



# THE TERRITORIAL

TUCSON CHAPTER OF THE ARIZONA COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS  
MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA



DECEMBER 2024

National MOAA and the Tucson MOAA Chapter are non-partisan



## FROM THE EAGLES NEST

**By Col Tom Owens,  
Tucson Chapter President**

I hope you all had a Happy Thanksgiving. We are in the month of holidays: Christmas, Hanukkah, Winter Solstice, and numerous other celebrations of the coming winter and New Year are approaching.

Our Holiday Luncheon is scheduled for Wednesday, December 18, at 1130 at the Tucson Country Club, 2950 N Camino Principal. The menu choices are Parmesan-crusted salmon Filet or Harvest Salad (organic mixed greens, Granny Smith Apples, Toasted pecans, grilled chicken, and cranberries). The cost is \$40. Ross Orvik will provide music on guitar.

We will have some leadership changes in January. I have decided that my nine years of service to the Tucson Chapter is enough. We will vote on a new slate of officers at the January meeting. We have openings if you are interested in serving. Nominations will be posted soon.

You should have received an email with proposed changes to the Chapter by-laws. If not, please let me know. We will also vote on these at the January 23, 2025 meeting.

The January 23 meeting will be held at 1130 at the [The Hungry Fox](#), 4637 E Broadway, at the NW corner of Swan. Ample parking.

Our speaker will be Dustin Williams, Pima Superintendent of Schools. Dustin is a native Tucsonan, graduate of Amphitheater High School and the University of Arizona. He was a teacher and coach and has been the elected Superintendent since 2017. Please join us.



Dena Kilgore, MOAA Program Director, Council and Chapter Affairs, will visit us and speak about MOAA activities at the February 27 meeting. We have not had a MOAA National speaker for two years.

Our annual presentation of scholarships and awards to the University of Arizona ROTC chapters will take place at the March 27 meeting. The schedules for the JROTC award ceremonies have not arrived yet. Major Randy Phelps will share a Vietnam Story at the April 24 luncheon meeting.

We continue to hold meetings in Vail to recruit new members. The effort is starting to grow. Three members in November and an additional four have committed to attending the December 21 meeting at Del Lago Golf Restaurant in Vail.

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# Upcoming Tucson Chapter Meetings

## December 18: Holiday Luncheon

Venue: Tucson Country Club / Time: 1130

RSVP: Col Tom Owens

January 23: Dustin Williams

Pima County Superintendent of Schools

Tucson Chapter Board Elections and ByLaw Changes

February 27: Speaker: Dena Kilgore,

MOAA Program Director, Council and Chapter Affairs

March 27: UofA ROTC Awards

April 24: Major Randy Phelps

A Vietnam Story

May 22: Speaker TBD

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## MOAA Tucson / Vail Meeting

MOAA Tucson / Vail will hold its next meeting Saturday, December 21 at Del Lago Golf Restaurant, in Vail, at 1130. Please let me know if you will attend and please invite any military officers (active or retired) you know to attend. Please come and participate.

Agenda includes Pledge, Arizona Council of Chapters meeting, MOAA Community Outreach Grants, and future Tucson meetings, and electing new Tucson officers.

Col Tom Owens  
President, MOAA Tucson Chapter  
520-400-9561 cell  
<https://tucsonmoaa.org/> <https://www.dellagogolf.net/>

## TUCSON BOARD MEETINGS

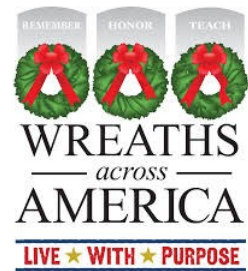
The Tucson MOAA Board meets the first Wednesday of the month, at 2 p.m. via ZOOM. Members are invited to submit items for consideration not later than one week prior to the meeting to the Secretary: [pam.devine@azmoves.com](mailto:pam.devine@azmoves.com). If you desire to participate, please email [rorvik@orvik.com](mailto:rorvik@orvik.com) to receive the access link.

## The Eagles Nest *continued from page 1*

We will present five Christmas Wreaths at the East Lawn Cemetery Wreaths Across America event on December 14 at 1000.

