



March 2025 Program

Library of Congress Veteran History Project

Melissa Jackson & Joe Mulhberger

Melissa Jackson is the Hillsborough County Field Representative and Caseworker for the Office of Congressman Vern



Buchanan (FL, District 16). Melissa serves as the Congressman's Field Representative for Constituent Service and handles constituent casework in the matters of Immigration, USDA, and EPA. Florida Congressional District 16 includes all of Manatee County as well as south Hillsborough, with a northern boundary of State Road 60 and

a western boundary of US 41. As the proud daughter of a World War II veteran and a former elementary school teacher, Melissa is looking forward to speaking about the Library of Congress Veteran History Project.

Co-presenting with Melissa is our own Lt Col Joe Mulhberger, USAF (Ret). Joe retired as a USAF Lieutenant Colonel

following 36 years on continuous active duty between 1984 and 2020. His involvement with combat, humanitarian, and relief operations touched all seven continents. Joe served four tours with Special Operations, three tours with the Nuclear Enterprise, additional tours supporting multiple air and space platforms, and as an Assistant Professor of German at our United States Air Force Academy. Joe is a



combat veteran with five post-9/11 deployments to: Oman, Iraq, Qatar, Lebanon, and Jordan for Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Inherent Resolve. Since retiring, Joe dedicates his time with his family and serving and advising veterans organizations.

From the Editor's Desk

CDR Cliff Korn, USNR (Ret)

Our Fearless Leader, Bill Kirkpatrick is under-the-weather and unable to give a President's Report this month, so I am usurping his space! Let's all pray that Bill is feeling better soon.

Not all veterans are eligible for health benefits through the VA. Although I am retired, I do not have service-connected disabilities and therefore fall into this category. Despite this, I have never felt discriminated against, as Medicare and Tricare for Life have adequately met my family's needs. However, I became somewhat dissatisfied when I required hearing aids and observed that many of my fellow retirees were receiving top-of-the-line aids at no cost from the VA. For civilians, there is an array of options for purchasing hearing aids, but quality devices can easily exceed \$6,000 per pair.

A beneficial solution for military retirees is available through the Retiree At Cost Hearing Aid Program (RACHAP). This program allows military retirees and dependents who are ineligible for hearing aids from the Veterans Administration (VA) to purchase them at a reduced cost through certain military treatment facilities. While RACHAP operates on a "space-available" basis and is not covered by TRICARE or Medicare, patients pay the manufacturer directly. The Defense Department's RACHAP facilitates the acquisition of hearing aids at government-negotiated prices via specific military medical facilities.

Retirees can utilize any military treatment facility offering the program and are not restricted to their service affiliation. It should be noted that not all military medical facilities participate in this program, as the care of active-duty members takes priority. Unfortunately, MacDill Air Force Base does not offer this program; the nearest participating facility to the Tampa area is Naval Hospital Jacksonville at NAS Jacksonville. Upon moving to Florida in 2012, I found that only active-duty personnel were being serviced at NAS Jax, prompting me to travel to Lyster Army Health Clinic in Fort Rucker, AL to benefit from RACHAP. While the additional travel and lodging expenses may be considerable, they are often deemed worthwhile. Currently, I have new hearing aids on order and will be returning to NAS Jacksonville in a few weeks for fitting and counseling on use. The cost for a pair of advanced, high end hearing aids suitable for my profound hearing loss is only \$941, which I find well worth the travel.

For further details, please search for RACHAP online, where you will find comprehensive information and a list of worldwide locations participating in the program.

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Chaplain

\$20.00 - 5 March LUNCHEON - \$20.00

To Register: 813-924-1983

Reservations no later than 6 p.m. Sunday, 2 March 2025

**Florida Room, Atrium Building
945 North Course Lane , Sun City Center, FL 33573**

Please give full names of members and guests, total number attending. Cost is \$20.00/person payable at the door (cash, check, or credit card). Social hour begins when you arrive, and the Business meeting starts at 11:00 followed by a speaker and lunch.

Remember, if you make a reservation and do not attend, you are expected to pay. Bring payment to the next meeting or send check to:

***Military Officers Association of America
Post Office Box 5693
Sun City Center, FL 33571-5693***

February Buffet Luncheon Menu

**Garden Salad Bar with Dressing Assortment,
Rolls & Butter**

Entrees:

- Corned Beef & Cabbage Gulden's Mustard
- Chicken Florentine
- Salmon with Dill

Starch & Vegetable du Jour

Desserts: Chef's selected desserts

Beverages: Decaf Coffee, Iced Tea, and Ice Water



Chaplain's Devotional for January

Rev. Dr. Tom Smith

God's Immutable Law

"While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." (Genesis 8:22).

