

The South Georgia Voice



*South Georgia Chapter
Military Officers Association of America
May, 2010*



www.sgamoaa.org

Membership Chair Report

By: Don McArthur Maj. USAF, Ret.

MOAA Council and Chapter Presidents from the 50 states and Puerto Rico, accompanied by members of the national Board of Directors and headquarters staff, plus members of MOAA's active duty, Guard, Reserve, spouse and auxiliary advisory committees swarmed Capitol Hill on April 21 to visit nearly all 535 representatives and senators in support of key legislative priorities. This year, the "Hill-stormers" met with their legislators and focused on the following issues:

*Finding a permanent fix to the threatened 21% cut to Medicare and TRICARE.

*Upgrading the smallest proposed military pay raise in almost 50 years

*Fixing a Reserve retirement problem that unfairly denies credit for hundreds of thousands of Guard and Reserve combat tours since 9/11.

*Fixing unfair compensation penalties imposed on thousands of disabled retirees and military survivors

MOAA "Hill-stormers" received very positive feedback from most legislators, and we hope to see a considerable jump in the number of cosponsors for MOAA-supported bills on these topics.

If you are in a "cruise mood", the following may be just what the doctor ordered: **Fewer Than 30 Cabins Left On MOAA's Signature Cruise!**

MOAA's first signature cruise is months away, but more than 280 MOAA members, family, and friends already have signed up for this seven-day trip to Alaska. Don't miss your opportunity to join MOAA aboard Holland America's *Zaandam* Sept 24-Oct. 1. Call MOAA Travel at (866) 724-4462 (and use option seven for group cruises).

And don't forget: If you book before June 1, MOAA Travel will donate a resort stay in your name to service members awaiting rehabilitation in the Wounded Warrior Project.

Food for Thought

If you could fit the entire population of the world into a village consisting of 100 people, maintaining the

proportion of all the people living on earth, that village would consist of: 57 Asians, 21 Europeans, 14 Americans, 8 Africans. There would be: 52 women & 40 men, 30 Caucasians & 70 non-Caucasians, 30 Christians & 70 non-Christians. 6 people would possess 59% of the wealth and they would all come from the USA. 80 would live in poverty & 70 would be illiterate. 50 would suffer from hunger and malnutrition. 1 would be dying, 1 would be being born, 1 would own a computer and 1 would have a university degree.

If you wake up in the morning in good health, you have more luck than one million people who won't live through the week.

If you have never experienced the horror of war, the solitude of prison, the pain of torture, have never been close to death from starvation, then you are better off than 500 million people.

If you can go to your place of worship without fear that someone will assassinate or kill you, then you are luckier than 3 billion people.

If you have a full fridge, clothes on your back, a roof over your head and a place to sleep, you are wealthier than 75% of the world's population.

So.....Work like you don't need the money. Love like nobody has ever hurt you. Dance like nobody is watching and sing like nobody is listening.

News you can use from MOAA **21% Cut Fixed - Until June**

Congress can act fast when it absolutely has to, and it absolutely

had to on April 15 - the last day Medicare could avoid imposing a 21% cut in payments to doctors that many doctors say would cause them to stop seeing Medicare and military patients.

Within the space of five hours, the Senate voted to defer the 21% cut until June 1. Because that was a month longer delay than the House proposed, House leaders greased another vote to approve the longer delay, and the bill was rushed to the White House so President Obama could sign it into law that night.

The cuts technically went into effect on April 1, but Medicare exercised its authority to hold claims for up to 10 business days, in anticipation that Congress would approve the delay. Still, the fact is that this is one more can-kicking exercise.

Now, legislators will try to figure out a way to push back the cuts until the end of the year, and next year they'll have to go through a new drill to avoid a 25% cut in January 2011.

The constant battles on this issue stem from the inability of Congress to agree on how to pay for the \$240 billion permanent fix. More and more legislators are insisting it should be paid for by cutting other spending. But finding a package of \$240 billion in spending cuts that a majority of legislators would vote for is an equally daunting challenge.

Needless to say, this isn't a trivial issue. Hill leaders simply must find a way to get past this problem so

seniors and military beneficiaries aren't being held hostage to monthly threats of having their health care access cut off.

TRICARE Protection

The Senate passed Sen. Jim Webb's (D-VA) TRICARE Affirmation Act (S. 3148), which makes it explicit in law that TRICARE constitutes qualifying coverage for national health reform purposes - thus avoiding any question that TRICARE beneficiaries would be subject to penalties imposed on those who don't obtain coverage.

The White House and Pentagon said all along there was no way that military people would be subject to such penalties, but now the law lays that out in black and white.

The House passed similar legislation earlier, so it will now go to the President for signature.

The Senate also has passed a separate bill explicitly protecting all beneficiaries of VA health care (S. 3162). The bill is awaiting consideration in the House and is expected to pass.

Legislative Affairs

Jim Smith Lt Col, USAFR

Rep. Jay Shaw

A majority of the Georgia House of Representatives voted to approve compromise legislation that in one bill adjusts more than 80 user fees, imposes a 1.45 percent hospital bed tax and phases out both the state income tax on retirement income for

seniors and the state's share of property taxes.

HB 1055 was originally a proposal to increase registration, licensing and user fees on more than services provided by the state, bringing in approximately \$96 million. The increased costs to citizens affect a broad range of fees, including civil court filings, business registrations, specialty car tags and numerous annual license fees charged by the Department of Agriculture.

As passed April 14, HB 1055 also includes a 1.45 percent tax increase on hospitals and their patients, which will generate approximately \$169 million. The infamous "sick tax" was actually approved earlier in the session, but differences between the House and Senate versions led to a compromise under which it would be rolled into HB 1055.

House leaders attempted to make the measure more politically palatable with the addition of two minor tax cuts. One would phase out the state's 0.25-mill property tax over time, and the other would gradually eliminate the income tax on retirement income for Georgians 65 and older between now and 2016.

The tax cuts in HB 1055, if signed into law by the governor, will hardly offset the hospital tax increase and the fee increases. There is an additional concern over whether the legislation is even legal because it combines tax code changes with fee increases.

May Meeting

Our next meeting is Thursday May 13, **6:00 pm**, at the Rainwater Conference Center on Norman Drive. Dinner is **at 6:30 PM**
Buddy Johnson will review the HBO "*The Pacific*" three day Honor Flight trip to the World War II Memorial

Please make your reservations through chapter secretary Buddy Johnson
Phone 229-561-0690(c) email buddy1612@bellsouth.net

Not later than Noon Monday, May 10

We are required to provide an accurate meal count **prior to** the conference center staff meeting at **1:00 pm Monday**. Cost is \$20 per person.

Sorry, we must bill no-shows

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Secretary Alton "Buddy" Johnson, Lt Col USAF, Ret.	Treasurer John Salter, Former USAF Captain
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