



Greetings Members and Friends,

Welcome to 2020!



Hope you all had a joyous holiday season.

**We changed our meeting this month to the second Thursday in the month, January 9<sup>th</sup>**; not to confuse you, but to allow us all plenty of time to wind down from the busy holiday season and to gently ease back into our routines. This should be the last date change for 2020.

This month's meeting is our annual business meeting and the Board has worked hard to develop a meaningful report that will present what our Chapter accomplished in 2019 and where we want to go in 2020. We will speak to our 2019 and 2020 goals, finances, meeting programs, membership and recruiting, social media initiatives, and surviving spouse programs.

The 2020 National Defense Appropriation Act waits Senate approval before going to the President for approval. (Hopefully it has passed by the time you read this message.) The 2020 NDAA includes language supporting MOAA positions on several issues. Most notably is the repeal of the SBP/DIC offset for surviving spouses, commonly referred to as the "Widow's Tax." Many of your actions and activities helped to convince our Alabama Legislators to support these issues. Special thanks to Anne Hartline, Donna Martin, Linda DeMarco, and Stella Gamble for participation in round tables and other activities sponsored by our Alabama Legislators.

I'm excited about 2020 and the many opportunities we have to better the lives of our active duty and retired military members, the Coast Guard, the Public Health Service, NOAA, and their families. We have many exciting programs planned for our meetings in 2020. We start 2020 with 177 members. Hopefully, all members will take the opportunity to regularly attend meetings and become active in Chapter affairs.

Respectfully,

*Wes*

Volume 120 Issue 1 January 2020

## Officers' Call

### Greater Birmingham Chapter Military Officers Association of America

*President* Wes Cox, Col, USA (Ret)

*1<sup>st</sup> VP* Mac Chandler, LTC, USA (Ret)

*2<sup>nd</sup> VP* Don Lehman, LTC, USMC (Ret)

*Treasurer* Doug Markham, CAPT, USN(Ret)

*Secretary* Ginger Branson, LTC, USA (Ret)

*Past Pres.* Thomas Ruffing, LTC, USA (Ret)

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*Chaplain* Mac Chandler, LTC, USA (Ret)

*TOPS Liaison* Al Wood, LTC, USA (Ret)

*Legislative Affairs* Wes Cox, Col, USA (Ret)

*Personal Affairs* Anne Hartline

*Surviving Spouse Liaison* Donna Martin

*Newsletter* Linda DeMarco, LTC, USA (Ret)

### Statement of Publication

Officer's Call is the newsletter of the Greater Birmingham Chapter—Military Officers Association of America. It is published once each month to inform the membership of issues and activities of interest to all.

GBC MOAA is a non-profit 501(c)19 entity in the state of Alabama organized to represent the membership and to support the activities of the Alabama Council and MOAA National.

MOAA and its affiliated chapters and councils are non-partisan.

Advertising contained in the newsletter is not endorsed by MOAA or its affiliate the Greater Birmingham Chapter, and does not represent any recommendation to the membership. Opinions expressed in articles contained herein are not necessarily those of the membership as a whole or the Chapter. Questions should be directed to [newsletter@moaabirmingham.org](mailto:newsletter@moaabirmingham.org).

**Thursday, January 9, 2020 Social 6:00 pm, Dinner at 6:30 pm**

- **Cost:** \$26.00 per person
- Payment for meal is due at the door (checks are preferred).

- **Location:** Danberry at Inverness, 235 Inverness Center Drive, Birmingham, AL 35242.
- **Reservations:** Contact CAPT Doug Markham, 205-420-2631 or dgmarkham3143@gmail.com **by** Noon on Monday January 6, 2020 to make your reservation. Note: Your reservation is not complete until you have received a confirmation call or email.

**Menu:** Mixed Grilled: Chicken Breast, Jumbo Shrimp, and Sea Scallops over Wild Rice with Broccoli & Yellow Squash, Mandarin Orange Salad: Mandarin Oranges, Pecans, Goat Cheese Over Arugula and Vinaigrette Dressing. Dessert: Strawberry Cheesecake with Caramel

**Driving Instructions - Danberry at Inverness, 235 Inverness Center Drive, Birmingham, AL 35242**

- **Traveling from I-65** (South or North): Take the I-459 interchange toward Atlanta. Proceed north on I-459 and take Exit 19 onto Highway 280 toward Childersburg. Travel approx. 2.2 miles on Highway 280 and turn right onto Inverness Center Drive (Fresh Market shopping center on right). Travel approx. 1/2 mile and turn left into Danberry at Inverness.
- **Traveling South on I-459:** Take Exit 19 onto Highway 280 toward Childersburg. Travel approx. 2.2 miles on Highway 280 and turn right onto Inverness Center Drive (Fresh Market shopping center on right). Travel approx. 1/2 mile and turn left into Danberry at Inverness.
- **Traveling West on Highway 280:** Turn left onto Inverness Center Drive (Fresh Market shopping center on the left). Travel approx. 1/2 mile and turn left into Danberry at Inverness.

