

PROCEEDINGS
of the
110TH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES

(SUMMARY OF MINUTES)

Phoenix, Arizona
August 15-20, 2009



VFW
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

Referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and ordered to be printed.

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The proceedings of the national encampments of the United Spanish War Veterans, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the American Legion, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, the Veterans of World War I of the United States, Incorporated, the Disabled American Veterans, and the AMVETS (American Veterans of World War II), respectively, shall be printed annually, with accompanying illustrations, as separate House documents of the session of the Congress to which they may be submitted.
[Approved October 2, 1968.]

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES,
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI
March, 2010

Honorable Nancy Pelosi
The Speaker U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Madam Speaker: In conformance with the provisions of Public Law No. 620, 90th Congress, approved October 22, 1968, I am transmitting to you herewith the proceedings of the 110th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in Phoenix, Arizona, August 15-20, 2009, which is submitted for printing as a House document.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Allen 'Gunner' Kent". The signature is written in black ink and is centered on the page.

Allen "Gunner" Kent
Adjutant General

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COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

(Including societies that amalgamated to form Veterans of Foreign Wars)

The Veterans of Foreign Service and the Army of the Philippines amalgamated at Denver, CO, August 1913, forming the Veterans of Foreign Wars as it is today. However, the birth of the order dates from September 29, 1899, when the first national officers were elected and the eligibility clause adopted. The original chapter was granted October 11, 1899.

* indicates deceased

American Veterans of Foreign Service

1899-1900	James C. Putnam *	Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1900-1901	Maj. Will S. White *	Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1901-1902	Maj. Will S. White *	Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1902-1903	James Romanis *	Elected at Washington Courthouse, Ohio.
1903-1904	James Romanis *	Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1904-1905	James Romanis *	Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1905-1906	George Metzger *	Elected at Altoona, Pennsylvania.
1906-1907	Charles H. Devereaux *	Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1907-1908	David T. Nevin *	Elected at James Exposition Grounds, Virginia.
1908-1909	J. Alfred Judge *	Elected at Lebanon, Pennsylvania.
1909-1910	J. Alfred Judge *	Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
1910-1911	Robert J. Woodside *	Elected at Jersey City, New Jersey.
1911-1912	Robert J. Woodside *	Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1912-1913	Robert J. Woodside *	Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

American Veterans of Foreign Service (Eastern Branch)

1903-1904	Capt. Robert S. Hansburg *	Elected at Altoona, Pennsylvania.
1904-1905	H.O. Kelly *	Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

(The above two organizations amalgamated September 1905, at Altoona, Pennsylvania.)

Army of the Philippines

1900-1901	Gen. Francis V. Greene *	Elected at Denver, Colorado.
1901-1902	Gen. Irving Hale *	Elected at Salt Lake City, Utah.

1902-1903	Gen. Irvin Hale *Elected at Council Bluffs, Iowa.
1903-1904	Gen. Charles King * Elected at St. Paul, Minnesota.
1904-1905	Gen. Wilder S. Metcalf *Elected at St. Louis, Missouri.
1905-1906	Col. Alfred S. Frost *Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1906-1907	Gen. Arthur MacArthur *Elected at Des Moines, Iowa.
1907-1908	Capt. H.A. Crow * Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.
1908-1909	Maj. P.J.H. Farrell *Elected at Galesburg, Illinois.
1909-1910	Col. Charles L. Jewett * Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
1910-1911	A. H. Anderson *Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1911-1912	F. Warner Karling *Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1912-1913	F. Warner Karling *Elected at Lincoln, Nebraska.

Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

1913-1914	Rice W. Means* Elected at Denver, Colorado.
1914-1915	Thomas Crago * Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
1915-1916	Gus Hartung* .....Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1916-1917	Albert Rabin* .....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1917-1918	William Ralston* Elected at New York, New York.
1918-1919	F. Warner Karling* Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1919-1920	F. Warner Karling* Elected at Providence, Rhode Island.
1920-1921	Robert G. Woodside* Elected at Washington, D.C.
1921-1922	Robert G. Woodside* .....Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1922-1923	Tillinghast Huston* Elected at Seattle, Washington.
1923-1924	Gen. Lloyd M. Brett* Elected at Norfolk, Virginia.
1924-1925	John H. Dunn* Elected at Atlantic City, New Jersey.
1925-1926	Fred Stover* Elected at Tulsa, Oklahoma.
1926-1927	Theodore Stitt* Elected at El Paso, Texas.
1927-1928	Frank T. Strayer* Elected at Providence, Rhode Island.
1928-1929	Eugene P. Carver* Elected at Indianapolis, Indiana.
1929-1930	Kezekiah N. Duff* Elected at St. Paul, Minnesota.
1930-1931	Paul C. Wolman* Elected at Baltimore, Maryland.
1931-1932	Darold D. DeCoe* Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.
1932-1933	Adm. Robert E. Coontz* .....Elected at Sacramento, California.
1933-1934	James E. Van Zandt* .....Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
1934-1935	James E. Van Zandt* Elected at Louisville, Kentucky.
1935-1936	James E. Van Zandt* Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1936-1937	Bernard W. Kearny* Elected at Denver, Colorado.
1937-1938	Scott P. Squyres* Elected at Buffalo, New York.
1938-1939	Eugene I. Van Antwerp* Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1939-1940	Otis N. Brown* Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.

1940-1941	Joseph C. Menendez* Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1941-1942	Max Singer* Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1942-1943	Robert T. Merrill* Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1943-1944	Carl S. Schoeninger* Elected at New York, New York.
1944-1945	Jean A. Brunner* Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1945-1946	Joseph M. Stack* Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1946-1947	Louis E. Starr* Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.
1947-1948	Ray H. Brannaman* Elected at Cleveland, Ohio.
1948-1949	Lyall T. Beggs * Elected at St. Louis, Missouri..
1949-1950	Clyde A. Lewis* Elected at Miami, Florida.
1950-1951	Charles C. Ralls* Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1951-1952	Frank C. Hilton* Elected at New York, New York.
1952-1953	James W. Cothran* Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1953-1954	Wayne E. Richards* Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
1954-1955	Merton B. Tice* Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1955-1956	Timothy J. Murphy* Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.
1956-1957	Cooper T. Holt* Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1957-1958	Richard L. Roudebush* Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.
1958-1959	John W. Mahan Elected at New York, New York.
1959-1960	Louis G. Feldmann* Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1960-1961	T.C. Connell* Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1961-1962	Robert E. Hansen Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.
1962-1963	Byron B. Gentry* Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1963-1964	Joseph J. Lombardo* Elected at Seattle, Washington.
1964-1965	John A. Jenkins* Elected at Cleveland, Ohio.
1965-1966	Andy Borg* Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1966-1967	Leslie M. Fry* Elected at New York, New York.
1967-1968	Joseph A. Scerra* Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1968-1969	Richard W. Homan Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1969-1970	Raymond A. Gallagher* Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1970-1971	Herbert R. Rainwater* Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.
1971-1972	Joseph L. Vicites* Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1972-1973	Patrick E. Carr* Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1973-1974	Ray R. Soden Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1974-1975	John J. Stang Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1975-1976	Thomas C. Walker* Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1976-1977	R. D. Smith Jr. Elected at New York, New York.
1977-1978	Dr. John Wasyluk Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1978-1979	Eric Sandstrom* Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1979-1980	Howard E. Vander Clute Jr.* Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1980-1981	T. C. Selman* Elected at Chicago, Illinois.

1980-1981	Arthur Fellwock Succeeded T.C. Selman, Oct. 21, 1980.
1980-1981	Arthur Fellwock Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1982-1983	James R. Currieo..... Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1983-1984	Clifford G. Olson Jr..... Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1984-1985	Billy Ray Cameron.....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1985-1986	John S. Staum Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1986-1987	Norman G. Staab..... Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1987-1988	Earl L. Stock* Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1988-1989	Larry W. Rivers .....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1989-1990	Walter G. Hogan Elected at Las Vegas, Nevada.
1990-1991	James L. Kimery* Elected at Baltimore, Maryland.
1991-1992	Robert E. Wallace Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1992-1993	John M. Carney Elected at Indianapolis, Indiana.
1993-1994	George R. Cramer..... Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1994-1995	Allen F. "Gunner" Kent..... Elected at Las Vegas, Nevada.
1995-1996	Paul A. Spera Elected at Phoenix, Arizona.
1996-1997	James E. Nier Elected at Louisville, Kentucky.
1997-1998	John E. Moon.....Elected at Salt Lake City, Utah.
1998-1999	Thomas A. Pouliot .....Elected at San Antonio, Texas.
1999-2000	John W. Smart..... Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.
2000-2001	John F. Gwizdak .....Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
2001-2002	James N. Goldsmith.....Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
2002-2003	Raymond C. Sisk* Elected at Nashville, Tennessee.
2003-2004	Edward S. Banas, Sr. Elected at San Antonio, Texas.
2004-2005	John Furgess Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
2005-2006	James R. Mueller .....Elected at Salt Lake City, Utah.
2006-2007	Gary L. Kurpius Elected at Reno, Nevada.
2007-2008	George J. Lisicki Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.
2008-2009	Glen M. Gardner, Jr. Elected at Orlando, Florida.
2009-2010	Thomas J. Tradewell, Sr. Elected at Phoenix, Arizona.

VFW National Officers and Directors, 2008-2009

Commander-in-Chief.....	Glen M. Gardner, Jr.
Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.....	Thomas J. Tradewell, Sr.
Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief	Richard L. Eubank
Adjutant General	Allen F. "Gunner" Kent
Quartermaster General	Lawrence M. Maher
Judge Advocate General	Walter Swanson
Surgeon General.....	Dr. James Tuorila

National Chaplain	Reverend Theodore Bowers
National Chief of Staff	Jimmie D. Cantrell
Inspector General	W. Benny Bachand
Assistant Adjutant General & Executive Director, Washington Office	Robert E. Wallace
Assistant Adjutant General, Operations.....	John J. McNeill
Assistant Quartermaster General.....	Robert B. Greene
Acting Director, VFW Foundation	Daniel M. Shea
Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General, Operations	Robert W. Crow
Director, Administration, Washington Office	Robert J. Gardner
Director, Administrative Operations.....	Kevin C. Jones
Director, Communications & Public Affairs, Kansas City.....	Jerry L. Newberry
Director, Communications & Public Affairs, Washington	Joseph E. Davis
Director, Emblem & Supply Department.....	M. L. "Bud" Cale
Director, General Services	David L. Swindler
Director, Information Technology/CIO	Patrick J. Botbyl
Director, Member Dues Processing.....	Robert A. Crider
Director, Membership.....	Matthew C. Claussen
Director, National Legislative Service	Dennis M. Cullinan
Director, National Military Services	Michael G. Penney
Director, National Security & Foreign Affairs.....	Michael H. Wysong
Director, National Veterans Service.....	William L. Bradshaw
Deputy Director, National Veterans Service	Gerald T. Manar
Director, Programs.....	Stephen L. Van Buskirk
Director, Properties.....	Billy R. Weissend
Director, Publications and Editor-in-Chief, VFW magazine	Richard K. Kolb
VFW Political Action Committee, Director	Larry W. Rivers

Regional National Council of Administration Members, 2008-2009

District No. 1 (ME NH)	Philip M. (Mike) Farrell
District No. 2 (MA VT)	John A. Martin
District No. 3 (MD NJ).....	Patrick J. Botbyl
District No. 4 (DC DE EU)	Richard F. Kennedy
District No. 5 (IN MO).....	William A. Thien
District No. 6 (VA WV)	Melvin L. Reed
District No. 7 (KY TN).....	Carl T. (Tom) Jackson
District No. 8 (AL GA)	John W. Hancock
District No. 9 (NC SC)	Richard N. Bell
District No.10 (AR OK).....	A. M. Armstrong

District No.11	(IA WI)	Earl D. Banks
District No.12	(ND WY)	Wayne L. Paulson
District No.13	(CO KS)	James L. (Larry) Mitchell
District No.14	(ID MT WA)	Raymond M. Lutz
District No.15	(AZ NM)	Frank V. Page
District No.16	(AK HI LAT PAC)	Preston (Nick) Nelson
District No.17	(NV OR UT)	Roy G. Kunzi
District No.18	(CT RI)	Leo R. Swider
District No.19	(LA MS)	Donald L. Verucchi
District No.21	(MN NE)	Richard E. Morrison
District No.23	(MI SD)	Gary Knudson
District A	(PA)	Peter Krenitsky
District B	(IL)	Terry W. Vance
District C	(NY)	Elton C. (Al) Klein
District D	(OH)	William K. Seagraves
District G	(CA)	Everett R. Martin
District H	(TX)	A. R. (Russ) Richards
District J	(FL)	Michael J. White
Past Commander-in-Chief		George J. Lisicki

National Honor Guard

Ronald E. Servary, Captain	521 MD
Alfred Nathaniel Simmons, Adjutant	8509 MD
Neil William Koski, Treasurer	6694 MD
Kenneth L. Britter	2562 MD
Eugene Daisey	5118 MD
Raymond H. Glock	1858 MD
Thomas V. Kimball, Jr.	10159 MD
Ronald Kitchen	434 MD
Gary Lee	3859 MD
Charles P. McConville	521 MD
Micheal McGuire	8849 MD
Phillip S. Medlin, Sr.	2678 MD
Stephen J. Olcott	9619 MD
Robert J. Patterson	6027 MD
Thomas E. Ryan, Sr.	10080 MD
Henry E. Servary	521 MD
Clinton A. Slack	475 DE
Carroll M. Smith, Jr.	8509 MD

Richard S. Udoff.....521 MD
 James L. Youngblood.....9083 MD

National Convention Committee
August 16-21, 2008, Orlando, Florida

Convention Committee Chairman John M. (Jack) Carney
 Operations Officer..... W. Benny Bachand
 Health Fair Chairman Kenneth A. Thie
 Meeting Halls, Signs & FlagsCo-Chairman..... Lewie Cooper
 Meeting Halls, Signs & FlagsCo-Chairman.....William E. Wentling
 Assistant Adjutant General Administration Operations John McNeill
 Manager, Meetings & Events.....Vanessa Kane, CMP, CMM
 Memorial Service Chairman Tom Kissell
 Patriotic Rally ChairmanBilly B. Moore
 Registration Chairman William J. Gault
 Transportation ChairmanStephen R. Surface
 Military/Contests Chairman Melvin L. Collins

National Sergeant-at-Arms

POST

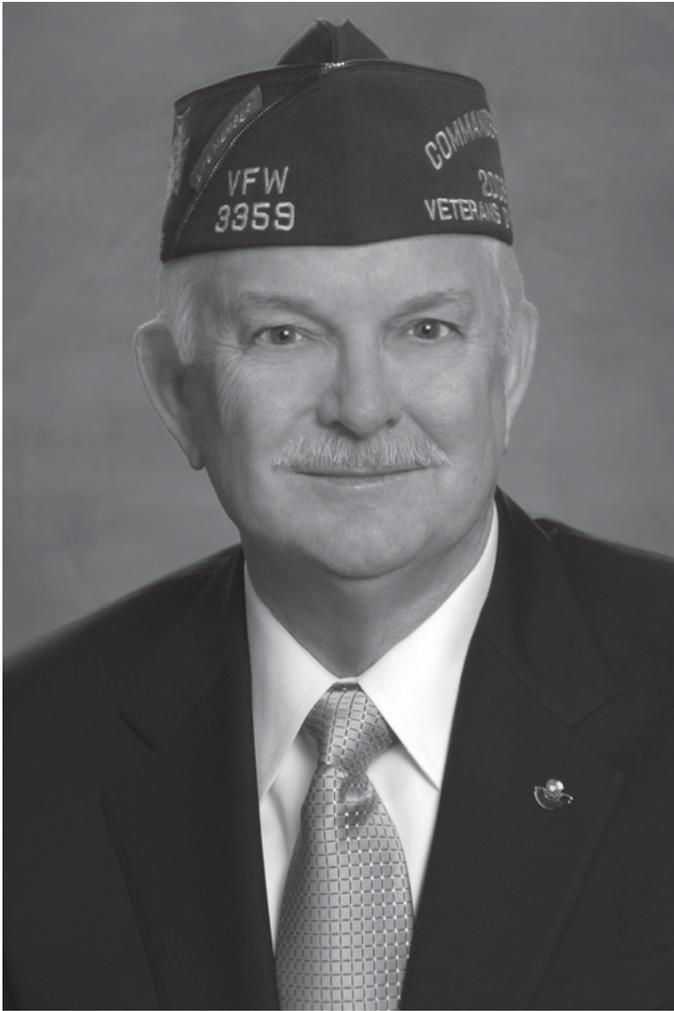
Bryan P. O'Brien..... 2394 MA

National Assistant Sergeants-at-Arms

Gary W. Barringer.....9134 NC
 Joy Ausman 10043 ID
 James M. Galen6802 MI
 Keith J. MacDonald 2275 CA
 Joseph P. Schirmers.....4847 MN
 L. Edward Villiaume, III..... 6827 FL
 Lonnie Garza.....7110 TX



George J. Lisicki
Commander-in-Chief
2007-2008



Glen M. Gardner Jr.
Commander-in-Chief
2008-2009

VFW National Officers and Directors, 2009-2010

Commander-in-Chief.....	Thomas J. Tradewell, Sr
Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.....	Richard L. Eubank
Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief.....	Richard L. DeNoyer
Adjutant General.....	Allen F. "Gunner" Kent
Quartermaster General.....	Lawrence M. Maher
Judge Advocate General.....	Vito S. DeMarco
Surgeon General.....	Dennis G. Guthrie
National Chaplain.....	Rev. Valentin R. Obregon
National Chief of Staff.....	Earl D. Banks, Jr.
Inspector General.....	Rick W. Barg
Assistant Adjutant General & Executive Director, Washington Office.....	Robert E. Wallace
Assistant Adjutant General, Operations.....	John J. McNeill
Assistant Quartermaster General.....	Robert B. Greene
Director, Administration & National Legislative Service.....	Eric A. Hilleman
Director, Administrative Operations.....	Kevin C. Jones
Director, Communications & Public Affairs, Kansas City.....	Jerry L. Newberry
Director, Communications & Public Affairs, Washington.....	Joseph E. Davis
Director, Human Resources.....	Debra L. Anderson
Director, Information Technology/CIO.....	Patrick J. Botbyl
Director, Member Dues Processing.....	Robert A. Crider
Director, Membership.....	Matthew C. Claussen
Director, National Military Services.....	Michael G. Penney
Director, National Veterans Service.....	William L. Bradshaw
Deputy Director, National Veterans Service.....	Gerald T. Manar
Director, Programs.....	Stephen L. Van Buskirk
Director, Properties.....	Billy R. Weissend
Director, Publications and Editor-in-Chief, VFW magazine.....	Richard K. Kolb
Director, VFW Foundation.....	Daniel M. Shea
VFW Political Action Committee, Director.....	Salvatore J. Capirchio

Regional National Council of Administration Members, 2009-2010

District No. 1 (ME NH).....	Eugene A. Pawlik
District No. 2 (MA VT).....	John A. Martin
District No. 3 (MD NJ).....	James L. Youngblood
District No. 4 (DC DE EU).....	Richard F. Kennedy
District No. 5 (IN MO).....	Paul E. Connors

District No. 6	(VA WV)	.....	Melvin L. Reed
District No. 7	(KY TN)	.....	John H. Ranson
District No. 8	(AL GA)	.....	John W. Hancock
District No. 9	(NC SC)	.....	Roy C. Meares
District No.10	(AR OK)	.....	A. M. Armstrong
District No.11	(IA WI)	.....	Larry J. Larson
District No.12	(ND WY)	.....	Wayne L. Paulson
District No.13	(CO KS)	.....	Charley L. Shoemaker
District No.14	(ID MT WA)	.....	Raymond M. Lutz
District No.15	(AZ NM)	.....	Vincent B. J. Lawrence
District No.16	(AK HI LAT PAC)	.....	Preston E. (Nick) Nelson
District No.17	(NV OR UT)	.....	Michael H. Musgrove
District No.18	(CT RI)	.....	Leo R. Swider
District No.19	(LA MS)	.....	Thomas J. Kijak
District No.21	(MN NE)	.....	Steven P. Van Bergen
District No.23	(MI SD)	.....	William A. Dobbie
District A	(PA)	.....	Albert S. Thomas, Jr.
District B	(IL)	.....	Donald R. Smithenry
District C	(NY)	.....	Bernard L. Thompson
District D	(OH)	.....	William K. Seagraves
District G	(CA)	.....	John P. Wolfe
District H	(TX)	.....	A. R. (Russ) Richards
District J	(FL)	.....	Robert Shepherd
Past Commander-in-Chief		.....	Glen M. Gardner, Jr.

National Honor Guard

Ronald Servary, Captain	.....	521 MD
Alfred Simmons, Adjutant Quartermaster	.....	8509 MD
Eugene Daisey	.....	5118 MD
Barbara Floyd	.....	521 MD
Raymond Glock	.....	1858 MD
Thomas Kimball	.....	10159 MD
Neil Koski	.....	6694 MD
Gary Lee	.....	609 VA
Charles McConville	.....	521 MD
Michael McGuire	.....	8849 MD
Phillip Medlin	.....	2678 MD
Stephen Olcott	.....	9619 MD
Robert Patterson	.....	6027 MD

Henry Servary.....	521 MD
Clinton Slack.....	475 DE
James Youngblood	9083 MD

National Convention Committee
August 15-20, 2009, Phoenix, Arizona

Convention Committee Chairman	James R. Currieo
Operations Officer.....	Raymond K. Thomas
Health Fair Chairman	Robert Rankin
Meeting Halls, Signs & FlagsCo-Chairman.....	Lewie Cooper
Meeting Halls, Signs & FlagsCo-Chairman.....	William Silvia
Assistant Adjutant General Administration Operations	John McNeill
Manager, Meetings & Events.....	Vanessa Kane, CMP, CMM
Memorial Service Chairman	John Halstead
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Registration Chairman	Bertha Gripp
Transportation Chairman	Christopher Kozakiewicz
Military/Contests Chairman	Shorty Larson

National Sergeant-at-Arms

	POST
Bryan P. O'Brien.....	2394 MA

National Assistant Sergeants-at-Arms

Gary W. Barringer.....	9134 NC
Joy Ausman	10043 ID
James M. Galen.....	6802 MI
Keith J. MacDonald	2275 CA
Joseph P. Schirmers.....	4847 MN
L. Edward Villiaume, III.....	6827 FL
Lonnie Garza.....	7110 TX

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE 110th NATIONAL
CONVENTION OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN
WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

PHOENIX, ARIZONA, AUGUST 16-20, 2009

ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE
SUNDAY, AUGUST 16, 2009

(The Memorial Service of the 110th Annual Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held at the Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Arizona, was called to order at 8:24 o'clock a.m., with Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner presiding. The Gold Star Parents, Gold Star Wives, National Officers and Past National Chaplains were escorted by the Sergeants-at-Arms.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Sergeant-at-Arms, you will prepare the hall for the Advancement and Posting of the Colors.

ADVANCE OF COLORS

(Whereupon, the VFW National Honor Guard Advanced the Colors followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. The singing of the National Anthem was led by Soloist Juanita Bohlman.)

INVOCATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Two of the VFW's great Chiefs have passed away during this administrative year: Cooper T. Holt on May 1st, 2009, and Clyde A. Lewis on February the 5th, 2009.

I want to acknowledge the presence of Chief Holt's daughter Cynthia Pappas, her husband Gus, and son, Cooper T.

The family of Clyde Lewis is represented by son John Lewis and grandson David. Father Clyde Lewis, another son, could not be with us.

Michael DeMik will now play "America the Beautiful."

(Whereupon, the "America the Beautiful" was played on the bagpipes by Michael DeMik.)

MEMORIAL RITUAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Comrades, Ladies Auxiliary and friends, we have met at this time to commemorate our comrades of the United States Armed Forces who have answered the last call. The VFW Ritual provides that the audience should refrain from applauding. The Chief of Staff will see that there is no disturbance during the ceremony.

NATIONAL CHIEF OF STAFF CANTRELL: Commander-in-Chief, your orders will be obeyed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I request that the National Chaplain preside.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am at your service and shall endeavor to perform this solemn duty in the spirit of faith, hope and charity.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, to whom should the true soldier look for help in the battles of life?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: Comrade Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, what assurance have we of a prolonged stay among the seasons and activities of earth?

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TRADEWELL: For we are strangers before Thee and sojourners. As with all our fathers; our days on earth are the shadow, and there is none abiding.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: Comrade Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, have you a message of condolence for those bereaved?

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF EUBANK: I have. The Book of Life tells us that, "Like a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth those who fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust."

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: What message has the Chaplain of the Ladies Auxiliary?

CHAPLAIN GWEN RANKIN: I have a message of hope that should inspire our comrades at this solemn moment and all through life. The message is from the Captain of our Salvation. He says, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: Comrades, we are thankful for those inspiring thoughts. Let us learn the lesson of the hour which is that we, too, are nearing the end of life's pilgrimage and sooner or later these services may be held in our memory.

Let us so live that when our summons comes we may depart with a good conscience in the comfort of a sincere religion, belief in God and perfect charity toward all mankind. Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, as today we remember and honor the memory of our departed comrades and sisters, we are indeed grateful for their service and sacrifice. May we continue their efforts as courageous protectors and true guardians of freedom. Let us be masters of brotherly and sisterly love. Oh, Lord, guide us in the way of moral responsibility and enlighten us and make us true believers in justice and peace, and kindle within us a flame of selfless, unwavering devotion to duty, that we may never be found wanting those qualities of spirit and mind which alone are able to preserve our homes, the peace of our nation, the tranquility of the world. Remember our departed comrades and sisters, oh, Lord, in Your mercy, and have compassion on us.

Buddy Reynolds, the Arizona Assistant State Chaplain and Soloist, will now sing "Sleep Soldier Boy."

(Whereupon, Arizona Assistant State Chaplain and Soloist Buddy Reynolds sang "Sleep Soldier Boy.")

SYMBOLIC TRIBUTE

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: Comrades, in commemorating virtues of our departed heroes who served their country in time of need, we now offer our symbolic tributes.

I place upon the sacred shrine these red flowers, which symbolize the zeal of our departed comrades in upholding brotherhood, truth and justice.

Comrade Past Commander-in-Chief, what tribute have you to offer?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: These white flowers I place as a token of the purity of affection we have for our departed comrades.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, have you a tribute to place upon this sacred shrine?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The blue of our national standard symbolizes truth and fidelity. Therefore, I place these blue flowers from nature's bosom in token of our sincere respect for all of our departed comrades.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: Ladies of the Auxiliary, will you offer a tribute to the memory of our departed comrades?

LADIES AUXILIARY NATIONAL PRESIDENT DIXIE HILD: I place upon our sacred shrine this wreath as a symbol of eternity: Its color bespeaks life everlasting. Thus do we say that the deeds of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines, on land, on sea and in the air, are immortalized in the hearts of a grateful people.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: Juanita Bohlman will now sing "The Lord's Prayer."

(Whereupon, Ladies Auxiliary National Soloist Juanita Bohlman sang "The Lord's Prayer.")

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Chaplain Richard A. Tatum, the First, is a Protestant Chaplain at Luke Air Force Base here in Phoenix, and serves as the primary pastor of the Luke Gospel Worship Service. He also serves as the supervisor for two contractors and coordinates ministry of 35 volunteers. He is Chaplain Advisor to Protestant Youth of the Chapel, Protestant Women of the Chapel and the Protestant Religious Education program.

He provides visitation to the 56th Maintenance Group and the 756th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, as well as for the 607th Air Control Squadron. Captain Tatum provides worship, pastoral care and religious rites to military, family members, civilians and contractors at Luke Air Force Base.

Before his commissioning, Chaplain Tatum had 14 and one-half years of enlisted experience with the Air Force. He entered basic training in November 1983 and eventually came on active duty in February 1986. He received his commission as a 2nd Lieutenant and designated as a Chaplain Candidate in February of 1998. In March 2001 he received his appointment as a Chaplain, and re-entered active duty in July 2002. He is endorsed by Chaplaincy Full Gospel Churches.

Chaplain Tatum accepted his calling to the preaching ministry in September 1986. He and his wife, the former Leona Green, have three

children: Richard II, Ashley and Jeanetta, and three grandchildren: Xiana, Richard III and Amon.
Chaplain Tatum.

MEMORIAL ADDRESS

CHAPLAIN TATUM: In my public speaking time I was taught to open with a catchy phrase or something that will get your attention. So I want to do that by asking you a question. What do a fish, cow, chicken and pig have in common?

While you are thinking about it, and some of you may already have the answer, I want to say thank you for this opportunity to speak at this great gathering of American citizens, warriors and former warriors if there be such a thing.

They have already introduced me as Richard Tatum. I am a Chaplain with the United States Air Force. I have been assigned at Luke for nearly two years. However, who I am is not as important, in my estimation, as what I am and the reason that I am here to celebrate and to memorialize those who have gone before me.

I am a member of the United States Air Forces. That is my great calling. It is my joy. And although I consider it the most important thing that I do in life now, my family may disagree. But it is for them that I do what I do, and have done what I have done, just like many of you, many of your friends, many of your family members before me.

Today I want to talk to you about a word called "sacrifice." It is a word that many of you are all too familiar with, either because of your own service to your country, or the service of your family members or friends or neighbors. It is all too familiar, that word, "sacrifice."

For more than 12 years of my military career I was in the journalism career field. And so today I want to take a journalistic approach to this word, "sacrifice." In our journalism career field, we were taught to cover the whole story. In covering the whole story, we had to cover what we called the five "W's" and the "H." The "who," the "what," the "when," the "where," the "why," and the "how."

Although I may not go with them in that particular order, my endeavor is to cover each aspect, and my desire is to be as brief as possible.

So let's go back to the question that I asked you to begin with. What answers did you come up with? Okay. It is a quiet hour, but – the main thing that we look at, is that those particular animals, in order for you to have meat, must die. However, just because they die, doesn't mean that they really, freely sacrificed themselves.

The word "sacrifice," according to dictionary.com, can be substituted with, "to give up," "to forgo," "to forfeit," "to let go of," or "to surrender."

As I looked at it, I found that this word went from religious aspects such as to sacrifice one's self or to sacrifice an animal for a cause, but that it rings not only from a religious aspect, but also all the way to sporting events or sporting terms, such as a sacrifice bunt, or a sacrifice fly.

But when I looked even deeper at the word and I looked at the origin, the word comes from the Latin word called "sacrificium." And that word, when put together, the "sacri" is holy, and the "ficium" is to do or to make. So when you sacrifice, it is to make something holy, or to make something greater than yourself, or to give of yourself for something that is greater

than you.

Today I want to focus on the definition which means to surrender or to prize something above yourself. Many of our military members have done that. They have sacrificed for the cause of our country. They have prized our freedom, our liberties, our joys, more valued than themselves.

When I was doing research for this particular topic, I found some interesting quotes. And, of course, one of my favorite quotes comes from my faith tradition, which is found in the Holy Bible in the Book of John, Chapter 15, Verses 12 through 13. It states, "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he would lay down his life for his friend."

Love sometimes requires sacrifice. To say that "I love you," to say that "I love this country," sometimes will require a greater sacrifice. However, I want you to think about this. What if every American citizen said, "I'm sorry, but I'm not willing to sacrifice. I would rather sleep in my bed, than sleep in a foxhole. I would rather eat at my table than to eat K-rations or C-rations," or in today's terms, Meals Ready to Eat.

"I would rather have solicitors knocking on my door, than knocking down the doors to find terrorists who threaten our very existence. I would rather have my son or daughter go to college, than to join the military and take a chance on dying on foreign soils."

However, the fact of the matter is that they are in more danger, more often, when they get in their cars or when they walk to school or hang out at the malls, than they would be if they joined the military. However, we don't always see these dangers, and so therefore we assume that they are safe.

Some also say, "I would rather drive my Lexus or my Beamer down a road full of potholes and complain, rather than to drive Hummers and tanks down roads and paths with improvised explosive devices," also known as IEDs.

What if no one was willing to sacrifice for the greater good? I guarantee you that we would not be the free nation that we are or enjoy the liberties that we enjoy.

Another interesting quote that I came across when doing this study came from Idi Amin, who was a Ugandan military leader and statesman. He said, "In any country, there must be people who will die. They are the sacrifices any nation has to make to achieve law and order."

Ben Nelson said, "The security of our nation depends on the men and women who are willing to sacrifice their safety and possibly their lives to protect the freedoms the rest of us enjoy."

And James Allen said, "He who would accomplish little, must sacrifice little. He who would achieve much, must sacrifice much. And he who would attain highly, must sacrifice greatly."

So today I want to go into the "where." Where have we sacrificed? As military members and families who are left behind, we have sacrificed in the jungles of Asia and the deserts and the mountains of southwest Asia, on the sands and beaches of Europe, in the jungles and streets of Africa, most recently in the skies and in the streets of the United States, as September 11th testifies.

We have sacrificed on nearly every continent, in scores and scores of countries, in many heated cities and hillsides, in urban development, as well as rural terrain. We have sacrificed in the skies, we have sacrificed on

land, we have sacrificed on seas, and underwater in submarines. We have sacrificed in places that are unknown. We have sacrificed in climates that are very extreme, but no climate has been too hot or too cold for the sake of freedom.

“When” have we sacrificed? We have had men making sacrifices since before this nation even began to be a nation. It began when a bunch of rag-tag but rugged militia men, fighting for the freedom and justice that they so desired, not only for themselves, but for posterity. Fighting against oppression and tyranny.

Today we still do the same thing. So from the 1700s to today, nearly every generation of our American citizens have had to make sacrifices in order for us to maintain our freedoms.

So this brings us to “why” we sacrifice. For some of us, it is for the freedoms and liberties that we sacrifice. We have taken those freedoms and liberties for granted. Only about one percent of America’s citizens will serve in the United States military, in any branch of service. And yet from generation to generation, our warriors have been misunderstood and maligned by those who we are fighting for.

We have been ostracized, ridiculed, abused, spat on, faced violence, and even killed by those we have sworn to protect and defend, because we have sworn to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States, which includes its citizens.

So why do we continue to do what we do, to endure the harshness and hardships of misunderstanding? For some, it is out of pure love. Love for family, love for friends, love for neighbors, love for our country.

For some, it is for a sense of pride. It is about duty. It is about honor. It is about responsibility. Despite the hardships and sacrifices, we still see serving as a privilege and a responsibility. Even right now, we have thousands of American warriors who have been deployed and are being deployed around the world in harm’s way. Most of whom, if not all, will experience some level of uncomfortableness, whether they are lonely and missing home, hungry from missing meals, or miserable because of weather conditions.

But why do we continue? Because freedom is important. And freedom is not free. It is not without sacrifice, that we enjoy our freedoms.

We do it not only for ourselves, but for our families, for our friends, and for our fellow citizens, most of whom we may never know.

This takes me to a transition of “who” are the ones who are making sacrifices? As I make this transition, I want to tell you about two American airmen, both of whom were assigned to Luke Air Force Base, both of whom made great sacrifices. Although these are only two individuals, they represent thousands more just like them.

The first one I want to tell you about is a Tech Sergeant Matt Slayton of the 56th Engineering Support Squadron, who was an explosive ordnance device team leader. Tech Sergeant Slayton will be retiring on August the 27th of this month, after only 17 years of service with the Air Force. Most of you realize that 17 years is not necessarily considered a military career.

So what happened? Sergeant Slayton was deployed in October of 2007. While doing his job as an EOD specialist in Kirkuk, Iraq, an IED exploded. He lost many parts of his body. He has gone through many surgeries and countless hours of rehab.

Some would say that he is one of the lucky ones. If you can call leav-

ing some of your body parts unfound on foreign soil, and having your life permanently altered, lucky, then I guess he would be one of the lucky ones. Like many other military heroes, he would say, "I was just doing my job."

The same could be said of Major Troy "Trojan" Gilbert, who devoted 12 years of distinguished service to the Air Force. On a Web site dedicated to maintaining his legacy, gilbertmemorial.org, I found these words:

"The son of a military family, his values and devotion to duty were reflected in every facet of his life. Trojan spent the last two years assigned as an F-16 Instructor Pilot at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, deploying to Balad Air Force Base, Iraq, in September 2006. He believed with all his heart in the mission being carried out there, and gave his life protecting personnel actively engaged in ground combat near Fallujah, Iraq, on 27 November 2006. His selfless dedication as a Christian, father, and military officer is without equal, and all who know and love him are thankful for the gifts he brought to our lives."

Major Gilbert was assigned to the 309th Fighter Squadron as the Assistant Director of Operations when he deployed. In addition to being an F-16 instructor pilot, he was a flight examiner and flight commander. He had logged more than 13 years of combat experience, supporting Operation Allied Force, Northern Watch, and Iraqi Freedom. Among his decorations, he was posthumously awarded the distinguished Cross of Valor and a Purple Heart.

Although I did not know either of these Luke warriors, as a Chaplain I have the unenviable task of meeting many family members from all branches of service out at Luke Air Force Base as they gather to meet the remains of their loved ones who gave the ultimate sacrifice, their lives, dying, doing what their country needed.

I want to share a few stats with you. As of yesterday, we have had more than 4,335 military members and civilians to die in support of Iraqi Freedom. Nearly 3,500 of them were killed in action, 870 in non-hostile actions. We have had more than 17,000, the exact number is 17,612, to be injured while serving in support of Iraqi Freedom. 13,851 of them were not able to return to duty.

Supporting Operation Enduring Freedom over in Afghanistan and other places in the Middle East, we have had 777 military members to die. That includes one civilian. Of that, 537 were killed in action, 240 in non-hostile actions. Of that, we have also had 1,328 wounded and returned to duty, but another 2,194 wounded and unable to return to the fight.

So I briefly want to mention "how" these sacrifices came to be, how these sacrifices were made by these military members. These sacrifices are made on various levels, whether through discomfort and pain, through the loss of limbs, or even through what we call the ultimate sacrifice, the giving of one's life for family, for friends, for strangers, for comrades, for fellow citizens, and even illegal aliens. These sacrifices have come through blood, sweat and tears, and many in times of great anguish and through the loss of life.

Many times these sacrifices have come not only through the giving of yourself physically, but it has caused some their educational endeavors and pursuits. It has cost some financial gain and security. It has cost some the loss of social and economic status. It has cost some the loss of family and friends who did not understand what they were doing, and walked out on them. For a great many, the cost has been the loss of physical and mental

abilities.

Our soldiers, marines, airmen and sailors, even our Coast Guard and civilian DoD employees are returning to us, some broken, fragile, weary, worn, maimed, sick, lonely, and sometimes all alone. They are returning to us in bags and in coffins because they were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice, that we may continue to enjoy the freedoms we enjoy today. Whether some are willing or unwilling, the sacrifices had to be made.

But I want you to remember this: That it is not the fish, the cow, the chicken or the pig that make an ultimate sacrifice just because they die, but rather it is our nation's citizens who willingly put their lives and livelihoods on the line for the greater good, the good of our nation.

I would like to conclude with a quote by Susan Collins. She says, "We can never fully repay the debt of our proud nation to those who have laid down their lives for our country. The best we can do is honor their memory, ensure that their sacrifice is not in vain, and help provide for their families."

As we remember our fallen fellow warriors, let us not just remember them in this Memorial Service, but let this be a call to action, as Ms. Collins states, to ensure that their sacrifice is not in vain, and to help the families of those deceased. I will take it one step further and say, to care for those who have survived, but lost body parts and/or their mental abilities while supporting and defending our country.

Thank you again for this opportunity to share in this Memorial Service. May we never forget to honor, remember, celebrate and to take care of our American warriors, military and civilian, Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, Navy, and other para and obscure militia forces. May God richly bless and keep you all.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: Buddy Reynolds will now sing, "Another Soldier is coming Home."

