



# COLUMBIA RIVER CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

5-Star Excellence Chapter



MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION of AMERICA  
P.O. BOX 1872 VANCOUVER, WA 98668

ESTABLISHED 1970

website: [www.moaacolumbiariver.org](http://www.moaacolumbiariver.org)

January 2019

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### President:

Evelyn Brady  
360-721-0865

### 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President: & Membership:

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President: & Programs

### Secretary:

Chris Rubadue  
425-269-1902

### Treasurer:

Susan Ellis  
360-910-0357

### Immediate Past President,

### CRMF president:

Dave Casteel  
360-834-2448

### Army Rep:

Jon Frederick  
360-576-9078

### Marine Rep:

Terry Babin  
360-608-7789

### Navy Rep:

Rich Wersinger  
360-901-1915

### Air Force Rep:

Jeremy Baenen  
360-281-9998

### Public Health Rep:

Chris Rubadue  
425-269-1902

### Surviving Spouse

### Liaison:

Terry Whisenant  
360-576-7736

### Legislative Affairs:

Rod Williams  
360-891-5605

### Membership Services:

Terry Babin  
360-608-7789

### Public Affairs:

John Donnelly  
360-721-3792

### Scholarship:

Paul Crosby  
360-666-8871

### Chaplain:

Rev Max Metcalf  
541-961-0869

### Roster Manager:

Mike Ellis  
360-910-0625

### State of Chapter Address

At our 2019 Membership Business Meeting on January 19, I summarized our accomplishments in 2018 and then addressed our challenges for 2019. We can be proud of the growth of our Scholarship Program and how we use our Support the Troops fund. As you may recall, we received 5 Star Awards, for both our newsletter and website and the chapter.

Without the strong advocacy of MOAA in Washington DC, retirees, former, and currently serving would be facing some pretty bleak times. I am certain that Congress would find many ways to degrade the benefits we have earned, and continue to carve away at pay and benefits for currently serving. National MOAA can continue to be strong advocate in Washington DC only if their membership is growing and involved. MOAA's strength comes from strong local chapters, and you can be a part of keeping our chapter strong and thriving.

Columbia River Chapter is facing some challenges in 2019. This is my final year as Chapter President, and at this point, we have no successor. We have no 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, no 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, no Membership Recruitment Chair, and no Program Chair. The

current Executive Board members are all doing multiple jobs to keep our chapter humming along, and many have served for a lot of years.



### 21 February Thursday

### Chapter Meeting 40 et 8 Chateau

11:30 AM Meet

12:00 PM Lunch

Vancouver, WA

RSVP by 19 February

Details page 11

Make 2019 the year that you make a small change to make a big difference. Imagine your personal mission statement is "Never Stop Serving". Maybe you are not comfortable taking a board position, but perhaps you can volunteer to help for one meeting or one event. A member has volunteered to man

the raffle table at our February 21 luncheon. We also need volunteers to help with our booth on Memorial Day. Try something new and cultivate fresh relationships with like minded people. It can be very satisfying to participate in meaningful activities that benefit our community and fellow veterans.

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### **President's Message continued**

Our Chapter Treasurer, **Susan Ellis**, reported on our financial status. Our revenue for 2018 was lower than expected and our expenses crept higher. Since the chapter gets revenue through dues and the raffles, more members will help to offset the loss. We are considering raising the dues to \$20 for 2020. It really helps our bottom line to have more attendance at our events, and participation in the raffle. Remember, you are all recruiters.

We are fortunate to have **Dave Casteel** and **Buck Marr** to explain legislative affairs to us in language we can understand. Read the articles in our newsletter and be engaged. Continue to send letters and emails when MOAA asks us to.

I am looking for to all the good things we will do this year. Our meetings are shaping up with some very good speakers and I look forward to seeing all of you that are able to attend. Please mark your calendars and plan to join us.

Never stop serving!

