

SOUNDINGS

Silver Strand Chapter of Military Officers Association of America

April 2010

Presidents Message MajGen Bob Butcher, USMC (Ret)

There is a wealth of information in this issue of *"The Soundings!"* I'd urge you to read it from cover to cover. Thanks to our editor (Jim Strickland) who continues to amaze me with his dedication and ability to locate articles that to inform us all.

Bob White, the President of the Chula Vista Veteran's Home Support Foundation provided a very interesting and informative briefing at our February dinner meeting. The foundation he leads is holding a golf classic on May 5th. More details regarding this very worthwhile opportunity are available on page 4.

Our April 19th speaker (please note that this meeting is on MONDAY, the 19th) will talk about a subject of interest to all of us. With the opening of the Fort Rosecrans Annex at MCAS Miramar, most of us have new options regarding our final resting place. He'll be available for questions after his presentation, so write them down and bring them with you.

I think all of us are nervous about what's going to happen with the retired and active duty health care plans now that the House and Senate have passed "Obama Care." MOAA President Norb Ryan's

Continued on page 4



Kirk Leopard has been named the first director of Miramar National Cemetery and has been the director of Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery since November 2007. The new 313 acre national cemetery located at the northwest corner of Marine Corps Air Station Miramar will serve Veterans' needs well into the 21st century. Mr Leopard has served as the director of Baltimore National Cemetery in Maryland and assistant to the director at Fort Mitchell (Alabama) National Cemetery. He retired from the Navy in 2004 after 21 years of service. He will speak at the April Joint Chapter/Navy League dinner and cover VA burial benefits provided at national cemeteries. Fort Rosecrans closed to first interment casketed burials in 1966, although it stays active with casketed interments of family members of those already interred and inurnments of cremated remains. Miramar National Cemetery will include both gravesite and columbarium development, providing a full range of burial alternatives to approximately 235,000 Veterans in the San Diego County area.

See Page 7 for more information on joint Chapter dinner Monday, 19 April

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Legislative Update

Jones Files SBP-DIC Discharge Petition On March 15, Rep. Walter Jones (R-NC) introduced a [discharge petition](#) on the House SBP-DIC offset repeal bill, H.R. 775. This relatively rare tactic is used to force a House vote on legislation that has languished in committee.

The petition offers hope that Congress will finally repeal the unfair deduction of VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) from military widows' Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities.

It was a discharge petition that helped break the ice in winning substantive action on concurrent receipt several years ago.

H.R. 775, sponsored by Rep. Solomon Ortiz (D-TX) currently has 320 plus co-sponsors - 74% of all House members. If more than half of House members (216) sign the petition, the bill must be "discharged" from committee consideration and brought to the floor for a vote. Rep. Ortiz' office staff has advised MOAA that he intends to sign it.

You would think that getting at least 216 of the 320 plus current cosponsors to sign the petition would be no problem. But it hasn't proved that easy in the past.

That's because a discharge petition is an embarrassing move for congressional leaders who are responsible for finding funds to pay for it. In this case, the SBP-DIC fix requires \$7B in mandatory spending that Armed Services Committee leaders don't have offsets for.

Normal House rules require that the responsible committee must identify offsets within its jurisdiction. For the Armed Services Committee, that would require cutting military retirement, TRICARE for Life or some other SBP area, which isn't going to happen. Committee leaders want to repeal SBP-DIC, but doing that requires House leadership's help to identify other offsets. And that's a problem too, when national health reform and other major initiatives are consuming most of the available offsets.

MOAA agrees with Rep. Jones that it sometimes takes

unusual action like a discharge petition to spotlight a bill that has a very large majority of cosponsors but still isn't getting anywhere, for whatever reason. The discharge petition is a way of saying, "We need to put our money where our mouth is."

You can help this worthy cause by [urging your U.S. Representative](#) to sign the petition.

MOAA, Coalition Push FY11 Priorities MOAA joined a panel of Military Coalition witnesses at a March 24 hearing before the House Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee.

The hearing was convened specifically to get inputs from beneficiary advocates on issues affecting active duty, Guard/Reserve, retired members, families and survivors.