It has been an honor serving you.

Tom



## Arlington National Cemetery Expansion Underway

### By Polly Parks

#### *Surviving Spouse Liaison*

I recently returned from a trip to Virginia, where I visited friends and family, and my husband's grave at Arlington National Cemetery. I am happy to report that the Southern Expansion construction project has made significant headway. The ANC website has an [informative video](#) on the project, which will include seamless access to the US Air Force Memorial, which sits at the head of the project.



*ANC Superintendent Charles "Ray" Alexander reviews design plans for Southern Expansion. (June 20, 2020, U.S. Army photo by Elizabeth Fraser / Arlington National Cemetery)*

The three-phase project began construction in September 2021 and is scheduled to be completed in 2028. Phase I, scheduled for completion in 2026, realigns Columbia Pike, modifies the S. Joyce Street intersection and the Columbia Pike/Washington Boulevard (Route 27) interchange, and replaces Southgate Road with a new segment of S. Nash Street. Construction of Phase II and Phase III of the Southern Expansion project is anticipated to occur over the next five years (spring 2023 through winter 2027) and will add more than 80,000 new internment opportunities.



*Senior leaders from ANC/OAC, the Army, FHWA, USACE, the Air Force District of Washington and contracting firm Kokosing during the DAR and Southern Expansion groundbreaking ceremony. (U.S. Army photo by Elizabeth Fraser / Arlington National Cemetery)*

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By Ann Hollis, *Legislative Chair* and Polly Parks, *The Territorial Editor*

**URGENT ACTION:** The Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act ([H.R. 8371](#)), sponsored by Arizona Representative Juan Ciscomani, passed the House on Nov. 18 by a 389-9 vote. MOAA analysis is the window to pass significant veterans' legislation is rapidly closing with the end of this legislative session, and immediate action by the Senate is essential. Please go to the [Legislative Action Center](#), scroll down to Support Comprehensive VA Healthcare, and notify Senators Sinema and Kelly to act now!

The bill addresses various programs, benefits, and services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), including those related to health care, educational assistance, home loans, homelessness, and disability and memorial affairs.

## **2025 NDAA / FY2025 Budget**

On December 7, the House and Senate released the negotiated text of the [2025 NDAA](#), and considerable pressure exists to pass it, though some items remain in contention. The NDAA authorizes defense policies and supports program plans, while the FY25 appropriations bill will ultimately set the final topline and specific spending levels. The NDAA has a \$911.8 billion topline for the military and the Department of Energy.

MOAA reports the text "includes significant quality of life improvements for servicemembers and their families, expands and updates key benefit programs, and requires key reports designed to ensure continued, meaningful congressional oversight."

**Military Pay Raise and Junior Enlisted Pay Increase:** Junior enlisted pay increased by 14.5%, with an increase of 4.5% for all others.

**Unaccompanied Housing:** Improvements include authorizing the services to provide free broadband internet access to servicemembers residing in unaccompanied housing and expanding the DoD Housing Feedback System to include unaccompanied housing.

**Basic Needs Allowance:** An increase in the threshold from 150% to 200% of the federal poverty guidelines will increase the number of military families eligible for this vital assistance program.

**Military Family Support:** More child care coverage for military spouses seeking employment, a 100% discount for DoD child care providers for one child and reduced costs for additional children (standardizing the benefit across the departments), and upgrades to the portability of professional licenses of servicemembers and military spouses.

**TRICARE and the Military Health System:** Improvements include a referral waiver for servicemembers seeking physical therapy, nutrition, audiology, optometry, and podiatry services in military treatment facilities; the elimination of TRICARE contraception copays to align with federal requirements for commercial health plans; and licensure flexibility allowing

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## **Legislative Update** *continued from page 4*

TRICARE mental health providers to provide tele-mental health care to servicemembers and their families without regard to the location of the provider or the patient.

**Travel Expense Reimbursement:** Effective in January 2027, DoD must reimburse reserve component travel and some related expenses for servicemembers who travel over 50 miles to inactive duty training (IDT) and muster duty.

