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CAPE CORAL COMMUNICATOR

May 2025

Volume 6 • Issue 5

CAPE CORAL MOAA BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES

April 12, 2025, Cape Royal Golf Community

President Gary Nolan called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. with 21 present for breakfast. Our guest speaker was to be Retired Navy Chief Joey Alonzo, commander of the US Navy Sea Cadets in Punta Gorda, but he was ill and was not able to attend the meeting.

After breakfast President Nolan asked for committee reports. Secretary Gary Peppers, as Finance Committee Chair, reported that CCMOAA's invested funds stood at \$34,588. That reflected a \$5,000 transfer of funds into our checking account to cover convention reimbursements, two scholarships of \$2,000 each that had recently been claimed, and \$2,000 to pay for the JROTC drill competition trophies. Recent market performance had also reduced our holdings by about one percent since the last report.

President Nolan reminded the members that our annual golf tournament would be held in

conjunction with Cape Royal's Memorial Day Golf Tournament on May 26. CCMOAA would have opportunities to sponsor tees and to sell mulligans, and to conduct a 50/50 raffle with first, second and third prizes to raise money for the chapter. Volunteers are requested.

Members were instructed to log onto the chapter web page to review the proposed bylaws changes and standard operating procedures, edited by Vice President Tom Wagner and to submit comments and/or corrections.

Tom Wagner, Bill Deile and anyone else interested will present JROTC medals at Miramar High School on May 1. President Nolan will be out of the country at that time.

With no other business issues to discuss, President Nolan adjourned the meeting at 11:10 a.m.

*Gary Peppers, Lt Col USAF (ret)
Chapter Secretary*

Cape Coral Memorial Day event set for May 26

As of the distribution of The Communicator, the only Cape Coral Memorial Day event was listed as:

The 44th Annual Memorial Day Remembrance ceremony on Monday, May 26 at 10 a.m. at Coral Ridge Funeral Home & Cemetery, 950 Chiquita Blvd S., to pay tribute to the heroism of our fallen veterans and the sacrifice of their families for their country.

TREASURER'S REPORT

**CAPT Timothy Cook,
USN (Ret)**

March 29, 2025 – April 23, 2025

Beginning Balance: Mar. 29, 2025:.....\$898.98

Deposits:

TOTAL DEPOSITS: \$0

Expenses:

TOTAL EXPENSES:..... \$0

Ending Balance: March 28, 2025:.....\$898.98

CCMOAA

Monthly Breakfast Meeting

Second Saturday of the Month

January - May

September - December

NEXT MEETING:

Saturday, May 10

10 a.m.

Cape Royal Golf Club

11460 Royal Tee Circle
Cape Coral

Cost \$12

(Prefer exact change please)

Breakfast Reservations to:

Cindy Nolan

capecoralmoaa@gmail.com

618-580-2368

PLEASE WEAR YOUR
NAMETAG

*(If you need one, contact
Gary Nolan)*



MOAA[®]

Officers

PRESIDENT:

Col Gary Nolan

US Air Force (Retired)

VICE PRESIDENT:

COL Tom Wagner

USAR (Retired)

SECRETARY:

LtCol Gary Peppers

US Air Force (Retired)

TREASURER:

CAPT Timothy Cook

US Navy (Retired)

BOARD MEMBER:

(at large)

COL Bill Deile

US Army (Retired)

FINANCE:

LtCol Gary Peppers

CHAPLAIN:

Cindy Nolan

WAYS & MEANS:

Col Gary Nolan

SPEAKER PROGRAMS:

Marilyn Stout

WEBMASTER:

COL Tom Wagner

USAR (Retired)

HISTORIANS:

LtCol Gary Peppers

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS:

COL Tom Wagner

PERSONAL AFFAIRS:

(Vacant)

VETERANS AFFAIRS:

(Vacant)

MEMBERSHIP:

Col Gary Nolan

PUBLIC AFFAIRS:

(Vacant)

PARLIAMENTARIAN:

Marilyn Stout

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Capt Larry Atkinson

US Air Force

TOPS:

(Vacant)

SURVIVING SPOUSES:

(Vacant)

FCOC SW AREA VP:

Col Gary Nolan

MOAA Awards

Cape Coral MOAA wins national MOAA chapter, communication awards

Cape Coral MOAA Chapter, Cape Coral Communicator newsletter and Cape Coral MOAA website have been presented the top awards in their categories by the Military Officers Association of America.

MOAA recently announced the winners of the annual Council and Chapter Levels of Excellence (LOE) Awards and the Harris Communications Awards for chapter newsletters and websites for 2024.

Out of almost 400 MOAA affiliates, 168 councils and chapters earned LOE award recognition this year. These councils and chapters excel at supporting and fostering programs that directly



support the MOAA mission and their communities.

Florida received more awards than any other state, with 22 Florida chapters receiving Levels of Excellence Awards and 24 chapters receiving Harris Communications Awards.

Cape Coral's MOAA chapter, Col Gary Nolan (USAF, Ret), president, won the 5-Star Levels of Excellence Award.

Winning the 5-Star Col Marvin J. Harris

Communications Awards were the Cape Coral Communicator newsletter, Capt Larry Atkinson (USAF), editor, and the Cape Coral MOAA Chapter website, COL Tom Wagner (USAR, Ret), webmaster.

The annual Col. Marvin J. Harris Communications Awards recognize councils and chapters that achieve excellence in communicating with their members and communities.

Cape Coral Communicator Member Profiles

The Cape Coral MOAA newsletter strives to regularly publish a profile on each of our members.

An online Microsoft Word form can be found on the CCMOAA Website at: www.capecoralmoaa.org. Members are encouraged to download the form, fill it out and return it to newsletter editor Larry Atkinson at publisherlarry@gmail.com.

For those who would rather just fill out the form by hand, copies of the questionnaire will be available at each monthly breakfast meeting.

We also request that photos be provided, including a current photo, one in uniform while in the service and any other photos you think other members might enjoy seeing.



Marvin C. Harris
Newsletter
Communications Award
FIVE STARS
2003, 2018, 2019,
2020, 2021, 2022, 2023
& 2024



FIVE STARS
Chapter Excellence
Award
2006, 2008, 2009,
2010, 2011, 2012, 2018,
2019, 2020, 2023 &
2024



FOUR STARS
Chapter Excellence
Award
2005, 2007, 2013,
2016, 2017 & 2021

May Speaker

Major Bryan Williams will present CCMOAA scholarship winners

Major Bryan Williams, the Senior Army Instructor and Department Head of the Mariner High School JROTC Leadership Academy, will be the speaker at the Saturday, May 10, Cape Coral MOAA breakfast meeting. It will be at 10 a.m. at the Cape Royal Golf Club, 11460 Royal Tee Circle, Cape Coral.

Williams will introduce the three Cape Coral MOAA JROTC Scholarship Awardees and their parents. Cape Coral MOAA Vice President COL Tom Wagner (USAR, Ret) and Board Member COL Bill Deile (USA, Ret) presented the three scholarships May 1 at the Major General James L. Dozier JROTC Awards Ceremony at South Fort Myers High School.

Prior to arriving at Mariner High School, Williams served more than 25 years of active duty in the United States Army as both a senior enlisted soldier (Sergeant First Class) and a logistics officer. During his military career, he deployed overseas numerous times to include two combat tours in Iraq.

