



# The Sentinel

Arizona's First Chapter  
The Military Officer's Association of America  
The Arizona Chapter Scottsdale, AZ 85250



December 2023 CHARTERED Oct 1956 67 YEARS OF SERVICE TO COUNTRY Stephen MacDonald, EDITOR

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and Chairpersons

## President's Perspective by Tom Sheets



**T**hank you to the 34 members and 16 guests who joined us at our 2023 Annual Meeting. I am sure you will agree that Paula Pedene's presentation ranks among the best and most riveting we have ever had. What a great testament to the honor, courage, and commitment of our veterans. Paula is, indeed, a true American hero. She took on one of our largest, most corrupt government bureaucracies on behalf of our veterans—and won! It wasn't quick and it wasn't easy...but she and right prevailed. If you were not able to attend the luncheon, you should consider reading her book, *A Sacred Duty*.

Next month we have two events. First is our annual Army-Navy Game Party and fundraiser on Saturday, December 9th, at Famous 48 on North Scottsdale Road. Please see the flyer on page 10 for more information. **We plan to give away \$1,000** and will have **five raffle prizes**. Each \$5 square you buy will give you four chances to win \$50—and you do not have to be present to win.

Secondly, we will hold our annual holiday gift exchange at McCormick Ranch on Saturday, December 16th. Additional details are on page 4. Please register early. Due to a scheduling mistake on McCormick Ranch's part, we will be in the Lakeview Room instead of the Pavilion, and space will be limited. (Continued on page 3.)



FEBRUARY 23,  
1929

US ARMY  
JUNE 14, 1775

US NAVY  
OCT 13, 1775

US MARINE  
CORPS  
NOV 10, 1775

US COAST  
GUARD  
AUG 14, 1790

US PUBLIC  
HEALTH  
SERVICE  
JAN 4, 1889

US AIR FORCE  
SEP 18, 1947

NATIONAL  
OCEANIC AND  
ATMOSPHERIC  
ADMINISTRATION  
OCT 3, 1970

US SPACE  
FORCE  
DEC 20, 2019

**The Sentinel** newsletter is published by the Arizona Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). MOAA and its affiliate chapters and councils are non-partisan.



## Chapter Membership

by Bob Fiegl, Chapter 1st VP  
and Membership Chair  
[Fieglr949@gmail.com](mailto:Fieglr949@gmail.com)

**Merry Christmas! Happy Holidays!  
Happy New Year!**

I hope this is as wonderful a time of year for you as it is for me. This has always been my happiest time of the year. That’s because I have so much to be thankful for and I enjoy the happiness and good cheer that surrounds me. Wherever you are now, I hope you have love, peace and optimism in your life.

We have 169 members on our roster, 23 of which are our wonderful surviving spouses. We’re basically holding our own with member numbers. Unfortunately, and sadly, we’ve experienced some losses this year – due to deaths and due to non-payment of chapter dues. To those who’ve suffered the loss of a loved one or close friend this year, I’m sorry, and I offer my sincere sympathy to you.

I attended MOAA’s southwest US regional meeting on November 17th and 18th. Thankfully, it was held in Phoenix this year. There are just a few major ‘take-away’s’ I want to share with you here.

First: You’re highly valued as a MOAA member! There is power in numbers and our national

organization has nearly 360,000 members. That counts for a lot of clout on Capitol Hill when MOAA staff are working with Congress garnering support for things that are particularly important to us. MOAA has a superb reputation for being led by highly effective and experienced people. Our leadership is genuinely recognized and respected within the Washington, DC ‘Beltway’. Here’s the link to recent accomplishments achieved: <https://www.moaa.org/content/topic-and-landing-pages/moaa-in-action/> Please take a few minutes to review these things. <https://www.moaa.org/content/about-moaa/moaa-at-a-glance/moaa-2022-stakeholders-report/>

Second: Many members have the ‘BASIC’ membership. Our leadership is asking those of you who hold this level to consider moving up to a ‘Premium’ or ‘Life’ membership. Yes, these cost money, but, if you’ve reviewed the accomplishments listed above, you’ll have to admit we get a lot of bang for our buck from our organization in the form of financial increases, medical care other important benefits.

