

# Maryland Military Coalition



*Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy*

## Call to Legislative Action

**Dear MMC Members and Friends.**

Wearing my "other" hat as the President of the Maryland Military Coalition (MMC), I am pleased to send you our initial list of legislative objectives for the 2022

Legislative Session in the Maryland General Assembly (MGA). The email below was sent to every Member of the Maryland General Assembly today. These goals are just the beginning--a stepping off point for the beginning of the Assembly. We hope to picque interests early and get substantive legislation passed this year, especially in the areas of reducing or eliminating the tax on retired pay and improved mental health services. But to do so, **we need your HELP**, by writing letters, sending emails and contacting YOUR representatives. Stay tuned and watch for our emails. Share them with your friends. Let's get going!

Bob

\* \* \* \* \*

## Dear Delegate

The MMC is a registered 501c(3) nonprofit, non-partisan all volunteer advocacy organization representing the interests of Maryland veterans, service members, their families, caregivers and survivors. The Coalition consists of 17 leading uniformed services and veterans' organizations with over 150,000 members. We represent about one-fourth of Maryland's Veterans, Service Members, and their families.

These Goals address health care and benefits issues affecting the military-connected community in our state.

In the ***Veterans Mental Health / Suicide Prevention*** area, progress was made in the last session but much more needs to be done starting with the development of a strategic plan on this issue. Last year, the MGA enacted a Veterans Mental Health First Aid Bill, which basically codifies existing practice authorizing the Mental Health Department to provide veterans and their families mental health first aid training. The supporting Sheila Hixson Grant Program bill expanded the potential number of non-profit mental health providers of such training who submit

matching grants. However, the \$2.5M grant must be included in the Administration's budget request or funded by another means. Overall, the MGA should direct a comprehensive plan to ensure a long-term, coordinated approach to support the mental health needs of at-risk veterans.

Another area that must be addressed is ***support for homeless veterans, including women veterans*** who are the fastest growing group of homeless veterans in the nation. The Federal Department of Veterans Affairs continues to make this issue a top priority and we believe more must be done to support those efforts at the state level. In Maryland, NO homeless shelter will accept a woman veteran with children. This must be resolved immediately. We also continue to support **creation of a Commission for a Memorial Honoring Women Veterans**. The establishment of a Women Veterans Inclusion Program Manager -- Ms. Roslyn Jones -- in the Office of the Maryland Secretary of Veterans Affairs is a welcome focal point for women veterans' issues.

Maryland should, in our view, do more to support our economy by **once and for all eliminating state tax on Uniformed Services retired pay** as recommended in the Towson University study of the [defense industry](#) (2017) commissioned by the MGA. Arizona and Nevada this year passed laws to do just that joining 34 other states who have fully or partially eliminated state tax on retired pay thereby making them more attractive to second-career uniformed services retirees who bring unique leadership skills, experience and high-level clearances to cyber, defense and other industries. The MMC strongly recommends this get done in the 2022 session.

The MMC commends the MGA for passage in the last session of legislation authorizing the Counties and independent jurisdictions to pass local laws permitting **refunds of property taxes for severely disabled veterans rated at 100% and their qualifying surviving spouses**. We recommend the MGA again take up legislation to lower the threshold for the property tax credit from 100% to

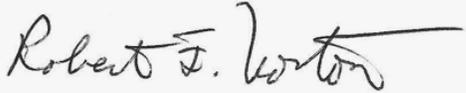
80%.

In support of active duty families being assigned to Maryland military bases, the MMC strongly supports legislation to **allow Uniformed Services' spouses with valid out-of-state health care licenses and certifications to practice temporarily** in Maryland while their state credentials are being validated.

Last but surely not least, the MMC urges the MGA to work with the Administration to **ensure timely completion of the Second Veterans Home (Sykesville) and to accelerate planning and delivery of a third and potentially a fourth Veterans Home.**

The Maryland Military Coalition looks forward to working with the MGA Veterans Caucus and the relevant Committees who will consider the above measures and other veterans' initiatives that will come before the MGA in the upcoming session.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light gray rectangular background. The signature reads "Robert F. Norton" in a cursive script.

Robert F. Norton  
COL, USA-ret.  
President, Maryland Military Coalition  
District 19

Member Organizations, Maryland Military Coalition

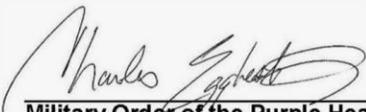
  
Air Force Sergeants Association

  
Association of the United States Navy

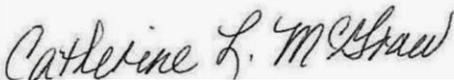
  
Disabled American Veterans

  
Fleet Reserve Association

  
Maryland Air National Guard Retirees' Association

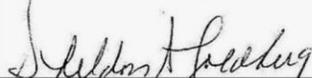
  
Military Order of the Purple Heart

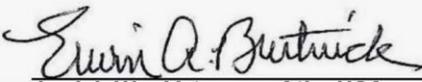
  
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association

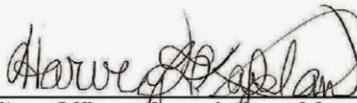
  
Society of Military Widows

  
American Military Society

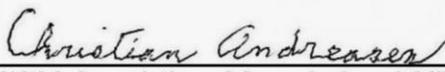
  
Commissioned Officers Association of the US Public Health Service

  
Distinguished Flying Cross Association

  
Jewish War Veterans of the USA

  
Military Officers Association of America

  
National Association for Black Veterans

  
NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers

  
Veterans of Foreign Wars