



Charleston Chapter, Military Officers Association of America

March— Issue 03 2026 Published monthly, except July Web site: www.charlestonmoaa.com

Chapter Luncheon with CAPT Shawn Lansing, USCG Coast Guard Sector Charleston Commander

Join us on Friday, 27 March 2026 to meet CAPT Shawn Lansing, who assumed command of Coast Guard Sector Charleston last summer. The Coast Guard is part of DHS, which is currently enduring another government funding shutdown, so keep your fingers crossed, once again.

Place: Fleet Reserve Association
99 Wisteria Rd.
Goose Creek, SC 29445
(843) 569-2692

Date: Friday, March 27, 2026

Time: Social Hour 11AM accompanied by a cash bar

Lunch: 12 Noon

Menu: Lunch served with choice of: Water, Tea

Choice between two entrees:

Baked Flounder with Lemon Almond Sauce Shrimp *OR*
Baked Black Forest Ham with Pineapple Cinnamon Glaze

Sides include Red Potatoes with garlic butter and parsley and Italian Green Beans

Girl Scout Cookies will be available for dessert!

Cost: \$30.00 per person. Make checks payable to Charleston MOAA.

Dress: Casual.

RSVP: Checks to arrive NLT Saturday, March 21, 2026, or use *ZELLE*

Mail to: CAPT Bud Schneeweis, 6 Wappoo Creek Pl, Charleston, SC 29412

For addl. info - call or txt: (703.300.0811) *OR* email: wshneeweis@verizon.net



Check out our interesting member biographical sketch on page 3.

Legislative Summary

Submitted by: Bud Schneeweis



CAPT, USCG (Ret)

Special, Check Out: MOAA's [Take Action Center](#)

MOAA-Backed Caregiver Bill Takes Major Step Forward in House

Bipartisan legislation that would provide much-needed support to veteran caregivers took a significant step toward becoming law last week, advancing out of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee alongside other important MOAA-supported bills.

The progress of the Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement (3R) Act (H.R. 2148) highlights growing bipartisan commitment to strengthening support for caregivers, families, and some of the most severely wounded, injured, and disabled veterans in the country.

The legislation represents a major step forward for the caregivers who form the backbone of veterans' long-term care. By expanding access to education, easing reemployment barriers, and enhancing retirement planning resources, the bill helps ensure caregivers have the tools they need to maintain stability while supporting those who served.

Without targeted reforms like those in the 3R Act, caregivers could be left to rely on public assistance, shifting costs between government agencies rather than reducing them.

MOAA is grateful to every member and veteran advocate who contacted their lawmakers urging action on this critical measure. Your engagement made a real difference. Now that the bill has passed out of both the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees, it is more important than ever to keep the pressure on this priority.

We encourage you to continue urging your elected officials to bring H.R. 2148 and S. 879 to the floor in both chambers and ensure it becomes law before the end of this year.

The legislation was a key part of MOAA's testimony before a joint February 24 hearing of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees. That testimony covered a range of veterans' priorities, such as protecting veterans from unaccredited "claim sharks" via the Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding (GUARD) VA Benefits Act and ending the "wounded veteran tax" faced by tens of thousands of combat-injured veterans via the Major Richard Star Act.

More Bills Move Forward

Along with the 3R act, House Veterans Affairs Committee members advanced other MOAA-supported legislation in their February 12 hearing:

The Fisher House Availability Act (H.R. 3726), which would allow TRICARE beneficiaries, including active duty families, to stay in VA Fisher Houses on a space-available basis. This change would expand access to lodging for families traveling for specialty or emergency care, reducing financial strain and ensuring they can remain close to their loved ones during treatment.

Continued on page 6.

Thank You
The following have renewed their membership for Five or More Years:

Nothing to report this month.



Steve Rowe, Realtor®



Proud MOAA Member



carolinaonerealestate.com

Retired Military, *Active Agent*

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www.SteveRoweHomes.com srowe@CarolinaOne.com

For every referred Client I donate \$100 to the MOAA Scholarship Fund!

