

**2020 | DECEMBER**

**EL PASO MUNICIPAL ROSE GARDEN**



# THE BORDER BULLETIN

EL PASO CHAPTER OF MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA



Nationally Ranked Five-Star Chapter • MOAA Affiliate from January 23, 1956 • Our 64th Year



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## EL PASO CHAPTER NATIONAL AWARDS

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2015, 2016, 2018, and 2019

Four Star

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**Communications Award Print Legislative Coverage**

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2008, 2009, 2011 and 2012

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Winner

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Runner-up

2009 and 2014

## Editorial Policy

MOAA national and the El Paso Chapter (a MOAA affiliate) are independent, nonprofit, and politically nonpartisan organizations.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

MIKE HESTER

Good afternoon team! It is hard to believe that the summer is gone and that we already had our first snowfall of the year, in October! Besides the weather, it does not look like COVID is releasing its grip on us as fast as we would like. From listening to the net it seems like everyone is weathering the storm in good spirits and morale if not great is at least holding steady and that is great news! As always if you are having problems, shoot the red star cluster and we will come running!

This edition of the Border Bulletin is coming out right before Thanksgiving and just in time for giving day. I am not going to hammer giving day as there are plenty of articles in this edition on the importance of giving day and how we maintain and improve the Foundation. Dig as deep as you can, from my foxhole I would rather have many members give a bit than a few give a lot. But that's just me!

I do not know about you but I am seriously looking forward to 2021, I want to put 2020 as far in the rearview mirror as I can. With that in mind I figured I would recap the MOAA Legislative Priorities so we can discuss at future meetings.

Below are the MOAA priorities of 2020, how did they(we) do? I think as a Chapter we owe National some feedback. As always if you want to sling something to me you can get me at [mikehester65@gmail.com](mailto:mikehester65@gmail.com). Send me some feedback and we can assess MOAA efforts the next time we meet face to face.

### 1. Protect Your Health Care Benefit

**Objective:** Ensure any changes to the Military Health System sustain military-medical readiness and beneficiary access to top-quality care.

### 2. Keep Military Pay and Benefits Strong

**Objective:** Sustain military pay comparability with the private sector and block erosion of compensation and non-pay quality-of-life benefits.

### 3. Support Military Families

**Objective:** Protect family support programs, and ensure military-provided services (housing, PCS, child care) are affordable, readily available, and meet quality standards.

### 4. Concurrent Receipt for All Retirees

**Objective:** End concurrent receipt penalties for military retirees.

### 5. Support the Total Force

**Objective:** Achieve equity of benefits, protections, and administrative support for Guard/Reserve members consistent with their active duty counterparts.

### 6. Better, Faster DoD/VA Services

**Objective:** Ensure timely access to service-earned benefits, and resist proposals to erode foundational services delivered through the VA and DoD.

### 7. Strengthen and Support All Uniformed Services

**Objective:** Support legislation, policies, and programs to enable the seven uniformed services to recruit, retain, and manage personnel.

We took an informal survey about a face to face meeting in Dec as well as a VTC Zoom style meeting. Although there were a few "yes I would attend" the "nos" won out on both. We will continue to keep our eye on this COVID virus with the hopes of meeting after the new year! Nobody wants to get out of the house more than me!

As always stay safe, keep your head down and powder dry, and I hope to see you all on the high ground!

Proud to serve!

Mike Hester



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (OCTOBER)

Howdy MOAA teammates! I hope this letter finds everybody in good health and spirits! It has been one long, hot, and extremely strange COVID summer and I assume like the rest of you I can't wait for a vaccine and to get back to normal operating procedure. In the meantime, we just have to hold fast and enjoy the ride as best as we can!

Unfortunately, because of the COVID we postponed our face-to-face meetings until after October. I know everybody is looking forward to a lunch where we can actually look each other in the eyes and enjoy each other's camaraderie. As for me I have been home more the last five months than in the last 30 years and I suspect (know) that I am getting under my wife's skin. So, if you don't see me at the next lunch check in our backyard, but you might have to dig a little (THAT WAS A JOKE).

Every presidents letter I have written I always ask for feedback but very rarely get it. Last month was an exception and I received a ton of feedback. I loved it! Keep it coming! Like an old mentor said and I've been passing it down to my subordinates over the years "feedback is a gift". I had some great discussions with members that were concerned that our chapter was delving into politics. I disagree.

