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The Ohio Council of Chapters – A Brief History

Sources: <https://bcsthome.net/hrcmoaa/bulletins/b0210.shtml>,
<https://www.moaa.org/>; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_Officers_Association_of_America

Introduction: The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) as we know it today originally began as the Retired Officers Association (ROA). Later it was renamed The Retired Officers Association (TROA), and finally MOAA in 2003. During the mid-1970s, three military chapters were organized in Ohio and became a part of The Retired Officers Association (TROA). With the renaming of the parent organization, the three Ohio chapters were reorganized under a parent umbrella organization for the state and called the Ohio Council of Chapters, MOAA. The following is a brief history.

MOAA is a professional association of United States military officers. It is a nonprofit organization that advocates for a strong national defense, but is politically nonpartisan. The association supports government policies that benefit military members and their families. Its membership is made up of active duty, retired, and former commissioned officers and warrant officers from the uniformed services of the United States.

Background: The association was known as Retired Officers Association from its start in 1929 in Los Angeles. The association historically has pursued legislative and policy actions on a variety of active duty, Reserve, and National Guard issues, in addition to its heavy and effective focus on lobbying for military retiree programs. In 1944, the association moved its headquarters to an area near Washington, D.C. At that time, the organization had approximately 2,600 members. After the end of World War II, the ROA began to grow. In 1979, the association added the word "The" to the name and became TROA to eliminate confusion with the acronym of another veterans' organization. TROA officials also said that efforts to attract active-duty members had not always been understood because of the word "retired" in the organization's name. They said that factor deterred membership among some active duty, Reserve, and National Guard personnel, plus recently retired officers embarking on second careers.

TROA recommended the change to its members after more than two years of extensive study, including talking with focus groups, members of the news media, Capitol Hill and Administration staff members, and surveying members and potential members.

On January 1, 2003, The Retired Officers Association (TROA) membership, the nation's largest veterans' group at the time, and representing military officers and their families, voted by mail and email to change its name to Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). Almost 90 percent of the 114,000 members voted favorably on the name change. Former military officers along with the uniformed officer corps of the U.S. Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration were told they could belong to the new organization.

In the words of V.Adm. Norbert R. Ryan, Jr., USN-ret., TROA's president at the time, "The recommendation to change our name was a huge decision," according to "However, we believe the change is in our members' best interests for future organizational strength as we lobby for our members and a strong national defense." He continued by saying "TROA has long been known for its integrity and effectiveness in helping service men and women who serve and have served our nation," Ryan continued. "Nothing about that will change, nor will our emphasis on military retiree issues. We will still be the same people who work hard for all of our members every day."

In 2002, the association changed its name to the Military Officers Association of America. The change took effect on 1 January 2003. TROA began the transition to its new name on January 1, 2003, but continued the use "formerly TROA" in its logo until October 1, 2003. TROA's magazine changed its name on January 1, 2003, from The Retired Officer Magazine to Military Officer. The web site changed to <https://www.moaa.org/> on January 2, 2003.

Today, the Military Officers Association of America has over 350,000 members. It is the largest military officers' organization in the United States. In addition to supporting a strong national defense program, the association provides military benefits counseling, career transition assistance, and educational assistance for children of military families (including families of enlisted personnel).

Ohio Council of MOAA: The Ohio Council was a result of planning by three Ohio chapters in the early-mid 1970's. Cincinnati, Cleveland and Dayton were the primary movers with Col Joe Gravenstine (Dayton—1st council President, 1976–78), COL Jim Walsh (Cincinnati —2nd Council President 1979-80), and also then a member of the National TROA Board of Directors) and LCDR Ed Olsen (Cleveland – 3rd Council President, 1981–82).

First meetings were quarterly and held in Dayton at the WPAFB Officer club. When the Columbus Chapter was added to the Council, the meetings were then held at Rickenbacker AFB for several years. The 4th Council President was LTC Margaret Brosner (Columbus 1983–84), who was also serving on the National Board of Directors, TROA during that period).

Early by-laws of the Council provided for:

- Provide for equal representation among all chapters.
- No requirement to belong to the National organization.
- Conscious attempt to provide for each chapter to become a host chapter for conventions.
- Each chapter independent of the other.

Mission: The original mission of the council was seen as discussion and resolving issues pertaining to the retired officers of the Armed Forces in the areas of pay, benefits, defense and other matters including political interests. The feeling was that chapters would be more of a “social” organization while council would handle the more serious issues. One of the first items of interest was that of retired military pay to be exempt from Ohio State income tax. This was finally achieved thirty years later in 2008.

