

## **Newsletter of the Hawaii Aloha Chapter, Affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America,**

*a nonpartisan, nonprofit veterans' association dedicated to maintaining a strong national defense and ensuring our nation keeps its commitments to currently serving, retired, and former members of the uniformed services and their families and survivors.*

Hawaii State Chapter — Chartered **23 July 1959**; Aloha Chapter — Chartered **27 January 2000**

Hawaii Aloha Chapter — Established **1 May 2015**

Both the national Military Officers Association of America and the Hawaii Aloha Chapter are non-partisan organizations

Volume No. 10, Issue No. 1	<a href="http://www.moaa-hawaii.org">http://www.moaa-hawaii.org</a>	May, 2024
----------------------------	---	-----------

=====

### In this issue:

- May 2024 General Membership Meeting and Lunch
- Internment Ceremony for Mark Webster, LCDR, USN (Ret)
- Vehicle Registration Office on Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam (JBPHH)
- The New Akaka VA Clinic is Accepting New Patients
- Chapter Calendar of Events

From National MOAA

- [White House Budget Request Offers Good News for TRICARE Beneficiaries](#)
- [State of the Coast Guard: 'We Cannot Do the Same With Less'](#)
- [VA Joins New Program to Support Military Spouse Hiring](#)
- [Where Will Your Cost-of-Living Adjustment Land in 2025?](#)
- [Major MOAA-Backed Improvements for Troops, Families Part of Initial NDAA Bill](#)
- [The Next Steps in MOAA's Fight to Support Combat-Injured Veterans](#)

---

### May 2024 General Membership Meeting and Lunch

The next Hawaii Aloha Chapter general membership meeting and lunch will occur on Friday, 24 May, at 11:15 AM. As usual, we'll be at the Oahu Veterans' Center in Salt Lake, and A Catered Experience will provide the food. Our guest speaker will come to us from HI-EMA, and will speak on hurricane preparedness. A reservation form is attached at the end of this newsletter. Please fill it out and mail it to our mailbox, along with a check for the appropriate amount, by Friday, 17 May.

### Internment Ceremony for Mark Webster, LCDR, USN (Ret)

Mark Webster, LCDR, USN (Ret), our Chapter's Immediate Past President and long-time Board member, as well as performing chapter duties as Membership Committee Chairman and newsletter editor/publisher, will be interred in a columbarium at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific otherwise known as the Punchbowl, on Tuesday, 4 June 2024, at 10:30 AM. Mark's relatives have arranged for a flag presentation to Mark's widow, Helene, and are working to get the Punahou Color Guard to perform a flag-folding ceremony. They are also trying to arrange for a bugler to play Taps. Friends and family will have the opportunity to speak and pay tribute to Mark.

### Vehicle Registration Office on Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam (JBPHH)

A Vehicle Registration Office opened on Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam (JBPHH), AAFES Main Exchange Complex, 1239 Vickers Ave, Honolulu, HI 96818. This is a joint project between the City and County of Honolulu and the Exchange to provide military members and their families a convenient, accessible location for vehicle registration and renewals; title changes; personalized license plates; and more. Office hours are Monday-Friday 0815-1600. Appointments can be made by calling 808-768-4063.

### The New Akaka VA Clinic is Accepting New Patients!

On April 8, 2024, VA Pacific Islands Health Care System (VAPIHCS) opened the new Daniel K. Akaka VA Clinic at 91-1051 Franklin D Roosevelt Ave, Kapolei, HI 96707. Many patients have already switched their care to this new clinic, which has a pharmacy and lab in addition to primary care, specialty care, imaging, women's health, mental health services, and more. If you are a Veteran who would like to transfer your care, please call 1-800-214-1306. Remember

that the new clinic also has an office for the Veterans Benefits Administration and Veteran Service Organizations, so you can also inquire about your claims.