Williams brings with him significant global experience and perspective. His career as a soldier allowed him to travel to more than 40 countries. His military awards include the Legion of Merit and he was the Department of the Army's



2010 Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award recipient. Williams was selected to the All-Army Rugby team three times. He was also the School District of Lee County's New Teacher of the Year runner-up in 2019 and was selected as a 2021 Golden Apple recipient and the 2021 American Legion Post 90 Teacher of the Year.

Williams is highly active in his community, particularly leading and mentoring youth. He and his wife coach a year-round competitive youth Air Rifle team together (recently ranked No. 9 in the Junior Olympics). He is a lifetime and active member with the VFW and American Legion, is the secretary of the Florida State Officer Candidate School Association, a board member of the Student Advisory Council, an appointed official of the Principal's Advisory Council and volunteers countless

hours leading his students in community service activities.

JROTC is a natural fit for Williams -- he is a lifelong learner and a student of leadership. He was enrolled in higher level education for 20 consecutive years and achieved four university degrees, to include two master's degrees (one from Australia National University) and numerous certifications. Williams said he aims to be more than a teacher to his students: "I want to be a coach, mentor and father figure for

my kiddos. I bring all of my success and failures as a military leader, a dad and a husband to my classroom, aiming every day to change a young person's life," he said.

Williams' most proud accomplishment is his family. He is married to a U.S. Army veteran, Marybeth, and they have two beautiful daughters. Elizabeth is a second lieutenant Quartermaster Officer in the U.S. Army, currently stationed in South Korea; and Bethany completed her freshman year at the University of Hawaii and transferred to Florida International University.

The Williams have lived all over the world to include Hawaii, Australia and Italy and have travelled to over 30 countries together. During their time off together, you can find them at the beach, cycling around Cape Coral or boating.

JROTC Scholarships

Three JROTC cadets awarded \$2,000 scholarships from CCMOAA

Three outstanding JROTC cadets from Lee County on May 1 were presented \$2,000 scholarships from the Cape Coral Military Officers Association of America chapter.

The scholarships were presented by Cape Coral MOAA Chapter Vice President COL Tom Wagner (USAR, Ret) and Board Member COL Bill Deile (USA, Ret) at the Lee County MG James Dozier JROTC Awards Ceremony at South Fort Myers High School.

These scholarships recognize their exceptional academic achievements, leadership skills, and dedication to serving their communities.

The recipients, who will be attending the May 10 Cape Coral MOAA Breakfast Meeting, are Malia Lo from Mariner High School, Andy

Seeley from Mariner High School, and Anijah Kasten from Lehigh Senior High School.

Malia Lo

Malia Lo, a senior at Mariner High School, has been a trailblazer in her four years of JROTC.

Serving as Battalion Commander and Marksmanship Commander, Malia has demonstrated exemplary leadership and academic excellence, maintaining a weighted GPA of 4.3 and earning numerous honors, including the Superintendent's or Principal's List for four consecutive years. She has also received the Distinguished Cadet Award for Scholastic Excellence three times.

Malia's commitment to service is evident in her over 400 logged

community service hours. She co-led a hurricane relief project that mobilized dozens of volunteers to assist in cleanup efforts, earning recognition in local news. As captain of the Marksmanship Team, she guided her team to national, state, and district championships despite challenges. Her nominator described her as "unequivocally the most positive and enthusiastic cadet" and a "role model servant leader." Malia plans to attend the University of South Florida ROTC and pursue a career as an Army officer.

Andy Seeley

Andy Seeley, also from Mariner High School, has excelled in academics, athletics, and leadership roles during *(Continued on next page)*



Cape Coral MOAA Board Member Bill Deile (left) and Vice President Tom Wagner present awards to the JROTC cadets May 1 at the MG James Dozier JROTC Awards Ceremony at South Fort Myers High School.

JROTC Scholarships *(continued)*

(Continued from previous page)

his four years in JROTC. With a weighted GPA of 4.6, Andy has earned numerous accolades, including the Distinguished Cadet Award for Scholastic Excellence and a \$120,000 merit scholarship from Norwich University. He has served as Battalion Commander, Vice President of Student Government, and captain of the Robotics Team, which qualified for national competitions twice.

Andy's dedication to service is highlighted by his leadership in hurricane relief efforts, where he co-lead a project involving over 600 cadets to rebuild food banks and coordinate disaster cleanup. His nominator praised him as one of the program's elite cadets, stating, "I can think of no higher qualified candidate." Andy plans to attend Norwich University ROTC and pursue a career as an Army officer.

Anijah Kasten

Anijah Kasten, a senior at Lehigh Senior High School, has distinguished herself as Regimental Commander of one of the largest JROTC programs in the country, overseeing over 900 cadets. With a weighted GPA of 4.61, Anijah is in the top 10 percent of her class and has earned the prestigious Cambridge Diploma.

Anijah's leadership and compassion shine through



Presenting awards at the MG James Dozier JROTC Awards Ceremony are: (L to R) Dan Bernard, Ed Charles and Jack Wagner of The Military Order of the Purple Heart, Bert Kurkland Chapter 696; COL Scott Robinson, Director of Army Instruction for Lee County JROTC; Bill Deile and Tom Wagner, Cape Coral MOAA.

her actions. As a sophomore, she was chosen as Raider Team Captain, and during an emergency, she demonstrated remarkable care by carrying an injured cadet to safety. Her nominator commended her selflessness and dedication, stating, "Her actions truly exemplify the selflessness and dedication that define her."

Anijah plans to attend Georgia Military College, the University of North Georgia, or Florida International University to become an Army officer.

These three cadets embody the values of leadership, service, and academic

excellence, making them deserving recipients of the Cape Coral Military Officers Association of America scholarships. Their achievements and aspirations reflect the bright future of Lee County's JROTC program and the communities they serve.

**ARTICLE/PHOTO
SUBMISSION
DEADLINE FOR THE
SEPTEMBER 2025
ISSUE:**

August 27, 2025

Please submit articles in a
Word Document and
photos in JPEG format

Email to: publisherlarry@gmail.com

Cape Coral MOAA Golf Fundraiser



MEMORIAL DAY

☆ **Team Scramble Event** ☆

\$35

ANNUAL PASS PLAYERS

\$75

GUEST PLAYERS

Price includes tax / green fee / cart fee / range balls / prizes / outdoor cookout & gratuities

MAY 26th 2025 / 8 AM Shot Gun Start

**30 TEAMS / 120 PLAYERS
REGISTER YOUR TEAM
WITH PAYMENT TODAY IN
THE GOLF SHOP**



MOAA's Advocacy in Action 2025 still needs your support

By: Terry Waters

MOAA's flagship advocacy event, Advocacy in Action (AiA) 2025, wrapped up last week after delivering an impactful presence on Capitol Hill.

More than 150 MOAA volunteers came together in the halls of Congress on April 9 to advocate for the service-earned pay and benefits relied upon by uniformed servicemembers, veterans, retirees, and their families. In a single day, our team of dedicated advocates met with lawmakers from all 50 states, visited over 325 congressional offices, and contributed a combined 1,200 hours of face-to-face advocacy.

[\[READ MORE: MOAA Members Mobilize for Advocacy in Action 2025\]](#)

These impressive numbers underscore one thing: When MOAA speaks, Congress listens. But our work doesn't stop here.

Our strength lies in our 350,000 members – and their families – across the country. Grassroots advocacy is key to the success of our message. Every voice matters, and yours can help reinforce the priorities delivered in person during Advocacy in Action.

Constituent messages sent directly after meetings with lawmakers help amplify our concerns and keep our issues



front and center throughout the legislative cycle.