Among many other inputs, the Coalition witnesses particularly urged the Subcommittee to:

- Provide at least a modest increase above the 1.4% pay raise proposed by the Pentagon, in the belief that troops being asked to endure more sacrifice than at any time in the last 50 years shouldn't be provided the lowest pay raise in almost 50 years
- Approve the Administration's proposal to authorize concurrent receipt for all medically retired servicemembers, with the continuing goal of ending the unfair disability offset for all disabled retirees
- End deduction of VA survivor benefits from Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities for survivors of members whose deaths were caused by service

Two Gold Star Wives representatives provided particularly compelling testimony on the SBP-DIC issue. "An 85-year-old widow shouldn't have to start dating and remarry to have SBP restored," said Mrs. Suzanne Stark. "It's discouraging to hear, year after year, 'We support you in principle, but just can't find the money'," added Mrs. Margaret McCloud.



MajGen Thomas Conant To Speak, Memorial Day, May 31, 2010

The Silver Strand Chapter of MOAA, the General Henry D. Styer Post (VFW Post 2422) And the Coronado Council of the Navy League will offer a Memorial Day Service on Monday, May 31st, 2010 at 10:00 AM in Coronado's Star Park. MajGen Thomas Conant, Commanding General, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing will be the guest speaker at this moving and memorable tribute to our Nation's fallen service members. Participants will include MCRD Marines, CHS NJROTC Color Guard, Coronado Battalion Sea Scouts, Boy Scout Troops, Gold Star Mothers, Gold Star Wives, and honored guests. After the service, a light luncheon will be provided at the VFW Hall, 557 Orange Avenue. Please mark your calendar right now and attend this event to honor those who have given their lives so that we might live in freedom. At the Korean War Memorial in Washington D.C. cut into granite is the statement: **'FREEDOM IS NOT FREE'**.

MOAA Scholarship Fund

Your Silver Strand Board is pleased to report that the Chapter recently sent a check for \$440 to the MOAA Scholarship fund. These funds were contributed by you throughout 2009 to support MOAA scholarships and grants offered to military dependents. It is gratifying that Chapter members continue to contribute generously to this very important fund. Thanks!

CAPT Robert White, USN (Ret), President, Veterans Home Support Foundation, spoke to the Silver Strand Chapter MOAA at our dinner meeting on 15 February. He discussed the goals of the foundation and their efforts to improve the quality of life for the 290 residents at the California Veterans Home Chula Vista. He talked about the successful fundraising efforts of the foundation over the past ten years that has generated income to provide additional physical assistive equipment and programs for the residents. Some of the items include sling lifters, Wi-Fi connectivity, Wii interactive fitness games, and Kindle electronic readers. Last year the foundation raised over \$45,000 that was directed toward additional equipment for the skilled nursing facility. The annual :



CAPT Bob White and MajGen Bob Butcher

golf tournament which will be held May 5, 2010 at the Eastlake Golf Club. CAPT White's presentation generated interest and questions from chapter members.

Dignity Memorial Moving Wall

The Veterans Museum and Memorial Center is hosting the Dignity Memorial Vietnam Wall on the lawn at the Southside of the Museum April 9-11. Needs are great, time is short. Call 619-239-2300 to volunteer or donate! For more information go to the website at www.veteranmuseum.org or call (619) 239-2300.

Continued from page 1

assessment that begins on page 4 is encouraging, and at the same time, troubling. Clearly, we'd all seem to be fine in the near term, but as he cautions, we don't know how this is going to play out and can't envision what could be unintended consequences of the legislation.

Let me offer that there is one thing we do know: There is going to be incredible pressure to reduce federal spending – and that pressure is sure to surface regarding our earned benefits and the support Congress provides the active duty forces. The best way you can divert that pressure is by watching for alerts from National MOAA, responding when asked to contact our legislators, and by remaining a member of both National MOAA and the Silver Strand Chapter.

I firmly believe that your membership in both of these organizations is more important than ever right now! Legislators know that we vote and that we influence the vote of our family members and neighbors. If you haven't renewed your membership, I'd urge you to do it right now. We can best counter the pressure that's sure to come by demonstrating that our membership numbers make us a force to be considered when they are getting ready to vote.

Mark your calendars right now to attend the May 31st Memorial Day Service discussed on page 3. This memorable service is sponsored by your chapter and it is a moving tribute to those that gave their lives that we might live in freedom.

I look forward to seeing you at our 19 May dinner and again on Memorial Day.