**Application for Membership/Renewal – Greater Birmingham Chapter MOAA (Please print or type)**

First Name MI Last Name Grade Rank Preferred Name Name of Spouse

Branch of Service: ☐ Army ☐ Air Force ☐ Navy ☐ Marines ☐ Coast Guard ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Status: ☐ Active Duty ☐ Retired ☐ National Guard ☐ Reserve ☐ Former Member ☐ Surviving Spouse

Mailing Address City State Zip Code

Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

National MOAA Membership Number: \_\_\_\_\_ National Membership Type: ☐ Basic ☐ Premium ☐ Life

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Renewal or ☐ New Membership (membership runs by calendar year)

☐ Regular Membership or ☐ Surviving Spouse: ☐ \$20/year ☐ \$35/2 years ☐ **\$50/3 years**

☐ Supporting Membership (\$50) or ☐ Sustaining Membership (\$100)

☐ ROTC Affiliation (electronic communications only – no cost)



Mail this form to Greater Birmingham Chapter MOAA, P.O. Box 530153, Birmingham, AL 35253





## JANUARY EVENTS

**January's meeting is the annual business meeting.**

A graphic with the words "HAPPY NEW YEAR" in large, colorful, 3D block letters. Each letter is decorated with different patterns like stars, stripes, and floral motifs. The background of the entire page is a close-up of the American flag, showing the stars and stripes.

### CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

January 2020 Chaplains Corner

Happy New Year Everyone! Seems like yesterday we were all worrying and scurrying to be prepared for the year 2000! A lot has happened in those last 19 years, hasn't it? I was thinking the other day about two prayers I learned as a child: the first is "God is great, God is good, let us thank him for our food." We are so incredibly blessed to be living in the incredible United States of America. An exceptional nation blessed by God with founding fathers who were wise beyond any politician that we have today. And in the year 2020, our farmer's will once again produce more food than any other country. God IS Great, God IS Good, and we should always thank our farmers and fishermen and God for our food. The other verse that came to mind was "Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray thee Lord my soul to take." When I think about this verse, it really is something that all us adults should contemplate...what is going to happen to our soul? So my thought for us as we enter this new year is to give thanks more, and to pray more, that God will continue to bless us, our families, our state, and our country. We need God's blessings now more than any time in our recent history! Thank you Lord.

***Mac Chandler LTC, US Army (Ret)***

(visit Legislative Action at <http://www.moaa.org>)

**Legislative Update January 2020** (visit Legislative Action at <http://www.moaa.org>)

I borrowed parts of two articles from the MOAA Newsletter. The first article outlines what is included in and what is not in the 2020 NDAA, specifically those issues that MOAA has supported throughout the development process. The second article outlines 5 specific items that are important to understand as the DoD implements the elimination of the Widows Tax.

**1. Here's What's In, What's Out of the Finalized Defense Bill**

**(By: Amanda Meyers, MOAA)**

After months of deliberations between House and Senate lawmakers, Congress unveiled its conference report of the FY 2020 defense authorization bill Dec. 10. The \$738 billion defense bill authorizes everything from pay and benefits for servicemembers and families to the size of the force.

MOAA secured many important provisions for servicemembers and their families in this year's conference report, which passed the House of Representatives on Dec. 11 by a vote of 377-48.

Here's a look at some of the measures included in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

**What's In**

**Pay raise**

Congress approved a 3.1% military pay raise, effective Jan. 1, 2020. The raise matches the administration's request and is the largest pay increase for troops in 10 years. A 3.1% increase equates to an annual raise of \$1,200 for an O-3 with 10 years of service.

**TRICARE**

Congress approved no new fees or pharmacy increases in 2020. Previously agreed upon increases for medical and pharmacy copays will take effect in January 2020.

