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**Chapters – enter title of your first news item here**

You can use the first part of this newsletter template for your Chapter news to include any meeting recaps or agendas, local news, state legislative issues, and other matters for your members. Please replace “Chapter item 1” above with an applicable topic title.

**Chapters – enter title of your second news item here**

You can enter your second news item here and if you have any additional items you can copy the formatting and style for any other information you would like to share.

**After Two Days of Confusion, Federal Funding Freeze Put on Ice**

*By: MOAA Staff*

A Jan. 27 [memorandum from the Office of Management and Budget](https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/25506191-omb-memo-1-27/) instituting a temporary pause of all federal agency grant, loan, and financial assistance programs [was blocked by a federal judge Jan. 28](https://apnews.com/article/donald-trump-pause-federal-grants-aid-f9948b9996c0ca971f0065fac85737ce) and then [rescinded Jan. 29](https://apnews.com/article/donald-trump-pause-federal-grants-aid-6d41961940585544fa43a3f66550e7be) before MOAA and fellow advocacy groups could fully ascertain its potential effects on the military and veteran community.

MOAA continuously monitors for threats to service-earned benefits as part of its work on behalf of those who serve and have served, their families, and their survivors. We will take action against any proposals that would diminish these earned benefits.

Prior to the Jan. 28 ruling and subsequent policy reversal, the VA made clear the memo would “have no impact on VA health care, benefits, or beneficiaries,” [according to a Jan. 28 statement](https://news.va.gov/press-room/va-statement-regarding-grants-loans-and-other-financial-assistance-programs/) from Acting VA Secretary Todd Hunter. This included GI Bill benefits, which were to continue to both students and schools.

As outlined in the original memo, the freeze would not have impacted military pay, retired pay, survivor annuities, disability compensation, or Dependency and Indemnity compensation (DIC). There was no indication that TRICARE benefits would be affected, and administration officials stated Medicare and Social Security payments would continue.

Should the federal government reinstate the freeze as initially outlined in the Jan. 27 memo, these VA-based programs are assessed to be potentially at risk:

* Veteran suicide prevention grants
* Job assistance for veterans and spouses
* VA home loan benefits
* Grants to support and house homeless veterans
* Veteran legal services
* Programs ensuring veterans are honorably memorialized
* State veterans’ homes
* Services to help rural veterans access care
* Recreational programs for disabled veterans

Veteran-specific job search programs and employment services for homeless veterans provided by the Labor Department also may be at risk, as are veterans treatment courts administered by the Justice Department.

MOAA will keep our membership informed of any updates on federal spending policy, along with any changes to your earned benefits stemming from new federal policy. Visit [MOAA’s news page](https://www.moaa.org/news) for the latest details.

**Do Your Service-Earned Skills Translate to a Career in Diplomacy?**

By: Kevin Lilley

Servicemembers and veterans considering a career in diplomacy may fear their experience in unrelated fields won’t translate.

A doctor-turned-ambassador begs to differ.

“Veterans are mission-driven, reliable, and patriotic,” said Ambassador Aldona Z. Woś, M.D., who served as U.S. Ambassador to Estonia under President George W. Bush (2004-07) and is now president of the [Institute of World Politics](https://www.iwp.edu/leadership/the-honorable-aldona-wos-m-d/) graduate school. “They are skilled at working in teams within organizational structures and have unique people skills, having navigated different environments, cultures and locations. … Whatever you did when you were in uniform has prepared you for a diplomatic career in ways a typical civilian education does not.”

Woś is no stranger to career pivots: Her medical career ranged from private practice to teaching to industry consulting. After her time in Estonia, Woś became active in state-level government, serving as secretary of North Carolina’s Department of Health and Human Services and overseeing more than 18,000 employees (and a budget nearing $20 billion).

While service-earned skills will prove helpful in most any diplomatic field, some advanced education may be required to find a desired position, and the application process for such jobs can be time-consuming. Woś, who took over the IWP top job on an interim basis in early 2022, said many schools offering diplomacy-directed programs accept VA education benefits, and while finding a position can take time, “the wait is worth it.”

