



# The Granite Slate

The Official Newsletter for the  
New Hampshire Chapter of The Military Officers Association of America  
(MOAA)



June, 2014

Published quarterly for the information of members of the NH Chapter of MOAA  
P.O. Box 712, Dover, NH 03821

Volume 36, No. 2

## In the News:

The warm weather is not the only reason military veterans may decide to head to Florida. The Sunshine State will now waive out-of-state tuition fees for former soldiers, sailors and Marines. On Monday, Gov. Rick Scott signed the Florida G.I. Bill, creating the Congressman C.W. Bill Young Tuition Waiver Program, which eliminates out-of-state tuition fees for honorably discharged veterans. "I am pleased to sign this legislation that will help our veterans find employment and expand career opportunities for veterans and their spouses," the Republican governor said in a press release.

The new law, which won unanimous support in the state legislature in March, will cost an estimated \$11.5 million annually, according to state officials. Florida is one of several states that now offer this incentive -- and it is an important one for military veterans: The federal post 9-11 G.I. bill obligates the Department of Veterans Affairs to cover in-state tuition for all military veterans within a 15-year period of their retiring from the service. The new measure in Florida means veterans who are not residents of the state will no longer have to pay the out-of-state difference in tuition, so there will be no out-of-pocket tuition costs for veterans. "It makes education affordable and accessible for a new generation of military veterans," said Karen Golden, deputy director, government relations at the Military Officers Association of America, a not-for-profit advocacy organization.

According to advocacy group Student Veterans of America, 23 states have laws providing student veterans an in-state residency waiver, 9 states have legislation pending and 11 states (including Washington, D.C.) have no in-state tuition options available.

"In-state tuition for veterans is really important and it sends two strong messages," said William Hubbard, a spokesperson for the SVA. "It shows that 'thank you for your service' is not a hollow term - and that we are serious as a country moving forward to empower and enable veterans to positively contribute to the American economy." There has been a push on the federal level, too.

The GI Bill Tuition Fairness Act of 2014, which would require charging veterans tuition and fees at the in-state tuition rate, was passed in the House, 390-0 on February 3, 2014. It is now on its way to the Senate. According to legislative tracker GovTracker, the bill has a 42% chance of being enacted.

Adapted from FOXBusiness, April 02, 2014 / Christina Scotti



L to R: Cmdr. Bruce Avery, USN (Ret.), President of the MOAA-NH; Mary Behnke, BSN, RN, VAMC; and CSM Jason Speltz, NH National Guard Sexual Response Coordinator (Photo by Peter Dawson, MOAA-NH)

MOAA-NH was honored to have not one but two guest speakers on Saturday, Apr. 12, 2014 at "Promises to Keep" in Derry, NH. Both speakers addressed what appears to be an emerging problem not only in today's military, but our society in general. CSM Jason Speltz (Sexual Assault Response Coordinator ANG New Hampshire) was joined by Mary Behnke, BSN, RN, (Women Veterans Program Manager, Dept. of Veterans Affairs, Medical Center, Manchester).

CSM Speltz said "sexual assault is NOT a military problem, but a societal one." Mary Behnke reiterated that sentiment in her comments but further expounded by citing that in 2006, 75,037 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) cases or claims included some element of sexual trauma, while in 2012, 157,635 cases were reported nationwide. Ms. Behnke said that while the VA will provide medical and mental health treatment for any veteran who alleges sexual assault or harassment, the VA will only investigate those cases in which the veteran is seeking fiscal compensation. Conversely, CSM Speltz said that in the Army the soldier has the choice whether or not the assault or harassment is investigated.

