

January OCC Legislative Affairs Update

On December 23, the President signed the 1,772-page National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The 1,772-page National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) covers a wide range of interests totaling \$858 billion, with \$817 billion going directly to DoD. An eighteen summary of the contents is available at https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/fy23_ndaa_agreement_summary.pdf.

MOAA in its review of the document has highlighted six issues they want to watch. They are: Pay Raise: While there is annual pay raise of 4.6%, it falls short of what is needed to counter the rampant inflation and the rising cost of employment. MOAA's next efforts will be to secure a raise for the uniformed services slated at 5.2%.

Health Care Cuts and Realignment: With the consolidation of military medical functions under the recently formed Defense Health Agency there has been a tendency to begin reductions and eliminations of medical service to our military as well as retirees. There has been considerable pushback resulting in a requirement in the NDAA that directs a "briefing and report on the reductions or realignment of military medical manning and medical billets." The report will need to clarify DoD's preliminary observations regarding the analyses used to support any reduction or realignment of such billets. The briefing is due no later than Feb. 1, 2023, with the formal report due by May 31, 2023.

Family Programs: The NDAA provides for much-needed assistance for military families in the form of a pilot program to reimburse military families for childcare costs related to PCS moves as well as other efforts to improve childcare and issues related to basis allowances for housing.

Housing Costs: The NDAA directs the DoD to establish a Chief Housing Officer position to monitor issues of excessive costs of housing in certain areas of the country and to coordinate efforts to assist service members during housing shortages.

Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) Open Season: The NDAA provides for an open season for the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) through 2023. This will provide eligible individuals a chance to opt in or opt out of the SBP. MOAA provides a detail analysis and summary of the impacts at <https://www.moaa.org/content/benefits-and-discounts/pay-and-benefits/survivor-issues/survivor-benefit-plan2/>

Guard and Reserve Issues: During the past year, servicemembers have been called upon to fight forest fires on the West Coast, rescue citizens during hurricanes, and been deployed military to major cities to support civilian hospitals overwhelmed with COVID-19. All these examples demonstrate heroic service by those who stand ready to provide support and security. As the calls continue, action is needed to provide those personnel needed support. The NDAA directs DoD to backdate the effective date of rank for officers who warrant the federal recognition of their promotions, and to provide transitional health care benefits for members of the National Guard who are separated from full-time duty for a period of active service greater than 30 days.

MOAA will be working with Congress this next year on passage of Concurrent Receipt, the Major Richard Star Act which finished the 117th Congress with great support but ran out of time for passage, and Arlington National Cemetery (ANC) Eligibility. MOAA continues its efforts to preserve military honors for those who have already earned eligibility.