

HIGH COUNTRY CHAPTER  
MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA



SECRETARY'S REPORT

High Country Chapter, MOAA  
Board of Directors Meeting  
6 May 2025 | Bocca Bistro, Boone, NC

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Call to Order

The meeting of the High Country Chapter, Military Officers Association of America, was held on Tuesday, May 6, 2025, at Bocca Bistro in Boone, NC. The meeting was called to order at 1700 hours by First Vice President Fred Schmitt, following a brief social period beginning at 1630. The meeting was conducted in accordance with the Chapter Bylaws and Robert's Rules of Order.

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Board Attendance

A quorum was established with eight of ten Board members present.

Present:

- Frederick (Fred) Schmitt – 1st Vice President (CAPT, USCG, Ret.; Chair, Nominating Committee)
- Adam Greene – Legislative Affairs Chair; Acting Secretary (LTC, USA)
- George Brudzinski – Treasurer (LtCol, USMC, Ret.)
- David Hollis – Director (LTC, USA, Ret.)
- Douglas (Doug) May – Immediate Past President (Capt., USMC, Fmr; PhD)
- Robert (Bob) Love – Director (LT, USN, Fmr)
- Melanie Trado – Director (MAJ, USAR)
- James (Jim) Fisher – Chaplain; Personal Affairs; Newsletter (CAPT, USN, Ret.)

Absent:

- Mary (Frankie) Groff – President (Surviving Spouse)
- Patsy Alley – Director (Surviving Spouse)

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The Pledge of Allegiance was conducted. While no physical flag was present, members stood and respectfully faced the symbolic direction of the United States flag.

**Invocation**

The invocation was delivered by Jim Fisher, who offered the following prayer:

Heavenly Father, we just come before you. We give you thanks for safety and all our travels. We know we're going to have travels this summer, certainly as individual members and families. So we do pray for this summer and safe travel and just really an enjoyment that you provide us through this upcoming season. We do want to lift up Memorial Day to you—just something that will inspire people to their higher angels in terms of patriotism and the principles of these United States. And we do pray for Lance as well—continue to pray for his health and well-being. And Lord, just pray that you would lead us and guide us in this meeting. In your name we pray. Amen.

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**Secretary's Report:**

April meeting summary:

After Action Review: Feedback from the United Methodist Church breakfast was discussed. The event was well-received, and general sentiment indicated strong community support.

Front Line to Farm Donation: Clarification was made that the Board approved an increase in the annual donation from \$250 to \$500.

Memorial Day Planning: Key logistics noted included:

- Watauga Community Band confirmation
- Chair rentals coordinated by Melanie; George remains POC
- Advertising handled by Frankie (Watauga Democrat, WATA Radio)
- American Legion Post 130 participation pending final verification
- Program printing to be managed by George
- Walkthrough scheduled for Friday, May 23 at 1100
- Mount Lawn flag placement scheduled for May 24 at 1100, with retrieval on May 31 at 1100 (weather permitting)
- General Membership Meeting: Briefly mentioned; Doug to provide an update on venue options.
- JROTC Awards and Speaker Program: Watauga and Avery County schools discussed, with updates to follow later in the meeting.
- Short discussion held regarding bylaws and honorary membership policy
- Adam confirmed willingness to continue supporting secretarial duties as needed
- Following discussion, a motion to approve the Secretary's Report was made by Fred, seconded by Bob, and approved unanimously.

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**Treasurer's Report:**

George Brudzinski presented the Treasurer's Report, noting that the chapter remains in a strong financial position.

Income (April 2025):

- Chapter Dues Collected: \$264.00
- George noted that 8 of the 20 non-life members had not yet submitted dues as of the meeting date. Hard-copy notices were sent to all unpaid members.
- Expenses (April 2025):
- Front Line to Farm Donation: \$500.00 (as approved at prior meeting)
- Chair Rental for Memorial Day Ceremony: \$636.15 (fully paid)
- Golf Tournament Sponsorship: Hole sponsor for the State Employees Association of North Carolina (SEANC), amount not itemized in discussion
- Account Balances (as of April 30, 2025):
- Checking Account: \$19,637.00
- Compared to \$15,400.00 at the same time in 2024

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George noted that year-to-date finances are ahead of last year's pace, and the chapter remains fiscally sound heading into the Memorial Day and summer event period.

No objections or questions were raised, and the Treasurer's Report was accepted without formal motion.