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## Chapter Officers

<b>President</b>	<b>CDR Bruce F. Avery, USN (Ret)</b>	(603) 526-2854, <a href="mailto:bruceavery@tds.net">bruceavery@tds.net</a>
<b>Vice-President</b>	<b>COL H. Allen Chadwick, USA (Ret)</b>	(603) 379-2147, <a href="mailto:achad21396@hotmail.com">achad21396@hotmail.com</a>
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Lt Col Stephanie A. Riley, ANG</b>	(603) 568-0815, <a href="mailto:saab014@aol.com">saab014@aol.com</a>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>CDR James R. Day, Jr. USN (Ret)</b>	(603) 642-7956, <a href="mailto:fuzzbutthall@comcast.net">fuzzbutthall@comcast.net</a>
Visit the Chapter's website at: <a href="http://www.moaa-nh.org">www.moaa-nh.org</a>		



## President's Corner

**Bruce Avery**

### **President's Corner June, 2014**

Over the past few weeks, we have been overwhelmed with reports of problems nationwide with the VA. Some deal with how local VA hospitals have served the veterans' communities and some are about nationwide systemic problems.

I am sure that there is a lot more publicity coming as a new VA Secretary comes aboard and attempts to redirect/restructure the VA to better provide the services that our Veterans have long been promised and deserve. We all have a stake in this and have an important role to play.

We will be meeting quarterly with Senators Shaheen and Ayotte, Congresswomen Kuster, and Shea-Porter and their staffs to discuss various areas of concern with the VA being a primary issue. We will also be meeting routinely with management at both the Manchester and White River Junction VAs.

I would appreciate your inputs. Please focus on issues of current VA performance. We all have a vested interest in the "Road Ahead" for the VA and this is your opportunity for direct input.

I can be reached by phone at (603) 748-2585 or by email at [bruceavery@tds.net](mailto:bruceavery@tds.net).

Thank you for your continued support,  
Bruce

### **GETTING TO KNOW YOUR CHAPTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

*This is the first of a series of articles in which we will profile the collateral duties of various members of the MOAA-NH Board of*

*Directors in order to become better aware of the efforts of the Board on behalf of our members, Ed.*

### **LEGISLATURE LIAISONS**

**CAPT Paul Chapman, USN (Ret)** is our designated Legislative Liaison for the U.S. Congress. He is responsible for keeping up to speed on national legislative issues affecting the military and veterans, working with the New Hampshire Congressional Delegation on military and veteran's legislature, and briefing the Board of Directors on these subjects. If you have any questions concerning national legislative issues, contact him. His email address is [milepost10@juno.com](mailto:milepost10@juno.com).

**CDR Peter S. Burdett, USN (Ret)** is the Chairman of the State Veterans Advisory Committee (SVAC). His email address is [Peter\\_Burdett@ml.com](mailto:Peter_Burdett@ml.com). The SVAC provides a means of maintaining liaison with, and receiving feedback from, veterans groups and the State legislature. This arrangement provides direct input into the legislative process and ensures a constant dialogue between the legislature and the fifteen veteran's organization members.

*Continued next column this page*

## **2013 New Chapter Members Welcome Aboard!**

LTC Lisa R Begley USA (Ret.) Peter 64 Lynette Ln Fremont, NH 03044-3030	Maj Gen Susan Y Desjardins USAF (Ret.) Peter Lennon 20 Cullen Way Exeter, NH 03833-4310
CAPT Thomas F Dreyer USN (Ret.) Cheryl 1 Fletcher Rd Windham, NH 03087-2389	Col George L Howard USAF (Ret.) PO Box 5 Glen, NH 03838-0005
LTC John E Mack USA (Ret.) Madelyn PO Box 867 Atkinson, NH 03811-0867	Lt Col Howard L Suls ANG Ann M Sukany-Suls 71 Powder Hill Rd Bedford, NH 03110-4845

*(Continued from previous column (bottom))*

The Secretary of SVAC is Lt Col Stephanie Riley, ANG, and is also our chapter Secretary. The Chairman of the SVAC Legislative Subcommittee is Lt Col Ed Josephson, a chapter Director. Finally, Col Joe DiChiaro, USAF (Ret.), a chapter Director, represents the SVAC on the State Commission studying PTSD and TBI. His email address is [j.dichiaro@comcast.net](mailto:j.dichiaro@comcast.net).