**\*\*\*REALLY IMPORTANT\*\*\***

Third: This is a subset of the above passage...it’s ‘Advocacy’. This is the political part of what MOAA does for us. It’s a really important aspect of what

*(Continued on page 7)*



## ARIZONA CHAPTER MOAA MEMBERSHIP DUES RENEWAL FORM

**2024 DUES are payable on JANUARY 1. Dues become DELINQUENT on March 1, 2024.**

If you become delinquent, you can still pay your Past Dues by completing your information below and send it with your check — **\$20/year for a Regular Member** or **\$10/year for a Surviving Spouse Member** payable to “AZ Chapter MOAA” and mail to: **Charlie Bitner, 134 E. Northview Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85020.**

Dues for 2023 \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Dues for 2024 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Member OR Surviving Spouse Member \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Please make any CHANGES to your Contact Information below:**

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**[To Renew Online - Click Here!](#)**

## President's Perspective

Continued from page 1

Before the fun and frivolity of our annual gift exchange, we will install our new slate of officers and directors for 2024. At the conclusion of our luncheon, I will pass the gavel to Bruce Kosaveach to serve as our Chapter President. It has been an honor to serve you for the past two years, and I thank all of you for your support and encouragement. Lisa and I look forward to continued participation and camaraderie, and I will continue to serve on your Board of Directors as the Immediate Past President.

We have a great chapter. That is not only our opinion, but that of our State Council and National Headquarters. Bob Fiegl and I represented the chapter at a National Leaders Workshop in November. Numerous national staff members went out of their way to compliment us on the excellence of our chapter. One national executive told me, "*you are one of the very best chapters we have!*" That is because of you, your support, your engagement, and your willingness to serve on our Board of Directors and committees. Thank you for all you have done for our chapter and for each other. I look forward to helping to ensure we remain "*one of the very best chapters in the Nation!*"

Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and Happy New Year.

Tom

## Announcements!

### September 2023 Donations

#### General Fund:

Lee Lange                      \$200

#### Scholarship Fund:

John Ady                      \$200

(In memory of Janet Lange)

Kathy Upchurch              \$40

### **Check Out Our Facebook Page! Facebook**

Don't forget to "Like" and "Follow" us!

## Veterans Administration (VA) Annual Veteran Suicide Report

**A**nother year. Another report. Continued bad news for Arizona! The VA recently released its annual report on Veteran suicides. The bottom line for Arizona Veterans: Not only has the state not improved—it moved from the 12th highest to the 6th highest Veteran suicide rate per 100,000!

Here is a link to a blog article on our website that includes additional information and a link to the actual report: <https://azmoaa.org/veteran-suicide-rate/>

This is a national tragedy and should concern all Veterans. Let's think about how we can help fight this insidious enemy in 2024.

### **Useful Web Links:**

[Chapter Home Page](#)

[Member Dues Renewal](#)

[Chapter Events](#)

[National MOAA Website](#)

[MOAA Store](#)

[MOAA Legislative Action Center](#)





**MEMBER HOLIDAY LUNCHEON**  
**December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

**'Tis the Season!!**



**Annual Chapter Holiday Party and Gift Exchange**

- If you are coming to the Christmas Party and want to participate in the gift exchange, please bring one gift per family.
- Gifts should be in the \$20-\$25 range and be wrapped or in gift bags/boxes.
- Suggest you focus on things we all like during the holidays — adult beverages (scotch), cookies, candy, handy gadgets, etc.
- Members attending with a gift should check in on arrival and receive a ticket allowing them to take part in the gift exchange. That ticket number will be called at random for your turn to select a gift from the gift table, or to choose another players gift.
- Anyone who gets their gift stolen in this way can do the same – choose a new gift or steal another players gift.
- A gift can only be stolen a total of two times.
- After all players have had a turn, the first player gets a chance to swap the gift he or she is holding for another opened gift.

There will not be a 50/50 raffle, but year-end donations to the scholarship fund will be gladly accepted. Remember, the scholarship fund is an IRS-approved 501(c)(3) non-profit, and donations are tax deductible.

**Agenda:** 11:00-11:45 am Meet & Greet Social Hour  
 11:45 am-12:00 pm Pledge, Invocation, Announcements  
 12:00-2:00pm Lunch and Program

**Place:** McCormick Ranch Golf Club  
 7505 E McCormick Pkwy, Scottsdale, AZ 85258

**Cost:** \$40 Per Person; Reservations by 4PM, Tuesday, 12 Dec 2023 to Charlie Bitner  
 RSVP to Charles Bitner, 134 E. Northview Ave, Phoenix 85020  
 By email: [charles@bitner36.com](mailto:charles@bitner36.com) or contact Charlie at 602-943-0028; **PAY ONLINE!**

**Menu:** McCormick Signature Salad, Santa Maria Tri-Tip Medallions with Chimichurri,  
 Apple Pie

**Dress:** Holiday Attire



## Legislative Update

by Lee Lange, Legislative Chair



### Latest Continuing Resolution Moves Budget Deadlines Into 2024

With zero of the 12 appropriations bills needed to fully fund the government signed into law, Congress resorted to another continuing resolution (CR) to avoid a federal shutdown, with the House passing the year's second CR on November 14th, and the Senate passing it late on November 15th, two days before the first CR expired.