(Whereupon, Soloist Buddy Reynolds sang "Another Soldier is Coming Home.")

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: At this time, in memory of Past Commanders-in-Chief Clyde A. Lewis and Cooper T. Holt, red roses will be presented to their families.

Our sincere sympathy is extended to family and friends.

Please stand for the benediction by Chaplain Arnold E. Bulick, and remain standing for "Taps."

BENEDICTION

CHAPLAIN "ARNIE" BULICK: Comrades and sisters, when we joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, we signed a declaration that we believed in God. We did not need state whether we were Catholic, Protestant, whether we were Jewish or Muslim, only that we believed in God. And that is certainly a good thing because we are all God's children.

My knowledge of Hebrew is extremely limited. I know absolutely nothing in Farsi or Arabic. So if any of this congregation is other than Christian, I want you to take my words, I want you to translate them to the language of your faith in God, and please, everyone here prepare your hearts to receive a blessing from the Lord.

Our precious heavenly Father, there are many here that today have heavy hearts, some with illnesses and disabilities of the body and of the mind. Lord, some have things that weigh so heavy on their mind, that it

keeps them from their full potential of an abundant life on this earth.

Right now, Lord, this prayer is to request that those that are seeking justice from the country that they served so well, will receive their just compensation. And, Lord, there are some here that are seeking a job at this very moment in their lives. Help them, Lord, to find the work and the position that is satisfactory to their needs on this earth.

We call on you, Lord, to give the healing and the compassion to those that have the illness and hurts of which we spoke.

Finally, Lord, this has been a very emotional time today. So for this congregation of your children, I pray, Lord, for a double portion of the love of God, of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the comfort from the Holy Spirit. Oh, God, may you continue your blessings upon America and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of these United States.

And everybody says, "Amen."

FROM THE FLOOR: Amen.

(Whereupon, "Taps" was played by David Geffen of Bugles Across America.)

RETIRING OF COLORS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: National Sergeant-at-Arms, prepare the hall for Retiring of the Colors.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief.

(Whereupon, the Retiring of the Colors was performed by the VFW National Honor Guard.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: We would like to acknowledge and thank all the participants who contributed to making this program a success. We especially would like to acknowledge the Gold Star Parents and Gold Star Wives for being with us this morning.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the Gold Parents, Gold Star Wives, past National Chaplains and honored guests from the room.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief.

(Whereupon, National Sergeants-at-Arms escorted the Gold Star Parents, Gold Star Wives, Past National Chaplains from the assembly at this time.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: This concludes our Memorial Service. We thank you for your attendance. Enjoy the rest of our Convention.

(Whereupon, the Memorial Service was concluded at 9:37 o'clock a.m.)

JOINT OPENING SESSION
MONDAY, AUGUST 17, 2009

(The Joint Opening Session of the 110th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the 96th National Convention of the Ladies Auxiliary was called to order on Monday, August 17, 2009, at 8:00 o'clock a.m., in the Phoenix Center, Phoenix, Arizona, by Adjutant General Allen "Gunner" Kent.)

CALL TO ORDER

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Welcome to the joint opening of the 110th VFW National Convention.

We want to extend a warm welcome to all of the service members and families from Luke Air Force Base who are our special guests today. Please stand and be recognized. (Applause)

Additionally, I am extremely pleased to have the privilege of introducing some very distinguished guests who are honoring us by being here today: President of the great Navajo Nation, Joe Shirley, Jr., and First Lady, Vikki Shirley, George Hardeen, Communications Director, Alton Shepherd, Executive Security, and Mike Carmillo, Executive Security. (Applause)

From that Nation came the legendary Navajo Code Talkers, to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for their service to the United States during World War II. (Applause)

Also I want to recognize the Director of the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services, Mr. Joey Strickland.

We want to acknowledge our generous sponsors for the 2009 VFW National Convention, as they are identified on the large screen. Special appreciation goes to our key sponsor, Life Lock, and to our supporters Anheuser-Busch and Jostens Jewelry Company. Please join me in giving them a round of applause. (Applause)

With us this morning are the representatives of the 2008-2009 Outstanding Community Service Posts. Please stand as a group and be recognized. (Applause)

This year 304 Commanders have earned the right to be named All-American. There are 47 Department Commanders, 63 District Commanders, and 196 Post Commanders. The Department Commanders will be presented their awards later this morning. Commanders, please stand and be recognized. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF NATIONAL CONVENTION CHAIRMAN
JAMES R. CURRIEO

Now, let me introduce this year's Convention Chairman, Past Commander-in-Chief James R. "Bob" Currieo.

REMARKS BY NATIONAL CONVENTION CHAIRMAN CURRIEO

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CURRIEO (National Convention Committee Chairman): Thank you, "Gunner". I bring you greetings from the Grand Canyon State and more than 6.5 million Arizonians, which include

nearly 36,000 VFW and Auxiliary members. Welcome to our great state and to its capital city of Phoenix.

We are extremely proud to host the 110th National Convention. We sincerely hope the time you spend with us will renew your pride in our nation, and this wonderful organization. Our conventions are a forum to rededicate your commitment to America's veterans and our military and bring new excitement to your work as a member of the VFW and Ladies Auxiliary.

Now, please rise as we officially open the Convention with the Advancing of the Colors.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will prepare the room to Advance the Colors.

ADVANCEMENT OF COLORS

(Whereupon, the National Honor Guard advanced the colors at this time.)

INVOCATION

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CURRIEO: For this morning's Invocation, we have the National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Reverend Theodore Bowers from Pennsylvania.

CHAPLAIN BOWERS: O God, our Heavenly Father, we pray that you will be with us at this time to guide the work of this Convention. Grant us wisdom to seek your will in all we undertake, and the courage to follow in the direction you would have us go. Keep us concerned about the welfare and improvement of our great organization, dedicated to the service and honor of our veterans, our military and their families.

Teach us to think wisely and carefully before we speak; to act with courage and conviction for the good of all; and, to deal charitably with one another, that we may all continue to enjoy mutual respect.

May we serve you in spirit and in truth that our accomplishments will be built upon the firm foundations of charity and justice so that our work both in private and public sessions bring credit to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and our Ladies Auxiliary.

We pause now to remember our men and women serving in harm's way. Give them courage and faith and a sense of your presence in the midst of their duties and responsibilities.

And now to you, O God, we give all honor and praise now and forevermore. Amen.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CURRIEO: Please remain standing as we recite the Pledge of Allegiance, the National Anthem sung by Juanita Bohlman, the Ladies Auxiliary National Soloist, and the posting of the Colors.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

(Whereupon, the Pledge of Allegiance was given by the assembly, followed by the National Anthem sung by Juanita Bohlman, the Ladies Auxiliary National Soloist, and the posting of the colors.)

(Whereupon, a video presentation was given on Commander-in-Chief Gardner's year.)

INTRODUCTION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
GLEN GARDNER, PRESENTATION OF OFFICIAL
CONVENTION BADGE, BELL AND GAVEL

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CURRIEO: It is now my pleasure to introduce a gentleman who has served veterans for many years, as well as serving this organization in a multitude of responsibilities, and is now our Commander-in-Chief.

Glen served in the U.S. Marine Corps in 1966-1970. He served as an aircraft mechanic with the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, Marine Aircraft Group 12 in Chu Lai, Vietnam, 1968-'69.

He was awarded the Combat Action Ribbon, Vietnam Service Medal with three Campaign Stars, the Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal with Device, and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry.

In 1969, Glen joined VFW Post 2993 in Olathe, Kansas. Later, when he moved to Texas, Glen transferred to Vickery Post 3359 in Garland, Texas, where he maintains his Life Membership. He was elected Post Commander in 1977 and again in 1983, and served as Post Quartermaster for five terms.

He earned the title of All-American District Commander in 1981-1982. Glen served as the Adjutant and Quartermaster for the Department of Texas for 22 years, from 1984 to 2006 when he resigned to assume the position of VFW National Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

Glen has served on several National Committees, including the National Bylaws Review Committee for 19 years and as Chairman of the Budget and Finance Committee in 1996-'97.

He was instrumental in forming the Texas Coalition of Veterans organizations. He chaired that 600,000-member group for 15 years.

Glen is a member of the Military Order of the Cootie, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans and the National Association of Uniformed Services. Please welcome our Commander-in-Chief Glen M. Gardner, Jr.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

REMARKS - COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARNDER: Thank you, Bob, very much. I want to thank your Committee. "Honor, Sacrifice and Service" continues to describe the work done by each of you in our great organization.

As we open the 110th Annual Convention, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the magnificent men and women serving in our armed forces. I want to thank each of them publicly, and their families for the silent sacrifices they make for our nation.

Recently, I had the highest privilege of visiting with our troops in Iraq. In spite of what you may have heard from some of the reporters on TV, I found a phenomenal resoluteness of spirit and remarkably high morale among our service members in Iraq.

It was clearly evident to me that the magnificent efforts and sacrifice of our military has prevailed and the nation of Iraq has virtually been reborn.

The transformation that is taking place is incredible in scope; an entire country and its people - once held hostage by the iron hand of Saddam Hussein, now has free elections and a working functioning government and its economy is on the rebound.

After six years of war, Iraqis are now able to defend their own country and as a result U.S. combat troops have left the last of Iraq's major cities. Because of our troops, Iraqi people are increasingly hopeful for their future.

During my visit to Kosovo I saw the great things our military accomplishes. I saw a free country rebuilding. I saw Albanian and Serbian children playing sports together. We have made a difference.

Our nation will win the war on terrorism, because our troops believe in what they are doing. And to me, I think they are a far more credible source than the media pundits and Sunday morning news shows talking heads that we listen to.

It is only because of such selfless devotion to duty, their sacrifices and their courage that we are able to live in a free country.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars is deeply involved in supporting the men and women of the armed forces and their families through our military service and veterans service departments. I am very proud of what we have been able to do on their behalf, and I know that we will continue to do much more for our military in the future.

During the last three years, I have visited the President in the Oval Office, met with four Cabinet members and every leader of Congress. I have met with the Minister of Defense in China, the President of Taiwan, National Security Committee in Russia, the Prime Minister of Australia, and veterans groups around the world.

Why was I able to do this? Not because of who I am, but who I represent. Because of each and every one of you and the respect everyone here and abroad has for our great organization, all of this is possible. So thanks to all of you for what you continue to do for the VFW and America's veterans.

During this year, I also made an effort to visit as many military bases as I could. I met with commanding officers, staff NCOs, and most of all, junior enlisted and each had a unique and different view of the VFW and what we do. We must never forget they are our future.

I also not only met with VA Secretary Shinseki on several occasions, but visited VA facilities across the country. I can assure you because of hard-working dedicated employees like the Dallas Hospital Director Joe Dalpiaz and veterans advocate Dave Herod, both with us today, veterans are receiving the best health care ever.

Are there still some problems with claims and the time to get them adjudicated? Yes, but I can assure you the Secretary and his staff are aware of the issue and are concerned.

This 110th National Convention provides us the opportunity to conduct critical business and pay tribute to some great Americans. Our organization faces challenges it has never faced before, and we all must work to strengthen the foundation for the future. Times are changing and we must change as well. Financial problems this year made us face new challenges and will continue into the near future, but working together we will continue to be the number one veterans' advocate organization. (Applause)

During this Convention, we will make definitive plans for the future and, of course, the passing of the colors at the end of the week that signi-

fies a change in leadership for this magnificent organization and the very important mission we have in helping those who deserve it most.

Remember, this is your Convention. If there are issues you are concerned with that are brought up on the Convention floor, feel free to express your opinion. It does no good to go to the Hospitality Room and talk about it or get back home and say "I wasn't for that." If you have your say and still lose, you can at least say you tried.

I appreciate the support of the many members, former commanders, and other distinguished guests who are present. Thank you for your continued interest and support of your VFW, our nation's veterans, military service members and their families.

I owe a special thanks to several people. In fact, too many to name them all, but some I must mention because without their help and support I would never have had the opportunity to be the Commander-in-Chief of the greatest veterans' organization, the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

VFW Post 3359, Garland, District 3, Department of Texas and the Southern Conference for their help and support over the years.

I would like to recognize Rael Cox, Post 3359, Jimmie Cantrell, Gailon Fletcher, Past Commanders-in-Chief Ted Connell, Larry Rivers, Jim Nier and Jack Carney. Those hardworking Adjutant Quartermasters I worked with over the years like Cleve Cox, Benny Bachand, Precilla Wilkewitz, Johnny Richard, Travis Whaley, and the many others. Thanks for your support and assistance. I had a great Ladies Auxiliary President, Dixie Hild.

As your National Commander, I have been privileged to have as part of my leadership team, two outstanding leaders: Senior Vice Commander Tommy Tradewell, and Junior Vice Commander Richard Eubank. Gentlemen, thank you for your hard work and support over the past year.

To the next two leaders who have been selected to represent our organization, Rich DeNoyer, and the next great leader from the Southern Conference, John Hamilton, I wish you the best as you go forward and lead this great organization. I will be there for any of you if you need my help.

Over the last 25 years, I have worked closely with the staffs in Kansas City and Washington, and the last three years just enhanced my appreciation for what they all do for our great organization.

To our Adjutant General "Gunner" Kent, our Quartermaster General Larry Maher, Executive Director Bob Wallace, and all the directors and staff members, thanks for your help and support over the last three years as a chair officer in the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Our staff members are working hard to lead the VFW into the future. We are losing some long-time employees because of retirement, and I especially want to thank them and wish them all the best.

We, the VFW, remain an exclusive and elite club. We certainly are bound by traditions and values, but there are a litany of other things that connect and unite us and reinforce what we are all about.

The lifetime friendships we share – based on common shared experiences; the challenges we meet and overcome together; the pride that swells deeply within when we see the flag of our nation and the ideals it so personifies; the appreciation we have for each other's constant efforts to improve the lives of those who deserve it most, our nation's veterans, the military and their families. (Applause)

These and many, many other relatively seemingly small events are part of the total glue that bonds us together forever. It is an intangible trait deep

in our hearts and once there, never leaves us.

Did we accomplish everything we wanted this year? No. But we did our best and that is all anyone can expect.

I would be remiss if I didn't especially say thank you to the "Honor, Sacrifice, Service" team of 54 Department Commanders who worked so hard this year for the VFW.

"Honor, Sacrifice, Service" will remain our legacy. We did our best.

I will always be eternally grateful for having had the rare and honored privilege to serve as your Commander-in-Chief. It is something that I couldn't have possibly imagined 40 years ago when I returned from Vietnam and joined the VFW.

In closing, I must also thank the person that made the greatest sacrifice over the last three years, my wife Jean, because without her help, support and encouragement, none of this would have been possible. I love her.

Thank you once again for what you do for the VFW, America's veterans and most of all, our military and their families. God bless you, God bless all of those on active duty, and God continue to bless America. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF VFW GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT AND CITATION TO DIXIE HILD, NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE LADIES AUXILIARY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: It is now my distinct pleasure to introduce the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Dixie Hild, of Omaha, Nebraska, was elected National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States at its 95th Auxiliary National Convention in Orlando, Florida, on Thursday, August 21, 2008.

In her acceptance speech, she introduced her 2008-2009 theme, "Our Dreams Become Rainbows", as a challenge to the members to understand that when they work together, that hard work for veterans and their communities indeed becomes rainbows of hope for our country.

Dixie is eligible through her husband, Rolland, who served in the U.S. Army in Vietnam, and is a Nebraska Past State Commander.

Dixie began her 24-year involvement by joining Herman Godbersen Auxiliary 8334 in Millerd, Nebraska.

She has served as Auxiliary and District President, and in 1994-1995 when she was State President, she was named Runner-Up President of the Year in her membership group.

She has served in numerous other capacities for the organization, including three terms as Department Chief of Staff.

On the National level, she has served as National Aide-de-Camp, Convention page, flag barer, Youth Activities and Voice of Democracy Director, Buddy Poppy Director and Big Ten Conference Chairman for the Safety, Legislative and Community Service Programs.

Retired after 21 years in insurance and bonding management, and five years in pharmaceutical sales, Dixie holds memberships in the Military Order of the Cootie's Auxiliary, American Legion Auxiliary, and is a Life Member of the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary. She is also very active in her community through the Divine Shepherd Lutheran Church.

I am very pleased to now present the VFW Gold Medal of Merit to my exemplary counterpart, National Auxiliary President, Dixie Hild. (Ap-

plause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Gold Medal of Merit and Citation awarded to Dixie Hild, National President, Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, 2008-2009.

"In esteemed recognition and sincere appreciation of her endless dedication and undying patriotism as the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary. Her theme 'Our Dreams Become Rainbows,' reflects her distinct and unique vision and will serve as the true and honorable legacy of her presidency.

"Her wealth of experience and lifelong commitment to the objectives of the VFW and Ladies Auxiliary, as well as her remarkable leadership among and to the VFW community, has justly earned her the highest level of admiration, respect and gratitude of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 17th day of August, 2009." This has been signed by Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – NATIONAL LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT, DIXIE HILD

NATIONAL LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT HILD: Commander-in-Chief Gardner, National VFW and Ladies Auxiliary Officers, Past Commanders-in-Chief, Past National Presidents, Comrades, Sisters and Guests:

I am so very proud and honored to receive this award from the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I thank you most sincerely. "Our Dreams Become Rainbows." That has been my theme for the 2008-2009 year. At the beginning of this year, I explained how an Auxiliary sister at the local level when she has an idea that is a dream, a dream for her.

When we worked and we worked and we made it into a reality and the result always seemed to be some sort of rainbow, a beautiful display of teamwork and energy.

Our country is in the midst of a storm. Our economy falters, our soldiers are dying in foreign lands, and we have enemies abroad and at home. But our country has weathered these storms before, the Great Depression, both World Wars, and the assassinations of governmental officials, diplomatic conflicts. Not one of these signs did this country weaken because of this. We always rebound bigger, better, stronger and more importantly wiser.

This storm will pass and just as the thunderhead moves on the sun will push through the clouds and hit the last raindrops, refracting a million times over, splitting the light spectrum into a thing of beauty, which is our rainbow, which is our sign of hope.

That is what we are, the members of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. We have strived to give the veterans hope. They are not forgotten, they are worth fighting for on Capitol Hill. Their lives are very precious in all of our sights.

We raised millions of dollars and volunteer even more millions of hours. The greatest thing we do is to give hope. May this Convention be a celebration of the passion and the hard work that each of us invest in the lives of our true heroes, the American military men and women.

Commander-in-Chief, I wish for you and all of the members of the Vet-

erans of Foreign Wars a most successful Convention this week. Thank you so very much for having me today.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE JANICE BREWER, GOVERNOR OF ARIZONA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: We are very pleased and honored to have Governor Jan Brewer here with us today. I would like to highlight a few things about the Governor's distinguished career in public service.

She came to Arizona in 1970 and became active in her community. She was elected to the Arizona House of Representatives in 1983, and then to the State Senate in 1987. She served for 14 years in the legislature, becoming a highly-respected member of both Houses. Prior to that, she served as Maricopa County Supervisor.

In 2002, she was elected Secretary of State, and was re-elected in 2006. Governor Brewer has always worked even-handedly and without partisan rancor to inspire public confidence in the state's political processes and to make government more accessible and efficient.

On January 21, 2009, she took the oath of office to become Arizona's twenty-second Governor. Allow me to introduce the Honorable Janice Kay Brewer, Governor of the State of Arizona. (Applause)

GREETINGS – THE HONORABLE JANICE BREWER

GOVERNOR BREWER: Good morning. Thank you and good morning to all you veterans. It is such an honor to be in this room with you today to be part of this National Convention. It is an honor to be here with General Hayden, General Aushev and General Whelden. It is an honor to be here with each and every one of you today.

I use the word "honor" very carefully. Here in Arizona, we honor veterans. We honor you by never forgetting the service you have rendered. Approximately, 600,000 veterans live here in Arizona. We know what you have done for that sweet enduring promise we call the United States. We understand, especially in challenging economic times, that we must do all we can to meet those needs.

George Washington said, and I quote, "The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified shall be directly proportionate to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation."

I recognize that serving our veterans depends on a working partnership between the federal government and the states. Federal benefits and services must be equally available to all veterans regardless of where they live, and federal and state governments must work together to achieve that mission.

We need more state veterans cemeteries in Arizona to ensure that any Arizona veteran can be buried in the state that they love. We need them in Yuma and we need them in Tucson.

Here in Arizona we have one veterans nursing home in Phoenix and have begun the process of building a second home in Tucson. While our counselors work very hard to correct the veterans with the benefits they

have earned through their service, we often work at a disadvantage. We don't have the information that we need on our new veterans coming to our state.

The Department of Defense and the VA need to share information on returning service members with the state's Department of Veterans Services. Such sharing will allow us to better serve all returning veterans and allow us to direct them to every single aspect of the federal, state and community resources available during their transition. These are just a few things, I think, that are necessary to ensure that our veterans get all the benefits to which they are entitled.

I do wish to commend the Federal VA for the steps it has taken to become more efficient in providing the needed services and benefits to our veterans, but most of all I wish to commend you, men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, for collectively being the voice that is heard in Washington on behalf of all of our veterans, from those that served in the European theater in operations in World War II, to those who are serving now in places even farther away from their homes and their families.

On the 40th anniversary of the D-Day invasion, President Ronald Reagan spoke at the site of the U.S. Ranger Monument in France. He told the veterans of the Normandy Invasion that in 1944, and I will quote, "Some of you were hardly more than boys when the deepest joy of life was before you. Yet you risked everything here. Why? Why did you do it?"

Reagan knew the answer as we all know. But you in this room, you knew better than anyone. We look at you and somehow we know the answer. It was faith and belief. It was loyalty and love.

Reagan went on to say, and his words are worth remembering here today because they apply to all of you. "The veterans had faith that they were doing what they were doing was right; faith that they fought for all humanity; faith, a just God would grant them the mercy on whatever beachhead they faced."

So, I say again it is an honor to be with you today because of who you are, because of what you have done for this country. Our goals are the same and shall always be the same: secure the nation, preserve the peace, and ensure that all who have done that receive not just the thanks of our nation but all the benefits to which their service has entitled them. Thank you and God bless you, and God bless Arizona and God bless the United States of America. Thank you. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE PHIL GORDON,
MAYOR OF PHOENIX

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: As we have already experienced, Phoenix is known for its hospitality, stunning beauty and varied entertainment. Without a doubt, when we leave here later this week, we will take with us a host of lasting memories of the time well spent in this dynamic city.

Here to greet us today is the Major of the great City of Phoenix, a city that has recently received the prestigious designation as an All-American City by the National Civic League. And it is hot.

Please welcome the Honorable Mayor, Phil Gordon. (Applause)

GREETINGS – THE HONORABLE PHIL GORDON

MAYOR GORDON: No, please. Today is about you-all. Let me first say, Commander-in-Chief, it is a dry heat that we are always reminded to tell our visitors. Of course, my other grandmother would always tell me it is like sticking your head in the oven.

Well, welcome to Phoenix. Thank you for the warm applause. Of course, in Phoenix in August most of the applauses are warm. We enjoy our heat, though, because it

does represent what this city is about, passion.

It is a very important event today that we are all attending, so important that many of you may have noticed that big blue and white airplane parked at Sky Harbor Inter Airport, which, by the way, was a clue to me that I wasn't the keynote speaker today.

But this is a great moment, and obviously a remarkable day. So, welcome officially to the City of Phoenix, the capital of the great state of Arizona.

I am so very proud to be with you and have the honor to welcome you all. I am proud of the people of Arizona, the people of the Valley, the people of the city that treasure our active military personnel service and our veterans' past service. I am proud of this wonderful Convention Center that displays its beautiful flag proudly. I am proud that we are the fifth largest city in the United States that is able to welcome you-all to the 110th National Convention.

Nothing fills my heart with pride more than looking out at all of you. So, I officially thank you all for being here and I thank you for your service. For the entirety of my life, starting with my dad and continuing through my oldest son, both of whom have served this country with distinction, I have had a lifetime of pleasures spending time with the extraordinary men and women who have performed extraordinary acts of valor and sacrifice for us all. I have been touched in a deep way and a personal way by nearly every one of them and by each and every one of you.

The freedoms we enjoy here in Phoenix and in your homes and seek for the rest of the world are not won by simply wishing or hoping. As you know, they are won by men and women taking real risks, dodging real bullets, shedding real blood, and when needed, unfortunately spending their very life. I have seen their sacrifices, your sacrifices up close and very personal.

The Veterans Hospitals that I have visited are filled with those whose service left them scarred, broken but yet forever proud. The cemeteries around the globe are dotted with headstones of Americans who wanted nothing more than the liberty for people they would never meet and to come safely to their families. For a nation whose very birth grew out of a revolution fighting for their freedom has always been a part of American history and legacy. You might even say that is our National VNA.

We are still reaping the benefits over our veterans' sacrifices. It is a debt that could never be paid in full, and nothing that I do as mayor, nothing will ever be as important to me as making sure that I do everything I can to make sure all of our veterans, all of our active military personnel are treated with the respect they have earned and are getting the care that they deserve.

My first official act as mayor was to enact a Veterans Commission for

the city and added a veterans liaison to my own staff. Since then we have originated in the Sky Harbor Inter Airport a lounge for members of the military and their families, and to this day the City of Phoenix, for those employees who were called up to active service, is the only city that pays the differential between military pay and their city employment pay. (Applause)

So, those overseas have one less thing to worry about and know that their families are taken care of.

I can't tell you how grateful I am to attend the event honoring our veterans, even though sometimes I feel out of place, as I have never had the honor or privilege to serve our country, yet I obtain those benefits daily. I know I need to be there, I know that others should be there more often.

I talk to as many veterans as I can and pledge to you again today that I will never forget your sacrifices. My respect for veterans, that did not magically appear or appeared on the day of my election. It was instilled upon me by first my dad and then others who have served and laid beside them today, members of that great war of their generation. I can tell you he served us well. As a nation, we are still fighting the fight he fought and so many others. But we will continue.

Young men and women are still giving up their very best they have to give, and decades from now they will be sitting in a room just like this, listening to a mayor being thanked by a future President. I know that because of them our nation will endure and freedom will continue to ring.

While being mayor is fine, but who has a more important job than the very people that keep us free? Nobody. That is why every time I see a veteran I tell them thanks, because as John Kennedy reminded us in his wise and eloquent way, the price of freedom is always high, but Americans have always paid it.

So to you, I say thanks from this grateful mayor and our grateful nation will never ever forget the debt that you have paid.

May God continue to bless you all, may God continue to bless this great nation, and stay safe in harm's way. God bless you and the applause is for everyone that serves our country. Thank you very, very much. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF AMERICAN FLAG SET TO GOVERNOR JANICE BREWER AND MAYOR PHIL GORDON BY THE LADIES AUXILIARY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Jean Barton, the Ladies Auxiliary National Patriotic Instructor, will now present commemorative flag sets to Mayor Phil Gordon and Governor Janice Brewer.

LADIES AUXILIARY NATIONAL PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTOR BARTON: On behalf of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I would like to present these American Flags to each of you. I hope you will proudly display them in your office and remember all the men and women who so bravely serve now and have served in the past to defend our country and to protect the freedoms that we all take for granted every day. (Applause)

SIGNING OF COMMUNITY COVENANT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Mayor Gordon, please stand by. We will have the signing of the Community Covenant next.

Community Covenant is a Secretary of the Army initiative, begun in early 2008, designed to raise the level of visibility of the service and sacrifices of today's service members and their families in this protracted time of war.

The centerpiece of this initiative is a public ceremony, typically hosted by community leaders, during which they demonstrate their support for our troops and their families by signing a Community Covenant document.

To date, almost 200 ceremonies have been conducted across America with another 100 in various stages of planning. Over half of the nation's governors and well over 300 mayors have participated.

Today, the Veterans of Foreign Wars will conduct a signing ceremony with the City of Phoenix and Army officials thereby demonstrating our collective support for our service members and their families.

As part of this covenant, VFW is committed to help inspire Community Covenant ceremonies all across the country in the coming year.

Representing the City of Phoenix is Mayor Phil Gordon, representing the Army are John South, Army Reserve Ambassador from Phoenix, and Major General Retired Craig Whelden, Community Covenant Coordinator. As Commander-in-Chief, I will sign for the VFW.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Community Covenant supporting those who serve.

"We, the City of Phoenix and the Veterans of Foreign Wars recognize:

"The commitment service members and their families make every day.

"The strength of service members comes from the strength of their families.

"The strength of families is supported by the strength of the Community.

"The strength of the Community comes from the support of Employers, educators, civic and business leaders, and its citizens.

"Together we are committed to:

"Building partnerships that support the strength, resilience and readiness of service members and their families.

"Encouraging cities and towns across America to host their own Community Covenant Signing Ceremony.

"State offices and local Posts of the Veterans of Foreign Wars are committed to helping inspire such ceremonies in their own states and communities." (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF MAJOR GENERAL CRAIG WHELDEN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: As we have just witnessed, quality of life issues are certainly the Army's number one priority and always a monumental task, but thanks to the leadership and expertise of such exemplary people as Major General Craig Whelden, the Covenant program has been a huge success.

From 1998-2000, General Whelden served as the Commanding General of the U.S. Army's Community and Family Support Center, overseeing all Army soldiers and family programs, as well as the Army's Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs.

For the past ten years, he has been a member of the Executive Commit-

tee of the U.S. Army's Morale, Welfare and Recreation Board of Directors.

All in all, General Whelden has been a true soldier's soldier culminating his military legacy as a soldier's general.

Please give a warm welcome to Major General Craig Whelden. (Applause)

REMARKS – MAJOR GENERAL CRAIG WHELDEN,
COMMUNITY COVENANT TASK FORCE

MAJOR GENERAL WHELDEN: Wow, look at the size of this group. You know, when you become a General, they tell you you should have a ten-minute speech in your back pocket at all times, because you never know when you are going to be talking to a group.

For the past 13 years or so, I have been doing that. I have never had a group quite this large, I don't think.

A couple of months ago, though, I was at an event where my wife attended, and when we got home I noticed that she put a shoebox underneath the bed. So, after she left the room, I went in and I pulled the shoebox out, and I looked inside and I found three eggs and \$2,564.

So, I confronted her and I said, "Karen, what is the deal here? What is with these eggs and all this money?" She said, "Well, you weren't supposed to find that, but every time you give a bad speech I put an egg in the shoebox." I said, "Well, that explains the three eggs. Where did all this money come from?" She said, "Every time I get a dozen eggs I sell them." (Laughter) So, you can be the judge.

If you will stop by our booth, I will give you her e-mail address and you can tell her whether or not she needs to put another egg in the shoebox.

Let me read to you some of the words that were on that Covenant. It was read, but it is very important that you understand what was said on that Covenant. It says, "We, the City of Phoenix and the Veterans of Foreign Wars encourage cities and towns across America to host their own Community Covenant Signing Ceremonies.

"State offices and local Posts of the Veterans of Foreign Wars are committed to helping inspire such ceremonies in their own states and communities."

So, ladies and gentlemen, this is not an information brief, this is a call to action. This is a call to action from your Commander-in-Chief to go out and touch every mayor, every city council member, every state legislator, every president of the Chamber of Commerce, and help them understand the Community Covenant is all about demonstrating the community support for today's serving men and women.

There are three things that service members typically think of when they are down range, when they are deployed. They think about their mission, they think about their family, and they wonder whether or not the American public are behind them. We don't want to repeat what happened 40 years ago with the Vietnam era veterans. I know many of you in this audience today are from that era.

We want to demonstrate in a very, very visible way that every community, every American are behind our service members and their families, no matter what the politics are in that community. So, that's what Community Covenant is all about.

Now, 18 months ago, the Secretary of the Army had this vision to re-

engage and re-affirm the connection between the American public and its service members and their families in this time of war. He saw two ways of doing that. The primary and the most visible way is a formal signing ceremony of a covenant whereby they demonstrate their support for the service members and their families. But along with that, and a little bit more subtle, is raising the level of visibility of the need to support today's service members and their families.

I have seen dozens and dozens of new programs all over the country that have spawned from these ceremonies. Who is from North Dakota? Let me tell you what is going on in North Dakota. Three or four months ago, the governor hosted a ceremony and in that ceremony he challenged all 350-something cities and towns in the state and the 53 counties, I believe, to do likewise.

The League of Cities put on their Web site the means, a tool kit to do exactly that. In the last four or five months, North Dakota has signed over 100 Community Covenant documents.

Who is from North Carolina? On the 27th of October, the North Carolina League of Cities will hold their annual meeting, and there will be hundreds of mayors present, and at that meeting all the mayors will sign a Community Covenant document, and I will encourage them – I will be there – to go back and do exactly the same thing in their own communities.

The Governor of Kentucky, who I think is about to send a letter out to all the area development districts to encourage them all to host such a ceremony. Congressman Ed Whitfield from the State of Kentucky has sponsored a bill in Congress, or a resolution in Congress demonstrating his support for the Community Covenant and encouraging every community in America to do exactly the same.

When I approached the mayor of Orange County, Florida, and I said, "You know, Mr. Mayor, let me tell you about the Community Covenant." He embraced it and said, "We want to do this. When should we do it, on Veterans Day or Memorial Day?" I said, "You know, Mr. Mayor, this is all about reaching past the traditional audiences that come to Veterans Day and Memorial Day. This is about engaging the average Americans, the ones that are walking the streets, driving their cars, going to ball games, taking their kids out, going to a movie. We want to re-engage that group of Americans. Why not do this at half time at one of the Orlando Magic games?"

That is exactly what is going to happen this fall. We will have 10 or 15 minutes at half time at the Orlando Magic game with an audience of about 18,000 in the arena who came there to watch a basketball game, but didn't know that when they leave that night they are going to be thinking about the support they provide to service members and their families.

So, that's what I am talking about, looking for venues for opportunities to engage the American public.

We have had over 200 ceremonies with over 400 mayors so far, 28 governors participated in this, 54 members of Congress, and 120 State Legislators. Tens of thousands of people have stepped up to the plate and participated in this. As I said, many, many new programs of support have spun off from this initiative.

Let me close by telling a little story, one that you-all can relate to. It is a fictional story, but one I think that you will understand. Many of you have seen the movie "Saving Private Ryan." It is a story of four soldiers who go

off to war in World War II. Three of them are killed in combat, and the news of their death is brought to their mother in one visit, and the Chief of Staff of the Army says we are not going to allow that fourth son to die in combat. So, he gives the order for a rescue mission to occur.

Captain John Miller, with about a dozen soldiers take off behind enemy lines looking for Private Ryan to bring him home. He loses several soldiers along the way, and when he finds Private Ryan he tells him that three of his brothers have been killed in combat, and that his orders are to bring him home.

Private Ryan refuses. Captain Miller says, "What are we supposed to tell your mother?" Ryan says, "Tell her I was here, tell her I am with the only brothers I have left. There is no way I am going to leave this bridge."

If you have seen the movie, you know that Captain Miller dies on that bridge, but just before he dies he whispers into Private Ryan's ear, "Earn this; earn it."

The movie flashes forward 50 years, and we find Private Ryan and his family standing over Captain John Miller's grave. He stands, he salutes, and with tears in his eyes he turns to his wife and he says, "Tell me I have led a good life. Tell me I am a good man."

There were nine million Private Ryans in the Army in World War II. There are about ten percent of that number in today's Army.

World War II was three and a half to four years long. We are about to enter our ninth year of this war with no end in sight.

Every one of these men and women are volunteers, some on their fourth and fifth rotation. The stresses are unbelievable. So, it is time for America to stand up and say to them, "We are here to support you, we are here to take care of your families when you are down range."

I will be just outside the door underneath the welcome sign the rest of the day. Please come by and see me. Tell me where you are from. Let me show you what has happened in your community and what is planned in your community.

When you find that there is nothing happening in your hometown, let me help show you how you can inspire a Community Covenant Signing Ceremony in your own hometown.

I do this seven days a week. I am the action officer. I tell everybody if you are interested in doing something like this in your hometown, you call me. The only time I am not available is when I am asleep. So, please stop by, see me today. It is only today because I have another event to go to tomorrow, and let's exchange business cards and let me show you how easy this is to knock on the door of a local mayor, a city council member, a member of the Chamber of Commerce, a county commissioner, and say, "Wouldn't you like to join the hundreds of others who have already done this, and then let me help you do exactly that."

God bless the VFW, God bless America, and especially God bless our men and women in uniform and their families. Thank you very much. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF THE 2009 VFW EISENHOWER DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD TO GENERAL MICHAEL V. HAYDEN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I am proud to introduce the recipient of this year's Dwight D. Eisenhower Award, a retired Four-Star

General and the former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Michael Hayden.

The Eisenhower award has been presented annually since 1970 to one individual for his or her vital and critical contributions to American security, unity and world peace.

It recognizes extraordinary contributions and achievements to secure the nation from foreign threats, to advance the interests of the nation abroad, and to inspire the American public to support these efforts as we journey towards the goal of world peace.

The Eisenhower Award is named after our 34th President, who along with seven other United States Presidents, proudly called themselves members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

This year's recipient is a career Air Force officer who received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, the mighty Dukes.

General Hayden was commissioned in 1967 and entered active duty in 1969. He then went on to hold numerous assignments and positions within the military, to include serving at Headquarters, Strategic Air Command, and then at Headquarters, U.S. Forces-Korea, at a U.S. Embassy in Bulgaria before the fall of the Soviet Union, and then at U.S. European Command immediately after the fall.

General Hayden commanded the Air Intelligence Agency, was Director for the Defense Policy and Arms Control for the National Security Council, the Director of the National Security Agency, and Chief of the Central Security Service.

His six-year tour as NSA Director, the longest in agency history, had him responsible for a Defense Department Combat Support Agency with military and civilian personnel stationed worldwide and with tremendously important missions.

In April 2005, General Hayden became the Principle Deputy Director for National Intelligence, and from May 2006 to February 2009, he served as the 20th Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The General served his country for 41 years in uniform, becoming the highest-ranking intelligence officer in the armed forces, and then continued serving the country as the CIA Director because our nation was at war. What an incomparable legacy he possesses.

General, our nation certainly sleeps better because you and your men and women stood watch over us. For that, we remain extremely grateful and are deeply honored that you could join us today.

Comrades and sisters, may I present to you the recipient of the 2009 VFW Dwight D. Eisenhower Award, General Michael Hayden. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: The citation reads as follows: "The Dwight D. Eisenhower Distinguished Service Award, Gold Medal and Citation presented to General Michael V. Hayden, United States Air Force, Retired.

"In special recognition and sincere appreciation of his innumerable contributions to our nation through years of distinguished military and public service.

"His stellar achievements as Commander of the Air Intelligence Agency, Director for Defense Policy and Arms Control for the National Security Council, Director of the National Security Agency and Chief, Central Security Service, and most recently, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency are well known. His probity and audacious leadership was integral in pro-

viding the crucial strategic intelligence and professional advice so necessary for our nation's leaders to actively and successfully execute the global war on terrorism while concurrently preserving the peace and security of the United States, and thus earns him the highest respect and gratitude of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 17th day of August, 2009. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General.

This award also comes with a \$15,000 honorarium. (Applause)

RESPONSE – GENERAL MICHAEL HAYDEN

GENERAL HAYDEN: Good morning. It is quite an honor just standing here among you, let alone being recognized. I feel as if during my military career I have been standing on your shoulders. I had a chance in early May to talk to a veterans group in Pittsburgh, and one of the things I recounted to them was one of the real benefits of my military career was that I had been able to visit an awful lot of the locations in which each and every one of you performed your service. I can remember walking through an immaculately-kept American military cemetery in Tunisia, or standing in the midst of a Polish forest in the dead of winter at a small Polish village that built a memorial to a B-24 crew, a B-24 crew that had taken battle damage over the IG Farber Works nearby, and that had crashed near that village.

