



## MOAA UPDATE FOR SPOUSES AND SURVIVING SPOUSES February 2021

### **Welcome to 2021!**

We are already well into the first quarter of the year as I write this. The relatively mild winter we experienced during January changed drastically this month with the arrival of the Arctic cold. I read that the Romans squeezed February down to 28 days to make it fit their calendar, contrary to their superstitions about avoiding even numbered months. A compromise perhaps, but it means March arrives sooner than any other month!

For Spouses and Surviving Spouses, the new year brought changes to the Survivor Benefit Plan which had been in planning since December 2019. At the **bottom of this newsletter** is a link for more information on the SBP-DIC offset phase out. There were many spouses who found answers to their questions on our Facebook group for **MOAA Surviving Spouses and Friends** [here](#). If

you know of anyone who could benefit from this Facebook group, I highly recommend it. It is a very active page with a lot of information. I also attended the January virtual meeting of MOAA Spouses and Surviving Spouses attend by over 60 members (can you imagine?). The minutes from this meeting are available by the link **located at the bottom of this newsletter**.

For spouses who are still working, check out the National Military Spouse Network's white paper on Employment Stability for Military Spouses, [here](#). National Military Spouse Network is a networking, mentoring and professional development organization committed to the education, empowerment and advancement of military spouses. They can be found on the [Internet](#) and on Facebook [here](#) .

## **Maryland COVID-19 Vaccination Information**

We are still managing our way through the COVID-19 pandemic and understanding the many vaccination programs. Maryland is currently allowing vaccinations for priority groups 1A, 1B and 1C. While the State is in Phase 1C, several counties remain in Phase 1B. Please check the Maryland COVIDLINK website for more information, [here](#).

Signing up for a vaccination appointment requires lots of patience and flexibility. In some counties, you can register through your local health department to receive notifications on when you can make an appointment. More pharmacies in Maryland are beginning to offer vaccinations or are expanding their vaccination

locations. Check your local area pharmacies to see if they are participating.

[Here](#) is an article by the Washington Post to help you understand the vaccination appointment process better. Additionally, [this](#) article has all the information you need by county. There is a Facebook group called Maryland Vaccine Hunters [here](#). If you don't have Facebook, contributors to this group created a shared spreadsheet ([here](#)) with information about many vaccination programs in Maryland. During our MOAA Montgomery County Chapter monthly meeting, several people told about their experiences to obtain an appointment. Vaccine appointment experiences at Walter Reed were rated very highly. Click [here](#) for the Walter Reed National Medical Center website. Many VA Hospitals are also scheduling vaccinations. Click [here](#) to check out the VA facilities near you.

## **Legislative Activities**

February is crunch month for the local Maryland Chapters of MOAA in pursuit of our legislative agenda. Two bills in particular are supported by Governor Hogan and would expand the existing military retirement income tax subtraction by exempting 100% of military retirement income from State taxation. The Maryland Military Coalition ([mdmilcoalition.org](http://mdmilcoalition.org)) launched a call to action which urged Maryland MOAA members to send letters and emails of support to their state representatives. If you did not respond – you still have time to do so. Contact your MOAA Chapter for

information if you haven't already received this call to action. It's vital for your voice to be heard!

This month, the Senate confirmed Denis McDonough as President Biden's new Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Secretary McDonough has a long history in public service, and he has a challenging road ahead of him. [Here](#) are his remarks from February 12, 2021.

## **Tax Season Begins**

Tax season is once again upon us. Last year, you may have taken advantage of the extended filing period due to COVID-19. However, this year that is not being offered. Many organizations offer free tax preparation services for veterans and surviving spouses. Check your local VA office, and also check out AARP as they offer free services [as per this article](#) . [This article](#) is very informative about things you should know when filing taxes this year.

I am wishing for a great thaw to end February! With March will come the spring weather, and warming days to strengthen our hopes for the future. Please feel free to reach out with comments or requests. And please share this letter with anyone who might benefit from reading this.

"Every gardener knows that under the cloak of winter lies a miracle ... a seed waiting to sprout, a bulb opening to the light, a bud straining to unfurl. And the anticipation nurtures our dream."

Barbara Winkler

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**SBP-DIC offset phase out** [link to DropBox File](#)

**MOAA Spouses and Surviving Spouses minutes** [Link to Drop Box File](#)