The new CR, with no anticipated policy changes or spending reductions, features two separate expiration dates extending the appropriations and authorities of the 12 FY 2023 spending bills: January 19th for Agriculture, Energy-Water, Military Construction-VA, and Transportation-HUD; and February 2nd for Defense, Homeland Security, Labor-HHS-Education, Commerce-Justice-Science, Financial Services, Interior-Environment, Legislative Branch, and State-Foreign Operations. Following the Senate's passage of the CR, the president quickly signed the bill into law.

While MOAA supports the CR in lieu of a shutdown, relying on extensions instead of passing a full budget always comes at a significant cost:

- **Underfunded programs, benefits, and services:** By extending the funding expiration

dates into the new year, federal agencies overseeing the eight uniformed services lack the authorizations or funding necessary for crucial elements such as the annual military pay raise, quality health care coverage, and quality-of-life programs for servicemembers and their families.

- **Time crunch:** The new expiration dates compress the timeline for federal agencies to spend funds and implement programs that will be outlined in the FY 2024 regular appropriation bills.
- **Looming budget cuts:** Failure by Congress to pass a budget by the start of the new year would pose a significant threat to all federal agencies and the programs vital to supporting the uniformed services and veteran communities. If all 12 regular appropriation bills for FY 2024 are not signed into law by January 1, it would trigger an *automatic 1% funding cut across all departments*, with no exception for DoD or the VA.

[Take action today](#) and urge your lawmakers to pass a full budget for FY 2024 and do what is right for our nation's servicemembers, past and present, and their families.

MOAA remains vigilant in monitoring Congress's progress on passing all 12 regular appropriation bills for FY 2024. Stay informed by subscribing to [MOAA's weekly newsletter](#) and visiting [MOAA's Advocacy News page](#) for the latest updates.

### Dec 16th Member Luncheon Meeting Reservation Form

Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ meals for name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (\$40.00/person) for the Nov 18th Member Luncheon Meeting payable to: **AZ Chapter MOAA** and mailed to arrive by **Dec 12th, 2023** to: **Charles Bitner, 134 E. Northview Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85020**, or contact: **Charles@Bitner36.com, 602-943-0028**.

Member reservations or call-ins **WILL NOT** be accepted after **Dec 12th, 2023 @ 4pm**

**Cancellations after Dec 12th, 2023 at 4 pm will be charged and not refunded.**

**TO PAY ONLINE - CLICK HERE!**

## Personal Affairs

by Lee Lange, Personal Affairs Officer



### What You Should Know About IRS Tax Changes for 2024

The IRS recently announced a host of [tax year 2024 annual inflation adjustments](#) as well as changes to contribution limits for retirement accounts. Here are a few of the most important updates.

#### Standard Deduction Increases

The standard deduction will rise to \$29,200 for married couples filing jointly and \$14,600 for single filers and married couples filing separately. The standard deduction is a specific dollar amount that reduces taxable income. Learn more about the deduction [at this IRS link](#).

#### Marginal Rates Steady, Brackets Adjusted for Inflation

The top tax rate is still 37% for married couples filing jointly with income greater than \$731,000 (\$609,350 for single filers). The other rates are:

- 35% for incomes over \$243,725 (\$487,450 for married couples filing jointly)
- 32% for incomes over \$191,950 (\$383,900 for married couples filing jointly)
- 24% for incomes over \$100,525 (\$201,050 for married couples filing jointly)
- 22% for incomes over \$47,150 (\$94,300 for married couples filing jointly)
- 12% for incomes over \$11,600 (\$23,200 for married couples filing jointly)
- 10% for incomes of less than \$11,600 (less than \$23,200 for married couples filing jointly)

These tax rates are set to expire at the end of 2025, when the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) sunsets. At that point, income tax brackets are scheduled to revert to their pre-TCJA levels, which would set the top tax bracket at 39.6%.

#### No Changes to Personal Exemption

The personal exemption for 2024 remains at zero. The elimination of the exemption was a provision of the TCJA, which also removed limits on itemized deductions. *(Continued on page 7)*

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## Chapter Membership

Continued from page 2

MOAA HQ does with regards to federal legislation that is or should be of major interest to you. Here's the link to MOAA Advocacy – Active Legislative Campaigns: <https://moaa.quorum.us/> Please, read on!