That village had saved the wings spar of that B-24 for more than four decades. They used that spar as part of the memorial and it is very simple. "Here died 11 American airmen in a battle for Polish freedom."

I had a chance while assigned on Guam to go visit Tinian and Saipan. For you Pacific veterans, I had a chance to swim out to some of the armor you left behind off the beach there. Two tours in Korea gave me a chance to walk up some of the same hills that you Korean War veterans walked up. When I was hiking them—they were Korean National Parks—and they were tough enough to walk during peacetime, and I thought what must this have been like during your service in Korea. At Osan Air Base where I lived, our housing was in the shadow of the hill that was a site of the last bayonet charge in the history of the United States Army.

I joined your company, became part of you during the Vietnam War with servicing Guam and Thailand. I have seen your work in the Gulf.

When I have been with our servicemen in Baghdad or Hilla, or Balad or Kirkuk, and I have walked the ground with current servicemen in Afghanistan, Kabul, Bagram, Khost and Kandahar, I have taken energy from you and your comrades.

When I went to Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Bethesda, thinking I was going there to inspire the wounded or to help them, or to comfort them, and I hope I did, but I have to tell you when I left those facilities, I had taken energy, I had taken energy from those wounded warriors. I know what you represent.

They tell a story before the fall of the Berlin Wall, there was a gap in the Iron Curtain and a lot of these Germans were making their way to progress and from Prague there was the chance that they could travel, get visas from West Germany and travel across the border from Czechoslovakia into West

Germany. Of course, they were betting all making this journey, and they would drive in their autos or other vehicles into Prague and camp out on the grounds of West German Embassy there, hope to get a visa and hope to travel in to West Germany.

One such group did. They were put aboard a train and they were told to keep all the curtains or windows down, keep the curtains drawn. As the train moved, you can imagine the tension in the air, the tension among the passengers.

As dawn was breaking, one of them had the temerity to raise the curtain, and what they saw was a monitored patrol of an American armored cavalry regiment in Huf, West Germany. One of the people on the train remarked, "Look, there are the Americans. Now, we are free." That identification in the eyes of the world of American arms and human freedom is your legacy.

Now, I also represent another group here today. Those of you out there in the current battlefield may see some guys in civilian clothes, probably needing a shave, and their identity badge simply says OGA, Other Government Agencies. All those folks are from the agency I used to direct.

One of the questions I sometimes get is how do you describe the deep world CIA, and I am really happy to answer that question because TV shows, movies, books, even some members of Congress often leave the wrong impression or paint an incomplete picture. The truth is that the CIA officers are very much like you, are very much like those who serve in our military. They are your friends and neighbors.

If you come from Northern Virginia or Southern Maryland, or the District of Columbia, a lot of them are your friends and neighbors. They come from all walks of life and they share a key trait with you and they want to serve the nation and keep it free.

But these warriors, the folks in the American intelligence community, do it with an extra burden. One is the need for many officers and CIA to actually shield their agency affiliation, to work undercover. Just think for a moment, how often do you ask what do you do? How many times in the course of a year are you asked to fill out some forms that ask for employment information? What do you say at Thanksgiving when cousin Millie asks you about your work? Those are all challenging situations for many CIA officers.

There is another group. I know all of you are familiar with that iconic image of the CIA, that set marble foyer as you walk in with the shield on the floor, the stars anonymously falling to the right, and the gospel of St. John off to the left: "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free."

But if you walk a little further, if you go up those marble stairs and you look down the left to the agency museum, you see a mural on the wall and you will see Lady Liberty there and you will see another saying inscribed, "We go where others cannot go, and we accomplish what others cannot accomplish."

When these folks are out there in the shadows, which is where they work, doing what no one else can do, accomplishing what no one else can accomplish, they need your support, they need your backing, and I take it you are asking me here as a strong voice of support for these great Americans, as strong a voice of support as I can imagine. And I thank you for it.

Now, you all know that the work that we, you and I have chosen to do,

work and service to America, work in our armed forces, and our intelligence services, puts a great burden on our families.

The National Military Family Association for the past 40 years has been working to educate America about that fact, and it works to help military family members, whether it is spouse scholarships or something they call Operation Purple Camps.

This past summer, the children, 10,000 children of deployed American military personnel have been able to go to summer camp free of charge with other such children, because of the National Military Family Association. So, I have asked that your generosity be shared with them, and the VFW will be donating that \$15,000 to sustain the important work of the National Military Family Association. (Applause)

My wife, Janine, is here today, a member of the Board of Governors of the National Military Family Association, and is here to accept that check on their behalf.

Again, I thank you, I thank you for all that you are, I thank you for all that you have done, and I thank you for all that you continue to do. God bless you. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrades, we are going to take a 15-minute break. Normally the person that is our guest speaker is a little late, but this time our guest speaker is a little early. So, we are going to go to the back and meet the guest speaker, and he will be out in less than 10 to 15 minutes.

Please remain in your seats. Please stand by and don't go all over the place because once we are ready to start we will start immediately. Thank you very much.

...Recess. ...

INTRODUCTION OF PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Our next guest is no stranger to the Veterans of Foreign Wars or to the veterans, service members and military families we serve.

He was born in Hawaii, raised with good old Midwestern values, and received Ivy League educations at Columbia University and Harvard Law School. He served in his State Senate for eight years before becoming a U.S. Senator from the Prairie State of Illinois in 2004.

He would go on to co-sponsor landmark VFW-supported legislation like the new G.I. Bill for the 21st Century and advanced appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs. And now, he has given us a historic increase to the VA health care budget. This is his third consecutive appearance before the VFW National Convention, but the first wearing the mantle of our Commander-in-Chief.

Comrades, sisters and distinguished guests, I am honored to present the 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Thank you, thank you so much. Thank you very much. Please be seated. Thank you so much. Commander-in-Chief, thank you for your introduction and for your lifetime of service. I was proud to

welcome Glen and your Executive Director, Bob Wallace, to the Oval Office just before the 4th of July, and I look forward to working with your next Commander, Tommy Tradewell.

Let me also acknowledge Jean Gardner and Sharon Tradewell, as well as Dixie Hild, Jan Tittle and all the spouses and family of the Ladies Auxiliary. America honors your service as well.

Also Governor Jan Brewer is here from Arizona and Mayor Phil Gordon, our host here in Phoenix. I want to acknowledge President of the great Navajo Nation, Dr. Joe Shirley, Jr., and First Lady Vikki Shirley. You may have already heard this, but I want to publicly acknowledge and thank Ms. Helen Denton, the Secretary to Dwight Eisenhower, who typed up the orders for the Normandy Invasion and is here today, and what an extraordinary story that is. (Applause)

Members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I am honored and humbled to stand before you as Commander-in-Chief of the finest military the world has ever known. And we are joined by some of those who make it the finest force in the world, from Luke Air Force Base, members of the 56th Fighter Wing. (Applause)

Whether you wear the uniform today, or wore it decades ago, you remind us of a fundamental truth. It's not the powerful weapons that make our military the strongest in the world. It's not the sophisticated systems that make us the most advanced. No, the true strength of our military lies in the spirit and skill of our men and women in uniform.

And you know this. You know this because it is the story of your lives. When Fascism seemed unstoppable and our harbor was bombed, you battled across rocky Pacific Islands and stormed the beaches of Europe, marching across a continent, my own grandfather and uncle among your ranks, liberating millions and turning enemies into allies.

When Communism cast its shadow across so much of the globe, you stood vigilant in a long Cold War, from an airlift in Berlin to the mountains of Korea to the jungles of Vietnam. When that Cold War ended and old hatreds emerged anew, you turned back aggression from Kuwait to Kosovo.

And long after you took off the uniform, you have continued to serve: Supporting our troops and their families when they go to war and welcoming them when they come home; working to give our veterans the care they deserve, and when America's heroes are laid to rest, giving everyone that final fitting tribute of a grateful nation. We can never say it enough, for your service in war and in peace, thank you, VFW. (Applause)

Today, the story of your service is carried on by a new generation of dedicated, courageous men and women who I have the privilege to lead and meet every day.

They are the young soldiers, the midshipmen at the Naval Academy who raised their right hand at graduation and committed themselves to a life of service.

They are the soldiers I met in Baghdad, who have done their duty, year after year, on a second, third or fourth tour.

They are the Marines of Camp Lejeune, preparing to deploy and now serving in Afghanistan to protect Americans here at home.

They are the airmen, who like those here today, who provide the close air support that saves the lives of our troops on the ground.

They are the wounded warriors at Landstuhl and Walter Reed and Bethesda, and across America for whom the battle is not to fight, but sim-

ply to speak, to stand and to walk once more.

They are the families that my wife Michelle has met at bases across the country. The spouses back home doing the parenting of two. The children who wonder when mom or dad is coming home. The parents who watch their sons and daughters go off to war. The families who lay a loved one to rest and the pain that lasts a lifetime.

To all those who have served America, our forces, your families, our veterans, you have done your duty. You have fulfilled your responsibilities. And now a grateful nation must fulfill ours. And that is what I want to talk about today.

First, we have a solemn responsibility to always lead our men and women in uniform wisely. That starts with a vision of American leadership that recognizes that military power alone cannot be the first or only answer to the threats facing our nation.

In recent years, our troops have succeeded in every mission America has given them, from toppling the Taliban to deposing a dictator in Iraq to battling brutal insurgencies. At the same time, forces trained for war have been called upon to perform a whole host of missions. Like mayors, they have run local governments and delivered water and electricity. Like aid workers, they have mentored farmers and built new schools. Like diplomats, they have negotiated agreements with tribal sheikhs and local leaders.

But let us never forget. We are a country of more than 300 million Americans. Less than one percent wears the uniform. And that one percent, our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen, have borne the overwhelming burden of our security. In fact, perhaps never in American history have so few protected so many.

The responsibility for our security must not be theirs alone. That is why I have made it a priority to enlist all elements of our national power in defense of our national security, our diplomacy and development, our economic might and our moral example. Because one of the best ways to lead our troops wisely is prevent the conflict that cost American blood and treasure tomorrow.

As President, my greatest responsibility is the security and safety of the American people. As I have said before, that is the first thing that I think about when I wake up in the morning. It is the last thing I think about when I go to sleep at night. And I will not hesitate to use force to protect the American people or our vital interests. (Applause)

But as we protect America, our men and women in uniform must also be treated as what they are: America's most precious resource. As Commander-in-Chief, I have a solemn responsibility for their safety. And there is nothing more sobering than signing a letter of condolence to the family of a serviceman or woman who has given their lives for our country.

That is why I have made this pledge to our armed forces: I will only send you into harm's way when it is absolutely necessary. When I do, it will be based on good intelligence and guided by a sound strategy. And I will give you a clear mission, defined goals and the equipment and support you need to get the job done. That's my commitment to you. (Applause)

That brings me to our second responsibility to our armed forces, giving them the resources and equipment and strategies to meet their missions. We need to keep our military the best trained, the best led, the best equipped fighting force in the world. That's why, even with our current

economic challenges, my budget increases defense spending.

We will ensure that we have the force structure to meet today's missions. That is why we have increased the size of the Army and Marine Corps two years ahead of schedule and have approved another temporary increase in the Army. And we have halted personnel reductions in the Navy and Air Force. This will give our troops more time home between deployments, which means less stress on families and more training for the next mission. And it will help us put an end, once and for all, to stop-loss for those who have done their duty.

We will equip our forces with the assets and technologies they need to fight and win. So my budget funds more of the Army helicopters, crews and pilots urgently needed in Afghanistan; also the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance that gives our troops the advantage; the special operations forces that can deploy on a moment's notice. And for all those serving in Afghanistan and Iraq, including our National Guard and Reserve, more of the protective gear and armored vehicles that saves lives.

As we fight in two wars, we will plan responsibly, budget honestly and speak candidly about the costs and consequences of our actions. That is why I have made sure my budget includes the cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In Iraq, after more than six years of war, we took an important step forward in June. We transferred control of all cities and towns to Iraq's security forces. The transition to full Iraqi responsibility for their own security is now underway. This progress is a testament to all those who have served in Iraq, both uniformed and civilian. And our nation owes these Americans, and all who have given their lives, a profound debt of gratitude.

As they take control of their destiny, Iraqis will be tested and targeted. Those who seek to sow sectarian division will attempt more senseless bombings, more killing of innocents. This we know.

But as we move forward, the Iraqi people must know that the United States will keep its commitments. And the American people must know that we will move forward with our strategy. We will begin removing our combat brigades from Iraq later this year. We will move all our combat brigades by the end of next August. And we will remove all our troops from Iraq by the end of 2011. And for America, the Iraq war will end.

By moving forward in Iraq, we are able to refocus on the war against al-Qaida and its extremist allies in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This is why I announced a new, comprehensive strategy in March. This strategy recognizes that al-Qaida and its allies have moved their base to the remote tribal areas of Pakistan. This strategy acknowledges that military power alone will not win this war, that we also need diplomacy and development and good governance. And our new strategy has a clear mission and defined goals, to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaida and its extremist allies.

In the months since, we have begun to put this comprehensive strategy into action. And in recent weeks, we have seen our troops do their part. They have gone into new areas, taking the fight to the Taliban in villages in towns where residents have been terrorized for years. They are adopting new tactics, knowing that it's not enough to kill extremists and terrorists; we also need to protect the Afghan people and improve their daily lives. And today, our troops are helping to secure polling places for this week's election so Afghans can choose the future they want.

These new efforts have not been without a price. The fighting has been

fierce. More Americans have given their lives. And as always, the thoughts and prayers of every American are with those who make the ultimate sacrifice in our defense.

As I said when I announced this strategy, there will be more difficult days ahead. The insurgency in Afghanistan didn't just happen overnight. And we won't defeat it overnight. This will not be quick; this will not be easy.

But we must never forget. This is not a war of choice. This is a war of necessity. Those who attacked America on 9/11 are plotting to do so again. If left unchecked, the Taliban insurgency will mean an even larger safe haven from which al-Qaida would plot to kill more Americans. So this is not only a war worth fighting. This is fundamental to the defense of our people.

Going forward, we will constantly adapt our tactics to stay ahead of the enemy and give our troops the tools and equipment they need to proceed. And at every step of the way, we will assess our efforts to defeat al-Qaida and its extremist allies, and to help the Afghan and Pakistani people build the future they seek.

Even as we lead and equip our troops for the missions of today, we have a third responsibility to fulfill. We must prepare our forces for the missions of tomorrow.

Our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen adapt to new challenges every day. But as we all know, much of our defense establishment has yet to fully adapt to the post-Cold War world, with doctrine and weapons better suited to fight the Soviets on the plains of Europe than insurgents in the rugged terrain of Afghanistan. Twenty years after the Cold War ended, this is simply not unacceptable. It is irresponsible. And our troops and taxpayers deserve better. (Applause)

That is why our defense review is taking a top-to-bottom look at our priorities and posture, questioning conventional wisdom, rethinking old dogmas and challenging the status quo. We are asking hard questions about the forces we need and the weapons we buy. And when we are finished, we will have a new blueprint for the 21st Century military we need. In fact, we are already on our way.

We are adopting new concepts, because the full spectrum of challenges demands a full range of military capabilities, the conventional and the unconventional, the ability to defeat both the Armored Division and the lone suicide bomber; the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile and the Improvised Explosive Device; 18th century-style piracy and 21st century cyber threats. No matter the mission, we must maintain America's military dominance.

So even as we modernize our conventional forces, we are investing in the capabilities that will re-orient our force of the future; an Army that is more mobile and expeditionary and missile defenses that protect our troops in the field; a Navy that not only projects power across the oceans but operates nimbly in shallow, coastal waters; an Air Force that dominates the air space with next-generation aircraft, manned and unmanned; a Marine Corps that can move ashore more rapidly in more places. And across the force, we are investing in new skills and specialties. Because in the 21st century, military strength will be measured not only by the weapons our troops carry, but by the languages they speak and the cultures they understand.

But here is the simple truth. We can't build the 21st century military we need, and maintain the fiscal responsibility that American demand, unless

we fundamentally reform the way our defense establishment does business. It is a simple fact. Every dollar wasted in our defense budget is a dollar we can't spend to care for our troops, protect America or prepare for the future.

You have heard the stories. The indefensible no-bid contracts that cost taxpayers billions and make contractors rich. The special interests and their exotic projects that are years behind schedule and billions over budget. The entrenched lobbyists pushing weapons that even our military says it doesn't want. The impulse in Washington to protect jobs back home building things we don't need at a cost we can't afford.

This waste would be unacceptable at any time. But at a time when we are fighting two wars and facing a serious deficit, it's inexcusable. It's unconscionable. It's an affront to the American people and to our troops. And it's time for it to stop.

This isn't a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. It is about giving our troops the support they need. And that's something on which all Americans can agree. So I am glad that I have a partner in this effort in a great veteran, a great Arizonian, and a great American who has shown the courage to stand and fight this waste, Senator John McCain. (Applause) And I am proud to have Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who has served under eight Presidents of both parties, leading this fight at the Pentagon.

Already, I have put an end to unnecessary no-bid contracts. I signed bipartisan legislation to reform defense procurement so weapons systems don't spin out of control. And even as we increase spending on the equipment and weapons our troops do need, we have proposed cutting tens of billions of dollars in waste we don't need.

Think about it. Hundreds of millions of dollars for an alternate second engine for the Joint Strike Fighter, when one reliable engine will do just fine. Nearly two billion dollars to buy more F-22 Fighter Jets when we can move ahead with a fleet of newer, more affordable aircraft. Tens of billions of dollars to put an anti-missile laser on a fleet of vulnerable 747s.

And billions of dollars for a new presidential helicopter. Maybe you heard about this. Among its other capabilities, it would let me cook a meal while under nuclear attack. I will tell you something. If the United States of America is under nuclear attack, the last thing on my mind will be whipping up a snack.

It is pretty straightforward. Cut the waste. Save taxpayer dollars. Support the troops. That is what we should be doing. (Applause) But we all know how Washington works. The special interests, contractors and entrenched lobbyists are invested in the status quo. And they are putting up a fight.

But make no mistake, so are we. If a project doesn't support our troops, if it does not make America safer, we will not fund it. If a system doesn't perform, we will terminate it. And if Congress sends me a defense bill loaded with a bunch of pork, I will veto it. We will do right by our troops and taxpayers. We will build the 21st century military that we need.

Finally, we will fulfill our responsibility to those who serve by keeping our promises to our people.

We will fulfill our responsibilities to our forces and families. That is why we are increasing military pay, that is why we are building better family housing and funding more child care and counseling to help families cope with the stresses of war. And we have changed the rules so military spouses can better compete for federal jobs and pursue their careers.

We will fulfill our responsibility to our wounded warriors. For those still in uniform, we are investing billions of dollars for more treatment centers, more case managers and better medical care so our troops can recover and return to where they want to be - with their units.

But as the VFW well knows for so many veterans the war rages on, the flashbacks that won't go away, the loved ones who now seem like strangers, the heavy darkness of depression that has led too many of our troops taking their own lives. Post-Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injury are the defining injuries of today's wars. So caring for those affected by them is a defining purpose of my budget, billions of dollars for more treatment and mental health screening to reach our troops on the front lines, and more mobile and rural clinics to reach veterans back home. We are not going to abandon these American heroes.

We will fulfill our responsibility to our veterans as they return to civilian life. I was proud to co-sponsor the post-9/11 G.I. Bill as a Senator. Thanks to the VFW members across the country, and leaders like Arizona's Harry Mitchell in Congress, it's now the law of the land. And as President, I am committed to seeing that it is successfully implemented.

For so many of you, like my grandfather, the original G.I. Bill changed your life, helping you to realize your dreams. And it transformed America, helping to build the largest middle class in history. We are saying the same thing to today's post-9/11 veterans; you pick the school, we will help pick up the bill.

And as these veterans start showing up on campuses, I am proud that we are making this opportunity available to all those who have sacrificed, including Reservists and National Guard members and spouses and children, including kids who have lost their mom or dad. In an era when so many people and institutions have acted irresponsibly, we chose to reward the responsibility and service of our forces and their families.

Whether you left the service in 2009 or 1949, we will fulfill our responsibility to deliver the benefits and care that you earned. That's why I have pledged to build nothing less than a 21st Century VA. And I picked a lifelong soldier and a wounded warrior from Vietnam to lead this fight, General Rick Shinseki. (Applause)

We are dramatically increasing funds for veterans' health care. This includes hundreds of millions of dollars to serve veterans in rural areas as well as the unique needs of our growing number of women veterans. We are restoring access to VA health care to a half million veterans who lost their eligibility in recent years, our Priority 8 veterans.

And since there has been so much misinformation out there about health insurance reform, let me say this. One thing that reform won't change is veterans' health care. No one is going to take away your benefits. That is the plain and simple truth. (Applause) We are expanding access to health care, not reducing it.

We are keeping our promise on concurrent receipt. My budget ensures that our severely disabled veterans will receive both their military retired pay and their VA disability benefits. And I look forward to signing legislation on advanced appropriations for the VA so that the medical care you need is never held up by budget delays.

I have also directed Secretary Shinseki to focus on a top priority, reducing homelessness among veterans. Because after serving this country, no veteran should be sleeping on the streets. We should have zero tolerance

for that.

And we are keeping our promise to fulfill another top priority at the VA, cutting the red tape and inefficiencies that cause backlogs and delays in the claims process. This spring I directed the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to create one unified lifetime electronic health record for members of the armed forces, a single electronic record, with privacy guaranteed that will stay with them forever. Because after fighting for America, you shouldn't have to fight over paperwork to receive the benefits that you have earned. (Applause)

Today, I can announce that we are taking another step. I have directed my Chief Performance Officer, my Chief Technology Officer and my Chief Information Officer to join with Secretary Shinseki in a new reform effort. We are launching a new competition to capture the very best ideas of our VA employees who work with you every day.

We are going to challenge each of our 57 regional VA offices to come up with the best ways of doing business, harnessing the best information technologies, cutting red tape and breaking through the bureaucracy.

And then we are going to fund the best ideas and put them into action. All with a simple mission, cut those backlogs, slash those wait times and deliver your benefits sooner. I know you have heard this for years, but with the leadership and resources we are providing this time means we are going to be able to do it. And that is our mission, and we are going to make it happen.

Taken together, these investments represent an historic increase in our commitment to America's veterans, a 15-percent increase over last year's funding levels and the largest increase in the VA budget in more than 30 years. And over the next five years we will invest another \$25 billion to make sure our veterans are getting what they need.

These are major investments and these are difficult times. Fiscal discipline demands that we make hard decisions, sacrificing certain things we cannot afford. But let me be clear. America's commitments to its veterans are not just lines in a budget. They are bonds that are sacrosanct, a sacred trust we are honor bound to uphold. And we will.

These are the commitments we make to the patriots who serve, from the day they enlist to the day they are laid to rest. Patriots like you, patriots like Jim Norene.

His story is his own, but in it we see the larger story of all who serve. A child of the Depression who grew up to join the greatest generation. A paratrooper in the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne. Jumping in a daring daylight raid into Holland to liberate a captive people. Rushing to Bastogne at the Battle of the Bulge where his commanding general, surrounded by the Germans and asked to surrender - declared famously, "Nuts."

For his bravery, Jim was awarded the Bronze Star. But like so many, he rarely spoke of what he did or what he saw, reminding us that true love of country is not boisterous or loud, but rather the "tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime."

Jim returned home and built a life; he went to school on the G.I. Bill. Got married. Raised a family in his small Oregon farming town. And every Veterans Day, year after year, he visited school children to speak about the meaning of service. And he did it all as a proud member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Then, this spring, Jim made a decision. He would return to Europe once more. Eighty-five years old, frail and gravely ill, he knew he might not make it back home. But like the paratrooper he always was, he was determined.

Near Bastogne, he returned to the places he knew so well. At a Dutch town, liberated by our GIs, school children lined the sidewalks and sang "The Star-Spangled Banner." And in the quiet clearing of an American cemetery, he walked among those perfect lines of white crosses of fellow soldiers who had fallen long ago, their names forever etched in stone.

Then, back where he had served 65 years before, Jim Norene passed away. At night. In his sleep. Quietly. Peacefully. The "tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime."

The next day I was privileged to join the commemoration at Normandy to mark that day when the beaches were stormed and a continent was freed. There were presidents and prime ministers and veterans from the far corners of the earth. But long after the bands stopped playing and the crowds stopped cheering, it was a story of a departed VFW member that echoed in our hearts.

Veterans of Foreign Wars, you have done your duty to your fallen comrades, to your communities, to your country. You have always fulfilled your responsibilities to America. And so long as I am President, America will always fulfill its responsibilities to you. (Applause)

God bless you, God bless all our veterans. And God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

INTRODUCTION OF GENERAL RUSLAN AUSHEV, PRESIDENT OF THE WAR VETERANS COMMITTEE, RUSSIAN FEDERATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: It is now my privilege to introduce from the Commonwealth of Independent States, the President of the War Veterans Committee, Russian Federation, Retired General Lieutenant Ruslan Aushev.

General Aushev is a combat-wounded veteran who served several tours in Afghanistan as a Commander of a Motorized Rifle Battalion and as a Regimental Chief of Staff.

For his bravery, the General was awarded the Gold Star of the Hero of the Soviet Union.

After the war, he was elected as a people's deputy to the Soviet Parliament, and was a member of the Upper Committee Council of Military Affairs.

In February 28, 1993, he was elected President of the Russian Republic of Ingushetia, a position he held through 2001.

In September 2004, the General made worldwide news by successfully negotiating the safe release of 26 women and children hostages from Chechen Terrace, in the Russian town of Beslan.

The VFW has traveled to Moscow over the past five years to meet with the General and his committee to discuss POW/MIA issues that are important to American families from World War II forward, as well as to Russian families who have missing loved ones from their war in Afghanistan.

Central to our full accounting mission is access to Russia's military

archives, where U.S. researchers have been banned since October 2006. Diplomatic notes were passed last month between the United States and the Russian Federation that we hope will revitalize a Joint Commission that was established to determine the fates of missing American personnel. I might add, in the Military War Museum in St. Petersburg, there are thousands and thousands of medical records of American GIs who were treated by Russians in Germany in World War II.

We are very grateful to the General and his fellow committee members, plus a representative from their Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for joining us here in Phoenix. They have helped to overcome barriers to aid our full accounting mission, and for that, the VFW is eternally grateful.

Please welcome the President of the War Veterans Committee, Ruslan Aushev. (Applause)

GREETINGS BY GENERAL RUSLAN AUSHEV,
PRESIDENT OF THE WAR VETERANS COMMITTEE,
RUSSIAN FEDERATION

GENERAL RUSLAN AUSHEV: Mr. Commander-in-Chief, dear veterans, before I begin my presentation, we have a special request from the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation Sergei Lavrov, for me to make a special presentation.

"I am pleased to greet the participants of the National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The interaction between the Russian and UA veterans is gaining momentum, and an attempt of exchange of experiences is underway as to how to address the issues of social and economic assistance for the veterans and their adaptation to peaceful life.

"This is the second year in a row that the delegation of the Warriors Internationalists Committee of the Council of Heads of Government of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Major Veterans Organizations in the CIS area attends your forum.

"Russia attaches much importance to the expansion of ties in this field regarding them as an important element of the cooperation and the humanitarian area, where such experience will undoubtedly contribute to the strengthening of the overall Russian-American relations.

"We believe that the legal status of the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on Prisoners of War and Missing in Action formalized during the meeting between President Dmitry Medvedev and President Barack Obama from the 6th to the 8th of July will enhance its efficiency.

"We highly appreciate the willingness of our American partners to render all possible assistance in the search of missing Soviet soldiers and identification of the unknown buried in the common war graves in the territorial of other countries. We also appreciate the current practical work based on the documents from the five Nazi concentration camps where our Prisoners of War were detained. For our part, we are committed to continue to promote this cooperation.

"During the Moscow Summit, the American side received copies of archives material which can help establish the fate of some U.S. servicemen taken as Prisoners of War during World War II. We hope the coming year of 2010, the year of the 65th anniversary of the great victory in World War II and the great patriotic war, the ties between the veterans association of our countries will receive a newly impetus marking the triumph of human-

ism and self-sacrifice in the name of the internal values of peace, freedom and justice.

"We are prepared for joint work with our American partners to achieve the level of active and pragmatic interaction in various areas based on the understanding of and mutual respect for each other's interests, which will ensure in peace and security in accordance with the spirit of the 21st Century.

"This objective is in the interest of our two countries and in the interest of the entire international community.

"I wish you every success in your work. I also wish health and prosperity to all the veterans."

This is signed by Sergei Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs. (Applause)

First of all, on behalf of our Committee, allow me to thank the Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner and the Executive Director Robert Wallace for the invitation to take part in the work of the 110th National Convention.

On behalf of the Committee of the War Veterans of the Commonwealth of Independent States, I wholeheartedly greet all and wish all of its participants successful and fruitful work.

In the past year our organizations were successful in achieving positive results in realizing the points of the Joint Declaration of Cooperation signed in 2007, and the ideas expressed during the Russian-American Conference in Moscow about the role of the veterans organizations in the development of international cooperation.

An important event was the exchange of diplomatic notes that determined the status of the U.S.-Russian Joint Commission on POW-MIAs that took place in July during the Moscow visit by President Barack Obama.

In that way, the agreement has been functioning since 1992 on the basis of a verbal decision of the presidents of both countries was legally secured. We have the foundation to consider that our organizations played a significant role in this, and that the exchange of notes will ease the work of both sides.

At the same time, I would like to highlight that our cooperation, and significant point is built on the basis of goodwill of the veterans and desire to solve common problems while helping each other. In the past year, our committee representatives on numerous occasions passed to the workers of the Moscow office of the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission a list of combat veterans from the Korean and Vietnam Wars who could possess information about American servicemen who died or became missing in action during those conflicts.

We organized several meetings with such veterans in Moscow and other cities. The importance of this work was confirmed by the Defense Prisoner of War Missing Personnel Office's principal director, Colonel David Ellis, during his visit to Moscow in June of this year.

We are counting on beginning our cooperation in exchanging of information on POWs and MIAs. We know of the concern from the U.S. side about gaining access to archival documents, and we are working with the Russian Federal Security Service with the hope to achieve progress on this issue.

Speaking of the cooperation between our organizations, I would like to recall the visit to Moscow of the VFW, Glen Gardner and the Director of the Washington Office, Robert Wallace, in October of last year.

Mr. Gardner's presentation to the Committee on Defense of Security in

the Federation Council, which is analogous to your Senate Committee, was met with exceptional interest by our Senators. In our turn, we are grateful to your organization for the reception of our representative in Washington in May of this year during the special commemoration on Memorial Day. Our representative was allowed the opportunity to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Arlington Cemetery, along with Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner.

Using this opportunity, I would like to again voice our proposal to establish a permanently-functioning international conference on veterans' issues and the conduct of an annual meeting with the participation of veterans from other countries. The main goal which we are targeting is the timely reactions to world events so that the voice and position of the veterans would be widely known. Also, we propose to continue our cooperation in all key directions, exchange of work experience, patriotic education, immortalizing the memories of the fallen, medical, social rehabilitation, defense of rights and others.

In relation to this, I would like to announce that on my way to Phoenix, I had a stop in Washington where as an Afghan veteran I was requested by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to share my evaluation of the current situation in Afghanistan, which to tell the truth, there is not much optimism from me. I kind of predicted this development of events even before the induction of the multi-forces into that country, where I spent many years as part of the Soviet contingent.

We, as military personnel, execute the orders, but the decisions are made by politicians. I would like very much for those decisions to be taken with the considerations of the opinion of the veterans who already have much experience in this realm. This is our goal. We must be heard.

Esteemed colleagues, in February of this year we marked the 20th anniversary of the withdrawal of the limited contingent of Soviet forces from Afghanistan. Among the many questions that I had to answer in relation to this anniversary was this one: How long will we continue to search for the missing in action servicemen? I remember the motto of the Joint POW-MIA Accounting Command, which I wholeheartedly agree, "Until they are home."

For us, it is a calling of honor and conscience, a debt of combat brotherhood. (Applause)

Speaking of the perspective of our further cooperation, I would like to highlight the basic direction of our common work is spelled out in the Declaration on Cooperation, and we are determined to fulfill them to the letter. We are ready to work with our American colleagues for the benefit of developing and strengthening the international veterans movement.

I wish all the veterans of the United States and their families good health, many years of prosperity and success, and to the people of our countries I wish peace, friendship and optimism.

From our veterans, I have two tasks to accomplish. I hold in my hand two medals that were issued on the 20th anniversary of the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, and one of these medals I would like to present to the Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner, and the second medal to Executive Director Bob Wallace. On behalf of all veterans, this is a gift to the American war veterans. (Applause)

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BOB WALLACE: Thank you, General. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, General. We appreciate you being with us. It is a long trip to be here today and we appreciate your help with the Joint Commission.

PRESENTATION OF 2009 HALL OF FAME AWARD
TO MS. CONNIE STEVENS

Who out there in this illustrious audience cannot recognize our next beautiful guest? (Applause)

As we all know well, Connie Stevens is a motion picture, TV and Broadway superstar, as well as a recording artist. But just as dear to our hearts, Connie is also known for her superlative 33 years of service to the USO and the United States military.

She has performed at the White House for four Presidents, and has entertained kings and queens all over the world. On Broadway, she was Neil Simon's Star-Spangled Girl. She is a television icon of the 1960s and has starred in 20 major motion pictures.

Ms. Stevens has more recently produced and directed an award-winning documentary about her three-week journey through Vietnam in 1995 with 100 American women who had served in that war.

Connie has received the 2000 Humanitarian of the Year Award from the Sons of Italy, and has been honored for her work and talent by the County of Los Angeles, the Shriners, Child Help U.S.A., Mother of the Year Foundation, NIAF Honors, Icon of the Year in California, the USO, and Decoration for Distinguished Civilian Service from the United States Armed Forces, the highest civilian honor from the armed forces for having worked tirelessly for veterans' causes for three decades.

She says of veterans, "They are my favorite Americans," and she has demonstrated her support and love of our military by having toured with Bob Hope around the world, at every major military base, numerous hospitals and other venues. She has given her time whenever and wherever needed, from Korea to Vietnam, to the Middle East.

What fond memories she has provided to thousands of our combat troops through the years. Many of you here were fortunate to have had that personal experience. We are all so proud of you, Connie, for that.

Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to thank Connie Stevens for her tremendous legacy of service in our country by presenting her with the VFW 2009 Hall of Fame Award. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Hall of Fame Award, Gold Medal and Citation, awarded to Connie Stevens.

"In heartfelt recognition of her fervent love of country and the indomitable American spirit she has expressed so dynamically and poignantly while entertaining United States service members around the world and heightening awareness of the women who served in Vietnam.

"Her generous humanitarian work was instrumental in improving the morale of United States service members and is a reflection of her exemplary dedication and patriotism, as well as her enthusiastic and internal support for our active military and veterans, thus earning her the utmost respect and sincere admiration of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 17th day of

August, 2009. Approved by the National Council of Administration." This has been signed by Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General.

This award comes with a \$5,000 honorarium.

RESPONSE – MS. CONNIE STEVENS

MS. STEVENS: Thank you so much. Wow, what a day. I thought following Sammy Davis, Jr., Frank Sinatra and Bob Hope was tough, but following the President of the United States, that is quite something.

Hi, everybody. You all look so beautiful in your uniforms. I want you to know that I have gone and will go anywhere for the military and the veterans of the United States of America. (Applause)

I am happy to be here. I wouldn't have missed today, I want you to know, if I had to come by bus. It was a five-hour flight, by the way. It was terrific, too. We had a lot of peanuts.

I wrote a few things for you and I want you to see that I made the writing bigger. It is that time. It happens to everybody.

Some of my greatest memories in my lifetime have been spending time with a lot of you. I have for four decades traveled around the world. I have entertained four Presidents. This will be the eighth President that I have been in the company with. He should have come over and said hello, but that's okay. (Laughter)

I have entertained our armed forces. I met you-all in hospitals from Cam Ranh Bay to Walter Reed. I have been on your ships from the Iowa to the Midway, midnight mass in the bowels of the Midway, never to be forgotten; in the jungles of Vietnam, in the air at Aviano and the Diego Garcia, Incirlik, Turkey. Every place that the President talked about I was there. I have been there with all of you and I have seen your glory and your valor for so many years now.

I have stated so many times, and I will state it again, the magnificent sons and daughters of our military and our veterans are by far my favorite Americans, and the greatest asset that America has and will have. (Applause)

As the years go by, it is such a pleasure to meet more and more of you, especially since I get a chance to personally thank each and every one of you. I would like to do that. I would like you-all to know that I am so grateful for all the benefits that I have derived because of your sacrifice.

It wasn't always easy as a single mom, still trying to follow my dreams and get on with what I had to do in life, and I must say that I have always been grateful for all of you because I saw it firsthand, the sacrifices. When you hold a dying young man's hand in a hospital, it will change your life forever and you will be eternally grateful. (Applause)

I thought I would tell you a little bit about me since it is sort of a serious day. I was born in Brooklyn, New York. I am an Italian girl. I know I don't look it, but my real name is Concetta Rosalie Ann Ingolia, and in a divorce at two years old I was awarded to my Italian grandparents who spoke no English, so I spoke only Italian until I was five years old.

I had the most wonderful, wonderful family life, because the values that I had from my immigrant grandparents I value today. I know how much that they loved America. I saw it, and how grateful they were to be there, to be in Brooklyn in a little tiny brownstone, enough to allow all of their sons

to go to war and defend it.

My father was in the Second World War and my older brother was in Korea and my younger brother was in Vietnam. So, I know you warriors very well. (Applause)

There was never less than ten for dinner every night. That is the truth. She had a little patch of ground in the backyard where she grew her own food, my grandmother and my grandfather. He was a shoe cobbler and I never knew we were poor until at least 30 years old, because I kept saying, "Mom, I don't want any more to eat." I will never forget that, and it has created a sense of value that I try to pass on to my own sweet daughters.

I have two daughters and in my family I have eight grandchildren now. Thank you very much. My daughter, Trish, just had a baby boy, another one, and my daughter, Joely Fisher, who has a television show that I want you to watch. It is called "Til Death." I am getting a little plug in there for the kid. She has five children. She is a better mom than I am and she has just adopted an African-American child and we are delighted.

Our big family is ready to take on the world. Certainly more love and support than you can imagine is what I learned from my grandparents allowing me to be a dreamer, the dreamer that I am. So, I am aware that I have been raised to know a person's true success is not really measured in wealth, it is not measured in how much you can own, how much people like you, but how much unselfishly you can love, commit and give back to your community and your country, and see how many dreams you have left to fulfill and make sure that those around you fulfill theirs. I have tried to pass this on, as I have said.

I have been blessed and honored to have an amazing career in motion pictures, television, stage, and now a business woman. I have my own cosmetic company. I saw a couple of ladies out there with great skin care. I know you are using my products "Forever Spring." I also have recently had the greatest joy of my life. I have directed my first major motion picture. It is called "Saving Grace B. Jones." I want you to see it. It is quite interesting. It is about 1951.

I am also a history buff. I have been around for a long, long time, and it deals with insanity and the hardships of a rural family in America when it wasn't popular to pay attention.

