



Tennessee Council of Chapters
Military Officers Association of America



Minutes of the Meeting 19 October 2022

Tennessee Council of Chapters, MOAA met 19 October 2022 at Sammy B's Restaurant in Lebanon, TN, 11:30 AM CST and on Zoom (hybrid virtual / in-person meeting).

Chattanooga: Ray Atkins, Carol Grohn, Bill Hewitt.

East Tennessee: No Representative

Ft. Campbell: Thomasa Ross, Ivan Adames, Eddie Sumbler, Monroe Gildersleeve, Howard French.

General Andrew Jackson: No Representative

Memphis: Kathy Desjarlais, Harold Beavers.

Middle TN: Karon Uzzell-Baggett, Patricia Bergquist, John Ohlinger and Doug Minton.

Mountain Empire: Dr. Donald Thompson

Stones River: Pete Warner, Susan Warner, Betty Moshea, Keith Prather

Sumner County: Steve Petersen

Upper Cumberland: No Representative

The meeting did have members on Zoom (Don Thompson, Keith Prather, Thomasa Ross).

The meeting did not have a guest speaker.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR: 2022 MEETING INFORMATION IN THE MINUTES!

Council President Ivan Adames began the meeting at 11:30 am.

Council Vice President Pete Warner led the pledge to the flag. Following the pledge allegiance to the flag. Chaplain Eddie Sumbler said a short prayer of opening the meeting and blessing the meals provided.

Acceptance of Minutes

An amended minutes of the 20 July 2022 meeting had been sent out on 17 October 2022 to all the chapter presidents and Council members. Steve Petersen moved that the minutes be accepted as amended. The motion was seconded by Pete Warner and approved unanimously.

Financial Report

Monroe Gildersleeve, Treasurer, delivered the financial report for the period of July 01, 2022 to September 30, 2022. The Council had no receipts during the quarter. Total funds on hand at the end of the quarter were \$6,503.48, which included restricted travel funds of \$1,150.0.

Doug Minton asked if TN COC has made a contribution to the MOAA Foundation? Every year the TN Council has always made an annual contribution to the MOAA Foundation. Ivan Adames says he made the contribution of \$100 for TN CoC to the MOAA Foundation from his personal funds on July 4th. Ivan Adames will need to submit documentation to the TN Council for reimbursement.

Also, the Council will be making its' contribution to TNVET for annual membership dues of \$100 when the notices are sent out. TNVET membership dues are based on the numbers of members in the composite Chapters has. Monroe Gildersleeve will look on follow-up into the TNVET dues.

The Council accepted the Treasurer's Report.

Surviving Spouse Report

Please Note: Chapter Presidents are requested to update their Chapter Surviving Spouse Liaison information (name, phone, and e-mail address) with Patricia regardless of whether a change has occurred or not. Please e-mail your information to p_bergq@hotmail.com so Patricia can communicate with your Surviving Spouse Liaison about legislative and other issues impacting surviving spouses. *This information is needed from the following chapters: East TN, General Andrew Jackson, Mountain Home, Upper Cumberland.*

The third and final phase of the Survivor Benefit Plan/ Dependency Indemnity Compensation (SBP/DIC) Offset Repeal for those impacted will be reflected in February 2023 annuitant pay. The Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) benefit will be paid in full; Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC) will be paid in full, and Supplemental Survivors Indemnity Allowance (SSIA) will permanently stop.

Also, in 2023, surviving spouses who turned their Survivor Benefit Plan benefit over to their child/children who were not offset will see the benefit restored to the surviving spouse. *Please check with DFAS regarding any necessary paperwork for the reversion.*

COLA will be 8.7% on SBP, DIC, Social Security, and Military Retired Pay and VA Disability Compensation.

Beginning January \$1,562.74 will be the 2023 DIC flat rate for surviving spouses.

TRICARE has eliminated a number of pharmacies from its program. Please check to make sure the pharmacy you use in your area is still in their program.

H.R.2214 and S.1669 - “Military Retiree Survivor Comfort Act” would allow for retention of the full final month's retired pay by the surviving spouse or other designated survivor, of a military retiree for the month in which the member was alive for at least 24 hours.

The legislation would allow for repayment over a 12-month period and gives the Secretary of Defense the option to forgive the payment. ***This bill is important for all “future” military surviving spouses.***

H.R.2214 has 44 co-sponsors (2 from TN: Cohen and DesJarlais)

S.1669 has 7 co-sponsors with NONE from TN

H.R.3402 and S.976 – “Caring for Survivors Act of 2021” are to improve and expand eligibility for the DIC Increase from 43% of a single, 100% disabled veteran’s compensation to 55%. The 2022 DIC rate is \$1,437.66 per month.

