



Volume 54, Issue 4

# The Bugle

## Central Virginia Chapter



April 2026

MOAA, including the Central Virginia Chapter, is a nonprofit nonpartisan veterans' association dedicated to maintaining a strong national defense and to preserving the earned entitlements of members of the uniformed services and their families and survivors. Membership is open to those who hold or have ever held a warrant or commission in any component of the U.S. Army, USMC, USN, USAF, USCG, USPHS, USSF or NOAA and their surviving spouse.

## Art and Lee Beltrone Present *Vietnam Graffiti: Messages From a Forgotten Troopship*

In what was arguably the most unique luncheon presentation of the year, Art Beltrone, a Military Artifact Historian, described his 1997 visit to the James River Reserve Fleet near Ft. Eustis, which consisted of a dozen WWII transport ships. And, among them was the *General Nelson M. Walker*. The *Walker* had served as a Vietnam Troop Transport Ship, ferrying 3200 American servicemen men on each voyage to Vietnam. What Art discovered was an unforgettable time capsule consisting of undisturbed supplies, furniture, tools, utensils and rows of stacked, collapsible bunks.

Most remarkable of all, however, was the graffiti on the canvas bottoms of many bunks consisting of quotes, poems, personal messages, sketches, caricatures, home towns and prayers – all scrawled by hand, using the felt-tip laundry pens that all soldiers had been issued. His discovery eventually became a mobile exhibit called “Marking Time: Voyage to Vietnam,” which has been publically displayed in 35 states and multiple museums. No journalist could describe the hopes and fears of men going to war any better than they did themselves.



Art Beltrone poses beside canvas bunks on the mothballed Vietnam-era troopship, the *General Nelson M. Walker*. Below, a soldier is seen resting with the underside of the upper bunk only 18 inches away – and a perfect tapestry for graffiti!



Artist's rendition of the sleeping compartment on the troopship with 200 men in rows and stacks of four canvas bunks.





2025

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**The Bugle**

2024 Col Marvin J. Harris 5-Star  
Communications Award Winner

**Editor:** Brion C. Smith

**Contributors:**

John Warnecke – Printing & Distribution

Bugle Newsletter: <https://cvmoaa.org/Newsletter>



**Our February Speaker will be  
Dr. Michael Balazs,  
MITRE Corporation**



Dr. Michael A. Balazs serves as the Technology Integrator (TI) for MITRE's Joint Staff, Combatant Commands, and Defense Intelligence programs. In this role, he coordinates research needs and technology transition between MITRE IR&D programs and its sponsors. He co-coordinates a portfolio of small Unmanned Aerial System programs ranging from the Commercial off-the-shelf Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) work program to the MITRE Challenge for Countering Unauthorized Aerial Systems. Additionally, he leads research in the area of non-traditional computational clusters. A perennial favorite with our membership, he spoke to CVC MOAA in 2018, 2019, 2020 and now again in 2026!

**Community Calendar**

**Wednesday, 1 April at 1300 at the Club at Glenmore:**  
CVC MOAA Board of Directors Meeting (Optional lunch at 12:00 noon)

**Thursday, 23 April:** CVC MOAA Luncheon at The Club at Glenmore, Social hour starts at 11:00 and seating at 12:00 noon. Lunch will be followed by a presentation Dr. Michael A. Balazs (Reservation form on page 7).

**Join MOAA's Central Virginia Chapter**

To learn more about the nationally recognized



Central Virginia Chapter

contact

**Membership Director  
Carolyn Still**

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# MOAA NATIONAL CORNER:

## AI, the VA, and Fraud: What You Need to Know

By MOAA Staff; updated March 18

*(The digital version of this document contains active hyperlinks to primary sources)*



The VA [recently announced plans](#) to review more than 1 million disability benefits questionnaires (DBQs) as part of efforts to identify signs of fraud in future claims. Initial reports on the plan raised concerns over whether automated processes or those relying on artificial intelligence, could reduce veterans' benefits or make them more difficult to obtain. The DBQ review would "flag claims with potential problems dating back to 2010," according to an initial *Stars and Stripes* report, with a process designed to "use artificial intelligence to look for signs that medical evidence was exaggerated or invented."