I have been inspired by all of you, by the way, to help with this great country of ours, and in the case of young men and women that I have entertained to fight for America, the ones that fight for a free and fertile dreamland. I am honored to be a small part of you, a part of a great force in America, the America that I praise every day that will put this regime and the next regime and the one after that on notice when they govern our country we are about to look very hard at them, each and all.

And they do not only govern taxation and representation, they are responsible. They are responsible for the veterans, for the greatest asset, the military of America, and for the dreams that all young Americans have still to fulfill. That is what they are responsible for.

I wanted to just give you one story. I have so many that I would love to share with you, and maybe one day I will in a book. But this is an actual story, and all veterans will get a kick out of this.

It was in Da Nang. We had just landed and took off again because they were rocketing the base, and I went out there to sing, and I sang a song called "Will You Marry Me, Bill?" Does anybody remember that song? Do

you remember that? (Applause) "Will you marry me, Bill, I've got the wedding bell blues."

Anyway, I said anybody here named Bill? Well, 19,000 young men came running up to the stage, and I picked about eight of them and they came up on the stage and I started to sing "Will You Marry Me, Bill", and it was going really, really well.

All of a sudden out of the corner of my eye from the hospital corps comes a soldier in a robe with his walking sticks trying to get through the crowd. I saw him and I thought, "Oh, my gosh, what am I going to do? What do I do?" He came to the front of the stage and I said, "I have got a real hero now." And I helped him up on the stage. I said, "Come on over here, Bill." He put his arms around me. I said, "Throw those away." He threw his crutches away and we did the song. Well, it was a great moment in both of our lives.

As a matter of fact, I was just saying to someone out there, many of us have spent an incredible time in our lives, one little moment that a lot of people don't understand. If you step foot in Vietnam, it was a closed community. I was glad to have been there and I am glad to have served.

Many years later, I am going in a hotel in Houston, and I am passing the bar, the concierge place where we go and have breakfast and drinks, and somebody turned around and said, "Hi." I looked at him. I passed and I said, "Hi." I looked at him and I said, "I know you." He came over and I said, "Bill, Da Nang, 1969, or was it '70?" I said, "You came on the stage and we sang together." He started crying, "Oh, my God, I don't believe you would remember me." We cried and we hugged.

I said, "Please have dinner with us." There were about 12 of us that night, and that night he came and I just couldn't believe after all these years that we met each other again. We were sitting at dinner and I am introducing him around, this is Bill and we met, and so forth.

They brought the first course, and everybody was laughing, and he reached over and he tapped me on the shoulder, and he said, "Connie, my name isn't Bill. It is Michael." (Laughter)

That is real power, I will tell you. Your unquestionable love, all of you, and your dedication to our beautiful country does not go unnoticed. It may seem like it does to the show business community, but it doesn't, because I have the biggest mouth.

You have been a shining example for generations and you will be for generations to come. You are a beacon to the world.

Obviously, we had a Russian diplomat here. You leave the world a great legacy and your families as well. You are hard to emulate. You cannot be easily surpassed, and a grateful nation thanks you over and over again for your sacrifice.

To all of you here today, I admire so much of what you have done with your lives. I wish you continued good health. I give you much love and I wish every last dream that you have comes true for you.

I am honored to be in your presence. Thank you for having me.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

INTRODUCTION OF COLONEL DAVID GRIFFITH, DIRECTOR, FREEDOM TEAM SALUTE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: It is now my honor to introduce Colonel David Griffith.

Colonel Griffith has spent 27 years in the U.S. Army and trained more than 60,000 personnel, finance and JAG officers at Fort Jackson.

Accordingly, you can bet he knows a thing or two about what being an Army family entails, especially the sacrifices that come with it. Colonel Griffith undoubtedly puts that knowledge to work as the Director of the Army's Freedom Team Salute program.

That innovative program, founded in 2005, honors the important bond between soldiers, family and community, and celebrates the sacrifices made by all those who love and support soldiers and generations of veterans.

Freedom Team Salute encourages soldiers to recognize their parents, spouses and employers with a commendation, thanking them for the value they bring to the Army family. The program also allows anyone to recognize a U.S. Army veteran for his or her service to the nation, no matter where or when he or she served, or for how long.

The VFW welcomes any opportunity to honor our nation's military families. So here to tell us more about the Freedom Team Salute program is Colonel David Griffith. (Applause)

REMARKS – COLONEL DAVID GRIFFITH

COLONEL GRIFFITH: Hup! Good morning. I want to thank you for that introduction. I would like to get a copy of it. My mother-in-law doesn't think I have a job, and I would like to send it to her.

It is really an honor to share this morning with so many distinguished veterans, and there seems to be a lot of you here. You are pretty far back there. When I talk before a large crowd like this, I always feel like Zsa Zsa Gabor's eighth husband on his wedding night. "I know what I have to say and do, but can I make it interesting?"

I think you all are going to enjoy learning about the Freedom Team Salute program if you have not heard about it already.

I want to thank National Commander Gardner and Adjutant General Kent for giving us this invitation to be here.

The veterans in this room represent the very best that America has to offer. Our country and Army exists only because of your legacy of service.

When our nation called, it was you who responded leaving behind your families, your friends, your communities, your jobs to live out what we today call the Army values: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage.

That is the example that you have set for today's soldiers. I can tell you those soldiers perform brilliantly around the world today. It is this legacy of service and support that Freedom Team Salute honors.

This morning I want to just provide you with some information on the program. I want to build on the relationship that we have started with your National Headquarters, and I will provide you a way to support your Strategic Outreach Initiative.

This is an Army program. However, we also want to thank our brothers

and sisters who serve in the other services in our military. Thank you for what you do.

If this program sounds like something you might be interested in, I would recommend that you send a note to your service secretary, and I think that every service could benefit from a program like the Freedom Team Salute program.

As a way of background, Freedom Team Salute is an official Army commendation program that recognizes the essential bond between our Army, our family, our communities and our veterans. The overarching goal of the program is to build a strong alumni community and support for our Army families.

It is built on two pillars, our soldiers and our veterans. Through this program, all soldiers can recognize their parents and spouses for their sacrifice and support, National Guard and Reserve soldiers can also recognize their employers.

Additionally, anyone can recognize discharged Army veterans for their years of dedicated service and other supporters that make significant contributions to the Army mission.

So, for example, you can recognize veterans' spouses, the Ladies Auxiliary and others in your community that stand in support of the Army and the VFW.

When we present someone with a commendation, they will receive a Certificate of Appreciation and a letter of thanks signed by the Secretary of the Army and the Army Chief of Staff, an official Army lapel pin and two Army decals.

If the commendation is sent from the VFW, it is customized with the VFW's name. There will be no doubt in the recipient's mind that it was the VFW that initiated this commendation. The commendation is provided at no cost to the VFW or the recipient and is fully funded by the Army.

In order to recognize someone, all we need is a name and address. It is that simple. The names and addresses are safeguarded. They are only used to prepare a commendation and to prepare the Salute newsletter, which I will talk about in a minute. But that is something that you can easily opt out of.

That has been our commitment to the 2.2 million people that we recognize, and it is our commitment to your Headquarters as well. We stay connected to those that we have commended through our quarterly news Salute letter. It has a circulation of well over a million, and it contains stories and articles connecting our veterans and our families to today's Army. You can see even those at the highest levels of the Army are using the program.

There is General Casey presenting one to Ms. Petraeus. Stories of the VFW with presentation to its members and supporters can also be put in this publication.

Again, the reach of this publication is over a million, so tell people about the great things that you are doing.

We get a lot of support from our army community and many want to join in our mission. For those who would like to join our effort, Freedom Team Salute has a formal Ambassador's Program. These volunteers raise local awareness for the program by conducting events and commendation ceremonies. We currently have 850 plus ambassadors in all 50 states and nine countries, and these are an asset to you. They can be used to conduct ceremonies at your Posts or Departments.

These ceremonies can be publicized in local, state and national media outlets generating free advertisement for your organization. Now, we consider these ambassadors to be the backbone of our program and many are VFW members, and we hope that some of you will join the ambassadors ranks.

Our primary goal for the FTS VFW partnership, is to create an enduring partnership, one that has been official to both organizations.

The Army's goal is to recognize the over 12 million Army veterans that we have yet to recognize. Simultaneously, FTS can help you achieve your Strategic Outreach Initiatives.

First, you can recognize your current members. Each Post should have received a letter from Adjutant General Kent requesting that you send the names and address of your Army veterans so that we can prepare commendations for them. Your National Office is leading the way and we recently sent VFW customized commendations to over 81,000 VFW members who had let their membership elapse.

To help with your membership recruitment, your members can send commendations to non-Army members in their communities. Of course, we can help you set up a commendation ceremony again with our ambassadors. All you need to do is to let our staff know that you are interested in doing that.

Also, don't forget again to recognize those that support you, your spouses, the Ladies Auxiliary, community leaders, businesses and so forth.

In summary, the Army is very interested in reconnecting with our alumni, our Army veterans. Remember we customized the letter so that the recipient knows that it came from the VFW.

Our goal is to present a Freedom commendation to every VFW Army veteran. Our challenge to you is to get the word out to your Posts and members, recognize your army veterans and your supporters. Of course, tell your friends and families and other organizations about our program because we need their help as well.

We have been able to present Freedom Team Salute commendations to a number of veterans celebrities and supporters, and all of them were humbled at the recognition. However, it was Mickey Rooney who said it best. He said, "The real stars are the veterans, recognize them, say thank you to them."

Freedom Team Salute is here to help you do just that. Jean Davis is our Veterans Outreach Manager, and she is your primary point of contact. She will be over in the booth in the Exhibit Hall, No. 4, today, and I ask you to stop by if you have any questions. That's our Web site if you want to learn more about the Freedom Team Salute program.

I again want to thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this gathering of heroes. You really are the people that make our country great and our Army strong. Hup! (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Colonel, before you leave the stage, I had an opportunity to travel a lot of military bases this last year, and I went to the Army bases. You know what I heard, hup. When I went to the Marine bases, I heard hoorah. You know what I heard at the Air Force bases? "Fore."

INTRODUCTION OF HANS SONG, DIRECTOR OF OVERSEAS
LIAISON, VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION, REPUBLIC OF CHINA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: It is now my privilege to introduce Mr. Hans Song, the Director of Overseas Liaison for the Veterans Affairs Commission from the Republic of China.

Mr. Song is here representing Minister Kao Hua-chu, who understandably had to remain behind to aid in recovery efforts after Typhoon Morakot devastated Taiwan ten days ago.

We hope your family is safe, and wish a speedy recovery for your nation.

Mr. Song received a Master's Degree from California State University at Los Angeles, served in his Army as a platoon leader, English language instructor, and then their military spokesman within their Ministry of National Defense.

In 1988, he joined their Veterans Affairs Commission, which is similar to our Department of Veterans Affairs, and ever since he has been our key liaison to the government of Taiwan.

He is the one who ensures every VFW visit to Taiwan goes smoothly and is productive. That includes my visit in early May, one that included meeting Dr. Ma, the President of the Republic of China, and VFW Ladies Auxiliary President Dixie Hild, who visited last November.

The VFW has a strong relationship with the Veterans Affairs Commission that goes back many, many years, and I can honestly say that successful relationship is due to the outstanding support and dedication of one man.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome my friend, Mr. Hans Song, from the Republic of China Veterans Affairs Commission. (Applause)

GREETINGS – MR. HANS SONG, VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION

MR. SONG: I don't know if I should say good morning or good afternoon, or in my country good evening. I am sure you all have had a very long morning and I will try to make my remarks short. My staff wrote me remarks of 13 pages, but I will just use three of them.

Well, Commander-in-Chief Gardner and National President Hild, I remember her, ladies and gentlemen and my dear friends with the VFW, good morning or good afternoon.

On behalf of General Kao Hua-chu, the Minister of Veterans Affairs in Taiwan, I am greatly honored to bring his greetings to your 2009 National Convention. Mr. Kao wanted to attend this Convention by himself, but as you probably learned from the TV news the disaster caused by Typhoon Morakot caused very, very devastating results to Taiwan that required him to stay in my country to take care of the aftermath management.

He remembered all our good friends with the VFW and he sent his best regards. But I need to report to you that as of August 15th, two days before, that the toll of the devastating disaster was that more than 120 persons are dead and were unheard of. There were still more than 500 that still is nowhere to be found. We are still looking very hard for them.

This is why I just thank President Obama for the American's kind aid to us. America, this great country, sent us friendship donations of a quarter of a million U.S. dollars, and also a rescue mission with helicopters to our rescue of the missing persons, of those trapped in the mountains where

they had no way to come out. Thank you very much, America, and please, our dear friends with the VFW, please pray for Taiwan.

The VFW and the VAC have built a very strong relationship for over four decades, and our two organizations have actually enjoyed our relationship by exchanging visits every year. In April of this year, I was honored to receive your Commander-in-Chief Gardner in Taiwan for a four-day visit during the time he was received by our President, Dr. Ma Ying-jeou for a 40-minute meeting.

President Ma Ying-jeou was sworn in last May 20th of the year 2008. Thirteen months have passed.

We have done greatly in two directions. The first one is our reproachment, our restructure of our friendship with Mainland China which used to be our enemy. This is a good sign for bringing peace between enemies.

Now, America does not need to put so much force in paving the way for us or for helping us making more defense force, because we are making friends with our former enemies.

In the past 15 months, we much proudly report to you that we have paved a way which has changed, in the past tense of 50 years, almost no people from both sides of the Taiwan Strait could meet each other, could visit each other. But now we are doing that. (Applause)

Another direction that our President was proud to tell the world is that we are making a much better way to build a good relationship with the United States of America. As a government official, I am not supposed to criticize any previous administration, but I must say the current administration is a peacemaker. Well, the previous one, I don't know, but he often induced a nickname, let's say, a troublemaker. I wouldn't put too much comment on that.

A third point I want to report to you is that we really want to appreciate Americans' assistance for Taiwan, the Republic of China, to join the inter organizations like the World Health family, which is very important, especially during the time that H1N1 is prevailing around the world. Every citizen in every country needs to have the access to the information provided by the World Health Organization, and we are fighting real hard for that, and thank America for helping us to join this organization. We thank you and we hope that you will continue to give your support for us to being engaged in more of these kind of world organizations like under the United Nations.

A fourth thing is that even though I just mentioned we are paving our peaceful ways with our former enemies, the Chinese Communists, or you like to call China. I am also one part of China. We are the Republic of China in Taiwan.

But now even though we are making friends, we still need our self-defense force, and we need to buy weapons to keep our self-defense.

Therefore, the most important one that we need your help with is the F-15 CNB, which is very important in keeping our air defense balanced between Taiwan and the other side of the Taiwan Strait. So all I am asking is the friendship of our VFW friends, and I know you have passed resolutions in all the past 22 years I have been here, and I am sure we will win your support, and we look forward to your visit, not just the Commanders, not just the President. Taiwan is a nice place. When you come to us, don't make it in the summertime because that is the season for Taiwan. Otherwise, every season is beautiful and we welcome you. Thank you very

much.

But before I leave here, I want to present a medal on behalf of our government to Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner. I will read the citation first.

“Mr. Glen Gardner, Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, has distinguished himself by his outstanding contributions to the promotion of friendly relations and cooperation between the United States of America and the Republic of China.

“In appreciation of his meritorious assistance, Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner is presented the Medal of the Order of Cloud and Banner with Cravat No. 3652, by the Government of the Republic of China, Taiwan, in accordance with Article 11 of the Armed Forces Decoration Regulations.”

This has been signed by President Man Ying-jeou and co-signed by Premier Wu Den-yih, and the Minister of Defense Kao Hau-chu. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much, Hans. Hans, once again I want to let you know that our prayers and best wishes are with your fellow countrymen, and let them know that our prayers and best wishes are with them for a speedy recovery from this hurricane. Thank you very much. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT TO MIKE DeROSA

The Veterans of Foreign Wars, through the VFW Foundation, has been able to provide emergency financial support to our military families through the Unmet Needs Program.

In 2007, while serving as President of Burger King Restaurants Mid-America Franchisee Association, Mike DeRosa developed, and has been the driving force, behind an incredibly successful fund-raising program for the VFW Foundation.

During its first year of existence, the “Buy A Burger; Donate A Buck” initiative raised more than \$110,000 for the Unmet Needs Program.

Understanding the importance of assisting military families and the positive impact the Unmet Needs Program makes for them during a real time of need, our next honoree was successful in his efforts to bolster the initiative by encouraging other Burger King Restaurants to likewise join in and lend a hand to the tune of an astounding 500 restaurants in 13 states.

Because of this tireless dedication by Mike, in 2009 and for the second consecutive year, Burger King patrons again stepped forward to honor America’s men and women in uniform, raising \$250,000 for the VFW Unmet Needs Program. In the brief time span since the “Buy A Burger; Donate A Buck” campaign was launched, more than \$360,000 has now been raised and donated to that program, helping countless of our military.

This is a remarkable expression of gratitude to all the brave men and women of our armed forces for their sacrifice and dedication. Our thanks goes out to everyone who has played a part in this wonderful and magnanimous endeavor, and we are especially grateful to the individual who first conceived the idea for the program and has since so honorably committed himself to making it a reality.

Please graciously welcome the recipient of the VFW Commander-in-Chief’s Gold Medal Award, Mr. Mike DeRosa. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: “Gold Medal of Merit and this Citation

awarded to Mike DeRosa.

“In sincere praise and deep appreciation of his endearing commitment and steadfast contributions to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and its Unmet Needs Program, conceived in benevolent support of United States military service members and their families.

“His invaluable responsiveness and tremendous efforts in raising more than \$360,000 to assist service members and their families during their time of need, truly demonstrates his genuine care, concern and compassion for all members of the United States military, thus earning him the utmost respect and regard of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

“In Witness Whereof, we have here unto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 17th day of August, 2009.”

This has been signed by Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. “Gunner” Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – MR. MIKE DeROSA

MR. DeROSA: The President of the United States, a Russian General, a movie star, and a Taiwanese diplomat, and now a guy that sells Whoppers and fries. The VFW really knows how to party, I have got to tell you. (laughter)

On behalf of my fellow franchisees, who really got together to make this program what it is, I proudly accept this honor. I also want to thank some other people that are involved behind the scenes. That is the VFW Foundation. I don’t know how many of you know that much about it, but it is a great foundation.

Foundation Director Dan Shea, Jamie Moore and the rest of the staff, we all know how important it is when you are in the field to make sure the supplies show up, because it is won or lost by logistics in supplies.

They made sure that everything we needed to raise the money was always there and it was there on time. We thank them for that.

I also want to thank all the various VFW Posts around our 13-state area. One of the benefits of this program is not just raising money for military families, but it is getting to know you, the veterans at these Posts. So whether it was in South Bend, Indiana, Fargo, North Dakota, Brainerd, Minnesota, Lincoln, Nebraska, Sioux City, Iowa, or my own home town of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, we will always treasure the friendships and we will also look at you people as special.

I pledge to you because there is a lot to do, a lot to do from now on to help military families, the Burger King franchisees will be with the VFW Foundation until all needs are met. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much, Mike. Right now, I wish I had a “Whataburger.” That is the wrong restaurant, I know. It is a good story. (Laughter)

INTRODUCTION OF THE 2009 VOICE OF DEMOCRACY WINNER NATALE SZABO

It is now my honor to introduce the 2009 Voice of Democracy Winner, Natale Szabo, from the Evergreen State of Washington. Incidentally, Natale

represents the first winner from the Department of Washington. So let's hear a loud cheer from that state's delegation, especially from Post 3386 and its Ladies Auxiliary in Airway Heights. (Applause)

Created in 1947, the Voice of Democracy Scholarship Program is an audio-essay contest from high school students in grades nine through twelve that provides more than \$3 million in scholarships annually.

The National first-place winner receives a \$30,000 scholarship paid directly to the recipient's American university, college or vocational/technical school.

This year's theme was "Service and Sacrifice by America's Veterans Benefit Today's Youth by..."

Natale resides in Cheney, Washington, and recently graduated from Medical Lake High School. She is now attending Washington State University, where she is using her scholarship to pursue a degree in broadcast communications earning the necessary education for her aspiration to begin a career as a Middle East news correspondent.

What a joy it is to have such a shining example of our youth here amongst us and if you haven't yet heard Natale speak, you are in for a real treat.

So, please join me now in welcoming Ms. Natale Szabo, our first-place Voice of Democracy Winner, as we listen to her first-place speech. Natale. (Applause)

2009 VOICE OF DEMOCRACY WINNER NATALE SZABO

MS. SZABO: Good afternoon, everybody. First of all, just let me say it is such an honor to be here. The journey from the time I wrote this speech back in October, not expecting to get anything out of it, to now has really been incredible. Don't get me wrong, \$30,000 is great, but no amount of money can really equal the support that I have gotten from the people of the VFW. It has really been amazing, and I have gotten so much support, so many great comments and so much great advice from the people here. So, thank you. (Applause)

"Service and Sacrifice by America's Veterans Benefit Today's Youth by..."

"If you can read this, thank a teacher. If you can read it in English, thank a soldier." My AP European History teacher, and also one of the single most intelligent educators of my high school, has this saying on a poster sitting outside of her room. Every single day hundreds of students pass by. Some of them stop and look, some ignore it, and some barely notice its existence. Few students actually think about it.

It's amazing the level of freedom we have in this country, and how much we take it for granted. This year is a historical time in politics, being the 2008 presidential election. Wait – what was that I just said? Elections? We have the power to actually choose who represents us? And we don't even have to worry about riots or people waiting with guns outside of the election booth?

Many people wouldn't think twice about this. But you and I know that our country is a political anomaly in the scope of the world. The First Amendment alone allows Americans to worship at a synagogue, a Christian church, or a mosque, read or publish nearly anything imaginable, and bring huge numbers of people together in a protest. Rich or poor, female or male, Americans have the right to an education, and every single one of us

is lucky enough to be tried in front of a jury in the court of law.

But let's take it further. Not only can we vote on who represents us, but once they are in office, we can rant, scream, blog and Photoshop compromising pictures of them all we want. Where else can you do that with the sort of nonchalant attitude that we regard it with? Whether we agree with these things or not, we're allowed to do it.

Those liberties haven't come to us without a cost. If it weren't for a group of brave rebel-rousers in the 1700s, we will still be spelling color with a "U" and answering to an island in Europe. Every single thing that we Americans take so selfishly as a "right" instead of a "privilege," has been paid for in blood, tears and pure determination. We are a country with a population in a league of our own. We are the owners of the American dream and that famous ingenuity that has sparked so much greatness. And at the heart of all of that? Our soldiers. Our brave, selfless, always persevering soldiers.

So what am I thankful for? What do I, an 18-year-old girl who likes designer clothes and only eats organic food, feel appreciative of? I am thankful for my intelligence. I am thankful for being able to question what's happening to me and who is controlling it. I am thankful to be able to debate my fellow seniors about last night's headlines every morning in history class. I am thankful for being able to wear jeans instead of a dress every day.

I am thankful for my dad, an escapee from the oppression of Soviet Hungary, to be able to create a prosperous life in America. I am thankful for the parents, the children, and the siblings who have so selflessly seen their loved ones off to war.

I am thankful that I attend a high school where half of the students have parents who are members of the United States military, for it is because of that personal connection that I have grown such an appreciation for our armed forces. I am thankful for the food on my table, the clothes on my back, the shoes on my feet, the TV in my house, the books that I read, and the life that I live. I am thankful, and I owe every bit of it to the veterans that have sacrificed for me. Their health, their time, and their families – our military has always put the good of the people above their own well-being.

Most of us haven't been in the throes of war, and don't know what it's like to be shot at. Most of us wouldn't have the guts to be out there on the front line. Lucky for us, we have our heroes in shining camo. Whether you're a Republican or a Democrat, a protester or supporter of our war in Iraq, a welder or a CEO; you live your life as freely as you do because of a soldier. So next time you see a man or woman in uniform, stop, take off your hat, shake your hand, and thank them from the bottom of your heart for sacrificing themselves every single day. If you are listening to this right now, thank a soldier. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: As all of you know, one of the changes I made this year was to present the Voice of Democracy Award back on the state level. One of the greatest honors that I had during my year as Commander-in-Chief was to be in Spokane, Washington, and present Natale with her first-place Voice of Democracy Award in front of the student body of her high school, along with the parents and guests that were present for the awards ceremony.

It was a great honor and it meant a lot to me and a lot to our great program. I thank them for that. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS TO 2009 ALL-AMERICAN
COMMANDERS

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Certainly, one of the most prestigious awards earned as a Commander in the Veterans of Foreign Wars is to be named a member of the All-American team. This year, we have 47 Department Commanders who have earned this award.

Now, Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Thomas Tradewell and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Richard Eubank will present All-American Commander Awards to this elite group.

Alabama – George H. Jones
Alaska – John W. Mattison
Arizona – Christopher Kozakiewicz
Arkansas - Victor M. Kerr
California – Joseph Nick Guest
Colorado – Steve A. Rylant
Connecticut – Alfred R. Meek
Delaware – Michael K. Farley
Europe – Robert A. Mowery
Florida – David L. Harris
Georgia – Henry DeWayne Epps
Hawaii – Richard JC Wong
Idaho – Gary T. Whitworth
Illinois – Vincent R. Long
Indiana – Richard M. Faulk
Iowa - Larry J. Larson
Kansas - Herbert G. Schwartzkopf
Kentucky - Carlos Pugh
Louisiana - Carroll J. Knott
Maine - Robert H. Bernard
Maryland - Richard J. Koel
Massachusetts – Ronald A. Patalano
Michigan - Richard A. Redfern
Minnesota - Stan Kowalski
Missouri - Thomas J. Hartman
Nebraska - Roger L. Lang
Nevada - Jerome M. Adams
New Hampshire – John S. Rubery
New Mexico - Gordon K. Lam
North Carolina - Lawrence K. Flood
Ohio - Richard R. Uzl
Oklahoma - Ronald J. Slowik
Oregon - James F. Hand
Pacific Areas - Laurence L. Lyons
Pennsylvania - Larry M. Wade
South Carolina - Frank M. Fogner
South Dakota - Dick L. Pickering
Tennessee - Millard Curtis Damron, Jr.
Texas - Jerry D. Murphree
Utah - Mitchell H. Baker
Vermont - Malcolm Macaskill

Virginia - Harold J. Roesch
Washington - Steven O. Stetson
West Virginia - Charles E. Haney
Wisconsin - Gary J. Erickson
Wyoming - James Pedersen

There is one absent Comrade Commander who unfortunately is not with us today because of his untimely passing. Past Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki presented Department of New Jersey Commander Richard C. Bradshaw's All-American Cap and Citation to his family posthumously. Although missing from our ranks this morning, he is with us in spirit.

Comrades, this is the end of the Joint Opening Ceremonies, and the Business Session for the 110th VFW will start at 1300 sharp.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: That is 1:00 o'clock for everybody that was in the Navy.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 12:15 o'clock p.m., to reconvene at 1:00 o'clock p.m.)

FIRST BUSINESS SESSION
MONDAY, AUGUST 17, 2009

(The First Business Session of the 110th Annual Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars United States, was called to order at 1:00 o'clock p.m., with Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner presiding.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: We will now call to order the afternoon business session of the 110th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

PRESENTATION OF THE NATIONAL RECRUITER
OF THE YEAR AWARD

As Commander-in-Chief, I wanted to emphatically stress the critical importance of recruiting, as well as reward those individuals who worked so hard to perform this vital mission.

This year, I have the pleasure of awarding the National Recruiter of the Year Award to an individual who has recruited a phenomenal 1,088 new or reinstated members. That he hails from one of our smallest Departments, Europe, makes this accomplishment more outstanding and fully deserves to be well-recognized.

From Post 10436 in Kitzingen, Germany, Department of Europe, please welcome Bruce Withers, the National Recruiter of the Year. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "National Recruiter of the Year Award presented to Bruce A. Withers.

"In sincere appreciation and grateful recognition of your outstanding service in the VFW membership program.

"Your exceptional initiative and untiring effort during the 2008-2009 membership year contributed immeasurably toward the membership goal of recruiting 175,000 new or reinstated members.

"You are highly commended for your ultimate professional achievements and recognized for your exemplary dedication to the goals of the 'Honor, Sacrifice, Service' team.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 17th day of August, 2009." This has been signed by Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION
TO THE 109TH NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: It is now my distinct pleasure to present a Certificate of Appreciation to the 109th National Convention Committee for their work in planning and conducting last year's very successful National Convention in Orlando, and that is even in spite of trying hard to give us the entertainment of a hurricane.

Here to accept the award on behalf of the committee is Jack Carney, Past Commander-in-Chief and the National Convention Committee Chairman for the 109th National Convention.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: It reads as follows: "Certificate of Appreciation presented to the 109th National Convention Committee.

"In extraordinary appreciation and eminent recognition of their dedica-

tion and persistence to ensure the success of the 109th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States held in Orlando, Florida, August 16-21, 2008.

“In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 17th day of August, 2009.”

This has been signed by Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. “Gunner” Kent, Adjutant General.

RESPONSE – PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CARNEY

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CARNEY: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. The Department of Florida was indeed pleased to host the 109th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I would be remiss if I didn't mention some of the outstanding Chairmen that we had, because Florida has a reputation of having a teamwork presentation. I would like to recognize them now.

Because of the dates of the Convention, we had two Past State Commanders involved, and I would recognize Jack McDermott and Dave Harris as being involved with our 109th National Convention. I would like to recognize Benny Bachand, Tom Kissell, Steve Surface, Billy Moore, Ken Thie, Mel Collins, Joe Gault, Bill Wentling and Lewie Cooper.

I would like at this time to take the opportunity to thank the Adjutant General and his staff, especially Vanessa Kane, who devoted quite a bit of time to make sure we put on the Convention the way the Veterans of Foreign Wars would like to have.

Thank you, Commander-in-Chief, and we appreciate this recognition.
(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much, Jack. We appreciate it.

At this time I would call on the Chairman of the Convention Credentials Committee, David Butters, for our first report of the Convention Credentials Committee.

REPORT OF CONVENTION CREDENTIALS

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS (Post 475 – Delaware): Commander-in-Chief, my name is Dave Butters, and I am a delegate from Post 475 in Newark, Delaware. I will be reporting to you at the beginning of each morning session the delegates strength as of the close of business of the previous day.

So, as of last night at 4:00 p.m., we had a total of 8,361 delegates; 42 Department Commanders; 24 Past Commanders-in-Chief; and 32 National officers. That is for a grand total of 8,459 delegates.

Now, Council members, we still have some Council members and several Department Commanders who have not picked up their packets. That packet, of course, gives that Department Commander one additional vote. So, if you have not picked up your packet, please do so at your earliest convenience so that we can get you into the total tonight to be reported tomorrow.

Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Dave. We appreciate it.

We will now call on the Chairman of the Rules Committee, James R. Mueller, for his report.

REPORT OF CONVENTION RULES

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES MUELLER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, your Committee on Convention Rules met Sunday afternoon, August 16, 2009, and agreed on the following recommendations, which are respectfully submitted for your consideration. The other ones on the Committee are Vice-Chairman, Past National Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki. We had the Kansas City staff of Kevin Jones and David Prohaska. I will now ask the Vice-Chairman to read the Rules.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The Convention Rules are as follows:

1. That, in accordance with the National By-Laws and Manual of Procedure, and with the exceptions noted below, Demeter's Manual shall be recognized as parliamentary authority for this Convention.
2. That when a registered delegate desires to make a motion or address the Convention, he or she shall rise, address the chair as "Comrade Commander-in-Chief," and after being recognized, shall state his or her name, Post number and Department before proceeding.
3. A registered delegate shall be permitted to speak but twice on any one subject or any pending resolution for a period not to exceed ten minutes each, except by consent of two-thirds of the voting strength of the Convention present; provided, that the Chairmen of National Committees may speak as frequently as necessary in connection with reports of their committees.

In the event of controversy, the presiding officer shall not entertain any motion which will curtail further debate without affording the maker of the motion or a member of the particular group presenting the resolution an opportunity for five minutes of final rebuttal.

4. All resolutions offered by individual registered delegates must bear the endorsement of the Department Commander or, if absent, the Department Adjutant. All resolutions must be submitted to the office of the Adjutant General for numbering and referral to committee no later than 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, August 18, 2009, and must be accompanied by a written explanation as to why the resolution was not presented to the Department Convention for consideration.

5. All resolutions offered on the floor at the Convention, or otherwise, shall be in writing, and shall automatically and without reading, be referred to the Adjutant General for assignment to the proper committee.

6. Committee Chairmen, in reporting on resolutions referred to their committee, shall first read those resolutions on which favorable action is recommended. Specific resolutions may be set aside for individual action at the request of any delegate, the others being voted upon collectively. After action has been taken on all such resolutions, the Chairman shall read the number and title of those resolutions which the committee has disapproved. A resolution disapproved by the committee shall be automatically rejected unless a motion is made and seconded that it be approved, in which case it shall be brought up for debate and action.

7. This Convention will not consider any resolution dealing with race, creed or religion, or endorse anyone for public office. This Convention will not consider any resolution calling for the expenditure or appropriation of organizational funds.

8. This Convention will not consider any resolution endorsing legislation sponsored by any other veterans organization, or requesting us to join with any other organization in sponsoring legislation not expressly proposed by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

9. No person not a duly registered delegate or member of the National Convention shall participate in debate, directly or indirectly, on any subject before this Convention.

10. Unit rule of voting is not allowed.

11. Voting strength shall be determined by those delegates registered as of the close of the credential registration booth the previous day and as reported to the National Convention at the following business session. The Department Commanders will receive, prior to the beginning of each session, a list of Posts that have properly registered delegates. Only delegates representing those Posts listed on the report will be accorded voting privileges.

12. On roll calls, the Department Commanders of each delegation shall poll his delegation's registered delegates on the floor and shall announce the vote of his delegation.

13. Registered delegates of a delegation may arrive at a vote in any manner, but shall announce it in terms of full units and not in terms of a fractional part of a vote.

14. Reconsideration of a motion or resolution upon which final disposition has been made shall not be allowed after the session at which it was acted on has been recessed, unless the body is notified of such contemplated action prior to the close of that session.

15. When the report of the Department Commander of the delegation is not acceptable to all registered delegates of the delegation and a poll of the Department registered delegates is demanded by three registered delegates of said Department, the Adjutant General shall poll the registered delegates, without discussion of question.

16. In accordance with Section 613 of the National By-Laws, voting shall be by acclamation, except a roll call can be demanded by 10 registered delegates representing Posts in 10 separate Departments, or by order of the Commander-in-Chief.

17. Nominating speeches for the National Officers shall be limited to five minutes each. The time allocated to encompass all seconding speeches shall be limited to four minutes. Nomination and election of National Officers will be held according to the Congressional Charter, By-Laws, and Section 609 of the Manual of Procedure.

18. Registered delegates and persons recognized by the Chair shall be entitled to a respectful hearing, and the Chair shall have the authority to clear the gallery or the floor or have the Sergeant-at-Arms escort from the floor any person or persons who may create any disturbances which interfere with the orderly procedure of the Convention.

19. Consent of two-thirds of the voting strength of the Convention present is necessary for suspension of the rules of this Convention.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: As Chairman of the Committee, I move adoption of these Convention Rules.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I have a motion before the floor. Do I have a second?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GEORGE LISICKI: I second it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: We have a motion before the floor to adopt the Convention Rules as read by the Co-Chairman of the Committee. Is there any discussion? Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor will say "aye"; all opposed "no". The "ayes" have it. The motion carries and the rules are adopted.

Let me remind you that before you will be recognized to speak on any issue before this Convention you must go to a microphone, you must address the Chair as prescribed in the rules, and you must have a green registration card to address this body. This card with your name on the front is not a registration in order to be a delegate at this Convention. You have to have a green registration card to address this body.

Let me now call for his report, the Chairman of the National Committee on By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual, Past Commander-in-Chief Larry W. Rivers.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL BY-LAWS, MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LARRY RIVERS: Commander-in-Chief, thank you very much. Chief, I am pleased to report to you and the delegates at this National Convention that our Committee met yesterday afternoon for about three hours. There were extensive recommended By-Law and Manual of Procedure changes, as well as numerous changes to our Ritual. We had a good and spirited debate, and I am pleased to tell you that we worked through and have recommendations to this body on those By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual changes that have been recommended.

Let me particularly thank the Vice-Chairman of this Committee, Jimmy Cantrell, from Texas. Special thanks should go out to the By-Laws Study Group, who have been working hard for the past three years to try to do a lot of housekeeping on our By-Laws and Manual of Procedure, and also to the Adjutant General's staff, and particularly Kevin Jones, the Director, who worked so closely with us.

Commander-in-Chief, in keeping with the normal Convention procedure, what we would like to do is have the Committee report those resolutions, both in the By-Laws, the Manual of Procedure and the Ritual that were recommended for adoption, have the appropriate motion.

If someone wants to have those set aside, then they can be recognized, set aside for later debate, and then have the vote on those that are not controversial.

Everyone should have, when they registered as a delegate, a copy of this white booklet. So, if you have that with you, get it out because this has all of the By-Law and Manual of Procedure changes. They are the corresponding "B" and "M" by each of those. That's what I will be referring to when I tell you what the Committee recommends adoption.

I am not going to read every one of these. If so, we will be here all day. Hopefully, you have had a chance to review and read and see which ones you may or may not agree with. So, I am going to try to move slowly so you can follow and note on your booklet. After I have read the recom-

mended approvals, then at that time if you want to have that set aside, please line up at the microphone, as the Chief said, and he will recognize you and you can make your motion to set aside.

The National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual Committee recommends for approval the following: B-3, B-5, B-6, B-7, B-8, B-9, B-10, B-12, B-13, B-14, B-15, B-16, B-17, B-18, B-19, B-20, B-21, B-22, B-23, B-24, B-25, B-26, B-27, B-28, B-29, B-30, B-31, B-32, B-34, B-35, B-36, B-37, B-38, B-39, B-40, B-41, B-42, B-43, B-44, B-45, B-48, B-49 and B-53.

Commander-in-Chief, I would move that we adopt the Committee's report pertaining to the By-Law Amendments just read and would move the approval of the Committee's report.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you. We have a motion that has been made by the Committee to approve their report. It does not need a second in accordance with the Demeter's Manual.

Is there any discussion? Any that need to be set aside for further discussion?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE KEN PIKE (Post 4876 – Oklahoma): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Ken Pike from Post 4876, Department of Oklahoma. I request B-8 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The request has been made that B-8 be set aside. It will be set aside for action.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE VICTOR FUENTEALBA (Post 9083 – Maryland): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Victor Fuentealba, a delegate from Post 9083, Department of Maryland. I request that B-39 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: B-39 will be set aside for further discussion. Are there any others to be set aside? Seeing no one at the microphones, all in favor of adopting the Committee's report for approval of the by-laws proposed will signify by saying "aye"; those opposed "no". The Chair is not in doubt. The motion is carried by a two-thirds majority.

B-8 will come to the floor. There is a motion to adopt B-8. Do I hear any discussion?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE KEN PIKE (Post 4876 – Oklahoma): I rise in opposition of this by-law because basically it is in Subsection (c), it is adding a \$25 charge for each Post to register for the National Convention. To the large Posts that \$25 doesn't mean a whole heck of a lot, but I did call three of my small Posts in my District. They are a 15-man Post, an 18-man Post and a 17-man Post. They fund their programs basically out of their pocket.

To quote one of the Commanders, he says, "I am reaching in my right pocket to pay for all of the programs that we are doing." They are doing those programs. "Now you want me to reach into my left pocket and take more money out. I can't afford it anymore."