H.R.3402 has 70 co-sponsors (2 from TN: Steve Cohen and Jim Cooper)

S.976 has 13 with co-sponsors NONE from TN

H.R.2827 CAPT James C. Edge Gold Star Spouse Equity Act “Remarriage Bill 2021” and S.4841 “Love Lives On Act 2022”

Surviving military spouses are not allowed to remarry before the arbitrary age of 55 without losing ALL their benefits. Only 7.4% (30,045) of surviving spouse DIC recipients are under the age of 56. The Gold Star Equity Act seeks to correct this injustice by preventing the termination of benefits to a surviving spouse due to remarriage.

H.R.2827 has 25 co-sponsors with NONE from TN.

S.4841 has 1 co-sponsor with NONE from TN.

H.R. 6849 - “Supporting All Veterans Families Act” has 4 co-sponsors with NONE from TN. This act would update certain terminology related to marriage under Title 38, US Code Section 101(3) and Section 5120(b) administered by the VA. It is understood that the language has not been updated since inception, and the archaic terminology should be removed. No other federal survivor program or beneficiary has inference of marriage.

Please contact your Congressmen and Senators for co-sponsorship of these pieces of legislation impacting our military surviving spouses across Tennessee.

The *most active* surviving spouses Facebook groups following these bills are:

- “Supporting All Veteran Families Act”
- “Military Survivors DFAS/SBP Issues”
- “DIC Surviving Spouses/DIC Increase Advocacy”
- “Eliminate The Remarriage Penalty”

Please be sure to read the Special Report “Victory for Veterans” in the Military Officer (October issue, Pages 20-24) about the **PACT Act** which included several pieces of legislation including the **Camp Lejeune Justice Act** (Period: between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987). As the article states: “Veterans are not the only ones affected by the law: Anyone “who resided, worked, or was otherwise exposed (including in utero exposure) for not less than 30 days” during

the above time period may bring action... to obtain appropriate relief for harm that was caused by exposure to water at Camp Lejeune."

TNVET Update

Steve Singleton provided written comments:

2023 TNVET Legislative Agenda

Representatives of the TNVET member organizations met in Nashville on Oct 16th, 2022. This planning meeting was scheduled later than usual due to this being a state legislative election year and many efforts and meetings with the state legislators and department offices were still occurring. The delay was worthwhile and helped formulate our effort for 2023.

The following are the TNVET legislative agenda items agreed to by unanimous consent, per constitutional bylaws:

1. Electronic Voting for Active Duty.
2. Medical Cannabis
3. Restoration of the 2nd free auto license plate for 100% disabled veterans
4. Identify and Implement processes/procedures that document what the state is accomplishing in hiring qualified veterans within its departments.

NOTE: TN Veterans on the Hill (TVOH) is set for Wednesday, 01 February 2023.

Separate Legislative Update

Doug Minton gave suggestion to Chapter leaders and Chapter members on some ways to contribute and keep MOAA's priorities on Congress' radar:

- Send pre-written letters to Capitol Hill using MOAA's [Legislative Action Center](#).
- Call elected officials using MOAA's direct line to the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at 1-866-272-6622.
- Engage with congressional members via social media, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.
- Stay current with MOAA's legislative efforts and subscribe to *The MOAA Newsletter*. Check your MOAA's newsletter subscription preferences [at this link](#).

Guest Speaker: No guest speaker

Advocacy in Action (legislative)

The date of Wednesday, April 26, 2023 has been set by MOAA for Advocacy in Action in-person in the nation's capital, Washington D. C. TN Council will need to send a representative.

Patricia Bergquist suggested that in the month of December, before the Christmas holiday, to visit the staff of their legislators and congressman will be back in Tennessee, their own District.

This is an opportunity for MOAA Chapter members to make a visit their representative in-person; to discuss about an issue and to advocate for co-sponsorship.

NEXT STEPS:

Stay Informed. Be sure to subscribe to the weekly *MOAA Newsletter* for the latest AIA news and updates. Keep up with all the latest advocacy news at [MOAA's Advocacy News page](#).

Visit the MOAA website and navigate to the Advocacy in Action page to find out about virtual conferences and legislative visits to make your voice heard. Remember that its numbers as well as the message that counts.