Like most of you I consider myself a Soldier first and foremost and as a Soldier I have never really given a damn who is sitting in the commander in chief chair. Professional soldiers in my view, "fight where they are told and win where they fight!" Our oath is to the Constitution, to an idea not a man, woman, or a party. I think that is a brilliant concept that sets us apart and above so many other militaries.

With that said this is my first time in 30 years on the other side of the fence and to be brutally honest I never really paid much attention to what was happening on the civilian side of our beloved country. I was and am shocked by the racial and ideological divides that I see on the news and in our great cities. It is foreign to me. To me the military is the great nationalization agent. It is the one institution where we bring people of all different backgrounds, race and religions, throw them together and unify them under common values. Sure, we have our problems but I still believe that the military proves that if you put a black kid from Chicago and a white kid from West Virginia into a barracks room, nine out of ten times they will find common ground and become buddies, combat is the great equalizer. It is when we get into our groups that the trouble begins. I think we need more discussion and less violence and speaking of discussion I had some great ones with some of our older members who were a victim of and overcame overt, in your face racism. I think your stories could help heal if we got off the bench.

Anyway, that is my two cents. You all know me; I am an unapologetic American Patriot and the Army taught me that any man who judges another on the color of their skin is a moron. You assess men as you meet them, one on one, and go from there. It is a lesson that in my opinion is desperately needed on the outside. If that is political, so be it, I will take my lumps.

We have a great bunch of folks in this organization so as always, I am asking for feedback, how can our chapter help strengthen our country that we have dedicated our lives to? Education, scholarships, donations, discussion, I don't know, that's why I want to hear from you. Go red direct at [Mikehester65@gmail.com](mailto:Mikehester65@gmail.com) and sling me your thoughts.

Don't forget giving day is the first Tuesday in December after Thanksgiving. This year we have done a great job raising funds for our Scholarship programs, but if we want a Chapter and Foundation that can also assist in Charitable Giving to programs like the Veterans Treatment Court, Jr Enlisted Food Bank, White Cane Day for the Blind, and others, we will need the greenbacks!! Dig deep!! More on that next month. Until then stay safe as always and if you need anything at any time, holler and the Cavalry will come!

Proud to serve!

Mike Hester

## CONTINUING OUR CHARITABLE WORK!

With essentially all of our usual **Outreach Programs** still shut down as a result of COVID 19, our ability to conduct a 2nd open period across all programs does not appear to be feasible. So until COVID fades into the distance, the Foundation is currently focused on addressing Emergency Requests that might materialize in our Military Community—should you be aware of such needs, please contact one of our Foundation Board Members.

Our current Committee work to develop policies and procedures for our new **Annual El Paso MOAA Memorial Scholarship** and to establish a 2020-2021 **ByLaws Review Committee** is progressing well. The Scholarship Committee has not only held its first round of discussions, but has been able to conduct a first round of Founding Sponsor fund raising that has successfully raise \$1250 toward 2021 Scholarships with “pledges” for similar amounts in 2022 and 2023—a great start. We will continue to solicit sponsor for the Scholarship Program through the month of September—if your are interested in being one of the Founding Sponsors for our Scholarship efforts, please contact Dave Powell, LTC. Ret.Powell@outlook.com or log onto the El Paso MOAA Chapter Website and go to our El Paso Scholarship link <https://www.elpasomoaa.org/content.asp?contentid=139> to make a donation.

We have also been fortunate to have **Col (Ret) Maureen Loftberg** return as a MOAA Volunteer and Maureen will head up our ByLaws Review Committee as well as play a key part in our an-

nual Giving Day Fund Raiser this Dec 1st---those of you who know Maureen will appreciate her vast historical activity and knowledge of Veteran activities and how much she can bring to the Foundation. The **2020 Giving Day Fund Raising Committee** is also in full swing and as you have noted from our President in his letter to Members this month, soon we will activate our Annual Giving Day Fund raiser along with the National Giving Day, December 1, 2020 activities—more to come in our November newsletter. We anticipate 2021 to be a very active year for our local Charitable Organizations and our ability to help will of course depend on the success of Giving Day. If you would like to join as a Volunteer on our Giving Day Committee to help with our fund raising effort, please contact John Robbins, jrronyucca@outlook.com

### Speaking of Volunteers!!

Don't forget that currently there are two remaining Executive Board positions that need to be filled, **President** and **Programs Director**. And as **previously noted**, many of our Committees are still badly in need of Volunteers to help staff the critical work that needs to be done to run Outreach efforts supporting our three major activities; **Soldier & Family Programs** on Ft Bliss, local **ROTC Programs** and **Veteran's Programs**. Seriously, we can not do the important work of the Foundation without you help--please consider joining us as a Board Member or Committee Member to help us manage the important activities of our Foundation. Remember.