This is putting a burden on the small Posts of this organization, not the large Posts, but the small Posts. So, I rise in opposition to this and say reject B-8.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade. Any further discussion on B-8?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DON SMITH (Post 9669 – Colorado): Comrade Command-

er-in-Chief, I am Don Smith, a delegate from Post 9669, State of Colorado. I also am opposed to B-8 for basically the same reasons. Any Post under 50 members is in serious trouble. It doesn't have a Post home. This \$25 tax will hurt them and the chances are they will be willing to turn in their charter. If that is the idea for these Posts to have their charters turned in, you will be successful in approving this item.

My Post, for example, has 60 members. I have to pay a per tax to the District, I have to pay registration fees with Department Conventions, and now you want me to pay \$25 to register with the National Convention, plus I pay our delegate fees. I believe this is totally unfair to all of our smaller VFW Posts in this great organization. Thank you for your time.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade. Any further discussion?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE RICHARD TANNER (Post 3787 – California): Commander-in-Chief, Rick Tanner, Post 3787, Department of California. I rise in opposition to B-8, and specifically Section (c) which puts the \$25 tax on each Post. This amounts to approximately \$200,000. Where is the money going?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I call on the Committee Chairman to answer that question, comrade.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: It goes to the National Convention budget. In fact, it costs \$1.3 million to put on this National Convention. Many of you here are on the National Committees. Now, \$400,000 of that money goes to pay for the National Committees. Another \$100,000 goes to recognize our All-American Commanders. Out of that, we have audio-visual costs, such as this, for about a quarter of a million dollars.

Look, the National Organization is not trying to penalize our Posts, but what we are asking for a decision on is what kind of National conventions do you have? If you went to our Council meeting, you saw that the National Organization itself has had an \$8 million deficit in the last few years.

Maybe five years ago, perhaps we could say that, but we just are trying to keep the level of the National Convention. It is only a \$15 increase, because they are paying \$10 now, and it goes from \$10 to \$25. So, it is not pecuniary in nature. We are not trying to harm posts. We are trying to keep a quality Convention like we have had over the life of the organization.

COMRADE LYNN DAVIS (Post 7792 – California): Commander-in-Chief, a point of clarification. The \$25 is in addition to the \$10 delegate fees according to the resolution.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Right now there is a \$10 Convention fee that is going to \$25. The \$10 delegate's fee is a new charge. They are two different things there. One is the \$25 fee that a Post pays, and then each delegate would pay \$10, if the Post pays that, that is fine, or if the delegate pays it. But it is two different things.

One is a \$15 increase over the \$10 that it is paying now. The other \$10 is a new \$10 delegate fee that we did not have before.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Do I hear further discussion?

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE CARLOS GORDON (Post 3835 – Latin America/Caribbean). I am Carlos Gordon from Latin America/ Caribbean. I rise in opposition to (c) due to the fact I am a small Post and it will put additional strain. Some posts in my Department can only help to bring a delegate to the Convention much less pay a tax for the Convention.

This would put a strain on the Posts that does not have the money to assist in this worthy cause as the Chairman so put it. I understand that we are in hard times, but "us" little guys like Ken Pike cannot afford to support this resolution.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade. Any further discussion?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE GERALD WARD (Post 5713 – Ohio): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Gerald Ward from Post 5713, Ohio, a delegate to this Convention. I rise in support of this by-law change. Comrades, it takes a lot of money to put this National Convention on, approximately \$1.3 million. We are not paying our way now, comrades, and the National budget was struggling, a \$5 million budget this past year, a deficit in the budget.

The National Convention budget, we allot \$400,000 for committees, \$100,000 for the All-American program, production for halls and everything, \$250,000. Space rental is approximately \$50,000, comrades. We have to either cut back or scale back on our National Convention, or we have to find the money elsewhere. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much, comrade. Do I hear any further discussion on B-8.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE WILLIAM THOMSON (Post 6192 – New Jersey): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Bill Thomson, Post 6192, Department of New Jersey. I rise in objection to B-8. Comrade Commander, we have in the last several years come to this Convention and in more ways and more times than one have agreed with or come to compromise and agreed with the raising of our dues for our members and our Life Members. We are diminishing the amount of money that we are getting back from our Life Members.

Here we are again this year talking about raising another fee for our organizational members. When I hear the reports that are given on the financial side, it is my understanding or I am led to believe that you know these are things that are beyond our control and we cannot, you know, be able to contain our costs. The Post members have those costs as well. We have to live within our means.

The District has to live within their means, and the Departments have to live within their means. We cannot keep coming to these meetings, Comrade Commander-in-Chief, and saying that we need to raise money because this is not only the National Organization that suffers because of the economy or how much money things cost today that they didn't cost yesterday. It is every single Post, every single District, every single Department that is meeting those needs.

So, while I may empathize with the position of those people that put the budget together, you know, perhaps we need our National Council members to look a little bit stronger before they cast their vote in agreement on those things that we spend money on during the course of the year. Don't penalize us because it wasn't scrutinized enough during the Council of Administration at the National level during the course of the year.

We ask that you reconsider pushing this by-law forward and, if not, I would ask that all of our members strongly consider casting your vote in opposition. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade. Any further discussion?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE LARRY RIVERS (Post 1736 – Louisiana): Commander-in-Chief, I am Larry Rivers, a delegate from Post 1736 in Alexandria, Louisiana. I rise in support of this proposed by-law change, but I want to say, first of all, that the National Organization will live with whatever this body decides.

Before we considered this, we went back and asked the question, when was the last time the fee for the Post registration was raised? We went back in our records, the National records, and we could go back as far as 1973, and we can't find where there has ever been an increase. Probably, this \$10 was put in as long as 30 years ago.

Now, there seems to be a misconception among some of us that this National Convention is for National. This Convention has nothing to do with National. This is for our posts and for our Post delegates. There is no such thing as any National delegates basically. They are Post delegates that vote and set this body precedent.

If you tell the National Organization that they have got to live within their budget, and I can assure you having had the pleasure of serving as your Budget Chairman this year, that is exactly what is going to happen; that is exactly what they are going to do.

Now, we have enjoyed great conventions, we have enjoyed beautiful settings, and to ask for a \$15 increase, plus a new \$10 delegate fee doesn't seem to be onerous. But, look, there is nobody on the National level that I have talked to or spoken to as we were working through these resolutions, and me as the volunteer appointed chairman, there is nobody pushing for this.

This is an idea of how do we keep our organization moving forward? This is a reasonable fee. Nobody is saying it is not onerous on some of our smaller Posts. Everybody knows that. The only thing I would say if you decide not to support giving the National Organization the resources they need to put on events like this, then just understand what you are doing.

So, now, we have already cut 100 National appointments. If you want to cut more, then that is the kind of things we are going to have to do. It is your decision to make, but I think our organization deserves to have a great Convention each year. It is for the posts and for those Post delegates, and this is not onerous to ask for an increase that is this small.

I urge you to consider that before you cast your vote. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE LYNN DAVIS (Post 7792 – California): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am opposed to this resolution. Of course, as far as Paragraph (c), but I would also like to bring your attention to Paragraph (a). Paragraph (a) does something that I don't think most of you here are aware, and that is it also will have to increase delegate dues for Districts.

Right now, the present by-laws state that based upon every 15 members of your Posts, you pay a delegate dues to the District for the District Convention. This changes that number from \$15 to \$30. Therefore, we will all have to go back to our Departments and to our Districts, and we will all have to raise our District dues in order to maintain just the financial revenues that we have received at the present time. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade. That is

a change that somebody is opposed to because they are going to save money.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE HARVEY STEPHENS (Post 2632 – Maryland): Commander-in-Chief and Officers, I am Harvey Stephens, VFW Post 2632, Maryland. A point of clarification. In Paragraph (c), if the Post has not paid their delegate fee, but the delegates arrive and pay the delegate fee, do the delegates get their vote?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The arrearage would happen after the Convention as it does now. Therefore, they would be in good standing at this Convention. If they don't pay their delegate fees before the next Convention, the same way it is now, Harvey, they would not be in good standing at the next Convention. They wouldn't have a charter at the next Convention either. That is the by-law today, that is not the change proposed in the by-law.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE ARTHUR HANLEY (Post 672 – New York): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Arthur Hanley from Post 672, Brewster, New York. I rise in opposition to B-8. I feel that while my Post and many Posts here can afford this, an increase of such magnitude percentage-wise is onerous to the smaller Posts.

I would have no problem if next year they come back with a similar amendment or change, and increase the registration fee for delegates, because that puts the cost to those who are attending. I also feel it is rubbing salt in the wounds to assess a \$50 late penalty on a Post that can't afford the \$25. I feel that you are trying to shut down Posts by pulling their charters for being in arrears. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE JACKIE SHIVERDAKER (Post 5579 – New Jersey): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Jackie Shiverdaker, State Commander from New Jersey, and a delegate from Post 5579. I have been coming to these Conventions for about the last 15 years, and I have paid a delegate fee of \$10 every year I have come. My Post normally does not pay a delegate fee, but when I register from Post 5579, we are not in arrears on the \$10 delegate registration fee.

Now, we are raising that to \$25, but yet every delegate that has to come still is paying \$10. If we want to raise this, let's do it in steps. Let's make it \$2 across the board for the Post and the delegates, and that way we can step this thing up instead of a big jump of \$25. There are too many small Posts that cannot afford it. By not affording it, you are going to take their charters.

It is tough out there now trying to keep these Posts alive and make them successful. We start hitting them for late fees like this, and you are going to penalize them another \$25, a 100-percent increase over that fee for being late, that is not right. I oppose this amendment to the by-laws and I hope the rest of the comrades on this floor agree with me. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE RAY LUTZ (Post 1087 – Montana): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Ray Lutz, a delegate from Post 1087, Great Falls, Montana. I rise in opposition to this also, but I would like to point out if they will read

further down, if you don't pay the \$25 fee, then you have a \$50 late registration fee. So, it is double.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: That has been noted. Thank you very much.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE BILL PERKINS (Post 3036 – Mississippi): Paragraph (c), I raise opposition to two parts of it. That is the same as a couple of other ones that I raised opposition to. Normally, if you just have one delegate that pays \$10, the Post doesn't pay anything. The other one, this is a \$50 fee.

I feel the way that a couple of the delegates have raised opposition to, and that is that you were sort of rubbing salt in the wounds charging these smaller Posts a \$50 fee, which they are not going to pay the \$25 anyway. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE ROBERT WEISS: Commander-in-Chief, Robert Weiss, a delegate from Post 2406, Michigan. I rise in support of B-8. The only thing we did as far as the delegates were concerned, we tried to make it uniform so you have got one delegate for every 30 members that you have in the Post. In Michigan, the delegate fees are brought up by the Districts themselves and they charge based on the amount of people, the members in a Post. They are not charged based on any delegate count.

We also looked at this increase as a \$15 increase, not a \$25 increase. It has always been \$10. All we are trying to do is to help the National Organization pay for this Convention in all the materials they have to mail out and send to the Posts and the Departments.

I hope everybody understands that we have got to look for the future in this organization, and the \$25 should not be a big problem. Those delegate fees were sent out, or the information was sent out to the Post Quartermasters in March every year, and if they can't go through five months and find \$25 to pay for their National registration fee, I don't know what they are doing. It can come out of my pocket and I can come up with \$25 to help a Post out.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade.

Microphone No. 1. Let me just say this. Is there anybody in favor that is addressing the microphones? Then I am going to let Speaker No. 1 have the last word, if he is opposed. Then we have one in favor. I think we have beat this dead horse as much as it needs to be beat.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE JACK TURNER (Post 1774 – California): Commander-in-Chief, I call for the question.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: There you go. Thank you. The Chair has ruled that debate has ended. The motion before the floor is to approve B-8. All those in favor will say "aye"; all those opposed "no". The Chair is not in doubt. It did not pass by two-thirds vote. The "nays" have it. The motion is defeated.

B-39 has been a set aside. Do I hear discussion on B-39? The motion before the floor is for approval of B-39.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE VICTOR FUENTEALBA (Post 9083 – Maryland): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Victor Fuentealba, a delegate from Post 9083, De-

partment of Maryland. I rise in opposition to B-39. Let me give you a little bit of background about the National Honor Guard, which this proposal affects.

The National Honor Guard, I believe, has been in existence for over 60 years. It is the only non-military organization that is permitted to perform at Arlington National Cemetery. The National Honor Guard performs five times a year in Arlington, on Veterans Day, Memorial Day, Gold Star Mothers, American War Mothers, and then when the Military Order of the Cootie has their trip.

Now, many of you don't realize that when the Honor Guard appears at Arlington, they are doing it at their own expense. They are not funded by National.

This is not an issue of money. The only compensation that they receive is when they come to the National Convention where they perform for the Memorial Service and the Opening Ceremonies, and the Closing Ceremonies. They pay for their own uniforms, they pay for their own transportation when they perform at other different functions.

Now, when you look at this change, it looks like a very innocuous small change. This change would change the name from the National Honor Guard to the National Color Guard. Now, typically, a color guard is a smaller unit of perhaps five. The National Honor guard, I believe at the present time, consists of 17 members.

Another change that would be made by this by-law would take it from the control of the National Convention and the Council of Administration and the Commander-in-Chief, and vest that authority solely in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief. It is my feeling that this change is unnecessary, it is my feeling that if this change goes through you may see the eventual demise of the National Honor Guard as we have it now.

The public relations image that is created by the National Honor Guard appearing in Arlington Cemetery is invaluable. There is no other veterans organization that can take credit for such recognition at Arlington Cemetery. I urge you to vote this down. I don't think it is necessary. As I said before, I think if you approve it you are actually opening the doors for the demise of the National Honor Guard. So, I urge you to please reject this recommendation.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Is there any further discussion?
Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE TOM RIDES: I am a member of the National Honor Guard. Once a year or once every four years we go to Washington, D.C., on our own money to escort the Congressional Medal of Honor recipients in Washington from the time they get off of the airplane to the time they leave. They do not do anything without us.

Only this year, after the latest election for President, we were not allowed to come because the rooms were given away. When we go to Washington to represent this National Honor Guard, we go over there in the evenings after 7:00 o'clock when the cemetery closes. We practice on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. We are the only ones allowed to do that other than the Old Guard. The National Honor Guard represents the VFW 150 percent.

When the National Organization wants to take away as the by-law says that this Convention has the say-so along with the Council of Administration, and then the Commander-in-Chief, in that order, I am opposed to this

and we need to give this National Honor Guard back to this Convention floor.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE JOHN McNEILL (Post 5412 – Virginia): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, not to argue or be contrary to my good friend here, Phil Medlin, but this is not an issue of the fact they were trying to establish undue control over the Honor Guard.

It is not an issue of whether we don't believe that they do an honorable job in what they do at Arlington Cemetery and elsewhere. Somehow the belief there is and in reality what Comrade Bissell is stating is the fact is they want to continue their status as a historical private club.

Right now, there is not a demise in the by-laws of the entity, official entity of the VFW. The issue here would be they are established under the control of the Commander-in-Chief, and we would then have latitude to send them on missions where we can pay them as a staff member for diem and other costs.

The very reason my other fellow comrades are arguing on this issue is that they see the reasons of what we want to do to help them out financially on missions they have to do.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade. Any further discussion?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE HARVEY STEPHENS (Post 2632 – Maryland): Commander-in-Chief, I am Harvey Stephens, Post 2632, Department of Maryland. The thing we worry about in this by-law, by changing the name to Color Guard versus Honor Guard, the Act by Congress states Honor Guard, and this may remove our honor guard from the Tomb.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE RON RUSKO (Post 9460 – Connecticut): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Ron Rusko, from the State of Connecticut, and Post 9460. I, too, rise to oppose this by-law change. I don't believe it was said yet, and I know that part of what was said that the Honor Guard does all of the different things at Arlington National Cemetery, but they also go to Past Commanders-in-Chief funerals, still at their own expense.

I heard that they didn't want to make it a private club. It is not a private club, it is ours. It is controlled by the National Convention and then, of course, the Council of Administration. And I see no reason why we should change that. It is perfectly well and good as it is.

Mr. McNeill made a statement that they are not under the umbrella of the VFW. Well, neither is any of the Eastern states, Big Ten or any other conference under the umbrella of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, either. So, if you are using that kind of attack to take them under the umbrella, you would have to use the same thing for all of your conferences.

I think that they do a tremendous job for this organization. I believe everybody in this room knows what a job they do. They, themselves, are coming to this microphone to say leave it alone, leave it be, we are happy and we want to stay with we are doing. I agree with them and I would hope everybody else would, too.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Is there any further discussion? Hearing none, the motion before the floor and the recommendation of the Committee is to pass B-39. All in favor will say "aye"; all opposed "no". The "nays" have it, and the motion is defeated.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. Under “M”, which stands for Manual of Procedure, of course, many of the M’s that we recommend for approval are housekeeping measures that go along and correspond to the “B” additions that you previously passed.

With that, now, I would move the adoption of the Committee’s report requesting the adoption of the following.

Again, look under the “M” numbers in your book, and I will read through those fairly slowly. The Committee recommends adoption of M-1, M-2, M-6, M-11, M-12, M-13, M-14, M-15, M-16, M-17, M-18, M-19, M-20, M-21, M-22, M-23, M-24, M-25, M-26, M-27, M-28, M-29, M-30, M-31, M-32, M-33, M-34, M-35, M-36, M-38, M-39, M-40, M-41, M-42, M-43, M-44, M-45, M-46, M-47 and M-48.

I move the adoption of those recommended Manual of Procedure changes.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: You have heard the report of the Committee for the adoption of the Manual of Procedure Proposals. Is there any that need to be set aside?

Microphone No. 1.

SISTER TISH McCULLOUGH (Post 4676 – Texas): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I would like to set aside M-44.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: M-44 has been set aside. Are there any others?

Comrades, the problem is that B-42, the By-law which refers to “M” has passed. You should have asked for that to be set aside. We have to have the Manual to operate when we have passed the By-law amendment. So, if the By-law was not set aside, then the Manual of Procedure that accompanies that By-law cannot be set aside at this time.

What the Committee has done is very diligently gone through and made it so the By-laws of the organization are the By-laws, the Manual of Procedure is the instrument by which you follow, how you follow that by-law that is in the By-laws. So, it has to be there as part of that, and since that By-law was passed.

Are there any others that did not pass as a By-law that need to be set aside?

FROM THE FLOOR: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the by-law was passed. However, it doesn’t designate how the caps are to be worn at meetings. It just says there will be a cap. The Manual of Procedure designates how the cap and when the cap will be worn. So, it is in order that we should discuss it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The rules of the Convention state, and I will ask the Parliamentarian to read the rules of the Convention having to do with By-Laws and Manual of Procedure.

PARLIAMENTARIAN MATTHEW MIHELIC (Post 6368 -Illinois): If you look at the back of your booklet on these by-laws, there are two boxes. One says By-Law Amendments and the other one says Manual of Procedure Amendments. The second block does say that a change in the by-laws automatically changes the Manual of Procedure, and it is not necessary to act individually on the corresponding Manual change. So, since the by-law was changed, the Manual of Procedure automatically changes. Those are the rules.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: That is the ruling of the chair.

FROM THE FLOOR: (Post 4676 – Texas): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: For instance, the Manual of Procedure that had to do with B-39 was not read by the Committee Chairman. There would be no action to take on it since the by-law did not pass.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE BUFORD MAPLES (Post 5985 – California): Was M-8 called out? I want to bring it on the floor and I didn't remember if he called out M-8 or not. That should not be brought up either.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: It was not called also. M-8 was not called since B-8 did not pass. M-37 is what corresponded to B-39. It was not reported by the chairman.

You have heard the report of the Committee. All those in favor of approving the Committee's report say "aye"; all opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it. The report of the Committee is adopted.

The Chairman will now read the By-Laws and Manual of Procedures recommended not to pass by the Committee.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Commander-in-Chief, we had several issues with the Ritual the National Chaplain reported to the Committee. It was the Committee's recommendation that we adopt our changes, R-1 through R-32 of the Ritual. I move the adoption of the changes.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The proposal of the Committee is to adopt all of the Ritual changes in the book, R-1 through R-32. Does somebody want to set aside one of those Ritual changes?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JOHN HOLLAND (Post 1 – Colorado): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am John Holland, Post No. 1, and the State Chaplain, Colorado. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I move to set aside, and there is a list, sir, R-3, R-5, R-6, R-7, R-8, R-9, R-10, R-12, R-14, R-15, R-17, R-18, R-20, R-23, R-26, R-32.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Does that leave any?

COMRADE JOHN HOLLAND (Post 1 – Colorado): That's about half, Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: We can't hear up here very well. We can't hear anything going on. We have heard the ones that the comrade asked to be set aside. Is there any others to be set aside? If not, all in favor of approving the report of the Committee will say "aye"; all those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it. The motion is passed.

We will now start with R-3. There is a motion before the floor for approval of R-3.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JOHN HOLLAND (Post 1 – Colorado): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, R-3 changes the Opening Prayer, and if I might even address R-5 at the same time as a point of order. It is the Closing Prayer. Both of them, to my knowledge, have been part of the VFW Ritual since approximately 1899, and I would just rather not see them changed just to modernize the language.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JOHN LORING (Post 9221 – Colorado): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I would like to speak on R-3. I am against changing this prayer. Among other things in that prayer we have currently a line that says,

"Bless, we ask Thee, the widows and children of our National Home and help us to fulfill our duty toward them." That has been deleted. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much.

Microphone No. 3.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN THEODORE BOWERS (Post 8896 – Pennsylvania): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Bowers, National Chaplain. These prayers were modified to update the language of the Ritual. All the prayers were looked at and studied by our Committee. This was not a one-man operation. This was looked at by the Committee on Ritual and also had representation by the By-Law Committee, and we felt that it was important to update the language of the prayers as well as the Scriptures that are included. Thank you, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade. Is there any further discussion?

COMRADE JOHN LORING (Post 9221 – Colorado): I am still in opposition. Some of the words that were changed, fine. It looks good. But some of the changes change the meaning. When you change the meaning in a prayer, you are not just updating it, you are modifying it and, like I said, deletion of the blessing on the National Home from that prayer and "O, Sovereign Ruler of the Universe, who art the Lord of Host and God of Peace."

The new proposed prayer says, "Heavenly Father and Ruler of All Nations." You really have to have both of them together. I have spent a lot of time last night going over these, and I am sorry, I am still in opposition. Thank you, Commander.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade. Comrades, I will assure you that for 19 years I was on the By-Law Committee we seemed to never get to the Ritual. We didn't have enough guts to get to the Ritual.

Is there any further discussion? The motion before the floor is to adopt R-3, which was proposed by the National Chaplain and the Committee formed to rewrite the prayers for the Ritual. It is reported that the action of the Committee on Bylaws was to approve R-3.

All those in favor of the motion to approve R-3 will say "aye"; all those opposed "no". The "nays" have it and the motion has failed.

We will now go to R-5.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JOHN HOLLAND (Post 1 – Colorado): I am the State Chaplain of Colorado. For the same reasons we would not like to change the Closing Prayer. There is no reason to spend any more time on specific language and such.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Is there any further discussion? The motion before the floor is for the passage of R-5. All in favor will say "aye"; all opposed "no". The "nays" have it. The motion fails. R-5 is defeated.

Next is R-6.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JOHN LORING (Post 9221 – Colorado): This particular one affects the initiation prayer brief form. As it goes through, down in the middle of it, where we talked about tender ties formed during wartime and pains of war, the new prayer simply has that as the difficulties and dangers of foreign service.

I don't believe that the Veterans of Foreign Wars are any longer called the Veterans of Foreign Service. They were a long time ago, but not currently. I rise in opposition to this change in the prayer.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade. Is there any further discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor of approving R-6 will signify by saying "aye"; all opposed "no". The "nays" have it. R-6 is defeated.

Next is R-7.

COMRADE JOHN LORING (Post 9221 – Colorado): The same basic change, the same basic objection to that prayer, and also the following one, R-8 does the same thing. They basically change the dangers or difficulties of foreign service as well as may our affiliation foster us enduring comradeship.

I believe we have raised the bond there, and I rise in opposition to the change in our existing prayer. Thank you, Commander.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade. The proposal before the floor is to approve R-7. All in favor will say "aye"; all opposed "no". The "nays" have it.

Comrades, the proposal before the Chair is to approve R-8, R-9, R-10, R-12, R-14, R-15, R-17, R-18, R-20, R-23, R-26 and R-32. Do I hear any discussion on all of those as a group?

COMRADE JOHN LORING (Post 9221 – Colorado): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I rise in opposition to passage of those. As previously mentioned, R-8 is another one that changes the word to foreign service affiliation. R-9, again it talks about this is under initiation of a Post upon these comrades now become just officers and not fellow officers.

On R-10, if you would, it again says who now become officers. I believe they become fellow officers. In the case of – what was the next one, sir?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: If you are just going to oppose all of those, just state that you are opposed to all of them.

COMRADE JOHN LORING (Post 9221 – Colorado): I am opposed to all of them, sir. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much. My birth certificate says I was born in the night, but it was not last night.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JOHN HOLLAND (Post 1 – Colorado): Commander-in-Chief, I am the State Chaplain of Colorado. I, too, am opposed to all of these Ritual changes.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade. We have your name for the next Committee to rewrite the Ritual. Once again, one more last time, all those in favor of the passage of R-8, R-9, R-10, R-12, R-14, R-15, R-17, R-18, R-20, R-23, R-26 and R-32 will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed "no". The "nays" have it. They are all disapproved.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief and fellow delegates. That completes the work of the National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual Committee, Chief. Thank you very much for the honor of working with you this year and serving as Chairman of this Committee. Now, under our procedure, those that were not moved for adoption are rejected.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: All of the by-law proposals that were not reported by the Committee, that were reported out as rejected by

the Committee, are there any to be set aside?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE JAMES HESSELGRAVE (Post 5518 – Minnesota): I move the adoption of M-5.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The motion before the floor is to adopt M-5. Do I hear a second?

COMRADE RAY TREBUS (Post 363 – Minnesota): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: We have a motion before the floor to adopt M-5. Do I hear any discussion?

COMRADE JAMES HESSELGRAVE (Post 5518 – Minnesota): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, for the most part, I have no reason to question the experience and the knowledge of the By-Laws Review Committee, some of which are my counterparts. But in the case of the duties of the Quartermaster, Section (c), I have had strong disagreement with their decision to allow the Quartermaster to relinquish his or her obligation to sign the checks for the Post.

It is equally tragic that the by-laws now do not require the Post Commander to countersign those checks. This may be the next battlefield of this Convention.

Along with the Quartermaster to authorize other persons to sign the checks of the Post, in my opinion, is a poor business practice. The Veterans of Foreign Wars is a volunteer organization and should be placing more checks and balances on our Posts, not less. We are making the monies of our Posts more accessible to loss.

The Quartermaster took an oath to protect the assets of the Post. Subsection (c) dilutes that oath and that obligation. As was stated in the By-Laws Committee meeting yesterday, the reason for the change of the Quartermaster's duties two years ago was to allow checks to be written by the club employees and other Committees of the Post in the absence of the Quartermaster.

It was also stated that this was a good business practice. I can't disagree more. If you know when bills and payroll and deliveries are to be made, common sense would dictate that the Post would plan ahead on these events and develop procedures that would allow the Quartermaster to sign those checks.

Furthermore, Commander, I know of no other nonprofit organization that allows their treasurer to authorize others to sign the checks of their organization. If they do, that is also wrong. I take the job of the Post and Department Quartermaster very seriously. Again, I say this is all wrong.

The last time I checked the National By-Laws I could find nowhere that it stated that the Veterans of Foreign Wars was in the business of running bars and gambling. Therefore, I see no reason to release the Quartermaster from his duties as a fiduciary or financial officer of the Post, nor should the Quartermaster be allowed to designate any other than himself to sign the checks of the Post. This is wrong, and we should approve M-5.

The by-law changes of recent years are sending the Veterans of Foreign Wars down a slippery slope. Section 219, Officers and Duties and Obligation (a) Officers, Quartermaster, Subsection (c) is one of the most blatant and ridiculous changes brought before the body in many years. I again ask this Convention to use common sense and logic and approve M-5. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade. Any further discussion?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE GUNDEL METZ (Post 1318 – Wisconsin): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Gundel Metz, Post 1318, Wisconsin, and the Post's Quartermaster. I say we reject M-5. The reason is you have one person who does all the checks.

If that person is hospitalized, like my Quartermaster was when I was Post Commander, who do you have to do the paperwork and the checks? Or if he dies, who do you have to do it? Are you going to hold a special meeting to have a special election? So, I rise and say we reject M-5.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 – Florida): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Benny Bachand, a delegate from Post 4287, Orlando, Florida. I am a member of the By-Law Committee that presented this by-law to the Convention floor a couple of years ago. I want to make sure that people understand what this does, this section that the good friend of mine from Minnesota is objecting to.

What we ask for here is that the Quartermaster, which is the accountable officer of the Post, he is the one responsible for the finances of the Post. We recommended that he, who is the accountable officer, have the authority to appoint other people to be signatories on the checks, and that those people be equally bonded for the same amount of money as the Post Quartermaster. This is a protection for the Post, this protects the Quartermaster. This protects your assets.

This by-law does not say that a Post cannot have two signatures. It allows for the Post to have the Commander to sign checks if the Post by-laws so dictate. So, ladies and gentlemen, this is a protection for the Post and the Post Quartermaster to do his business.

As Jim said, it is a fiduciary responsibility of the Post. That is what we ought to be giving him. The VFW is a big business and we ought to be protecting our assets. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much, comrade. Any further discussion?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE JAMES HESSELGRAVE (Post 5518 – Minnesota): The by-laws also provide for the opportunity of the Quartermaster not to fulfill his obligations. The by-laws do state that the Commander can appoint a Quartermaster pro tem for a period of 60 days. If that Quartermaster cannot fulfill his duties within that 60 days, that Post is to elect a new Quartermaster.

I still say, and I will stand by this Convention after Convention, Chief, that the Quartermaster should sign that check. It is his responsibility, and I think looking at any good business practice all you have to do is to plan ahead, and that Quartermaster can fulfill his obligations.

I don't disagree with what Benny says, but this is a business. I wouldn't run my business and allow somebody to sign the checks of my business. I say you put this back the way it was. I still ask for the approval of M-5.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade. The Chairman will read the staff comment concerning this proposal.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I just wanted to read the comments that were given to the Commit-

tee so that everybody understands the National Organization is not promoting or doesn't have a dog in this fight.

The thought was that the Quartermaster can't always be at the Post 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and it was better to allow the Quartermaster the authority to appoint someone who was also bonded to sign those checks rather than be faced with the prospect of having the Quartermaster sign 25 or 30 checks and leave them there blank. That was the only thought process here, and that was the reason for the action taken by the Committee.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There being no further discussion, all in favor of passage of M-5 will signify by saying "aye"; all opposed "no". The Chair is not in doubt. The "nays" have it. The motion fails.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Mr. Chairman, that completes the work of the Committee. On behalf of the Committee, thank you for giving us the opportunity.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE VICTOR SMITH (Post 1289 – Illinois): I voted on the prevailing side for B-42, I ask for reconsideration of that vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: There is a motion for reconsideration of B-42.

COMRADE DON SMITHENRY (Post 4226 – Illinois): I second the motion to reconsider.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: We have a motion on the floor and a second. Do I hear any discussion?

COMRADE VICTOR SMITH (Post 1289 – Illinois): Under discussion, Commander-in-Chief, since M-44 is tied to B-42, then we were told that B-42 was merely clean-up, then they really cleaned up. So, we didn't understand the full consequences of voting approval of B-42. This will give our members the opportunity to reconsider that vote so that M-44 is not included.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: We have a motion to reconsider B-42. All in favor please say "aye"; all opposed "no". The "nays" have it. The motion to reconsider does not pass.

Microphone No. 3. Any more set asides?

COMRADE CHESTER PYATT (Post 8087 – Florida): Commander-in-Chief, I would like to move that we adopt B-50.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The motion before the floor is to adopt B-50. Do I hear a second? Do I hear a second? There being no second, the motion dies.

COMRADE PETE NICHOLSEN (Post 10097 – Florida): Excuse me, Commander.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Raise your microphone at least so I know you are trying. I don't know what is going on out there on the floor. I am not a mind-reader.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE PETE NICHOLSEN (Post 10097 – Florida): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The motion has been made and seconded to approve B-50. Do I hear any discussion on B-50?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE CHESTER PYATT (Post 8087 – Florida): I am in favor of this

amendment, a change to the by-laws. While many Departments do not have men's auxiliaries, the ones that do receive much needed help for their Posts, both financial aid and volunteers.

In a lot of cases, they are vital to the life of the Post. We must consider the possible contributions that formation of Districts for the men's auxiliaries can have. Auxiliaries can meet and participate with the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary in joint meetings to help formulate District fund-raisers, learn where other Posts are, meet new members from other Posts, and also after the joint sessions they can go into their own meeting to formulate ideas, which can only help to benefit Posts in the District.

We must allow the growth of this organization. A lot of their membership have military backgrounds, and can become leaders of their organization. Many of our potential new VFW members are women serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Their husbands and sons, or sons, will be wanting to join the auxiliary and participate in levels beyond the Post. This would just be a start, but we must as the greatest veterans organization adopt this change to allow the organization to move forward. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE PETE NICHOLSEN (Post 10097 – Florida): Our auxiliaries in the State of Florida have helped us greatly. We have more Posts closing every single year. We need the help. We closed a Post and put it into trusteeship a month ago, and it needed to be mowed, cut and whatever.

Who showed up? The Men's Auxiliary. They don't just drink at the bar, they are helping us with our membership. They are helping us with our financial aid, and they have actually paid for part of the roof in my District 13. I ask you, Commander-in-Chief, and all comrades in this room, if you have been exposed to a men's auxiliary in your Post, then your State and your District, give them some more supervision, some more contact. Let them be treated not like a red-headed stepchild. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE ALLEN "GUNNER" KENT (Post 9972 – Arizona): Commander-in-Chief, "Gunner" Kent, a delegate from Post 9972, Sierra Vista, Arizona. I rise to speak against this. Comrades, when we formed the Men's Auxiliary, it was formed for a Post level organization only to help the VFW with the Post.

At the time that we formed the Men's Auxiliary, there had not been a major conflict since the Vietnam War except the Gulf War. It was felt at that time that there was not enough veterans for the VFW, so the Men's Auxiliary could help.

I was against it then, I am against it now. Since 2001, we have had 1.8 million combat veterans serve that are eligible for this organization. We don't need a Men's Auxiliary, we need somebody out there recruiting the ones that are eligible for this organization, not a Men's Auxiliary.

We are starting to get pushed back from the young soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marine and Coast Guardsmen that are serving in the military today. We tell them join the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, you have earned it. They walk into a Post and there is a guy there and they say, "Where did you serve?" "Oh, I didn't serve. I belong to the Men's Auxiliary. I don't have to serve. I have got a card. I can come in here any time I want. I have got the same privileges you have."

We are sending the wrong message to the people that we need in this organization. I am strongly opposed to this, and I hope you delegates agree. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE MELVIN GARRETT (Post 6396 – New York): I rise in opposition to this amendment to the men's auxiliary by-laws as the Department State Judge Advocate. I have experienced many problems in our Department, and a lot of it has been surrounded by the fact the men's auxiliary has become a very strong force in the Posts and they are beginning to take over many of the responsibilities and duties of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I concur with the Adjutant General. We need to get out and we need to recruit members that are eligible for the VFW to strengthen the VFW. The men's auxiliary was only an extension of the Sons of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. For those who think that this is going to solve our problems, sit back and let them grow, and we will be the minority of this great organization. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade.
Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE ANTHONY CLASSE (Post 10708 – Europe): I am in opposition to this motion. However, if the comrade would pay attention to the resolutions that are coming up, he might have an answer that way, too. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade.
Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE ARTHUR HANLEY (Post 672 – New York): I rise in opposition. The comrades who were in favor of this speak of the men's auxiliary helping the Post. Right here it says the Departments are authorized to issue charters to units other than those sponsored by a Post. How are those going to help the Post? Thank you, Commander.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much, comrade.
Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE LARRY MAHER (Post 7356 – Missouri): I, too, rise in opposition. I would like, Commander-in-Chief, if you could, to make reference to a resolution that I believe came out of the General Resolutions Committee that maybe should be entered in the record at this time so the comrades understand that this is going to be addressed a little bit later. That is my first point.

The second point is I believe the comrade just made reference to it. The devil is always in the details, and the details in this particular by-law amendment, as stated, says Departments are authorized to issue charters to units other than those sponsored by Posts. It doesn't make reference to auxiliary units. It says units sponsored by Posts.

If you look at the definition section in our by-laws, 720, they could issue charters to any kind of thing under this by-law the way it is written. We need to be careful about the devil and the details. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade.

I will call on the Committee Chairman to read the staff notes on this, which will explain why it was defeated in the By-Law Committee.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. The Committee rejected this in favor of Resolution 207 that was pending in the Finance and Internal Organization Committee. I am told

that that resolution passed. I will just read you the “Resolved.”

“Be It Resolved, that the Commander-in-Chief appoint a Committee to research the feasibility of establishing the Men’s Auxiliary as a National Organization and present options at the 111th Convention.”

So, we recommended rejection based on that, and the reasons Delegate Maher just gave in that the language is so broad you could just about charter anything. So, again, the devil is indeed in the details, and if the resolution passes this floor that will be brought before you shortly, the Commander-in-Chief would appoint a Committee to actually look into that feasibility and report back to this body next year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I believe like anything we do, we must have definite plans and ideas before we start making changes to our by-laws. That is why during the Committee meeting the discussion was to defeat the Proposed By-Law, Manual of Procedure having to do with the men’s auxiliary until this study could be completed.

Microphone No. 3.

SISTER DONNA COULTOR (Post 710 – Pennsylvania): I served my country the same as all of you men served your country. My spouse should be able to participate on the same level as your spouses are participating. I look forward to the day when the Men’s Auxiliary is capable of doing the same things that the Ladies Auxiliary is doing. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE JACK PICKARD (Post 2780 – Michigan): I rise to speak along with her. My son should have the same right as my daughter, and when I hear somebody say that we should not have a Men’s Auxiliary, then why do we have a Ladies Auxiliary? Why do we give them more credit? That is total discrimination. I have said that for years. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE ROBERT MOWERY (Post 10708- Europe): What we need to do here is to get rid of the men’s and ladies auxiliaries and just have an auxiliary which they can join. That would take care of the whole deal.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: That statement wasn’t made while I was in the chair. Don’t let Dixie find out or I am in trouble. Thank you, Rob. I appreciate it.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE ALLEN “GUNNER” KENT (Post 9972 – Arizona): In reference to my comrade there that wants her husband to belong to the Men’s Auxiliary, if this Men’s Auxiliary was just for the spouses of the female veterans I wouldn’t have any problem with it.

But if you read who was eligible for this Men’s Auxiliary, it is just about everybody in the world. So, this auxiliary was not formed in the same manner as the Ladies Auxiliary. This auxiliary was formed so we could get people to help the Posts. Now, there are not the same restrictions here.

If you have a Men’s Auxiliary that says they are the spouses of the combat female veterans that fought, I have no problem with that. This Men’s Auxiliary doesn’t say that.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE RAY LUTZ (Post 1087 – Montana): I call for the question.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: We have a motion to call for the question. Do I hear a second? I don’t need a second. The motion is to cut off debate and move the question. All in favor of cutting off debate will signify by saying “aye”; all those opposed “no”. The Chair rules that it passed

by two-thirds majority as needed by Demeter's Manual.