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**Awards and Recognition:**

Fred Schmitt formally announced that the High Country Chapter has again been honored with MOAA's Five-Star Level of Excellence (LOE) Award. In addition, the chapter received Harris

Communications Awards for both its:

Website – managed by George Brudzinski

Newsletter – led by Jim Fisher

The Board extended its congratulations to George and Jim for their efforts maintaining high standards of communication and outreach. Fred emphasized that these national-level awards reflect the strength and professionalism of the chapter, particularly commendable for a small organization.

**Upcoming Events & Planning:**

The Board conducted a thorough planning session for the Memorial Day Ceremony, scheduled for Monday, May 26, 2025, at Boone Mall. As one of the chapter's most prominent and visible public events, the ceremony serves to honor fallen service members and brings together civic organizations, community members, and veteran supporters in a shared act of remembrance.

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**Venue and Walkthrough**

The ceremony will be held in the Center Court of Boone Mall, as in previous years. A full walkthrough is scheduled for Friday, May 23 at 1100, during which Board members and key participants will review setup and confirm roles. Chairs will be delivered that morning and stored securely at the mall over the weekend. CK will assist in coordinating delivery and staging logistics.

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**Color Guard and Keynote Speaker**

The Watauga High School USMC JROTC unit will provide the Color Guard for the ceremony. Sergeant Major Derek Bosowski, the Senior Marine Instructor for the program, will also serve as the keynote speaker. A brief biography of SgtMaj Bosowski will be included in the event program. George Brudzinski requested that this, along with any additional materials for the ceremony, be submitted no later than May 15 to allow for program layout and production.

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**Flag Presentation to Rob**

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A central element of the ceremony will be the presentation of the U.S. flag to Rob, the son of Jenny Ellerbe and the late USAF Maj. Ryan David, who was killed in 2012 during a wildfire response mission. The flag will be presented during the formal flag-folding segment of the program, conducted by American Legion Post 130. Jenny will deliver brief personal remarks at the podium following the presentation. Fred Schmitt, who will serve as the Master of Ceremonies, will introduce both Jenny and Rob during the program. Adam Greene is responsible for drafting the introductory remarks and preparing a condensed version of Maj. Ryan David's biography, which will be shared with both Fred and George.

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#### **Program Design and Printing**

This year's printed program will transition from the traditional double-sided half-sheet format to a folded full-page layout. This expanded format will allow space for:

- The schedule of events
- Biographies of SgtMaj Bosowski and Maj. David
- Sponsor listings
- Additional acknowledgments or inserts if needed

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#### **Sponsorships**

A total of 10 sponsor slots are planned for this year's program. As of the meeting, four sponsors were confirmed, all of whom are returning supporters, including Martha Garvin Cenac and The Breakfast Sweet.

Board members volunteered to help fill remaining sponsorship slots to ensure printing and event costs are fully covered. George will finalize sponsor formatting in parallel with content production and printing.

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#### **Flag Stand and Equipment**

Adam Greene provided an update on the chapter's new mobile flag stand, which he is building and donating. The stand will support a total of 10 flags, including the traditional service branches as well as the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) flags. Constructed in two modular halves and equipped with casters for ease of movement, the stand is built for both function and presentation quality. It will make its first public appearance at this year's ceremony.

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#### **Event Communication and Final Coordination**

Fred will issue a final event coordination email to all key personnel following the walkthrough. This will include event timing, setup notes, and confirmations for speaker order, flag-folding procedures, and program distribution.

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Adam will ensure his deliverables—the biography and introduction for Jenny and Rob—are completed and forwarded to Fred and George in time for inclusion in the program and ceremony script

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Program & Committee Updates:

WHS JROTC and Appalachian State ROTC (Reported by David):

David Hollis provided a comprehensive update on the chapter's ongoing support for local JROTC and ROTC programs, including current award presentations, school partnerships, and proposed expansions.

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Watauga High School JROTC

David confirmed that the Watauga High School Awards Ceremony is scheduled for Saturday, May 10 at 1700. He and his wife will represent the chapter and present the \$2,000 MOAA Leadership Award to the selected recipient.

David noted that no cadet from the program qualified this year for the MOAA National JROTC Medal, which is based on strict national criteria. The medals will be retained and considered again for next year's cycle.

He also reminded the Board that Watauga's Speaker Series—an initiative bringing MOAA members into the classroom to discuss service and leadership—had seen strong participation, though weather-related disruptions had caused scheduling challenges in recent years. The plan is to restart the series in fall 2025 on a more reliable timeline.

