

2010 MOAA STORMING THE HILL  
AFTER ACTION REPORT  
MARYLAND TEAM

1. MD-MOAA was represented by Council President LTC John W. Fringer, Jr., USA-Ret. and Council 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President CAPT Norm Taylor, USN-Ret. MOAA National also assigned National Board Member CAPT David Peterson, NOAA-Ret. and COL Bob Norton, Deputy Director, Government Relations Department, MOAA. Both team members assigned by National are residents of Maryland.
2. The following issues/bills were identified by MOAA for discussion during the meetings with our legislators.
  - a. "Disabled Veterans Tax." S.546 and H.R. 303/333/HR4525 provide for concurrent receipt of military retired pay and VA disability payments.
  - b. "Military Widows Tax." S.535 and H.R. 775 provide for receipt of the full Survivor Benefit Plan annuity and the full VA Disability and Indemnity Compensation payment without any offset.
  - c. "Reserve Retirement." In 2008, Congress passed a law to reduce reserve retirement age by 3 months for each 90 days; but the credit was limited to service after January 2008, the effective date of the law. This unfairly denied credit for some 500,000 combat tours served between 2001 and 2008. S. 831 and HR 208 apply the provisions of the 2008 law to active service between 2001 and 2008.
  - d. "Military Pay Raise Plus Up." The administration has requested a 1.4% pay raise for the armed forces. If enacted, this will be the smallest pay since 1962. This is not the correct message to send to the members of the armed forces engaged in the Global War on Terrorism. In keeping with past efforts to close the gap between civilian pay and military pay created in the 1980's, MOAA is supporting an additional 0.5% increase to continue closing the pay gap. HR 4427/HR1592 will provide a 1.9% pay raise for 2011.
  - e. "Reduction in Medicare payment rates." HR 816 will delay the 21% decrease in Medicare and, subsequently, TRICARE payment rates. Failure to pass this bill could ultimately cause doctors to refuse to treat Medicare/TRICARE patients.
3. The four team members visited the offices of Senator Ben Cardin and Senator Barbara Mikulski.
  - a. Senator Mikulski was not available so we met with Mr. Frank Cristinzio, Legislative Assistant for Military/Veterans Affairs. Senator Mikulski has indicated her support for the bills to end SBP/DIC offset, provide for full concurrent receipt of VA and retired pay, and correcting the inequity in computation of reserve retirement by being a co-sponsor of the relevant Senate bills. Since there is no Senate bill to address the military pay raise, Mr.

Cristinzio indicated that she would consider the issue during her review of the DOD Appropriations Bill.

- b. Senator Cardin was not initially available so the team met with Mr. Andre Coleman, Legislative Fellow. Senator Cardin did join us during the meeting and we were able to thank him for being a co-sponsor of the bills to end SBP/DIC offset and to provide full concurrent receipt to disabled retirees. He acknowledged that the reserve retirement issue should be corrected and agreed to look at S.831 with the view of becoming a co-sponsor. He also indicated that he would consider the pay raise issue during the review of the DOD Appropriations Bill.
4. The team separated to visit the eight congressional offices. LTC Fringer and COL Norton visited Congressmen Kratovil, Van Hollen, Cummings, and Hoyer.
    - a. In Congressman Kratovil's office the team met with Mr. Joe Reid, Special Assistant. He indicated that Congressman Kratovil was very supportive of a strong national defense and would support the bills we discussed. We expressed our appreciation for his support and asked that Congressman Kratovil sign on as a co-sponsor for the bills we discussed. Mr. Reid indicated that he would brief the congressman and let us know. Mr. Reid responded to a subsequent email inquiring about Congressman Kratovil's position on the bills we discussed, stated that the legislative team was preparing to brief the congressman on the issues within the next week. We are continuing to wait for a response.
    - b. In Congressman Cummings office, we met with Mr. John Childress, Legislative Assistant for Military Affairs. Congressman Cummings is currently a co-sponsor of HR. 775 (SBP/DIC Offset). We discussed the other issues with Mr. Childress and he indicated that he would relay our concerns to Congressman Cummings.
    - c. We met with Congressman Van Hollen who was the primary sponsor of the MOAA Federal Charter bill. Since he is also a co-sponsor of HR 775, we concentrated on the concurrent receipt, reserve retirement credit, and the active duty pay raise issues. He indicated that he would consider the pay raise issue; however, he indicated that he was more in favor of increasing some of the incentive allowances rather than an across the board pay raise. He did state that he would seriously review the issue. After discussing the reserve retirement and concurrent receipt issues, he agreed to become a co-sponsor of the relevant bills. Subsequent follow up determined that he did become a co-sponsor of HR 208, HR 303, and HR 333.
    - d. In Congressman Hoyer's office, we met with Mr. Stephen Ham, Military Legislative Assistant. Mr. Ham indicated that Congressman Hoyer, as the House Majority Leader, does not normally co-sponsor bills. However, Mr. Ham stated that Congressman Hoyer is supportive of most military/veteran issues.

