

Fort George G. Meade Chapter

September – December 2024 issue



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A Message from the Chapter President, Gregory Rhoden (USMC, Ret.)

Hello, fellow chapter members! I hope this newsletter finds you well. Last month, I sent an introductory email to our chapter members, but for those who missed it, I'd like to reintroduce myself. My name is Gregory Rhoden, and I am a retired Marine. I have been an MOAA life member since retiring from military service in 2015. In my second career, I work as a Department of Defense consultant supporting the Joint Staff in the Joint Requirements Office for Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Defense. The commute from Fulton, MD to the Pentagon may not be ideal, but I am passionate about my job and the people I work with which makes up for the time in traffic. I joined MOAA because of its dedication to the military community and its families and I see my involvement as an opportunity to give back to a community that has given me so much.

I hope everyone had a great summer and looking forward to the cooler days of fall and the seasonal holidays that are right around the corner starting with Labor Day. I look forward to working with each one of you as we support active, retired, National Guard, and service veterans and their families.

Notes from the August 24, 2024, Ft. George G. Meade Chapter Board Meeting

The Board discussed the need to fill several vacant chapter leadership positions. The President, Gregory Rhoden, agreed to reach out to several chapter members via email to invite them to consider volunteering for a leadership position.

The Treasurer, Jim Shiffrin, provided an update on the chapter's budget. While the chapter has some reserve funds, the Board considered reducing certain expenses to ensure a balanced budget in 2025. Those interested in more information about the budget should contact Jim Shiffrin.

After thoughtful consideration, the Board agreed to hold 10 monthly chapter meetings per year, with no meetings in July and August. Chapter meetings will alternate between Saturday mornings and other times in the afternoons or evenings. The next monthly chapter meeting following the September luncheon will take place on October 26th at 1:00 PM (location to be determined).

The Board also agreed to hold monthly board meetings on the first Wednesday of every month at 6:30 PM. Due to the upcoming September luncheon, the Board agreed to hold an ad hoc board meeting on September 13th at 6:30 PM to finalize luncheon plans for.

Lastly, the Board is working on drafting a chapter mission statement that will summarize our goals and values. This statement will also communicate our purpose and direction to chapter members and external stakeholders. The new mission statement will be shared in the coming weeks.

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September Luncheon

Our chapter and the Military Order of the World Wars will host a luncheon on September 21, 2024, at the All American Steakhouse in Odenton, MD. Please note that the venue has been changed from the original plans, we will no longer meet at the Odenton Volunteer Fire Station as indicated in the RSVP email sent by Jim Shiffrin in August. We are excited to announce that the keynote speaker for this event will be Mr. Ross Cohen, Deputy Secretary of the Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families. Please spread the word to other chapter members, friends, family, and the local community. We are looking forward to having maximum participation from the chapter.

Call for Volunteers to Serve in Vacant Leadership Positions

Do you have a special skill set that can be utilized in one of our chapter's open leadership positions? Do you have some free time to help ensure the longevity of our chapter? Would you like to give back to your community and the nation in a meaningful way? If you answered yes to any of those questions, then we need you. We are seeking chapter members who would like to volunteer for any of the open leadership positions and serve on the Board. Your contributions will help ensure the chapter remains in good standing, active, and relevant. The Board encourages all chapter members to consider volunteering to help us grow and continue to serve our military community. Some of the key vacant positions the Board would like to fill include the following:

Vice President 2
Secretary
Newsletter Editor
Membership Committee Chair
Program Committee Chair
Fund Raising Committee Chair
Webmaster

Contact Gregory Rhoden or Jim Shiffrin for more information on these positions.

Special Fall 2025 Viking Cruise Vacation

Our very own, and past Council President, Harvey Kaplan has worked with MOAA Vacations to secure early options on a range of cabins on an exciting Viking Mississippi River cruise Fall Sep 6-20, 2025.