MOAA discussion

- Texas W/S – (Nov 18/19) – alternative dates (plan B)
- 2023 MOAA Chapter Leader Workshop – Mid South February 24-25 (Birmingham, AL) encourage more Chapter Officers to attend this workshop.
- MOAA National Annual Conference (LOE Awards) – Kansas City, KS (Oct 27/28) Six Chapters set to attend are Middle TN, Memphis, Mountain Empire, Stones River, Fort Campbell, Chattanooga, and TN COC.
- East TN Chapter (TN02) revitalization opportunity (Knoxville area)
- MOAA Surviving Liaison Spouse Excellence Award to be presented to Patricia Bergquist at the National Conference.

Other Chapter Business:

- Second Vice President volunteer is still needed.
- **Sandy Warner** (Pete Warner's spouse) volunteered for the appointed position of Council secretary.
- The BRAVO ZULU Award was to Patricia Bergquist by the TN Council President

Chapter Updates

Chattanooga TN01 - Carol Grohn written comments as follows:

Membership: 146 members: of those: 117 regular, 24 emeritus, 5 spouse members + 19 surviving spouses, 5 of whom are emeritus.

Dinner meeting programs:

June: a panel convened to discuss education issues, a major topic in the recent primary election. We face declining scores on the Armed Forces Qualification Test and the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery; quality of local public schools; curriculum and

culture matters in schools. Panelists included TN State Senator Bo Watson, Rhonda Thurman, who has 18-yrs of experience on the Hamilton County School Board, and Brandy Howard, activist and President of the local Moms for Liberty. Additionally, we heard briefly from Hamilton County Criminal Court Judge who intends to add a track to the Mental Health Court to serve veterans.

August: Congressman Chuck Fleischmann provided an inspiring and frank talk with 50 attendees; he is on the powerful House Appropriations Committee.

October: Brad Cobb and Rescue 82 Ukraine Relief told their story of a group of men (veterans, law enforcement/SWAT, pastors, etc.) who entered Ukraine from Romania last March to respond to desperate situations as their country was invaded by Russia. The team was in contact with other like-minded groups who communicated specific needs and requests for supplies. They distributed emergency medical supplies and assisted Romanian and Moldovan pastors and other volunteers caring for Ukraine refugees. They believed they were called to serve.

Surviving Spouses consistently meet for a social lunchtime monthly at the Mountain City Club. CAPT Billy Hewitt is MOAA's local member liaison and he attends their luncheons on occasion. The group maintains a column in our bi-monthly newsletter.

Awards: The Chattanooga Chapter was awarded a 4-star Level of Excellence Award. This was the first time that our chapter submitted for the evaluation. We have held a 5-star Communications Award Winner for several years in a row.

MOAA Council and Chapter Affairs Leaders Workshop: was attended by Col Dooley and Maj Grohn 12-13 August in Raleigh, NC and over 100 networking representatives from chapters of 7 southeastern states. Attendees received updates on chapter management, breakout sessions: legislative or surviving spouse liaison training. Attendees received a Leaders Workbook 2022.

Nomination Committee for next slate of board members is in progress.

Purchase: The board has approved the purchase of a new projector; it has proven difficult to have to borrow from and then return projectors to other resources. Attempts to purchase lapel mics were found to be incompatible with the organization which hosts our bi-monthly dinner meetings and the stand-up mic has been adequate despite outdated.

Veterans Day/Holiday plans: Veterans Day parade on Nov 5th in Ft. Oglethorpe is an annual event in which our chapter will have a presence once again this year. Gears are winding up once again to participate with the community to donate to the marines' mission with Toys for Tots, to represent MOAA as Salvation Army bellringers and with Wreaths Across America to purchase/and participate in the placement of wreaths on headstones at the Chattanooga National Cemetery. Many families do this patriotic activity with their children and grandchildren.

East Tennessee TN02 (Knoxville) - Written update not provided

MOAA Memphis TN03 – Kathy Desjarlais: written update provided as follows:

- Memphis - The Director of Memphis VAMC and a 100-and-a-half-year-old WWII Veteran were the highlights of this past quarter.
- Memphis is once again challenging its members to contribute toward the Holiday Food Boxes being sponsored by the VAMC.
- We have also provided a quick access link on our web page for those who would like to support Wreaths Across America.
- We are also revisiting the criteria for our scholarship program including both the amount and who is eligible.
- I will be the MOAA Annual Conference and LOE Awards in Kansas City next week.