But VA officials instead plan to use a "data collection tool" on the DBQs that would help flag false or exaggerated claims in future filings, a spokesman said March 16. [A follow-up article](#) noted the tool would be powered by a program with AI features, but it would not use those features as part of the review, per the VA.

The initial report triggered negative responses from veterans and [concerns from veterans groups](#), some of whom said the process could be used to reduce disability ratings and payments. The VA issued more details in follow-up press statements and communications with MOAA and fellow veterans groups, saying no plans called for using the tool in a way that could result in a reduction or denial of benefits.

### How MOAA Works to GUARD Your Benefits

MOAA appreciates the assurances from the VA regarding the preservation of VA-approved disability compensation. We will remain watchful as the new data-collection process unfolds to ensure all who have earned these benefits receive them in a timely manner. We also want to ensure all legal avenues are available to combat fraud in the VA system, including criminal proceedings for bad actors who siphon benefits from veterans under the guise of "helping" with a VA claim. The Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding (GUARD) VA Benefits Act, a key part of MOAA's [Advocacy in Action campaign](#), restores such criminal penalties, protecting veterans from paying for services that are available for free from accredited agencies.

### Beyond AI

Fraud takes place in any large system, including VA disability compensation. MOAA applauds efforts to find out these bad actors, including the use of new technology as part of the department's [wider AI strategy](#). But finding these actors is only part of the solution. In fact, dozens of companies providing unaccredited services to veterans as part of the VA claims process have been found already and have received cease-and-desist letters ... only to continue advertising their programs. The GUARD VA Benefits Act moves from detection to protection – allowing enforcement beyond a simple letter, and allowing veterans to keep the benefits they've earned through service.

Keep up with the latest on Advocacy in Action and other MOAA legislative priorities by registering at our [Legislative Action Center](#)

**Remember: This and all previous editions of The Bugle are available at <https://cvmoaa.org/Newsletter>**

# Legislative Review...



*The Chapter's Legislative Committee  
is chaired by  
Dan Moy*

For up-to-date information about legislative issues that affect you, go to the MOAA website  
<http://www.moaa.org/takeaction>

Greetings fellow members,

The 2026 legislative session has concluded, but without an approved budget. Negotiators have until April 23<sup>rd</sup> to prepare a budget agreement for the governor's signature. Here's a snapshot of how the Joint Leadership Council (JLC) top legislative priorities fared during the General Assembly (GA):

**2026-01 Virginia Military Survivors & Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP):** Funding held up by budget process. The future viability of the program uncertain.

**2026-02 Claim Sharks:** A bill has gone to the Governor's office but does not meet some objectives laid out in the JLC's initiative. JLC will include on the list again for next year. Delegate Amy Laufer (District 55, Albemarle) is a strong advocate for the enforcement language we hope to see.

**2026-03 Veteran Suicide Prevention:** A bill should be headed to the Governor's office for signature. This was our lone "win" in the JLC this year.

**2026-04 Student Veterans Textbook Support:** Withdrawn after not finding a patron, and also to focus attention on VMSDEP funding.

**2026-05 Charitable Gaming.** This Bill proposed some relief to brick-and-mortar Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), but failed.

**2026-06 United States Public Health Service (USPHS) and National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) State Tax Exemption:** House bill failed, but Senate bill is continued to 2027.

In the coming weeks, budget negotiations will have an immediate impact on JLC initiative 2026-01 (VMSDEP). If left unfunded, the program will expire at the end of June, placing some 11,000 students at risk for losing their college tuition assistance. Although the JLC endorsed the program as one of its top priorities, asking legislators to commission a review to stabilize cost and ensure sustainability, the JLC was unable to recruit a patron for the bill.

