

## 2022 May OCC Legislative Affairs Update

During the month of April, MOAA's annual Advocacy in Action (AiA) event brought members from across the nation in contact with their lawmakers to address critical topics on MOAA's legislative agenda. Traditionally this was an in-person event that brought hundreds of MOAA members to the Hill, but in 2021 it was conducted virtually because of the COVID pandemic.

Seventeen individuals from Ohio were identified to begin contacting the state's Senators and Congressional Representatives to schedule appointments. Altogether, MOAA members reached every member of Congress via thousands of letters and more than 235 meetings, both in-person and virtual. To facilitate the event, the legislative affairs staff member in each congressional office was provided a narrative paper or outline covering exactly what the MOAA representatives wanted to discuss. On the scheduled day, a virtual connection was made, and discussions held. The allotted time, though brief was effective. Three major issues were covered: The Richard Star Act, Stop Copay Overpay Act and Military Pay Raise.

The Richard Star Act or Combat Injured Concurrent Receipt is about Servicemembers injured in combat and forced to retire (before 20 years) facing an offset where their retirement pay is reduced for every dollar of disability received from the VA. Some have their entire retirement pay "offset". The key bills are H.R. 1282 and S. 344.

The 'Stop Copay Overpay Act' refers to TRICARE copays for mental health visits. These have increased dramatically. Because mental health care often requires multiple visits, higher copays quickly add up and make treatment unaffordable for some military families.

Military Pay Raise: Based on current Department of Labor assessments, and reflecting the rising costs of employment, the FY 2023 NDAA should include a pay raise of 4.6%. An undercutting of that amount would negatively impact several groups.

Recruits: Individuals considering whether to join the military may see this as an omen of things to come. Why join if pay will not keep up with the civilian sector?

Those Currently serving: Those prepared to go into harm's way may see this as a slight to their service and sacrifice.

Those about to retire: These servicemembers may decide to get out taking their work experience and going to work for a government contractor or some other enterprise.

It is not known yet how effective these meetings will influence the vote of the respective congressman and women that were contacted. Time will tell.

John Anderson, MOAA OCC Legislative Affairs Representative