Details are in the attached flyer. While this is not an official MOAA Signature Cruise with headquarters participation, it has some excellent opportunities. Harvey is very familiar with the river and says that he is willing to add several free cruise enhancements related to Corps of Engineers projects along the Mississippi—for those travelers who have an interest. Incidentally, non-MOAA members plus friends and relatives are welcome to join; everyone who is not a Chapter member should indicate that they are friends (or relatives) of someone in Ft. George G. Meade Chapter to get the best pricing from MOAA Vacations.

Here is a link to the Viking web page with additional information: <https://www.vikingrivercruises.com/cruise-destinations/mississippi/americas-great-river/2025-stpaul-neworleans/pricing.html#noscroll>

The MOAA point of contact is Mike Tyrell (mike@moaavac.com). The MOAA web page for MOAA Vacations is: <https://www.moaa.org/content/benefits-and-discounts/exclusive-discounts/travel/moaa-vacations/> .

The MOAA Vacations web site is: <https://moaavacations.com> ; phone number is: 800-211-5107.

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Birthday Salutes

September

US Air Force

Karl Davis

Matthew Goodrich

James Shiffrin

October

US Navy

Oscar Carrion

Bobby Lindsay

Bryan Schnitker

November

US Marine Corps

David Dragics

James Gourley

Roger Longenbach

Peter Maldini

Francis McBrearty

Michael McFarland

Richard Morain

John Whitman

December

National Guard

US Space Force

Janet Burtnick

Ruth Eicher

Kristine Henry

Nancy Hobbs

Anne Kelly

Simone Moore

Gary Palmer

Harry Rosenzweig

Mary Jo Sweeney



DoD Launches Long-Awaited Housing Feedback Database

By: Jen Goodale

DoD announced the long-awaited launch of its [DoD Housing Feedback System](#) (DHFS) on Aug. 12, which will enable servicemembers residing in privatized military housing to share their experiences and concerns directly. This initiative marks a significant step forward in addressing longstanding issues that have garnered increasing attention in recent years due to [reports of substandard living conditions](#) in some privatized military housing communities.

The online DHFS is designed to provide a streamlined and accessible platform for military families to voice concerns about their housing situations. Residents can submit feedback on various aspects of their living conditions, including maintenance issues, safety concerns, and overall satisfaction. This feedback will be

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used to hold housing providers accountable and ensure servicemembers and their families receive the quality housing they deserve.

MOAA has been a [key advocate](#) in the push for better military housing and endorsed the legislation that led to the creation of this feedback system. As one of the largest and most influential military advocacy organizations, MOAA has consistently championed the rights and well-being of servicemembers and their families. In collaboration with a coalition of other military and veteran organizations, MOAA played a pivotal role in driving legislative efforts to improve privatized military housing.

This coalition's advocacy efforts were instrumental in bringing attention to the various issues plaguing privatized military housing, including inadequate maintenance; poor communication between privatized housing companies, military housing offices and residents; and a lack of accountability for housing providers. By working together, these organizations successfully pushed for reforms that culminated in the establishment of the DHFS.

The launch of the DHFS represents a significant victory for servicemembers and their families, who have long sought better living conditions. It also underscores DoD's commitment to improving the quality of life

for those who serve. With the introduction of this system, military families now have a direct line to communicate their concerns, empowering them to be active participants in the process of improving military housing.



"The DHFS has been built to possibly expand to include all of DoD housing. This was done deliberately from the onset as our senior leadership determined it might be beneficial, and a possible direction we will go in the future," said a senior DoD official.

MOAA has endorsed legislation that would expand the DHFS to include servicemembers living in unaccompanied housing.

As DoD continues to roll out this new system, ongoing feedback from servicemembers will be crucial in refining the platform and ensuring that it effectively addresses the needs of the military community.

Here's Why the NDAA Will Strengthen the Next-Gen TRICARE Network

By: Karen Ruedisueli

MOAA's work to ensure TRICARE beneficiaries will see greater access to high-quality care under the new provider contract is set to take a major step forward, with congressional oversight of the process included in both House and Senate committee reports on the must-pass defense authorization bill.

Both the Senate and House Armed Services Committee (SASC and HASC) reports on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) require assessments of the [so-called "T-5" contract](#) and how it will enhance access to network care.