How You Can Help:

Sign Up for MOAA's Legislative Action Center

One of the most effective ways to support MOAA's advocacy is by using our Legislative Action Center. This free, easy-to-use

platform empowers you to:

- Stay informed on the latest legislative priorities and actions affecting the uniformed services and veteran communities.

- Easily send messages to your lawmakers — personalized with your story — about the advocacy issues that matter most.

- Track your outreach and see how your efforts contribute to broader campaigns.

It only takes a minute to get started, but the effect of your engagement can last far longer. Sign up today and help us turn in-person momentum into real legislative progress – join thousands of your fellow members by visiting the Legislative Action Center and making your voice heard.



Col. Don "DK" Berry, USAF (Ret), meets with a staff member from the office of Sen. John Boozman (R-Ark.) on April 9 as part of MOAA's Advocacy in Action campaign. (Photo by Sean Shanahan/for MOAA)

What proposed \$1 trillion defense budget means for everyone

By MOAA Government Relations Staff

The first-ever proposed \$1 trillion defense budget includes \$150 billion in new spending that addresses key MOAA priorities, including \$2.9 billion to restore the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) and end the need for servicemembers to pay 5% of their anticipated housing costs out-of-pocket.

The House Armed Services Committee's budget reconciliation draft would also fund improvements to unaccompanied housing, address child care and spouse employment concerns, and add \$2 billion to the DoD health care budget, along with the temporary BAH increase. The legislation passed the panel April 29 by a 35-21 margin and heads to the House Budget Committee, but as it moves forward under the budget reconciliation process, the final bill remains uncertain while Congress seeks to capture \$1.5 trillion in spending cuts across the government.

[\[TAKE ACTION: Ask Your Lawmakers to Restore BAH\]](#)

Other key provisions addressing MOAA priorities found in the \$150 billion spending increase:

Active Component

- Unaccompanied Housing Funding: Over \$1.2 billion in increases for facilities sustainment, restoration, and modernization.
- Tuition Assistance: A \$100 million boost to tuition assistance programs.
- Temporary Lodging Expense (TLE) Expansion: \$590 million to extend the time to house-hunt from



14 to 21 days.

[\[TAKE ACTION: Ask Congress to Address the Hazardous Unaccompanied Housing Conditions Rampant in the Military\]](#)

Families

- Child Care Fee Assistance: As DoD continues to find solutions to address child care shortages, the bill includes \$100 million to provide fee assistance to more military families.
- Military Spouse Licensure: The development of interstate compacts is a key component of ensuring military spouses working in licensed or credentialed fields can PCS across state lines with minimal interruptions. The bill includes \$10 million for continued efforts to enhance license portability.

DoD Health Care

- Defense Health Program (DHP) Funding Increase: DHP will see \$2 billion more in funding, designed to address challenges across the military health system. However, the funds will not address TRICARE parity gaps or otherwise expand the military health care benefit.

What Is Budget Reconciliation?

Budget reconciliation is a limited, but expedited, legislative process for Congress to align spending with the budget resolution. In early April, Congress adopted a budget resolution agreeing to a reduction in federal spending. Now, lawmakers are using the budget reconciliation process to conform with the budget resolution they passed.

[\[RELATED: What Budget Constraints Could Mean for Your Earned Benefits\]](#)

This process can only be used to pass provisions that directly affect federal spending, revenues, or the debt limit – discretionary spending remains subject to the annual appropriations process. Additionally, this process cannot be filibustered, meaning a simple majority is needed in the Senate. And any adjustments cannot be in perpetuity – no permanent changes for issues like concurrent receipt, for example, can be made through this process. Even with these guardrails, lawmakers have a lot of latitude to reshape spending for the next decade.

The \$150 billion increase in defense spending has answered the call on many MOAA priorities, which will have positive effects for servicemembers, their families, and retirees. However, the potential impact on the network of services our community relies on through other departments and agencies remains uncertain. MOAA will continue advocating for improvements to our community's quality of life while striving to preserve the benefits we have earned.

MOAA strengthens ties with Pentagon officials to advance state-level advocacy

By: Jen Goodale

MOAA council and chapter leaders met with key DoD representatives recently to explore ways to deepen coordination on issues affecting servicemembers and their families.

Members of MOAA's State Legislative Exchange Forum spoke with Lee Kelley, acting deputy assistant secretary of defense for Military Community and Family Policy (MC&FP), and Geraldine Valentino-Smith, director of the Defense-State Liaison Office (DSLO). Discussions focused on how MOAA's 400-plus nationwide councils and chapters could enhance MC&FP's advocacy impact — particularly as DSLO continues to advance key legislative goals in all 50 states.

Valentino-Smith praised MOAA state leaders: "Who's influencing the legislators? MOAA members have relationships with state lawmakers who trust their expertise," she said. "This should complement our efforts."

Each year, DSLO publishes a list of 10 state legislative initiatives that serve as focal areas for the regional liaisons. In turn, legislative leaders within MOAA's councils and chapters are empowered to work these initiatives at the local level. This engagement helps expand the reach of DSLO, which has just eight regional liaisons who each cover no less than five states each.

MOAA forum leaders expressed appreciation for MC&FP's efforts and shared concerns about potential cuts to quality-of-life programs that support military families. Kelley highlighted the direct ties between MC&FP



Participants in a recent meeting between DoD officials and MOAA council and chapter leaders included, from left: Col. Harold Cooney, USA (Ret); DoD's Geraldine Valentino-Smith and Lee Kelley; Lt. Col. Don Wolfinger, USA (Ret); Lt. Col. Shelly Kalkowski, USAF (Ret); Col. Don "DK" Berry, USAF (Ret); Jen Goodale, MOAA's director of Government Relations for Military Family and Survivor Policy; and DoD's Eryn Wagnon. (Photo by Dave Julian)

programs and readiness of the total force – along with DSLO, MC&FP oversees child and youth programs; morale, welfare, and recreation efforts; and casualty and mortuary affairs.

Shaping Longer-Term Priorities
Valentino-Smith acknowledged the challenges presented by DSLO's battle rhythm, which involves identifying legislative priorities for each calendar year. While many priorities are retained in follow-on years, approximately four new priorities are added annually.

DSLO is working on a process to identify priorities that will span a two-year period to allow regional liaisons and supporting organizations, like MOAA, to achieve more progress, Valentino-Smith indicated.

This proposed change was well-received by MOAA leaders, as

new issues typically may require nearly a full year worth of research and lawmaker-education efforts. MOAA leaders also stressed the desire to be proactive rather than reactive, which a two-year cycle would enable.

Get Involved

Bringing MOAA State Legislative Exchange Forum leaders to the Pentagon signals an enhanced effort to find opportunities for our councils and chapters to engage with all levels of the process. We appreciate all those who have worked tirelessly on behalf of MOAA and the greater military and veteran community to advocate for changes and improvements at federal and state levels.

If you are a MOAA affiliate legislative leader and looking to get involved, email chapters@moaa.org.

Resources are many for caregivers

By: Cheryl Toland

There are 14.3 million military and veteran caregivers, representing 5.5% of the U.S. adult population, according to a report from Rand. If you find there is a need for a caregiver in your life or if you become a caregiver, know that caregivers are not alone. Many organizations offer information, guidance, and resources. Here are some to consider:



MOAA

Stay in the know about legislation and news affecting the caregiver community by reading the latest articles from MOAA. You can also take action on legislation pertaining to caregivers through [MOAA's Legislative Action Center](#).

