



The OWRC Briefing Board

The Newsletter of the Ohio Western Reserve Chapter, An affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America

November 2024 | Volume 24 Issue 7 | OWRC.net and MOAA.org

For questions contact the Chapter President and Webmaster at andy@andrewemanuele.com



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Chapter Activities for October and November.

OWRC held our October meeting at Sarah's Vineyard and Winery, and it was great fun. We had a nice turnout, and although the weather was a bit chilly, we were able to sit outside in the Pavillion and enjoy not only our meeting, meals, and camaraderie, but we were able to watch the Guardians win one of their playoff games.

OWRC had eight members attend the Military Aviation Preservation Society (MAPS) 12th Annual Veteran Celebration, which was held on November 9. The OWRC 1st VP, BG Thomas Luczynski, USA(Ret), was featured as a guest speaker.

The purpose of the meeting was to finalize nominations for our November Chapter elections. Our OWRC election for 2025 officers was held on Wednesday, November 13, from 1130 to 1300 at Michael's AM, 1562 Akron Peninsula Rd, Akron, OH 44313.



The meeting also included our first **Doughboy Meal and Chapter Fundraiser**. As you can see from the photo it was well attended with 20 members and guests in attendance. Everyone enjoyed the luncheon, and we will plan to repeat this next year for Veterans Day.

The Doughboy meal was conceived and organized by our President Elect, (yes we have one of those too!), Major Bill Maki, USAF (Ret).

The slate of officers elected to lead OWRC in 2025 is listed below.



President	William Maki
1 st Vice President	Tom Luczynski
2d Vice President	James McClellan
Secretary	John Anderson
Treasurer	Lisa Rivedal
1 Yr Trustee	John Chapman
2 Yr Trustee	Andy Emanuele
3 Yr Trustee	Tom Harden

SAVE THE DATE

The Christmas Party, Officer Installation, and Cookie Exchange is scheduled for Friday, December 6, 1800 – 2100 at The Galaxy Restaurant in Wadsworth. This meeting will include the Installation of the 2025 Chapter Officers, our annual Cookie Exchange, and entertainment by the Manchester HS Choir. We will have Duane Carlson on the piano for background music



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The menu, pricing, additional information, and registration form is published on the OWRC website. To register and pay for your meal visit the OWRC Website at [Events – Ohio Western Reserve Chapter – OWRC](#)

Thank you, and Happy Holidays,
Andy

Dues are Due

Annual Dues Payment

Each fall, the OWRC Executive Board has several important administrative milestones, which include the annual meeting, the elections, the collection of annual dues, and direct giving contributions. On the last point, I wanted to ensure our members are up to date with the latest updates.

First, our 2025 dues remain the same amount as 2024. For active members, it is \$25 and for Surviving Spouses, it is \$10. As in the past, you can choose to donate to three different charities we support: ROTC/JROTC Scholarships, Fischer House, and Summit County's Stand Down. For each of these charities, you can select the amount you want to donate but a suggested donation level is \$10.

Second, for 2025, our preferred method to pay or donate is via our website. I wanted to take a few minutes to outline the process as we recently updated our site but ensured the dues submittal process and look is familiar. As before, to pay your dues:

Access the OWRC website via your computer, laptop, or smartphone. Here is the link:

[Dues and miscellaneous Payment – Ohio Western Reserve Chapter – OWRC](#)

Then, follow the Instructions on the Dues Payment Page.

Additionally, you can pay your annual dues or make a direct contribution via check and mail to our PO Box. Our address:

PO BOX 4272
3840 Ridgewood Road
Copley OH 44321

Our Treasurer, James McClellan, Col (Ret), USAF, will provide each member with a status of your dues, and you should receive this notice after Thanksgiving. However, you can contact him anytime if you have questions via the contact tab on our website.

Finally, while we collect dues and direct giving contributions anytime during a given year, we ask you to complete your submissions for 2025 before January 31, 2024.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with Col McClellan via our contact tab on the website.

Thank You, and Happy Holidays,

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Annual Meeting Recap: MOAA President Outlines People-Focused Efforts to Strengthen the Association

By: Tony Lombardo

MOAA continues to operate actively on several fronts, but our association remains laser-focused on the people we serve.