If you go to the [moaa.quorum.us](https://moaa.quorum.us) link you can enroll in 'Advocacy' (hit the red button in the upper right corner of the page). From there, MOAA has done virtually all of the work for us when it comes to writing to your US congressional representative or Senators. Once you've registered, all you must do is click on which of the listed legislative items you want your representatives on Capitol Hill to know your feelings about. There's no cost. It takes mere seconds to do and you're adding a very important input which may help decide the outcome of important federal legislation. Personal note: I visited this site recently and submitted about a dozen inputs to Congresswoman Lesko and Senators Kelly and Sinema within about 15 minutes. To my pleasant surprise, I received responses to every single MOAA email letter I sent to them – all via the Advocacy site. If you'd like help with this, please email me.

**THERE ARE 34 MEMBERS WHO ARE  
DELINQUENT PAYING 2023 DUES.  
EMAIL ME IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS  
ABOUT YOUR STATUS.**

(They were due in January and became overdue in March. We don't want to lose you!)

**Renew Your Chapter  
Membership Now!  
[CLICK HERE](#)**

## personal affairs

Continued from page 6

More details on TCJA reforms are available [at the IRS website](#).

### Gift Exclusion Rises

The annual gift exclusion will increase by \$1,000 to \$18,000. The annual gift exclusion is the amount of money one person may transfer to another each year without incurring a gift tax.

### Contribution Limits Up for Retirement Plans, IRAs

The contribution limit for employees who participate in the Thrift Savings Plan, as well as in 401(k), 403(b), and most 457 plans, has gone up \$500, to \$23,000. Catch-up contributions for employees 50 and over will be \$30,500 in 2024. The limit on annual contributions to an Individual Retirement Arrangement (IRA) increased to \$7,000. Taxpayers age 50 or over can contribute an additional \$1,000 for a total contribution of \$8,000.

The income ranges for determining eligibility to make deductible contributions to traditional IRAs and to make contributions to Roth IRAs have increased. Those who file jointly and make \$230,000 or less can make a fully deductible contribution to a traditional IRA if a spouse is covered by a retirement plan at work. Solo filers who make \$77,000 or less can take a full deduction for their contribution to a traditional IRA.

Married taxpayers who file jointly and make \$240,000 or more are not allowed to contribute to a Roth IRA. Single taxpayers who make \$161,000 or more are prohibited from contributing to a Roth IRA.

Full information on the contribution/deduction limits can be found on the [IRS website](#).



## Recent Chapter Events November Luncheon

Our AZ MOAA Chapter was honored with a presentation by Paula Pedene at our November luncheon meeting. Paula shared her amazing story of courage and perseverance with our chapter, beginning with her decorated career in the U.S. Navy, and followed by working as the public information officer at the Phoenix VA Hospital in 1994. While working in the director's office, she began to notice inconsistencies in how the hospital handled waiting lists for veterans receiving care.

Over the next twenty years, Paula and her husband, Bill who is a retired naval officer, endured the challenges of living in the bureaucratic environment of the Phoenix VA that was cooking the books for its own benefit. She discovered the agency's practice of maintaining multiple waiting lists to hide actual wait times and attempted to report it to authorities within the VA. That labeled her as a whistleblower, and the retaliation she faced from higher-ups was astounding.

In 2014, Paula worked with Dr. Sam Foote to blow the whistle on the agency for fraudulently fudging patient waiting lists to make it appear that vets were being seen within the required time frame. The scandal led to the resignation of several VA officials, including the department's cabinet secretary Eric Shinseki.

An internal investigation at the Phoenix VA found that 40 veterans had died while waiting for care, but a 2016 investigation by the Office of the Inspector General at the Department of Veterans Affairs found at least 200 cases of veterans dying while waiting for care.

Paula has written her story in her book, *A Sacred Duty: How a Whistleblower Took on the VA and Won*. Justice has prevailed due to Paula's efforts and her incredible willingness to put herself on the line to ensure that veterans are properly cared for.



Paula Pedene.

## Meritorious Service Awards 2023



President Tom Sheets, award winners Steve MacDonald and Carole Litten, and presenter Lee Lange.





AZMOAA Board member, CDR Jack Farley, spent Veterans Day at the Anasazi Elementary School with his grandson, Deklyn, and nearly 100 third graders. They posted the visit on their Instagram page. Although he was "dying" in the sun with his Dress Blues, he had a ball with the kids and is still getting feedback from teachers and parents (all positive). Jack shared information about his career and answered many questions from the students. He said they were the most inquisitive group he has ever met, and the children said they enjoyed visiting with him more than playing at recess! Well done, Jack!