**Evelyn Brady**  
President



Our Chapter President **Evelyn** presents at our 2019 Membership Business Meeting on January 19

### **Scholarship Corner** by Paul Crosby

I have two items for this edition of the chapter's award winning newsletter.

The first is to identify our Clark College Dan Doty scholarship recipient. His name is **Gabriel Berkhoudt**. **Gabriel**, an Army and Air Force veteran, is an engineering major. **Gabriel** will attend our February 21<sup>st</sup> chapter luncheon so he can tell us all about himself.

The second item is about endowments. The chapter has two upcoming opportunities, one to add to the Clark Foundation endowment by matching up to a \$5,000 donation and the second is to start a WSU endowment with the \$5,000 needed to get it started.

Members can help the board decide what to do by sending in a donation or increasing/adding to any donation they have already made. The board will need to make a decision at the February 14th board meeting. You can also let board members know what you think.

Thank you for your support for our scholarship programs, we would not be where we are without that support.

**Paul Crosby**  
Scholarship  
360-666-8871



## Holiday and Scholarship Party December 2018

### A good time was had by all!





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## ***Chapter ~ Membership Eligibility***

Chapter membership is open to active duty, National Guard, Reserve, retired, and former commissioned officers and warrant officers of the following uniformed services: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Public Health Service, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Surviving spouses of deceased officers are also eligible to join.

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## ***Columbia River Chapter ~ Affiliate***

Our chapter is an affiliate of the 390,000 member national MOAA which is the nation's largest and most influential association of military officers. MOAA and the chapter are nonprofit, politically nonpartisan organizations. Our chapter is an IRC 501(c)19 war veterans organization.

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## ***Newsletter Editor***

Our Chapter Secretary, **Chris Rubadue**, coordinates calendar inputs and newsletter distribution.

Newsletter Editor: **Rich Wersinger**. You can contact him at 360-901-1915 or e-mail him at [rich@rjwconsulting.org](mailto:rich@rjwconsulting.org).

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## ***Newsletter Distribution***

We continue to distribute our newsletter by e-mail. If you are receiving this via postal service and would prefer e-mail please notify **Chris Rubadue**, our Chapter Secretary at (425) 269-1902 or [clrubadue@comcast.net](mailto:clrubadue@comcast.net).



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**Columbia River MOAA Foundation  
(CRMF) Update** *by Dave Casteel*

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This is a quick recap of the CRMF's FY/CY 2018 reports presented at the annual meeting on Saturday, January 19.

First and foremost, the Foundation board thanks YOU for your generosity in 2018. Because of you, we were able to support scholarships at a record level. Back in January we were offered an opportunity to match a \$5,520 donation by an anonymous donor at Clark college. Your response to this was phenomenal, and although we had to temporarily waive our minimum three-year fund reserve, we were still able to meet this match in addition to our ongoing scholarships obligations to Clark College and WSU-V. We ended the year with a balance of \$8,534.43. Clark and WSU-V just presented us with some interesting options to discuss regarding scholarships going forward.

Members told us they wanted to see our Support the Troops (STT) fund used to support veterans activities, so we did. We received \$2,763.59 in 2018 and spent \$4,422.36 leaving us with an ending fund balance of \$1,837.92. However, we voted in January to give the WSU-V veterans resource center the same amount we gave to Clark college in 2018, reducing our effective 2019 starting balance to \$787.92. It is obvious that we will not be able to support Fisher House, both College Veterans Resource centers, Clark County Veterans Assistance Centers and our JROTC units at the same level unless we receive substantially more in donations in 2019 designated for the STT fund. I will post the financial reports on our website at <http://www.moaacolumbiariver.org/> in the foundation tab.

Thank you also to the eleven families who shopped using their Fred Meyer Rewards cards linked to the CRMF in 2018 resulting in earnings to us in the amount of \$88.63. Although not a large amount, it is a start. Just imagine if even half our members would link their Fred Meyer Rewards card to the CRMF? Want to know how? E-mail me at [shilohcamas@comcast.net](mailto:shilohcamas@comcast.net) (or call me at 360-834-2448) and I will send you the instructions.