“One can get a job to pay the bills during the application process,” she said. “I encourage folks not to be put off by the length of the process and just go for it.”

 The reward for patience and persistence may be the chance to serve your nation in a wholly new, exciting capacity … drawing on your time in uniform to strengthen your performance.

“As a veteran, your life experiences are a phenomenal credential,” Woś said. “Whether it be in a graduate classroom or an embassy overseas, veterans with their unique, important perspectives and experiences have a tremendous amount to offer.”

For more ways MOAA can support any career path you choose, visit our [Transition and Career Center](https://www.moaa.org/careers).

**Urge Your Lawmakers to Secure Federal Job Protections for Military Spouses**

*By: Jen Goodale*

Military spouses working for the federal government provide more than just an often-untapped skill set for their agency or department – their careers make it more likely for a servicemember to remain in uniform, despite frequent moves and other potential professional derailments.

For this reason, MOAA welcomes recent guidance from the VA and other federal agencies designed to exempt military spouses on PCS orders from recent Office of Personal Management (OPM) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) directives regarding a federal hiring freeze, a return to in-person work for federal employees, and changes to probationary periods and administrative leave policies.

But not all agencies are making such exemptions part of their policies. And while some lawmakers are weighing in with letters to OPM and OMB urging consideration of exemptions for military spouses, they need to hear from you about how important this issue is to the financial wellbeing of military families, and to the health of the all-volunteer force.

Without this protection, the new guidance could negatively impact military spouses who have been offered federal positions, are in a probationary hiring status, or are currently working for the federal government.

**Recognizing the Need**

Three executive orders (EOs) in the past 17 years recognized and addressed persistent un- and underemployment challenges military spouses face:

* [EO 13473](https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/WCPD-2008-09-29/pdf/WCPD-2008-09-29-Pg1257.pdf), To Authorize Certain Noncompetitive Appointments in the Civil Service for Spouses of Certain Members of the Armed Forces (President George W. Bush)
* [EO 13832](https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/DCPD-201800316/pdf/DCPD-201800316.pdf), Enhancing Noncompetitive Civil Service Appointments of Military Spouses (President Donald Trump)
* [EO 14100](https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/DCPD-202300512/pdf/DCPD-202300512.pdf), Advancing Economic Security for Military and Veteran Spouses, Military Caregivers, and Survivors (President Joe Biden)

These orders established and enhanced the federal noncompetitive hiring authority to [support military spouse employment](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid:USC-prelim-title5-section3330d&num=0&edition=prelim). Provisions in the last five National Defense Authorization Acts (NDAAs) extended the hiring authority in recognition of the continued high unemployment rate – 21%, according to the most recent DoD data – and also expanded it to include DoD civilian spouses, State Department spouses, and intelligence community spouses.

The FY 2024 NDAA further clarified the importance of expanding remote and telework options for federally employed military spouses.

A VA memo issued Jan. 24 notes that the new federal policy “allows for exceptions for military spouses with permanent change of station orders. Current arrangements to include Domestic Employee Teleworking Overseas (DETO) arrangements will not be modified unless there is a basis for revisiting or revising the arrangement.” This memo should be a model for other agencies moving forward.

The same day, the Department of Health and Human Services issued an agency exemption to military spouses with permanent changes of station, noting, “Current Workplace Flexibility Agreements will not be modified unless there is a basis for revisiting or revising the arrangements.”

However, other department-wide guidance such as that issued by DoD and the Labor Department lacked similar provisions.

[Additional OPM and OMB guidance](https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/latest-memos/agency-return-to-office-implementation-plans.pdf) on return-to-office plans issued Jan. 27 included language in a footnote exempting military spouses working remotely under language in the FY 2024 NDAA. However, without more specific direction from OPM and OMB, there are significant concerns military spouses on the move could face additional difficulties keeping, or securing, federal positions despite their qualifications.

Visit MOAA’s Legislative Action Center and [ask your lawmakers to urge OPM and OMB to establish exemptions for military spouses](https://moaa.quorum.us/campaign/108173/) to ensure they can continue to make their valuable contributions to our federal workforce while helping support their families.