Middle Tennessee TN04 - Karon Uzzell - Baggett: written comments as follows:

- I. Luncheon Meetings
 - a. July 2022 – informative briefing by Mrs. Traci Holton, Deputy Chief Operating Officer and Chief Engineer of Nashville International Airport. She discussed the \$1.4 Billion BNA Vision project to a post-pandemic record crowd of 40+.
 - b. August 2022 – Davidson County Division II General Sessions Judge Melissa Blackburn delivered a powerful presentation on the Veterans Court she started as a sentencing alternative several years ago. Chapter member attendance was high to learn about this incredible program.
 - c. September 2022 – Chapter member, Col Duffy White, USMC, Retired, recounted his experience as a Presidential Military Aide in the early 1990s. The meeting was held at Operation Stand Down Tennessee and reflected a football theme in recognition of the speaker who carried the “nuclear football”. Attendance remained strong at this meeting.
- II. Advocacy
 - a. Highlighted the MOAA National elections and bylaws change to membership at the July meeting and encouraged members to engage via paper ballots in the MOAA magazine or through electronic voting.
 - b. Members received reminders about advocating for various legislation benefitting the military community at every meeting.
 - c. The Legislative Liaison highlighted important issues pending before the 117th Congress like the National Defense Appropriations Act, the Major Richard Star Act and the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022.
- III. Community Outreach
 - a. Conducted a successful food bag packing event at Operation Stand Down Tennessee (OSDTN) to support their Operation Commissary food insecurity mission. Twelve chapter members packed over 160 food bags in 2 hours. The

- MOAA Foundation's Community Outreach Grant will provide \$10 gift cards for qualified veterans and their family members when the food bags are distributed.
 - b. Coordinated with the Alzheimer's Association of Middle Tennessee to finalize planning for an October 15, 2022 Veteran Dementia Symposium to educate veterans and their loved ones on dementia, its impact on the veteran community and resources available.
 - c. Reviewed the estimated purchases of computer equipment for the men of Matthew 25, a local charity benefitting homeless veterans and the site of our third community outreach grant. After equipment is purchased and installed, chapter members will conduct a briefing on general career development, resume writing and interview skills.
- IV. Award – Our Chapter Surviving Spouse Liaison, Mrs. Patricia Bergquist, was nominated by the Tennessee Council of Chapters and unanimously won the 2022 MOAA Surviving Spouse Liaison Excellence Award.
- V. Other
- a. Chapter president attended the Mid-Atlantic Councils & Chapters Leaders Workshop in August.
 - b. The chapter will purchase a table at the upcoming OSDTN Nashville Heroes Breakfast on November 8, 2022. Ten chapter members are slated to attend the event.
 - c. Key leadership vacancies still exist, but dedicated volunteers keep the chapter going forward.

Mountain Empire TN05 – Don Thompson: Written update provided.

Mountain Empire legislative representative will be attending the November 18/19 MOAA Workshop held in Dallas, Texas.

Upper Cumberland TN06– Katie Clark: Written update provided

We are in the process of putting together the next virtual MOAA National State Legislative Forum agenda on **Tuesday 18 October 2022 from 20:30 - 21:30 EST.**

This virtual meeting will focus on the Defense State Liaison Office and their 2023 Key Issues and new faces. There have been a number of personnel changes since our July meeting and several more to come before the end of the year.

We may have time for one or two additional topics.

Ft Campbell TN07 - Thomasa Ross: written updates provided as follows:

August 2022

- Chapter business meeting conducted via Zoom. Guest speaker was Frances Manzitto - Visit Clarksville, Director of Tourism Sales. Frances Manzitto discussed the Welcome Home Veterans Celebration scheduled for September 14-18, 2022.

- Chapter conducted 5thAnnual COL Ted A. Crozier Sr. Golf Tournament at Clarksville Country Club to raise scholarship funds.
- Spouses' Luncheon was conducted.