"Our team does absolutely remarkable work, and a major part of our work this past year has been focused on people, relationships, and delivering absolute member value," said MOAA President and CEO Lt. Gen. Brian T. Kelly, USAF (Ret), during MOAA's Annual Meeting of the Membership, held October 25 in Alexandria, Va. "We know these relationships will be particularly important as we get ready to start a new administration here and the 119th Congress."

Kelly's speech included details on six focus areas selected to strengthen and grow the association:

1. Maintaining Key Advocacy Positions and Mission Focus

Kelly, who spent 2024 meeting with many key lawmakers on the Hill, thanked members for harnessing their "grassroots power" and supporting MOAA's legislative priorities all year.

"We want to be recognized and respected as the foremost organization advocating on behalf of the uniformed services community and their families," Kelly said, noting the recent release of [Ending the Wait for Toxic-Exposed Veterans](#).

This report, published by MOAA and Disabled American Veterans (DAV), provides a blueprint for reforming how our government responds to service-related toxic exposures.

2. Chapter System Viability

"Councils and chapters remain the heartbeat of our association and carry the weight of our community engagement," Kelly said.

MOAA has 386 chapters across the country and operating virtually, with a combined membership representing 10% of MOAA's national membership. Kelly said he has made chapter visits a "major priority"; 2024 saw 130 chapter visits from MOAA HQ.

"I have been impressed by every single visit I make," said Kelly, who added he serves as MOAA's "chief listening officer."

Our newest chapter, newly approved by the board, is the [MOAA Public Affairs and Communications Professionals Virtual Chapter](#).

3. Growing Membership

Membership is growing overall, particularly at the Basic member level, Kelly said, but the association is making efforts both to increase paid Premium and Life membership levels and better reach the currently serving population.

"We have been working with the association of graduates from each of the service academies ... so as they graduate [the goal would be] they become automatic Basic members," Kelly said. "We're doing the same things with large ROTC organizations."

4. MOAA Foundation Stability

MOAA's charities, The MOAA Foundation and the MOAA Scholarship Fund, demonstrate that while we are an association of officers, we are not just about officers, Kelly said.



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"It's our actions and our deeds ... that reach out to the broader service community that make that statement true," Kelly said. "The majority of those things happen through our two charities."

The MOAA Scholarship Fund, which recently marked its 75th year, disbursed nearly \$11 million in loans and grants for the 2024-25 school year.

MOAA's focus is largely on The MOAA Foundation, which is still working to build its endowment. The need is clearly there: In the immediate wake of hurricanes Helene and Milton, the Foundation quickly approved \$270,000 in crisis relief grants for servicemembers, veterans, and families impacted by the storms.

Kelly thanked JP Morgan Chase, which had representatives in attendance, for making multiple generous donations this year, including \$75,000 to support the foundation.

5. Strengthening Brand and Reach

MOAA is continuing to leverage our communication channels, such as [Military Officer magazine](#) and The MOAA Newsletter, to engage with the broad service community and strengthen our membership. Kelly noted ongoing efforts on social media, working alongside influencers in the military and spouse communities who can share MOAA's mission with their large, and often younger, audiences.

"We are trying to make sure the next generation of folks see the same value of MOAA that all of us have seen over the years," Kelly said.

6. Financial Stability

MOAA continues to use funds from its endowment to help cover expenses, Kelly said, adding this is not sustainable in the long run. MOAA is working aggressively to identify new revenue sources, Kelly said, chiefly our upcoming conference in 2025.

Total Force+: MOAA's 'People Conference'

MOAA will launch TotalForce+, a "people first" conference focused on advancing solutions for the military and veteran communities, Oct. 28-29, 2025, at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center in National Harbor, Md.

The event will bring 5,000 people together, including key decision-makers from the uniformed services community, academia, industry, and nonprofits.

This significant event will serve as a forum to identify ways to improve the service experience for uniformed personnel and their families, our veterans, retirees, caregivers, and survivors. Positive outcomes will ensure future generations continue to raise their hands to serve, Kelly said.

"We understand and believe that it is the people who serve who make a strong national defense possible," Kelly said.