Want an easy way to make a donation to the CRMF that reduces your Adjusted Gross Income? Make a donation to us from your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) using a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD). It's easy and tax advantageous to you. I plan to do so this year; I hope you will also.

We are an IRC 501(c)3 public charity and registered with the State of Washington. Our formal name is Columbia River MOAA Foundation--CRMF and our EIN is 47-4776049.

By the way, we received another excellent audit report due to the attention to detail and impeccable records of our CRMF Treasurer, **Frank Hill**. Thanks Frank.

If you have any specific questions please e-mail ([shilohcamas@comcast.net](mailto:shilohcamas@comcast.net)) or call me at 360-834-2448.



### How to Earn Cash \$\$\$ Rewards for Yourself AND the Columbia River MOAA Foundation (CRMF) While Shopping at Fred Meyer

1. Go to [www.fredmeyer.com](http://www.fredmeyer.com)
2. Select the Savings and Rewards tab and scroll down to Fred Meyer Community Rewards
3. Scroll down to (and click on) "re-enroll or link your Rewards Card now"
4. Sign into your account using the user name and password you setup when you received your Rewards Card (or click "forgot password").
5. A screen will appear entitled "Find Your Organization." In the box that asks you to enter "your organization's number or at least 3 letters of the organizations name," enter "Columbia River MOAA Foundation" then click search
6. When the search finds the Columbia River MOAA Foundation simply click on the O in front of Columbia River MOAA Foundation #AU238
7. Then click "enroll"
8. Use your phone number as your alternate ID when you check out and YOU and the Columbia River MOAA Foundation BOTH receive cash rewards.

Don't have a Fred Meyer Rewards card? Go to any Fred Meyer Customer Service Counter and sign up. Then link your Rewards card on your phone or PC.

It's quick and easy. The **best part is YOU AND the Columbia River MOAA Foundation** will both earn \$\$\$ when you tell the clerk your Rewards (phone) number at check out. You will earn your full normal rewards AND Fred Meyer will donate money to the Columbia River MOAA Foundation (CRMF) quarterly.



**ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY  
of the  
2018 JOINT AUDIT OF THE FINANCIAL RECORDS**

**Purpose:** This summary of the Joint Audit of the Columbia River Chapter (CRC) and the Columbia River MOAA Foundation (CRMF) is provided for the record at the Annual Meeting of the CRC and CRMF.

**Audit Date:** December 3, 2018.

**Period Audited:** November 1, 2017 through October 31, 2018.

**Audit Areas:**

- ✓ Documentation
- ✓ Budgeting
- ✓ Income & Receipts
- ✓ Expenses & Expenditures
- ✓ Petty Cash
- ✓ Chapter Assets
- ✓ Internal Controls
- ✓ Administrative & Processes

**Prior Year Recommendations:**

1. Action was taken by various individual officers and the Executive Board of the CRC on all four recommendations from the prior year's audit.
2. There were no formal recommendations for the CRMF during the 2017 audit.

**Audit Objectives and Findings:**

1. **Ensure essential documentation for registering with Federal and State agencies, to include certification of non-profit status, is complete and current.** Documentation was complete and current for both the CRC and the CRMF.
2. **Review the adequacy of the audit trails for income and expenses, as well as internal controls, are sufficient to support an external (e.g., IRS) audit.**
  - Records and documentation of income/receipts, deposits, and expenditures for the CRC and CRMF were complete and accurate.
  - Internal controls are prudent and practical.
3. **Determine any areas of weakness, or areas requiring further examination/discussion, with respect to processes, procedures, and overall management of assets and finances.**
  - There were no problems areas identified. One formal recommendation was made for the CRC and another for the CRMF—both addressing process/procedures:



- For the CRC, the recommendation is to consider an Amendment to the CRC By-laws under the title “Financial Management” to formalize certain procedural and approval steps in management of Chapter financial resources.
- For the CRMF, in coordination with the CRC Executive Board, the recommendation is to determine options for file backup and archiving of documents and records.
- All other recommendations for “tweaking” the CRC and CRMF processed were provided in the comments on the respective audit reports.