4. CAPT Taylor and CAPT Peterson met with Congressman Roscoe Bartlett and his Legislative Assistant Jane White; Congressman John Sarbanes' Legislative Assistant Jim Notter; Congressman "Dutch" Rupperersberger's Legislative Assistant Carol Merkel; and Congresswomen Donna Edwards' Legislative Assistant Nate Tipton.

- a. Congressman Bartlett, the only congressman with whom we were able to speak with directly, had already signed on to support the pay raise, SBP/DIC repeal, and full retirement pay. He was open on the issue of Reserve retirement and the Medicare cut. Probably most of that discussion was on the Medicare cut. So at least we left with the understanding that he would look carefully at those two remaking and open issues.
- b. Congressman Sarbanes had already signed on to support the SBP/DIC repeal, but that was the only issue where he had made a commitment. Historically, Congressman Sarbanes has been reluctant to take the lead on any issue; he usually waits for the chairman of his committee before he personally gets on board with any issue. Nevertheless, his Legislative Assistant Jim Notter listened to our pitch on the issues and assured us that he would provide the background material on each of the MOAA issues to the congressman.
- c. Congressman Rupperersberger is in the same situation as Congressman Sarbanes. He has signed on to only support the SBP/DIC repeal. Nevertheless in our meeting with his Legislative Assistant, Carol Merkel, who is new to her job, took copious notes. Since the Congressman was not in the office due to surgery on his neck, Ms Merkel wanted to be sure she conveyed our message on the MOAA issues correctly. In addition, because she was unsure of where Congressman Rupperersberger stood on the issues, she was not able to state with any certainty what his position might be. However, with the material we left for the congressman, and her notes on our personal comments, Congressman Rupperersberger will understand the issues and the importance of each to the military community.
- d. Congresswoman Edwards had already signed on to support the SBP/DIC repeal, full retirement pay, and opposing the reduction in Medicare payments. Her Legislative Assistant, Nate Tipton was familiar with the two issues that were open for her decision, the upgrade in military pay and Reserve retirement. Mr. Tipton was aware that Congresswoman Edwards was sympathetic to these two open issues and felt that she would be supporting them when the vote is taken.

5. Following is the status of the bills addressed during the 2010 Storming of the Hill.

- a. Disabled Veterans Tax
  - i. S.546 – Senator Mikulski, Senator Cardin

- ii. H.R. 303/333 – Representatives Edwards, Bartlett, Cummings, and Van Hollen
- b. Military Widows Tax
  - i. S. 535 – Senator Mikulski, Senator Cardin
  - ii. H.R. 775 – Representatives Kratovil, Ruppersberger, Sarbanes, Cummings, Edwards, Bartlett, and Van Hollen
- c. Reserve/National Guard Retirement
  - i. S. 831 – Senator Mikulski
  - ii. H.R. 208 – Congressmen Cummings and Van Hollen
- d. 1.9% Military Pay Raise
  - i. H.R. 4427 – Congressman Bartlett



The Maryland Team meeting with Senator Cardin



Capt Peterson, NOAA (Ret) and CAPT Norm Taylor, USN (Ret) met with Congressman Bartlett.