



COLUMBIA RIVER CHAPTER SPECIAL EDITION NEWSLETTER

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

4-Star Excellence Chapter



ESTABLISHED 1970

website: www.moaacolumbiariver.org

December 2020

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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This special edition of the CRC chapter newsletter focuses on our key role for advocacy in national and state legislative matters impacting veterans.

The November election is over, the business of governing ramps up again. Washington voters retained our incumbent representatives in Congress, so your chapter legislative team already have established contacts with them and their staff.

As you will see in the article on national legislative activity there are both short term concerns during the remainder of the current session and longer-term concerns with the next administration.

Similarly, we also know our state elected representatives and have an active engagement with them on veteran related legislation. I encourage you to read through this newsletter and remain engaged on key matters through our chapter and through the MOAA nation web site (WWW.MOAA.org). When visiting the national site make sure to identify yourself as a CRC member and, if asked, our chapter code is WA01.

Together we make a difference.

**Federal Legislative Update:
by Buck Marr**

Columbia River Veteran Advocates:

Predictively, given the election, November was relatively quiet on the federal legislative front. Post-election has been anything but quiet. The landscape has been changing two and three times a day.

The all-important FY21 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) has been a centerpiece in the ebb and flow of political verbal jousting.

And, as all of you savvy MOAA-ites know, despite the desire of the leaders of the Armed Services Committees to keep the NDAA focused on national defense subjects, much of the traditional quibbling was over non-defense issues like protection for social media providers for information posted by another content provider.

The President originally indicated he would veto the NDAA if that protection was not removed. Another red-hot issue threatening to produce a Presidential veto was the renaming of bases named for Confederate leaders.

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**We cannot wait to
be with you all
soon!**

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Federal Legislative Affairs continued

In sum, the back-and-forth verbal volleys between the House, Senate and White House makes for interesting viewing and listening.

However, the MOAA advocate warriors are not “paid” to sit idly by watching and listening. With laser like focus, our national leading and award-winning veteran advocacy organization is “paid” to be in the trenches working for the net good of those who serve and have served.

So, my friends, put aside some of the laughable theatrics and push our representatives and their staffs to do the right thing for veterans.

Current status of the NDAA.

On December 3, the conference committee published their report. It is anticipated that the full House will vote on the bill next week (starting 7 December) marking the 60th consecutive year of passing the NDAA. Highlights:

Looking Good:

- An authorization for a 3.0% base pay raise for service members.
- Modified the realignment of military medical treatment facilities to include additional requirements before DOD can downsize or realign military treatment facilities.
- Increased Agent Orange Protections adding three conditions to the list of diseases.
- The first phase of the SBP/DIC offset elimination is in place.
- Strengthens oversight actions supporting quality housing for military families.

Action Required:

- Advocate Congress preserve Arlington National Cemetery and eligibility for 20-year retirees. Review the December 2 MOAA article for details.
- Achieve concurrent receipt of service-earned retirement pay and VA disability pay.

- Your MOAA Government Relations and Health Care Committees are hard at work dissecting the NDAA and formulating advocacy plans as we speak. I encourage all of you stay current on the issues.

An annual reminder regarding COLA.

Every veteran should be laser focused on cost-of-living retired pay increases. Everybody knows pay raises are codified in law and determined by economic conditions.

However, surprisingly, many veterans don't recall the President can ratchet the raise to zero. And older veterans should remember in 2010, a Presidential commission recommended withholding cost of living retired pay increases until the member reached the age of 62. At that age, a onetime “catch up” payment would be paid. It would have been devastating for retirees.

For this article, my point is that the White House and Congress can make all kinds of modifications to a cost-of-living increase despite the mandates of the “law.” With the legislative balance hanging on a single state, Georgia, we cannot take our eye off of this “ball.” With the pandemic induced growing national debt, and depending on the makeup of the next legislature, anticipating a change in thinking regarding national defense could be a good idea.

A final note:

As I write this on Dec 5, the Congress is recognizing that it is likely they will not get their work completed within the confines of the December 11 continuing resolution end date. With this comes the need for another stopgap measure to avoid a government shutdown.