**Medical Billets**

MOAA's extensive efforts on the medical billet reduction issue paid off with a provision that addresses concerns regarding both medical readiness and beneficiary access to high quality care. The provision prohibits DoD and the services from reducing medical end strength authorizations until they complete a series of steps:

- A review of medical manpower requirements of each military department under all national defense strategy scenarios
- An analysis of affected billets together with mitigation plans to address potential gaps in health care services
- The creation of metrics to determine TRICARE network adequacy;
- The establishment of outreach plans for affected beneficiaries, including transition plans for continuity of health care services.

**Survivor Benefits**

After more than 40 years, Congress finally approved elimination of a financial penalty more than 65,000 military survivors face, known as the "Widows Tax." Eliminating the widows tax has been a top legislative priority for MOAA for decades. According to the conference report, the offset will be phased out over a three-year period.



### Guard and Reserve

Members of the National Guard and Reserves have reasons to celebrate the bill's release, as well. Servicemembers serving on 12304B orders will now have this time count toward their active duty time to lower the age when they receive their retirement pay.

Steps in the right direction were taken to standardize a service record for members of the reserve component; unfortunately, the legislation does not specify the DoD to use the DD214. In the wake of the suicide crisis, the National Guard received the authorization for a suicide prevention pilot program to expand the existing efforts.

### Medical Malpractice

The NDAA contains significant improvements to addressing non-combat related military medical malpractice by directing DoD to develop a regulation for negligent malpractice to be addressed through the military legal system. Although this is not a repeal of the 1950s era "Feres Doctrine," it provides a form of redress for servicemembers who have suffered from medical malpractice to address negligence. The NDAA conference report will authorize a payment up to \$100,000 by DoD judges.

### Spouse and Family

Military families can expect to see expansions to spouse employment resources.

In the most comprehensive military housing reform since 1996, the bill includes a robust tenant bill of rights and responsibilities, ensures medical costs and relocation expenses are covered by landlords, formalizes a dispute resolution process, and ensures a proper work order system and complaint database are in place.

### What's Out

#### Concurrent Receipt

Ensuring concurrent payment of retirement and disability benefits to medical retirees with less than 20 years of service has been a longtime MOAA priority. Colloquially known as "Chapter 61" retirees, this group of veterans see their retirement pay offset by the disability benefits they receive through the VA, an injustice that sets up a fight for MOAA in the coming year.

#### The Border Wall

Rather than authorize funds for constructing a barrier at the southern border, conferees opted to shift the question of border wall funds to appropriators rather than set up a long fight to get the NDAA passed. Without this provision removed, the path to passage is likely to be smoother.

### **2. 5 Things You Need to Know About the Widows Tax Repeal Included in the repeal of the Widows Tax** (By Dan Merry, MOAA)

Here is what's known about the plan outlined in the FY 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to end the SBP/DIC offset. The House agreed to the conference report by a vote of 377-48 on Dec. 11, with Senate action expected soon.

**1. The logistics.** The phased-in approach to repeal is really a three-year rollout with a delayed start. No changes will be made to the benefit in calendar year 2020, but the offset will be reduced partially over 2021 and 2022, with full elimination starting on Jan. 1, 2023.

**2. The limitations.** The benefit will not be extended retroactively. The bill states specifically that "no benefits may be paid to any person for any period before the effective date provided ... by reasons made of the amendments made" by the NDAA.

**3. The "pay-for."** We confirmed with staff leadership on the House Armed Services Committee that no benefits have been or will be reduced to pay for this repeal.



## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE CONTINUED

**4. The fine print.** The NDAA section addressing the repeal also removes the option for an eligible surviving military spouse to establish an annuity in the name of a dependent child instead of their own. This change would take effect Jan. 1, 2023. Spouses who've elected to transfer their annuity payment to a child (or children) will have their eligibility for the benefit restored on Dec. 31, 2022, "whether or not payment to such child subsequently was terminated due to loss of dependent status or death," per the legislation.

**5. What's next?** MOAA stands ready to ensure the government rights this wrong. As the full details of the repeal take shape, our legislative and benefits experts will continue to ensure all who've waited far too long to receive this benefit will get what's been promised.

## DECEMBER 2019 PICTURES



Donna Martin, Anne Hartline, Senator Doug Jones, Stella Malone, and General Krulak







**Armed Forces Spouse Club**  
**January 9, 2020**  
**11:30 am**  
**Grille 29**  
**971 Brookwood Village**  
**Hostess: Donna Martin**

For reservations  
Contact  
Jane Galik  
ladyg8r74@gmail.com  
205-664-8163

The purpose of this organization is to foster friendship among the spouses of active, retired alive and deceased military personnel of the Armed Forces. In lieu of having many speakers this year, we have chosen locations for comradery-won't you please join us!!!