John Down attended the JLC's last meeting on March 17<sup>th</sup> where the council affirmed its continued support for VMSDEP. Department of Veterans Services (DVS) Commissioner John Maxwell also stated his organization's advocacy for the program for which the JLC and the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) have formed a working group. Additionally, Commissioner Maxell highlighted several key initiatives seeking to connect veterans and their families to DVS services as well as the resources available through partners and veteran service organizations across the commonwealth. Among the top priorities on DVS's radar are:

- Economic resiliency through workforce development opportunities
- Healthcare, suicide prevention, and skilled nursing care
- Housing for ~400 homeless veterans per year
- Justice reforms to support veterans (incarcerations and recidivism)
- Improving digital process for appointments and claims
- Taking care of servicemember families (licensing and employment)

- Honoring our legacy (cemeteries, care centers, Virginia War Memorial)

At the federal level, MOAA has 5 priorities for 2026 and will be highlighting these initiatives on the Hill in April. Virginia Council of Chapters (VCOC) President Mary Lou Wassel, and MOAA's Vice President for Legislative Affairs Monti Zimmerman, plan to represent the Commonwealth in DC. Here's a snapshot of the 5 initiatives:

**Shutdown Fairness Act, S.3168.** DoD and DHS members need to be paid regardless of funding lapses. Bill would cover USPHS and NOAA servicemembers. Introduced in the Senate (Nov 2025) by Senator Ron Johnson (OH).

**Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding VA Benefits Act, H.R. 1732.** This bill seeks to put "teeth" into dealing with "claim sharks" who prey on veterans in need of help in filing claims with the VA. Reinstates penalties for these claim sharks who charge unauthorized fees. Introduced in the House by Representative Chris Pappas (NH). The House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs held committee hearings on March 18<sup>th</sup>—awaiting results of those hearings.

**Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement Act, H.R. 2148 & S. 879.** This bill expands support and assistance provided to family caregivers under a program administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Extends the period of medical care coverage for primary family caregivers. VA must provide bereavement counseling and support to family caregivers following the death of a veteran receiving care under the program. The VA must also provide retirement planning services to primary family caregivers and study the feasibility and advisability of establishing a retirement plan or retirement savings for caregivers.

**Improve and Enhance the Work Opportunity Tax Credit Act, H.R.6231 & S. 3265.** Adds military spouses as a target group for the non-refundable tax credit that employers can take for hiring target group members in their first year on the job, increasing the credit, and thus incentivizing employers. Bill has been in the House Ways and Means Committee since it was introduced in November 2025. Referred to the Senate Finance Committee in November 2025.

**Military Care Act, H.R. 6796.** Establishes a digital system that provides military treatment facilities beneficiaries with improved access to care. Referred to the Armed Services Committee in December 2025. VA must provide to primary family caregivers (1) assistance returning to the workforce upon discharge or dismissal from the program, (2) support in transitioning from caregiving, and (3) specified employment assistance during their tenure as a caregiver and for the following 180-days.

Stay tuned for further updates, and as always, please feel free to reach out to me at any time for questions concerning MOAA's engagement efforts. You can contact me at [danmoy@mac.com](mailto:danmoy@mac.com).

Best,  
Dan



**Central Virginia Chapter of  
MOAA**

State: VA  
City: Charlottesville

## Notes from the President's Desk

Please contact me immediately to confirm that your email address on-file is up-to-date. We have reason to believe that as many as 30-40% of our membership are not receiving important chapter information or digital issues of The Bugle because their email address is out-of-date.

The burial of former chapter member and Treasurer CDR Pam Batchellor, US Navy (Ret) will take place on April 10 at Arlington National Cemetery. Her husband Mike Childress is requesting a rough head count on who is attending. Please let me know if you plan to attend. More details such as exact time are forthcoming.

**John Warnecke**

President, Central Virginia MOAA.

[warnecke@comcast.net](mailto:warnecke@comcast.net)



Chapter Director for ROTC Liaison, Steve Hiss attended the 2026 Orange County High School JROTC Spring Banquet and presented the MOAA JROTC Leadership Award to Cadet Hamzah Abudhaim.



Chapter President John Warnecke places the CVC MOAA Wreath at the annual birthday ceremony for James Madison at Montpelier. Below, and far right, John is joined by chapter member Pat Kelly representing the Sons of the American Revolution (France).



# March Luncheon attendees gather to hear Art and Lee Beltrone discuss the Vietnam Graffiti Project.



Lee and Art Beltrone (above) and one of the hundreds of graffiti samples they preserved from the *General Walker Troopship* (left).