One example: The Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement Act would help close gaps in caregiver financial planning and preparation by providing professional development, employment assistance, and retirement guidance specifically tailored for veteran caregivers. This legislation is critical to ensuring caregivers receive the recognition, support, and financial security they have earned through their service to veterans. [Urge your lawmaker to support this bill today.](#)

MOAA also partners with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation to provide Tips for Lifelong Caregiving.

[\[RELATED: Caregivers Sacrifice for Our Veterans – Now Congress Must Support Them\]](#)

Elizabeth Dole Foundation

[The Elizabeth Dole Foundation](#) addresses “the obstacles our military and veteran caregivers face regularly, from providing access to essential resources and support networks to calling for policy changes.” Their initiatives also include the Dole Caregiver Fellowship program and the Hidden Heroes Campaign.

VA Programs

The [VA's Caregiver Support Program](#) offers clinical services to caregivers of eligible and covered veterans enrolled in

the VA health care system. The program's mission is to promote the health and well-being of family caregivers who care for our nation's veterans.

Its programs and resources include the [VA Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers](#), which offers enhanced clinical support for family caregivers of eligible veterans; [Caregiver Support Program Teams](#), which have expertise in caregiving and, most importantly, are caring professionals; and [caregiver health and well-being coaching](#), a personal guide who will help you develop a personal health plan based on your values, needs, and goals.

[VA Aid and Attendance](#), or housebound benefits, provides monthly payments added to the amount of a monthly VA pension for qualified veterans and survivors.

Retiree COLA predictions remain steady as inflation fears loom

By: Kevin Lilley

Next month's release of key inflation figures should offer military retirees, Social Security recipients, and other federal beneficiaries an early glimpse of what trade-policy changes could mean for their annual cost-of-living adjustment.

Two predictions based on the April release of March inflation data put the 2026 COLA increase at 2.3% and 2.2%, in line with previous estimates. However, both made clear the numbers did not reflect any price changes resulting from recent tariffs; the first figures to include even a small amount of that data will be released in May.

Doing the Math

A 2.3% COLA would require the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) to rise in the next few months from its current level of 1.5% over the annual baseline figure. The average of the last three monthly CPI-W figures of the fiscal year (July, August, and September) is used to calculate the COLA.

Last year, the CPI-W rose from 1.7% in March 2024 to an average of 2.5% over those last three months – much lower than previous years' figures, which led to near-record COLAs.

[\[RELATED FROM MOAA: How Your COLA Is Calculated\]](#)



align with the data set. If food prices rise but other costs stay stable, for example, a retiree with a larger-than-average food budget may not see as much relief from their COLA increase.

Why MOAA Tracks COLA

[Publishing monthly updates to the CPI-W](#) at MOAA.org allows MOAA members and others to use the information in their financial planning. However, MOAA's main interest in tracking COLA is to maintain the earned retirement benefit for those who served and their families.

Details Matter

No matter the eventual impact of trade policy on prices, it's important to keep these factors in mind regarding inflation and the potential pay adjustment:

- Watch the numbers: Media reports on monthly inflation figures rarely mention the CPI-W, instead reflecting the CPI "for all urban consumers," or CPI-U. These figures pull from different data sets, giving greater weights to different products.
- Trends and timing: While upcoming releases may offer a glimpse at a possible COLA, only the last three releases of the fiscal year determine the raise.
- Personal spending: While the CPI-W pulls from a "basket" of consumer spending designed to reflect overall purchasing power, an individual's budget may not fully

Without continued inflation adjustment, this benefit would lose its value in short order. And while that may seem obvious, it hasn't stopped lawmakers from attempting to change COLA calculations or make other budget-based decisions that would weaken retirees' buying power.

Protecting this benefit has long been a top MOAA priority. And while no current legislation threatens these adjustments, ongoing budget constraints and an ever-present inclusion of COLA changes in a regular [Congressional Budget Office report](#) on deficit-reduction options means the issue simply cannot fall off the radar.

Keep up to date with COLA via MOAA's COLA Watch page, and track our advocacy priorities by visiting [MOAA.org/advocacy-news](#).

What budget constraints could mean for your earned benefits

By: Brenden McMahon

MOAA representatives discussed ongoing concerns in key areas during a recent meeting with professional staff from both the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, part of our work to protect service-earned benefits in the face of budget constraints and a compressed congressional calendar.

The talks covered four key areas: unaccompanied housing, military spouse employment, military health system (MHS) access to care, and veterans exposed to toxins while in uniform. Professional staff on both committees characterized the year ahead as primarily defensive, with limited opportunity for advancing new legislative priorities.

They expressed the greatest openness to efforts reinforcing or improving existing policies — particularly in areas related to DoD health care. Other issues, such as unaccompanied housing and military spouse employment, were met with interest and constructive discussion, though committee staff acknowledged constraints that may limit broader legislative action this year.

Here's a look at what was discussed in the March session, and how you can keep up with progress on these critical issues.

Unaccompanied Housing

MOAA and committee staff discussed the potential impacts of the continuing resolution on planned unaccompanied housing improvements. Committee staff acknowledged the issue but noted that funding limitations

and competing priorities may constrain options in the near term.

While broader legislative movement on this issue may prove challenging this year, it remains a critical area in need of oversight.

Military Spouse Employment

MOAA highlighted ongoing challenges facing military spouses in the federal workforce, including barriers related to licensure portability and other employment obstacles. Committee staff expressed support and encouraged continued focus on the issue, noting potential opportunities to push forward bills like the Resilient Employment and Authorization Determination to Increase the National Employment of Serving Spouses (READINESS) Act.

MOAA continues its work in support of the Military Spouse Hiring Act, which would award a tax credit to businesses hiring military spouses. However, because this bill would involve changes to the tax code, it would fall under a different committee jurisdiction.

Military Health System: Access to Care

Committee staffers encouraged MOAA to continue advocating for reliable MHS funding amid concerns that DoD is redirecting resources away from health care, impacting both readiness and the benefit itself by undercutting the direct care system.

Committee staff requested feedback on recent MHS

stabilization testimony and other legislative proposals. MOAA was also asked to provide draft legislative language for a digital access assistance platform, which is one of our Tier 1 priorities, and help clarify how much was saved through the TRICARE pharmacy network reductions.

Toxic Exposure

MOAA discussed recommendations from its Ending the Wait initiative and raised concerns about ongoing challenges to access service-earned care and benefits. Committee staff asked what specific problems remain unresolved and whether DoD is still failing to acknowledge certain exposure-related conditions.

MOAA and committee staff agreed it is critical to clearly identify what is still not working in these processes and what gaps may remain.

A Steady Voice

As Congress faces a compressed legislative calendar and ongoing budget uncertainty, MOAA remains committed to engaging with lawmakers and staff to advance practical, achievable improvements for the uniformed services and veteran communities. Even in a constrained environment, opportunities remain — and MOAA will continue to serve as a trusted voice, providing thoughtful policy recommendations and amplifying the concerns of those who serve and have served.

To stay informed and support these efforts, visit [MOAA's Legislative Action Center](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Cape Coral MOAA Board Meeting

10 a.m.
Thursday, MAY 8
Cape Royal
Golf Club

All members are welcome



About CCMOAA

*Serving All Military,
Veterans, & their families
in the Cape Coral area
... and beyond!*

Members of the Cape Coral Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America, P.O. Box 100508, Cape Coral, FL 33910-0508, publish the Cape Coral Communicator monthly, except June, July and August. The Chapter is a non-profit, non-partisan, and tax-exempt IRS 501(c)(3) and a 501(c)(19) organization, affiliated with National MOAA and the Florida Chapter of Councils, MOAA, not associated with the Department of Defense. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of MOAA, the Florida Council of Chapters, this Chapter, or DOD.