## JACK FARLEY VISITS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ON VETERANS DAY



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## **2023 Army-Navy Football Game Party**

Join us for America's Game AND raise money to support the Veteran programs of the Southwest Veterans Chamber of Commerce (SWVCC) and the Arizona Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (AZMOAA)

**Saturday December 9th, 2023**  
**@ "Famous 48"— 8989 N Scottsdale Rd #608, Scottsdale, AZ**  
**Tailgate Party (inside) 12:00; Kickoff 1:00**



### **Program will include:**

- Individual luncheon orders
- "Football Pool" - \$5 a square; four \$50 payouts for each 100 squares
- Goal is to sell five boards
- Raffle tickets for a prize after each quarter and halftime
- Spirited interservice rivalry
- Introduce prospective members to our organizations

Get your squares **now** at <https://business.swvcc.org/store>, at any SWVCC event, or by calling 602.677.2961/760.213.3705. If paying by check, please make your check payable to "SWVCC."



<https://business.swvcc.org/store>

\*\*\*\*\* (You do not have to be present to win) \*\*\*\*\*

***On behalf of the Veterans and their families who will benefit from your generosity***  
***WE THANK YOU!***

# Arizona Chapter MOAA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

ELIGIBILITY: Men and women who are or have been federally commissioned in one of the seven U.S. uniformed services (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard), or NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) or U.S. Public Health Services, the National Guard or other Reserve Components of those services, and Surviving Spouses of deceased individuals who would, if living, be eligible for regular membership as defined above. ([Click here for online application form.](#))

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Branch of Service: \_\_\_\_\_ Rank: \_\_\_\_\_

Service Status:  Active (includes Reserve/National Guard)  Retired  
 Former Officer  Warrant Officer  
 Surviving spouse of deceased MOAA member  OR eligible individual

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

Your MOAA Member Number: \_\_\_\_\_ (National MOAA membership is required.)

If you are not currently a member of National MOAA, you may request membership at [moaa.org](http://moaa.org)

**OR** you may request the AZ Chapter Membership Chairperson, Bob Fiegl, to enroll you in National MOAA for a no-cost Basic Membership for 3 Years. You can email Bob at [Fieglr869@gmail.com](mailto:Fieglr869@gmail.com).

Chapter Dues are \$20.00 per year for a Regular Member and \$10 for a Surviving Spouse. *(This is separate from your national MOAA membership. Even if you have a free membership at national, you must still pay chapter dues.)*

Dues for new members joining: Jan 1 –Jun 30 = **\$20** . Jul 1 – Dec 31 = **\$20** (includes following year paid in full).

Amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Please mail check payable to “**AZ Chapter MOAA**” with completed application to Chapter Treasurer: Charlie Bitner, 134 E. Northview Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85020

How did you learn about the Arizona Chapter?  AZ MOAA Website  *The Sentinel* Newsletter  
 AZ MOAA Chapter Membership Chairman  Other ( \_\_\_\_\_ )

Applicant Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_





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**Who Can Join MOAA?**

Men and women who are or have been federally-commissioned in one of the seven U.S. uniformed services:

- Army
- Navy
- Air Force
- Marine Corps
- Coast Guard
- Space Force
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- Public Health Services
- The National Guard
- or other Reserve Components of those services

Widows and widowers of deceased individuals who would, if living, be eligible for regular membership in accordance with the above.

**ARIZONA CHAPTER  
Military Officers Association of America**

**CALENDAR**

**Board of Directors Meetings**

First Thursday of each month  
December 7th, 2023

Papago Park Arizona National Guard Base  
5636 E McDowell Rd  
Phoenix, AZ 85008

**Member Luncheon/Meetings**

Third Saturday of each month at 11am  
Next Meeting: Dec 16th, 2023  
McCormick Ranch Golf Club  
7505 E McCormick Pkwy, Scottsdale, AZ 85258

**Upcoming Events**

9 Dec 2023: Annual Army-Navy Game  
20 Jan 2023: Member Luncheon



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**SURVIVING SPOUSES**

Susan Farrell, Surviving Spouse 602-993-8556

**TRANSITION LIAISON**

CDR Jim Draper USN 480-483-7769

**WEBMASTER**

Carl Ulbrich, Jireh Communications

Access Arizona Chapter's Internet Web Site at: [azmoaa.org](http://azmoaa.org)  
The *Sentinel* Newsletter is sent electronically

Arizona Chapter  
Military Officers Association of America  
3537 E Tina Dr  
Phoenix, AZ 85050



azmoaa.org



**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**