## Surviving Spouse Corner: Improve Your Mental Skills With These Brain Exercises

By: Pat Green



Most of us have noticed a mental decline in a close friend or family member. Perhaps they don't seem as sharp, witty, or speedy as they once were. You might wonder whether others are noticing this with you as well. Mental decline is not just a phenomenon of aging. Stress, emotions, and poor diet and sleep reduce cognitive skills and affect all ages. If you have had a stroke or a brain injury, or if you are concerned about a perceived mental decline, speak to your family doctor. If the doctor recognizes an issue, a neurologist can provide a detailed cognitive skills evaluation.

Physical health and emotional health correlate with mental health. If you are consumed with grief or anxiety or dealing with a disease, deal with that first. If serious grieving extends more than two years, seek grief counseling for help. Complicated grief is seen in 9% of widows ages 60 to 75. A smaller percentage of men are affected.

If you want to improve your mental skills, try adding mental strengthening exercises into daily activities, such as:

**Recall.** Practice memorizing names, phone numbers, vocabulary words, baseball standings, NCAA March Madness lineups, or TV program schedules. Look at a magazine photo for a few seconds, close your eyes, and try to recall items in the photo.

**Analysis.** Read a newspaper article. Set it aside, then try to write a recap or summary of the article. Try to remember the who, what, when, where, and why.

**Spatial.** Rearrange a linen closet, pantry, or garage. Look for the most pragmatic and yet economical use of space. Do the same exercise with drawers in kitchen, bed, or bath. While you're at it, set aside some donation items and throw out expired items.

**Social.** Have a conversation every day. If you live alone, this might be a challenge. Practice small talk at the checkout line of stores. Initiate a phone call or an invitation. This is a must. Accept any invitations you receive. Try to remember a joke you can tell at your next social event.

**Focus.** Stay focused on whatever activity you are engaged. It might be a conversation, gardening, dancing, chores, or workouts at the gym. Focus on listening, the number of repetitions, muscles involved, posture, and breathing. Be in one with your thoughts. Meditation and prayer are very good options of mental focus.

**Fun and games.** This can be all manner of social get-togethers. But there are some good solitary options. Jigsaw puzzles provide color and form discernment. Manipulation of the pieces is also good hand-eye coordination practice. Sudoku uses number grids, but it is not a math game. It is a logic exercise. Start with easy grids, and progress to expert status. Using computer sites, you can play Bridge, Gin Rummy, or Hearts with robots. These games require a memory of cards played and the counted.

**LUNCHEON MEETING RESERVATION FORM**  
**Thursday, 23 April 2026**

**11:00 a.m. Social Hour, 12:00 Noon Lunch**  
**The Club at Glenmore**

**Guest Speaker: Dr. Michael Balazs, MITRE Corporation**

*Directions from Charlottesville: Route 250 East. One mile past Shadwell turn right into Glenmore. Turn right on Piper Way. If you are not a resident, please tell the gate guard that you are attending the MOAA luncheon. Proceed on Piper Way. The Club is on the right just past the tennis courts. Attire for men is suit/sport coat and tie or military uniform.*



**Menu Selections**

Corn Chowder

**Choice of entrée:**

**A. Shrimp Cakes**

**or**

**B. Chicken Breast Piccata**

**or**

**C. Vegetable Cannelloni**

**\***

Brown Rice Pilaf

Sauteed Spinach

**\***

Carrot Cake



**Please Circle Entrée Selection**

Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_ **A B C**

Guest Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ **A B C**

\_\_\_\_\_ **A B C**

\_\_\_\_\_ **A B C**

**Please make reservations for \_\_\_\_ @ \$35.00 each.**

My current email address (if changed) is: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please remit with check payable to CVC MOAA. Reservations must be received**  
**NO LATER THAN Friday, 17 April 2026.**

**CVC MOAA**  
**P.O. Box 6455**  
**Charlottesville, VA 22906-6455**

**Due to mail uncertainties and a need to ensure a timely head count, please confirm your attendance numbers and meal selection with John Warnecke by 17 April 2026 via email ([warnecke@comcast.net](mailto:warnecke@comcast.net)) or phone (434) 981-8554.**



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