At press time, the bill passed the House 281 to 140. In contention was a last minute provision by Speaker Johnson regarding treatment of transgender youth that nearly derailed passage. The Senate must pass the bill before it can be signed by President Biden.

Congress has been unable to reach a final agreement on the FY2025 spending bills, and the government is facing another potential shutdown. The current Continuing Resolution (CR) must be passed by December 20.

Republican and Democrat leaders signal they are resigned to another CR; what is in contention is its length. The President must propose his FY26 budget in early February. If a CR is still in effect, it risks throwing next year's budget process into disarray. Lawmakers must pass a final FY25 spending bill by the end of April 2025 or face across-the-board FY25 spending cuts to both defense and domestic programs (known as "sequestration"). The current CR already operates with an across-the-board cut to FY24 levels.

## **Next Year**

On January 3, the US Senate and House of Representatives will reconvene. Representative Ruben Gallego, a former Marine Corps Lance Corporal who served two combat tours in Iraq, will be sworn in as Arizona Senator. He will join Senator Mark Kelly, a retired Navy Captain, in representing Arizona's interests in Washington. In our Catchment Area, Representative Raul Grijalva will start his final term, and Representative Juan Ciscomani will begin his second term.

President-elect Donald Trump will be sworn into office on January 20, 2025. Hopefully, the weather will be mild. The President-elect has nominated a full slate of Cabinet appointees. However, it is unclear how many will make it through the Senate confirmation process, as numerous nominations are contentious, even with the incoming Republican majority. All in all, over 2,000 political appointees will need to be confirmed by the Senate.

## **Arizona Update**

Senator David Gowan (R), District 19, and Representative Stacy Travers (D), District 12, have expressed their willingness to reintroduce legislation supporting state income tax parity for USPHS officers serving in Arizona. Senator Gowan has already started the process, and there should be an actual bill number soon. Please express your support to Sen Gowan at [DGOWAN@AZLEG.GOV](mailto:DGOWAN@AZLEG.GOV) and Rep Travers at [STRAVERS@AZLEG.GOV](mailto:STRAVERS@AZLEG.GOV).

Governor Hobbs named John Scott II the Arizona Department of Veterans Services Director. His bio is at <https://dvs.az.gov/about/leadership/john-scott>. The ADVS Director is a critical leadership position for protecting veterans' rights at the state level. It is extremely important to have a confirmed and permanent Director to ensure that ADVS serves the needs of Arizona veterans. The Arizona Senate has established a committee to oversee all nominations. AZ Sen. Jake Hoffman is the chairman. Contact Sen. Hoffman ([JAKE.HOFFMAN@AZLEG.GOV](mailto:JAKE.HOFFMAN@AZLEG.GOV) / (602) 926-3292) and ask him to support Arizona veterans by asking his committee to approve Mr. Scott's nomination when the committee meets in January.

# D-M RAO December Meeting

**By Polly Parks**  
*The Territorial Editor*

The new **355th Staff Liaison** is David Martinson, USAF Col (Ret).

**VITA** said the schedule is the week of January 6 there will be a class for volunteers. January 7-13 they start appointments and January 20 begin doing taxes. They will not be taking appointments at the BX this year. Volunteers are always welcome; there are new chairs!

**Mission Support Group** wants to get the word out early that Commissary parking will be closed off during the 21-23 March 2025 Air Show. Attendees can park at the Commissary and walk across the road. Commissary and BX will have thru traffic only.

Construction will begin in 2025 and continue through 2031 as D-M divests itself of the last A-10s and begins reconfiguration for the AF Special Operations Command (ASOC). The reorganization will result in three wings: ASOC, Base, and a Deployable.

**SAVAHCS** has a new Center of Development and Community Engagement Service Chief, Ms. Monica Oxford. They are always in need of volunteers. For the holidays the American Legion Auxiliary will be doing a gift shop. You can shop for family or self. Shipping is available. They are busy stuffing handmade stockings for in-patients. There will be a national solute for volunteers the February week of Valentines.

She had a handout on “How to Become a VA Volunteer” which requires a minimum commitment of 100 hours a year. Training is available for some positions, but most entail skills we already have. For most positions, the process is: complete application (VA Form 10-7005); a information & interview session; complete new volunteer training; fingerprint/background check clearance; TB screening; and COVID19 and flu vaccinations are mandatory.