Genesis 8:22 reminds us that our universe is governed by immutable laws put in place by God. The Scripture cites four life-long examples of God's unchanging constitution: seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night. We take for granted the changing of the seasons that produce crops, the cold of winter and heat of summer, or day for service and night for rest.

Our Scripture reminds us of another unchangeable law of life, the law of sowing and reaping (Galatians 6:7-9). How often have you heard the proverb, "you reap what you sow." There are four principles the immutable law of sowing and reaping make clear to us. Let's talk about that today.

Principle #1: You reap what you sow.

If you sow a watermelon seed, what do you get? A watermelon. If you sow a kernel of corn, what do you get? Corn. If you sow love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control, what do you get? God's immutable law guarantees you will reap the benefits of sowing into the life of others.

Principle #2: You will reap in greater proportion that what you sowed.

How many watermelons come from planting one seed? How many kernels of corn? God alone knows the answer. God alone knows the impact we can have every day as He places divine appointments in our way. The question is, "What will I sow in the lives of those I meet daily?"

Principle #3: You may not always reap in the same season.

Sowing good fruit in faith gives us comfort that God will reward our efforts. His divine providence may reward us before the growing season is completed and harvest time arrives. God know our need and is bound by Scripture to cause us to reap what we sow.

Principle #4: Don't grow weary in doing good. You will reap in due season.

Planting is hard work. It is easy to grow weary as we look at the pressures of life. Know from Scripture that God will cause us to reap what we sow. What are you planting today? That is what you will reap in the future.

Be abundantly blessed, Rev. Dr. Tom Smith



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Did you know we have a Facebook Page? We do! It's a great place to see what's happening in our chapter, and it allows you to express your opinions on our activities and keep in touch with other members. If you have a Facebook account, click the logo/link to "like" and follow our page. If you don't yet have a Facebook Account, Facebook makes it easy to establish one.

Like what you see in this newsletter?
There's even more in the Florida Council of
Chapter's newsletter at this link!

<https://flmoaa.org/news/#>

Upcoming Events

Chapter Meetings & Luncheons

January 8	June 4
February 5	September 3
March 5	October 1
April 2	November 5
May 7	December 3

CAMARADERIE - SPEAKERS - LUNCH

Luncheons are the first Wednesday of each month (except January) 11am-1pm. Cost is \$20
Atrium Florida Room
945 North Course Lane, Sun City Center
Register to 813-924-1983 NLT 6pm the Sunday prior to the luncheon.

MILITARY
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Surviving Spouse Corner

Jeannie Stratis

Did you know that MOAA has a Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter? The Chapter has 232 Surviving Spouses and 74 Surviving Spouse Liaisons. Send an email to MSSVC02@gmail.com to join. Each month the group gets together virtually. Every other month the topics change. One month there will be an unstructured meeting where members share issues, information, and ideas. In the other months, there will be a guest speaker.

Upcoming SSSC Meeting:

- March 18, 2025, at 1 PM ET: Maj Gen. April Vogel, MOAA Government Relations Vice-President will be the guest speaker discussing "Advocacy in Action" (AiA).

Please join us! Newcomers are welcome. You can also connect with us on MOAA's Surviving Spouses Facebook group.

There is also a Surviving Spouse Virtual Book Club.