Membership: Three additional chapters (Canton, Toledo and Western Reserve) were added in the early 1980's. Total retired officers in Ohio as of Fiscal Year 1995 were approximate 5,800. Membership of the Council at that time was around 2,000 members in seven chapters. Membership has dropped in the last several years despite a name change and eligibility requirements. The Mahoning and Shenango Valleys Chapter was added to the Ohio Council of Chapters in 2011. The Toledo Area Chapter of MOAA, TAOMOAA, closed in March 2018.

Conventions: They were first started in 1975 at WPAFB and hosted by the Dayton chapter. The second was hosted also by Dayton and the third by Columbus. The agendas for the early conventions included Friday PM, golf tournament, Council Board of Directors meeting late Friday PM. Format for Saturday AM included morning briefings and workshops. Afternoons were devoted to tours, exhibits and shopping. The evenings included a formal dinner w/speaker. Sunday morning consisted of a wrap-up and critique. TROA national usually provided some financial assistance and speakers. Highlights of some of the conventions included Woody Hayes (1979) as a guest speaker. Attendance at that convention was over one hundred. Latter day conventions have averaged 40–60 members and guests.

In 1995 the two-year format was adopted. Memorable convention sites included Sawmill Creek (hosted by Cleveland) in 1978 and where the council realized that sales tax was part of the overall expenses. Camp Perry in 1988 was hosted by the Toledo chapter. Cincinnati in 1994 was hosted by the Cincinnati chapter in conjunction with national TROA.

The OCC has continued to convene conventions every two years at various locations. The most recent ones were sponsored by MSVC and OWRC. During the COVID Pandemic (2020-2021) there was an attempt to convene a convention in Columbus, but technical issues caused its cancellation. At present, the next biennial convention is scheduled for September-October 2023 at the Youngstown Air Reserve Station, Vienna, Ohio.

Legislative/Other: The 1991–1994 legislative agenda for the council included: exempt military retired pay from the OHIO State income tax; exempt the military survivor benefit plans (SBP) and the retired family protection plan (RSFPP) annuities from the state income tax; provide a reasonable preference for the living of veterans for Ohio funded programs, projects and other employment opportunities; and promote a special military license plate for active, reserve, guard and retired military personnel. In the mid-nineties, the Ohio Governor instituted the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame and all veteran organizations including the Ohio Council TROA were invited to sit in on the initial planning. To date the Ohio council is aware that at least four of its members (1-Cincinnati, 1-Canton, 1-Dayton, and 1-Western Reserve) are members of that distinguished group. Several other projects completed included representation and lobbying for the Ohio Veterans Memorial Plaza (state memorial dedicated in 1997 to veterans of each of the 88 Ohio counties). The Ohio Military Veterans Partnership (OMVP) met in the spring of 1996 with Col Parker Reed (VP-Ohio Council) as its first chairman. The aim of the OMVP was to join together military and veteran organizations to provide strength through unity while dealing with issues of mutual importance to all veterans, active-duty personnel, reserve, guard, families, dependents and retirees from all branches of the Armed Services. In the summer of 1996, the Ohio Western Reserve National Cemetery, a VA cemetery in NE Ohio was established in Rittman. Efforts of the Western Reserve chapter and especially by CWO Don Nielson (Council President 1991–92) were finally successful. In October 2018, the Ohio Council of Chapters represented National MOAA and participated in the grand opening of the National Veterans Memorial and Museum (NVMM) in Columbus. For the first time ever, all chapters in the Ohio Council of Chapters, as well as the Council, earned 5-Star Levels of Excellence (LOE) from MOAA for 2017; this is the highest award MOAA allocates. Council Chapters have continued to achieve 5-Star LOE ratings through the years.

The Council continues to hold its meetings at the NVMM in Columbus. Meetings are now held quarterly, (January, April, July and September). During the COVID lockdown, the OCC continued to hold its meetings at the NVMM. Virtual participation was offered to those who could not participate because of impending issues or distance prohibitions.

Past Chapter Presidents:

2020-2022 Hahn, Daniel, MG, USA, OWRC
2018-2020 Hosler, Roderick, LTC, USA, MSVC
2016-2018 Calta, Dick Col, USAF, OWRC
2014-2016 Schroeder, Richard, COL, USA, TAC
2012-2014 Cooney, Terry, CAPT, USN, DAC
2010-2012 Williams, George, CAPT, USN, COC
2008-2010 McCoy, John, Col, USAF COC
2006-2008 Jewett, Harlan, COL, USA, OWRC
2004-2006 MacDonald, John, CAPT, USN, TAC
2002-2004 Toombs, Raymond, MAJ, USA, OWRC
2000-2002 Lawson, Robert, BG, USA, COC
1988-2000
1986-1988
1984-1986
1983-1984 Brosner, Margaret, LTC, USA, COC
1981-1982 Olsen, Ed, LCDR, USN, GCleC
1979-1980 Walsh, Jim, COL, USA, GCinC
1976-1978 Gravenstine, Joe, Col, USAF, DAC