### Foundation Officers 2020

**President** Vacant  
**Vice-President** COL John Robins  
**Secretary** CPT David Thackston  
**Treasurer** LTC Dave Powell  
**Chapter Advisot** COL Mike Hester

### Board of Directors

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**Director** Col (R) Maureen Lofberg  
**Chaplain** Connie Sullivan  
**President, El Paso MOAA Chapter**  
Col (R) Mike Hester

### A FEW HOURS A MONTH CAN GO A LONG WAY TO MAKING OUR OUTREACH SUCCESSFUL.

#### Your Foundation Board of Directors:

Vice President	LTC (R) John Robbins,	jrronyucca@outlook.com	915 309 1891
Secretary	CPT Ashley Sperry	ashley.m.sperry.mil@mail.mil	937 207 0715
Treasurer	LTC (R) Dave Powell	LTC.Ret.Powell@outlook.com	915 491 1272
Veterans Affairs	COL (R) Lennie Enzel	lennieenzel@icloud.com	915 241 0812
Director	COL (R) Maureen Loftberg		915 566 2880
Chaplain	Connie Sullivan	spanishdancer4@sbcglobal.net	915 778 0948



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# TEXAS DRIVER LICENSE, REAL ID AND YOU

Please be advised that beginning October 1, 2021, federal agencies will only accept Texas driver licenses and identification cards for official federal purposes - including air travel and entering federal facilities - provided the Texas driver license or identification card is marked REAL ID compliant. REAL ID compliance is indicated by a gold circle with an inset star located on the upper right of the driver license or identification card. For additional information

regarding the REAL ID Act, please visit <http://www.dps.texas.gov/DriverLicense/federalRealIdAct.htm>.

Texas Department of Public Safety strongly encourages you to renew your license prior to October 1, 2021, to ensure that you have a REAL ID compliant card. If you already have a REAL ID compliant card, as indicated with a Gold Star in the upper righthand corner, you do not need to take any action before October 1, 2021.

If you have any questions, please email [realid@dps.texas.gov](mailto:realid@dps.texas.gov).

Fort Bliss offers Texas driver license services at 505 Pershing Ave, Room A154

Real ID frequently asked questions for the public are available here <https://www.dps.texas.gov/realid>.



## PHYSICAL THERAPY AT ITS BEST [www.bordertherapy.com](http://www.bordertherapy.com)

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 3330 Rinconada Blvd. • Suite 5 • Las cruces, NM 88011 • 575-323-8077

## Report a Retiree Death

**Monday - Friday:**

0730 - 1700

915-568-5207

After Hours (Installation)

915-569-6950/6951

or visit:

<https://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary>

## El Paso Chapter of MOAA Member:

EL PASO, Texas (KTSM) – The El Paso County Sheriff's Office is sending out a new warning about a telephone scam that's targeting residents throughout El Paso County.


Officials said a caller or callers are claiming to be collecting money for the El Paso County Sheriff's Office and/or Sheriff Richard Wiles.

The Sheriff's Office said it is not seeking donations and has not authorized anyone to make calls seeking donations on their behalf.


Authorities said if anyone has been a victim of a scam, they should report it to their local law enforcement agency.

Residents are also being asked to be careful about telephone calls asking for money.

Respectfully,  
William L. Moore  
Lieutenant Colonel,  
US Army, Retired  
Webmaster  
<http://elpasomoaa.org>



# William Beaumont Army Medical Center PHARMACY NOTICE







**\*\*\*WBAMC Pharmacy Service UPDATE\*\*\***  
**Service Expansion Beginning September 8th 2020**

**Mendoza Curbside Pharmacy**  
**Hours of Operation: 7:30am-4:00pm**  
**Services Offered:**  
-24hr Drop-Off Rx Service  
(SAVE A TRIP! Ask your WBAMC provider to initiate your New or Renewal Rx Request at the Mendoza Curbside Pharmacy, Rx will be ready within 24hrs (next business day) for pick-up!  
-Acute Care Rx Same Day Pick-up (limited to certain types of medications)  
-Tricare Online/Audio-care Prescription Refill Pick-up