**4. Make a risk assessment of potential for waste, fraud, or abuse.**

- Treasurers for both the CRC (Susan Ellis) and CRMF (Frank Hill) are very diligent in not only performing their duties, but doing so in a timely manner. Both have created accounting tools and record formats that facilitate a transparent and efficient audit trail.
- Overall, the risk for waste, fraud, or abuse is low in both the CRC and CRMF.

**Other Remarks:**

- 1 The work done by the CRC Treasurer during 2018 achieved significant improvements in the financial records and financial management tools of the Chapter.
- 2 A special thank you to Christine Rubadue and Robert McFarlin for volunteering to be part of the Audit Team for the third straight year.

Submitted by: Terry Babin on January 19, 2019.





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COLUMBIA RIVER CHAPTER  
MEMBER SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUMMARY OF THE ANNUAL REPORT FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2018

**Committee Overview:** Mission: Develop and support activities which encourage active participation and long-term membership in the Chapter.

**Responsibility: Establish and maintain a program for welcoming new members and their spouses.**

1. A New Member Orientations with a brunch hosted by the Executive Board was held during November 2018.
2. The Chapter's New Member Sponsor Program was implemented during 2017.
  - Program Objectives:
    - Introduce a new member to other Chapter members.
    - Help the new member become familiar with the primary functions of the Chapter.
    - Encourage participation in Chapter activities and events.
    - Build a relationship with the new member and the Chapter which encourages long-term retention and involvement.
  - General procedures were approved during late spring of 2016 with Service Representatives and other members acting as sponsors
  - Results have not been consistent.
  - Program will be evaluated and possible changes made during 2019.

**Responsibility: Support a system to keep contact with members—designated as the “Keeping Connected” system.**

1. Updated Call Lists, and added two new callers.
2. Phone calls to Chapter members made during April and September/October.
3. Contact success rate was 76%--our best yet since the program started.
4. Used e-mail follow-up when unable to make phone contact.
5. Thirty-six (36) Action Items (one less than last year) were identified during the two phone call series, and action was taken and completed by Chapter officers.
6. Still need 2 more alternate callers.

**Responsibility: Provide personal affairs services.**

1. Provided casualty assistance for four (4) families of a deceased member including coordination of funeral and military honors.
2. Sent sympathy and “get well” cards to nine (9) members and spouses.
3. Provided personal affairs planning pamphlets, checklists, documentation assistance, and other support for eleven (11) members and their families.
4. Regularly published articles in Chapter's newsletter about personal affair's planning and also Membership Services Committee activities.

**Responsibility: Coordinate with Membership and Program Committees.**

1. Membership Committee Coordination: Continued coordination to ensure timely assignment of sponsors for new members.
2. Program Committee Coordination: Participated regularly in planning Chapter programs.

Submitted by: Terry Babin, Chairman Membership Services Committee on January 19, 2019.

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**MEMBERSHIP SERVICES and OTHER  
NOTES FOR THE BEGINNING OF 2019****Joint Audit of the Chapter and the Foundation**

While not a function of the Membership Services Committee, I am taking the liberty of inserting a few comments on the financial audits of the Chapter and its Foundation. A summary of the annual report pertaining to both audits, and submitted for the 2019 Annual Business Meeting, is included separately in this Newsletter.

First, the money is all there, or spent appropriately as the membership intended. The audit trail for income and expenditures is exceptional.