**Current MOAA-NH members: Please share with your Service Veteran Colleagues. We are actively soliciting and welcoming new members into our NH-based organization.**

The New Hampshire Chapter of MOAA was formed in November, 1979, with several principal objectives. Among these are fostering fraternal relations between all branches of the various services, educating children of service personnel, and presenting their rights and interests when service matters are under consideration.

We also provide aid in many forms to active and retired personnel of the various Services from which our members are drawn. Membership in the New Hampshire Chapter is open to all representatives of the **Military Officers Association of America** (MOAA national) who are or have been commissioned officers and warrant officers of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

We welcome you as prospective members; please visit our complete website for more information including contact(s): [MOAA-NH.org](http://MOAA-NH.org).

**Don't Forget the  
Clambake  
On August 2nd!!**

**Jamaica Island Recreation Area  
Portsmouth Naval Shipyard**



*All,*

Please add your comments to the MOAA-NH web-site ([moaa-nh.org](http://moaa-nh.org)), and send possibilities for our next edition to "poko@comcast.net." All submissions including news items will be considered for inclusion,

*-editor-*



## In the News

April 16, 2014

Shaheen press release

SHAHEEN, AYOTTE ANNOUNCE VA CLINIC SITES FOR COLEBROOK AND BERLIN

In response to bipartisan effort, VA plans to open clinics for North Country veterans (Washington, DC) – New Hampshire U.S. Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Kelly Ayotte (R-NH) are announcing today that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has approved the opening of two Veterans Affairs (VA) health care sites in Colebrook and Berlin. The announcement comes after repeated calls from Shaheen and Ayotte, both members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, to establish accessible VA medical care facilities for North Country veterans.

The VA approval of an expansion plan for the White River Junction (WRJ) VA Medical Center (VAMC) to incorporate VA sites in both Colebrook and Berlin represents the culmination of a years-long bipartisan effort by Shaheen and Ayotte to expand health care access for veterans in the North Country.

The new Colebrook and Berlin clinics will offer primary care, preventive health care, lab draws, and tele-health services through a shared staffing model with existing health care clinics. The part-time health care clinics will help serve more than 2,500 veterans in local and surrounding areas, and are scheduled to open by the end of the current fiscal year, according to the VA.

For years, Shaheen and Ayotte, along with the full New Hampshire delegation, have urged VA Secretary Eric Shinseki to expand access to veterans' health care in the North Country.

In some of these areas veterans often travel more than 130 miles to access VA facilities in Littleton, Conway, or Manchester. Given the region's mountainous terrain and hazardous weather, travel time for basic appointments can exceed two and a half hours each way.

With the VA system spotlighted in the recent news, I felt it beneficial to summarize a few details of benefits eligibility. Many veterans lack understanding of this rather complicated system.

--editor--

The VA offers health care benefits to certain veterans. There are many misconceptions about who is eligible for these benefits. The good news is that many people are eligible for VA medical benefits, even if they don't know about it.

An important note: Being eligible for VA medical care does not mean you will receive 100% free health care. Each veteran who is eligible for VA health care benefits is assigned a priority number which helps determine what types of health care they are eligible to receive, and whether or not they are required to pay a co-pay or other fees.

In general, VA health care is potentially available to anyone who served on active duty. Guard and Reserve members may also qualify if they were called up on Federal Executive Orders,

Eligibility is based on several factors, including when and where the veteran served, service-connected disabilities, whether an injury or illness occurred while on active duty, income, and other factors. Veterans of the Vietnam War and Persian Gulf War are generally eligible. Service members returning from the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns are usually eligible for VA health care for up to 5 years after returning from the AOR, and sometimes longer, depending on their status.