**Freedom Crossing Pharmacy**  
**Hours of Operation: 9:30am-6:00pm**  
Ticket Kiosk turns off at 12:45pm for Lunch from 1:00pm-2:00pm  
**Services Offered:**  
-24hr Drop-Off Rx Service  
(SAVE A TRIP! Ask your WBAMC provider to initiate your Rx Request at the Freedom Crossing Pharmacy, Rx will be ready within 24hrs (next business day) for pick-up!  
-Acute Care Rx Same Day Pick-up (limited to certain types of medications)  
-Tricare Online/Audio-care Prescription Refill Pick-up

**\*\*Freedom Crossing does not have curbside. We thank you for observing mask and social distancing requirements in the Freedom Crossing waiting area.\*\***

**Stay Informed and Take Control of Your Healthcare with the WBAMC App**



## EL PASO VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM PHARMACY

There are four convenient options for refilling prescriptions which can then be mailed directly to your home. Choose any process that is easy for you to use:

- Call the automated phone system at (915) 564-6100 ext. 6110 or 1-800-672-3782 ext.6110.

Follow the directions to process your refill.

- Mail in your refill slips.
- Drop the refill slip in the mail-out box located in the pharmacy.
- Use the MyHealtheVet Website: [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)

Please note, window service at the Pharmacy will be limited to new prescriptions only. So, for all refills, please use one of the 4 options listed above.

**Location:** 2nd Floor, West Hallway.

**Hours:** Mon - Fri., 8:00am-4:30pm; Except Tues., 9:00am-4:30pm





## CHAPLAIN CORNER

MRS. CONNIE SULLIVAN

Well, it's been a while since this Pandemic hit our country and it seems as well, like it is going to stay a while longer. In the mean time, we need to stay strong and not lose faith that sooner or later things are going to change.

We also need to remember that no matter how many times we fall, meaning that what ever challenges we encounter, it's how we get up or pick ourselves up and start where we left off, that matters; continuing in hope that no matter what, God is with us.

The trials we are going through are like the process of diamonds. In order



for them to sparkle, they have to be polished extensively and extremely to bring out the brilliance and luster of the stone.

Often times the situations we go through can be emotionally painful and devastating, especially when we lose our love ones. However, we know that we have to keep on going because we know as well that there is sunshine at the end of the tunnel.

Let's continue doing what we have been working at and that is, helping each other; because most of us can see the rainbow at the end of this Pan-

demical flood.

God promised that He would never leave us nor forsake us. If we stay the course until we know that at the finish line, things will be better and that in our future not only will we be able to flourish but our country as well, God's grace will be there for us. Also by loving one another we will see that we cannot possibly go wrong.

May our Heavenly Father keep on blessing us and our nation, protecting and keeping us safe and above all giving us peace.

### MEMBER RENEWALS

Mrs. Mary Wilke	COL Constance Moore
COL Daniel Washburn	CW3 Gary Mann
MAJ Rodney Gilbert	COL Miller Rhodes
Mrs. Eva Haggard	CPL Priscella Weikel
Mrs. Sylvia McGriff	Mrs. Mary Lordes Henry
COL Blake Wayman	CW4 Marshal Pyland
COL Gary Mundy	Mrs. Mary Wilke
MG James Maloney	COL Louis Clark
LTC Donald Hughes	Mrs. Reva Reel
Mrs. Laura Charity	



#GIVINGTUESDAY™

**DEC 1**  
**2020**



## RETIREE PAY DATES FOR 2021

## ANNUITANT PAY DATES FOR 2021

MONTH	DIRECT DEPOSIT DATES	MONTH	DIRECT DEPOSIT DATES
JANUARY	FEBRUARY 1	JANUARY	FEBRUARY 1
FEBRUARY	MARCH 1	FEBRUARY	MARCH 1
MARCH	APRIL 1	MARCH	APRIL 1
APRIL	APRIL 30	APRIL	MAY 3
MAY	JUNE 1	MAY	JUNE 1
JUNE	JULY 1	JUNE	JULY 1
JULY	JULY 30	JULY	AUGUST 2
AUGUST	SEPTEMBER 1	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER 1
SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER 1	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER 1
OCTOBER	NOVEMBER 1	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER 1
NOVEMBER	DECEMBER 1	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER 1
DECEMBER	DECEMBER 30	DECEMBER	JANUARY 3, 2022