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Avery County High School JROTC

David reported that Avery County High School now has a fully active Army JROTC program under the direction of LTC (Ret.) David Baker. In discussions with the instructor, David con-firmed that the school is eager to partner with the chapter for both:

Participation in the Speaker Series

Receipt of a Leadership Award to support their top-performing cadets

David proposed extending chapter resources to include Avery County going forward, including a proportional share of the scholarship funds currently directed entirely to Watauga. Board members agreed in principle, with the understanding that specific award amounts and budget lines will be formalized in September as part of the chapter's draft FY budget.

A motion to expand the award program to Avery County was made, seconded, and passed unanimously. The Board agreed that this partnership strengthens the chapter's regional presence and reflects its commitment to nurturing future leaders in multiple school systems.

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David also emphasized that, based on recent volunteer turnout for speaking engagements, the chapter has sufficient capacity to support two JROTC programs without compromising quality or consistency.

**Legislative Affairs (Adam):  
National Legislation.**

1. Major Richard Star Act (H.R. 2102 / S. 1032). Introduced in March 2025, this bipartisan bill aims to eliminate the offset that prevents combat-injured veterans from receiving both full military retirement pay and VA disability compensation. As of now, the bill has been introduced in both the House and Senate and is awaiting further action.
2. Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement Act (S. 879). Introduced in March 2025, this legislation seeks to provide comprehensive support to caregivers of veterans, including education, employment assistance, and retirement planning. The bill is currently under consideration in the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.
3. Veterans' ACCESS Act of 2025 (H.R. 740). Introduced in January 2025, this bill aims to improve veterans' access to community care by establishing clear standards and ensuring timely access to mental health and addiction services. It is currently under review by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.
4. Caring for Survivors Act of 2025 (H.R. 680). Introduced in January 2025, this bill proposes to increase the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) for surviving spouses and dependents of deceased veterans. It also seeks to reduce the eligibility period for certain benefits. The bill is currently under consideration in the House. [veterans.senate.gov](https://www.veterans.senate.gov)
5. Love Lives On Act of 2025 (H.R. 1004 / S. 410). Introduced in February 2025, this bipartisan legislation aims to allow surviving spouses to retain their Survivor Benefit Plan and DIC benefits upon remarriage at any age, removing current age restrictions. The bill is currently under review in both the House and Senate.

**State-Level Legislative Priorities**

Adam outlined several bills currently under consideration in the North Carolina General Assembly, all of which align with MOAA's mission to support service members, veterans, and their families:

1. Property Tax Relief for Disabled Veterans. House Bill 118: Proposes increasing the property tax homestead exclusion for disabled veterans from \$45,000 to \$61,000, to reflect cost-of-living adjustments over the past decade. The bill has passed the House Homeland Security, Military, and Veterans Affairs Committee and awaits further action.

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2. Senate Bill 660: Introduces a phased increase in the exemption amount and includes provisions for prequalification, exemption of a primary motor vehicle for veterans rated 100% disabled, and partial reimbursement to local governments for lost revenue.
3. Regulation of Compensation for Veterans' Benefits Services. Senate Bill 693: Seeks to regulate compensation for assistance with veterans' benefits claims. The bill prohibits unqualified individuals from receiving compensation for preparing or submitting initial disability claims and sets legal standards for representation agreements.
4. Employment Preferences for Veterans and Their Families. House Bill 114: Expands hiring preference eligibility within state government to include all veterans, not just those with wartime service. The bill also extends preference to spouses and dependents, aiming to help address state employment shortages.
5. Mandatory Posting of Veterans' Benefits Information by Employers. House Bill 213: Requires employers to post information on veterans' benefits in every workplace room where five or more employees work. The Commissioner of Labor will supply digital templates or printed copies upon request.
6. Higher Education Support for Service Members and Veterans. House Bill 69: Protects access and affordability in higher education for veterans and active-duty members. Key provisions include:
  - Prohibiting discriminatory admissions practices
  - Requiring admissions deferment for military students admitted to UNC system schools
  - Ensuring in-state tuition for honorably discharged veterans

These bills reflect a growing focus on improving access to benefits, reducing administrative barriers, and expanding support services for the veteran community across North Carolina.