---

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

20 May 24	0900	Golf Outing, Leilehua Golf Course, (Monday)	99 Leilehua Golf Course Road, Wahiawa
24 May 24	1115	General Membership Meeting, (Friday)	OVC, Guest Speaker: HI-EMA/Topic Hurricane Preparedness
27 May 24	0830	Mayor's Memorial Day Ceremony, (Monday)	Punchbowl
27 May 24	1300	Governor's Memorial Day Ceremony, (Monday)	Hawaii Veterans' Cemetery
4 Jun 24	1030	Mark Webster Internment Ceremony, (Tuesday)	Punchbowl
14 Jun 24	1100	National Flag Day Massing of the Colors\	OVC
24 Jun 24	0904	Golf Outing, Klipper Golf Course, (Monday)	Kaneohe Marine Corps Air Station
22 Jul 24	0900	Golf Outing, Barbers Point Golf Course, (Monday)	92-2219 Franklin D. Roosevelt Ave, Kapolei
26 Jul 24	1115	General Membership Meeting, (Friday)	OVC, Guest Speaker: AARP (T)/Topic TBD
23 Aug 24	0904	Golf Outing, Klipper Golf Course, (Monday)	Kaneohe Marine Corps Air Station
7 Sep 24	1200	Annual Picnic/BBQ, (Saturday)	Foster Point, Hickam Field
27 Sep 24	0836	Golf Outing, Leilehua Golf Course, (Friday)	99 Leilehua Golf Course Road, Wahiawa
21 Oct 24	0910	Golf Outing, Barbers Point Golf Course, (Monday)	92-2219 Franklin D. Roosevelt Ave, Kapolei
11 Nov 24	1000	Veterans' Day Ceremony, (Monday)	Punchbowl
15 Nov 24	1730	Annual General Membership Meeting/ (Friday)	Mongolian BBQ, Sunset Lanai, Cp Smith
22 Nov 24	0910	Golf Outing, Klipper Golf Course, (Friday)	Kaneohe Marine Corps Air Station
8 Dec 24	1000	Christmas Brunch/Party, (Sunday)	Tradewinds Club, Hickam Field
24 Jan 25	1115,	General Membership Meeting and Installation Ceremony, (Friday)	OVC, Guest Speaker/Topic TBD

---

## White House Budget Request Offers Good News for TRICARE Beneficiaries

*By: Karen Ruedisueli*

The FY 2025 DoD budget proposal includes no mention of TRICARE cost-sharing requirements or other fee increases – good news for beneficiaries, as past TRICARE fee increase proposals have originated with the annual budget request.

The [White House budget](#), released March 11, includes a Unified Medical Budget (UMB) request of \$61.4 billion, up 4.6% from the FY 2024 budget request. The UMB is made up of several accounts within the annual defense appropriations bill including Operations and Maintenance (O&M), MILPERS (funding for military personnel operating the MHS), and MILCON, which funds Military Health System (MHS) construction projects.

The request for the Defense Health Program (DHP) sits at \$40.3 billion, up from \$38.4 billion in the FY 2024 request. DHP, a sub-account of O&M, funds MHS functions such as health care delivery in military treatment facilities (MTFs); TRICARE; certain medical readiness activities and expeditionary medical capabilities; and education and training programs.

DHP spending growth is driven predominantly by MTF investment designed to sustain direct care capabilities and modernize electronic health records/digital health. Within the FY 2025 DHP request, \$20.6 billion, or 51%, is for purchased care via TRICARE.

### 'Strategic Imperative'

The budget narrative underscores the updated MHS strategy to restore MTF capacity, reattract beneficiaries to the direct care system of military hospitals and clinics, and increase opportunities to sustain uniformed medical provider clinical readiness.

"We recognize a strategic imperative to rebuild our military and civilian medical workforce and resource the MHS," [the budget overview states](#). "The DoD leadership determined the most effective way to take care of our people, support the

National Defense Strategy, increase clinical readiness, mitigate risks to requirements, and reduce long-term cost growth in private sector care is to reattract beneficiaries to Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) and maximize medical education and training pipelines.”

The budget document also provides an update on past medical billet cut proposals, an initiative [MOAA successfully advocated to halt](#) in several consecutive defense authorization bills. DoD has suspended planned clinical military medical end strength divestitures and will use this congressionally directed pause to conduct an assessment of current military medical end strength to match operational requirements.

Following this assessment, DoD will submit a report to the House and Senate Armed Services Committees that certifies the completion of a comprehensive review of military medical manning and justification for any proposed changes to the composition of military medical end strength. The report will include plans to address civilian backfill and persistent civilian vacancies or risks associated with the planned reductions.

As the FY 2025 NDAA process moves forward, MOAA remains focused on legislation and congressional oversight that will ensure beneficiaries have access to quality care as DoD implements the new MHS stabilization strategy. Please watch your MOAA newsletter and our [Advocacy News page](#) for opportunities to support our efforts through MOAA’s [Legislative Action Center](#).