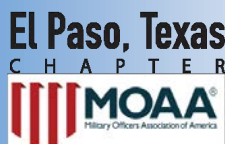
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**Outreach Foundation**

a 501(c)(3) Charitable Organization

## ***Getting Ready for 2021 !!***

The Foundation will close out our 2020 Outreach Programs with an effort to identify COVID related needs among the Military Community that are not being addressed by City and State Outreach, VA programs, FT Bliss MWR, or other local Non-Profit Organizations working to address the difficulties of the last year. A limited amount of funding is available—please see our COVID Grant Application at <https://elpasomoaa.org>

Our Success in 2021 will depend on

## **El Paso MOAA Giving Day**

**First Tuesday after Thanksgiving!**

**December 1st, 2020**

**<https://www.elpasomoaa.org>**

**Please Don't  
forget to  
DONATE!!**

Each year the **El Paso MOAA Outreach Foundation** raises funds for our coming year charitable projects on **Giving Tuesday, the first Tuesday after Thanksgiving—this year on 1 December 2020.** Outreach programs depend on El Paso MOAA Members and Friends support on this important day. We hope that you will include the Outreach Foundation in your celebration of philanthropy this year.

Giving Tuesday kicks off the National charitable season, on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving when many focus on their holiday and end-of-year giving. Since its inaugural year in 2012, **Giving Tuesday** has become a National movement that celebrates and supports giving and philanthropy connecting diverse groups of individuals, communities, and organizations for one common purpose; to celebrate and encourage charitable giving. Giving Tuesday harnesses the potential of social media and the generosity of people to bring about real change in their communities.

**You may donate online to help our Military Community at:**

**<https://www.elpasomoaa.org/outreach>.**

**or**

**send your donation to the address below.**

**El Paso MOAA Outreach Foundation  
PO Box 6144 Fort Bliss, Texas 79906-0144**



# Surviving 2020!

Although COVID closed down most of the 2020 activities that our El Paso MOAA Outreach Foundation has supported in the past few years, we were able to reach out with contributions to help the Jr Enlisted Food Bank and provide the traditional “Gold Bars” to graduating UTEP ROTC Students!



Our efforts with the Soldier Art Workshops—SKIES Youth Program were also a success sponsoring the



February Watercolor Workshop taught by Frank Rimbach—one MWR’s favorite Watercolor Artists—at the MWR Art Shop on Marshall Road.

With the current Ft Bliss limitation on 4 Students physically attending Classes at the MWR Art Shop, funding provided by our Outreach for SKIES is also helping to establish “ZOOM virtual classes” that will allow Artists beginning in January 2021. First up in January will be Live Encaustics Class by Sally Avant.



The Virtual Class capability will also allow MWR Arts & Crafts to reach out to more Soldiers and Families of the 1st Armored Division located on East Ft Bliss and unable to participate in on site activities due to COVID restrictions.

# Here's Your 2021 Military Retiree and VA Disability Pay Raise

## OCTOBER 20, 2020

[https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2020-news-articles/heres-your-2021-military-retiree-and-va-disability-pay-raise/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=TMNsend&utm\\_content=NC+AFHRM+1+ERet+L+NC](https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2020-news-articles/heres-your-2021-military-retiree-and-va-disability-pay-raise/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=TMNsend&utm_content=NC+AFHRM+1+ERet+L+NC)

*Editor's note: This article by Jim Absher originally appeared on Military.com, a leading source of news for the military and veteran community.*

Military retirees, those who receive disability or other benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs, federal retirees and Social Security recipients will see a 1.3% increase in their monthly checks for 2021.

The annual Cost Of Living Allowance (COLA) is slightly less than the 1.6% increase from last year but in line with the historical increases seen over the last 10 years.

Each year, military retirement pay, Survivor Benefit Plan Annuities, VA Compensation and Pensions, and Social Security benefits are adjusted for the rate of inflation.

Military retirement pay is one of the top three benefits of military service, along with medical and other benefits. Understanding how to calculate military retirement pay involves understanding the final pay and high 36-month average methods.

### Retirement Pay Increase

As a result of the increase, retired military members will see a \$13 increase for each \$1,000 in military retirement pension they receive each month.

Retirees who entered military service on or after Aug. 1, 1986, and opted for the Career Status Bonus (CSB/Redux retirement plan) have any COLA increases reduced by 1%, so they will see a smaller increase in 2021. They should see a monthly increase of only \$3 per \$1,000.