Second, both Treasurers, Susan Ellis and Frank Hill, have organized the documentation, accounting tools, and processes to ensure we are properly accounting for, and safeguarding, your dues and donations. The money is spent only as budgeted and approved by the respective Executive Boards acting on behalf of the Chapter's members. Both Treasurers are doing exceptional diligent and smart work for you and your investment in the purposes and goals of the Chapter and Foundation.

**Personal Affairs**

Every year around December or January, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) mails a document to military retirees titled: ***Retiree Account Statement*** (form DFAS-CL 7220/148). The primary purpose of the document is to provide information regarding retiree pay for the next calendar year on pay (and increases), taxes to be withheld, and payment address. Also included is information on Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) coverage.

On the reverse of the statement you find your Arrears of Pay Beneficiary Information. Arrears of pay is retired pay owed by the government, and unpaid, to the retiree at the date of death.

Check the listed beneficiaries listed for SBP and Arrears of Pay. If the beneficiary(ies) and percentage allocations are outdated, contact DFAS as soon as possible. Contact information is provided on the front of the statement.

Recent experience indicates that the start of DFAS payments to beneficiaries can be delayed by several months if your beneficiary information is not current. Additionally, your designated beneficiary(ies) should have quick and easy access to copies of marriage certificates, divorce decrees, and death certificates as applicable for any previous marriage by the retiree in case there is an issue on beneficiary eligibility.

**Annual Business Meeting Committee Report**

A summary of the annual report submitted for the 2019 Annual Business Meeting is included separately in this Newsletter.

Our semi-annual "*Keeping Connected*" phone call program continues to be a success. Last fall's call series had the best response rate yet in five years of the program—thank you to everyone who took the calls, provided updated information and recommendations for the Chapter, and took time to "chat" with our callers, and returned calls when the callers had to leave a voicemail or contact you by e-mail.

Can you help us? Last year Major General Buck Marr and Holly Mangum volunteered to be additional callers. The Chapter still needs, however, two (2) more Alternate Callers—that is "backups" to our primary callers when the primary caller is unable to participate in a specific call series (usually due to work or vacation plans). Being an Alternate Caller is great way to be involved with the Chapter twice a year without having to leave your residence.

As an Alternate Caller, you will receive the information you need so you know what to say and to ask. In many cases each conversation lasts 5 minutes or less per member on the respective Call List. There are less than a dozen names on a Call List. Often, a Call List will be split between two Alternate Callers.

Please call me [Terry Babin (360) 608-7789]—no arm twisting on my part when you call—if interested. No need to immediately commit.

## **MOAA Educational Assistance**

**Programs** copied by Rich Wersinger from  
**MOAA.org**

Applicants for MOAA (National) programs must be planning to attend an accredited college or university during the 2019-2020 school year as full-time students. All loans, scholarships, and grants are for students seeking their first undergraduate degree and are awarded for no more than five school years. No loans, scholarships, or grants are available for graduate-level studies.

**General Eligibility:** Applicants must be under 24 years old. Applicants must have a parent eligible for MOAA membership or be children of active duty, Reserve, National Guard, or retired enlisted military personnel. If the applicant served in a uniformed service before completing college, his or her maximum age for eligibility will be increased by the number of years he or she so served, up to five years. Applicants must have a high school GPA of 3.0 or higher. Children attending U.S. military academies and academy prep schools are not eligible. If selected for any Educational Assistance program, the sponsoring parent must have a paid MOAA (officers) or Voices (enlisted) membership throughout the college years and, if applicable, until the loan is repaid. Male applicants must affirm they have registered or will register for the Selective Service (by accepting the terms at the end of the application).

**Selection Criteria:** We evaluate students based of their scholastic ability (1/3), extracurricular activities (1/3), and financial need (1/3). The applicant provides this information in the online application.

**Deadline and Content:** The online application must be completed and submitted **no later than noon EST March 1, 2019**. We notify semifinalists in mid-March, and they must submit supporting documentation. We notify finalists in mid-May, and they must submit proof of MOAA or Voices membership as appropriate and a fully executed promissory note.