## **State of the Coast Guard: ‘We Cannot Do the Same With Less’**

*By: Mark Belinsky*

The Coast Guard’s funding will cover only half its maintenance requirements in the coming year, the service’s top officer said in the annual State of the Coast Guard speech – a familiar situation for all who serve and one that will have ripple effects for the ongoing recruiting crisis.

“The quality of our facilities and ships not only impacts mission readiness; it is an important factor potential recruits think about when they consider Coast Guard service,” Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Linda Fagan said during the March 20 address to lawmakers at the Cannon House office building. “And recruiting is critical to operational readiness.”

Fagan did suggest the service will be scaling back some operations in the face of the funding and end strength challenges.

“Like the other branches of the armed forces, the Coast Guard is experiencing a personnel shortfall,” she said. “The service cannot maintain the same level of operations with this gap. We cannot do the same with less.”

Despite inadequate funding, the Coast Guard has adapted with modern talent management investments that have helped it continue its global work to partner with nations under the larger Indo-Pacific strategy, interdict narcotics, and save nearly 5,000 lives.

Innovation through the service’s talent management task force has resulted in reforms to training and talent acquisition. Assessments of existing personnel skills are now evaluated before training and have resulted in the service delivering trained petty officers 31% faster to the force. The [Scout Talent and Refer \(STAR\) program](#) also embraces the ability for current servicemembers and retirees to find talent for the service; a referral by a retiree or servicemember can also come with a \$1,000 cash incentive.

Such referrals have a higher training completion rate, according to a Coast Guard senior leader. It should come as no surprise that retirees are good at spotting those with the aptitude and character fit for service. Along with attributes that indicate such potential, there is also the added bonus of coaching and mentoring provided by these retirees.

The cash incentive is an innovative way for the Coast Guard to leverage retirees to support the total force ... and possibly a model for DoD to consider.

## VA Joins New Program to Support Military Spouse Hiring

By: *Kevin Lilley*

The VA became the latest employer to join a new program designed to boost military spouse hiring – and the department has a lot of room to grow.

Of the VA's 50,240 new hires in FY 2021 – the last year for which figures are [immediately available](#) – just 68, or 0.13%, were military spouses. That's down from 0.22% the previous year and falls well behind the FY 2021 DoD total (2.71%) and that year's executive branch agency average (0.90%).

Part of the department's work to improve this figure includes participating in the [4+1 Commitment](#), a program led by Blue Star Families and Hiring Our Heroes where participating employers commit to at least one of the following ways to help military spouses:

- Facilitate job transferability
- Offer remote or telework
- Offer flexible work hours
- Provide paid PCS leave

Participants also would consider joining an existing government spouse employment program – the “+1” part of the program. The VA has been part of one of those programs, the [Military Spouse Employment Partnership](#), since 2019.

“To build the strongest possible workforce to serve our nation's heroes, we need to hire and support military spouses – many of whom are Veterans themselves,” Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough said in a March 6 news release announcing the department's [participation in the program](#). “We at VA are proud to make these commitments and support our nation's military spouses every way we can.”

MOAA will continue its work in [support of the 4+1 Commitment](#) while urging strong action from Congress to increase military spouse employment opportunities across the federal spectrum, not just the VA. [A recent MOAA.org article](#) highlighted significant concerns with the first-ever federal strategic plan addressing barriers to spouse, caregiver, and survivor employment, and ongoing efforts to address the problem via legislation include support of the bipartisan READINESS Act, which would allow federally employed spouses facing a PCS move to:

- Seek an individual determination from their employer about whether their job can be done remotely (on a temporary basis) or be relocated.
- Obtain a determination on a transfer to a similar position, if the above options aren't available.
- Move into non-pay status, which would let the employee retain nonmonetary benefits, such as a security clearance.

Learn more about other MOAA legislative efforts on this and other topics at [MOAA's Legislative Action Center](#).

## Where Will Your Cost-of-Living Adjustment Land in 2025?

By: *Kevin Lilley*

After a slow start to the fiscal year, the index which will set the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for military retirees, Social Security recipients, and others has risen sharply in recent months, and now outpaces last year's inflation track.

Should this trend continue, retirees could expect a higher adjustment than the 3.2% received in 2024. [One estimate puts the 2025 figure at 2.6%](#), well short of the last three adjustments – 3.2%, 8.7%, and 5.9% – but not far from the average adjustment over the last 10 years (2.75%).

