



Never stop serving!



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Star Spangled Banner Chapter of MOAA

September 2026 Newsletter

Contents: September Dinner Meeting, President's Message, JROTC & ROTC news, Legislative & Membership Updates, Future Event Dates

Dinner Meeting

***Wednesday, September 30, 2026*at 6pm (*date change)
Pappas Restaurant, Cockeysville***



"Health Concerns for an Aging Population"

Colonel (Dr.) Slavomir "Andrew" Bilinski, MC, USA

Col (Dr.) Bilinski is Board Certified in Emergency Medicine and is the CBRNE Advisor and Travel Medicine Doctor at Ft. Meade, MD

None of us are getting any younger, and there is so much misinformation from the US Health Secretary and the media, so come listen to an expert and have your and your loved one's health concerns and questions answered. This would be an excellent dinner meeting to ***bring your spouse or significant other or bring a colleague who may be interested in joining.***

DINNER RESERVATIONS: PAPPAS RESTAURANT & SPORTS BAR. 550 Cranbrook Road, Cockeysville, MD 21030. (410) 666-0030

\$50.00 per person, including three courses, coffee, tea, non-alcoholic beverages, gratuities, and tax. Cash bar is available for cocktails, wine, and beer.

Please make your reservation today. The final count is due on **27 Sep**

SOCIAL TIME: 6:00 PM. DINNER: 6:30 PM. DRESS: Military Uniform or Business Casual.

MENU SELECTIONS (at seating)

Entrée Selections (Select 1 entrée.)

Pappas' Famous Crab Cake, eight ounces.

Orange Roughy, filet broiled in lemon butter sauce.

New York Strip Steak, eight ounces, Angus steak.

Chicken Marsala, chicken breast with sauteed mushrooms in Marsala wine sauce.

All entrees are served with garden salad, baked potato, a fresh vegetable, and dessert.

All members PLEASE register online for the meeting at:

<https://www.starspan.org/Chapter Info/Calendar/UpcomingEvents> and click on the Sep 30 Dinner Meeting, EVEN IF YOU PLAN TO PAY BY CHECK. (Our site is now secure; make sure you type in the https:// if you are having trouble)

Reservation Form: FOR MAIL IN ONLY

You MUST mail the reservation form below by **21Sep**. We need a firm count by **27 Sep**. MAIL CHECKS TO TREASURER RITA M. KUREK at the address below. (410) 294-4913

Please call Rita Kurek if you have doubts about your mailed reservation arriving by 21 Sep.

RESERVATION FORM (mail in)

NAME _____

Number of Guests _____

DINNER RESERVATION at \$50.00 per person..... \$ _____

DUES FOR **2026** \$30.00 (if not paid already) \$ _____

Donation for Army Officer's Guides (gift to ROTC Cadets) \$ _____

Donation to paws4vets (our annual fundraising cause) \$ _____

TOTAL.....\$ _____

Make Checks payable to: **Star Spangled Banner Chapter of MOAA**

Mail check to: Treasurer, Rita M. Kurek, 1231 Engleberth Rd, Essex MD 21221



The Star Spangled Banner Chapter

COL George Stakias USAR (Ret.)

President's Message

I hope all members enjoyed their summer break with loved ones and took time for some much-needed rest and relaxation. As we continue to celebrate our nation's 250th anniversary from 1776 to 2026, let us cherish the freedom, resilience, and enduring spirit of our nation. We have much to look forward to toward the end of 2026. I kindly ask that you stay active in the chapter, and if you ever need a ride to one of our upcoming dinner meetings, please know that we are here to help. As our membership slowly grows, we would like to hear from those whose voices have not yet been heard. Your voice is important, and we need your participation. We are actively seeking new members and inviting both current and new members to support the chapter by volunteering for a committee assignment or considering service as President. We also encourage you to donate to the worthy causes of [*paws4vets*](#) and the Army Officer Guides and Leadership Medals.

Thank you so much! Look forward to seeing you at our next dinner meeting and upcoming events!

**ROTC & JROTC News: Col (ret) Frank Hilsher, ROTC
Chairman, Col (ret) Rob Paolucci, JROTC Chairman**

All cohorts of the 12 Colleges we support in ROTC activities, have just returned to their respective campuses.

Summer training in the form of Advanced Camp was completed successfully at Fort Knox, KY for all appropriate and available MS3 Cadets (Juniors).

This training event (usually 6 weeks in length) gives Cadre evaluators details of military task performance in many different settings and scenes.

Leadership, mental acuity, physical fitness, etc. are only several ways that the Cadet is tested and evaluated. At this training is where the highest performing cadets are named as Distinguished Military Student. Following a successful Senior year, most of these Students are designated as Distinguished Military Graduates upon Commissioning and Graduation. They represent the top 20% of all ROTC Graduates.

So now, it is back to task at hand for all four MS groups. Time will tell how the academic military year will unfold. I will keep you posted.

Frank Hilsher
COL, (R), USA
ROTC Chair

Legislative Update: LTC (ret) Bill Gray, Chairman

Support the Take Care of America's Veterans Act (TCAVA)

What is this proposed Act? It provides a unique opportunity to pass omnibus legislation that would provide long-sought support to tens of millions of veterans, caregivers, and survivors that is too important to miss, and the end result far outweighs concerns with how the bill is funded.

