



**FALCONS LANDING CHAPTER  
MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA  
20540 FALCONS LANDING CIRCLE, #P1  
POTOMAC FALLS, VIRGINIA 20165**



**Falcons Landing MOAA Chapter Legislative Report**

**March 2019**

**1. DOD: We are heading into our fourth month of an “ACTING” Secretary of Defense, and are about to lose the Secretary of the Air Force, former New Mexico Representative and active duty Air Force officer, Heather Wilson. Her resignation, effective 31 May, seems to come close on the heels of a disconnect with the administration, regarding the Space Force separate military department concept, put forth by the White House. Ms Wilson, who is leaving the Pentagon to take a position as president of University of Texas, El Paso, has been Air Force Secretary for two years, and is said to expect to shepherd the Air Force budget through congressional hearings, prior to her departure. We have no speculation as to who her successor might be; however, Senate confirmation will be required.**

**And speaking of the budget . . . The FY2020 budget finally hit the street, last week, a month later than normal. The \$4.7 Trillion (with a “T”) budget has earmarked \$750 billion for national security. Defense spending did not take the 5% hit that other departments did.**

**2. CONGRESS: 17% of the membership in this congress have military experience. Not fabulous; but not abysmal. So, what are some of the bills we will be most interested in?**

**HR 333 - Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act of 2019. Provides full concurrent receipt for disabled military retirees.**

**HR 561 - Protecting Business Opportunities for Veterans.**

**HR 425 - Supporting Veterans in STEM Careers Act.**

**HR 499 - Service Disabled Veterans Small Business Continuation Act**

**HR 450 - Preventing Crime Against Veterans**

**HR 299 - Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019. Does this one sound familiar? The House passed it, last session; however, the Senate let it languish and now, it has been re-introduced for consideration. In January 2019, the US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit ruled in favor of Blue Water Navy veterans, granting presumptive exposure to Agent Orange. VA healthcare and benefits are on the line here, so this is important.**

**3. VETERANS ADMINISTRATION: The VA has established a groundbreaking partnership with Sanford Health, the purpose of which is to enhance cancer patient screening through FREE genetic testing for veterans. The VA has come in for some pretty withering criticism for lengthy delays in healthcare services to vets, and for administrative mismanagement allowing excruciating backlogs in GI Bill payments and housing allotments. The VA MISSION ACT, signed in June of 2018, provided a massive spending boost, meant to upgrade customer service and diminish administrative**

**backlog. In November of 2018, the VA announced that it would require an ADDITIONAL 12 months to correct computer glitches.**

**VA Secretary Wilkie has said, “We must move our soldiers from the front line of combat to the frontline of healthcare,” which might beg the question: why did he fail to support the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans bill in the last congressional session? His official reasoning was two-fold: he envisioned exorbitant cost (with the potential of 90,000 claims) and did not agree with the premise that there was a correlation between Agent Orange and service off the Vietnam coast.**

**The President’s latest budget increases funding for veterans’ health care by about 10% over 2019 funding levels.**

**4. VCOC: The MOAA Virginia Council of Chapters, in coordination with the Joint Leadership Council of 28 veterans’ organizations were successful in encouraging the Virginia General Assembly to adopt the following:**

**\*Personal property tax relief for certain disabled veterans.**

**\*Elimination of the requirement that a veteran’s disability rating be combat-related. Instead, a permanent service-connected rating of at least 90%, plus other requirements, would qualify a spouse or child for Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program.**

**5. MOAA MAGAZINE & NEWSLETTER: Don’t miss the website newsletter 5-part series on tax code changes. Your online newsletter is a WEALTH (literally) of information.**

**STORMING THE HILL will take place on April 10th. Primary issues will include -**

**\*stabilization of TRICARE fees (in the CBO crosshairs)**

**\*Maintenance of current compensation levels for current-serving troop**

**\*SBP offset & the “Widows Tax”. Just to be sure we are all on the same page as to what this little catch-phrase actually represents. Survivors of deceased service members are required to forfeit some/all of the Survivor Benefit Plan annuity (which their member PURCHASED - thank you very much) in the event that the sponsor dies of a service-connected injury or disease and VA indemnity compensation is involved. This is an injustice we can all get excited about.**

**And speaking of excited . . . the MOAA Magazine (Vol 17, issue3) makes it SOOO EASY to contact our senators, representatives, and the major house/senate leadership on issues of importance to us. Look at page 92. There’s a pull-out letter! You don’t even have to compose it yourself. You simply sign your name, fold and seal it (don’t forget the stamp!) and take it to your nearest mailbox. If it were any easier . . . well, let’s face it, it COULDN’T be any easier.**

**Last, but certainly not least, we have a visitor coming to Falcons Landing on April 16th, for our Quarterly meeting - our new Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton. We look forward to getting to know her . . . and having her get to know us.**

**WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

**Clair Wylie**

**Legislative Director**