MOAA tracks these figures to offer a glimpse of future finances for members, many of whom are COLA recipients from a variety of sources (DoD, VA, and Social Security benefits all track with the increase, although VA benefits [are not covered automatically](#)). We also watch beyond the index and into the halls of Congress, where these increases have faced threats in past years.

## COLA Concerns

[This 2021 piece at MOAA.org](#) offers background on some of the proposals Congress has made or considered that would reduce or eliminate COLA from military retiree benefits. There are no similar proposals in the works at present, but rising debt and tightening budgets may lead some members to seek new funding sources.

These could come in the form of legislative changes affecting retiree pay – [some examples from past years are here](#) – or in plans to change how the benefit is calculated: A Congressional Budget Office report offering deficit-reduction options includes a change to the Consumer Price Index used to determine COLA that would lead to [more than \\$250 billion in savings](#) over a decade.

It's a big number, but it would come at the expense of all who receive the annual COLA adjustment – to include military retirees and VA disability recipients on fixed incomes.

MOAA has monitored these proposals for decades, forming coalitions with fellow advocacy and veterans groups to ensure your benefits remain safe from all threats, including both inflation *and* legislative interference. We work to ensure lawmakers realize the sacrifices made by those who've earned these benefits – and how COLA limits, even seemingly minor ones, can have major impacts on individual budgets that compound over the years and decades.

You can keep up with all of MOAA's work on this topic by visiting [our COLA Watch page](#), and learn how you can take part in ongoing advocacy efforts by registering for our [Legislative Action Center](#).

## Major MOAA-Backed Improvements for Troops, Families Part of Initial NDAA Bill

*By: Kevin Lilley*

A series of reforms and new programs designed to improve the lives of servicemembers and their families moved from a [panel report](#) to [the text of legislation](#) in just a few short days, thanks in part to a bipartisan effort relying on input from military advocacy groups including MOAA.

The base text of the House version of the FY 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) will include recommendations from the House Armed Services Committee's Quality of Life Panel, a bipartisan group whose plans to address a series of challenges faced by the all-volunteer force [include several MOAA priorities](#).

Among the improvements: Pay raises for junior enlisted; programs targeting persistent issues with child care, health care, and spouse employment; and the restoration of the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) to cover 100% of projected housing and utilities costs – a key part of MOAA's recent Advocacy in Action (AiA) event on Capitol Hill.

“The importance of this panel's work on behalf of our servicemembers and their families can't be overstated – both in the meaningful changes and improvements the members propose, and in the way this legislation came together: Bipartisan teamwork to better understand the needs of the military community and identify solutions,” said MOAA President and CEO Lt. Gen. Brian T. Kelly, USAF (Ret). “MOAA looks forward to helping Congress finish the job and ensure the NDAA includes policies that will make a real difference to those who serve, especially junior members who need the most support.”

## Building Solutions

MOAA's involvement with the panel responsible for these significant reforms started early and covered both sides of the aisle. Rep. Don Bacon (R-Neb.), a retired Air Force brigadier general and MOAA member, chaired the panel and outlined its mission in [an interview with MOAA last year](#). And Rep. Chrissy Houlahan (D-Pa.), a former Air Force officer and the panel's ranking member, spoke during MOAA's AiA event April 17, outlining the NDAA moves and seeking continued support from the association as the bill moves forward.

Bacon, Houlahan, and the rest of the panel joined as initial co-sponsors of the new legislation – H.R. 8070, officially dubbed the Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement Act – which was introduced by Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.), the House Armed Services Committee chairman, and Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.), its ranking member.

“Servicemembers should never have to worry about making ends meet, putting food on the table, or affording housing,” Rogers said in a release announcing the new bill. “Improving the quality of life for our servicemembers and their families is my number one priority – we're going to get this done.”

The committee plans to meet the week of May 20 to consider the legislation and add “additional legislative text,” per the release, which may address other [MOAA legislative priorities](#). The base text stands at 35 pages; last year's final NDAA approached 1,000 pages.

The must-pass NDAA serves as a way for Congress to “reiterate our unwavering commitment to investing in the greatest source of our country's strength: service members and their families,” Smith said in the release. “This year's bill leaves no doubt that the heart of America's defense will get the recognition and resources they need and deserve.”

Keep up with the NDAA process, and learn more about the quality of life improvements included in the legislation, by visiting [MOAA's Advocacy News page](#).