Multiple high-level MOAA priorities are among more than 60 pieces of legislation wrapped into the bill, to include:

- **The Major Richard Star Act**, which would end an unjust pay offset faced by tens of thousands of combat-injured military retirees who lose a dollar of earned retirement pay for every dollar of VA disability compensation.
- **The Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement (3R) Act**, a top MOAA priority which would assist caregivers in returning to the workforce and planning for their financial future.
- **The Love Lives On Act**, which would allow surviving spouses to retain critical benefits regardless of remarriage.

- **Twenty more pieces of legislation** MOAA has supported as standalone bills, to include increased survivor benefits, expanded veteran health care benefits and services, improved claims processing, and much more.

How do we not support this? How do you not get behind the amount of goodness we can do for the veteran community?”

The Major Issue is Pay-For Concerns Due to the VA Disability Ratings

If the TCAVA Passes. The funds for the bill will come from lawmakers codifying a change to the VA disability rating schedule affecting future sleep apnea and tinnitus claims – a change that’s been in the works for more than a decade. Passing the bill now allows lawmakers to use these funds within the veteran community. If TCAVA is not passed, and the VA changes are effective prior to passage of the legislation, the savings due to the revision will be returned to the Treasury, where they are not required to benefit the Veteran Community and their families.

Please note that the proposed VA changes will not affect existing Veterans and their Disability Rating.

A ‘False Argument’

Please note opinion that such changes to the disability schedule amounted to taking benefits away from future veterans is not sound. Setting aside the fact that the changes are already in process, and that future veterans would still be able to seek treatment from the VA for sleep apnea and tinnitus. The passage of TCAVA would mean for those currently in harm’s way – those who may be forced into early retirement would benefit from Star Act reforms, families of future survivors would see meaningful increases to their benefits, and millions of others would benefit from the array of TCAVA improvements.

Take Action Now!

If we do not take advantage of it now, we’re going to look back at this opportunity later and see it as a missed opportunity.

1. Go to the MOAA National Website (www.moaa.org). If you are a registered member of MOAA National, you can sign in: if you are not listed as a member, you still should be able to proceed to the following steps.
2. Click on the **Advocacy** Heading at the top of the page
3. Click on the **Legislative Action Center**
4. Find the **Pass the Take Care of America’s Veterans Act** under **Featured Campaigns** and click the **Write** box.
5. Key in your personal information and make certain that your address is correct.

6. The system will bring up the names of your Senator and your Representative in Congress depending on the address you enter.
7. A sample letter will appear that you can edit and send to our Senators and your Congress Representative.

If you would like to volunteer to be part of the MOAA effort to visit each member of the House from Maryland, please reach out to our Legislative Representative, Bill Gray (graybillo@verizon.net or 410-746-2861) as soon as possible.

Membership Update: LTC (ret) Bill Gray, Chairman

All non-paid 2026 dues members were dropped from the distribution list on August 1, 2026.

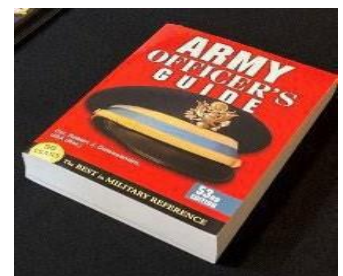
New Members are always welcome!! Recruit your colleagues!

On the website, under Chapter Info, Recruiting heading, the Recruiting Brochure is available to print and deliver to prospective members. If the individual has questions, refer them to Bill Gray or if they want to send in their dues, refer to Rita Kurek, Treasurer.

LTC (Ret) Bill Gray, 2nd VP, Legislative & Membership Chairperson
Email: graybillo@verizon.net
Cell: 410-746-2861

Pay Dues Online or mail to:
Col (Ret) Rita M. Kurek, Secretary-Treasurer
1231 Engleberth Rd.
Essex, MD 21221
rmkurek@aol.com
Cell: 410-294-4913

Dues help pay for the Army Officer Guides we present to newly commissioned 2nd LTs each year at our three supported ROTCs.



Future Chapter Events for 2026: **(SAVE THE DATES NOW!!!)**

<i>DATE</i>	<i>EVENT</i>
30 September 2026 6pm	Dinner Meeting Speaker: Col (Dr.) Slavomir "Andrew" Bilinski, MC USA Venue: Pappas Restaurant & Sports Bar, Cockeysville, MD 21030 POC: Rob Paolucci (443) 326-7936
11 November 2026 6pm "Veteran's Day"	Annual Dinner Meeting Speaker: TBD Venue: Pappas Restaurant & Sports Bar, Cockeysville MD 21030 POC: George Stakias (410) 707-6947

This letter is published by the Star Spangled Banner Chapter. It is a 501(c)19 nonprofit affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). The Star Spangled Banner Chapter is one of more than 400-plus chapters affiliated with National MOAA. Our chapter is a non-partisan veterans' organization.

MOAA and its affiliates are dedicated to maintaining a strong national defense and ensuring our nation keeps its commitment to currently serving retired and former members of the uniformed services, their families, and survivors. Our chapter supports national MOAA's federal legislative actions and MD Council's State legislative priorities.



*** Newsletter Online: www.starspan.org Newsletter Editor and
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The Star Spangled Banner Chapter of the **Military Officers Association of America** is the oldest, continuously operating MOAA chapter in Maryland. Founded in 1964, we provide camaraderie with purpose and align with MOAA's national mission: a strong national defense, taking care of our country's veterans, and protecting the benefits of all who have served and currently serve. Our chapter membership is open to commission and warrant officers of all eight services.