MAY Calendar of Events

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
				1 <i>Silver Star Banner Day</i> ----- <i>Loyalty Day</i>	2	3
4	5 <i>Cinco de Mayo</i>	6	7	8 <i>CCMOAA Board Meeting</i> ----- <i>VE Day</i>	9 <i>Military Spouse Appreciation Day</i>	10 <i>CCMOAA Breakfast Meeting</i>
11 <i>Mother's Day</i>	12	13 <i>Children of Fallen Patriots Day</i>	14	15	16	17 <i>Armed Forces Day</i>
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25 <i>Memorial Day Team Scramble Golf Event</i>	26 <i>Memorial Day</i>	27	28	29	30	31

Memorial Day to be observed on Monday, May 26 this year

Memorial Day is an American holiday, observed on the last Monday of May, honoring the men and women who died while serving in the U.S. military. Memorial Day 2025 will occur on Monday, May 26.

While many Memorial Day events are usually planned in the area, at the time of this publication, nothing had been announced.

Originally known as Decoration Day, it originated in the years following the Civil War and became an official federal holiday in 1971. Many Americans observe Memorial Day by visiting cemeteries or memorials, holding family gatherings and participating in parades. Unofficially, it marks the beginning of the summer season.

Birthplace of Memorial Day

The Civil War, which ended in the spring of 1865, claimed more lives than any conflict in U.S. history and required the establishment of the country's first national cemeteries.

By the late 1860s, Americans in various towns and cities had begun holding springtime tributes to these countless fallen soldiers, decorating their graves with flowers and reciting prayers.

It is unclear where exactly this tradition originated; numerous different communities may have independently initiated the memorial gatherings. And some records show that one of the earliest Memorial Day commemorations was organized by a group of formerly enslaved people in Charleston, SC less than a month after the Confederacy surrendered in 1865. Nevertheless, in 1966 the federal government declared Waterloo, NY the official birthplace of Memorial Day.

Waterloo—which first celebrated the day on May 5, 1866—was chosen because it hosted an annual, community-wide event, during



which businesses closed and residents decorated the graves of soldiers with flowers and flags.

Each year on Memorial Day a national moment of remembrance takes place at 3:00 p.m. local time.

Decoration Day

On May 5, 1868, General John A. Logan, leader of an organization for Northern Civil War veterans, called for a nationwide day of remembrance later that month. "The 30th of May, 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village and hamlet churchyard in the land," he proclaimed.

The date of Decoration Day, as he called it, was chosen because it wasn't the anniversary of any particular battle.

On the first Decoration Day, General James Garfield made a speech at Arlington National Cemetery, and 5,000 participants decorated the graves of the 20,000 Civil War soldiers buried there.

Many Northern states held similar commemorative events and reprised the tradition in subsequent years; by 1890 each one had made Decoration Day an official state holiday. Southern states, on the other hand, continued to honor the dead on separate days until after World War I.

History of Memorial Day

Memorial Day, as Decoration Day gradually came to be known, originally honored only those lost while fighting in the Civil War. But during World War I the United States found itself embroiled in another major conflict, and the holiday evolved to commemorate American military personnel who died in all wars, including World War II, The Vietnam War, The

Korean War and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

For decades, Memorial Day continued to be observed on May 30, the date General Logan had selected for the first Decoration Day. But in 1968, Congress passed the Uniform Monday Holiday Act, which established Memorial Day as the last Monday in May in order to create a three-day weekend for federal employees. The change went into effect in 1971. The same law also declared Memorial Day a federal holiday.

Traditions and Rituals

Cities and towns across the United States host Memorial Day parades each year, often incorporating military personnel and members of veterans' organizations. Some of the largest parades take place in Chicago, New York and Washington, D.C.

Americans also observe Memorial Day by visiting cemeteries and memorials. Some people wear a red poppy in remembrance of those fallen in war—a tradition that began with a World War I poem. On a less somber note, many people take weekend trips or throw parties and barbecues on the holiday, perhaps because Memorial Day weekend—the long weekend comprising the Saturday and Sunday before Memorial Day and Memorial Day itself—unofficially marks the beginning of summer.

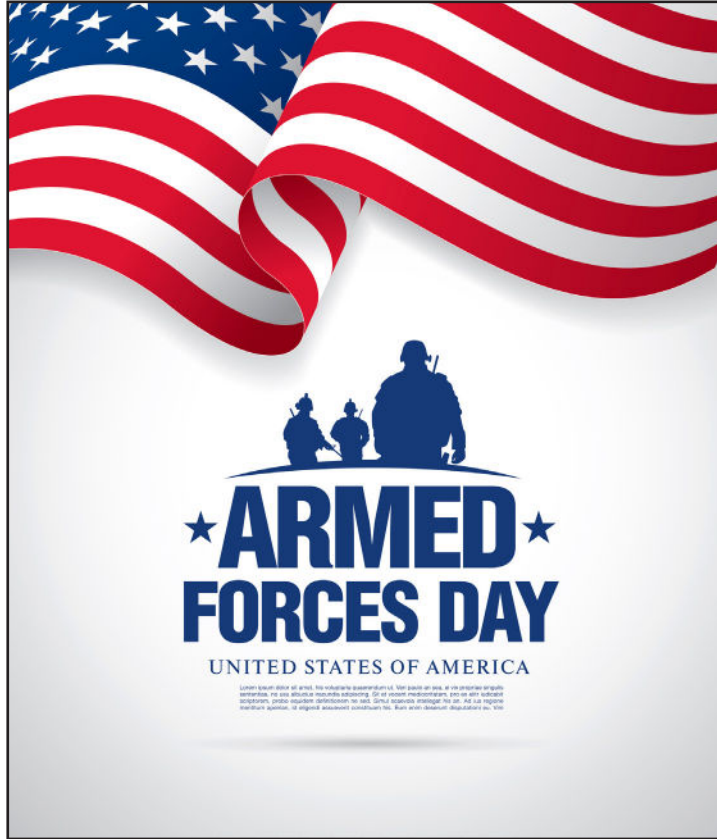
Armed Forces Day to be observed on Saturday, May 17 this year

Armed Forces Day is observed on the third Saturday of May each year. This year, it will be celebrated on May 17.

How is Armed Forces Day different from Veterans Day and Memorial Day? Veterans Day, previously known as Armistice Day, commemorates those who served in the military during wartime. Memorial Day honors those who died in service. Armed Forces Day, on the other hand, is dedicated to honoring all individuals currently serving in the military, as well as those who have served and sacrificed for our freedom.

Armed Forces Day was established on August 31, 1949, by then-Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson. It was created to replace separate Army, Navy, and Air Force Days, following the unification of the Armed Forces under the Department of Defense by President Harry S. Truman when he signed the National Security Act into law on July 26, 1947.

Originally, Armed Forces Day was intended as an educational program for civilians to increase awareness of the Armed Forces. It aimed to expand public



understanding of the military's role in civilian life and showcase state-of-the-art equipment. It is a day to honor and acknowledge the people serving in the Armed Forces of the United States.

Armed Forces Day honors all individuals currently serving and all who have served, both active and former, in the reserves, National Guard, or on active duty. In his proclamation announcing the establishment of the holiday, President Truman invited the Governors of the States, Territories, and possessions to issue proclamations calling for the celebration of the day to honor the Armed Forces and the millions of veterans who have

returned to civilian life.