**Interest-Free Loans:** This is our main program. The interest-free loans are renewable annually for up to five years of full-time undergraduate study. The interest-free loan program currently provides a \$7,000 loan per student each year. Students selected as loan recipients and their sponsoring parent must sign a promissory note before receiving funds. We disburse funds electronically in two increments: one-half in early August and one-half in mid-December.

### **Scholarships:**

**American Patriot Scholarship:** Limited to students who qualify for the interest-free loan program and whose military parent has died on active service or is receiving Traumatic Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (T-SGLI) payments. Currently, students receive scholarships of \$5,000 each school year.

### **Grants:**

**Designated Scholar Program:** We consider all loan recipients for this program. Students chosen receive a \$6,500 interest-free loan and a \$500 grant named by the donor. Students must correspond with the donor or their designee each fall.

**Senior Grants:** We notify current loan recipients entering their final year in college of these grants in January of their junior year. Students who believe they are eligible for these grants and who do not receive an emailed link to the application should email [edassist@moaa.org](mailto:edassist@moaa.org) for additional information. Recipients of Senior Grants become ineligible for further Educational Assistance programs. The number of grants awarded varies from year to year.

**General John Paul Ratay Educational Fund Grants:** These grants are limited to children whose military parent retired and subsequently died. Students qualifying for a loan who meet the criteria of a Ratay grant are automatically considered. Students who believe they are eligible for these grants and who do not receive a request for supporting documentation should email [edassist@moaa.org](mailto:edassist@moaa.org). Funding for this grant is limited, so we might not award these annually.

**We disburse scholarships and grants in early August.**

**Students may only receive one type of Educational Assistance each school year.**

**For more**

**information:** [www.moaa.org/education](http://www.moaa.org/education) or [www.moaa.org/scholarship](http://www.moaa.org/scholarship).





## Legislative Contacts

### MOAA Legislative Action Center

<http://www.moaa.org/Legislative/>

**MOAA Capitol toll free hotline** at 1-866-272-6622

### White House

Comments: 202-456-1111 Switchboard: 202-456-1414  
FAX: 202-456-2461 E-mail: [comments@whitehouse.gov](mailto:comments@whitehouse.gov)

### Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler Washington's 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District

<http://herrerabeutler.house.gov/>

<b>Washington, DC Office:</b> U.S. House of Representatives 1107 Longworth House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202) 225-3536 Fax: (202) 225-3478	<b>Vancouver, WA Office:</b> O.O. Howard House 750 Anderson Street, Suite B Vancouver, WA 98661 Phone: (360) 695-6292 Fax: (360) 695-6197
Contact Congresswoman Herrera Beutler via email: <a href="https://herrerabeutler.house.gov/contact/">https://herrerabeutler.house.gov/contact/</a>	

The U.S. Government's Portal: <http://www.usa.gov/>  
U.S. Senate: <http://www.senate.gov/>  
U.S. House of Representatives: <http://www.house.gov/>



### U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell <http://cantwell.senate.gov/>

<b>WASHINGTON, DC</b> 511 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510 202-224-3441 202-228-0514 - FAX 202-224-8273 - TDD	<b>SW WASHINGTON</b> The Marshall House 1313 Officers Row Vancouver, WA 98661 360-696-7838 360-696-7844 – FAX	<b>SEATTLE, WASHINGTON</b> 915 Second Avenue Suite 3206 Seattle, WA 98174. 206-220-6400 206-220-6404 - FAX
Contact Senator Cantwell via email: <a href="https://www.cantwell.senate.gov/contact/email/form">https://www.cantwell.senate.gov/contact/email/form</a>		