Board Actions

The annual meeting also meant welcoming 12 new members of MOAA's board of directors and the swearing in of Gen. Thomas D. Waldhauser, USMC (Ret), as the board's new chairman.

Throughout his 43 years of military service, Waldhauser participated in various operations and contingencies, including Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. He also served as Chief of Staff, U.S. Special Operations Command; Commander, Marine Forces U.S. Central Command/I Marine Expeditionary Force; and Senior Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense. Prior to his retirement in 2019, he served as the Combatant Commander for U.S. Africa Command.



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"The organization is now 95 years old and still going strong," said Waldhauser, who has served on MOAA's board of directors since 2020. "As an incoming chairman, I want to continue to make the organization stronger and more meaningful for not just our members but the entire uniformed services community."

The Class of 2024 stepped down from the board after six years of service. Gen. Gary L. North, USAF (Ret), MOAA's outgoing chairman, said he knows Waldhauser and the new board will continue to take MOAA's top priorities and "drive them forward."

"Any way that those of us coming off of the board can continue to help, you know we will," North said. "We're still council and chapter members, and we're going to continue to serve and be a part of the team."

Before passing the gavel, North presented the Chairman's Award to Col. Mary Mayer, USAF (Ret), for her dedication to MOAA as a board member and chapter leader in Portland, Oregon, epitomizing MOAA's motto, "Never Stop Serving."

"If I could encourage all of you. It's all about serving," said Mayer, who just completed her term as a board member. "Whether you're serving on the board, whether you're serving at your local chapter, whether you're serving at the council, it's all worth it because our target audience depends on us."

Book Talk with Admiral Stavridis

Immediately following the annual meeting, Adm. James Stavridis, USN (Ret), former supreme allied commander of NATO, discussed his latest book, [The Restless Wave](#). The fast-paced novel tells the story of Scott Bradley James, a midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy in 1941.

Expect romance, action, brushes with historical figures, and a few lessons learned as the James navigates the early years of his career with World War II as the backdrop.

"I tried to create something that was historical, but not completely bedded down in the dark tragedy of war," said Stavridis, a MOAA Life member. "I think even in the midst of war, people fall in love, and there are complex love triangles. ... And I think it's important that we realize this is a story about the Greatest Generation, but that the Greatest Generation was young. They were trying to find their way." Following his talk, Stavridis signed copies of his book, with donations benefiting The MOAA Foundation.

VA Takes Steps to Fast-Track Benefits for K2 Veterans

By: Jeff Goldberg

The VA will begin the rulemaking process to add bladder, ureter, and genitourinary cancers as presumptive conditions for veterans stationed at Uzbekistan's Karshi-Khanabad Air Base, better known as K2, the department's top official announced October 29.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough also preliminarily indicated that the same will be done for multiple myeloma and leukemias as part of remarks at the National Press Club during his [annual pre-Veterans Day progress report](#).

Those who served at K2, including servicemembers among the first to deploy following 9/11, were exposed to a "toxic soup" that jeopardized both their immediate and long-term health, McDonough said. He also stated that when these veterans returned home, many developed disabling medical conditions.

MOAA aided in the efforts to raise the plight of K2 veterans and their toxic exposures in [Ending the Wait for Toxic-Exposed Veterans](#), our report co-authored with Disabled American Veterans (DAV) which provides a blueprint for timely,



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equitable access to exposure-related benefits. One such servicemember, Mark Jackson, noted that one of the first things he noticed upon his arrival at the base was his "throat and eyes stinging from ... this rotten smell."

He quickly concluded that "this place is toxic." His service at K2 was followed by a myriad of medical issues, including irritable bowel syndrome and thyroid dysfunction.

What's Changing for K2 Veterans

McDonough highlighted that the VA is building upon prior actions and implemented the following:

- Eliminated the PACT Act phase-in period for presumptive benefits. This makes all K2 veterans immediately eligible for care and benefits related to more than 300 presumptive conditions.
- Made all K2 veterans eligible for VA health care, whether or not they've filed a benefits claim with the VA.
- Initiated the rulemaking process to make chronic multisymptom illness, also known as Gulf War Illness, a presumptive condition for K2 veterans.
- Made sure the unique toxic exposures at K2 are taken into account and each new K2 claim gets reviewed a second time prior to a final determination.
- Reached out to every known living K2 veteran to encourage them to contact the VA for care and benefits.