Warm regards, Bob

Silver Strand Chapter 2010 Dues Report

We currently have over 52 out of 206 total Chapter members who are **delinquent on their 2010 dues**. **If your mailing label has the year 09 beside your name and is highlighted in red, you have not paid your 2010 dues**. Please use the form on Page 7 to correct that oversight and mail them in today. **If you elected to receive your newsletter electronically and have received a "Delinquent Dues" e-mail**, please mail your check to the PO address in the e-mail today. Thank You!

Veterans Home Annual Golf Classic



The Veterans Home in Chula Vista is now in its tenth year of operation and home to nearly 300 guests. The Veterans Home Support Foundation continues to work diligently to obtain funds to provide quality of life equipment, services, and activities not covered by appropriated funds. One of the major fundraisers for the foundation is the annual golf classic. The Veterans Home Golf Classic 2010 will be held on Wednesday, May 5th at the East Lake Country Club.

Registration table and practice tee will open at 11 a.m. A box lunch will be served prior to a 12:30 shotgun start. Following the round of play, a barbeque dinner will be served and raffle prizes awarded. For registration form or more information contact: Dee Diaz (619) 205-1410 or email: Dorothy.Diaz@cdva.ca.gov

National Health Reform and You - From the Office of The President of MOAA

Dear MOAA Member,

In recent days, we've seen a barrage of information (and misinformation, in many cases) about how national health reform legislation might affect currently serving and retired servicemembers and their families.

Now that President Obama has signed the initial legislation into law, I want to lay out for you what we know.

Continued on next page

The biggest question on our members' minds has been: "How will passage of national health reform legislation affect me?" For members under age 65, based on what we know so far, the answer appears to be, "Not much, if at all."

There are some changes to Medicare, but it remains to be seen what the real impact of those may be over time. The most significant of them is likely to be some reduction of availability of Medicare Advantage HMOs.

In the meantime, MOAA has prepared [answers to the most-frequently asked questions](#) that we hope you'll find useful.

Unfortunately, there already are messages flying around the internet to the effect that "I heard this will end TRICARE" or "This will force military people to buy other coverage." That's simply not true. If you get such messages, please help educate the senders with MOAA's answers.

As MOAA has said from the beginning, everyone we've talked to in the Administration or the House or the Senate, of either political party, supports protecting military and VA beneficiaries from adverse effects associated with national health reform.

Just to be sure, MOAA and loyal members like you generated more than 100,000 messages to Congress urging protection of the unique military and VA health benefits and protection against any taxation of those benefits. And your voices were heard.

In as clear an indication of that as anyone could ask for, the House unanimously passed separate legislation explicitly citing TRICARE as "qualifying health coverage" for purposes of the new law. The Senate is working now to pass the same legislation. VA care and TRICARE For Life already were explicitly designated in law. That means eligible beneficiaries of those programs won't be subject to financial penalties that can be imposed on people who don't have qualifying insurance.

That said, let's be clear on another key issue.

Can anyone guarantee that there will never be any unfavorable changes to military and VA programs? No.

Do we know for sure how all the details will play out? No.

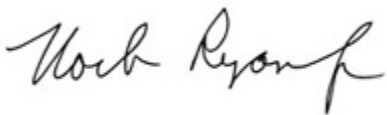
There's always a potential for unintended consequences, and there's always the potential for new initiatives to arise (see below).

But if you were worried that national health reform legislation is somehow aimed at whacking military beneficiaries' health coverage, that's just not so.

Frankly, we think the much more significant issue for Medicare – and for the military community and the rest of America -- is what proposed changes will be recommended by the new National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform that's supposed to report by Dec. 1 on options to reduce the national debt.

You have my personal pledge that MOAA will continue to be vigilant as implementation of national health reform proceeds – and as the new debt commission proposals become known – and your association will continue to do everything in our power to protect your interests and your service-earned health benefits.

All the best,



VADM Norb Ryan Jr., USN (Ret)
President

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! NAVY'S RETIRED ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

Retired Activities Offices (RAOs) serve as link between local retirees and the military community, as well as other governmental agencies that provide assistance to retirees. RAOs are often located on Navy and Marine Corps Installations and are staffed, in most cases, with retiree volunteers who will assist other retirees, their family members, and survivors directly, or guide them to organizations to ensure they receive services and benefits to which they are entitled. RAOs often coordinate with Fleet & Family Service Centers and assist in the Annual Retiree Seminar.