This month's interesting biographical sketch

Lt Paul Gray, USN

LT Paul Gray, USN grew up in McKeesport, Pennsylvania (near Pittsburgh) and did not leave his hometown until he decided to attend The Citadel in Charleston for his college education. He graduated from The Citadel with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and earned his commission by being a member of the Navy ROTC. Paul will be joining fellow Citadel Classmates to celebrate their 50th Reunion in the fall of 2026. He served in the Navy from 1976 until 1982. His last assignment was on the USS Texas (CGN-39) from 1980 to 1982.

The USS Texas (DLGN/CGN-39) was the US Navy's second Virginia-Class nuclear powered guided missile cruiser. She was the third ship of the Navy to be named in honor of the State of Texas. Her keel was laid on 18 August 1973, at Newport News, Virginia, by the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company. According to him, this was his most rewarding assignment. He received orders to become The Navigation Officer on the USS Texas during his last two years of service on active duty in the Navy. At the end of that assignment, he opted to return full-time to civilian life.

For most of Paul's civilian career, he worked for a number of large logistical companies and only recently retired from that demanding field in 2025. One of his most unexpected interests in retirement is through much kind pressure from a friend involved in the Charleston Symphony Orchestra Chorus. He encouraged him to join the choir with him. Paul finally agreed to try out and was accepted at the first audition. He sings bass. The chorus is a volunteer position and when the orchestra needs a choir to join them for performances, then the members practice to provide the best voices to complement the orchestra. It is and continues to be a rewarding interest. Sometimes other local large choirs will join them creating as many as 180 voices with the orchestra on stage as will happen on April 24 and April 25th in Charleston singing Fantasia in C Minor by Beethoven.

Paul's wife, Pearl, works full time reporting to the Director of Food Management at MUSC and is a Patient Ambassador interacting with all the patients ensuring they are having the best service



possible by MUSC. Pearl is originally from Walterboro and they enjoy having a son, daughter and two grandchildren residing within 5 minutes of their home in Summerville. Their daughter, Ashley, is married to LTC Randy Sadler's son, Bryan, in our chapter and Randy told Paul about our Charleston MOAA Chapter. Randy discussed information about our various speakers and luncheons. He provided a membership brochure to him. Paul is coming to our February luncheon meeting in Goose Creek.

Many thanks to Randy for recruiting another great military officer to join our chapter. Highlighting our newer members for both their military career as well as their contributions to our community is important. I encourage all of our members to greet Paul at our luncheons and get to know him. He has some great experiences he can share!



Rest in Peace

Military Brothers and Sisters. Your Service to Our Country is Recorded and Honored.

Thankfully, nothing to report this month.



President's Pen

Happy Saint Patrick's Day!!!

It's March again and that brings Daylight Savings Time! It begins at 0200 Sunday March 8th, so don't forget to "spring your clock forward" before going to bed Saturday night the 7th. With that, Spring will begin shortly after, so warmer weather is not far behind!

A special "thank you" to your Board of Directors for their continued support of our Chapter. CAPT Bud Schneeweis, your Legislative Director; Col Ron Kennedy, your Publicity Director; Lt Bob McKay, your Award Director; and COL Steve Rowe, (in abstention) your Assistant Awards Director; each stepped forward to serve a 2026 - 2028 term supporting your Chapter. They were sworn in during our February luncheon.



Dare I say "government shutdown"? Bud has some great speakers lined up for our up-coming

luncheons that had been scheduled to do their presentations last year and had to cancel due to the "government shutdown" and talking with MOAA members is not part of their "critical mission". Hopefully, that will not interfere with our up - coming meetings.

The SC Council of Chapters has a new slate of officers as of January 2026. The new president replacing Linda Caldwell is Lt Col Jim Albert, USAF (Ret). He is in the Grand Strand (Myrtle Beach) Chapter and has held many leadership positions in that Chapter through the years. Bud has scheduled Jim to speak to the Charleston Chapter in the near future.

As I mentioned, spring is near and with that comes our annual ROTC and JROTC Awards ceremonies. Bob McKay is already in the process of scheduling our members to carry the junior and senior JROTC cadets their certificates, medals and cash gifts at each of their school locations. Please let him know which schools you are able to assist with as your schedule allows. If you have not done this in the past, Bob has an outstanding packet of instructions that he gets to you with the certificates, medals and the crisp \$50 bill. He does make it very easy to accomplish the mission!