These actions provide a pathway for veterans who served at K2 to receive care for conditions biologically linked to affiliated toxic exposures.

"K2 vets now have higher claim and approval rates than any other cohort of veterans," McDonough said.

However, many challenges remain. The secretary noted in his remarks that K2 veterans have waited over 20 years for recognition of their exposure to toxic materials. And while he has initiated steps to correct previous inaction, organizations like MOAA must continue to advocate for those exposed to deadly toxins.

By highlighting the stories of Jackson and others, and by demonstrating the real-world impacts of K2 exposure, MOAA has consistently worked to shed light on these issues. The VA has recognized this work, done in coordination with other veterans service organizations, and acknowledged the efforts of all advocates who continually fight for veterans.

For over 23 years, K2 veterans waited to have their exposure recognized. That is far too long. MOAA will continue to fight on behalf of veterans, and we will help hold the VA accountable so that veterans, including those who served at K2, are never forgotten.



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OWRC Purpose and Mission Statement

Support the purposes and objectives of the Military Officers Association of America; promote camaraderie among the officers (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).

For those of you who live in the OH-6 district, your representative has changed. Bill Johnson took the position of president of Youngstown State University and was replaced as the OH-6 representative by Michael Rulli. I have updated his contact information.

Even with the November Election, these are still valid contact emails and phone numbers. I will update these contacts as soon as the new information is published.

Legislative Contacts:

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

President Joseph R. Biden Jr. (D) The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. Washington DC 20500

Switchboard: 202-456-1414 www.whitehouse.gov

Senator Sherrod Brown (D) U.S. Senate 713 Hart Senate Office Bldg. Washington, DC 20510 Phone: (202) 224-2315 www.brown.senate.gov

Senator James D. (J.D.) Vance (R) U.S. Senate B40-C Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510 Phone:(202)224-3353 www.vance.senate.gov or 240 East 9th Street, Room 3061 Cleveland, OH 44199 [Share Your Opinion - J.D. Vance \(senate.gov\)](https://www.vance.senate.gov)

Representative Michael Rulli (R) U.S. Congressional **OH District 6** 192 East State St. Salem, OH 44460 Phone (330) 337-6951 [Congressman Michael Rulli \(house.gov\)](https://michaelrulli.house.gov) or Washington, D.C. Office 2082 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515 Tel: (202) 225-5705 or 4137 Boardman-Canfield Road Suite 106 Canfield, OH 44406 T (330) 967-7312

Representative Troy Balderson (R) U.S. Congressional **OH District 12.** 2429 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 (202) 225-5355 [Send Me an Email | U.S. Congressman Troy Balderson \(house.gov\)](https://troybalderson.house.gov) 12931 Stonecreek Drive, Pickerington, OH 43147 (614)523-2555

Representative Emilia Sykes (D) U.S. Congressional **OH District 13.** 1217 Longworth House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Tel: (202)225-6265 [Congresswoman Emilia Sykes \(house.gov\)](https://emiliasykes.house.gov) 121 South Main St Suite 107 Akron, OH 44308 (330)400-5350

Representative David P. Joyce (R) U.S. Congressional **OH District 14** 2065 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, DC, 20515-3514 Phone: (202) 225-5731 [https://joyce.house.gov/contact](https://davidjoyce.house.gov/contact) or 8500 Station Street Mentor, OH 44060 (440) 352-3939



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OWRC 2024 Executive Board

I will update this with the new names for next month

You can contact Chapter Officers via the 'Contact Us' link on OWRC.net

President/Webmaster Andy Emanuele LTC, USA, RET andy@andrewemanuele.com	1st Vice President, Programs Tom Luczynski BG, USA, RET tlucz@gmail.com
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2 Year Surviving Spouse Liaison Lynda Farkas lfarkas2@neo.rr.com	3 Year Tom N. Harnden LtCol, USAF, RET tharnden@neo.rr.com
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