The RAO at Naval Base Coronado is co-located at the Naval Amphibious Base with the Navy's I.D. card and Personnel Offices. We welcome walk-in clients, phone calls, and e-mails to our office. The office is staffed entirely by volunteers, and we are open for business between 0900 and 1200 Monday through Friday. We are closed on federal holidays. We welcome new volunteers and provide training which many consider personally valuable. Our phone number and address are provided below. RAO tasks include:

- Provide Survivor's Benefit Plan (SBP) counseling to future and retired retirees.
- Provide Retired Casualty Assistance Program (RCAP) assistance to survivors.
- Provide assistance to retirees and/or annuitants in retired pay, annuitant pay, direct deposit and tax withholding.
- Disseminate information on new programs and benefits.
- Provide information on existing programs, rights, and benefits when requested.
- Provide assistance to resolve conflicts between retirees and various government agencies.
- Find resources to resolve retiree questions/concerns outside our expertise/purview.
- Provide location/addresses and phone numbers of various federal/state/local agencies or officials when requested.

Retired Activities Office, Guadalcanal Road, Bldg 16, Naval Amphibious Base, Coronado, CA 92 155-5000
Telephone (619) 437-2780, Email: rao.coro@yahoo.com

Web Sites You Can Use

Military Officers Association	http://www.moaa.org/
Defense Accounting and Finance Service	http://www.dfas.mil/
United States Senate	http://www.senate.gov/
United States House of Representatives	http://www.house.gov/
California State Legislature	http://www.legislature.ca.gov/
City of Coronado	http://coronado.ca.us/
Navy Medical Center San Diego	http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcspd/
Express Scripts, TRICARE Pharmacy	http://www.express-scripts.com/
TRICARE Online Options Wizard	http://www.tricare.mil/mybenefit/
Medline Plus, U.S. National Library of Medicine	http://medlineplus.gov/
US Department of Veterans Affairs	http://www.va.gov
California Department of Veterans Affairs	www.cdva.ca.gov
Online Resources for Veterans	www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov
The United Veterans Council of San Diego	www.sduvc.org
Space A Travel, Air Mobility Command	http://www.amc.af.mil.amctravel
The Flying Leatherneck Historical Foundation	www.flyingleathernecks.org

Joint Silver Strand Chapter MOAA /Coronado Navy League Dinner Meeting

Date: Monday, April 19, 2010

Mr Kirk Leopard

Director, Miramar National Cemetery and Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery

Where: Coronado Yacht Club, 1631 Strand Way

When: 1800: Social Time

1845: Dinner

1930: Program

*Prime Rib w/ Creamy Horseradish Au Jus & Twice Baked Potatoes, or
Grilled Salmon w/ Creamy Lemon Dill Sauce & Wild Rice, or
Vegetarian Plate - Portobello Mushroom w/ Chardonnay Sauce
Pear & Cranberry Spring Salad Mix, grilled vegetables, desert, rolls, coffee, tea; \$30 per person*

Use the coupon below for:

- April 19 Dinner Meeting Reservation
- Pay 2010 Dues
- Donate to NJROTC & Naval Sea Cadets
- Donate to MOAA Scholarship Fund

Chapter Meeting Monday, April 19, 2010

Mail to: Silver Strand Chapter MOAA
P.O. Box 180043
Coronado, CA 92178-0043

Name _____
Phone _____

Reservations must reach our PO Box by **Noon, Friday, 16 April (Firm)**

Indicate your choice (s) of entrée _____

Number attending dinner ____ X \$30 = \$_____

2010 Dues (\$10 for members) (\$5 for Auxiliary) \$_____
(\$40 for 5 years) (\$20for 5 years)

Donation to NJROTC (Coronado and Mar Vista High Schools) \$_____

Naval Sea Cadet Corps, Coronado Battalion \$_____

MOAA Scholarship Fund \$_____

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$_____



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**Dates to Remember
2010**

Chapter Meetings

April 19
June 21
August 16
October 20
December 7

Board Meetings

May 18
July 20
September 21
November 16

SOUNDINGS

Silver Strand Chapter
 Military Officers Association of America
 P. O. Box 180043
 Coronado, CA 92178-0043

Return Service Requested

TIME DATED MATERIAL