Unfortunately, we still have some members of our Chapter that have not renewed their membership dues for 2026. MOAA National requires that we remove them from our roster list as of the 31st of March. We have sent our FINAL REMINDER post cards to those members and hope that they renew before we have to drop them from our roster list.

Welcome to our newest member of our Chapter, LT Paul C. Gray, USN. His bio is located on page 3 of the *Bridge View* this month. He and his wife Pearl reside in Summerville. Please greet them when you see them at one of our future luncheons.

Thank you again for your continued support to the Charleston Chapter!!

Ernie

Thank You

**Lt Col Edward D. Knowles Toys for
Tots Benefits Program
30th Year**

Current Toys for Tots Fund

\$ 436.17

**Don't forget Daylight
Savings Time begins
08 March at 0200
hours.**

Congress created this enforcement gap, and Congress must work to close it.

What the GUARD VA Benefits Act Does

The GUARD VA Benefits Act restores the enforcement authority Congress originally intended by reinstating criminal penalties for unaccredited individuals who charge unauthorized fees. The bill does not limit veterans' choices or access to help. Instead, it ensures assistance comes from qualified, accountable, and regulated professionals.

MOAA urges lawmakers to advance this legislation to protect service-earned benefits for veterans and survivors, and to restore integrity to the VA claims system.

Stop the 34-Year Wait - Deliver Toxic-Exposed Veterans the Care They've Earned

Veterans exposed to toxic substances like Agent Orange, chemicals released by burn pits, and radiation should not have to fight for decades to prove their illnesses are service-connected. Yet according to a recent report from MOAA and DAV, toxic-exposed veterans wait over 34 years on average before receiving presumptive service connection and the care they've earned. The PACT Act was a historic step forward, but its work isn't complete.

Congress must pass legislation to bolster the legal framework for establishing presumptive conditions, creating clear timelines and processes to move from exposure acknowledgment to the delivery of earned benefits. This commonsense reform will cut through red tape, improve VA accountability, and end the long wait faced by millions of veterans.

Contact your legislators through MOAA's [Legislative Action Center](#).

Rest in Peace Spouses

***For Your Support to our Military
Brothers and Sisters. Your Service is
Recorded and Honored.***

Thankfully, nothing to report this month.

Preparing for the 2026 Tax Season

By *Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)* February 2026

Important note: The following information is specific for retirees. For tax resources, annuitants and former spouses should visit myPay and our dedicated webpages on www.dfas.mil.

The 2026 tax season is here and DFAS wants to make sure that retirees, annuitants, and former spouses are prepared. Now is the best time to verify everything is correct in your myPay account so you can retrieve your tax documents when you need to file.

Start with myPay

The best tool DFAS offers to ensure a smooth tax season is myPay (<https://mypay.dfas.mil>). The most important step to take is to log in to your myPay account and ensure your mailing address is correct. An easy, online stop for your tax season needs, myPay offers printing or downloading of your tax statements for your retired pay. You can download and print your current year tax statement, as well as prior year 1099-Rs (up to four prior years for retirees). If you need it, you can also download and print IRS Form 1095-B. You will have earlier access to your tax documents through myPay; 1099-Rs are currently available in myPay, while paper copies are mailed in mid-to-late January. If you haven't logged in to myPay recently, this is a good time to log in and update your password before this busy tax season.

State taxes for retirees

Thanks to MOAA and the SC Council of Chapters and the SC Chapters, military retirement pay is not taxable in South Carolina.

Federal taxability of retired pay

Tax statements for retirees, SBP annuitants, and former spouses are currently available in myPay. Tax statements sent through the U.S. Postal Service will be in the mail prior to Jan. 31, 2026. In many cases, the electronic online forms are available through myPay much earlier and more securely than those sent to customers electing delivery by mail.

The above article was taken from the Army Echoes publication.

The Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act (H.R. 6047), which would increase the rate of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) to provide additional financial support for survivors and increase the rate of Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) to boost financial support for catastrophically service-connected disabled veterans. The bill is named for Sharri Briley, widow of an Army Black Hawk pilot killed in Somalia in 1993, and for Eric Edmundson, a former Army sergeant who suffered shrapnel wounds, a heart attack, and a brain injury after his Humvee struck a roadside bomb in Iraq in 2005.

Your Advocacy Remains Essential

The hearing delivered meaningful momentum, but much work remains to get MOAA's legislative priorities across the finish line. MOAA urges all members and supporters to continue contacting their lawmakers to ensure these bills move swiftly to the floor and are enacted into law. Add your voice to our cause via MOAA's Legislative Action Center.

MOAA will continue to monitor developments closely and keep you informed as these important measures progress.

Stop VA Claim Sharks: Why MOAA Backs the GUARD VA Benefits Act

At the center of MOAA's work to combat this threat is the Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding (GUARD) VA Benefits Act (H.R. 1732), a bipartisan bill which would restore long-overdue accountability to the VA disability claims process.

A System Built on Trust ... and a Dangerous Gap
Federal law is clear: Only VA-accredited attorneys, claims agents, and veterans service organizations (VSOs) may assist veterans with disability claims in exchange for compensation, and no veteran can be charged when filing an initial claim, even by an accredited agent. The law clearly states that accreditation requires training, ethical compliance, continuing education, and fee oversight.

But in 2006, Congress repealed criminal penalties for unaccredited individuals who illegally charge veterans for claims assistance. That decision created a regulatory gap, one that predatory companies have spent nearly two decades exploiting.

VA's only enforcement tool against these actors is a cease-and-desist letter, a measure that has proven to be largely ineffective. Over the past decade, the VA has issued more than 40 such letters, yet most of the companies that received warnings continue operating, advertising, and charging veterans thousands of dollars in unauthorized fees.

A Perfect Storm for Exploitation

VA disability claims are complex and slow, leaving frustrated veterans searching for help. The passage of the MOAA-supported Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act, a critical expansion of benefits for toxic-exposed veterans, dramatically increased the number of new and reopened claims, creating a larger pool of newly eligible veterans vulnerable to exploitation.

More than 40 unaccredited companies now actively market themselves as "consultants" or "coaches," claiming they can maximize ratings or speed decisions. Some charge contingency-style fees totaling tens of thousands of dollars. A veteran awarded a 100% rating can be charged nearly \$20,000 for assistance that is legally available for free through accredited VSOs. Other companies charge flat fees for consultations with medical examiners, nexus letters, and other supporting documentation.

These companies are not subject to VA oversight, ethical standards, or fee limits. Veterans report aggressive data-targeted marketing, misleading contracts, and long-term payment obligations tied to future benefit increases ... even when the company does no additional work.

One retired Navy petty officer and longtime volunteer advocate described veterans being contacted almost immediately after filing claims by companies falsely implying VA affiliation and armed with detailed, sensitive claim information. This erosion of trust underscores the urgent need for accountability.

Enforcement Works – When It Exists

States have begun stepping in where federal enforcement is lacking. Most recently, the Texas Attorney General successfully prosecuted Vet Claims Insiders, affirming that these practices harm veterans and violate consumer protection laws. But veterans should not have to rely on a patchwork of state actions to protect their federal benefits.

Charleston Chapter MOAA Membership Application Renewal Change of Address. Chapter Dues: \$20.00 a year for Regular membership. Surviving Spouse membership \$5.00 per year. Multiple year dues are encouraged in order to reduce paperwork. Make check payable to "Charleston MOAA". Mail to: Charleston MOAA, P.O. Box 70421, Charleston SC 29415-0421.

Last Name _____ First Name _____ MI _____

DOB _____ Rank _____ Service _____ Spouse's Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number _____ Email _____

Member of National MOAA? Please provide your membership number _____

Your status : Retired Active Duty Reserve National Guard Former Officer Surviving Spouse Dues for Year (s) _____

How do you want to receive your newsletter US Mail (B&W) or E Mail (Full color)

Zelle Payments

How to Send Payments Using Zelle®

We now accept payments through Zelle® for dues, lunches, and donations for Toys for Tots and Scholarship funds. Please follow these simple steps:

Step 1: Log in to your bank or Zelle® app. Use your bank's mobile app, online banking site, or the Zelle® app if your bank doesn't offer it directly.

