

MINUTES FROM SURVIVING SPOUSE VIRTUAL CHAPTER MEETING

16 JANUARY 2024

Lt. Gen. Brian Kelly, USAF (Ret), MOAA President and Chief Executive Officer gave an overview of what a great 1st year he had at MOAA. From a big picture perspective, we are in a strong position financially and from a membership standpoint as well as from a respect standpoint in D.C.! He reviewed several areas of strong focus this year including finding a new revenue stream. Insurance is no longer the resource it was in the past. This is the downside of MOAA helping to implement TRICARE for Life. Another focus is transitioning to a new membership committee module. He reviewed the MOAA Scholarship Fund and Foundation.

In terms of Surviving Spouses, he noted that they comprise 12 ½ % of MOAA members and they need more education, support, and understanding. There will be more visibility in the MOAA magazine (**Note:** There rarely has been any information in the MOAA Magazine about Surviving Spouses) and a Survivors Guide is being worked on. Gen. Kelly noted that even though MOAA has transitioned from the term auxiliary member to surviving spouses, MOAA board members are finding on chapter visits, that the term auxiliary member is still used in some chapters! Thus, the need for education. MOAA is working with Kathy Thorp, CAPT, USN (Ret.) on Health Care Committee of BOD and Investment Committee, and others per advocacy for the Surviving Spouse community.

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR MOAA MEMBERS to make sure their spouse is listed on their profile. You can call 1-800-234-6622 or go to <https://www.moaa.org/content/topic-and-landing-pages/i-am-a-spouse/> . This page includes a section to *Create Your Spouse Account* or *Members: Update Your Profile Here*. MOAA is trying to update their database but needs our assistance. Members updating their profile helps as does all MOAA members sharing information. MOAA shares information with members and members share with MOAA to keep the MOAA database as current as possible.

During the Q & A session, I asked about many of the updated versions of MOAA publications being only available online. Many of the surviving spouses in local chapters do not use the internet. MOAA is trying to balance the cost of printing and online.

Jennifer Goodale, MOAA Director of Military Family and Survivor Policy, who is a Marine Corps veteran and spouse of an active duty Marine, gave an overview of Advocacy in Action since 2021 and stated the topics for 2024 had not been voted on yet. She noted that the training will be on the website via video as well as in person on 16 April. Hill Day will be 17 April. There will be a virtual component included during the summer recess. Bills directly related to surviving spouses that she addressed include:

Caring for Survivors Act of 2023 - Bipartisan legislation in the House and Senate (H.R. 1083/S. 414) would align Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payments with other federal survivor benefits. *HR 1083* had 65 cosponsors (now has 72 but none from VA). *S 414* had 21 cosponsors (now has 22 but none from VA). **Note:** Edie Smith is leading a Facebook group that

is advocating for passage of this bill – DIC Surviving Spouse /DIC Increase Advocacy. Contact me if you would like more information about this group.

Love Lives On Act - To secure the right for surviving military spouses to remarry at any age and retain their benefits. Currently only retain benefits if marry after age 55. HR 3651 had 37 cosponsors and S 1266 had 27 cosponsors. Neither has changed nor had any cosponsors from VA.

Respect for Grieving Families Act – Will prevent DFAS from immediately recouping the final month of retirement benefits upon the passing of a retired servicemember. HR3232 had 16 cosponsors and S 1588 had 2 cosponsors. The number of cosponsors has not changed for either bill and neither had any from VA.

Several members had questions that Jen was going to research and then get back with the group about the response. There will be a social get together next month and a program in March. I will keep you updated. The Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter also has a book club if anyone is interested.

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