



# 2025 Team Packet

## Elevator Pitches and Abbreviated Background

The following elevator pitches summarize MOAA's ask and some key facts for each of our five AiA issues. A brief explanation is ideal for visits where a lawmaker has time for a greeting and a handshake but not the time for a full meeting. Each team will only be briefing three of the five topics.

### Military Spouse Hiring Act

**Portfolio:** Families/Survivors

#### WHY IT MATTERS:

Military spouses face a staggering 21% unemployment rate — five times the national average — due to frequent relocations and limited job opportunities near remote installations. This creates financial strain for military families, impacts military readiness, and contributes to servicemember retention challenges.

#### KEY FACTS:

- Military spouses relocate every 2–3 years, on average, making it challenging to find and maintain consistent employment, despite being highly educated and skilled.
- Despite significant investments in addressing this crisis, the 20%+ unemployment rate has persisted for over a decade.
- One approach to addressing this issue that remains untested is incentivizing businesses to hire military spouses. When veteran unemployment spiked, the multipronged approach to solving the problem included adding a target group to the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC). From 2019 to 2023, more than 630,000 veterans were hired under WOTC, demonstrating the program's success in reducing employment barriers.
- Financial strain caused by spouse unemployment is a significant factor in servicemembers' decisions to leave the military.

#### THE ASK:

MOAA urges Congress to add military spouses as a target group under WOTC to:

- Lower the military spouse unemployment rate.
- Offset hiring and onboarding costs for employers and fill vacant positions with highly skilled workers.
- Increase military family financial stability and improve servicemember retention.

### Unaccompanied Housing Improvements

**Portfolio:** Currently Serving

#### WHY IT MATTERS:

- Thousands of servicemembers live in substandard barracks plagued by mold, pests, sewage overflows, and broken safety systems. Despite recent legislative action, a \$137 billion backlog in deferred maintenance persists, and servicemembers continue to face unsafe and unacceptable conditions.
- Transparency is essential for accountability and sustaining efforts to improve unaccompanied housing.

#### KEY FACTS:

- Many barracks fail to meet DoD standards for privacy, space, and quality, with health and safety risks reported across installations.
- DoD lacks reliable assessments and funding transparency for unaccompanied housing, hindering oversight and improvements.
- Pest infestations, mold, and sewage issues often leave servicemembers responsible for their own pest control and hazardous material removal, according to the GAO.

#### THE ASK:

MOAA urges Congress to require DoD to:

- Provide transparency on funding for barracks maintenance and improvements.
- Empower lawmakers to identify and address unaccompanied housing challenges in their districts and states.

## Improve Military Health System Access to Care

**Portfolio:** DoD Health Care

### WHY IT MATTERS:

DoD and Congress have acknowledged longstanding problems with access to care within the Military Health System (MHS), yet beneficiaries lack a consistent, effective, and well-understood system for reporting access challenges and getting help navigating the MHS.

### KEY FACTS:

- The new MHS stabilization strategy seeks to recapture 7% of beneficiary care back to military hospitals and clinics that are struggling with staffing challenges.
- TRICARE policy prohibits beneficiaries from changing TRICARE plans to move care to the civilian network except during the annual open enrollment season or after qualifying life events.
- Challenges related to the new TRICARE West Region contract underscore the need for more effective beneficiary assistance with barriers to access.

### THE ASK:

MOAA urges Congress to pass legislation establishing an MHS digital access assistance platform to:

- Help military families navigate the MHS by routing their issues to the appropriate contacts for assistance.
- Improve oversight and accountability of the MHS by providing visibility to access problems.
- Ensure fixable systemic MHS barriers to access are addressed.

## Ending the Wait Report Priorities

**Portfolio:** Retirees/Veterans

### WHY IT MATTERS:

Veterans exposed to toxins during service face decades-long delays for acknowledgment and care. The current system leaves veterans and their families waiting far too long for the benefits and support they need and have earned.

### KEY FACTS:

- Since the end of World War I, the VA has acknowledged 30 toxic exposures. Just over half of them (16) resulted in the establishment of a presumptive.
- For all acknowledged exposures, the average time between the first year that veterans were exposed to an acknowledgment from VA is 31.4 years.
- For the subset of 16 exposures that have presumptives, the time from acknowledgment to the establishment of a presumptive, as marked by a concession of exposure, is 2.4 years on average.
- When looking at the overall time-frame, it takes an average of 34.1 years after the first incidence of military toxic exposure to the establishment of a presumptive.

### THE ASK:

Enact legislation to bolster the legal framework for creating presumptive conditions. This framework must establish:

- Clear acknowledgment of toxic exposures.
- Formal concession of exposure, tied to time and location of service.
- Scientific research to establish presumptive service connection for related illnesses.

## Caregiver Support Improvements

**Portfolio:** VA Health Care

### WHY IT MATTERS:

Veteran caregivers provide essential care for aging and disabled veterans, often at the expense of their own financial security, mental health, and career aspirations. These caregivers deserve tangible resources to support their vital role within veterans' families and communities.

### KEY FACT:

74% of veteran caregivers support veterans age 60 or older, yet their stipends are classified as "unearned income," preventing contributions to Social Security or retirement accounts.

### THE ASK:

MOAA urges Congress to pass the Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement Act to:

- Enhance education, employment, and retirement opportunities for caregivers.
- Address the significant economic and emotional challenges they face.
- Empower caregivers to achieve financial security while reducing the government's long-term economic burden.