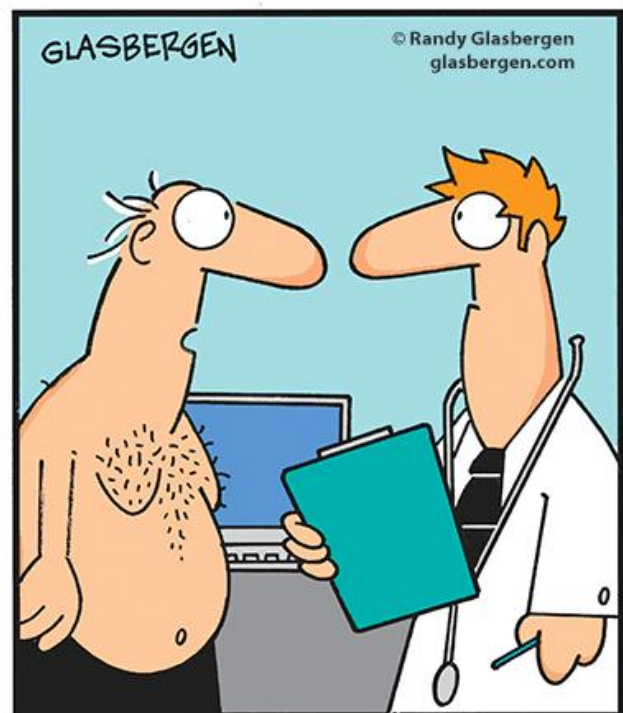


They meet on Zoom on the third Monday of the month at 4pm. Upcoming selections are "The Lost Book Shop," by Evie Woods, "A Year in Provence," by Peter Mayle, and "A Calamity of Souls," by David Balducci, along with several others. Surviving spouses can email mssvc02@gmail.com to join.

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"What good is our security system if the Wrinkle Fairy can get in without setting off the alarm?!"



"Gravity has lowered my chest, my stomach and my butt. Why hasn't it lowered my cholesterol?!"

MILITARY BENEFITS FORUM

THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 2025

10AM-12PM

**SUN CITY CENTER COMMUNITY HALL
1910 SOUTH PEBBLE BEACH BLVD.**



Join us for our Second Annual Military Benefits Forum for our military members, veterans, family members, surviving spouses, and caregivers of all branches, grades and ranks.



Guest speakers from the Florida Department of Veteran Affairs, James A. Haley Veterans Hospital, Hillsborough County Veteran Services, Veterans Benefit Administration, and local VSOs



This is a free event! To ensure a seat and an info packet, please register by scanning the QR code below or email moaasccsurvivors@gmail.com and provide first and last name.



Sun City Center Chapter
Surviving Spouse Committee



Legislative Affairs

LTC Jeff Camp, USA (Ret)

Veteran Overmedication and Suicide Prevention Act

Lawmakers are renewing efforts to address potential overmedication of veterans by Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) doctors, a concern linked to increased suicide rates among former service members. The proposed “Veteran Overmedication and Suicide Prevention Act” seeks a comprehensive study to examine the types and quantities of medications prescribed to veterans, the prevalence of non-pharmaceutical treatments offered prior to medication, and the frequency of medications being the initial treatment option. This initiative aims to identify patterns in prescription practices and their possible connections to veteran suicides, with the goal of improving mental health care and reducing reliance on pharmaceuticals within the VA system.

Proposed Veteran Legislation in Florida

As of February 2025, Florida has introduced several legislative measures to support veterans:

- **Senate Bill 116:** Filed on February 5, 2025, this bill mandates the Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs to conduct a study evaluating veterans’ awareness of existing programs and services. It also aims to enhance the Veteran Suicide Prevention Training Pilot Program by incorporating specialized mental health training and proposes the development of adult day health care facilities for veterans and their families.
- **House Bill 445:** Filed on February 6, 2025, this bill seeks to exempt certain disabled veterans from paying tolls on Florida’s toll facilities.

In the previous year, Governor Ron DeSantis signed House Bill 725 into law, expanding eligibility for admission to state veterans’ long-term care facilities to include spouses or surviving spouses of qualifying veterans. Additionally, House Bill 1329 was enacted to enhance programs and benefits for veterans, such as designating “Veterans Florida” as the state’s primary contact for military transition assistance and creating a fee exemption on hunting and fishing licenses for honorably discharged veterans with qualifying service-connected disabilities.

Pay Raise for Military Retirees and Active Duty

Congress has approved a pay increase for military retirees in 2025 through a 2.5% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), effective December 1, 2024. This adjustment is based on the Consumer Price Index and aims to account for inflation. Retirees saw this increase in their December 31, 2024 payment.

It’s important to note that COLA adjustments for retirees differ from the annual pay raises for active-duty service members. While active-duty personnel received a 4.5% pay raise in 2025, with junior enlisted ranks (E-1 through E-4) receiving a total increase of 14.5%, these raises are separate from the COLA adjustments applied to retirement pay.

Veteran’s Affairs Welcomes New Secretary

As of February 7, 2025, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has undergone significant leadership changes and is implementing new policies to enhance services for veterans. On February 4, 2025, the U.S. Senate confirmed former Georgia Representative Doug Collins as the new VA Secretary with a 77-23 vote. Collins, an Air Force Reserve colonel and military chaplain, has pledged to streamline regulations and combat corruption within the VA to ensure veterans receive their due benefits. Additionally, the VA has announced a return to in-person work policies starting February 3, 2025, aiming to improve service delivery and accessibility for veterans. These developments reflect the VA’s ongoing commitment to enhancing care and support for the approximately 18 million veterans it serves.