The motion now before the floor is for the passage of B-50. All in favor of passage of B-50 will say "aye"; all those opposed "no". The Chair was not in doubt. The motion was defeated.

Are there any more by-laws to be set aside?

COMRADE JOHN GUBIN (Post 921 – Michigan): I would like to have set aside B-33 and I believe M-4 and M-9 go with it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: B-33 and M-4 and M-9 will be set aside. We will deal with B-33 right now. If the by-law is defeated, those remain defeated. If it passes, then those pass. B-33, do I hear a motion to approve B-33?

COMRADE JOHN GUBIN (Post 921 – Michigan): I make a motion to approve B-33.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: There is a motion before the floor to approve B-33. Do I hear a second?

COMRADE DONALD MARTINDALE (Post 1794 – Michigan): I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The motion has been made and seconded to approve B-33. The floor is open to discussion.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE JOHN GUBIN (Post 9021 – Michigan): Thank you, Commander. Commander-in-Chief, I attended the By-Laws Committee meeting yesterday and waited for this proposal to come up, and Comrade Larry Rivers stated that if you are not a member of the Committee you cannot speak. So, I did not speak at that time.

But when I heard the rebuttal or the case letter for not approving this by-law, it was the same one that was read in the Convention in 2008. After that letter was written, I obtained a copy of our Department. We addressed old issues involved that made this a very viable by-law.

The purpose of this by-law is to save the Posts money. We all keep talking about raising money and saving money. This saves the Post money. It is a simple by-law proposal to use the Post options of either carrying a bond or properly carrying the property theft insurance to ensure all people in their Post, volunteers, are paid for to be covered by insurance.

That is the purpose behind this by-law change. It is a good change, it is a change for progress. It will be beneficial to the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Do I hear any further discussion? May we have the staff's comment about it, by the Chairman.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. This is indeed a proposal as my comrade said that seems to appear at every Convention and the arguments in opposition never seem to change nor do the arguments in favor of.

Basically, what this involves is the Quartermaster's bond. There is a surety bond and then there are certain theft protection allowed under certain insurance policies. The surety bond that the VFW now requires is broad enough to be sure that we protect the Post.

With insurance policies, the theft provisions can change who is covered, whether an employee is covered, what constitutes an employee. With the surety bonds that are required that we get basically through, I think it is, Lockton Insurance now, they cover volunteers and everything else.

What the National Organization's concern is that everybody may not be able to read through their insurance policy to thoroughly understand

exactly what and who is covered. If the policy says you have to be an employee, most of our Quartermasters are not employees of the VFW, they are volunteers. Some do, some do not.

What we are trying to avoid is the confusion that comes about if, in fact, you get away from the surety and allow all other types of things. You know, employees, as we heard in some of this other debate, we are trying to protect the assets of the VFW, and the surety bond proposal has served us well. It has served that function and the Committee would urge that you reject B-33.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Microphone No. 3.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN WASYLIK: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am John Wasyluk, Post 2529, Sandusky, Ohio. I speak in opposition to this proposed change. If anything, rather than weakening our by-laws, we need to strengthen them. I am going through a horrible situation in my own Post now.

We have theft insurance. If the Bible wasn't open, I would tell you what I thought of it. The Bible is open and you use whatever blanks you want to, gentlemen and ladies. Theft insurance is not worth the powder it is talked about.

We need to do something to strengthen the regulations for theft in our Posts. It is rampant, and weakening the by-laws is not going to do it. Vote this down.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade. Is there any further discussion?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE JOHN GUBIN (Post 9021 – Michigan): I speak for the second time on this motion. I differ with my good comrade from Ohio, but being from Michigan we always have a different opinion. The by-law change does strengthen the proposal because the bond doesn't do everything that everybody says it does.

The deductible is with it. It only covers the Quartermaster. If somebody else steals the money from the Post, you have to resort back to you theft insurance. The way this by-law is written, it is insured that in the Posts the duty of the Posts, Departments and Districts, that they have the proper theft insurance to cover everybody in the Post, including the volunteers, which is us, and the employees hired by that Post. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade. Is there any further discussion? Seeing none, the motion before the floor is for the passage of B-33. All in favor of passage of B-33 will say "aye"; all opposed "no". The "nays" have it. The motion is defeated. Are there any more by-laws to be set aside?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE RAY LUTZ (Post 1087 – Montana): I move that B-11 be considered for passage.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: There is a motion before the floor that B-11 be approved by the delegates. Is there a second?

Microphone No. 3, my good friend Deke Johnson.

COMRADE DEKE JOHNSON (Post 63 – Idaho): I would like to second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much, Deke. The

motion before the floor, duly made and seconded, is for the approval of B-11. Do I hear discussion?

I will call on the Chairman of the Committee to explain the staff comments prior to opening the floor for debate. Mr. Chairman.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I would just like to share the staff's comments. B-11 really doesn't make any sense. Evidently, the intention was to prohibit other than Immediate Past Commanders-in-Chief from automatically being delegates to the National Convention. The problem is there is only one Immediate Past Commander-in-Chief, so this should be singular rather than plural.

Secondly, if the underlying purpose is to deprive Past Chiefs of travel to the Convention, that is not controlled by the by-laws, it is controlled by the travel policy adopted by the Council. The Council could do that on its own motion, just as the Council could decide not to pay Committee members or delegates, even if this by-law was passed.

So, that was the staff's recommendation. We would urge that it be rejected.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE RAY LUTZ (Post 1087 – Montana): I really didn't expect it to be passed at this Convention, but I wanted to have an opportunity to explain what our goal is. In these financial problems that we are having today, we have 26 Past Chiefs here.

We talked at the Council about using the Council members for travel to be representatives at Conventions, et cetera, because several of the Past Commanders-in-Chief were getting too old to travel. Well, there are 26 of them here, so they are not too old to travel. The bottom line is the Council members have no benefits once they go out of office, so why don't we utilize them to represent the National at the Conventions and let them make some of the decisions, cut down on their cost to the National Convention, to the Homecomings, et cetera? Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Is there any further discussion? All in favor of the motion will say "aye"; all opposed "no". The "nays" have it. The motion failed.

Do I hear any more motions concerning the By-Laws? There being none, the report of the Committee is adopted.

I now call on the report of the Committee on Finance and Internal Organization. The Chairman of the Committee is Past Commander-in-Chief John "Jack" Carney with his 112 Resolutions.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CARNEY: Oh, no, we don't. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. Our Committee met yesterday afternoon as directed by the Convention. I was pleased to have a great group of Committee members, and I would like to thank John Moon as the Vice-Chairman, and I would also like to especially thank Bob Greene and Pat Botbyl, the staff members in assisting us.

We passed Resolution 206, Resolution to Amend Ritual. We passed Resolution 207, National Recognition for VFW Men's Auxiliary.

Resolution 208, VFW Cross of Malta was also approved.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I move that these Resolutions be adopted.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: There is a motion duly made and seconded by the report of the Committee for passage of the Resolutions reported by the Chairman. Is there any debate? Is there any debate? Hearing none, all in favor of accepting the report of the Committee will signify by saying "aye"; all opposed "no". The "ayes" have it. The report is adopted.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CARNEY: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the following Resolutions were rejected: 201, Cross of Malta.

202, Changes VFW Member Dues from Calendar Year to subscription year.

203, Reduce Unnecessary Spending on a National Level.

204, Annual Membership for New and Reinstated Members to be Twelve (12) in Duration.

205, National Recognition for VFW Men's Auxiliary.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: You have heard the report of the Committee. Seeing no one at the microphone, the Committee's report will stand as read. Thank you, Comrade Chairman. I appreciate the work that was done by you and your Committee. At this time you are relieved.

Before you get too excited, I would like to release the By-Law Committee at this time.

We will now have the report of the Committee on General Resolutions. The Chairman is Jim Nier. I think this is the one with 112.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. Good afternoon, comrades. I am Jim Nier, Past Commander-in-Chief and a delegate from Post 8919, Texas, and Chairman of the General Resolutions Committee for this 110th VFW Convention.

Other members of the Committee serving with me are Past Commander-in-Chief Wally Hogan from Wisconsin, Past Commander-in-Chief George Cramer from Illinois; and Curtis "Doc" Bohlman from Oklahoma, a five-time past Surgeon General.

The staff advisors to this Committee were Steven Van Buskirk and Debra Anderson.

The Committee met yesterday at 2:00 p.m., August 16th, and had spirited and sometimes extensive deliberations. There were seven Resolutions to come before the Committee for consideration.

In accordance with our Convention Rules, I will first read those Resolutions on which favorable action has been recommended by the Committee. They are Resolution 301, Award the Medal of Honor to General George Washington.

Resolution No. 303, Restore Memorial Day to May 30th.

Resolution No. 306, Establish Protocol for the POW/MIA Flag.

Commander-in-Chief, at this time I move adoption of Resolutions 301, 303 and 306.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: You have a motion duly made and seconded before the body for adoption of these three Resolutions. Do I hear any debate? Is there any discussion? Seeing none, all in favor of approval of the Committee report will signify by saying "aye"; all opposed "no". The "ayes" have it. The motion passes. The report is accepted.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: The Committee recommended approval of two Resolutions with amendments. They are Resolution 302, Support Our Nation's Gold Star Mothers, and Resolution 304, Support for USS Iowa as a Museum. Both amendments addressed raising funds, which is in contradiction of Convention Rule No. 7.

Commander-in-Chief, let me read how 302 was amended. The Be It Resolved now reads, "BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and all of its Auxiliaries should join in assisting with raising awareness of the efforts to construct such a memorial and should assist in the current effort to raise funds for the completion of the memorial."

The amended "BE IT RESOLVED" will read, "BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and all of its Auxiliaries should join in assisting with raising awareness of the efforts for the construction of such a memorial."

I would move adoption of Resolution 302, as amended.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: There is a motion before the floor to adopt Resolution 302, as amended. Do I hear any discussion? Seeing none, all in favor of the motion will signify by saying "aye"; all opposed "no". The "ayes" have it. The motion carried.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: The Committee recommended amending Resolution 304. It now reads, "BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the assignment of the USS Iowa BB 61 as a museum at the former Naval Station Mare Island, and that we ask our sister Veterans Service Organizations, our Congressmen, Senators and Representatives to join us in this support, by raising funds, and by introducing and supporting legislation to further this assignment and the funding necessary to support the assignment of the USS Iowa BB 61 into museum duty."

The new resolved will read, "BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the assignment of the USS Iowa BB 61 as a museum at the former Naval Station Mare Island, and that we ask our sister Veterans Organizations, our Congressmen, Senators and Representatives to join us in this support by introducing and supporting legislation to further this assignment and the funding necessary to support the assignment of the USS Iowa BB 61 into museum duty."

We have struck the words "by raising funds, and" from the first "Be It Resolved."

Commander-in-Chief, I move adoption of Resolution 304, as amended.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: You have heard the report of the Committee for the adoption of Resolution 304, as amended. Is there any discussion? Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor will say "aye"; all opposed "no". The "ayes" have it. The motion carried.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: The Committee recommends rejection of Resolutions 305 and 307.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: One minute. There is some confusion among the Committee members.

Microphone No. 1, Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GEORGE CRAMER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief and delegates to the 110th National Convention, George Cramer, a delegate from VFW Post 3783, Naperville, Illinois, and a member of the Committee. I move for reconsideration of Resolution No. 306.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Do I hear a second?

SISTER DEBRA ANDERSON (Post 73 – Missouri): I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I believe 306 passed by the floor. It was not reported out of the Committee. It was in error in the report of the Chairman. Therefore, the Committee has asked that they be given the opportunity to correct this mistake.

All in favor of reconsidering Resolution 306 will signify by saying “aye”; all opposed “no”. The “ayes” have it by two-thirds majority.

Resolution 306 will now be reconsidered. I will call on the Chairman for his report.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Let me get this right this time. The Committee recommends rejection of 306.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: You have heard the report of the Committee. Is there any motion on the floor to approve any Resolutions that have been rejected by the Committee?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE MICHAEL EMERSON (Post 9601 – California): I request to set aside Resolution No. 305. You just said any.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: You have to make a motion to pass 305, comrade.

COMRADE MICHAEL EMERSON (Post 9601 – California): I would like to make a motion to adopt Resolution 305.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The motion before the floor is to approve Resolution 305. Do I hear a second?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE FRANK MILLS (Post 1754 – Pennsylvania): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: There is a motion on the floor and a second to approve Resolution 305. Do I hear any discussion?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE MICHAEL EMERSON (Post 9601 – California): I rise in support of Resolution 305. During this year’s National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, you have heard a unique opportunity to honor some of the most uncommon heroes of modern times and fellow veterans, the 40 heroes of Flight 93.

The 40 passengers and crew members of Flight 93 became the first to fight back in modern war on terrorism. They collectively chose to take action against their hijackers, ultimately causing their plane to crash in the field outside of Somerset, Pennsylvania, before reaching its intended target of Washington, D.C., and saving countless lives.

Their heroic actions will forever be commemorated at the Flight 93 National Memorial in Stoystown, Pennsylvania, the nation’s permanent memorial to their selfless actions and inspiring legacy.

However, the compelling story of Flight 93 is just one reason to support this Memorial. These 40 men and women, five of whom had prior military service, share the same ideals and principles as VFW members in sacrificing their lives for their fellow man.

I am asking VFW members to pass Resolution 305 during the 110th Annual Convention in support of the efforts to build the memorial which will preserve this historic crash site.

Enforcement by the VFW will be an immeasurable source of support for the Flight 93 National Memorial campaign. There are few opportunities to honor modern day heroes whose actions have changed the course of

American history in such a significant way.

The Flight 93 National Memorial is the best way to ensure we remember the sacrifice of those on Flight 93. Therefore, I ask that this body vote to approve this Resolution 305.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade. Do I hear any further debate?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE FRANK MILLS (Post 1754 – Pennsylvania): We also rise in support of this Resolution that endorses the building of this memorial. We feel it is a fitting tribute to honor the memory of those who made the ultimate sacrifice and perhaps stopping another terrorist attack and saving many lives. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Any further discussion?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE CURTIS HUDSON (Post 3380 – Tennessee): I rise in opposition to this proposal. I think when we go this way, the next thing we will see is a person or persons in that area and they get killed, we will have a memorial for those people.

I think what we need to concentrate on is doing memorials for our veterans. I have compassion for those people, but I think if we start this now, then every time we come to a Convention floor we are going to have a proposal that we have a memorial for anyone. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade.

Microphone No. 3.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN WASYLIK (Post 2529 – Ohio): I rise in support of this Resolution. During our Committee meeting, it was brought to our attention that we want to be careful and not commit the organization to any further expenditures of money.

We are not asking in that Resolution for any money. We are asking simply for verbal support, no different than when we go out to the public and say let's support veterans by donating to them as we do every month.

We just passed a Resolution to turn the USS Iowa into a memorial. We are supporting that. I firmly support it also. But aren't we being a little hypocritical? I would say that the damage, publicity-wise to this organization to turn this item down when it is going to be built anyhow, the funds are there, would be damaging to us. I don't want that. Thank you, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE CURTIS HUDSON (Post 3380 – Tennessee): In the second paragraph, it does ask that they be allowed to solicit the Posts, Departments and the Districts for funds for this memorial.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE ALLEN "GUNNER" KENT (Post 9972 – Arizona): I disagree with my fine friend Past Commander-in-Chief "Doc" Wasylik. As this comrade to my right just stated, this Resolution asks the National Organization to go to the Departments, the Districts and the Posts and ask them to make a donation to this memorial.

By doing this, we are going to have our Posts, Districts and Departments make a choice whether they make a donation to this or make a donation to the National Military Service, MAP, Operation Uplink, or Unmet Needs.

We have already heard today very loudly that these Posts, Departments

and Districts don't have a lot of money. Now, we are asking them to make choices on a memorial that has nothing to do with the veterans. I have nothing against the flight or nothing against the memorial, but this is not a veterans memorial. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JOHN BIEDRZYCKI (Post 418 – Pennsylvania): I rise in support of this Resolution for some reasons that may not be easily clarified in this discussion. But I call your attention and your memory, my comrades, to what happened on September 11th.

As those airliners flew over the United States, over the City of Pittsburgh, as I taught my students in school that morning, and we watched the developments on television, that airliner was flying over the City of Pittsburgh on its way to Washington, D.C.

Those people on that airliner, those heroes, decided to rise up, five of them being veterans themselves. They rose up and caused that airliner not to reach its final destination. That in a sense is what we all stand for. Those who will stand up and be recognized in a time that they are needed for their country and those individuals did that on that airliner. I think that reaches to the heart of what this organization is all about. We should support recognition of that.

Now, the Resolution itself asks us to publicize and give people an opportunity or a choice whether they want to make a donation. It is not asking us to do more than to publish the Resolution that is passed by this Convention, and it is asking us to possibly publicize in our newspaper or on our Web site. I don't see any great monetary contribution that we are going to have to put forward to support this Resolution.

I might also add that veterans all across the country, in Pennsylvania especially, are supporting this construction of this memorial. The money has already been raised, and it is going to be built. If it is going to be built, I certainly would like to see the Veterans of Foreign Wars supporting America's heroes who rose up at a time of crisis and a moment of action was necessary and they took it.

Wouldn't it be sad that this memorial be built and constructed and the Veterans of Foreign Wars going on record opposing it? I would move that we vote in support of this Resolution. I hope you comrades will follow me.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Comrade, if I may, were you on the Committee that drafted this Resolution?

COMRADE JOHN BIEDRZYCKI (Post 418 – Pennsylvania): I was not.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I want to get some clarification on whoever was involved in the drafting of the Resolution.

COMRADE JOHN BIEDRZYCKI (Post 418 – Pennsylvania): I was on the Committee, and this went to an individual vote in Committee.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I understand, but I want to get some clarification on the drafting, John. That is the only reason I asked.

COMRADE JOHN BIEDRZYCKI (Post 418 – Pennsylvania): Right. I wish we had the language for all the comrades to read it. Yes, they are asking that we publicize it and they are asking that we give people a choice if they want to donate. They are not asking in this Resolution to actively solicit, in other words, to send out a notice.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, John. Comrades, if you were involved, the Chair would like clarification. The way I read the

Resolution it calls for us to publicize and ask our members, our Posts, our Districts, our Departments to give them the opportunity to donate.

Who would decided who is going to do it? Are we going to furnish our mailing lists to somebody on the Committee for this memorial? Are we going to give away \$10,000 worth of advertising space in the National magazine to publicize a request in there? Are we going to give away free space on our Internet to do something like that? Has the Committee thought of any of these, the answers to this? This is a very vague Resolution, comrade.

COMRADE MICHAEL EMERSON (Post 9601 – California): I am the person that helped write this Resolution. It might be very simple if you allow me to just read the last two paragraphs so that you can read it and hear it for yourselves, and then I will try to clarify.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: That's fine.

COMRADE MICHAEL EMERSON (Post 9601 – California): "BE IT RESOLVED" that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States will endorse and support building the Flight 93 National Memorial as a permanent and lasting tribute to the bravery, courage, and self-sacrifice exhibited by the passengers and crew members of Flight 93; and

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, will publicize the status of the memorial to Departments, Posts and members so that they may decide on an individual basis if they choose to support the campaign to build The Flight 93 National Memorial to honor the heroes of Flight 93."

So, what has happened, I think, that people are reading into this, and some of the other distinguished members here have actually stated that we are asking for money. We are asking to publicize and let people know. Yes, if they decide they want to individually donate, they can. But they can do that today if they wanted to without this.

The American Legion has already approved a Resolution very similar to this last year in their National Convention. They believe this is a good cause. It doesn't mean that the VFW should follow suit. To me, this is to honor these people, five of which out of the 40 were veterans, Vietnam veterans, Korean veterans, Desert Storm veterans. This, as was stated, will be built.

I am on the Committee that is helping to build it. This will be built, and I, as a VFW member, would be honored to be part of it as a VFW member, to have the VFW to have their name etched in granite on this memorial forever to say that they supported the building of this memorial.

I don't know what else I can say. If you have a specific question, I will try to answer it. But again this is not asking for money, it is asking for support. If you want to put it in the magazine, great. You don't have to do anything. There is nothing in here that is binding you to do anything in particular.

If you don't like a certain word in here, I will be more than happy to take a word out or two that makes you uncomfortable. I don't want this Resolution to fail because there is a problem with it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade.
Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE WILLIAM THOMSON (Post 6192 – New Jersey): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, you know, there may be some that interpret this ambiguously and the word "support", that it means financial support. I would think if the writers wanted to say that they wanted financial support, they

would have added that word before the word "support" that said we are encouraging people for financial support. It does not say that.

You know, one of the things that I see within my own Post and my own Department, our members get a little too parochial about who we give credit to and who we don't give credit to. There have been a host of organizations that are doing things for our Warriors because of possibly what we initiated as Unmet Needs or some of the other programs that we have, where the public is now supporting those things with their own dollars and their own volunteers in order to support our Warriors.

I don't think that we need to limit our support strictly to the membership or the people who have been members of this organization. This is not asking us to give a dollar or a penny to anything at all. If they wanted to do that, I think they would have put that word in there. All we are saying is that we are supporting what these brave and courageous people, men and women did to redirect this flight from its intention to do into the White House, and they gave their lives to put this plane down in Pennsylvania.

I believe that the country owes these people a debt of gratitude, and I think we are on the right side of the country if we are supporting this Resolution. Thank you, Commander.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JACK UBER (Post 9871 – Ohio): A point of order. I think if the right reading here would remove the word "will" "and support" in the first paragraph, and the word "will" in the second paragraph, it might be supported better by all the people involved. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE VINCENT REAGAN (Post 1677): I rise in opposition. It has been stated the funds are there, it has been stated that they are going to build it anyway. Then why is this Resolution even on the floor? We feel for these people, we understand what they did. I think it is a waste of time that we even be talking about it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 – Florida): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I am Benny Bachand, a delegate from Post 4287, Orlando, Florida. I, like many of the other delegates here, certainly understand and respect what happened in that flight in Pennsylvania.

But also I understand that we are a veterans organization dealing with veterans' issues and veterans' memorials and veterans' monuments. I don't think we have enough monuments in this country that do justice to the veterans of this country who have served our country so well.

We ought to be concentrating as an organization in taking care of the veterans of this organization, the veterans of this country and monumentizing those people who have served our organization. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE ARTHUR HANLEY (Post 672 – New York): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I rise in opposition to this Resolution as it is written. If it was the first paragraph only, I might support it. It has already been stated that the funds are there to build it. That is fine. They have the money. It is

going to be built whether we support this or not.

I take exception to a comrade who spoke a couple of people ago who said he would hate to see us go on record as opposed to the building of this. By opposing this Resolution, we are not in opposition to the building of the memorial. I take exception to that and I am insulted that he would think that we feel that way.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade.

COMRADE ARTHUR HANLEY (Post 672 – New York): We also must honor our motto, "Honor the Dead by Helping the Living." We should support those who are alive today. Enough with memorials and monuments.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE ASHLEY LITTLE (Post 4548 – Arkansas): I rise in opposition to the Resolution. My heart goes out to those countrymen that died on this September day in that flight. But this is a veterans organization. If we want to support a flight, let's support the flight of the entire flight of troops that died over in Lockerbie, Spain.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much, comrade. Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DONALD LANDIN (Post 63 – Idaho): I rise in opposition to 305 only in that as the Committee on Resolutions did previously, I would move to amend to remove the words "and support". I do believe that the VFW should endorse the building of the Flight 93 National Memorial. I would further move that the second paragraph be deleted in its entirety. Thank you, Commander.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: We have an amendment to the motion to amend the first paragraph by striking the words "and support" and completely striking the second paragraph. Is that the comment?

COMRADE DONALD LANDIN (Post 63 – Idaho): That is the comment. If it would read that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States endorse the building of The Flight 93 National Memorial, and continue on there, and delete the entire second paragraph.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I have a motion or an amendment. Do I hear a second? Do I hear a second? Seeing none, the motion dies. I think that this is another one of those dead horses that we are beating to death. I would ask if there is one more comrade in favor and one more comrade opposed, I will give them the opportunities to speak.

Is there a comrade in favor of this proposal? One comrade opposed. Comrade, the rules limit debate to two times. Thank you, comrades.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JEROME GIVENS (Post 1111 – Indiana): I am in opposition to this proposal. It doesn't have to do with veterans. That's what has got me riled up. I want it to die. Thank you, comrade.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Is there one more comrade that wants to speak in favor of the Resolution?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE WAYNE THOMPSON (Post 5061 – Colorado): I think this issue has a lot of emotional appeal to it, and I think there is good comments from the same conclusions that if we just simply oppose it, then we are not very sympathetic to what those brave people did. I really don't like us to be on record that way.

I will offer an amendment. The amendment would read as follows, and

this would be the entire Resolution.

“BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States endorses the building of a Flight 93 National Memorial as a permanent and lasting tribute to the bravery, courage and self-sacrifice exhibited by the passengers and crew members of Flight 93.” I would strike the rest of the current proposal.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Comrade, that motion has already been brought before this Board and died for the lack of a second.

COMRADE WAYNE THOMPSON (Post 5061 – Colorado): I was going to be the seconder, but I didn’t get here fast enough. I will second that, but I think this is a better wording.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I will accept the amendment. Do I hear a second?

COMRADE WILLIAM THOMSON (Post 6192 – New Jersey): I will second that amendment.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: My understanding, Wayne, is the amendment is to strike the second paragraph completely, and to strike out the words “and support” out of the first paragraph. What you are saying is we endorse the building of the Memorial.

COMRADE WAYNE THOMPSON (Post 5061 – Colorado): May I read it again, Chief?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Yes, sir.

COMRADE WAYNE THOMPSON (Post 5061 – Colorado): Okay. My proposal is as follows: the Resolution would read in its entirety as I am now going to state it. It would say, “BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States endorses the building of a Flight 93 National Memorial as a permanent and lasting tribute to the bravery, courage and self-sacrifice exhibited by the passengers and crew members of Flight 93.” We are just saying we are sympathetic as the discussion, sir. The rest of it would be struck.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you. The Chairman has the proposal. We have a motion before the floor duly seconded to amend the motion. All in favor of the amendment will say “aye”; all opposed “no”. The “ayes” have it.

We now have a motion before the floor to approve Resolution No. 305, as amended. All in favor of approving Resolution 305, as amended, will say “aye”; all opposed “no”. The “ayes” have it. The motion passes.

Wayne, would you make sure you get with the Chairman and the Judge Advocate, Kevin or somebody to make sure we get the exact wording. Thank you.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Comrades, to set the record straight, we need to go back. The Committee recommended approval of Resolution 307, World War I Museum as a National Memorial and Establishment of a Commission for the Centennial of World War I.

Commander-in-Chief, I move for adoption of Resolution No. 307.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Per the Committee report, Resolution 307, a motion has been made to approve and seconded by the Committee report. Is there any discussion on 307? Seeing no one at the microphones, all those in favor of passage of Resolution 307 will signify by saying “aye”; all opposed “no”. The “ayes” have it. The motion passes.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, this completes the report of the General Resolutions Committee.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much. We will have to keep your Committee in case of other Resolutions that come up. We will have the report of the Committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs. The Chairman is Past Commander-in-Chief John Furgess.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY
AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Commander-in-Chief Gardner, it is my pleasure to report that the Convention Committee on Security and Foreign Affairs convened at the Phoenix Convention Center at 2:00 p.m. yesterday, Sunday, 16 August, 2009.

Your instructions were read. Roll call was conducted, and action was taken on the Resolutions referred to this Committee.

A portion of the Committee members were designated to participate in the POW/MIA Subcommittee. For their support and guidance, I would like to thank the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Past Commander-in-Chief John Smart of New Hampshire, the Chairman of the POW/MIA Subcommittee, Past Commander-in-Chief John Gwizdak from Georgia. Vice-Chairmen of the POW/MIA Subcommittee, Past Commander-in-Chief Tom Pouliot of Montana, and Past Commander-in-Chief John Staum of Minnesota.

Also, I extend the Committee's gratitude and my appreciation to our Committee advisor, Bob Jackson, Assistant Director of National Legislative Service. A very special thank you is extended to all the members of the Committee and the POW/MIA Subcommittee for their thoughtful deliberations and active participation in the Committee meetings yesterday.

At the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, we had a very special guest speaker. He traveled from afar to address this Committee, Retired General Ruslan Aushev, Chairman of the Committee of Warrior Internationalists from the Russian Federation. General Aushev spoke about his organization's relationship and cooperation with the Veterans of Foreign Wars on many fronts, including veterans' health care and especially MIA issues.

Commander-in-Chief, the Committee carefully deliberated each and every Resolution. I will now move forward with the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee recommendations. If any delegate to the Convention would like a Resolution set aside for discussion, please so indicate after I have completed the approval segment of the report and moved for adoption.

I will read the Resolution numbers the Committee recommends for approval as submitted:

Resolution 409, Support for the Global War on Terrorism.

Resolution 410, Support for the Troops and their Mission in the War on Terrorism.

Resolution 411, Increase the Defense Budget.

Resolution 412, Ballistic Missile Defense is a National Security Priority.

Resolution 413, Maintain Global Air Supremacy.

Resolution 414, Support for the Coast Guard Deepwater Program.

Resolution 415, Support for the Army's Future Combat Systems Program.

Resolution 416, Re-designate the Position of Secretary of the Navy as the Secretary of the Navy and Marine Corps.
Resolution 417, Raise Military Base Pay to Equal Private-Sector Wages.
Resolution 418, Energy Dependence and National Security.
Resolution 419, Lower the Reserve Component Retirement Pay Age.

Resolution 420, Correct the FY08 National Defense Authorization Act Reserve Retirement Pay Provision.

Resolution 422, Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act.

Resolution 423, Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

Resolution 424, Child Custody and Military Deployments.

Resolution 425, Military Absentee Voting.

Resolution 426, Oppose All Efforts to Repeal the 1993 Law Banning Homosexuals from Serving in the Armed Forces.

Resolution 427, Secure America's Borders/Halt Illegal Immigration.

Resolution 428, Support NATO Expansion.

Resolution 429, Support for the Republic of Korea.

Resolution 430, Support for the Republic of China on Taiwan.

Resolution 431, Investigate the Israeli Attack on the USS Liberty.

Resolution 432, Halt North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program.

Resolution 433, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal Authorization Date Change.

Resolution 434, Europe Defense Service Medal.

Resolution 436, Amend Criteria for Award of the Army of Occupation World War II Medal.

Resolution 437, Recognize Military Veterans who were Killed or Wounded During the Early Period of the Cold War.

Resolution 438, Expand Eligibility for the Army Combat Action Badge.

Resolution 441, Expand the Dates of Eligibility for the Vietnam Service Medal.

Resolution 442, Congressional Gold Medal for all Code Talkers.

Resolution 443, World War I Generation National Honors.

Resolution 444, Congressional Gold Medal for the Women Air Force Service Pilots

Resolution 445, First Award of Navy Good Conduct Medal for Individuals Killed in Combat or Separated from Active Duty due to Wounds or Disability Incurred from Combat.

Resolution 446, Award Cold War Victory Medal.

Resolution 447, Award of Navy Medical Badge.

Resolution 448, Concurrent Receipt of Military Longevity Retirement Pay and Department of Veterans Affairs Disability Compensation.

I now move the adoption of these resolutions.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: You have heard these. We have a motion on the floor, duly seconded by the report of the Committee, to approve the Committee's recommendation. One question, Mr. Chairman, I thought we were going to amend 416 to say the Secretary of the Marine Corps and take out the Navy part. (Laughter)

Does anyone want any set aside, any of the Resolutions?

COMRADE KEN PIKE (Post 4876 – Oklahoma): For clarification, you stated 444 you approved, but you gave the subtitle of 445, which is it? Is it 444 or 445?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Ken, I understand the numbers on this report are different from the numbers in the book. My 444 says Congressional Gold Medal for the Women Air Force Service Pilots.

COMRADE KEN PIKE (Post 4876 – Oklahoma): And the one in the book says Support Former POW Slave Labor Claims Against Japanese Firms.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Okay. I understand that came up under the Subcommittee for POW/MIA report that will be reported on momentarily.

COMRADE KEN PIKE (Post 4876 – Oklahoma): The question is, what number is it? They are saying let's approve it. You are approving a number that is off. Which one are we approving?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Whoever typed that report typed the numbers wrong.

Mr. Chairman, I would ask that somehow we straighten out the numbers on the report before we proceed with the approval. The Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief indicates there is more than one of the Resolutions that you have read that has the wrong number with the wrong titles.

So, we have to make sure we don't approve some Resolution that you wanted to defeat, because we have got the wrong number. The numbers that we approve is what we are going to approve.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Let's resolve it this way. I will go over this again with the Washington Office tonight and we will report to you tomorrow if that meets your guidelines, rather than hold the Convention up.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: That is fine with the Chair. Is the Subcommittee on POW/MIA ready to report?

COMRADE RICK HOUSE (Post 1894 – Missouri): A point of order. Resolution 306 passed by this body and then moved for reconsideration by two-thirds was never put to rest.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: That's because it was approved to start with. The Committee recommended rejection. There is no action taken on a rejected motion, unless it is asked to be set aside, and a motion made to pass it.

COMRADE RICK HOUSE (Post 1894 – Missouri): Resolution 306 was passed by the body and then moved for reconsideration.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: That is what I say, comrade.

COMRADE RICK HOUSE (Post 1894 – Missouri): Under the reconsideration, wouldn't we need to vote on it again?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Reconsideration means that there is no action taken on the motion. The Committee rejected it. That was the Committee's report, that it be rejected, not approved. That is why we asked for reconsideration. So nobody was going to make a motion to approve it after we reconsidered rejection, and a negative motion to reject is out of order because it is a negative motion.

COMRADE RICK HOUSE (Post 1894 – Missouri): Yes. Thank you.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, I am going to refer to your booklet, which is correct, and everything was in order down to apparently Resolution 444, which the comrade at Microphone 3 took note of. Resolution 444, Support Former POW Slave Labor Claims Against Japanese Firms will be discussed in the Subcommittee report of the POW/MIA Subcommittee.

Resolution 445, Congressional Gold Medal for the Women Air Force Service Pilots.

Resolution 446, First Award of Navy Good Conduct Medal for Individuals Killed in Combat or Separated from Active Duty Due to Wounds.

Resolution 447, Award a Cold War Victory Medal.

Resolution 448, Award of Navy Medical Badge.

Resolution 449, Concurrent Receipt of Military Longevity Retirement Pay and Department of Veterans Affairs Disability Compensation.

Now, I move, Chief, for approval of those Resolutions.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: All right. We have the Committee report, clarified by the Chairman, and a motion to approve the Resolutions as reported approved by the Committee, duly seconded. Is there any discussion? Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor of the Committee report will signify the sign of "aye"; all opposed "no". The "ayes" have it and the motion passes.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Finally, Chief, those Resolutions the Committee recommended for rejection and the reason. After the list is read, you will have an opportunity to move the adoption of any of these Resolutions. Each motion will be taken up and disposed of in order.

If no motion is made by any comrade with respect to a specific Resolution, the Resolution is under our Convention Rules automatically rejected by the Convention.

Resolution 435, Cold War Victory Medal, recommend rejection in favor of Resolution 447.

Resolution 439, Authorize the Combat Action Badge for Pentagon Service on September 11, 2001. This was rejected due to a lack of clarity.

Commander-in-Chief, this concludes the National Security and Foreign Affairs Report unless there is further action.

We have two that were amended, 421, Oppose TRICARE Fee Increases. That was approved as amended.

Resolution No. 440, Establish a Combat Action Medal for Navy and Marine Corps Personnel. That was approved as amended.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Read the amended part.

COMRADE BOB JACKSON: This Resolution 421, the change that was made was in the "Resolved" paragraph. "BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we oppose all TRICARE fee increases and urge Congress to prevent the Department of Defense from escalating or realigning co-payments or any other fees for TRICARE services and benefits."

The changes to Resolution 440 is in the second "BE IT RESOLVED" where it reads, "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we support the Navy and Marine Combat Action Medal as a replacement for the Combat Action Ribbon with the same eligibility criteria, thereby authorizing its wear by all who previously were awarded the Combat Action Ribbon; and,

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the eligibility for the Navy and Marine Corps Combat Action Medal be authorized retroactive to 7 December, 1941, which is the same date now established for the Combat Action Ribbon." Those are the changes to that Resolution.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: You have heard the motion of the Committee to approve the two Resolutions as amended. Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor will say "aye"; all opposed "no". The

“ayes” have it. The motion passes.

Is there any of these Resolutions that were not approved by the Committee that need to be set aside or need to have a motion made at this time? If not, the Committee report will stand as read.

The Chairman of the Committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs John Furgess, I hereby relieve you and your Committee.

REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON POW-MIA

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN GWIZDAK: Commander-in-Chief, I am pleased to report that the POW-MIA Subcommittee of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee convened at the Phoenix Convention Center at 2:30 on Sunday, August 16th. Your instructions were followed.

All members were present and accounted for, and action was taken on the resolutions assigned to this Committee. I would like to thank Vice-Chairman of the POW/MIA Subcommittee, Past Commander-in-Chief Thomas Pouliot and Past Commander-in-Chief John Staum from Minnesota. Their expertise and extensive knowledge on this issue was most valuable in our discussions.

Also I extend the Committee's gratitude and my personal appreciation to our Committee advisor, Bob Jackson, Assistant Director for National Legislative Services.

A very special thank you is extended to all members of the POW/MIA Committee for their genuine concern and active dialogue in our Committee's deliberations.

We had a guest speaker at our meeting, as you know, Mr. Johnnie Webb, Deputy Commander of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command in Hawaii. Mr. Webb presented an overview of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command's mission and their present activities and future operations.

The Committee carefully reviewed and deliberated each resolution. Comrades, I will now outline the POW/MIA Subcommittee's recommendations. If any of the delegates to this Convention would like a Resolution set aside for discussion, please so indicate after I have completed the approval segment of the report and move for adoption.

I will now read the Resolution numbers that the Committee recommends for approval as submitted.

Resolution 402, POW/MIA Public Awareness.

Resolution 403, Full Funding for the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command.

Resolution 404, Recover the Remains of the George One Crew.

Resolution 405, Renew POW/MIA Discussions with North Korea.

Resolution 406, Call for Vietnam POW/MIA Unilateral Action.

Resolution 407, U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIA Affairs.

Resolution 444, Support Former POW Slave Labor Claims Against Japanese Firms.

I now move for the adoption of these Resolutions.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: You have heard the report of the Committee. We have a motion and a second on the floor. Is there any discussion? Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor of approving the Committee report will signify by saying “aye”; all those opposed “no”.

The “ayes” have it. The motion passes.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GWIZDAK: I will now read the Resolution numbers that the Committee recommends for approval, as amended. It is important to note that the amendment language in this Resolution reflects updated information only and in no way is the intent of the Resolution changed.

That is Resolution No. 401, POW/MIA Full Accounting Commitment and Agency Funding. That was changed to reflect that the remains of Captain Stryker were found and that changed the paragraph to read, “Nobody from the Gulf War no longer missing.” So that was the amendment. I recommend approval, as amended, Resolution 401, Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: We have a motion and a second from the Committee to approve Resolution 401, as amended. Do I hear any discussion? Seeing no one at the microphones, all in favor will signify by the sign of “aye”; all those opposed “no”. The “ayes” have it and the motion carried.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GWIZDAK: One other item I will bring to the attention of the Convention. We were also given another Resolution, Resolution 408. Resolution 408 said Use of U.S. Navy Vessels and/or U.S. Government Vessels for Vietnam Underwater Accounting Activities.

