

Ohio Western Reserve Chapter Newsletter

March 2024 issue



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March President's Notes

The big activity for the month is St. Patrick's Day on March 17. It is on a Sunday, but I bet the preceding weekend will be all green beer! Be safe and have fun.

You can learn more about St Patrick's here: [St. Patrick's Day: Facts and Traditions](#).

It is a big celebration in Ireland. Ann and I were in New York City on St Patrick's Day 2001, and the place was flooded with folks from Ireland and England. Because of Mad Cow Disease, there was a ban on parties and restaurants in Europe at the time. It looks like they all came to NYC to celebrate! It was fun.

The Chapter will hold the March Membership meeting at the McKinley Museum and Planetarium on Saturday, March 23. The Museum is in Canton, and we will meet at 1130 at Mission BBQ for lunch, then head over to the Museum. Check out the information and let us know you are coming on [Events – OWRC website](#).

I attended an **MOAA online Roundtable for Chapter and Council officers** last night. The two main things discussed were the new Committee module that will not directly affect most of you but will make it easier and more capable for your Chapter officers to use.

The second topic that might affect you is the Dues Portal. This is used by MOAA members to pay Chapter dues on the MOAA website. MOAA then forwards the dues payments to the appropriate Chapter. The new Portal will not be ready to 'turn on' next month because of the authorization (probably security) problems. You are lucky that you will not have this problem because our Chapter lets you pay through our website, which is very secure. ([Dues Payment – OWRC](#)).

We host the annual **ROTC/JROTC Recognition and Awards Banquet for local ROTC and JROTC Detachments in April**. This is scheduled for Thursday, April 25, and is one of the Chapter's premier events for the year. You will start to see announcements on the Chapter Web Site. Please plan to attend. This is one of the main missions of OWRC, and we hope you help with our appeals for donations and sponsorship of cadets.

Prepare for the April **Solar Eclipse on Monday, April 8, 2024!** The Akron area is in the Path of Totality, where the sky will become as dark as deep twilight.

The eclipse will start at about 2 PM and continue until about 4 PM.

- Partial eclipse begins 1:59:09 p.m.
- Totality begins at 3:14:13 p.m.
- Maximum eclipse: 3:15:38 p.m.
- Totality ends: 3:17:02 p.m.

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- The partial eclipse ends 4:29:05 p.m.

I got this timing information from WKYC's website ([What time is the April 8 eclipse in Ohio?](#)).

Bright stars and planets will be visible. The Sun's outer atmosphere, the corona (not the beer), will shine around the moon's shadow. And that is spectacular and can be a problem.

Because it gets dark, your iris will not constrict to keep bright light out and protect your eyes. But the strong sunlight can damage your retina. **Do not look at the Sun**, except during the less than 3 minutes of the totality. The unfiltered light from the Sun can cause severe damage to your eyes. You must use special solar filter glasses.

Don't use regular sunglasses, or a telescope, or binoculars. You need special solar filters. Glasses with these filters are starting to become available in the area. You can get them at Amazon (of course) for anywhere from paper ones for \$1 apiece to plastic framed certified glasses for about \$10 each. Whatever you get, make sure they are CE Certified and ISO12312-2:2015(E) certified. Even the cheap ones need to say that. You should also be able to buy some at the McKinley Museum and Planetarium gift shop.

And don't forget our weekly lunches, 1130 every Wednesday at Michaels' s AM, 1562 Akron Peninsula Rd, Akron, OH 44313. Across the road from PaPa Joe's

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Update Your Contact Information at MOAA

Does MOAA National have your correct current Personal Information including email and snail-mail (USPS) addresses along with your telephone point of contact? Spouse information as applicable. Many times our contact information can change and we just forget to alert others.

MOAA National is transitioning to a new Association Management Software (AMS) during the month of March. When the new software is released, your ability to contact MOAA via login on the website ([moaa.org](#)) will be tied to the information they have. Please take the time NOW to contact the MOAA National Member Service Center ([msc@moaa.org](#)) or 1-800-234-MOAA(6622) and review/update them. While you are doing that, do we at OWRC have all the current information?