Bottom Line:

Anything can affect the NDAA as our legislators work the mammoth appropriations spending bill with fast growing support for a pandemic relief bill.

Stay tuned.



Washington State Legislative Affairs Update

by Dave Casteel

This updated report was presented by Washington State Council of Chapters (WSCOC) VP for Legislative and Government Affairs, **Jerry Jackson**, at the Fall WSCOC meeting of state officers and chapter presidents during the November 21, 2020 Semi Annual WSCOC meeting

WSCOC is a member of the Washington State Veterans Legislative Coalition (VLC). The VLC's mission in summary is to maintain knowledge of veterans bills in the legislature, sponsor bills, attend committee hearings, and inform the membership of bill's status. The VLC for the upcoming 2021 legislative session is comprised of 16 Veterans Service Organizations and 13 Members at Large. Jerry is the MOAA VSO voting representative. I participate as a Member At Large.

During the 2020 session, the VLC was involved in the passage of bills in the following areas:

- Disabled Veteran Property Tax Exemption
- Free License Plates for Disabled Veterans
- State Employment
- Military Service Credit
- Military Commercial Driver's License Skills Test Waiver
- Washington State Conservation Corps
- Disabled Veteran Hunting & Fishing Licenses
- State Parks Disabled Veteran Lifetime Pass
- Washington State Veterans Cemetery

In a typical pre-COVID week, it was not unusual to have up to 50 bills concerning veterans pending committee consideration. Hearings often are scheduled with only a few days advance notice, making it difficult to get timely action reports out to members of the representative VSO organizations.

The VLC had two meetings this Fall in preparation for the upcoming session which will quite likely be virtual. The January reception has been cancelled.

In lieu of the reception, the VLC is sending letters to all legislators and their legislative assistants outlining the VLC's mission and position regarding the reception. Most will be working remotely and many new legislators will not have their contact data known until early in the year. In previous years, the VLC very actively attended committee sessions offering verbal testimony on issues affecting veterans and their families.

The Veterans Legislative Coalition is anticipating virtual meetings with legislators, however, procedures are still unknown with respect to endorsing bills and testimony.

Recognizing budget constraints, the VLC is adamantly supporting and doing all possible to protect WDVA funding in the upcoming session. Strategies going forward will be discussed at the December VLC meeting.

For ease of access to the VLC, an email address has been established: vetlegcoal@gmail.com. All VSO representatives to the VLC remain directly available at their respective contact addresses.

The Washington State Council of Chapters joined the MOAA National State Legislative Forum in November 2019. The Forum is comprised of 27 state MOAA Councils (out of 34). This forum is a vehicle which allows participating members to share veteran's issues and procedures of resolution in respective state legislatures. There have been five meetings to date. Information of value is presented to the VLC and WSCOC chapters.

Dave Casteel
President
WSCOC





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

Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler Washington's 3rd Congressional District

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

Washington, DC Office: U.S. House of Representatives 1107 Longworth House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202) 225-3536 Fax: (202) 225-3478	Vancouver, WA Office: 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: https://herrerabeutler.house.gov/contact/	

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/>

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

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

WASHINGTON, DC 154 Russell Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510 Phone: (202) 224-2621 Fax: (202) 224-0238	SW WASHINGTON The Marshall House 1323 Officer's Row Vancouver, Washington 98661 Phone: (360) 696-7797 Fax: (360) 696-7798	SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 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: https://www.murray.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/contactme		

Vancouver Area Washington State Legislative Districts and Representatives

Legislator	District 49	District 17	District 18	District 14	District 20
Senator	Annette Cleveland 786-7696	Lynda Wilson 786-7632	Ann Rivers 786-7634	Curtis King 786-7626	Peter Abbarno 786-7638
Representative, Position 1	Sharon Wylie 786-7924	Vicki Kraft 786-7994	Brandon Vick 786-7850	Chris Corry 786-7810	Richard DeBolt 786-7896
Representative, Position 2	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