## The Next Steps in MOAA's Fight to Support Combat-Injured Veterans

By: *Mark Belinsky*

MOAA's work to keep the unjust treatment of combat-injured veterans at the forefront of lawmakers' minds has moved into another gear in recent weeks, but the fight is far from over.

Support for the Major Richard Star Act (H.R. 1282 | S. 344), which would prevent these veterans from losing a dollar of DoD-funded retirement pay for every dollar of VA-funded disability compensation, echoed through the halls of Congress last week as part of MOAA's annual Advocacy in Action (AiA) event, with hundreds of legislators and staffers hearing from MOAA visitors. The wide majority expressed support for the measure; not surprising, as the bill boasts [74](#) co-sponsors in the Senate and an impressive [327](#) in the House.

The Hill visits came on the heels of a recent [joint Veterans Affairs Committee panel](#) where each advocacy group – MOAA included – echoed support for the Star Act. And [The Military Coalition](#) recently led a [Star Act Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill](#) to increase support for the legislation; MOAA is a proud TMC member and led planning efforts for that event. So, with support steadily increasing into a busy spring legislative session, what stumbling blocks remain, and how can they be overcome?

The loudest opposition comes from lawmakers who seek to tamp down any increased spending, even the funds needed to fix a clear oversight and restore earned compensation for combat-injured veterans. To ensure the Star Act remains a matter of priority in this election year, these lawmakers need to hear the reality behind these concerns:

- **The Wrong Message:** Achieving savings by reducing DoD retired pay for combat-injured veterans is an awful injustice. Continuing to do so during a recruiting crisis is even worse – breaking faith with veterans will sour potential recruits – especially the 65% of whom don't wish to serve due to injury concerns, according to DoD data – and the veterans themselves, turning off valuable influencers.
- **The Wrong Math:** The Congressional Budget Office's projection of \$9 billion over 10 years to fund the legislation is likely double the true cost of the bill. It assumes all 52,304 eligible combat-injured veterans would switch from current compensation programs to Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP), but about half may find financial benefit by staying with the current, tax-free compensation. The Star Act is not retroactive, does not include back pay, and is actuarially sound.

### ***How You Can Help***

Although AiA has concluded, we still need members to engage their representatives through our Legislative Action Center.

Amplify your message with your network of friends and family who can use the action center. Customize the message to add impact.

Another great way to amplify your message is to use MOAA's toll-free hotline – 866-272-MOAA (6622) – to contact your lawmakers. Officials need to hear your voice as a constituent; grassroots advocacy has a greater impact during election years.

When you call, be sure to ask to speak with the staff military legislative assistant or legislative director who evaluate all military related legislation for your lawmakers. You may have to schedule a follow-up phone call to get past the front desk and speak with the appropriate congressional staff member – your call may be what's needed to get the lawmaker's office to support inclusion of the Star Act in the NDAA.

Spread the word! Subscribe and follow the progress of all MOAA's legislative initiatives at [MOAA's Advocacy News page](#).



*Hawaii Aloha Chapter, MOAA*

**RESERVATION FORM**

**Luncheon Meeting**

**Catered Buffet Luncheon**

**1115, Friday, 24 May 2024**

**Oahu Veterans' Center**

**1298 Kukila Street, Foster Village, Honolulu, HI 96818**

Lunch: Boneless BBQ Teriyaki Chicken, Breaded Fish with Tartar Sauce, Meat Jun with Sauce, White Rice, Potato Macaroni Salad, Tossed Salad with Italian Dressing, and Cake

Guest Speaker: TBD, HI-EMA

Topic: Hurricane Preparedness

¶ Member: \_\_\_\_\_ → \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse: ¶ \_\_\_\_\_

¶ Guest(s): \_\_\_\_\_ → \_\_\_\_\_ ¶

¶ Cost = \$14.50 per person → \_\_\_\_\_ x \$14.50 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_ + ¶

Donation to your Chapter's General Fund for Sustaining Operations: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ → \_\_\_\_\_ ¶

Total = \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Payable in Advance. → A firm head count is required. ¶

Please send in your reservation ASAP to arrive NLT **Friday, 17 May 2024** Make

Checks Payable to: → → Hawaii Aloha Chapter, MOAA

Mailing Address: → → P.O. Box 201441  
Honolulu, HI 96820

For more information, contact Mike Fricano at 808-386-8575 or HeyRef13@gmail.com