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MOAA developed this reference guide to answer beneficiaries' frequently asked questions.

In it, you'll find all the information you need to make the transition to TRICARE For Life (TFL).

These articles, written by MOAA benefits experts, can be accessed online by Premium and Life members, who can also download a PDF version of the material. Members will need to log into [MOAA.org](#) to access the material; contact MOAA's Member Service Center at [MSC@moaa.org](#) with access issues. It contains articles on areas such as a roadmap to Medicare and TFL, understanding TFL pharmacy benefits, using TFL overseas, and frequently asked questions. [MOAA - MOAA's Member Service Center: A Resource for Advocacy](#)

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Do you need solar eclipse glasses? Most libraries will have them; our (Fairlawn) library will distribute them, beginning Mar 31; 1 per person coming through the door. I have also seen them in “health food stores” for around \$2 or \$3. These will also be available at the McKinley Museum Planetarium gift shop during our visit, Saturday, 23 March

Senate Bill Would Give Surviving Spouses More Access to Career Resources

By: Jen Goodale

Surviving spouses of servicemembers who died on active duty or due to a service-connected disability would gain access to free job counseling services under a bipartisan Senate proposal.

Sens. Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.) and Bill Cassidy (R-La.) recently introduced the Gold Star and Surviving Spouse Career Services Act ([S. 3746](#)), which would allow surviving spouses to receive career counseling from specialists within the Department of Labor’s Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP).

“After the terrible loss of a service member, we must do everything that we can to support their families,” Hassan said in a Feb. 7 press release [announcing the bill’s introduction](#). “This bipartisan bill is a commonsense way to help address the challenges that surviving spouses can face in their careers, and we must continue working to support our service members and their families.”

In the same release, Cassidy noted the importance of supporting these spouses with meaningful action, not just sentiment.

“We often thank the wife or husband of those serving overseas for their sacrifice,” he said. “If we really mean this, then a Gold Star spouse should be able to continue to access the services that they accessed when their husband or wife was alive.”

DVOP, housed within Veterans Employment and Training Services at the Department of Labor (DOLVETS), provides state-level funding to hire specialists who provide individualized career services to eligible veterans and spouses experiencing significant barriers to employment. The program is not currently available to the more than 450,000 service-connected surviving spouses across the country.

Surviving spouses can have lower incomes in the years following a servicemember’s death due to barriers such as psychological effects and time demands preventing full participation in the workforce, [studies have shown](#). Providing support to surviving spouses through expanded eligibility for DVOP services will not require additional funding, according to Department of Labor officials.

MOAA recognizes the unique challenges of surviving spouses and continues to work to enhance ways to help this community. We appreciate Senator Hassan’s focus on improving employment opportunities for military spouses at all stages; as an original co-sponsor of the [Military Spouse Hiring Act](#) and a supporter of the [SECURE](#)

[2.0 Act](#), the senator understands the significant impact military service has on the entire family. **Please join MOAA in our efforts to improve** access to career counseling services for surviving spouses by [asking your elected officials](#) to co-sponsor the Gold Star and Surviving Spouse Career Services Act.

Strong Start for DoD's New Military Spouse Employment Program

By: Jen Goodale

More than 85% of the nearly 500 military spouses who participated in the first year of a DoD-run career-accelerator program received full-time job offers from their host employer.

It's an impressive start for the [Military Spouse Career Accelerator Pilot](#) (MSCAP), a three-year pilot designed to place military spouses in paid private-sector fellowships with a goal of full employment at the conclusion of the 12-week program.

As of January 2024, more than 250 companies had committed to providing employment opportunities to military spouses through the program. This approach, similar to [SkillBridge](#), requires DoD and the private sector to join efforts to find a solution to the decades-long 20% unemployment rate among military spouses – a challenge which directly impacts military readiness.

"The financial challenges that arise when a military spouse is unable to earn an income to augment a military member's income often mean those families will rethink their decision to stay with the military," said Eddy Mentzer, the program manager for spouse education and career opportunities in DoD's Military Community and Family Policy office.