Buchanan Hosts Inaugural Valentines for Veterans

Buchanan and Team Delivered Over 4,000 Valentines Card to Area Veterans



2/14/2025 BRADENTON — Today, Congressman Vern Buchanan delivered handwritten valentines cards to local veterans [at the Manatee County Sheriff’s Office and the Manatee County Commission](#) through his new constituent appreciation program, Valentines for Veterans. He also discussed a new package of pro-veteran legislation he rolled out this week to help improve the mental and physical health of America’s veterans.

“Seeing the smiling faces of our incredible veterans when they were handed a card was the reason I started this program,” said Buchanan. “It was also great seeing such great artwork from our students who put a ton of thought and care into each one of these cards. I’m grateful for our school systems’ participation and their work helping me honor the sacrifices made by our veteran community. Their service and sacrifice will never be forgotten.”

Buchanan partnered with 26 local schools and youth organizations in Manatee and Hillsborough Counties to create more than 4,000 cards for veterans living in Florida’s 16th Congressional District. There are over 64,000 veterans living within the District and this new program intends to reach as many as possible with a valentines card to thank them for their service.

Schools and youth organizations participating include: Alafia Elementary School, Bayshore Elementary School, Blackburn Elementary School, Boys & Girls Clubs of Manatee County, Braden River Middle School, Corr Elementary School, Doodle Bugs! Children’s Learning Academy, Dr. Mona Jain Middle School, G.D. Rogers Garden-Bullock Elementary School, Gene Witt Elementary School, James Tillman Elementary School, Lakewood Ranch High School, Lakewood Ranch Preparatory Academy, Manatee High School, Nelson Elementary School, Oneco Elementary School, Palm View K-8 School, Palma Sola Elementary School, Palmetto High School, Pinecrest Elementary School, Ruskin Elementary School, Summerfield Elementary School, Thompson Elementary School, Tillman Elementary School, Trail Life Troop and Virgil Mills Elementary School.

In addition to veterans working at the Manatee County Sheriff’s Office and with Manatee County, Buchanan and members of his staff personally delivered valentines to: the Bradenton Fire and Police Departments, the East Manatee Fire District, Freedom Village Veterans, the Longboat Key Police and Fire Departments, Manatee County Bob’s Vets, the Manatee County Veterans Council, MOAA Sun City Center, the North River Fire District, the Sarasota Police Department and other veterans organizations.

Buchanan Delivers Remarks on New Veterans Legislation

Bills Establish Program for Medically Tailored Meals, Support Veterans Experiencing Mental Health Crises



2/14/2025 BRADENTON — Congressman Vern Buchanan delivered brief remarks on new legislation he introduced to fight for Florida’s veterans, the [Veterans Nutrition and Wellness Act of 2025](#) (H.R. 1289) and the [Veterans Mental Health Crisis Referral Enhancement Act of 2025](#) (H.R. 1290).

“With more than 64,000 veterans in our district, fighting for our veterans and America’s servicemembers has been one of my top priorities since coming to Congress,” said Buchanan. “Our nation’s veterans have sacrificed so much for our country, and we must ensure they have access to the nutritious food and mental health care they need to stay healthy.”

The *Veterans Nutrition and Wellness Act of 2025* offers enhanced nutritional food options to veterans through a “food as medicine” health care approach. The bill directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish and carry out a pilot program to administer medically tailored meals and groceries to eligible veterans.

The *Veterans Mental Health Crisis Referral Enhancement Act of 2025* addresses critical gaps in mental health care for veterans. This bill directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a three-year pilot program to refer veterans experiencing mental health crises to approved non-Veterans Affairs mental health care providers, ensuring timely access to competent care.

Buchanan has fought for veterans and America’s servicemembers throughout his career. In January, he introduced the *Veteran Overmedication and Suicide Prevention Act* (H.R. 136), which requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to review the deaths of all veterans it treated who died by suicide or from a drug overdose in the last five years.

For more information about the Valentines for Veterans program and any other Congressional events, please reach out to Cara Misiewicz at Cara.Misiewicz@mail.house.gov. Find all photos from the Valentines for Veterans program [here](#).

Our February Meeting!



February speaker Tom Harding gives a memorable presentation on the life, times, and career of RADM Larry Chambers, USN (Ret)



Rep. Buchanan staff members Melissa Jackson and MarDee Buchman distribute Valentines for Veterans.



Chapter members Ferris Garrett and Michelle Halcomb receive MOAA National Awards first presented at the MOAA Florida Council of Chapters Leadership Conference and Convention.



