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**TIMELY TOPICS**

Capitol Area Chapter  
Military Officers Association of America  
Chapter Website: [www.cacmoaa.org](http://www.cacmoaa.org)

Vol 2024 No 7

**IN THIS ISSUE**

- SEPTEMBER PICNIC
- COLA
- PACT ACT
- CAC MISSION STATEMENT
- VETERANS CRISIS LINE



**September Picnic**

Join us for the September picnic as we leave the dog days of summer and usher in the fall beauty of Michigan! Bring your appetite and summer stories with you to the Meridian Central Park pavilion as we kick off another season of fellowship and camaraderie.

**September 2024 CAC MOAA Picnic**

When: Thursday, 12 September 2024

Where: Meridian Central Park Pavilion, 5151 Marsh Rd, Okemos (Just north of the Meridian Mall)  
SOCIAL MIXER (beverages and snacks provided): 5:30 p.m. BUFFET: 6:30 p.m.

**BUFFET MENU:**

BBQ, salad, side dishes, dessert, lemonade/ice tea

Please RSVP by Monday, 9 September to [www.cacmoaa.org](http://www.cacmoaa.org) or contact:

Tony Kruckeberg at (517) 575-9386, or email at [armyblkhawk@yahoo.com](mailto:armyblkhawk@yahoo.com)



**Retirees, Veterans May See Only a Small Cost-of-Living Benefit Boost Next Year**

Recipients of **Social Security** checks and veterans benefits payouts could see a **cost-of-living adjustment** of less than 3% in 2025, the lowest mark since before the COVID-19 pandemic, according to an independent watchdog group. Officials from **the Senior Citizens League** — an affiliate of TREA: The Enlisted Association — last week announced their latest projection for Social Security COLA rates for the upcoming year, estimating the figure will be less than 2.6%. In a statement, the group said that figure is “substantially lower” than the **3.2% adjustment that was implemented at the start of 2024**. The cost-of-living adjustment rate hasn’t been below 3% since early 2020, when it was down to 1.3%. Social Security officials typically announce their cost-of-living calculations for the coming calendar year in early October. In recent years, estimates unveiled by the Senior Citizens League’s in late summer have come within a percentage point of the official adjustment mark. The Social Security announcement is of particular interest to veterans because Congress **annually ties the increase in veterans payouts to the Social Security Administration’s calculations**. About 5 million veterans and 2 million military retirees receive benefits checks each month through the Department of Veterans Affairs. The COLA-increase would apply to payouts for disability compensation, clothing allowances, and dependency and indemnity benefits, as well as some other Veterans Affairs assistance programs. Social Security officials calculate the annual cost-of-living adjustment based on the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers. If those laborers don’t see a rise in their annual salaries, federal planners can determine that no adjustment is needed. However, Senior Citizens League officials said the government’s “failure to return inflation to pre-pandemic levels” has put additional pressure on seniors and veterans benefits recipients, making the size of the adjustment crucial for many the financial health of many households.

## Veterans' PACT Act Claims Continue to Rise, 2 Years After Law's Passage

In his speech at the Democratic National Convention on Monday night, President Joe Biden touted the [2022 PACT Act](#) as “one of the most significant laws ever helping veterans and their families” and a cornerstone of his administration’s achievements. But the full impact of the law — which granted new disability benefits to veterans who suffered [toxic exposure injuries](#) while in the ranks — may not be known for years to come. More veterans received health care and financial aid through the law in its second year than the first, and Department of Veterans Affairs statistics suggest that number could continue to grow into the future. The law — officially the [Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act](#) — passed its two-year anniversary earlier this month. When it was enacted, veterans advocates estimated that as many as one in every five veterans living in America today might benefit from some provisions in the measure.