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“The committee is concerned about the ability of the TRICARE purchased care network to meet the health care needs of TRICARE beneficiaries,” the SASC report notes. “In a November 2023 [Management Advisory](#), the Department of Defense (DoD) Inspector General reported that, in some locations, the TRICARE network is not robust or adequate enough to meet beneficiaries’ needs.”



The SASC report also notes that [military health system reforms](#) in the FY 2017 NDAA established TRICARE Select and required DoD to develop an implementation plan to improve access to care for TRICARE beneficiaries.

SASC FY 2025 NDAA report language directs the Comptroller General to submit a review of DoD’s oversight and enforcement of contractors’ network adequacy requirements in T-5, including an assessment of the reliability of the contractors’ data used in the metrics, as well as T-5 network adequacy requirements related to pediatric primary care and obstetrics care.

While MOAA understands the COVID-19 pandemic led to workforce volatility and capacity constraints across the U.S. health care system, military family feedback suggests some access problems are due to providers leaving the TRICARE network – not overall capacity shortages.

Preventing an ‘Undue Burden’

The HASC also addressed TRICARE network concerns in its report accompanying its version of the FY 2025 NDAA.

“The committee believes that our servicemembers and their families should have access to medical care that does not cause an undue burden,” the HASC report states. “Recent reports of provider shortages on bases around the country are of particular concern to the committee as servicemembers and their families are traveling greater distances to access the care they need without a sufficient TRICARE network.”

The HASC report directs DoD to provide a congressional briefing on T-5 by Dec. 1 to include how T-5 will ensure access to pediatric primary care and obstetrics care within the direct care system or as part of the managed care support contracts.

An evaluation of T-5 requirements by the Comptroller General’s Government Accountability Office (GAO) will help determine whether T-5 will address network adequacy issues or if further action will be necessary to ensure beneficiary access to care for servicemembers, retirees, their families and survivors.

MOAA looks forward to leveraging report findings in future TRICARE advocacy efforts. Keep up with the latest on T-5 [and other health care news at MOAA.org](#)

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Advocacy in Action: Why Playing the Long Game Matters

By: *Jen Goodale*

At first glance, it might seem puzzling that MOAA dedicates time and resources to bills that appear to have little chance of passing. However, this approach reflects a deep understanding of advocacy as a long-term effort requiring persistence, education, and established relationships.

The [long battle to repeal](#) the Survivor Benefit Plan-Dependency and Indemnity Compensation offset, better known as the "[widows tax](#)," is a recent example of legislation that passed as a result of such an effort.

A new Congress arrives every two years with new members, fresh priorities, and evolving dynamics. This constant turnover means the legislative landscape is perpetually shifting. What might be a low-priority issue in one Congress can gain traction in the next as new voices and perspectives come into play. By continuously advocating for important military-related legislation, MOAA ensures these issues remain on the radar, ready to be seized upon when the timing is right.



A significant number of elected officials and their staffers lack personal military or uniformed service experience. This gap in understanding makes it even more critical for MOAA to engage in ongoing education efforts. By persistently bringing our concerns to the forefront, MOAA helps inform and shape the perspectives of those in power. This education isn't a one-time effort; it's a continuous process, necessary for ensuring the unique challenges faced by servicemembers and their families are fully understood and addressed.

Advocacy is not just about pushing bills through: It's about finding and nurturing bipartisan champions who will carry these causes forward. This doesn't happen overnight. It takes time to build relationships, demonstrate the importance of an issue, and convince legislators to take up the mantle. MOAA's consistent efforts lay the groundwork for these champions to emerge, ensuring that when the political climate is right, there are committed leaders ready to drive change.

MOAA's advocacy efforts are amplified when supported by the voices of constituents. Elected officials are more likely to take notice when they hear directly from the people they represent. That's why it's vital for members and supporters to get involved through MOAA's [Legislative Action Center](#). Your input not only reinforces MOAA's message but also helps to build the momentum needed to turn these long-term efforts into [legislative wins](#).

By staying engaged, persistent, and proactive, MOAA continues to work tirelessly on behalf of our uniformed services community, knowing that today's efforts lay the foundation for tomorrow's successes.