



The South Georgia Voice

South Georgia Chapter, Military Officers Association of America

October 2026 Edition

www.sgamoaa.org



President's Corner

Annual Membership Meeting on 12 Nov 2026

Members will vote to finalize the 2027 Chapter Dues during our upcoming Chapter Annual Meeting. Full budget details and meeting specifics will be part of the November newsletter.

Chapter Donations Supports our Mission Goals

Your financial support directly builds the next generation of military and civic leaders right here in the Valdosta-Lowndes area. 100% of your donation goes directly to funding local youth milestones, including JROTC grants for Valdosta and Lowndes High Schools, an Air Force ROTC scholarship at VSU, and sponsorships for the American Legion Boys and Girls State programs. By funding these grants via donations, we protect our chapter's baseline operating budget. Please consider making a tax-deductible 501(c)(19) contribution today to keep these community programs thriving.

Membership Outreach Campaign

Our September outreach campaign put our Chapter on the radar of thirty local MOAA members across the Valdosta-Thomasville area, laying the groundwork for future membership growth.

Supporting Our Deployed Forces

We ask our chapter members to keep our deployed service members and their families in your thoughts and prayers. We are particularly mindful of our neighbors from Moody AFB serving forward in the Middle East, to include Chapter member Capt. DeLapp serving forward with the 322nd Air Expeditionary Wing (AEW).

Tom McCracken

President, South Georgia Chapter, MOAA

Last Chapter Meeting – 10 Sep 2026

Guest Speaker – Pete Strand, Chapter Vice-President, Valdosta Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) Volunteer, and Vietnam War Air Force Pilot.



Pete Strand speaking to the Chapter

At our September meeting, Pete Strand shared his firsthand account of flying a Douglas EC-47 electronic reconnaissance mission on 28 Mar 1973—just one day before the final U.S. troops left Vietnam. For his high-stakes airborne radio direction finding work with the 361st TEWS, Pete earned the Distinguished Flying Cross, America's oldest and highest military award for extraordinary aerial achievement, and we are deeply grateful for his presentation and continued chapter commitment.

25th Anniversary of 9/11 Ceremony

The Valdosta-Lowndes County community came together on Friday, September 11, 2026, to observe the 25th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks with a solemn

memorial ceremony inside the historic Lowndes County Courthouse. Chief Master Sgt. Stephen Weaver, Installation Fire Chief for the 23rd Wing at Moody Air Force Base, delivered the keynote address, highlighting the strong bond between local civil service and our armed forces. Joined by local Fire Chiefs Marcus Haynes and Billy Young, Valdosta Mayor Scott James Matheson and Lowndes County Commissioner-At-Large Bill Slaughter presented joint proclamations, ensuring that our community continues to uphold its sacred vow to never forget.



Don & Sara McArthur attending the ceremony

National MOAA News

Take Care of America's Veterans Act (TCAVA)

Congress is currently debating the Take Care of America's Veterans Act (H.R. 9237 / S. 4744), a landmark legislative effort combining over sixty individual bills to reshape veteran health care, benefits, and support systems. Four of these provisions are long-standing priorities for MOAA:

- ✓ **Major Richard Star Act**
- ✓ **Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement (3R) Act**
- ✓ **Love Lives on Act**
- ✓ **Justice for ALS Veterans Act**

MOAA's Legislative Action Center

<https://moaa.quorum.us/>

The **Legislative Action Center** is a powerful online advocacy tool created by the MOAA to enable military officers, veterans, active-duty servicemembers, and their families to directly engage with federal legislators to protect and advance military benefits, pay, and healthcare. Key priorities include:

- ✓ **Reauthorize the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) for Veterans and Add Military Spouses**
- ✓ **Restore GLP-1 Coverage for TRICARE for Life (TFL)**
- ✓ **Pass the Major Richard Star Act**

TotalForce+ Conference- 01-03 Feb 2027

This conference is a flagship, people-focused national event hosted by the MOAA designed to address critical issues affecting uniformed servicemembers, veterans, and their families. The conference brings together military leaders, defense and VA officials, industry experts, and policymakers to collaborate on solutions for the broader military community. Core Pillars of the Event:

- ✓ **Modernize Talent Management & Innovation**
- ✓ **Optimize Leadership Development**
- ✓ **Advance Quality of Life**
- ✓ **Amplify the Veteran & Retiree Experience**

Georgia Council of Chapters News

<https://www.gamoa.org/>

Dwight D. Eisenhower Army Medical Center (DDEAMC) Update

As of **31 Aug 2026**, the Defense Health Agency (DHA) completed its formal notification period to downgrade DDEMAC to an outpatient facility. The U.S. HOR has already voted to block these cuts via the **FY2027 NDAA (H.R. 8800)**, but we need the Senate to secure the finish line. Please take five minutes to contact our Georgia Senators and ask them to strongly support the DDEAMC service protections during the upcoming fall defense bill negotiations.