The PACT Act provides for presumptive benefit status for 12 types of cancer and 12 other respiratory illnesses linked to [burn pit exposure](#) in the Gulf War and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; hypertension and monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance, or MGUS, for [veterans who served in Vietnam](#) and radiation-related illnesses for veterans who served in several locations in the 1960s and early 1970s. It also extended health care eligibility within the VA system to tens of thousands of veterans while mandating new research and processing procedures for future toxic exposure injuries. VA officials said that, since the PACT Act was signed into law two years ago, the department has approved more than 1 million disability claims related to its provisions, totaling more than \$6.8 billion in payouts. Of that total, more than half were approved after August 2023, following a year of officials publicizing the act’s offerings. Similarly, nearly 740,000 veterans have enrolled in VA health care thanks to new PACT Act eligibility since August 2022, according to VA data. More than half of that new enrollment has come in the past 12 months.

VA officials have credited these successes to a public push to get word out on the part of lawmakers, advocates and federal offices over the last two years. They’ve also promised to keep that work going into the future. That work includes toxic exposure screenings at VA medical centers for all patients. The department has conducted about 5.7 million such medical reviews in the last two years, designed to identify potentially life-threatening health conditions among veterans as early as possible. VA leaders also report seeing a steady increase in disability benefits submissions in recent years, beyond just the PACT Act submissions, and anticipate that number will continue to grow in coming years.

Aug. 14 was the deadline for individuals to file PACT Act disability claims that could be retroactively awarded to August 2022, giving a substantial windfall to veterans and survivors with approved claims. But individuals who apply in the future can still receive payouts from the date of their filing, a move that can bring in tens of thousands of dollars a year for struggling veterans. [Go here](#) to learn more about filing a PACT Act claim.

[RELATED: [VA: Projected \\$15 Billion Budget Shortfall Puts Benefits Payments at Risk](#)]

[RELATED: [VA's New Burn Pit Registry Aims for Data on 4.7 Million Veterans](#)]



Executive Board Meeting  
 Thursday, 5 September 2024 @ 11:30 am - 1:00 pm @ Piazzano's Restaurant, 1825 N Grand River,  
 Lansing

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**Support our Chapter**

Please remember to bring you returnable bottles and cans to our chapter meetings. A member of the board will collect and return them for a cash donation to the chapter. Every donation goes to supporting the scholarship fund and other chapter activities.



Congratulations to our 2024 CAC MOAA scholarship recipients and thank you to all who have donated to this great cause. Without your hard work and generosity the scholarship program would not be possible.  
**THANKS TO ALL!**



**Now and Always  
We'll be There.**

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 For membership inquiries please use this link: [www.cacmoaa.org](http://www.cacmoaa.org). For eligibility or other questions regarding membership please contact Bruce Bahr at (517) 526-2406. **Why join?** <https://youtu.be/42YD9d8W15Q>

**CAC Mission Statement**  
 Our mission is to support legislative and charitable initiatives at the local, state, and national levels to enhance our families, communities and country.

**Support our Scholarship Program with a Kroger Card!!**  
 We continue to increase our enrollment in the Kroger Community Rewards Program! Thank you for all of your support in signing up and shopping with Kroger. For those interested in beginning the program, our chapter non-profit organization number is: JR311, use this number when contacting Kroger for admission to the program and Kroger will donate a portion of your purchase to the CAC MOAA chapter scholarship fund.

**Veterans Crisis Line**  
 The Veterans Crisis Line connects veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call (800) 273-8255 and press 1, chat online, or send a text message to 838255 to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Support for deaf and hard of hearing individuals is available.

Your local Capitol Area Chapter and National MOAA are nonpartisan groups representing all members regarding legislative issues and current events affecting you and your community! For more information regarding issues that affect you and your family members please use this link: <http://takeaction.moaa.org> or call (800) 234-6622/(703) 549-2311

**Newsletter**  
 Help the chapter reduce newsletter costs by requesting an email version in lieu of a printed copy. If you are able to and would like to get this via email, or if you need some help with it, contact me at [moaaeditor@gmail.com](mailto:moaaeditor@gmail.com) or call (517) 526-2406