USA, Retired, attended our April luncheon for the first time after her retirement from Fort Campbell, Kentucky. She was sworn in at the June 2023 chapter luncheon.

One key leadership vacancy still exists, and outreach is underway to two long-standing chapter members. Recruitment efforts will continue.

### **Mountain Empire TN05 – Written update not provided. Extracted from biannual newsletter**

We welcomed five new members and their spouses.

Presented four scholarships and awards to ROTC and JROTC cadets.

Presented MOAA awards at 10 local high schools and ETSU.

We were recognized with a 5-star Colonel Marvin J. Harris Communications Award for our website and a 4-star award for this newsletter (2022)

John Rice and Bill Woods shared stories of their days as Naval Aviators

### **Upper Cumberland TN06 – Written update not provided.**

### **Ft Campbell TN07 – Written update provided as follows:**

Our chapter received the COL Marvin J Harris Five-Star Communications Award for both our website and newsletter. Both awards were presented during the Kentucky Council's July meeting.



The chapter had a change in leadership earlier this year. An acting president is CW4 Brian Lynch, USA (Ret) membership Chairman.

Monthly meetings are held at a variety of venues.  
The chapter in-person attendance continues to slowly increase.

The chapter's golf scramble is scheduled for 24 August 2023.

The new Division Commander will be speaking at the Clarksville Chamber of Commerce Military Affair Committee's Power Breakfast in August 24.

This month's MOAA Magazine (August issue) has an excellent article on Veteran Owned Breweries in Clarksville, Tennessee.

The USAF Thunderbirds are scheduled to perform in Owensboro, KY on 16/17 September 2023.

**Stones River TN10 – Written update provided by Betty Moshea as follows:**

The Stones River Chapter of MOAA currently has 103 members.

Thirteen of those are surviving spouses. Holly Kyle is our new surviving spouse coordinator.

We are sponsoring a table at the 21st Annual Wings of Freedom Fish Fry and the late Admiral Jimmie Taylor will be the Grand Marshal. Admiral Taylor passed away July 11, 2023.

The Stones River Chapter of MOAA is going to Arnold Air Force Base on September for a regular meeting and a social gathering.

Our Chapter also has a trip to Germany, September 21-October 1, 2023.

**Sumner County TN11 – Written update not provided.**

**General Andrew Jackson TN12 – Bobbie A. Bell: written update provided as follows:**

Luncheon Meetings

May 2023 – Our scholarship recipient, Cadet Major Aaliyah McElhiney, & her parents & ROTC leader, TSGT (R) Justin McComas were our guests.

June 2023 – speaker was Ms. Lisa Kiss, the lead Davidson County Veterans Service Supervisor who updated everyone on the services her office provides.

July 2023 – speaker was Jared Grimble from the Nashville USO. He brought us up to date on the Nashville USO's activities & also gave us a pathway to volunteer.

Meetings have been a challenge due to the weather damage caused to our meeting place at McKendree Towers. We are hopeful we will be able to get back to our original room in August, which is more conducive to our chapter meetings.

Additionally, the chapter publishes a newsletter each month & distributes it to chapter members & prospective members.

#### Membership

Our membership drive is ongoing & we have added 2-3 new members in this last quarter. We have also been in communication with the national membership folks to correct our membership list & purge members who have died. We continue to average about 22-25 persons per meeting.

#### Awards & JROTC

We were successful in attending 4 JROTC awards ceremonies & awarded our annual scholarship. Additionally, we were finally able to contact one of our schools that we support. They had undergone a leadership change, but we have been able to make connection with the new leadership & are optimistic for this upcoming year.

#### Advocacy

Members have been reminded of the national issues & encouraged to contact their congressional representative.

#### Leadership

We now have in place a membership chairman & a legislative chairman.

#### **Conclusion of Meeting**

The meeting was adjourned about 13:25 CST.

#### **Next Meetings and Future Events**

MOAA Virtual Monthly Roundtable of Chapter Leaders: (7 PM EST) Last Thursday of month.

27 July, Chapter Assessments

31 August, Finance and Benefits

28 September, AMS Cutover

26 October, Community Outreach

\*\*Tennessee Tax Free Weekend – July 28 – 30

Advocacy in Action – August Session – Congressional Representative home district

Thunderbirds Airshow – September 16/17: Owensboro Air Show – Owensboro, KY

Our next meeting is scheduled for **October 18, 2023** at 11:30 AM. The meeting will be in-person at Sammy B's in Lebanon, TN.

#### **Future Meetings – at Sammy B's or on Zoom!**

TN CoC Meeting: 17 January 2024

TN CoC Meeting: 17 April 2024

TN CoC Meeting: 17 July 2024

TN CoC Meeting: 16 October 2024

Minutes prepared and submitted by Sandy Warner, Secretary, TN Council of Chapter