Survivors receiving Survivor Benefit Plan payments will see the same increase of \$13 per \$1,000 in their monthly payments.

### VA Disability Increase

Disabled veterans will also get a bump. The average VA disability check will go up about \$1.85 per month for those with a 10% rating, and \$19.68 for those rated at 100%.

### Other Federal Retirees and Beneficiaries

Military retirees and VA beneficiaries aren't the only ones who benefit from the COLA increase. Civil Service retirees and Social Security recipients will also see the 1.3% jump in their monthly checks.

For Social Security recipients, the monthly increase will mean an extra \$18.07 per month for the average beneficiary.

### How the COLA Is Determined

The Department of Labor determines the annual COLA by measuring the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which is a measurement of a broad sampling of the cost of consumer goods and expenses. The CPI is compared to the previous year; if there is an increase, there is a COLA. If there is no increase, there is no COLA.

The COLA affects about one in every five Americans, including Social Security recipients, disabled veterans, federal retirees and retired military members.

In 2020, the COLA increase was 1.6%; in 2019, retirees saw a 2.8% increase.





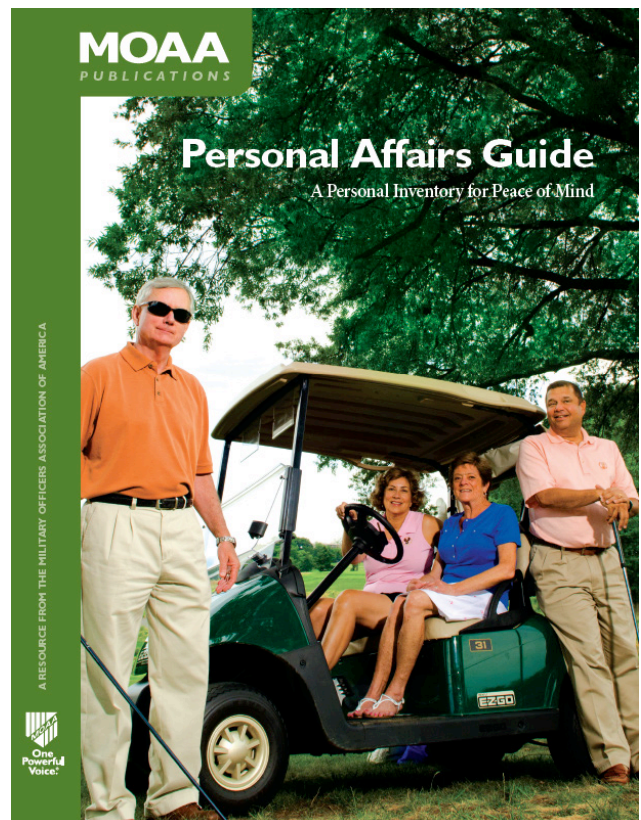
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☒ YES! Sign me up as a **FREE BASIC MOAA Member**

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☐ Graduation Year (Cadet/Midshipmen) \_\_\_\_\_

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*To ensure deliverability of MOAA communications, please provide a personal email without a ".mil" domain if available.*

*We value your privacy. MOAA does not rent or sell its members' emails to third parties. If you include your email address, you will receive e-communications from MOAA as a member benefit. Visit [www.moaa.org/email](http://www.moaa.org/email) for details.*

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse Name \_\_\_\_\_

*Your spouse has access to all of your MOAA member benefits.*

*Membership is open to active duty, former, retired, and National Guard and Reserve commissioned and warrant officers of the uniformed services and their surviving spouses.*

\* Surviving spouse of eligible officer

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\*Surviving spouse of eligible officer

**Add your own voice to the fight.**



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# THE BORDER BULLETIN

is the print newsletter of the  
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(MOAA)

P.O. Box 6144, Fort Bliss, TX 79906-0144  
<http://elpasomoaa.org>

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## THE DECEMBER MEMBERSHIP MEETING & LUNCHEON IS CANCELLED



## FORT BLISS ACCESS CONTROL POINTS

- A 100% identification card check of all personnel will be implemented at all Fort Bliss access control points.
- All Department of Defense and non-DoD vehicular occupants, including the driver and all of-age passengers, will have to present an ID card - valid state driver's license, government/federal ID card, passport, etc. - for authorized access to Fort Bliss.
- All vehicles and occupants entering Fort Bliss are subject to random searches and inspections, as has always been the standard.
- All non-DoD persons can expect to obtain a visitor's pass at certain gates with VCC (Visitor Control Centers). Travelers should plan their time accordingly as access times to Fort Bliss might be increased following these enduring security measure enhancements.