In his proclamation, President Truman called upon citizens to display the flag of the United States at their homes on Armed Forces Day and to participate in exercises recognizing the skill, gallantry, and devotion to duty characteristic of the Armed Forces. One way to express this recognition is by volunteering with or donating to the USO, a congressionally-chartered nonprofit organization committed to serving active-duty military and their families.

The first Armed Forces Day was celebrated on May 20, 1950. The annual Army Day Parade held in Washington, D.C., during the first week of April was replaced by an Armed Forces Day Parade held during the third week of May.

Armed Forces Day is part of National Military Appreciation Month, which begins on May 1st with Loyalty Day and includes Public Service Recognition Week, VE (Victory in Europe) Day, Military Spouse Appreciation Day, and Armed Forces Week, leading up to Armed Forces Day. The month concludes with Memorial Day, a day to honor our fallen

Loyalty Day is celebrated May 1

Loyalty Day is celebrated on May 1 in the United States. It was established by President Dwight D. Eisenhower as a day to express allegiance to the United States and recognize American history.

The choice of May 1 was intended to counteract International Workers' Day and was acknowledged by the U.S. Congress during the height of the Second Red Scare.

Every year on Loyalty Day, the sitting president is asked to issue a proclamation requesting government officials to display the American flag on all government buildings³. The proclamations also encourage the American people to observe Loyalty Day with ceremonies in appropriate locations, with parades being the most common form of celebration.

History

International Workers' Day, held



annually on May 1, has honored the labor movement since the late 19th century. The date marks the 1886 Haymarket affair in Chicago. Social unrest following World War I, particularly the October Revolution in Russia, led to the First Red Scare, resulting in government crackdowns on organized labor, the communist movement, and other activities deemed "radical". In this context, Loyalty Day (originally called "Americanization Day") was created in 1921 as a direct

replacement for International Workers' Day.

An early celebration of Americanization Day took place on May 1, 1930, when 10,000 VFW members held a rally at New York's Union Square to promote patriotism.

During the Second Red Scare, Loyalty Day was recognized by the U.S. Congress on April 27, 1955, and became an official recurring holiday on July 18, 1958 (Public Law 85-529).

President Dwight D. Eisenhower proclaimed May 1, 1955, as the first observance of Loyalty Day⁶. In 1958, Eisenhower urged Congress to move Child Health Day to the first Monday in October to avoid conflicting with Loyalty Day⁶. Since its establishment as a legal holiday in 1958, Loyalty Day has been recognized with an official proclamation every year by every president.

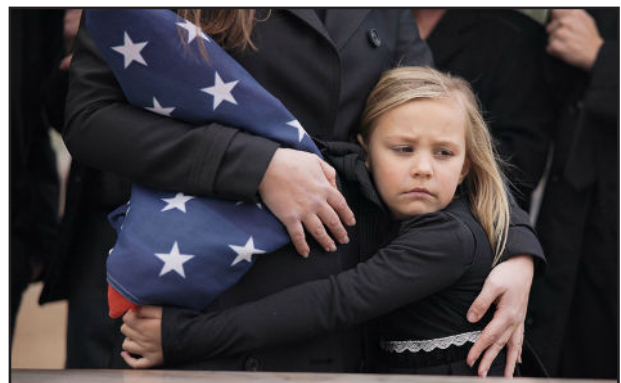
May 13 honors children of the fallen

Children of Fallen Patriots Day is observed on May 13 every year. The day aims to honor the pain and sacrifice of children who have lost a parent to martyrdom. The objective is to appreciate the young individuals who live tragically altered lives due to a parent passing away in the line of duty. Children of Fallen Patriots Day was established by the Children of Fallen Patriots Foundation in 2014, an organization that provides financial education and educational counseling to Gold Star scholars who have a martyred parent. May 13 was chosen as Children of Fallen Patriots Day because it was the day the Arlington National Cemetery was established in 1864.

The individuals who form the

U.S. Armed Forces risk losing their lives in the line of duty. These martyrs may often leave behind families, especially children. Children of Fallen Patriots Day aims to honor the pain and sacrifice of children who have lost a parent to martyrdom. The objective is to appreciate the young individuals who live tragically altered lives due to a parent passing away in the line of duty.

Children of Fallen Patriots Day was established by the Children of Fallen Patriots Foundation in



2014, an organization that provides financial education and educational counseling to Gold Star scholars who have a martyred parent. May 13 was chosen as Children of Fallen Patriots Day because it was the day the Arlington National Cemetery was established in 1864.

More than medicine: Understanding the value of VA healthcare

By: René Campos

For generations, the VA health care system has embodied the nation's promise to those who have served. Operated by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), it provides not only medical care, but also critical support to veterans, families, caregivers, and survivors while advancing the broader health of the nation through education, innovation, and emergency response.

The far-reaching contributions of the VHA, and its importance to the nation, stem from its four core missions: delivering health care, training and educating health care professionals, conducting groundbreaking research, and responding to national emergencies. Together, these missions make the VHA a cornerstone of veteran support and a vital national asset.

Delivering Health Care

Serving more than 9 million veterans across more than 1,300 facilities, the VHA offers a full spectrum of health care services — from primary and mental health care to cutting-edge specialty treatments and services. To improve the quality of care and expand its services, the VA has in recent years:

- **Reduced Wait Times:** Improved access to primary and mental health care, often outperforming private-sector benchmarks.

- **Expanded Community Care:** Used the MISSION Act of 2018 to bolster its ability to refer veterans to non-VA providers when needed to access timely, specialized care closer to home.

- **Grown Telehealth Services:** Experienced a significant expansion in its remote programs, with dramatic increases in access for rural and homebound veterans.

- **Adopted a Whole Health Model:** Developed a new approach which helps veterans design personalized wellness plans including acupuncture, yoga, and nutritional counseling, allowing them to live fuller lives.

- **Supported Caregivers:** Expanded caregiver support programs including its specialized Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers, offering home-based services, training, respite care, stipends, and more to those caring for veterans with serious injuries.

Training the Health Workforce

The VA is not just a provider of care — it is a vital educator. Through academic partnerships with over 1,400 institutions, the VA trains the next generation of health care professionals.

Each year, approximately 120,000 medical trainees — including physicians, nurses, psychologists, and social workers — gain clinical experience by working in VA facilities. An estimated 70% of practicing U.S. physicians have trained in the VHA.

This hands-on training prepares providers for complex, team-based care environments and enhances the nation's overall health system capacity. These education programs equip providers to serve veterans from all backgrounds and communities.

VHA's mission also extends to continuous learning and professional development for its workforce. VA clinicians benefit from ongoing access to advanced training, cutting-edge research, and academic partnerships — ensuring they remain at the forefront of medical innovation and best practices to better serve veterans.

Driving Innovation

The VA has long been a leader in advancing medical knowledge with discoveries that benefit both veterans and the general population.

- **Pioneering Breakthroughs:** VA research has led to major innovations including the first successful liver transplant, the cardiac pacemaker, and computer tomography imaging technologies. The VA was also a trailblazer in using barcodes as part of medication administration, a widely adopted tool to reduce medication errors.

- **Precision Medicine and Genomics:** The VA delivers cutting-edge cancer care through genetic sequencing. In tandem with the Million Veteran Program — one of the world's largest health-genomics databases — VA researchers are uncovering connections between genes and chronic conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

- **Mental Health Leadership:** VA research has led to the development of evidence-based therapies like prolonged exposure therapy and cognitive

processing therapy for PTSD. These treatments, first validated within the VA, are used widely throughout the U.S. mental health system.