September 2022

- Chapter attended Welcome Home Veterans Celebration luncheon in lieu of business meeting.
- Chapter participated in Welcome Home Veterans Celebration events during September 14-18, 2022.
- Chapter members CW4 Monroe Gildersleeve, USA (Ret) and MAJ Richard Noggle, USA (Ret) were honored by being Quilts of Valor recipients at the Welcome Home Veterans Celebration.
- Chapter members supported the Austin Peay State University Alumni Military Dinner. Funds raised from dinner support APSU military endowments/scholarships.
- Chapter members COL Arthur Nicholson, USAF (Ret) and CPT Thomasa Ross, USA (Fmr) participated in The Arts and Heritage Council and Arts for Hearts monument dedication ceremony. This monument created by more than 300 Clarksvillians in remembrance of 9/11 victims and first responders, to Montgomery County.
- September 12, 2022 chapter liaison members of TNVET met with representatives of the state legislature, Sec. of State, and Montgomery County Election Commission to continue work and discussions on the State of Tennessee providing electronic voting capability for those military and civilians stationed outside the U.S.
- Spouses' Luncheon was conducted.

October 2022

- Chapter business meeting was conducted virtually with Christian County Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Committee (MAC) Chairman as guest speaker.
- Chapter members volunteered with Christian County Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Committee (Chili Cookoff).
- Chapter members participated and volunteered with Austin Peay State University Scholarship 5K.
- Chapter members attended and discussed MOAA during the annual Retirement Appreciation Day located at Fort Campbell, Kentucky.
- Chapter was spotlighted in the *Military Officer* magazine for service.
- CPT Thomasa Ross, USA (Fmr) participated with the Military Women's Memorial 25thAnniversary Celebration by raising funds through exercising (25 Day Challenge).
- Spouses' Luncheon was conducted.

Stones River TN10 – Pete Warner: Written update provided as follows

1. In June, the chapter donated \$100 to the new Rutherford County Veterans Center located in Murfreesboro – the grand opening was 15 July at 11am. The building will house the county's Veteran's Service Office.

2. Board member, Ralph Fullerton secured the attendance of the former Attorney General of the United States, Alberto Gonzalez to be our guest speaker in October. The chapter is very excited about having a national figure of his prominence speak to our group.
3. Speaking about publicity, the chapter is composing a story to send to the MOAA Magazine about our very own "Maverick," RADM Jimmie Taylor. His story somewhat mirrors the original movie "Top Gun," and he was consulted on its making. As a former Navy Blue Angel Commander, he certainly has the right stuff!
4. Chapter strength remains strong with 86 members.

Sumner County TN11– Steve Petersen: Written update provided commented as follows:

08/25/2022 Chapter Dinner Meeting had Van Hilleary, Chief of Staff for TN Congressman John Rose and member of our chapter present legislative information from Congress.

09/22/2022 Chapter Dinner Meeting had MG Tommy Baker (USA Retired); Commissioner of the TN Dept of Veterans Services presented updated information on VA services for TN veterans.

Received a listing of 25 National MOAA members with addresses and phone numbers in Sumner County who are not members of our Chapter. All individuals are being contacted to explain our Chapter and offer for them to attend a MOAA meeting.

Hendersonville VFW closed for major revision and we have used the Gallatin American Legion Post and Hendersonville Senior Center for our dinner meetings. Our next meeting this month and our annual Christmas Party dinner will be at the Gallatin American Legion Post.

This month we will be soliciting members to bring a toy or game for our Marine Toys for Tots Campaign.

General Andrew Jackson TN12 – Written update not provided

Conclusion of Meeting

Chaplain Eddie Sumbler ended the meeting with a closing prayer.

The meeting was adjourned about 13:35 CST.

Next Meetings and Future Events

1. TN Early State General & City Voting - (Oct 19 – Nov 03);
2. Daylight Saving Time Ends – (Sun, Nov 06)
3. TN Election Day (Tuesday, November 8) - seeking for Volunteer Poll watcher
4. MOAA Virtual Monthly Roundtable of Chapter Leaders: (7 PM EST/6 pm CST)

- Oct 20, Transition Service
Nov 17, Retention
Dec 29, End of Year Review & Discussion
5. ***MOAA National Annual Conference, Kansas City, KS - (October 27/28/29)
 6. *Texas Leadership Training Workshop – Dallas/Ft Worth, TX (November 18/19)
 7. ***2023 MOAA Chapter Leader Workshop – Mid South February 24-25 (TBA)

Our next meeting is scheduled for **January 18, 2023** at 11:30. The meeting will likely be in-person at Sammy B's in Lebanon, TN, but the decision has not been made.

Future Meetings – at Sammy B's or on Zoom!

TN CoC Meeting	18 January 2023
TN CoC Meeting:	19 April 2023
TN CoC Meeting:	19 July 2023
TN CoC Meeting:	18 October 2023

Minutes prepared and submitted by Ivan Adames, President, TN Council of Chapter