### **Surviving Spouse Corner**

According to the MOAA staff on December 9, 2019

The repeal of the "widows tax" – an unfair offset that takes thousands of dollars from the pockets of surviving military spouses and their families – is now closer than ever thanks to its inclusion in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

Language that would end the Survivor Benefit Plan-Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (SBP-DIC) offset, a rule that costs about 65,000 military survivors up to \$12,000 a year in benefits, will be part of the NDAA, which [reportedly will be sent to both houses of Congress](#) for a vote this week. According to language in the NDAA, full repeal would be phased in over three years.

Passage through both chambers, and the signature of the president, would bring long-sought relief to these military families, many of whom have joined MOAA members and staffers in pushing Congress to act.

December 10, 2019 update. Based the House.

December 17, 2019 update. Based the Senate.

December 20, 2019 update. President Trump signed the bill.

Based on the NDAA, **Spouse SBP annuitants who are subject to the DIC offset will see the first change in the SBP annuity payment they receive on February 1, 2021.**

## GREATER BIRMINGHAM CHAPTER INFORMATION

### HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Steve Driggers	4
Sam Dayhood	6
Anne Hayes	8
Wes Cox	11
Sumter Coleman	12
Tammy Sample	14
Pat Marvin	18
Joseph Przybyzewski	19
Butch Pair	20
David McCrorie	21
Doug Markham	22
Heidi Mueninghoff	24
Don Broxson	24
Robert Waudby	27
Bob Roper	28
Chris Stricklin	28
Carolyn Bellamy	29

### Greater Birmingham MOAA Coins

The new Greater Birmingham Chapter MOAA Challenge Coins are now available to order for only \$10 per coin! This coin will make a wonderful gift and must-have for any challenge coin collection. You can also order coins by contacting:  
LTC (ret) Don Lehman at [don.lehman1@gmail.com](mailto:don.lehman1@gmail.com).  
Display cases are available for \$1 each, and orders to be mailed should add \$1 per coin.

### RECRUITER'S CORNER

#### Recruiter's Corner

#### Recruiter's Corner

##### Chapter dues renewals:

A second notice has been sent to members still needing to pay their 2020 dues. Thanks! Your continued support is greatly appreciated. Again, you can pay both your National and or Chapter dues online at: <https://chapterdues.moaa.org/Membership.aspx>. It is fast, easy and secure.

##### Chapter membership and on-line directory (coming in 2020!):

Our website is now set-up with a "members only" tab that will require a secure log-in to access. We will activate this tab soon and we are also working to publish an on-line member directory WITH photos! So stay tuned, we'll be working on it and let everyone know how it's coming along.

Our chapter membership is now over 170! What a great year for recruiting and I give credit to all who have helped. A special thank you to Donna Martin; no way that I could keep track of everything without her valuable help.

##### Website

Our website is: [www.MOABirmingham.org](http://www.MOABirmingham.org). Be sure to [check it often to see updated calendar events, newsletters, photos from recent meetings/events and other fun pictures](#). For Facebook users, search for "MOAA Birmingham" and I'll try to do a better job of [posting things about our chapter](#). Thanks.

#### Personalized MOAA Nametags

MOAA nametags with white lettering on white, approximately the size of a business card with magnetic backs are available for \$8.50 each through J.D. Crawford.

Mail your name, rank and branch of service (or other information as applicable, i.e. surviving spouse, etc.) along with \$8.50 for each nametag ordered to James D. Crawford, 3076 Brookhill Drive, Birmingham, AL 35242.

Make checks payable to James D. Crawford.





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Lt. Col. (Ret) Mac Chandler, Family Service Counselor

205-879-3401 [RidoutsValleyChapel.com](http://RidoutsValleyChapel.com)



## Donald Lehman

LtCol USMCR (retired)



### Consulting Petroleum Geologist

AAPG CPG #4560

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[AlabamaMarine.org](http://AlabamaMarine.org)

[VVA.org](http://VVA.org) - [DAV.org](http://DAV.org)

Cell: (404) 441-3882  
[don.lehman1@gmail.com](mailto:don.lehman1@gmail.com)



Still serving veterans – Once a Marine always a Marine



Our upcoming dinner meetings will be 09 January 2020 at 6:00 pm and 06 February 2020