Protecting the Nation

The VA's "Fourth Mission" serves all Americans — mobilizing department resources to aid in emergencies, disasters, and public health crises. Examples include:

- **COVID-19 Pandemic Response:** During the pandemic, the VA provided critical support beyond its veteran patient base, treating non-veterans, deploying more than 4,000 staff, and distributing millions of vaccine doses through federal and community partnerships.

- **Disaster Response Teams:** Using a specialized personnel system, the VA is able to rapidly mobilize clinical staff to respond to wildfires, hurricanes, and other large-scale emergencies.

- **National Health Infrastructure:** VA medical centers serve as federal coordinating centers as part of a larger national disaster medical system response, ensuring surge capacity for mass casualty or pandemic scenarios — a role crucial to U.S. preparedness.

MOAA's Commitment

These four missions form the backbone of a system that not only honors veterans with world-class care, but also serves the nation through cutting-edge medical education, groundbreaking research, and vital emergency response capabilities.

Like all large health care systems, the VA faces challenges. MOAA acknowledges the need for continued reform to simplify the system and ensure veterans can more easily access the care and benefits they've earned.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to work alongside VA Secretary Doug Collins and Congress to drive meaningful, veteran-centered improvements that enhance quality, increase transparency, and ensure timely access to care.

By preserving and strengthening VA health care, we not only honor the sacrifices of our veterans — we invest in the health, resilience, and well-being of the entire nation.

No waivers needed for TRICARE outside drive-time standard

Editor's note: This article by Patricia Kime originally appeared on Military.com, a leading source of news for the military and veteran community.

Beneficiaries who live within 100 miles of a military hospital or clinic but at least 30 minutes away by car no longer need to request a waiver to stay with Tricare Prime, the Defense Department's managed-care health program.

Under the next-generation Tricare contracts that went into effect Jan. 1, patients who move to a location outside that access standard for primary care can choose to receive care at the DoD facility or, if they already receive care there, keep their primary care manager without seeking a waiver.

According to the Defense Health Agency, beneficiaries who meet the criteria will receive a letter notifying them that their homes are outside the access-standard measure, but if they don't respond, they will remain with their current primary care managers, or PCMs, at their military treatment facility.

Those who want to change primary care managers, however, can do so by following instructions in the letter.

"This new approach will help prevent unnecessary coverage gaps and ensure families keep access to their PCMs," said Shane Pham, a DHA management and program analyst, in a news release last week.

The change was among the requirements of the new contracts, known as T-5, which were issued to TriWest Healthcare Alliance in the Tricare West Region and Humana Military in the Tricare East Region on Jan. 1.

[\[UPDATED MONTHLY: MOAA's TRICARE Toolkit\]](#)

The allowance also coincides with an effort at the Defense Department to bring family members and military

retirees back into military hospitals and clinics to ensure that the facilities have enough patients to maintain provider proficiency and curb the rising costs of private-sector care

According to a memo issued Dec. 6, 2023, by then-Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks, the DoD hopes to increase the number of patients seen at military treatment facilities by 7% by the end of 2026, or a total of 3.3 million patients.

In a speech to uniformed and civilian federal health officials in March, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Dr. Stephen Ferrara said the DoD is pursuing the efforts in order to create a high-functioning medical system.

"The last thing that a family or that service member needs is to be worried about whether their family is getting adequate or high-quality care," Ferrara said.

According to Tricare officials, the decision to drop the drive time waiver was made based on patient satisfaction surveys showing that many beneficiaries are willing to drive more than 30 minutes to keep their primary care doctors and would prefer not to switch physicians.

If a Tricare Prime beneficiary moves more than 30 minutes from their PCM, their Tricare regional contract will contact all adult patients in the household by phone, text, mail and email to provide options for continuing their health coverage.

Patients will have 90 days to decide what to do. If they now live more than 30 minutes but less than 100 miles away, they won't have to do anything to keep their Tricare Prime coverage and primary care manager. Or they can switch health plans -- to Tricare Select or the U.S. Family Health Program, if it is available in their region.

If patients have moved more than 100 miles away from a Tricare Prime Service Area, they must decide within 90 days to switch to another

plan. They will be dropped from Tricare Prime after 90 days and will be able to be seen at a military hospital or clinic only if space is available.

Defense Health Agency officials urge all beneficiaries to ensure that their addresses are updated in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System, or DEERS, and they also should check the email addresses and phone numbers the DoD has on file for accuracy.

Since the contract changeover Jan. 1, Tricare providers and patients have experienced disruptions to patient care and payments, resulting in patients having to switch providers or delay care and prompting providers to take out loans to pay staff while they wait for reimbursements.

The problems have caught the eye of lawmakers on Capitol Hill as well as military leadership, including the services' top enlisted leaders.

During a hearing last week before the House Appropriations subcommittee that oversees military construction, Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy James Honea said he personally has received complaints from providers about the reimbursement delays.

"The Defense Health Agency to their credit has worked diligently with me, with the contract, to have those bills paid as quickly as possible. But as we are continuing through this transformation, we are finding more and more places that we are challenged [to find] health care providers," Honea said.

Last month, Republican Reps. John Rutherford and Aaron Bean of Florida wrote to David Smith, the acting DHA director, asking him to explain the delays and fix them.

"It would be unacceptable for military families to lose access to critical care coverage. This crisis must be immediately rectified," they wrote.

Florida Veterans Foundation launches veterans dental program

Courtesy of the Florida Veterans Foundation

The Florida Veterans Foundation (FVF) on April 17 launched its statewide Veterans Dental Program, a groundbreaking initiative designed to expand access to vital dental care services for eligible Veterans across Florida.

FVF's comprehensive network of selected 501c3 nonprofit organizations will deliver no-cost services to qualifying Veterans, including routine exams, cleanings, fillings, and other necessary dental procedures. The program will address the gap in dental care services for Veterans who are not fully covered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

"We are honored to lead this initiative, which will directly impact the lives of many Veterans across Florida. Our goal is to ensure that every eligible Veteran has access to the dental care they need, improving their quality of life and overall health," said Dr. Pia S. Woodley, DBA, Chair of the Florida Veterans Foundation.

The Veterans Dental Program was established through 2023 legislation (CS/HB 635-2023) sponsored by Sen. Danny Burgess of Zephyrhills and Rep. Patt Maney of Fort Walton Beach and funded by a \$1 million appropriation from the Florida Legislature in 2024. The program will be initiated through selected nonprofit Veterans organizations that will provide dental care to Florida residents who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces and meet specific criteria, including income level and service status.

"Florida is a leader in being the most Veteran-friendly state in our country, and our goal



is to continue addressing ways to improve their quality of life," said Sen. Danny Burgess (R-Zephyrhills). "This program is designed to provide greater services and more benefits to Veterans within their local communities by engaging the organizations who best know their needs."

"Just 15% of Veterans are eligible for dental services through the federal VA. I was honored to sponsor the legislation that created this vital program, which will help meet a critical need beyond the local resources that are available to our state's Veterans," said Rep. Patt Maney.

"This is another example of Florida stepping up to the plate to address a critical gap in services for our Veterans," said Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs Executive Director James S. Hartsell. "It's no secret that good dental care is vital for both your physical and mental well-being. Thanks to Gov. Ron DeSantis, bill sponsors Sen. Danny Burgess and Rep. Patt Maney, and our

legislature, this state-led initiative is another reason Florida remains the most Veteran friendly, appreciated and sought after state in the Nation."