The report from Johnnie Webb and others indicates already that those activities have taken place. So, the Committee did not act on that Resolution since circumstances have made that Resolution actually outdated, and we did not address it, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you. Do I hear any discussion concerning the report of the Subcommittee on POW/MIA? There being no more action to be taken, the Committee report is accepted by this body. The Subcommittee on POW/MIA is hereby relieved of its duties. Thank you very much. That was a very good job.

We will now call on the report of the Committee on Veterans Service by Chairman John Hamilton.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

COMRADE JOHN HAMILTON (Post 7909 – Florida): Thank you, Chief, for an opportunity to serve.

Commander-in-Chief Gardner, I report that the Convention Veterans Service Resolutions Committee convened at 1400 hours Sunday, August 16th. Roll call was taken, the preliminary matters were discussed.

The Committee was divided into three Subcommittees to carefully deliberate each of the 51 Resolutions that were assigned. The Subcommittees were established as follows:

Subcommittee 1, Medical Programs, Chaired by Daniel Crocker from Michigan, and Vice-Chairman Dale Ronning from North Dakota. Staff advisors were Michael O'Rourke and Chris Nedham.

Subcommittee No. 2, which was Employment, was Chaired to Vito DeMarco from Vermont, and the Vice-Chairman was Lee Kitchen from Florida. The Staff advisors were Larry Berman and Justin Brown.

Subcommittee No. 3 was Veterans Benefits and Entitlements, Chaired by John Stroud from Nevada, and Vice-Chairman Tom Ressler from Idaho. The Staff advisors were Fred Burns and Theresa Morris.

Before I proceed, I would like to thank, of course, Bill Bradshaw, Den-

nis Cullinan and the staff from Washington for all their help and guidance through this. Also, I would like to thank Past Commander-in-Chief Gary Kurpius who served as an advisor for this Committee for his input.

At this time, Commander-in-Chief, with your permission, I will present the Resolutions that were recommended for approval by the full Committee.

- Resolution 601, Adequate Department of Veterans Affairs Budget.
- Resolution 602, Consider Treatment for a Presumptive Service Connected Condition as a Claim for VA Compensation.
- Resolution 603, Extending Gulf War Presumptions, Registry, and Health Care to Afghanistan Theater Veterans.
- Resolution 604, Oppose VA Pharmaceutical Co-Payment Increases.
- Resolution 605, Entitlement to Nursing Home Care.
- Resolution 606, Health Care for Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury.
- Resolution 607, Veterans Employment and Training Programs.
- Resolution 610, Advanced Funding for Veterans Health Care.
- Resolution 611, Veterans Entrepreneurship.
- Resolution 614, VA Claims Backlog.
- Resolution 615, Improve Treatment for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder.
- Resolution 616, Oppose Attempts to Privatize Veterans Health Care.
- Resolution 617, Presumptive Service Connection for Tinnitus and Hearing Loss.
- Resolution 618, Extend the Service Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business Requirement of P.L. 109-461 to all Federal Agencies.
- Resolution 619, Burial Plot Allowance.
- Resolution 620, Minimum Compensation for Hearing Loss.
- Resolution 621, Repeat the Survivor's Benefit Plan and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation Offset.
- Resolution 622, Incident Reporting of Sexual Assault and Health Care for Military Sexual Trauma.
- Resolution 623, Payment for Loss of Quality of Life.
- Resolution 624, Exempt Catastrophically Disabled Veterans from Paying any VA Co-Payments.
- Resolution 631, Marker Medallion.
- Resolution 635, Require OPM to Issue a Single Regulation Governing Veterans' Preference.
- Resolution 636, Reduce the Ten-Year Rule for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation.
- Resolution 637, Vietnam Veterans' Equity Act.
- Resolution 638, Oppose the Imposition of Time Limits for Filing Compensation Claims.
- Resolution 640, Oppose Regional Dispersion of the Board of Veterans Appeals.
- Resolution 642, Increase the Reimbursement Rates for Fee Basis Care and Fully Cover the Cost of Treatment Through Fee Basis.
- Resolution 647, Recognize Robley Rex.
- Resolution 648, Provide Family Caregiver Support.
- Resolution 649, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program Eligibility.
- Resolution 650, Increase the Benefit Level for the Survivors and Dependents Educational Assistance program.

Resolution 651, Enforcement of Veterans Employment Programs.

Commander-in-Chief, I move the acceptance of the Committee's report and recommend the comrades approve these Resolutions.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: You have heard the report of the Committee. With the report there is a second. Do I hear any discussion on a Resolution presented by the Committee to be adopted? Do I hear any set asides? There being none, all in favor of accepting the Committee's report will signify by the sign of "aye"; all opposed "no". The "ayes" have it. The Committee report is adopted.

COMRADE JOHN HAMILTON (Post 7909 – Florida): I will now read the Resolutions approved as amended.

Resolution 608, High Quality VA Services for Women Veterans.

Resolution 609, Extend a Presumptive of Service Connection to Blast Survivors.

Resolution 613, Expand Department of Defense Pre-Separation Counseling and Department of Labor Transition Assistance Programs.

Resolution 626, Homeless Veterans Priorities.

Resolution 628, Inclusion of Overseas Veterans All-Inclusive Medical Service Under the Foreign Medical Program.

Resolution 639, Oppose Reduction of the Appeal Period for Department of Veterans Affairs Decisions.

Chief, I move the acceptance of these Resolution as amended.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: We have a motion and a second to approve these Resolutions as amended by the Committee. Do I hear any discussion? Seeing none, all in favor will signify by the sign of "aye"; all opposed by the sign of "no". The "ayes" have it. The motion passes.

COMRADE JOHN HAMILTON (Post 7909 – Florida): I will now read the Resolutions that were recommended for rejection by the Committee.

Resolution 612, Small Business Administration Veterans Programs.

Resolution 625, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program Eligibility.

Resolution 627, Employer Tax Credit.

Resolution 629, Amend the National Veterans Service Advisory Committee Policy and Procedure to Allow for VA Accreditation of Post, County Council and District Service Officers.

Resolution 630, Full Vietnam Veteran Status for Those Currently Referred to as Vietnam-Era Veterans.

Resolution 632, Exposure of Herbicides for Certain Veterans Who Served in the Vicinity of the Republic of Vietnam.

Resolution 633, Require Waiver of Tuition and Fees for Higher Education Benefits for Children and Spouses of Service Members Deceased from Wounds of Injuries Incurred on Active Duty or Rated 100 Percent Disabled by the VA.

Resolution 634, Require Defense Contractors to Recruit and Provide Veterans' Preference.

Resolution 641, Require the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to Pay Fees of Attorneys, Agents and Claims Representatives.

Resolution 643, Provide Educational Benefits for Dependents of Service Connected Veterans Rated at 80 Percent or More Disabled.

Resolution 644, Support DVOPS/LVER Grants Being Returned to Staffing Grants.

Resolution 645, Veterans' Preference in Federal Employment.

Resolution 646, Enforcement of Veterans Affirmative Action Programs in the Federal Government.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: You have heard the report of the Committee. Are there any motions? If not, the report will stand as read. Thank you, comrade.

I will now relieve the Committee on Veterans Service Resolutions. Thank you, Chairman John Hamilton and your Committee for an outstanding job.

I will now call on the Adjutant General for announcements.

. . . Convention Announcements. . . .

CLOSING CEREMONIES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Sergeant-at-Arms, we will have the Closing Ceremonies.

(Whereupon, the National Sergeant-at-Arms led the assembly in the Salute to the Colors.)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: National Chaplain, please.

BENEDICTION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: O God of all people and nations, we pause at the close of this session to acknowledge again your sovereignty over our lives and our country. Keep us concerned about the welfare and improvement of our various communities in which we live, the safety and pride of our homes, the health and welfare of our veterans, and the moral values that guide our great nation.

Dismiss us with your heavenly benediction and may your blessing be upon us and remain with us always. Amen.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Sergeant-at-Arms. We are now in recess until 8:00 o'clock a.m. tomorrow morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 4:00 o'clock p.m., to reconvene on Tuesday, August 18, 2009, at 8:00 o'clock a.m.)

SECOND BUSINESS SESSION
TUESDAY, AUGUST 18, 2009

(The Second Business Session of the 110th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States was called to order in the Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Arizona, at 8:00 o'clock a.m., by Commander-in-Chief Gardner.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I will now reconvene the 110th VFW National Convention.

(National Sergeant-at-Arms Bryan O'Brien led the Convention in the Salute to the Colors and the Pledge of Allegiance, and National Chaplain Theodore Bowers gave the Opening Prayer from the Ritual.)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Commander-in-Chief, the Opening Ceremonies have been performed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Sergeants-at-Arms. Good morning, comrades. Today we continue with the business of the 110th Annual Convention with several guest speakers and presentations of some awards.

I want to thank everybody for the lively debate in the business we conducted yesterday afternoon. You know, those of us that are in leadership positions are used to some of the discussions that went on, but I am not sure the poor Chaplain was. So, we may have to have him taken to the clinic later on.

You know, one of the things we have done this year is to stream the business of this Convention, or at least the Opening Session and some of the activities. There was some debate and issues brought up by a couple of our members that we may be in violation of the by-laws by streaming the business of the Convention.

I wasn't asking for an opinion, because I would have made an opinion maybe a little different. But I am going to call on the Adjutant General to read an e-mail that he got this morning concerning the streaming of our National Convention proceedings.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Please remember, comrades, we are only streaming the general sessions when we are giving awards and having speakers. We did not stream yesterday afternoon. The e-mail reads as follows:

"Past awards to the live coverage of the Convention is great. I am currently deployed in the Northern Caribbean Sea, and this is the only way I could see it. I would like to be able to get a copy of the video that has the President's speech to use as a membership recruiting tool." It has been signed Roy Burns, PFC, 9801, Box 60 FPOA 09805001.

So, at least the comrade got to see it that is not here, and he wouldn't have gotten it if we had not streamed it.

INTRODUCTION OF VICTOR BIGGS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
THE AMERICAN VETERANS DISABLED FOR LIFE MEMORIAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: For the first time in our nation's history, we will build a monument to honor and pay tribute to some of

America's most courageous heroes. The American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial will celebrate those men and women who may be broken in body, but never in spirit.

The American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial Foundation was formed to raise the funds necessary to design and construct the memorial.

It was established in 1998 through the combined efforts of philanthropist Lois B. Pope, Foundation Chairwoman; Mr. Arthur H. Wilson, National Adjutant of The Disabled American Veterans and Foundation President; and the late Jesse Brown, former Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Foundation's first Executive Director.

Transcending conflicts, service branches and generations, The American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial will express America's lasting gratitude to the men and women whose lives were forever changed in service to our country and also honor veterans' loved ones and caregivers, individuals whose heroic devotion is a source of strength for those striving to heal.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States donated \$100,000 in 2005 to help initiate the fund-raising campaign for the Memorial, which is expected to open in the year 2010 adjacent to Independence Avenue immediately across from the Botanical Garden and in full view from the United States Capitol.

The memorial is a long-overdue tribute to those three million living disabled veterans both who have passed before having placed their lives in harm's way or now spend each day living with a deep and permanent reminder of their willing sacrifices.

We again welcome our fellow veteran and comrade to speak further about the Foundation, Executive Director Victor Biggs. (Applause)

RESPONSE – MR. VICTOR BIGGS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BIGGS: Good morning. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Gardner.

National Officers, Executive Director Bob Wallace and his entire team, I thank you for allowing our Foundation once again to share this magnificent public initiative that the VFW, as the Commander has mentioned, has supported and endorsed to honor our nation's three million disabled veterans and those who have passed on before.

I would also like to recognize Adjutant General "Gunner" Kent, our Board member, who also serves on our Board, for his outstanding and ongoing contribution to this memorial for our disabled veterans.

I am here today to give you an update on the project and to ask once again for your help to build and dedicate this memorial. I would like to briefly show you, for those who have not seen the project before, the DVD and give you an overview as to the project, its location, its proximity to our Nation's Capitol and the magnificent design of this memorial.

(Whereupon, the video is shown at this time.)

Are there any disabled veterans out there? Thank you so much. This memorial is for you. As you can see from the video much thought, planning and interaction and coordination with the National Capital Planning Commission, the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Parks Services has gone into this project.

I am pleased to say that in its meeting on July 16th the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed and gave their final approval for the architectural site

design and the revised concept for the inscriptions and art work for the memorial.

The Commission expressed appreciation for and they reiterated their support for the provocative quality of the artwork, commenting that it will inspire visitors to the memorial as well as those working nearby, including legislators who will walk through this location on a daily basis.

Although this dedication of this most notable sentiment and the turn-over to the National Parks Services is a few years away, our focus is on ground breaking, the next major milestone. However, federal law requires that we must raise all construction costs and funds prior to breaking ground.

I am pleased to say that with the leadership of our Chairman and Board, including "Gunner" Kent, we have raised over 85 percent of the funds needed to begin construction, and we are less than \$6 million away to making your memorial, your next memorial, a reality.

We ask the VFW once again to continue your legacy of leadership and help us in a significant way to break ground this coming year. We welcome working with you Districts, Departments, Posts, Service Foundations as well.

Once again, our mission is to raise the funds for the construction of this permanent American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial.

What makes this memorial different from other memorials in Washington, D.C.? There is no other memorial for the living. This is the first that recognizes America's three million living disabled veterans and will be dedicated to your and their honor.

Since the conflict began in Afghanistan, as you know, the death toll in June went up to 80,000. We have over 80,000 American soldiers who have been wounded and over 300,000 receiving medical treatment. Seventeen percent of these veterans are receiving treatment for PTSD, also not to mention the statistics for the Vietnam War and other wars, recent wars.

Yesterday, President Obama noticed that there will be more difficult days ahead. Nevertheless, many troops of soldiers return to the battlefield three or four or even more times. There is no other memorial that recognizes those 80,000 Americans, the Vietnam veterans and other recent wars, and including the 871 amputees from recent wars. These men and women, America's sons and daughters, answered the call and now continue to live with the wounds of war long after the battles have ended.

In closing, I would like to read excerpts from a poem titled "Our Veterans" by Lawrence F. Kelly, a disabled veteran who resides in Pennsylvania.

"There are none so very lonely as
those who share so much.

"They keep their memories only to
forget what they can't touch.

"Their minds are etched with pictures
of fallen friend and foe.

"Those ruined internal fixtures
never letting go.

"They fought for all our freedom
and love of country, too.

"Let's show them that we need them.
They live with this for you."

Larry, and all you disabled veterans, we thank you so much for your ser-

vice. This memorial is for you and for those of us here, for your comrades, your brothers and your sisters, too.

Here is our call to action. We are asking you to share one thing that no others can, which is you. We are required by federal law to raise the construction-related funds prior to breaking ground. We cannot do it alone.

I am here today to ask once again for your help to engage your Departments, your Posts, your community, your friends, your legislators, your families. It is so urgent that I would even like for you to get your in-laws involved as well. I have.

Your ongoing support is important to breaking ground this coming year. I will be at Booth 730 in the Exhibit Hall with some materials for you. I also have a gift for the first 100 that shows up at Booth 730.

Thank you for your service and thank you in advance for your sacrificial and continued support.

May God richly bless you, may God bless our country and our soldiers wherever they are. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Victor.

Let me now call on the Chairman of the Credentials Committee, David Butters, for a report.

REPORT OF CONVENTION CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS (Post 475 – Delaware): As of the close of business yesterday, August 17, 2009, the delegates strength to this 110th National Convention is 8,718 Post Delegates; 42 total Department Commanders; 24 total Past Commanders-in-Chief; 32 total National officers. That is for a grand total of 8,816. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you.

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS (Post 475 – Delaware): Thank you.

VFW COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT TO HELEN KOGEL DENTON

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: It is a real privilege to present our next guest to you. During World War II, Ms. Helen Kogel Denton was a dedicated member of the Women's Army Corps, and among the first to enter France after the liberation of Paris. She then served on General Dwight Eisenhower's staff until receiving her discharge in 1945.

From then forward, Ms. Denton has devoted her life to assisting those in need. For more than 18 years, she has facilitated blood drives for the Red Cross, resulting in 50,000 pints of blood, earning her the title, "Red Cross Volunteer of the Year."

She has also received the prestigious Clara Barton Award of Meritorious Service, the United Way Community Service Award, and the Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Non-Violent Social Change Award for her exceptional work in the community.

From bake sales for troops, to visiting veterans in nursing homes, to educating amateur historians and school children alike on the importance of America's "Greatest Generation," her commitment to country, our military and her community is truly remarkable.

She has always answered the call of duty and leadership, holding the title of VFW Post Commander several times, and in recent years, breathing

a new life into VFW Post 3650 in Riverdale, Georgia.

Under her leadership, the Post has earned 100 percent in Membership, Americanism, Youth Activities, and Community Service.

The Post has regained its pre-eminence with the community and civic leaders. Through Helen's yeoman service, it hosts the award-winning District Loyalty Day activities, it constructed and dedicated the local Veterans' Memorial, and holds popular ceremonies on Memorial Day, Independence Day and Veterans Day.

Always stressing the need to continue to support those who have borne the brunt of battle, and their families, accompanied with her motivation, compassion and integrity, Helen truly exemplifies what it means to be a member of the VFW.

I need to personally add that this award has its genesis in my having met Helen last year at her Post while attending our NASCAR truck race. For all who have had the privilege to spend some time just conversing with Helen is truly a wonderful experience.

I didn't read the introduction until this morning, because you have so much to read. Let me just add a couple of things to it.

Are there any in the audience who participated in D-Day in Normandy? If you did, would you please stand and be recognized. (Applause) You know, one of the things this introduction doesn't tell you is that Helen typed all of the orders for the Invasion of Normandy not knowing exactly what she was typing because they gave it to her a page at a time and never were two pages the same like one and two. It was like one and eight, and two and seven.

Another side note, Helen decided, when she came ashore, to walk on the beaches of Normandy and got stuck in the sand, and a young man driving by in a jeep helped get her out of the sand. She was so grateful that she married him.

How long were you married, Helen?

SISTER HELEN DENTON: Thirty-six years.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: She was married 36 years. So, it is now my honor to present this Gold Medal to Ms. Helen Denton from Riverdale, Georgia.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Gold Medal of Merit and Citation awarded to Helen Kogel Denton.

"In sincere praise and deepest appreciation of her more than 60 years of unwavering commitment and steadfast dedication to America's active duty military, veterans in her community.

"Her exemplary leadership within the Veterans of Foreign Wars personifies the essence of its mission and embodies the spirit of the organization. Her competence, loyalty and unrivaled vision of veteran support and community service has earned her the utmost respect and fullest admiration by all her colleagues within the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 18th day of August, 2009."

It has been signed by Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – SISTER HELEN KOGEL DENTON

SISTER HELEN DENTON (Post 3650 – Georgia): I have to have the stool to stand on. Thank you very much for this award. I am pleased, I am honored and thrilled.

After listening to all that he said about me, I wonder where he got that information. But I want to tell you a little bit about me. I was born and raised in South Dakota during the Depression, so I grew up knowing what it meant to save. But I also learned from my parents, who homesteaded, that you have to give back to the community what you get out of it.

So, in my early ages we always helped our neighbor. When Noland and I got married and lived in Jonesboro, our house burned within the first year, and we didn't have any insurance. The city came and helped us from cleaning our clothes, rebuilding the house, recovering the furniture, all without any expense to us.

I had to give something back, so in my community work I was on the library board where we built libraries in three of the towns. I was on a Committee of National that proposed seat belts in the automobiles, which we now have. I was on an organization that sent children to college. We sent ten students to four years of college through this fund.

But these are the things that I got involved in. Then when my husband died, I knew that there was something that I had to do by myself to make life worth living. That's when I volunteered for the American Red Cross. I volunteered for everything that I could think of.

Then it was in 1994, when we celebrated the 50th anniversary that I broke my silence and told somebody that I typed the battle plans for the D-Day. Could you keep a secret for 50 years? But now I go to schools and I speak to the children, to all ages, and it is surprising. I speak to second graders. Now, you say what can you tell a second grader about war?

But this is where patriotism comes in. I tell them that I had to learn to respect my elders, I had to learn to do the work that they have assigned me, to respect my flag, to love my country. It is surprising how much they absorb in that.

Then I go ahead and speak to other organizations, civic organizations, women's organizations, and I tell them how much we appreciated the sacrifice that they made during the war because they were the ones that provided the food and the equipment that the Army needed, or the military needed.

Then I speak to military groups, and that's when they ask me questions about what I typed. I can tell them because now I know it is available to anybody who wants it. But I have thought when Riverdale named a street for me that was great, but the best thing is when my state VFW made me "Mr. VFW." Then I thought it just can't get any better. (Applause)

Then this morning I received this outstanding award from the National. I will have to say it is almost as nice as getting kissed by the President.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I appreciate this. (Applause)

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GEORGE LISICKI

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Perhaps no one in our organization exhibits steadfast devotion, strong support, and integrity more than the

next person we are about to honor.

George Lisicki has left a lasting mark upon the VFW and to all who have come to rely on his experience and ability. As our VFW Commander-in-Chief last year, George was unsurpassed in his firm commitment and allegiance to America's veterans, young and old alike. Throughout his year as Commander-in-Chief, George also established his role as a determined spokesman for all those we serve.

For that, and much more, we owe a forever lasting debt of gratitude to him. Please join me in honoring Past Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki with the Distinguished Service Medal and Citation. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Distinguished Service Medal and Citation awarded to George Lisicki.

"In lasting appreciation and spirited recognition of 38 years of unyielding dedication and stalwart service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. As an intrepid professional leader and highly committed member, he actively fulfilled many duties including being the first Vietnam veteran in Post 2314 to be elected Commander, All-American State Commander in 1998, the New Jersey State Membership Director, a National Council of Administration member, and ultimately, the pinnacle of VFW achievement as the Commander-in-Chief.

"His courageous leadership, reinforced by a commanding presence, along with the ultimate integrity in which he performed his duties are the finest traditions and highest values of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 18th day of August, 2009."

This has been signed by Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GEORGE LISICKI

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Thank you very much. Commander-in-Chief and comrades, the great organization, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, it has been my honor to serve this organization for the past 38 years, and I am the one who is honored to belong to the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I was fortunate enough to come from a great Department, the Department of New Jersey. My Department was not back this year, but will be back up front very shortly, I am sure. I have worked with some great leaders in New Jersey, my good friends, Past Commander-in-Chief, the Past Adjutant General, the late Howard Vander Clute, the Past Commander-in-Chief Bob Wallace. I thank you for your mentorship over the years. I thank each and every one of you for your support.

As Commander-in-Chief this past year, we are an organization that can be very proud of our accomplishments. It was this past year that after ten years of hard work working on getting a new G.I. Bill for the 21st Century, it was finally passed. Last year we received the largest increase in the VA health-care system in the history of the VA, which led the way to getting the largest increase this year in the history of the VA.

We went to war and fought against the airlines when they wanted to charge our military excess baggage fee for taking their military equipment

to a combat zone.

We got into the NASCAR picture this past year, the publicity that this organization needed, to help us get our message out about the great work of this organization.

My friends, it has been a great year, a year of great accomplishments this past year. As this year had great accomplishments, we are going to see in the foreseen future, and all the accolades don't go to the Commander-in-Chief, the accolades of the organization goes to each and every one of you because you give us the power and the strength to represent the greatest veterans organization in the world, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. My comrades, I salute you. (Applause)

There is one special person I would like to thank, and that is the lady who stood behind me for many years, allowed me to work for this organization. It was very easy, because she served 13 times as President of our Ladies Auxiliary.

Her love for this organization and her support of me has allowed me to continue to work for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, my wife, Gloria. Gloria, thank you. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE HARRY MITCHELL, CONGRESSMAN FROM ARIZONA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Our next guest brings to Congress his commitment to practice in fiscal responsibility, securing the border, investing in stem cell research, and honoring our nation's veterans.

Representing "The Grand Canyon State" from its 5th District, advocating in Congress for all those who have served in uniform has been one of his top priorities.

As a freshman member of Congress, he was chosen to serve in the high-ranking position of Chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs.

The Subcommittee, under his leadership, has addressed issues ranging from quality of patient care to VA outreach efforts toward America's 17 million veterans who aren't enrolled in the VA.

He led high-profile investigations to help cut bureaucratic red tape at the VA and to combat a troubling epidemic of suicide among our nation's veterans.

Last year, he teamed with Senator Jim Webb to pass the post-9/11 G.I. Bill, which has already proven to be a phenomenal success.

And earlier this year, voicing his concern for veterans, he was a major cause for President Obama scrapping the proposed plan to build veterans' private insurers for service-related disabilities.

We are all very pleased that he is joining us today, so please welcome the Honorable Harry Mitchell. (Applause)

RESPONSE – CONGRESSMAN MITCHELL

CONGRESSMAN MITCHELL: Good morning. Thank you, Commander Gardner. I am honored and privileged to be with you today at this 110th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. On behalf of myself and the State of Arizona, with this special genuflexion for our local economy, I want to give the VFW and the members of the Ladies Auxiliary,

and all your family members, a warm welcome to the Valley of the Sun. Although in August, warm may not be just the right word.

I would first like to welcome Secretary Eric Shinseki from my home state of Arizona and thank him for his leadership on behalf of our nation's veterans.

Also I would like to humbly thank each of the VFW members here today and your 1.6 million members nationwide for your brave and noble service to our nation.

It is an inspiring sight to look out and see so many of you here. Your answer to the call of duty, your role in our nation's great history, your sacrifices and those of the lost comrades must never be forgotten. To the thousands of American armed forces members who are right now serving our country in harm's way, we are grateful and proud of what you are doing and our thoughts and prayers are with you.

I also want to thank all of the family members and loved ones, the veterans and service members who are here today. As a parent and grandfather, I know that there is no make-up days when it comes to missed birthdays, holidays, anniversaries and graduations. You have all made untold sacrifices. You are unsung heroes and you deserve our nation's great gratitude as well.

I know there are a lot of folks here from around the country and there are many right here from Arizona. There are a few members of the VFW of the Department of Arizona that I would like to acknowledge. First, Commander Vincent Reagan of Casa Grande, Adjutant Raymond Thomas, and Quartermaster Leonard Kuczynski of Scottsdale. Leonard and Raymond both live in my congressional district and I know that all three of you must be very pleased and proud how this outstanding conference has come together. I want to congratulate all of you.

As some of you may know, I serve on the House Veterans Affairs Committee. I also chair the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, and this service continues to be one of the most rewarding parts of my service in Congress.

With the help of the dedicated veterans service organizations like the VFW, I have had the opportunity to work for those who fought and served bravely for our country. It is a job I take very seriously. While some things may divide us as a nation, we must be united in keeping the promise to every soldier, sailor, airman and Marine that we put into harm's way that they will be cared for when they return.

Supporting our troops is not a slogan, it is a mandate and a moral imperative.

One key aspect of that mandate is making sure that the Department of Veterans Affairs has the resources it needs year after year to provide the care veterans like yourselves need.

Just last month we scored a major victory on that front. The 2010 Military Construction Veterans Affairs Appropriations Bill, which passed overwhelmingly with bipartisan support, contained an important change that I had been asking for. Instead of providing funding for just one year, the Bill also included for just nearly \$50 billion for the VA in 2011 for medical services, medical support and compliance and medical facilities.

Like you, I believe congressional budget delays should not hamstring the delivery of health care to veterans. In the upward of \$50 billion of advanced funding is a much-needed step in the right direction. (Applause)

I know that the issue of advanced funding is a priority for the VFW, and I thank you for your support of this. Veterans health care should never be compromised by delays in congressional budget cycle and the advanced funding will ensure that delivery of both the care and reliability is timely.

I have discovered since coming to Congress that the most important responsibility, besides crafting and voting on policy, is oversight. As Chairman of the Oversight Investigations, our Committee has held over two dozen hearings that have shed light on problems in the VA system, and that has led to numerous reforms. Among the most pressing issue that we have seen is the epidemic of suicides.

At our urging, the VA has reversed a long-standing policy on using mass media advertising to reach out to veterans who are at risk of taking their own lives. Now, to the VA's credit, public service announcements join the actor Gary Sinise who portrayed the disabled Vietnam veteran in "Forrest Gump" has been aired across the nation and ads for the VA hotline, which is 1-800-273-TALK, have appeared on buses, including those right here in the Valley.

Most recently, we gained the shocking attention of the nation when we looked into allegations that overworked VA employees in Detroit shredded or hid thousands of active claims records in an effort to keep up with the productivity demands and quotas. We have also looked into botched prostate cancer treatment at the VA Hospital in Philadelphia where nearly 100 patients received the incorrect dose of radiation. We held a hearing that exposed the errors in endoscopic procedures in VA Hospitals in Florida, Tennessee and Georgia, which put more than 10,000 veterans at risk of infection with illnesses like hepatitis and HIV.

Errors and failures like these are frustrating and unconscionable. But shedding light on them has led to reforms. There is still an awful lot of work to do, but my priority as Chairman of the Oversight Investigations is to make sure that the situations like this do not happen again.

As I said, serving on the Veterans Committee has been a terrific experience. However, I do not come from a military background. My background is education. I spent 28 years in the classroom as a high school government and civics teacher in my hometown of Tempe. All during that time, I was Mayor of Tempe. I would teach my classes during the first half of the day and then head down to City Hall.

Because of my background and belief in the life-changing power of education, there is one Bill that I have been involved with in Congress which is easily the most rewarding issue I have ever worked on. Just over a year ago, I had the honor of teaming with Senator Jim Webb of Virginia to introduce and pass a new and much-improved G.I. Bill.

We promised our service members the opportunity for higher education when they joined. I believe it is our responsibility to see that they get it when they become veterans. The old Montgomery G.I. Bill has done many good things for our veterans, but over the years it has become a peacetime benefit that does not cover all the costs of higher education the way the original G.I. Bill did after World War II.

As you all know too well, we are not at peace. The response to the Bill among veterans has been phenomenal. After a year of implementation and preparation, tens of thousands of veterans have this month started to use the new G.I. Bill to further their education. This proven mixture of military experience and discipline, coupled with higher education and training,

will exponentially improve their economic prospects and strengthen our workforce.

This new G.I. Bill extends educational benefits to the members of the military who have served on active duty since September 11, 2001. This includes career service members who can now transfer some or all of their benefit to their spouses or children.

Returning veterans who qualify will have the full cost of education paid for as well as their housing and educational materials. They will have 15 years to use it, and the benefit is transferrable to their children or spouse.

One of the most important components of this new G.I. Bill is that for the first time this benefit is available to activated Guard and Reservists. For years, the Guard and Reservists took the same risks and made the same sacrifices overseas in combat zones, but were not eligible for the same benefits when they got home. That is no longer the case.

It is my hope and firm expectation that this new G.I. Bill will provide veterans with a greater chance of success while transitioning back to civilian life.

After World War II, the G.I. Bill helped to train what became known as the "Greatest Generation." By a show of hands, how many of you here today served during the Second World War? Thank you so much for your service. (Applause)

You know, the best thing we can do today is to honor that service and to ensure our ongoing strength as a nation is to make sure that the next generation of brave citizen soldiers have the same opportunity of success.

With that, I want to again thank you for your service and for giving me the opportunity to express my gratitude for the VFW for the tireless advocacy on behalf of veterans issues. We must always remember the words of our first President George Washington, and I quote. "The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation."

Thank you very much and enjoy the rest of the conference. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Congressman Mitchell, we do appreciate you very much, and we all recognize that the veterans of this country over the last two years, thanks to our Congress, has received many entitlements that they were well overdue, and we appreciate your help and support.

VFW COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT
TO DR. JAMES WRIGHT

It is now my honor and privilege to present the Commander-in-Chief Gold Medal of Merit to Dr. Jim Wright, Founder of the Severely Injured Military Veterans: Fulfilling Their Dreams Program and President Emeritus of Dartmouth College, the venerable Ivy League school in Hanover, New Hampshire.

A veteran with a lasting 11-year tenure as President of Dartmouth, Dr. Wright knows firsthand the sacrifices that are associated with serving our country, as well as the value of education.

After visiting with our severely wounded at the Bethesda Naval Medical Center, Dr. Wright saw firsthand the unique challenges posed to them as they tried to make college plans, and he knew something had to change

in order to encourage these students to continue their quest for a college education.

So, he got to work in a way he knows best to raise more than \$350,000 in launching his program in April, 2007.

The Severely Injured Military Veterans: Fulfilling Their Dreams program is now offered through the American Council of Education. The program provides full counseling assistance with assessing goals, understanding the requirements of course work, learning about the application process, and crafting connections on campuses, among its vital and benevolent services.

These critical tools help to ensure severely wounded veterans receive the full support of the education community, from community colleges even to elite institutions such as Dartmouth. Yes, there are some of our younger brethren matriculating there through the program, as they find their path to pursue their own hopes and dreams.

But all of these stellar accomplishments may pale in comparison to arguably his most significant accomplishment in my book, he is a fellow Marine. And it just goes to show all you frustrated Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard in this great audience, that Marines are also very intelligent and brilliant. Jim proves that.

What an outstanding American we have standing here with us and I am very proud to present Dr. James Wright with the Commander-in-Chief's Gold Medal of Merit. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Gold Medal of Merit and Citation awarded to James Wright, Ph.D.

"In esteemed recognition and sincere appreciation of his exceptional accomplishment of founding and embracing the 'Severely Injured Military Veterans: Fulfilling Their Dreams' program as President of Dartmouth College.

"His steadfast efforts to ensure that our nation's wounded heroes receive the full support of the higher education community as they find a path to pursue their own hopes and dreams are unparalleled. For this stellar achievement as a true constituent and friend of our veterans, he has earned the respect, admiration and eternal gratitude of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 18th day of August, 2009."

Signed by Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – DR. JAMES WRIGHT

COMRADE WRIGHT: Thank you so much. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Gardner. I want to congratulate you for your leadership of this historic organization and for your strong efforts on behalf of current servicemen and women, and it is a treat to receive this honor from someone who is another Marine and also another MAG veteran, Marine Air Group, sacrifice, sir.

This is a very special occasion for me to be honored by a group who for 110 years has been committed to serving veterans, and to be in a room with so many veterans who have served their country in the military and continue to serve their country by their devotion to veterans.

This has a personal meaning for me as well. My father served in the Second World War. He was a member of C Company, Charlie Company of the 723rd Railway Operation Battalion. He served in and earned bronze battle stars in Northern France, the Rhineland in Central Europe. He was the proud member of the VFW General U.S. Grant Post 2665 in Galena, Illinois. (Applause)

His last job before he retired was tending bar at the VFW Post in Galena, Illinois. My dad now has been dead for 25 years, but I know he would have been very pleased today.

Another personal note, I would like to thank my wonderful wife, Susan, for all of her support in this work that I have been doing. Today is our 25th wedding anniversary, and we are pleased to be celebrating it here with you. Susan, thank you. (Applause)

I joined the Marines at the age of 17, just after graduating from high school. Three years later my younger brother joined the Navy. He, too, was 17. My mother used to say with her husband an Army veteran, her two sons in the Navy and the Marines, if she had a third son, he probably would have joined the Air Force, and perhaps he would have, as so might the daughter have done. I surely would have tried to persuade my hypothetical younger brother or sister to join the Marines as well.

After I got out of the Marines, I decided to do to school. I was the first in my family to go to college, and my brother followed. I have not stopped going to school ever since. I taught American History and I have always been honored to serve as President of Dartmouth, but I am proud always to have served in the United States Marines. It was no longer an explicit part of my life, but it was an important part of me and who I am.

In 2004, during the Battle of Fallujah, I was quite moved by the courage and the suffering of the Marines who were fighting in that city. I mentioned to a friend, a retired Marine officer, that I would like to do something, and he encouraged me to go down and visit Bethesda Naval Hospital. In fact, he secured permission from the commandant's office for me to visit Bethesda.

I recall hearing from the Gunner Sergeant who was then in charge of the Marine liaison office there, do you believe there is an old Marine Lance Corporal who is the President of an Ivy League institution? Obviously, he didn't know what old Marine Lance Corporals can accomplish once they set out to do it.

I first went to Bethesda in the summer of 2005, and this past winter I made my eighteenth visit to either Bethesda, Walter Reed or Belvoir Hospitals, and I will go down again to Bethesda in a couple of weeks.

I was pleased to work with ACE to set up a counseling program for severely-wounded veterans, and my focus has been on wounded veterans, those who are hospitalized. But I recognized early on a broader problem in the absence of full support for veterans, whether they are wounded or not, wanting to go to college.

Somebody connected me with Senator Jim Webb, and I spent an afternoon with him and John Warner and Chuck Hagel, and I was interested in making sure that any G.I. Bill would have a provision for those who wanted to go to private institutions.

With the Yellow Ribbon Program that we developed in Senator Warner's office, and, Congressman, I want to thank you for your leadership on that. I was pleased to work with representatives from the VFW, from the Iraq,

Afghanistan Veterans of America, from Jerry Kolberg and his foundation in helping to secure passage of this. It was very rewarding.

A couple of things stand out about my experience. Remember, I am an old teacher and I am also a historian. First, the G.I. Bill of 1944 was one of the great investments in the infrastructure of this Republic. The "Greatest Generation" earned that description not only at beaches of Normandy and Okinawa, but really they learned it through all of their contributions to this country and to the world since 1945.

The 1944 Bill was not compensation to some interest group, but it was an investment in those who had already demonstrated their commitment to civic responsibility, and it has been an investment that has been repaid a thousand-fold.

Secondly, as a history lesson, I believe as those in this room understand our treatment of the veterans of the Vietnam War was a national embarrassment. That is one that should not be repeated in this Republic.

In a democracy, there are clear processes to deal with an unpopular war, but in a democracy one does not blame the warriors for wars that are unpopular. (Applause)

We have learned that lesson, but we still need to reach out even more effectively and more warmly to veterans of the Vietnam War.

These two principles that this Republic has served by investing in those who have already committed to serve, and secondly, to keep the warriors separate from the politics of war, these to me are sufficient grounds for doing all that we can for the veterans who are engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Indeed, as President Obama said to you yesterday, this is our sacred trust and I salute your work, the work of this organization to protect that trust.

Finally, a personal note. My first or second visit to Bethesda Hospital, I met a young Marine who had serious gunshot wounds from the Battle of Fallujah. I talked to him and he didn't remember very much about our conversation. I left a card behind and I told him I would encourage him if he wanted to pursue an education. And he later got in touch with me.

I sort of counseled him and guided him to take a few classes at home, and he later enrolled at Dartmouth. He is doing exceptionally well at Dartmouth, just a first-rate student at Dartmouth.

He is studying Arabic, and he said that he spilled his blood on a street, a dusty street over in Iraq, and he would like to do whatever he can with his life to try to minimize the risk of other young men and women spilling their blood in this way.

One thing I wanted to do in May before I stepped down as President, though, was to climb Mount Moosilauke, the mountain that Dartmouth College owns, several thousand feet. It is quite a climb.

One should not wait until he is nearly 70 to say now I am going to climb Moosilauke. I got a group of students to join me in this walk. I asked a couple of the Marines that are enrolled at Dartmouth to come along. I reminded them that Marines do not leave other Marines along the trail.

I am sure glad they came. They helped me a lot that day, because I took on far too much, but I was not at all willing to admit that I took on too much. Early on, these two Marines kept offering to take my backpack, and early on I was too stubborn to give it up. But very quickly I realized this was no place to be stubborn. So, I gave them my backpack.

When we got down to the lodge at the foot after an eight-and-a-half-hour hike, I was simply exhausted. I could scarcely move.