*For more detailed information on gate access and hours of operation see  
<https://www.bliss.army.mil/gateinfo.html>.*



## SURVIVING SPOUSE LIAISON MRS. CONNIE SULLIVAN

There are some experiences in our lives that at the time they happen, they seem tragic but later on in life become comical when we think back and realize that it wasn't as big of a deal after all, and so they become treasured memories.

Although, in some cases, the situation could have been devastating. My experience happened when my children were: the oldest 13 years old, my middle child was 8 years and my youngest was 6 years old.

It was one of those times when you feel like finally there are peaceful moments and the children are getting along well and quietly. I then decided to do something for myself. Big Mistake!! I went ahead and gave myself a perm and when I had put the rollers on and the perm, I heard yelling and bickering in the kitchen.

As an attentive mother, I went to see what the ruckus was all about. It took a while to resolve the situation and of course, totally forgot about the perm on my head. Yea !! When I took the rollers off, kinky is not enough of a word to describe what my hair looked like.

Well, when my kids and husband saw me, they thought it was very funny. Soooo! I said to them that I was not going to cook for a week. For my husband, it was not a problem because he loved to cook; however, he did not know how to make the Enchilada Casserole

(Mexican Dish) which the children and he liked very much. In fact it was their favorite food.

After a few days my son came to me with a contrite heart and asked me if I was over my predicament. His pleas were apparent that they had learned the lesson of not making fun at someone's mishap and of course, thank God that He taught us about forgiveness.

To say the least, it took several weeks for my hair to grow long enough to cut the burned, and I mean burned strands off. In these Covid times, it is good to reflect on our past and the lessons we have learned that have helped us grow emotionally and spiritually.

We are all having a difficult time but, as we all know, we are not going through it alone, God is with us and we are all in this together.



## Junior Enlisted Family Center

Located at 2004 Sheridan Rd. Fort Bliss, TX 79906

No Cost Thrift Store: Closed  
Food Pantry: Fridays 10:30am-2:30pm  
Baby Project: Fridays 10:30am-2:30pm

JEFC drive-thru Food Pantry: Wednesdays 3-5pm  
Hosted at 7060 Comington St. El Paso, TX 79930

Junior Enlisted military families in need are allowed one bundle of diapers, baby wipes and up to 10 baby food items per week during hours of operation while supplies last.



## LEGISLATIVE

CW2 DAVE GARCIA, USA, RETIRED

Greetings ...Comrades and Guest to this email on this Important article...Pls read carefully for a better understanding... VA C&P exams from VA facilities to be outsource to QTC, LHI or VES ...C&P are being sources out already... In accordance to M21 iii.iv.3. a.1.6.have the flexiability to request an examination from medical center or contractors providers as I mentioned above... But my concern in eliminating in-house C&P program completely should be of great concern to all us veterans... We all need to contact our elective official from both District 16 and 23 to write a letter to the VA Secretary Robert Wilkie to get a response in the elimanitating of in-house C&P exams...Thank you for your involvement of this issue...Together we will prevail as one powerful voice...Mr. Garcia

### VA PLANS TO OUTSOURCE ALL COMPENSATION AND PENSION EXAMS

By NIKKI WENTLING | STARS AND STRIPES

Published: October 21, 2020

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs is **eliminating its in-house compensation and pension exam program** and **will outsource all of the exams**, which are crucial to determining whether veterans are eligible for VA benefits.

In a letter to VA Secretary Robert Wilkie on Tuesday, Rep. Elaine Luria, D-Va., said the plan was developed with **no notice to Congress**. She's concerned the move could **slow work to reduce a backlog of compensation and pension exams**, commonly

referred to as C&P exams, and she's worried about the **VA's ability to oversee the contractors**. Luria also criticized the department for cutting federal jobs during a pandemic. "For many veterans, thorough and accurate C&P examinations are crucial to securing service-connected benefits," Luria wrote. "VA's quiet decision to carry out a major reorganization of its C&P program without a plan to make key improvements, reduce backlog, or retain employees is unlikely to deliver the **high-quality results we expect**."

Luria leads the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, part of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. During a hearing she led last year, the VA said it would contract with more outside medical providers to perform C&P exams. Lawmakers were led to believe the contracted examiners merely supplemented the existing program, primarily to help rural veterans and those veterans facing long wait times, Luria said. Recently, however, VA staff told Luria's office about the department's plan to shutter the C&P program at the VA and contract with the private sector for 100% of the exams.