Statewide Veteran-centric organizations interested in participating in the Veterans Dental Program can learn more and apply for a grant online at www.helpflvets.org/dentalprogram. The FVF will work closely with veteran service organizations and community partners to promote the program and educate veterans about their eligibility.

"This program is a lifeline designed to reach those veterans in desperate need of dental care, offering them hope and a path to a better quality of life," said Paul Kimbel, FVF Lead Dental Analyst. "We look forward to working together with our network of nonprofits to make a positive impact and ensure Florida's veterans receive the vital care they so rightly deserve."

Senate confirms Air Force veteran Dan Caine as Joint Chiefs Chairman

This article by Svetlana Shkolnikova originally appeared on Stripes.com. Stars and Stripes serves the U.S. military community by providing editorially independent news and information around the world.

The Senate voted April 11 to confirm retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Dan Caine as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, elevating him to four-star general and the nation's highest-ranking military position.

The vote was 60-25 and took place in the middle of the night to ensure Caine, a 34-year military veteran, could begin his role as the principal military adviser to President Donald Trump as the Senate departed for a two-week recess.

[\[RELATED: Caine Sworn in as JCS Chairman\]](#)

Democrats blocked an attempt to hold a quick vote on Caine's nomination during the day on Thursday to protest Trump's firing of the most recent chairman, Air Force Gen. Charles "CQ" Brown.

Sen. Roger Wicker of Mississippi, the Republican chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, urged the Senate to stay "as long as it takes" to confirm Caine, pointing to increasing threats from China's military buildup and the banding together of multiple adversaries against the United States.

The committee advanced Caine's nomination this week on a 23-4 vote.

"We must... get the president's chief military official on the job — because that is what the American people deserve and what the moment demands," Wicker said.

Caine, 56, is stepping out of retirement to take the position. He is also the first Joint Chiefs chairman to have never served at the rank of four-star general or admiral before assuming the chairmanship.

By statute, the job is required to go to someone who has served as a combatant commander, as the vice chairman for the Joint Chiefs of Staff or as the top uniformed officer of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps or Space Force. Trump invoked a waiver to bypass those criteria.



Caine acknowledged he was an unconventional nominee at his confirmation hearing earlier this month. But he said his decades of military service and experience as an entrepreneur and investor made him a good fit for "unconventional times."

"I realize for many Americans I'm an unknown leader and it is with a heart full of gratitude that I've been given a truly unique set of experiences that I believe have prepared me to be the 22nd chairman," he said.

Caine followed his father into the Air Force, commissioning through the ROTC shortly after graduating from the Virginia Military Institute in 1990.

An F-16 pilot with 150 combat flight hours, Caine was reportedly so aggressive in the cockpit that he earned the nickname "Razin Caine."

On Sept. 11, 2001, Caine was a lead aviator protecting the skies above Washington following the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and New York's World Trade Center. He also deployed to Iraq and served as a deputy commander in the U.S. campaign against the Islamic State.

Trump met Caine when he visited U.S. troops in western Iraq in 2018. The meeting made a great impression on Trump, who later recounted Caine told him that ISIS could be defeated in a week and not two years as his senior advisers predicted.

"I said, 'Why didn't my other generals tell me that? Why didn't they tell me that?'" Trump said at the Conservative

Political Action Conference in 2019.

Trump also repeatedly claimed Caine put on a Make America Great Again hat during the meeting — an account that Caine disputed at his confirmation hearing. Caine said he has "never worn any political merchandise."

He sought to reassure senators that he would provide candid military advice to Trump, pledging to "speak truth to power" even if it was not what elected officials wanted to hear. He also said he was willing to be fired for following the Constitution.

"Candor has gotten me here today, and candor will continue to allow me to do my job moving forward," Caine said.

Trump frequently clashed during his first term with former Joint Chiefs Chairman Mark Milley, a now-retired Army general. Since Trump's return to the White House in January, Milley has had his security detail revoked, his security clearance suspended and is under an investigation that could bump down his rank.

"It's always a challenge to stand up to this president," Sen. Mazie Hirono, D-Hawaii, told Caine at his confirmation hearing.

Caine noted he served three presidents from both political parties as a general officer. His most recent role was associate director for military affairs at the CIA, where he was the agency's primary liaison to the Defense Department.

As a part-time member of the Air National Guard from 2009 to 2016, Caine ventured into the business world and became a "serial entrepreneur and investor" who founded and led companies. He joined a venture capital firm called Shield Capital after retiring in December.

He said he learned "what a different kind of grit looks like" as a businessman and would apply those lessons to the chairmanship.

"Our American entrepreneurial spirit is a force multiplier and my time as an entrepreneur has made me a better general officer and leader," he said. "I'll bring more of that spirit into the joint force."

Party in Philly: Navy and Marine Corps turn 250 and you can join the fun

Editor's note: This article by Blake Stilwell originally appeared on Military.com, a leading source of news for the military and veteran community.

It's time to party like it's 1775 -- at least, for the Navy and Marine Corps.

The year 2025 marks the 250th birthday for both branches of the U.S. military and Philadelphia (the birthplace of each) will host Homecoming 250: the official national celebration. An estimated 300,000 history buffs and sea service veterans are expected to attend.

From Oct. 9-16 and then on Nov. 10, 2025, the City of Brotherly Love, along with Camden, New Jersey (which sits directly across the Delaware River), will host a series of events to commemorate the Navy and Marine Corps semiquincentennial, all of which are open to the public free of charge.

Sadly, the new Tun Tavern, birthplace of the Marine Corps, will not be finished in time for the Marines' 250th birthday as planned. It was never a part of the official Homecoming 250 festivities, but it's sure to be a must-see when it's finished.

The festivities for the Navy begin on Oct. 9 as a parade of



ships float down the river for a formal "blessing of the fleet." The historic vessels include the USS Olympia, the oldest steel warship still floating. First launched in 1891, the Olympia saw action in the Spanish-American War, World War I and ferried the Unknown Soldier from France to his final resting place in Washington.

Other ships include the USS New Jersey (America's most decorated battleship), a replica of the USS Providence (which carried the Marines on their first amphibious landing during the Revolutionary War) and a replica of the USS Monitor, the Civil War-era ironclad that changed naval warfare forever. Visitors to Independence Mall can also see a special preview of Ken Burns' "The American

Revolution," the award-winning filmmaker's latest epic documentary series. Events continue until the closing ceremonies on Oct. 16, 2025.

Those who return to the Philadelphia area for the Marine Corps' 250th birthday on Nov. 10 can attend the 100th Marine Corps Birthday Ball at the historic Bellevue Hotel. The venue is where Lt. Gen. John Lejeune, 13th commandant of the Marine Corps, hosted the very first Marine Corps Ball in 1925 alongside the legendary Maj. Gen. Smedley Butler.

On top of Philadelphia and Camden's myriad history museums, those interested in a deeper dive can attend academic symposiums on the 250 years of the Navy's and Marine Corps' history hosted by the University of Pennsylvania and Rutgers University. And, of course, no naval history celebration would be complete without the Navy and Marine Corps bands or the Blue Angels demonstration team, all of which will be present during the celebrations.

For more information about Homecoming 250, visit the official website, Homecoming250.org. To find out when the new Tun Tavern opens its doors, keep an eye out on [The Tun Legacy Foundation website](http://TheTunLegacyFoundation.com).



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