

The Knox County Joint Veterans Council Honor Guard



The Honor Guard conducts regular meetings on the third Thursday of each month @ 7:00 P.M. **Contact Hugh Lamb @**

[740-358-7823](tel:740-358-7823) if you are interested in volunteering.

A members letter ...

Approximately nine years ago, I, like many others, were unaware of the organization that performs one of the most important ceremonies not only for veterans who pass but for their families here in our county. A friend, Gary Fessler who was working on a project with me happened to mention an organization that he joined, our Knox County Joint Veterans Council Honor Guard. As a United States Army veteran myself, I was interested but not sure if I could commit to something at that time. He invited me to observe one of the funerals so I could see what takes place. It's hard to explain the feeling that came over me seeing such a ceremony for the families of veterans who had passed. I could tell right away how important it was for those family members. I joined soon after and have been honored to be a part of such a dedicated group. This honor guard offers services in the final moment to those who have served their country, but the organization needs more volunteers to step in and join. We need men and women who have served this great country to help us continue these ceremonies provided by the Honor Guard. In addition to volunteers we also need financial support for the small needs such as uniforms and other minor costs.

In addition to the honor we feel serving these veterans and their families, there is a camaraderie that is very special. I did not realize it at the time, but the man who introduced me to this group has become one of my better friends in life. Along with Gary, I've become close with all of the members and feel very fortunate to know and serve with each one.

Each Member of the honor guard could tell you stories about a hug they received from a widow or the children of a veteran's family. The special moment of a presentation of the American flag or any one of them most likely would have tears in their eyes sharing many of these touching moments.

It doesn't take a large commitment to be a part of such an honored group and provide such a meaningful service. From arriving at a location to providing the ceremony may only take approximately 30 or 40 minutes on any given day. Very small obligation for such an important honor to our fallen. The honor guard needs members to attend as many funerals as possible, but we also understand when one cannot, and that's OK.

We provide a folded flag to a designated family member, and along with this flag they receive three spent cartridges that represent the Honor Guard code of "duty, honor and country". The ceremony includes a 3 volley rifle salute and the playing of taps.

As a member of the honor guard the organization will provide most of the uniforms and may provide mileage reimbursement. The only real cost to members is your time. A new member will receive the proper amount of practice and training as needed for any of the multiple positions.

Thank you for your time and support, Sincerely,

Terry Walter, Vice Commander, Joint Veterans Council Honor Guard

If Interested in serving or donating, reach out to myself at 614-679-3852 or 740-392-4168. Donations by mail can be sent to Military Honor Guard, 1 Mansfield Ave, Mount Vernon OH 43050. email mtwalter6@yahoo.com or contact the Knox County Veterans Office for additional information.

In [a letter sent Tuesday to President Joe Biden](#), key leaders from the [House Armed Services Committee](#) called for the budget plan to include plans to improve military housing, junior enlisted pay, military health care options, base childcare availability and military spouse employment assistance programs.

The lawmakers said they hope to address those issues as part of the upcoming [annual defense authorization bill](#), but said a strong show of support from the White House regarding the issues is needed to produce fixes. "The committee's quality of life inquiry thus far has revealed an alarming erosion of military quality of life that, if not addressed quickly, will soon place the all-volunteer force at risk," the lawmakers wrote. "Reversing this decline will require a national commitment of resources to address quality of life concerns for service members and their families."

The push was signed by committee chairman Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Ala., ranking member Adam Smith, D-Wash., [quality of life panel](#) chairman Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb., and panel ranking member Chrissy Houlahan, D-Pa. The group has been outspoken in recent months about the need for a congressional focus on military quality of life issues. Biden is expected to release [his fiscal 2025 budget request](#) on March 11. But Congress still has not finalized plans for the current fiscal year budget, even though fiscal 2024 began on Oct. 1.

The latest short-term funding extension for federal agencies is set to run out for a handful of departments on March 1 and for all government operations on March 8. If lawmakers can't reach a new deal by then, the impasse would trigger a shutdown of most federal operations and services. Biden is scheduled to deliver his annual State of the Union address before both chambers of Congress on March 7. White House officials have not yet indicated how much — if any — of the speech will focus on military family and service member benefit issues.

Earlier this month, Bacon told Military Times that he is focused on addressing several key military quality of life issues through legislation this year, but noted that those fixes may come in the form of multi-year plans.

Among them — and among the requests outlined in Tuesday's letter — are junior enlisted pay increases and dealing with "aging and poorly maintained barracks, dormitories, and single-family housing forcing service members and their families to contend with mold, pests, and other unacceptable habitability problems."

"This is a large, costly undertaking, but it is our moral and national security imperative to support those who serve," they wrote.

Most junior enlisted service members currently make around \$24,000 a year in basic pay, while enlisted troops nearing retirement typically earn about \$70,000 annually. In contrast, the most junior enlisted officers make at least \$46,000 annually, and most make more than \$80,000 a year with just six years of time in service.

The lawmakers noted that even with other bonuses and allowances, that level of salary can result in "food insecurity and economic insecurity with escalating negative impacts on recruiting and retention."

All service members are scheduled to receive a 4.5% raise next January under the federal formula used to determine military month pay, which would be the third consecutive year of pay raises above 4% for troops.

But lawmakers have argued that those boosts do little to close the significant gap between officer and enlisted pay, and do not fully account for inflation costs in recent years.

Small, nonthreatening balloon intercepted over Utah by NORAD

NORAD fighter pilots sent in the morning to investigate the balloon determined it was “not maneuverable” and did not present a threat to national security, spokesperson John Cornelio said. The balloon was still in the air, under close observation.

NORAD, a joint military command tasked with defending the airspace over the U.S. and Canada, has not said where the balloon came from or why it was flying over Utah and Colorado. There has been heightened interest in reports of balloon overflights after the military identified — and eventually shot down — a large, white Chinese spy balloon that crossed much of the country last year. But officials said the balloon intercepted Friday was not sent by a foreign adversary and posed no threat to aviation or U.S. security.

NORAD said it was continuing to coordinate with the Federal Aviation Administration to track and monitor the balloon, which was detected at an altitude varying between 43,000 feet (13,100 meters) and 45,000 feet (13,700 meters), Cornelio said. NORAD declined to specify where in Utah pilots encountered it.

Early reports of the balloon sighting had raised concern among lawmakers including U.S. Sen. Jon Tester and U.S. Rep. Matt Rosendale of Montana, who said their offices were monitoring the situation. The office of Utah Gov. Spencer Cox said it had been in touch with local military officials. The [Chinese balloon](#) that was downed last year off the coast of South Carolina after a weeklong path over multiple military sites was part of a [global surveillance program](#) that Beijing has been conducting for “several years,” according to the Pentagon. It was outfitted with advanced technology designed to collect intelligence signals, the Biden administration said.

China denied that it was conducting military surveillance and said it was a civilian balloon that accidentally veered off course while collecting weather data. After it was shot down, [Chinese officials](#) said they reserved the right to “take further actions” and criticized the U.S. for “an obvious overreaction and a serious violation of international practice.” Similar spy balloons linked to the People’s Liberation Army — the military wing of China’s ruling Communist Party — have been detected floating over five continents. Just last month, Taiwan’s Defense Ministry detected four Chinese balloons, including three reportedly flying by a key air force base.



Pictures of the Month



U.S. Marines and Chilean naval infantry members climb Mount Tarn during a cold weather training exercise near Punta Arenas, Chile, Aug. 23, 2023



An A-10C Thunderbolt II aircraft receives fuel from a KC-135 Stratotanker over the Atlantic Ocean, Feb. 28, 2023.