#### Veterans Day Naming Discussion

The federal administration is in early-stage national discussions concerning a potential renaming of Veterans Day. The change, advocated by at least one public figure, would replace the current inclusive designation with a more specific commemoration of World War I Victory Day. The Board expressed strong opposition to this idea, emphasizing the importance of Veterans Day as a unifying observance honoring all who have served, not just those from a single conflict. While no formal proposal has advanced at the federal level, members agreed that if such legislation gains traction, the chapter should consider submitting a letter of opposition to elected officials, including Rep. Virginia Foxx and Sen. Thom Tillis.



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Fred Schmitt briefed the Board on efforts to establish more formal committee charters to guide the work of key chapter functions, beginning with those expected to have the highest activity levels in the coming year.

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#### Draft Charters: Fundraising and Programs & Events

Fred has prepared initial drafts of charters for two priority committees:

- Fundraising
- Programs & Events

These drafts outline each committee's primary responsibilities as well as examples of tasks they may undertake—phrased in terms of function rather than individual roles. The goal is to build flexibility into the structure, allowing future committee members to execute tasks in a collaborative and organized manner without tying duties to specific names or titles.

The charters were described as short and purpose driven. For example, the Fundraising Committee charter identifies its core responsibility as “coordinating and sustaining financial support for chapter initiatives,” with additional lines outlining activities such as sponsor solicitation, event support, and tracking donor relationships.

Fred will distribute the drafts via email to all Board members and requested feedback prior to formal adoption. Once reviewed and refined, the format will be replicated for other standing committees, including:

- Membership
- Legislative Affairs
- ROTC/JROTC Support
- Communications

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#### Coordination with Volunteers

George Brudzinski noted that some items listed in the Fundraising charter may better align with the Treasurer's functional responsibilities, such as budget management and funds disbursement. Fred agreed, clarifying that execution may fall under the Treasurer, even if coordination resides within the committee.

These charters will also serve to onboard new volunteers more effectively. Anne Marie, who recently volunteered to assist with fundraising, has expressed interest in having clear objectives and expectations.

George and Fred plan to meet with Anne Marie later this month to review the draft charter and incorporate her insights.

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#### Flag Stand Update:

Adam Greene provided a status update on the construction of the chapter's new mobile flag stand, which he is building and donating for use at chapter ceremonies, beginning with the up-coming Memorial Day event.

The stand is designed to accommodate a total of 10 flags, including the traditional service branches, the United States flag, and new additions: the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) flags. These additions ensure full representation of all uniformed services recognized by the Department of Defense and Department of Health and Human Services.

- Constructed in two modular halves, the stand is:
- Fully mobile, equipped with casters for transport and setup
- Built using maple plywood and red oak trim, and stained to match the finish of the chapter's existing flagpoles
- Engineered to provide both stability and visual uniformity during indoor and outdoor use

Adam noted that all flags have been standardized in height (eight feet, with the U.S. flag at nine feet), and he has personally procured a new matching flag set. Additional features such as flag spreaders have been integrated to ensure proper presentation.

He confirmed that the stand will be completed and delivered in time for the Memorial Day ceremony. The project has exceeded its original scope, but Adam affirmed his commitment and emphasized that it is being made as a personal donation to the chapter.

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#### Closing and Next Steps

The meeting concluded with a brief summary of outstanding tasks and upcoming milestones. Several items were identified for immediate follow-up before the Memorial Day Ceremony and summer schedule.

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#### Key Action Items

Fred Schmitt

- Finalize Memorial Day ceremony script
- Coordinate walkthrough logistics and emcee notes
- Send reminder email to all participants following the May 23 walkthrough
- Introduce Jenny and Rob during the ceremony

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Adam Greene

- Provide condensed biography of Maj. Ryan David to Fred and George
- Draft and deliver introductory remarks for Jenny and Rob
- Finalize and deliver the completed flag stand

George Brudzinski

- Collect all program content and bios no later than May 15
- Finalize program layout and printing
- Confirm sponsors, with a goal of reaching ten
- Coordinate chair delivery and storage at Boone Mall

David Hollis

- Present MOAA Leadership Award at Watauga HS on May 10
- Maintain contact with Avery County JROTC for future award and speaker coordination
- All Board Members
- Review committee charter drafts distributed by Fred
- Provide sponsor referrals to assist George
- Attend May 23 walkthrough at Boone Mall if available

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Next Meeting

- The next scheduled Board of Directors meeting will take place on:
- Tuesday, June 3, 2025
- 1630 social | 1700 meeting
- Location: Boca Bistro