The South Georgia Voice

South Georgia Chapter, Military Officers Association of America
November 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. We will also cover any new business during the meeting as we prepare to enter 2027.

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.

Forest Williams
We are deeply saddened to share the passing of Chapter member Forrest Williams, who died on Wednesday, October 28, 2026, at the age of 94.
A graduate of the University of Texas, Forrest honorably served in the U.S. Army for 24 years, beginning with his enlistment and service in France and Germany. He went on to become an officer and served as a fixed and rotary-wing aviator, completing two combat tours in Vietnam before retiring at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.
https://www.mclanefuneralservices.com/obituaries/forrest-williams

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 – 08 Oct 2026

Guest Speaker – Erika Bennett, Vice President of Marketing & Network Development, South Georgia Medical Center (SGMC) Health



Erika Bennett

Erika Bennett joined SGMC Health in 2013, moving from Senior Communication Specialist to Director of Marketing and Brand Experience. A proud Valdosta State University alumna with a Bachelor's in Speech Communications, she specialized in Public Relations. Erika lives with her husband, Austin, and their two sons, Bridges and Brody.

At our October meeting, she provided an update on hospital expansions and their community impact. SGMC Health is South Georgia's most comprehensive medical system, with a 3,000+ workforce caring for 400,000 annual patients across four hospitals and 15 counties.

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.gamoaa.org/

The Fight to Save Dwight D. Eisenhower Army Medical Center (Augusta, GA): Senate Action Needed

UPDATE: Rep. Rick Allen successfully passed **Sections 704 and 705** within the House defense bill (**H.R. 8800**) to legally halt the downgrade. Senators Raphael Warnock (D-GA) and Tim Scott (R-SC) filed **Senate Amendment 6769** to the Senate defense bill (**S. 4784**), mirroring the House protections to ensure inpatient care remains fully active. 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.

Local Veterans Day Events

Tuesday, 10 November 2026

Veterans Days Celebration sponsored by Valdosta CBOC (Veterans Administration)

Time: 12:00 – 2:00 pm at Rainwater Conference Center, Valdosta, GA (Lunch Provided)

Wednesday, 11 November 2026

Veterans Days Celebration sponsored by Lowndes High School & American Legion Post 13

Ceremony: 10:00 – 11:30 am at Lowndes HS, Valdosta, GA
Community Luncheon: 12:00 – 2:30 pm at American Legion Post 13, Valdosta, GA

Valdosta State University Veterans Days Ceremony

Ceremony: 10:00 – 11:00 am at VSU (Pound Hall), Valdosta, GA
RSVP:
https://departmentofinvitations.com/invite/7fa10ce1-4421-445d-8623-17271ac79d5f

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 entitles 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

Date	Event
05-08 Nov 2026	GAMOAA Annual Conference
11 Nov 2026	Local Veteran Events
12 Nov 2026	Chapter Meeting
15 Dec 2026	Chapter Winter Luncheon
05 Jan 2027	Chapter Winter Board Meeting
14 Jan 2027	Chapter Meeting
11 Feb 2027	Chapter Meeting

Upcoming Chapter Meeting

Our next chapter meeting is **Thursday, 12 November 2026**, at Mama June's located at 3286 Inner Perimeter Rd. Valdosta, GA 31602, beginning at 6:00 p.m. Our guest speaker is **Chief Leslie Manahan**, head of the Valdosta Police Department. Originally from Marietta, she graduated with an Education degree from Valdosta State University in 1994 before continuing her training at the FBI National Academy and Columbus State University. She joined the Valdosta Department in 1997 as a patrol officer, working up to Chief of Police in 2019. 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