As a good rule, if there is any doubt about your eligibility status, simply apply. You may be approved for some form of VA medical care benefits and not know until the application process begins.

Continued from page 1



Head Table, "Promises To Keep"  
Derry, NH

All Formal complaints MUST be investigated per Army Regulation 600-20. Informal complaints are not investigated, but the victims are afforded all medical and psy-

chological treatment available. They can also request discrete Permanent Change of Station orders to be relocated to another military post away from their current situation.

The VA defines sexual assault as "physical assault of a sexual nature, battery of a sexual nature, or sexual harassment." Also, "repeated, unsolicited, verbal, or physical contact of a sexual nature which are threatening in character that occurred while a veteran was serving on active duty or on active duty for training." The U.S. Army has employed a further expansion to the general definitions which goes into much more (explicit) detail. Army Regulation 600-20, Chapter 7 outlines the specifics.

In general, the guest speakers and the MOAA-NH members were synonymous in their agreement that sexual assault and sexual harassment has always been in the military as it has in the private sector. The difference today is that service members may feel that reporting sexual abuse (issues) of all types is now socially acceptable.

Demographics and metrics for the number of cases for sexual harassment and sexual assault in the civilian workplace vice the U.S. Military were not presented. As a result, this only tells half the story. Interestingly enough, however, one final statistic that was presented by Ms. Behnke was that of the 513 cases of sexual harassment and sexual assault at the Manchester VAMC, 285 were filed by male veterans while 228 were reported or filed by females.

Further information can be found at <http://www.moaa-nh.org> or <http://www.moaa.org/main>.



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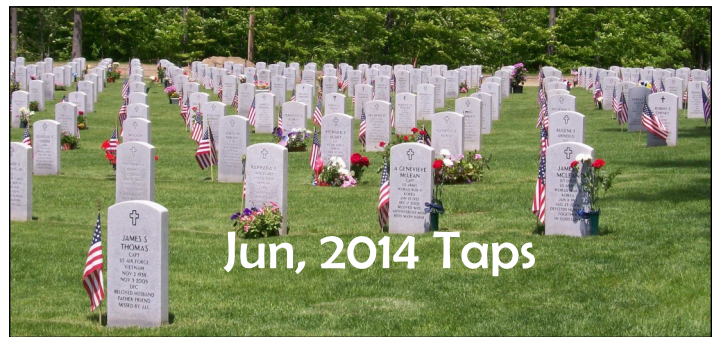
***MOAA Travel update (see web site for all details)***

October Vantage Cruise Seine River to Normandy  
 (No close date but cabin choices are becoming limited)  
 Please sign up soon to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity.

FOUND: After the MOAA luncheon in Derry on 12 April, a man's black cap. It has a white "G" and golf pennant embroidered on the back of it. Please contact Sharon Day at cimice89@comcast.net or 603-643-7956 to claim the cap.

**2014 TENTATIVE Schedule**

- June 14      **The Eagle Mountain House, Jackson**
- August 2    **Clambake (PNSY)**
- Sept 27     **Common Man Restaurant, Plymouth, NH**
- Nov 8        **Annual Mtg. Nashua C.C., Nashua, NH**



- |                                    |                   |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| CW4 Mark L. Anthony, USA (Ret.)    | Newark, DE        |
| Maj William E. Ashley, USAF (Ret.) | Rye Beach, NH     |
| Mrs. Dorothy L. Bergquist          | North Hampton, NH |
| LTC Harry L. Bryant, USA (Ret.)    | Canterbury, NH    |
| COL Joseph R. Cataldo, USA (Ret.)  | Hooksett, NH      |
| BG Robert A. Cheney, USA (Ret.)    | North Hampton, NH |
| CDR Martin F. Corcoran, USN (Ret.) | Pittsboro, NC     |
| Mrs. Mary M. Cournoyer             | Jaffrey, NH       |
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List continued next edition (Sept.)