Step 2: Add our organization as a recipient. Send your payment to: charlestonmoaa@gmail.com.

Make sure the name shown is: Charleston Chapter, Military Officers Association of America

Step 3: Enter your payment details.

- Amount: Enter the correct amount for your payment.

• **Memo (important!):** Please include what the payment is for:

- Annual dues
- Luncheon/food choices
- Donation - Toys for Tots or Scholarship Fund

This memo helps us credit your payment correctly.

Step 4: Confirm and send. Review your payment details before submitting. You'll receive a confirmation from your bank or Zelle® once it's sent.

Notes:

- Zelle® payments go directly from your bank account to ours, usually within minutes.
- No fees are charged by Zelle®.
- Please double-check the email address before sending – Zelle® payments cannot be canceled once sent.

OFFICERS and BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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1st VP PROGRAMS	CAPT Bud Schneeweis, USCG (thru 2026)	703-300-0811	wschneeweis@verizon.net
2nd VP MEMBERSHIP	COL Beverly R. Brockman, USA (thru 2026)	704-300-8739	brockman1982@att.net
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REPRESENTATIVES TO THE BOARD (Appointed by the President)

CHAPLAIN	Col Mark Barnes, USAF	843-327-8138	emarkbarnes@me.com
EDITOR			
SCHOLARSHIP/Web Site	Col Rudy Smart, USAF	843-834-0474	r2smart1@gmail.com

Prospective Chapter Members: If you are not a member of the Charleston Chapter, MOAA, you have received this copy as a courtesy invitation to contact any Officer or Director for information about joining our Chapter. News and Views herein are not necessarily those of any Government Department or another Chapter, or a Member's Chapter and non-partisan.

Membership News

LATEST INFORMATION

Total Members - 210
Regular Members—164
Honorary Members - 4
Surviving Spouse Members - 41
Special Members—1
Members receiving the newsletter by email 132

CHARLESTON MOAA MEMBERS: We are continuing our recruiting drive for new members. If you are uncertain of your status, just e-mail me at brockman1982@att.net and I will verify if you are current for another year or more or— if you need to pay dues for 2026. My cell number is 704-300-8739, but an e-mail is usually the best and most efficient. We value your membership and appreciate your support of our chapter.

As of January 1, 2026 our dues for Regular Members has been increased to \$20/year. The dues will remain at \$5 for Surviving Spouses—defined as widows or widowers of Regular Members. Please make checks payable to "Charleston MOAA" and mail to Charleston MOAA, PO BOX 70421, Charleston, SC 29415-0421. We now have an alternative method for payment of dues other than USPS. Please see the instructions for Zelle payments on page 7.

RECRUITING UPDATE - I ask everyone to think of our Chapter when you are meeting new folks in your community, neighborhood, church or other organizations. If they are interested in joining our Chapter, and meet the criteria, I will be glad to follow-up and share more information with them. Just provide my name, number and e-mail to them or send me an e-mail with their information and I will reach out to them.

ADDRESS/EMAIL CHANGES-Please keep me advised if you have a change to your address, phone or e-mail and I will update our records. When you have requested a newsletter to be mailed to you and your address has changed or you are on vacation, the Chapter must pay a fee to the Post Office for the newsletter to have the mail released. We will be glad to use your email during your time of travel only if you prefer.

We very much appreciate everyone's support of our Chapter and should you have any questions at any time,— feel free to call me at 704-300-8739 or e-mail me at brockman1982@att.net. I will be happy to answer your questions.

Thank you!
Beverly Brockman Col, USA (Ret)
Membership 2nd Vice President

Thank You

*For your gift in support of
Chapter programs:*

*Thank you for those who have contributed
at our luncheons. Your gifts help us sup-
port the USMC Toys for Tots Program, our
Scholarship Program and our ROTC/
JROTC Programs.*

CHARLESTON CHAPTER
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**Are you looking for more
Chapter and MOAA
information?
Or you need to update your
contact information?**

Visit our Web Site

<http://www.charlestonmoaa.com>

**Many improvements were recently made,
and the work continues.**