Annual Conference

The 67th Annual Georgia Council of Chapters (GAMOA) State Conference will take place from **November 5–8, 2026**, in Athens, Georgia. Hosted by the Athens Area Chapter of MOAA, the multi-day event brings together military leaders, veterans, and chapter representatives from across the state. Any Chapter member that wants to attend, please contact Tom McCracken for more information.

South Georgia News

Local and state lawmakers are actively voting on several major bills impacting veterans in South

Georgia. Here are the top four issues currently on the table:

✓ **Property Tax Relief (SB 129):** The "Georgia Supporting Those Who Sacrificed for Service Act" proposes a total homestead property tax exemption for 100% disabled veterans, plus tiered tax relief for partially disabled veterans.

✓ **Fair Housing Requirements (SB 429):** The "Housing for Heroes Act" lowers the standard monthly income requirement for 100% disabled veterans from three times the monthly rent to two times the rent. This ensures landlords count federal disability benefits fairly during the rental application process.

✓ **Combatting "Claim Sharks" (HB 108):** The "SAVE Act" protects veterans from predatory, **unaccredited consultants** who charge steep fees to help veterans file for the legally entitled benefits that are fee-free.

✓ **State Veterans' Homes Funding:** The State Senate is facing heavy pressure to address severe underfunding at **Georgia's state-run veterans' homes**.

GA Department of Veteran Services

Valdosta Veterans Field Service Office

348 Enterprise Drive, Valdosta, GA 31601

<https://veterans.georgia.gov/locations/valdosta>

Military Related News Articles

<https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/military-officer-magazine/military-officer-magazine-digital-edition>

<https://www.militarytimes.com/news>

<https://www.defensenews.com>

<https://www.defensenews.com/ebb>

<https://veterans.georgia.gov/newsletter>

Chapter Notes

Upcoming Events

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
08 Oct 2026	Chapter Meeting
05-08 Nov 2026	GAMOOA Annual Conference
11 Nov 2026	Local Veteran Events
12 Nov 2026	Chapter Meeting

Upcoming Chapter Meeting

Our next chapter meeting is **Thursday, 08 Oct 2026**, at Mama June's located at 3286 Inner Perimeter Rd. Valdosta, GA 31602, beginning at 6:00 p.m. Our guest speaker is Erika Bennett, VP of Marketing & Brand Experience, South Georgia Medical Center. A meet-and-greet will take place from 6:00–6:15 p.m., followed by the Pledge and Blessing. Please take a moment to welcome guests and introduce yourself to members you may not know. Please reply to Secretary Don McArthur at 229-244-7498 or dandsmcarthur@bellsouth.net

Newsletter Submissions

Send items for the newsletter as early as possible to allow for printing time to Tom McCracken at thomas.d.mccracken@gmail.com

About Our Chapter

The South Georgia Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) is a non-profit, politically **non-partisan organization** affiliated with National MOAA, which is also **non-partisan**. **To join the chapter**, visit <http://www.sgamoaa.org> and select "Become a member." For written correspondence or donations, please use: **South GA MOAA, PO Box 5941, Valdosta, GA 31603**

Roster of Chapter Officers

<https://www.sgamoaa.org/officers-directors>

Chapter Meeting



Piper's, Scoggins's, Strand's & Dan Tupy



Larry Bostic, Roger Pace and Gary Hackbarth



Rod Casey & Don McArthur



Tom McCracken

Valdosta-Lowndes County 9/11 Memorial Ceremony



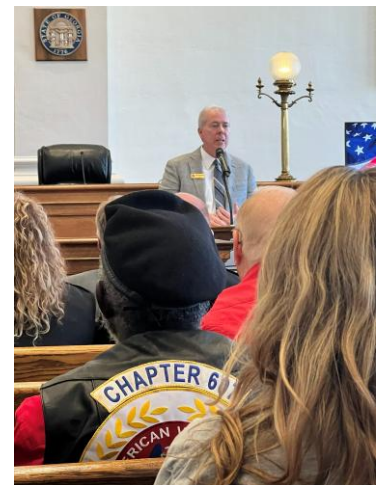
Lacey's & Steve Coyne



Chief Master Sgt. Stephen Weaver, the Installation Fire Chief for the 23rd Wing at Moody AFB (Keynote Speaker)



Valdosta Mayor Scott James Matheson



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