Volunteers are always needed at the **D-M RAO Office** and requires a minimum of a short day per week. The **Pharmacy** and **JAG** can also use volunteers.



**NEW INVENTORY BEING ADDED EACH DAY!**

# Surviving Spouse & Personal Affairs

By Polly Parks, *Surviving Spouse Liaison*

In the short time I've served as Tucson Chapter Surviving Spouse Liaison, there has been much to celebrate with MOAA's tireless advocacy. In 2021, the Arizona Legislature exempted military pensions, annuities, and other veterans' compensation from state income tax. Also, in 2021, the onerous and unfair Widows Tax was repealed. The PACT Act was signed in August 2022, and the VA has proactively expanded its coverage creatively. MOAA has actively worked with the VA and DoD to protect compensation and quality of life benefits for active duty, their families, retirees, Surviving Spouses, and all veterans and their dependents. The negotiated 2025 NDAA boosted enlisted personnel pay by 14.5% and increased the BNA from 150% to \$200%, among other benefits. It truly has exemplified "Never Stop Serving."

I worry that the next few years will not be so provident for our military and retiree community. We must gird ourselves for the battles ahead. National elections are temporary jousting, but budgetary fiat can take decades to reverse. It appears that nothing is off the cutting table, and all of a sudden, crypto, the "cloud," and manned missions to Mars are seriously prioritized as economic imperatives by the incoming Executive Branch.

I live in the real world, which is comprised of real people and real problems. Yesterday, I received a letter from MOAA President Brian Kelly asking for donations to [The MOAA Foundation](#) to strengthen the new [Crisis Relief Program](#), which, in the past year, has helped over 300 active-duty service members, veterans, caregivers, and survivors recover from unprecedented natural disasters. I will, along with a donation to our local chapter tax-deductible ROTC Scholarship Fund. I ask you to join me.

## WHO CAN JOIN MOAA?

MOAA membership is open to all officers, commissioned or warrant, whether on active duty, retired, former, reserve or national guard and their surviving spouse of all the eight uniformed services, including the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Public Health Service. To join the Tucson Chapter, click the Join Our Chapter button on our Chapter's home page: <http://www.tucsonmoaa.org/>.

**Contact Your  
Legislators and  
Urge Them to  
Support the  
All-Volunteer  
Force**

## MOAA Tucson Chapter Mission

1. Advocate and support MOAA national goals.
2. Advocate and support the Arizona and metro Tucson programs, activities, and proposed legislation.
3. Encourage and promote a spirit of volunteerism and participation in programs and activities beneficial to Tucson civic and military communities.



**TUCSON CHAPTER OFFICERS**

(<http://www.tucsonmoaa.org>)

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**Volunteer to be a MOAA Mover**

**Tucson Chapter needs Your Help**

Our MOAA programs and their quality depend on the voluntary efforts of our members. Please consider lending your *LEADERSHIP AND VOICE* to the Chapter teams. Contact Tucson Chapter President Tom Owens at [owensttt@gmail.com](mailto:owensttt@gmail.com) .

**Contact Your Legislator and Urge Them to Support the All-Volunteer Force**

**LOCAL VA CONTACTS**

**Southern Arizona VA Health Care System (SAVAHCS)** 520-792-1450 or 1-800-470-8262  
**Suicide Prevention Coordinator** 520-792-1450 extension 6415  
**Caregiver Support Program** 520-629-1822 extension 5390  
**Patient Advocate Office** 520-629-1819  
**Care in the Community** 520-792-1450 extension 6555  
**Women's Health Clinic** 520-629-4885

**Center for Development & Civic Engagement**  
520-629-1822

**D-M AFB CONTACT NUMBERS**  
**Base Welcome Center** 520-228-4886  
**Info and Referral Services** 520-228-5690  
**ID/CAC card processing** 520-228-4425  
**Base Exchange** 520-748-7887  
**Commissary** 520-228-3116  
**Retiree Activities Office** 520-228-5100  
**VSO** 520-275-7633