Implementing Lessons Learned

In the subsequent years of the pilot, Mentzer hopes to see more employers commit to hosting military spouse fellows. There's an opportunity to get more federal agencies involved to recognize the level of education and experience spouses bring to an organization. Ideally, passage of the MOAA-supported READINESS Act will create policies allowing for [higher retention of military spouses](#) within the federal sector.

The MSCAP program initially focused on finding opportunities for "career-ready" military spouses. In its second year, Mentzer is looking to include those at lower levels of education and/or experience. Skill-based fellowships can offer on-the-job training and skill development for this cohort.

MOAA is encouraged by the program's first year results and looks forward to its continued success. The next steps include reviewing existing military spouse employment programs and determining if and where funds can be reallocated. Ensuring personnel, resources, and funds are invested in proven programs is a must. Solutions to problems morph over time, and archaic programs too often outlive their efficacy.

Solving the military spouse unemployment crisis (yes, it's at crisis levels) is going to take a multifaceted approach. MOAA continues to urge Congress to [add military spouses as a target group](#) under the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and to find a more reliable method of accurately tracking military spouse employment/unemployment.

Visit MOAA's [Legislative Action Center](#) and ask your lawmakers to support policies that support military spouse employment.

Good, Bad, and Ugly: 3 Paths for the Ongoing Budget Crisis

By: *Cory Titus*

The clock is ticking on yet another potential government shutdown.

Congress needs to pass 12 funding bills – four by March 1 (including funding for the VA and military construction) and the rest by March 8 – to keep the government open. Aside from passing yet another stopgap continuing resolution (CR), Congress has three primary options:

1. Full Funding - The preferred option – passing all the spending bills, either individually or as part of an omnibus package – would fund the government through the end of the year. All the attention is on the House of Representatives, including Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) and the razor-thin Republican majority.

Passing these bills likely will require some Democratic support, which complicates the situation. Johnson made it “[unequivocally](#)” clear that he wants to avoid a shutdown, and the bipartisan path risks [angering members](#) of his own conference.

2. Yearlong CR - The second option is to pass a full-year continuing resolution, which would push DoD into uncharted territory. As Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin highlighted [in his Nov. 29 letter](#) to the lead Senate appropriator, Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.), DoD has never operated under a full-year CR.

This arrangement “would misalign billions of dollars, subject Service members and their families to unnecessary stress, damage our readiness, and impede our ability to react to emergent events,” Austin wrote in the letter.

In addition to losing ground against the pacing challenges of China, this path would force DoD to deal with a multibillion cut to military personnel accounts.

3. Federal Shutdown - The last, worst option brings not just uncertainty for DoD budget-planners, but potential financial disaster for those in uniform: Unlike past shutdowns and shutdown threats, Congress has not passed any legislation protecting servicemember pay should the government run out of money.

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Without that agreement, all uniformed servicemembers would be subject to the challenges members of the Coast Guard, as well as those in the commissioned corps of the U.S. Public Health Service and NOAA, [faced in 2019](#), when pay protections were limited to DoD branches.

While Congress should have serious policy debates about spending levels, shutting down the government does not advance such discussions. A shutdown is wasteful and prevents DoD from moving funds to important things like construction projects that support quality of life infrastructure for our servicemembers and their families.

[Write your lawmakers today to make your voice heard](#) – Congress needs to pass the funding bills our community relies upon.

The Last Page

OWRC Purpose and Mission Statement

Support the purposes and objectives of the Military Officers Association of America; promote camaraderie among the officer (retired, active, and former) within the OWRC region and relationships with other veteran organizations; and support projects for those pursuing military service (ROTC programs) and assisting veterans (wounded, jobless and homeless).

Join or Renew your local chapter membership, go to chapterdues.moaa.org/Membership.aspx , select Ohio and select Ohio Western Reserve Chapter.

Legislative Contacts:

MOAA Legislative Update [MOAA | Legislative Action Center \(quorum.us\)](https://www.moaa.org/Legislative/legislative-action-center/quorum-us) .

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