

Legislative Committee Newsletter 09-21

The Legislative Committee is collecting information to support the 2022 New Mexico legislative session, participating in the Interim Military & Veterans' Affairs Committee meetings, and providing inputs to the Military/Veterans Leadership Council to prepare for the 2022 New Mexico Legislative session.

The Albuquerque MOAA Chapter supports the ongoing initiative to obtain exemption to New Mexico personal income tax (PIT) on military retirement pay. In order to bring this exemption to fruition, chapter members must engage with their state senators and representatives.

During the Interim Military & Veterans Affairs Committee meeting on 06/16/21 several committee members expressed a concern that the work plan developed by the Legislative Services Council did not include the PIT exemption and other tax exemptions for veterans in the work plan for discussion during this years interim session. Senator William Burt and Representative Eliseo Alcon were successful in adding the PIT exemption to the work plan. The subject will probably be discussed at either the September 14 meeting in Grants or the October 22 meeting in Santa Fe.

Walter Paul, the Military & Veterans Leadership Council (MVLC) Vice Chair, met with the New Mexico Department of Veterans Affairs Cabinet Secretary, Sonya Smith on August 20. Walter defined the purpose of the MVLC as a single voice of the entire military community of New Mexico. He discussed the Governor's number one 2018 veterans' campaign promise to eliminate PIT on military retirement pay and to increase state benefits for New Mexico veterans. The Secretary is in support of the PIT initiative and to that end will schedule a meeting with the Governor and the MVLC leadership in the near future.

In order to gain the additional benefits for the New Mexico military community, every Albuquerque MOAA chapter member should establish a personal relationship with their respective state senator and representative. Multiple communications with your senator and representative registers on their radar and piques their interest in that subject. When communicating, ensure you have your facts straight. The legislative process can appear to be irrational, but try to understand the dynamics of the legislative process when communicating with your senator and representative.

The national MOAA "Advocacy in Action" needs every members continued support. Keep sending those emails and letters to your Senators and appropriate Representatives.

The prioritized advocacy topics for the 2021 "Advocacy in Action" are:

1. Comprehensive Toxic Exposure Reform

- a. This reform initiative is bicameral and bipartisan. Current bills are Senate Bill 437 (S.437) and House Bill 2436 (H.R.2436) and Senate Bill 927 (S.927) and House Bill 2127 (H.R. 2127). There are omnibus proposals in the Senate and the House to combine the features of the current bills into a comprehensive reform bill. This legislation is necessary to ensure medical care and compensation for veterans and their survivors are provided.

2. Parity for TRICARE Young Adults

- a. Military kids do not transition to adulthood with the same health care protections as civilian families with commercial health insurance plans. Information on the initiative is available on the MOAA Issue Papers website.

3. Basic Needs Allowance

- a. This allowance establishes a subsistence allowance for service members and their families living near the poverty line. This is even more important in the pandemic environment when many military spouses are out of work.

Issue papers are available at:

<https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2021-news-articles/advocacy/join-moaas-advocacy-in-action-event.-help-us-make-a-difference/>

The latest update (July 21, 2021) for “Advocacy in Action” is at:

<https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2021-news-articles/advocacy/advocacy-in-action-rolls-forward-moaas-major-progress-on-our-3-issues/>

It is important to express your concerns to the New Mexico Congressional delegation. The links to send a MOAA-suggested message are listed below. Select the appropriate link and fill in your contact information. These messages can be sent at any time. The staffs of the senators and representatives record these emails.

Comprehensive Toxic Exposure Reform:

<https://takeaction.moaa.org/moaa/app/take-action?engagementId=511223>

Parity for TRICARE Young Adults

<https://takeaction.moaa.org/moaa/app/take-action?engagementId=511394>

Basic Needs Allowance

<https://takeaction.moaa.org/moaa/app/take-action?engagementId=511409>

If you cannot open the above links, cut and paste to your browser.

Col Marvin A Schott, USAF (Ret)

Legislative Representative