### U.S. Senator Patty Murray <http://murray.senate.gov/>

<b>WASHINGTON, DC</b> 154 Russell Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510 Phone: (202) 224-2621 Fax: (202) 224-0238	<b>SW WASHINGTON</b> The Marshall House 1323 Officer's Row Vancouver, Washington 98661 Phone: (360) 696-7797 Fax: (360) 696-7798	<b>SEATTLE, WASHINGTON</b> 2988 Jackson Federal Building 915 Second Avenue Seattle, WA 98174 Phone: (206) 553-5545 Toll Free: (866) 481-9186 Fax: (206) 553-0891
Contact Senator Murray via email: <a href="https://www.murray.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/contactme">https://www.murray.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/contactme</a>		

## Vancouver Area Washington State Legislative Districts and Representatives

Legislator	District 49	District 17	District 18	District 14	District 20
<b>Senator</b>	Annette Cleveland 786-7696	Lynda Wilson 786-7632	Ann Rivers 786-7634	Curtis King 786-7626	John Braun 786-7638
<b>Representative, Position 1</b>	Sharon Wylie 786-7924	Vicki Kraft 786-7994	Brandon Vick 786-7850	Chris Corry 786-7810	Richard DeBolt 786-7896
<b>Representative, Position 2</b>	Monica Stonier 786-7872	Paul Harris 786-7976	Larry Hoff 786-7812	Gina Mosbrucker 786-7856	Ed Orcutt 786-7990

Note: All phone numbers are 360 area code, except where otherwise noted. Toll free **1-800-562-6000**  
More info at [www.leg.wa.gov/legislature](http://www.leg.wa.gov/legislature)



**Federal Legislative Update:****by Buck Marr**

**Steven Covey**, the author of “The Seven Habits of Successful People” said: “The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.” When it comes to Federal Legislation in 2019, nothing could be truer.

Given the daily Shakespearean-like U.S. governance landscape it is easy for us veteran citizens to acquire an attention-deficit disorder in the face of a daunting menu of daily headlines: Government shutdown. The Wall. Immigration Policy. Changed Congressional leadership. China. An elusive 2020 top line Defense Budget. Sequestration. Mueller Investigation. Syria/Afghanistan. And the 2020 Presidential election is creeping on our radar with a recent flood of prospective Presidential candidates.

Keeping the main thing the main thing is great advice for us MOAA-ites! After a highly successful multiple win 2018, 2019 could present extremely challenging legislative issues. Don’t believe me? Have you read the Annual Report from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) which lists options for reducing the U.S. deficit? At the top of the list is limiting military service member pay raises. What a surprise! And more--Narrow eligibility requirements for VA disability benefits. End VA’s Individual Unemployability Program for retirement-age veterans. Reduce Military Housing Allowance. Introduce enrollment fees for Tricare for Life. Increase fees for Medicare Part B. Introduce a minimum out-of-pocket Tricare for Life requirement.

The last three proposals ought to send shivers up your back. This is the fourth time in five years that the CBO has suggested raising Tricare enrollment fees and introducing out-of-pocket-expenses for those using Tricare for Life. In the past, the Senate has been somewhat agreeable to these increases but the previous Republican led House pushed back against them. The tide may have shifted in the House making our advocacy very important. And, what makes our advocacy task even more difficult is the “Pay as You Go” policy of Congress. To bring that closer to home, fixing the inequity of the “widow’s tax” would cost extremely high dollars. Historically, legislators are sympathetic to the monthly loss of income for over

67,000 military survivors, but nobody in the Congress has any idea how to pay the bill for fixing the problem. So, they continue to apply a small annual band aid fix after failing to eliminate the tax. **Sen Jones** D-AI and **Rep Wilson** R-S.C. will introduce a Bill for the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress to eliminate the tax.