"VA privately advised my staff of the decision after it was made, without a press release or communication to the affected veterans, advocates, or labor representatives," Luria said. "Such a consequential decision should have been communicated directly to the chair and ranking member of this subcommittee and should not have moved forward during the turbulence of the pandemic." **The VA did not immediately respond to a request for comment.**

The change comes as the VA is working through a backlog of requests for exams. The department suspended the exams in April, as coronavirus cases grew across the United States. During that time, **the backlog grew to about 350,000 requests**. The VA resumed in-person exams in some locations May 28. As of mid-October, exams were being scheduled in all areas of the U.S. In all the new instructions about the re-

sumed exams, the VA notes that a "VA contract medical examiner" would be in touch to schedule them.

During a **C&P exam, a health care provider examines a veteran to help determine whether his or her disabilities are connected to military service**. The information gathered during the exam is used by the VA to **make a decision on a veteran's claim and to issue a disability rating**. The rating determines how much monthly compensation the veteran is due. **The VA has increasingly relied on contractors to perform the exams — spending nearly \$6.8 billion on exam contracts in 2016. Recently, contractors were performing about 60% of exams, Luria's letter states.**

The Government Accountability Office reported in 2018 that the department **doesn't track whether contractors are meeting quality and timeliness standards**. The VA has not yet implemented the recommendations the GAO made in that report, Luria said. **She's worried that as the VA expands its use of contractors, the department lacks the ability to oversee them.** "More than two years later, [the VA] has not fully implemented these recommendations it agreed were necessary for proper oversight," Luria wrote to Wilkie. **The "failure to implement these recommendations raises concerns about its ability to oversee contractors as they increase their workload from 60% of C&P examinations to nearly 100%."** Luria sent a list of questions to Wilkie, including how many C&P examiner jobs the VA would eliminate and whether those employees would be able to remain at the agency in some capacity.

Luria also wants to know whether the VA has considered maintaining in-house exams for veterans suffering from Gulf War Illness, military sexual trauma and traumatic brain injury — all conditions unique to veterans and that often call for specialists. She asked for responses by Nov. 16.

wentling.nikki@stripes.com  
Twitter: @nikkiwentling





## DOC'S CORNER

DR. DANIEL WASHBURN.

Several recent research surveys have estimated that the average American adult spends between 6 and 10 hours each day looking at a screen. That screen time is usually divided between phones, TV, computer, tablet and video games. That astounding amount of screen time has increased even more the past 6 months due to the COVID pandemic.

Spending so much time each day staring at a screen will often cause eye strain. Symptoms include blurry vision, tired eyes that ache and sometimes even a mild headache. Fortunately, screen time does not cause permanent or long-term eye damage but can cause significant temporary symptoms. Is there anything you can do to treat or minimize the eye strain triggered by long hours looking at a screen?

The most obvious remedy is to minimize the time you spend each day staring at a screen. However, jobs and other activities sometimes require long hours on the phone or computer so cut-

ting back may not always be an option. There are other ways to treat eye strain from screen time.

1) Keep your eyes moist: many of the symptoms from screen time are caused by dry eyes. We normal blink every 4 seconds because each blink keeps the eyes moist. When we stare at a computer, our blink rate is cut by 70%, which causes dry eyes. Make a conscious effort to blink as often as possible. Keep artificial tears or lubricating eyedrops on hand to refresh your eyes when they feel dry. A humidifier in the room may also help.

2) Follow the 20-20-20 rule: take regular breaks from staring at your screen. Every 20 minutes look at a target at least 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds.

3) Adjust the screen glare, brightness and contrast: the screen brightness can be turned down and the contrast up which may help with eye strain. A screen mat or filter can cut down on glare.

4) Eyeglasses: if you rely on eyeglasses to see your screen, make sure you are wearing a good, accurate eyeglass prescription.

5) Blue light blocking glasses: these glasses have not been proven to help with eye strain caused by too much screen time and I have never tried them myself so am unable to relay personal experience. I have had some people tell me they think their eye fatigue was reduced by using this type of eyeglass. However, there is not sufficient evidence for me to recommend these glasses at this time.

Again, the best option is to cut way back on screen time but if that is not an option, try these other remedies.

Daniel Washburn,  
M.D. Former Chief Eye Surgeon  
at WBAMC



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