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Bequests and Heritage Society

A bequest - a gift made through your will - allows you to retain control of your assets during your lifetime and distribute them as you wish upon your death. After providing for loved ones, many people choose to include a gift to The MOAA Foundation.

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Donors who provide for The MOAA Foundation either by means of a bequest or a planned gift are eligible for Heritage Society membership. For more information, please email our Development office at foundation@moaa.org or call **(800) 234-6622, ext.169**.

For bequests to The MOAA Foundation, your attorney may find the following wording useful:

"I give and bequeath _____ (description of property) and/or the sum of \$ _____ to Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) Foundation, a Virginia nonprofit, charitable organization (EIN: 46-4219250) that is tax-exempt under section §501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code doing business at 201 North Washington Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2539. These funds are to be used in support of all MOAA Foundation charitable programs offered by MOAA, its subsidiaries, its councils or its chapters to currently serving uniformed servicemembers and veterans of all ranks, their families and their survivors."



"This is historical fiction and will give the reader insight into one of the pivotal battles of the Vietnam war. Matt's work putting this together was prodigious. I don't know how he did it. As a historical novel, I think it is great."

General Walter Boomer, US Marine Corps (Ret)
Available on [Amazon and Kindle](#).

Member Spotlight

Are you involved in a community event, activity, or service? Send us a picture and a description of 'you' in action and we will highlight you in the chapter newsletter!

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newsletter@sccmoaa.org

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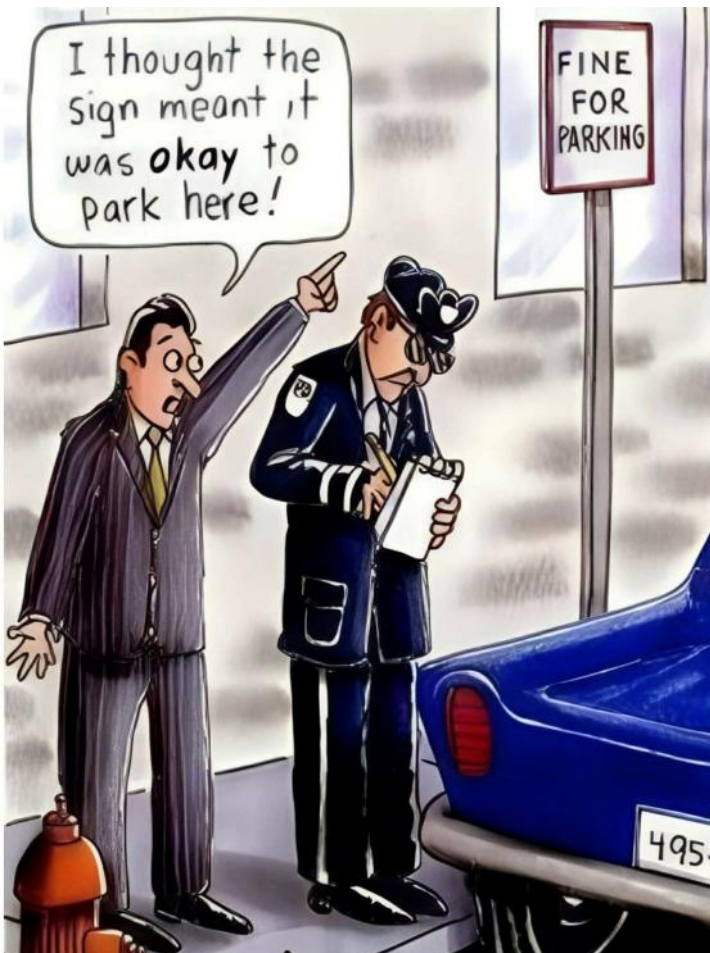
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Are You a National MOAA Member? If yes supply MOAA Number _____

Do You Wish a Chapter Name Tag at \$10? Names? _____

Are You a Member of Another MOAA Chapter? Which One? _____

To complete enrollment: fill out application and mail to SCC MOAA Chapter, PO Box 5693, Sun City Center, FL 33571-5693

More information? Contact kfaryniasz@hotmail.com Phone: (813)255-5178

Other Information:

Chapter annual dues are \$20 and \$15 for Surviving spouses. Spouses and significant others are welcome and free.

Chapter luncheons/meetings are held on the first Wednesday of the month except July and August. Guest speakers are part of the program each month.



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Military Officers Association of America
P.O. Box 5693
Sun City Center, FL. 33571-5693

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