**Rep. Adam Smith**, D-WA, is the new Chairman of the House Arms Services Committee (HASC). From personal experience, I can easily assert that he is one of the most intelligent Representatives in the House. He has a long experience on the HASC as the Minority Leader. He is well versed on all armed services issues and is very articulate in stating his position. He is not perfectly aligned with MOAA’s advocacy goals but I found him willing to listen. As Columbia River Chapter members, I believe we should consider leaning on our Washington State MOAA Council members to build a strategic communication plan for constant and consistent interface with Representative Smith and his staffers as well as HASC staff assistants.

Another issue worth highlighting is an ongoing omnibus Veterans Administration issue created by the difference in opinion between the two major parties over veteran access to private sector treatment. This issue will likely become a significant topic with veteran VA health care hanging in the balance.

During the 2018 summer, Congress approved the VA Mission Act. The provisions of this Act will supplant the programs inherent to the VA Choice Program. The Choice community care program is restricted to veterans living more than 40 miles from a VA facility or to those who must wait more than 30 days for specific VA services. The VA Mission Act sets looser guidelines for getting community care for those veterans facing an “unusual or excessive” burden in gaining access to a VA facility. While that sounded very advantageous to the majority party in the last Congress, the new Democrat led leadership sees the Mission Act guidelines as a move to privatize VA services with the net result of skimming off VA appropriated dollars into the private sector resulting in a diminished VA capability of providing needed services.

[Continued on page 14]

**Federal Legislative Update continued**

Veteran groups have viewed these loosening of guidelines favorably. However, the new chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, **Rep Takano**, D-CA has already promised “rigorous oversight of the Mission Act guidelines implementation. **VA Secretary Wilkie** has lauded the new guidelines as “a real transformational period at the department.” **Rep Takano** has said “If there is an agenda (on **VA Secretary Robert Wilkie’s** part) to put us on a path to privatization, he’s the one who is going to be an adversary, not just to me but to veterans.”

All in all, it could make for exciting drama for everybody except those veterans in dire need of

responsive and conclusive services. Stay tuned for future updates from MOAA.

Late breaking news and probably the most positive news in a month or two is the passage of legislation going to the President which would insure that Federal workers receive back pay not received as result of the Federal government shutdown. Stay tuned...film at eleven.

**Buck Marr**  
**Federal Legislative Affairs**



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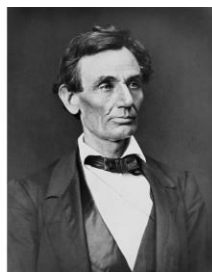
**2019 CHAPTER CALENDAR**

21 February Thursday	<b>Chapter Luncheon Meeting</b> Venue: 40 et 8 Boxcar Meet and Greet: 11:30 am Lunch: Noon	Catered by Panera Bread <b>Speaker:</b> Marcel Piet of Argen Tech, Vancouver  Details Below!
21 March Thursday	<b>Chapter Luncheon Meeting</b> Venue: 40 et 8 Boxcar Meet and Greet: 11:30 am Lunch: Noon	Catered by Chick Fil A <b>Speaker:</b> Greg Mahoney, LTC USA (Ret), Combat Vet.
18 April Thursday	<b>Chapter Luncheon Meeting</b>	
16 May Thursday	<b>Chapter Dinner Meeting</b>	
27 May Monday	<b>Memorial Day Event at Vancouver Barracks</b> We will have a booth.	
9 June Monday	<b>Sunday Social</b>	

**Chapter Luncheon Meeting****DATE: February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019****Meet & Greet: 1130****Lunch at 1200 hrs****Catered by Panera Bread****COST: \$15 Per Person****LOCATION: 40 et 8 CHATEAU****7607 NE 26th Avenue, Vancouver, WA 98665**

**Speaker:** Marcel Piet of Argen Tech in Vancouver Operations Manager **Jay Lorentz** will join him: Argen Tech is part of a large Drone (military & civilian) company.

See: <https://argentechsolutions.com/>

**Please RSVP Susan Ellis at: [sdellis1973@gmail.com](mailto:sdellis1973@gmail.com) or (360) 910-0357****NLT Tuesday 19 February**

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