This one young Marine handed me my backpack. I said to him, this is the young Marine who I first met at Bethesda in 2005. I said, "Samuel, when I first met you in that hospital bed, you were recovering from gunshot wounds and you could scarcely talk to me. Did you ever think that someday you and I would climb a mountain together?" He said, "No, sir, I didn't."

I said, "Did you ever think, Samuel, that you would carry my backpack on that mountain?" He said, "No, sir, I didn't." I said, "Well, I didn't either, Samuel, but you can do anything you want to do and I hope you have demonstrated that to yourself time and time again."

That's the message I would like to leave. These veterans want a hand. They want to step up and they want to continue to try to make a difference. They are not asking for anyone to pander them, they are asking for people to step up and say, yes, we appreciate what you have done, and more importantly, we know that you will continue to do more and these guys will continue to carry the backpack for this Republic. Thank you very much for all that you do. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I know you have noticed the two troopers sitting behind Helen up here. They are not here guarding Helen. They just said if anything happens, they want Helen to be with them to help calm the battle.

INTRODUCTION OF SECRETARY ERIC SHINSEKI, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

It is now my honor to introduce the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, General Eric Shinseki.

The General is a 1965 West Point graduate who served two tours in Vietnam, first in 1965 to 1966 as an artillery forward observer with the 25th Infantry Division, and again in 1969 to 1970 as Troop "A" Commander, 3rd Squadron, 5th Cavalry Regiment.

Twice he was wounded, to include losing part of a foot to a land mine, but instead of going home, he soldiered on to rise in rank and responsibility to command a squadron, a brigade, the 1st Cavalry Division, the 7th Army, and then in 1999 as the 45th Chief of Staff of the United States Army.

Prior to his June 2003, military retirement, after 38 years in uniform, the General would lead the Army during Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. He would also initiate a transformation of the Army of the largest magnitude in years to address emerging strategic challenges of the 21st Century, along with cultural and technological evolutions within the Army.

Mr. Secretary, you led the most powerful Army on earth and now lead the one federal agency that is singularly tasked to keep a nation's promise to her veterans. But you did not inherit an organization without internal and external problems or challenges.

As you endeavor to meet, correct and improve upon those many challenges, I pledge to you that you will not walk this path alone. The VFW may sometimes seem like your loudest critic, but we are also, and will always continue to be, your strongest advocate and partner on Capitol Hill, in the White House and in all 1,400 communities where there is a VA facil-

ity. That's because we know very well that your 275,000 dedicated employees care deeply about veterans.

Comrades, sisters and guests, may I present to you a fellow combat veteran, the recipient of two Purple Hearts and three Bronze Stars for Valor, the former Chief of Staff of the United States Army and now Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Eric Shinseki. (Applause)

REMARKS BY SECRETARY SHINSEKI

SECRETARY SHINSEKI: Good morning. Thank you very much. (Applause) Glen, thank you for that very kind introduction and for inviting me to join you and the membership of the VFW here in the Valley of the Sun.

Let me acknowledge some of the other special members here this morning. Chairman Filner, I believe, is present, Chairman Mitchell, both terrific leaders for us in the Congress, and have been entirely helpful in all the good things we have already been able to accomplish.

Tommy Tradewell, congratulations on your appointment. "Gunner" Kent, Bob Wallace with whom I work every day, Dixie Hild, President of the VFW Ladies Auxiliary, Richard Eubank, Jr., Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, fellow veterans, other distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Good morning. I am greatly honored to be here and honored to be following President Obama, and thanking you and your families for your patriotism and service to the nation.

We reaffirm our commitment to you and other veterans by providing the benefit and services you have earned and on which you rely so heavily.

At your February winter conference in Louisville was the first time I appeared before you, I told you that serving as Secretary was for me a calling, one that allowed me to give back to those with whom I went to war as a young man, those who I sent to war as a Chief, and then those great veterans of World War II and Korea on whose shoulders I stood as I grew up in the profession of arms.

I told you that for my first meeting with him President Obama's commitment to veterans was clear. It runs deep, it is firm and it is unwavering. His vision to transform this department, the Department of Veterans Affairs, resonated with me. It was clear and that's the reason I am here today, and I am thankful to him for this opportunity to serve veterans and give back as I indicated.

Yesterday you had a chance to hear firsthand his commitment to all who have steadfastly safeguarded our way of life.

Over the past seven months, I have visited VA facilities large and small, urban and rural, complex and simple, all across the United States. I have spoken with leaders, members of their staff and with veterans I was able to encounter in those locations, some of them very remote. I also invited each of our 21 Vision Directors to come share with me their requirements, their priorities, their measurements for performance and quality and safety, and their needs for resources, people, money, time.

I took the final four-hour Vision presentation last Friday. This was time well-invested, all 21 Visions, a valuable learning experience for someone who is not a clinician and didn't grow up in the VA.

Much as Glen has indicated, every day 288,000 people come to work at the VA to serve veterans. They are good people. We have only one mission, to care for our nation's veterans wherever they live by providing them

the highest quality benefits and services possible, and I would add we must do this faster, better and more equitably.

VFW's ministry of presence, whether to simply answer a veteran's question or to provide bedside comfort and companionship or renders honors at a final formation on one of our National Cemeteries is remarkable devotion on your part to comrades who have served and shared hardships with us. Simple acts of kindness performed by your 2.2 million members and the more than 500,000 members of your Ladies Auxiliary reach out, lift up and sustain veterans and their families.

The VFW has set the standard in this area for 110 years, and your Auxiliary for 96 of them. Your century of achievements in Veterans Affairs is the drumbeat we all salute.

Now, VA's own legacy of service is unwavering pursuit of President Lincoln's charge to care for those who have borne the battle. These words are as compelling for us in the Department today as it was when they were first delivered by President Lincoln during his second inaugural address.

The veterans I have met in my travels have been uplifting. Many struggle with conditions and inevitably with old age. Others live with uncertain consequences from exposures to environmental threats and chemicals, and still others that recently have returned from Afghanistan and Iraq bearing the fresh wounds of war visible and invisible.

Now, out of my encounters with veterans, among the many things that come up, three concerns keep coming through: access, the backlog and homeless veterans.

Let me talk about access for a couple of minutes. Of the 23.4 million veterans in this country, roughly eight million are enrolled with the VA. Five and a half million have used our medical services at least once. Three and a half million visit our medical facilities regularly.

Why have over 15 million veterans never enrolled with us? I don't know the answer to that, but I am pursuing it. Whatever the reason, the VA will continue reaching out to them to explain our benefits and services and the quality of our health-care system.

A major initiative, which will expand access, is the President's decision to welcome back some 500,000 priority Group 8 veterans who lost their entitlements in 2003. We began registering them in July. We expect 266,000 enrollments this first year alone out through the year 2010.

Another initial to expand and improve access is the evolution of our health-care delivery system. VA's 153 medical centers are the flagships of our nationwide integrated health-care enterprise. Now, about a decade ago, VA, in my opinion, brilliantly decided to move away from the concept of here are our flagships, come visit us, to one that endeavors to deliver health care and distribute health care to wherever veterans live.

To do that, we have created a system of 768 community-based outpatient clinics, which by the end of 2010 will be upwards of 800. 232 veteran centers, outreach clinics, mobile clinics, reaching out in the most rural and remote areas where veterans live. When necessary, there will be contracted specialized health care locally as well.

Our next major leap in health-care delivery will be to routinely connect flagship medical centers to distant community-based outpatient clinics, and there are even more distant mobile counterparts via an IT backbone that places specialized health-care professionals in direct contact with patients via tele-health and tele-medicine.

Today we are even piloting connectivity for medical centers to the homes of chronically-ill veterans to provide better monitoring and the prevention of avoidable acute episodes. This means that veterans will drive less to receive routine health care. But they will have better access day to day. It will be higher quality, more convenient, especially for veterans challenged by long-distance travel and prevention. Prevention will mean healthier lives.

The backlog: Even though less than 50 percent of the veteran population receives care or benefits from VA, we have a backlog in disability claims. I know the numbers are out there, and they vary widely. The total number of claims in our inventory today is around 400,000.

Backlog claims that have been in the system for longer than 125 days, which is what we consider the backlog, total roughly 145,000. In July, we closed out 85,000 claims and we took in 89,000 new ones. So, you can see the challenge here.

Regardless of how we parse the numbers, there is a backlog. It is too big, and veterans are waiting too long for their checks. (Applause)

Now, in April, President Obama charged the Defense Secretary, Bob Gates, and me to build a fully interoperable electronic record system that will provide each member of our armed forces a virtual lifetime and electronic record that will track them from the day they first put on the uniform through their time as veterans until the day they are finally laid to rest. VA is already a leader in the development and use of the electronic health records, and so is the DoD.

Between the DoD and the VA, we have an opportunity to drive the improvement of health care through a fully interoperable electronic health record. And our achievements here may go beyond just veterans and service members, but could help the nation as a whole.

We are working with the President's chief performance technology and chief informational officers to harness the powers of innovation and technology. For the VA, it will revolutionize our claims process, faster processing, higher quality decisions, no lost records, fewer records. I am personally committed to reducing the processing time of disability claims. We have work to do here and we are moving out.

Homelessness: Veterans lead the nation in homelessness, depression, substance abuse, suicides, and they rank up there in joblessness as well. Here again, this is an accumulation of neglect. We estimate that 131,000 veterans live on the streets of this wealthiest, most powerful nation in the world, men and women, young and old, fully functioning and disabled from every war generation, even the current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Some of them will sleep on the streets here in Phoenix tonight. Six years ago that number was 195,000. Today it is 131,000. So, we think we have the right partners, the right plans and the right programs in place. We are moving in the right direction to remove this blot on all of our consciences.

President Obama and I are committed to ending homelessness among veterans. We are going to take those 131,000 homeless veterans off the streets of our country over the next five years. No one who served this nation in uniform as we have should ever find themselves living without care and without hope. (Applause)

Now, I know there are never any absolutes in life when I say we are going to take the 131,000 veterans off the streets. But unless we set an

ambitious target, we would not be giving this our very best efforts, and to do this well we will have to attack the entire downward spiral that ends up in homelessness.

Homelessness is just the last stage in a lot of missed opportunities. We must offer education. We must offer jobs; we must treat depression, fight substance abuse, offer safe housing. We have to do it all.

No missed opportunities in going from 131,000 to zero, and keeping it there. Education, jobs, mental health, substance abuse, housing: Let me touch on each one for a few seconds.

Education: You have already heard and we have heard from the gentlemen in Congress who have been our leaders in promoting the new G.I. Bill and getting that legislation passed, both Chairman Filner and especially the leadership of Chairman Mitchell and his oversight of the G.I. Bill.

The President and Senators Jim Webb and John Warner just kicked off our post-9/11 new G.I. Bill program on 3 August. We expect roughly 150,000 veterans to take part in this fully-funded degree-producing program at a state college or university of their choice this year.

Additionally, 1,100 private institutions have elected to participate in a special arrangement called the Yellow Ribbon Program. This investment in America's future will go on for decades to come. The last time we did this in 1944, after World War II, our country ended up being richer by 450,000 trained engineers, 240,000 accountants, 238,000 teachers, 91,000 scientists, 67,000 doctors, 22,000 dentists, and a million other college-educated veterans. They went on to provide the leadership that catapulted our economy to the world's largest in our nation to leadership in the free world and victor of the Cold War.

Lightning is about to strike twice for those who have answered our nation's call, and I could not be more proud of this opportunity for them.

Jobs: I recently addressed more than 1,700 veterans, small business owners at the fifth annual small business symposium on 21 July. I reminded them that veterans hire veterans because they know what they are getting. Customers and partners value their skills, knowledge and attributes, and are eager to work with them.

Just last fall in a survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management, over 90 percent of the employers said they valued veterans' skills, and in particular their strong sense of responsibility and teamwork. The VA puts veterans first in our own contracting awards, because we recognize the on-time, on-budget quality solutions they bring to our contracting needs.

In the fiscal year 2008, our unique veterans first buying program resulted in VA spending more than \$2 billion on veterans-owned small businesses. That represents 15 percent of our procurement dollars, up five percent from the previous year. During that time, we also doubled our support to service disabled veteran-owned businesses. That means 12 percent of our procurement dollars, \$1.6 billion, was invested here.

At VA, our experience is that veteran-owned small businesses have a high likelihood for creating jobs, developing new products and services, and building prosperity. As I have said, veterans hire veterans. So, increasing opportunities for veteran-owned small businesses is an effective way to help address many needs during this economic downturn.

Homelessness Health Care: We will spend \$3.2 billion next year to prevent and reduce homelessness among veterans. \$2.7 billion of that will

go to medical services and \$500 million on specific homeless programs. With 85 percent of homelessness funding going to health care, it means that homelessness is primarily a health-care issue, heavily burdened with depression and substance abuse.

The psychological consequences of combat affect every generation of veterans. VA now employs 18,000 mental health professionals to address our mental health needs. We know that if we diagnose and treat people they usually get better. We also know that if we don't, they won't, and sometimes those problems become debilitating. We understand the stigma issue, but we are not going to be dissuaded. We are not giving up on any of our veterans with mental health concerns and challenges, and we are definitely not giving up on the homeless.

Homeless Housing: We have approximately 500 partners in nearly every major town and city across the country helping you to get homeless veterans off the streets. With 20,000 HUD vouchers from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and our \$500 million to invest in 2010 to cover safe housing and rehabilitation for veterans that we have been able to coax off the streets, we are going to reduce the number of homeless veterans next year and each year thereafter for the next five.

So, education, jobs, health care and housing, we have work to do here but we have momentum. We know where we are headed.

President Obama has charged me with transforming the VA into a high-performing 21st Century organization. It will be a different organization than the one that exists today. Five years from now we intend to be the provider of choice for more of that larger population of 23.4 million veterans I described, provider of a choice of insurance, provider of choice in health care and education, provider of choice in home loans, counseling and employment.

To achieve this kind of status with veterans, we must make it easier for them to understand their entitlements and then make it much simpler for them to access those benefits and health-care services.

Beyond the five years, we are looking for new ways of thinking and acting. We are asking why 40 years after Agent Orange was last used in Vietnam, this Secretary is still adjudicating disability claims for service connection related to Agent Orange, and why 20 years after Desert Storm we are still debating the debilitating effects of whatever causes Gulf War illness.

Left to our present processes, 20 to 40 years from now some future Secretary will be adjudicating service connection disabilities from the ongoing conflicts. We must do better, we have to change this process, and we will.

If you have not already heard that the Institute of Medicine recently released a new study and a possible link between heart disease, Parkinson's disease and Agent Orange. We have this study under review now, and I assure you we will get this right.

My remarks this morning comprise a seven-month progress report on the state of your Department. I intend to do this again next year. Much more remains to be done, and I expect to have more to report next year.

We need your continued support and assistance if we are to become the provider of choice. We thank the VFW for your leadership and the many outcomes this past year, from the G.I. Bill to advanced appropriations.

My mission is to serve veterans by increasing their access to our benefits and services, to provide them the highest quality of health care available,

and to control costs to the best of my ability. Doing so will make VA a model of good governance. Doing so will also keep faith with President Lincoln's charge to care for those who have borne the battle and grant them the dignity and respect they deserve until they are laid to rest.

That is my mission. I am honored to have it. God bless our men and women who serve in uniform today. God bless our veterans and God bless our wonderful country. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. We appreciate you being the true veteran's advocate that this nation's veterans need. We know that you will continue to do so as you serve in that capacity as the cabinet member for Veterans Affairs. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF VFW CITIZENSHIP AWARD TO JANIS ROZNOWSKI

In 2003, former American Airline Flight Attendant, Janis Roznowski, was part of a team that transported troops in and out of the Middle East. That experience ignited in Janis a deep feeling of responsibility to our troops, especially those wounded in battle, and she began visiting them at Brooke Army Medical Center in her home state of Texas.

It was then, when she decided wounded warriors and their families needed a better, more comfortable place to recover, that, the "Operation Comfort" program was born.

Operation Comfort strives to bring a part of home to recovering service members and their visiting loved ones at Brooke.

One of her first projects involved supplying wounded soldiers with computers in order to easily communicate with their fellow service members serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, a highly-regarded and much-appreciated initiative among the wounded.

Thanks to Operation Comfort, the Soldier and Family Assistance Center and the Occupational, Amputee and Burn Physical Therapy Clinics, have all been remodeled and now include everything from new paint, to pool tables to laptops.

Janis even implemented wounded warrior and amputee outings, including a trip to Ground Zero, surfing in California, white water rafting in Idaho, and a trip to Normandy for severely-burned soldiers.

The value and respect Ms. Roznowski has shown these wounded service members and their families is truly remarkable and of the first order in charity.

I take great pleasure in now presenting Janis Roznowski with the 2009 VFW Citizenship Award for her extraordinary efforts in supporting our troops and their families.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: The "James E. Van Zandt Citizenship Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Janis Roznowski.

"In acclaimed recognition and utmost appreciation of her benevolent contributions and unwavering efforts in providing support and comfort for wounded soldiers and veterans of the United States military and their families through Operation Comfort.

"As founder of Operation Comfort and a dedicated lifelong supporter of veterans, her tremendous generosity, persistence and passionate concern for America's wounded have truly made her an inspiration for innumerable others, thus, in keeping with the highest ideals of the Veterans of Foreign

Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 18th day of August, 2009. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General.

This award comes with a \$5,000 honorarium. (Applause)

RESPONSE – MS. JANIS ROZNOWSKI

MS. JANIS ROZNOWSKI: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am deeply honored to receive the Citizenship Award. I stand in good company, because each of you understands what it means to be a good citizen. You not only have served our country during wartime, but also continue to serve as a good citizen by building a strong Veterans of Foreign Wars, while at the same time making a difference in the lives of our veterans of yesterday, today and tomorrow.

I would like to thank the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the Department of Texas, and particularly Roy Grona and Dan West, the Paul G. Mahoney Post 4372, and the Ladies Auxiliary in Odessa, Texas, and particularly Danny and Linda Henry, and Roger and Mary Ann Langford. Also my husband, Tom, for understanding and helping me along this pathway. (Applause)

I am from San Angelo, Texas, and I am a proud member of the Paul G. Mahoney Post 4372, Ladies Auxiliary, in Odessa, Texas.

While growing up in San Angelo, my church youth group visited church members in their homes and in nursing homes, where we would sing to them. I remember what joy they got from our visits and how it made me feel just seeing how happy they were.

My memories of growing up are filled with World War II veterans. After all, my father was in the Second Infantry Division and was D-Day Plus One on Omaha Beach, the Battle of the Bulge, and on into Czechoslovakia.

The veterans were everywhere, because everyone served and their pictures filled every house in the neighborhood. I remember seeing Daddy's war pictures of bombed-out villages and roads. I was a child, and I couldn't really understand what the pictures represented.

During the Vietnam War, everyone I knew went to Vietnam. Two of my brothers served in the Army and the Marines, three childhood school friends and a distant cousin went to Vietnam and never came home. My brother, who was in the Marine Corps, died from Agent Orange.

When I moved to San Antonio after high school in 1968, it seemed natural to visit wounded veterans at Brooke Army Medical Center. I remember the long rooms with beds on both sides of the rooms filled with wounded men. On several occasions, I would take them to dinner and the movies, and although I can no longer remember their names or where they are from, I have never forgotten them and I have often wondered where they are and how they are doing.

After becoming a Flight Attendant with American Airlines, it was my desire to fly the troops in and out of Vietnam. However, I was too junior. In 2003, when America began flying the troops in and out of Kuwait City, I volunteered. I, like you, joined up just in a different capacity.

Never will I ever forget the men and women that we transported over.

They were some of the best men and women I have ever had the pleasure to meet, and they changed my life. I felt the deep responsibility to them, and I felt if they could go to war, then I could do something, too. So I joined up.

We, as Glen mentioned, started several support programs. We have a cycling program, a sled hockey program. We have a softball league this year. We take them surfing, as I mentioned, hand cycling and sled hockey. For those of you who are from the East Coast, we will be traveling. Our sled hockey team, we will be taking them up to Minnesota, St. Louis and Chicago. So, if you are in the area during the time we are there, please come out and watch our guys.

We also have a family financial assistance program where we have wounded military families with Unmet Needs. Last year, I am proud to say that our very small nonprofit organization was able to provide nearly \$250,000 in family financial assistance grants. (Applause)

As the Secretary mentioned, we have a long way to go. Right now what we are seeing, we are seeing numerous soldiers, marines, airmen and sailors who don't show their injuries. They have emotional injuries, they have memories and which I am sure you-all experienced, wartime memories. So, we do have a long way to go. But I want you to know that we are there.

Whatever the guys want to do, whatever they need, we have told them that we are there to help. Our logo is a desert helmet resting on a pillow. I have told them when you are tired of working the issues, you come, you rest on the pillow and you tell the helmet what your needs are, and we will do whatever we can.

We will be taking 15 amputees surfing in Pismo Beach September 3rd through the 8th. This August 25th through the 31st, we will be taking 28 burn soldiers, marines and soldiers, to the World Burn Congress. I am excited to say the firefighters from Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Maryland, and New York City will be meeting us at the airport and transporting us into the city.

I would like to close by reading a song that is very important to me. It expresses how I feel in my heart, and I know it expresses how you feel because you are a citizen of our country and you are still serving, you are working to make our country better for the veterans of today, yesterday and tomorrow.

"The road is long with many a winding turn that leads us to who knows where, who knows when. But I am strong, strong enough to carry him. He ain't heavy, he's my brother.

"So on we go. His welfare is of my concern. No burden is he to bear. We'll get there.

"For I know he would not encumber me. He ain't heavy, he's my brother.

"If I'm laden at all, I'm laden with sadness that everyone's heart isn't filled with the gladness of love for one another.

"It's a long, long road from which there is no return. While we're on the way to there, why not share.

"And the load doesn't weigh me down at all. He ain't heavy, he's my brother. He's my brother. He ain't heavy, he's my brother."

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you Janis, thank you very much. We really appreciate what you do. I have often told many Congress-

men if we could pass legislation that mandated it, every Representative or Senator elected would have to spend one week at a facility like Bamze, we wouldn't have any problems getting funds for any programs of the veterans.

MS. ROZNOWSKI: That is exactly right. Thank you.

PRESENTATION BY JIM CHANCELLOR TO
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: This morning we have a special presentation to the Commander-in-Chief. Please give a warm welcome to Mr. Jim Chancellor from Indiana. (Applause)

COMRADE JIM CHANCELLOR: Good morning, comrades. Thank you for allowing me a few minutes with you this morning. I would like to talk to you about yesterday and today, yesterday's veterans compared to today's veterans; some of the things we have in common and some of the things that we don't so much have in common.

It is the intangibles that we all share that count. It is the love of country and commitment. It is a sacrifice that we can all share with one another. It doesn't matter if it was Korea, Desert Storm, Vietnam, World War II, these are the intangibles that we share. What we don't share so much is today's wireless technologies, the Internet, the cell phones, the Tweeters and the Facebooks. These are things that are used every day and very common with our young veterans, but to an old salty dog like me, not so much.

But it is the intangibles that I spoke of earlier that really count. Those are the things that organizations are made of. Those are actually things that families are made of.

I look at the VFW as one big family, a family of veterans. Our population keeps growing and growing, and I look at the VFW as the father figure of that family. The VFW is like the parent to the child. It is like the father to the son.

Let me explain what I mean. As a young father, I was concerned that my children wouldn't get what I was trying to show them. I didn't lecture them and preach to them, I tried to show them right from wrong. I tried to show them the way to go by what I did. Then one morning I woke up and they were adults and they had made it. We are not perfect and we have all made mistakes, but I am very proud of my family.

The VFW shows the way exactly like that father figure did. The VFW will always be there. They have shown through their due diligence to the young veterans.

I didn't join the VFW when I first got back from Vietnam. It took me nearly 20 years to join. But during those 20 years they were always there. The Veterans of Foreign Wars was there. They were in the newspaper doing positive community participation. They had proven time and time again that their dedication to the young veteran was there. They didn't preach, they didn't teach, they showed. That is what I am so proud of.

It is those intangibles that we all share. It is those intangibles that we will take on and on and on.

Our young veterans will be our leaders of tomorrow, but our young veterans need the leaders of today. I want to thank the VFW for what they have done not only for me personally but for all the young veterans. I want to encourage them to continue to change, to make adjustments, to be there for the younger veterans.

Now, the ring I am going to present to the Commander this morning has been compared to a Super Bowl ring or World Series ring. Those rings are worn by an elite group of individuals that have a shared bond. I can understand this comparison. But the difference between the Vietnam veterans ring and those types of rings is that war is not a game. There are no time-outs in this, words like sacrifice and courage, and dying.

To wear one of these rings, you must have been willing to die for this great country. On with the presentation. Our Commander was in the United States Marine Corps. He was an aircraft mechanic serving with the 1st Marine Aircraft Group 12 in Chu Lai, Vietnam. He was awarded the Combat Action Ribbon, the Vietnam Service Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, National Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal with Device, and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry.

It gives me great pleasure and honor to present this ring to our Commander-in-Chief, Glen Gardner, Jr. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much, Jim. I appreciate it very much.

Jim, are you saying at the Mares Station we offered the best equipment we could get in Vietnam is over? Thank you very much. Jim, we appreciate that. It is a great honor to have received one of the rings. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF SLOAN GIBSON, USO PRESIDENT AND CEO

It is now my honor to introduce the United Service Organization's President and Chief Executive Officer, Sloan D. Gibson.

President Gibson is a 1975 graduate of the United States Military Academy. He achieved both airborne and ranger qualifications and served as an infantry officer in the U.S. Army. He earned a Master's in Economics from the University of Missouri, from our home in Kansas City, and a Master's in Public Administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

He was elected by the USO World Board of Governors to become the 22nd President and CEO of the USO, effective September 1, 2008.

Prior to joining the USO, Sloan spent more than 20 years in banking in Charlotte, Atlanta, Nashville, and Birmingham, Alabama.

In 2004, he retired from AmSouth Bank Corporation where he was serving as Vice-Chairman and Chief Financial Officer. During his tenure as CFO, AmSouth was added to the Standard & Poor's 500.

Sloan also has a long history of service and leadership with a variety of not-for-profit organizations. In 2002, he chaired the United Way Campaign in Central Alabama, raising more than \$30 million.

In December, 2008, he said, "Our volunteers, employees, donors and corporate partners all put their hearts and souls into making life better for America's men and women serving in uniform and their families." Well said.

Comrade and sisters, please welcome the USO President and CEO, Sloan Gibson. (Applause)

REMARKS – MR. SLOAN GIBSON, PRESIDENT OF THE USO

MR. GIBSON: Your USO is changing. It is changing because the needs of our troops and their families are changing. Today many of the troops that

need us most are forward deployed into small units in the most remote, austere and dangerous locations.

Your USO is reaching them at some 200 small forward operating bases in Afghanistan and Iraq. We are reaching them with programs like USO To Go. Pilot loads of the stuff that troops want most shipped directly to their location. We are reaching them with USO In A Box, our air transportable mini USO center with Internet, telephones, movies, video games. Consider this. We have the most myriad military since the Civil War, and the cycle of multiple deployments is putting these families under incredible stress.

Your USO was helping troops and families stay connected. Our new satellite-based Internet and private telephone network is supporting all of our centers in Southwest Asia.

In just the first few months with this capability up, troops have made nearly 500,000 free phone calls home. We also connect troops and families by partnering with United Through Reading, where servicemen and women are video recorded at a USO Center reading the children's book. This year alone we sent more than 40,000 of these recordings and books home to children who are missing their deployed mom or dad.

Last year, Sesame Workshop created a live show with Elmo and all his friends to help military children deal with their parents' deployment.

In partnership with the USO, this show was performed 70 times in more than 40 military installations here in the States. Next month, Sesame Street characters begin their around the world USO tour performing at military installations in Europe, the Pacific, the Far East and again here stateside.

Here is another change. Thanks to medical advances and the use of body armor, more troops are surviving battlefield injuries than ever before. While that is great news, it also means men and women are returning whose lives and the lives of their families have been turned upside down.

Your USO was reaching out to make a difference for those who have given so much. Many of you know that when our troops are wounded in Iraq or Afghanistan, they receive treatment at the U.S. hospital at Landstuhl, Germany, before coming home.

Last October, we opened a 4,000 square foot USO center right next to the hospital to support these wounded warriors.

Comrades, I believe your Commander-in-Chief was over in Iraq last June when Operation Proper Exit brought a group of wounded warriors, all amputees, back to where they had been wounded, helping them to get closure with their traumatic experience, and providing inspiration to currently deployed troops.

I was very pleased to read about your commitment to the emotional health of our warriors. I encourage you to use your vast base of wartime experience to make a difference.

Your USO was working with the Defense Center of Excellence for post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury, and with Tri-West Health Care right here in the Phoenix area to make every one of our 140 USO centers around the world a resource in the fight against suicide among our troops.

We will train staff and volunteers to recognize service members who may not be coping well with stress. We will help our troops and families realize it is okay to get help and let them know exactly where to turn for the support they need.

The VFW and the USO know that this nation cannot sit by while our brave warriors and their families struggle with serious emotional challeng-

es. We share with you the obligation to confront these mental health issues and to prevent suicides among those who serve us.

Your USO is also changing, because we realize our troops and families deserve the very best we can provide.

Overseas, we are opening and renovating centers in Daegu and Osan, Korea, Ginowan in Okinawa, Grafinger, Germany, Baghdad and Basrah, and Behran and Kandahar, Afghanistan, and all three of our centers in Kuwait have been completely renovated and expanded.

Where we can't operate centers, we will place more USO's In A Box at forward operating bases in Afghanistan and other remote areas like Djibouti. Here in the States, we have opened new centers at Fort Drum, Fort Carson, Fort Bragg, Fort Benning, and we will soon open new centers at Fort Riley, Kansas, Fort Bliss, Texas, Columbia, South Carolina and Richmond, Virginia.

We have renovated centers in St. Louis and Houston. You may not realize that your USO has supported every single dignified transfer at Dover, no matter the time of day or night, for nearly 20 years. We are renovating and expanding both of our centers there and building an additional center to create a special place for families coming to Dover to witness the return of their loved ones who have fallen in the line of duty.

There is a special reason I call this your USO. Over the years, the members of the VFW with family have joined us as donors and volunteers at our centers around the world. You help us greet troops in Dallas and Atlanta as R&R flights come home.

When you are there for our troops at centers from Florida to Washington State, you give them the most precious gift of all, your gratitude. Because of you, we are able to let our troops around the world know that this country appreciates their service and honors their sacrifice. We could not deliver this message of support without your standing with us.

One last thing, being with you here today is special for me for a personal reason. You heard that I am a graduate of the Military Academy. I served in the Army after Vietnam and saw no overseas duty during wartime, so I am not eligible to become a member of the VFW. My dad, however, was a B-17 tail gunner in the Air Force during World War II. There was nothing that he was more proud of than his service during wartime.

Dad was not a joiner. He only belonged to one organization, this one. (Applause) My dad wore this with pride. You were there and you played a very important part when we laid my dad to rest two years ago. I will always be grateful to you for that.

On his behalf, I want to thank you for all you do to ensure that our veterans continue to receive the care they so richly deserve and that this country always remembers the men and women serving us around the world.

Thank you for your service and sacrifice, and thank you for the honor of being here today. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Like "Gunner", I got an e-mail from someone saying they were watching this as we screened this on the Internet. To my sister Marietta, I want to say hi. Keep watching me.

PRESENTATION BY GMNA AND THE UAW

A great number of current and retired General Motors employees and

United Auto Workers members have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. So, it is no surprise UAW-GM works hard to honor service members and veterans through the UAW Veterans Affairs Department, the GM Affinity group, and the VFW.

UAW-GM has a long history of supporting the military. During World War II, Detroit, home to UAW-GM, became known as “the arsenal of democracy” as UAW-represented GM plants were converted to the production of critical war material. This effort played a significant, yet often unheralded role, in our great victories both in Europe and the Pacific.

Over the years, UAW-GM has stayed committed to all those who have served our nation in times of war and peace.

Just last year, UAW-GM stepped forward during the VFW’s 2008 Annual Convention to provide the taping of video messages for our troops, a mobile law office to advise veterans on legal matters and to provide information on UAW’s Stephen Yokich House, a home for veterans’ children located at the VFW National Home for Children.

With UAW-GM actively supporting our military, the organization feels it is essential to give the servicemen and women the opportunity to stay in touch with their families and friends while serving overseas.

So, also at last year’s Convention, Cal Rapson, Vice-President and Director, United Auto Workers, and Diana Tremblay, General Motors North America Vice-President of Labor Relations, presented us with a very generous check in support of VFW programs that benefit U.S. soldiers.

In addition to other things, that generosity was directly responsible for 93,000 phone connections made between U.S. service members overseas and their loved ones back home, during an Operation Uplink free call day held in January of this year, calls that totaled more than 1.2 million minutes of direct conversation time, an astounding number.

For their enduring generosity and corporate commitment to supporting our military, both Cal and Diana were awarded the VFW Gold Medal of Merit.

GM-UAW’s kindness has also allowed for tonight’s entertainment at the Patriotic Rally.

I am honored that Diana and Cal are again attending our Convention this year as the representatives for GM-UAW. Please join me in heartily welcoming again Mr. Cal Rapson and Ms. Diana Tremblay. (Applause)

MR. CAL RAPSON: Thank you, Commander, and thanks to all the veterans. Let’s never lose sight that you are the reason why Diana and I are here today.

My remarks will not be long this morning, because I am the type of person who gets right to the point. My message is simply this: The men and women of the UAW and GM thank you for the service to this nation. Even in these difficult times, we value what you have done, and to show our support we are proud to contribute \$75,000 to the VFW. (Applause)

Diana and I personally, and I do mean personally, are very grateful for the work of this great organization. (Applause)

MS. DIANA TREMBLAY: In addition to our contribution, the UAW and GM is very pleased to honor VFW Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner, whose term of office is expiring. As everybody here knows, being a Commander-in-Chief is, to say the least, a very demanding job. Mr. Gardner certainly was well-prepared for the task. After all, he is a former Marine.

During his distinguished military career, Glen received many awards,

including the Combat Action Ribbon, the Vietnam Service Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, as well as other ones you heard about earlier. That is very impressive, don't you think?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Especially the Good Conduct Medal.

MS. DIANA TREMBLAY: Now, Commander-in-Chief Gardner, on behalf of the men and women of the UAW and GM who, like the VFW, are a part of the American family, Cal and I are happy to present you with yet another award. It is inscribed "For Superior Support of Military Men, Women and Families."

Cal and I are proud to present it to you as a token of our appreciation and respect for what you have accomplished for the nation's veterans.

MR. CAL RAPSON: Congratulations for a job well done. We wish you well. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much, Cal. The support we receive from the UAW and GM, we can never express to you our gratitude and appreciation, especially for those young men and women who have the opportunity to call home while serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I just returned from Iraq and they are always very appreciative to have that opportunity. It is corporate sponsors like you that make it possible. We appreciate it. Thank you very much. (Applause)

RECOGNITION OF CAPTAIN CRYSTAL LAUVER

The Army presents two highly-prestigious awards annually to U.S. Army Engineering Units.

This past year, the 955th Engineering Company was the recipient of the Itschner Award. First presented by the Society of American Military Engineers in 1960, the award is named in honor of Lieutenant General Emerson C. Itschner, U.S. Army.

In 1974, the competition for the Itschner Award was broadened to include the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve.

And if that is not enough, the 955th Engineering Company also won the Army Reserve Outstanding Unit from the Reserve Officers Association.

I believe we all should take great pride in the fact that the Commander of the 955th Engineering Company just so happens to be in our midst today, and she is none other than our Assistant Director of National Military Services, Captain Crystal Lauver, United States Army Reserves.

Let's please honor this outstanding officer, Crystal Lauver. (Applause)

CAPTAIN LAUVER: Everyone is going to hear enough from me at the National Military Services Briefing later on today, so I just want to say thank you to everyone who donate to the programs.

My company has three detachments. We are able to use all of the programs that you make available, including MAP grants to welcome my soldiers home. We use the free call days. My 1st Sergeant was very good at pushing that, and also two of my soldiers were recipients of the Unmet Need grants. All of you in here helped make that possible. So, thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: For those that don't know, Crystal has just returned from her second deployment, the first time in Afghanistan, and now 15 months in Iraq. And Mike is sure glad to have her back. Right,

Mike? (Applause)

We, being like many businesses, the VFW also has a rule if any of our employees are deployed and they take a reduction in pay, we make up the difference. So, "Gunner", being the outstanding supervisor and Adjutant General he is, called Crystal in the office and reminded her that if she lost any salary while she was deployed that the VFW would make up the difference. But she very politely informed him that the Army paid her more than he did. (Laughter) I am not sure if that is good or bad.

PRESENTATION OF 2009 ARMED FORCES AWARD

It is now my privilege to introduce the recipient of the 2009 VFW Armed Forces Award, Army Brigadier General Rhonda Cornum.

The General was commissioned in the Army and began a research career in 1978 after receiving a doctorate in nutrition and biochemistry from Cornell University. She added her medical degree from the Uniformed Services University in 1986.

Her most recent assignments included commanding the 28th Combat Support Hospital at Fort Bragg, as the Deployed Medical Task Force Commander in Bosnia, as the Commander of the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, being the U.S. Army Forces Command Surgeon at Fort McPherson, and most recently as the U.S. Army's Assistant Surgeon General for Force Projection.

General Cornum's current assignment is as the Director of the Army's Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Directorate. Her organization's mission is to enhance performance and resilience in soldiers, their families, and Army civilians through a holistic fitness program that capitalizes on the five dimensions of strength: physical, emotional, social, spiritual and family.

In August, 1990, then General Cornum was assigned as the Flight Surgeon to the 229th Attack Helicopter Battalion during Operation Desert Storm. Her Black Hawk Helicopter was shot down the last week of February, 1991, while performing a search and rescue mission for a downed F-16 pilot.

Five crewmen were killed and General Cornum was severely injured. General Cornum, along with the two other survivors, were captured by Iraqi forces and repatriated when hostilities ceased.

General Cornum is a surgeon, clinician and researcher who wears Senior Flight Surgeon Wings, as well as Airborne, Air Assault and the Expert Field Medic Badges.

Her medals and decorations include the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, Air Medal and POW Medal, among many others.

But we are simply proud of you, General Cornum, if not for any other reason, that you chose to remain in uniform after being so severely injured in order to continue caring for the health and well-being of our soldiers and their families.

The VFW Armed Forces Award has been presented annually since 1964 to military members and organizations to recognize extraordinary achievement to the armed forces of the United States, the nation and to our national security.

Accordingly, this award was presented in absentia to all Vietnam prisoners of war in 1971, followed by Rear Admiral and Medal of Honor recipi-

ent, Jeremiah Denton, in 1974; the two military organizations directly involved in the Full Accounting Mission-Joint Task Force Full Accounting in 1994, and the Army Central Identification Laboratory in 1997.

Comrades and sisters, we will honor someone who so equally fulfills that honorable tradition. Please welcome the recipient of the 2009 VFW Armed Forces Award, a Life Member of VFW Post 4437 in DeFuniak Springs, Florida, Brigadier General and Dr. Rhonda Cornum. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Armed Forces Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Brigadier General Rhonda L. Cornum, Ph.D., M.D.

"In special recognition and appreciation of her exemplary military career spanning more than three decades, beginning with her Army commission in 1978, to achieving the esteemed position of U.S. Army Forces Command Surgeon.

"Brigadier General Cornum has embodied all that is in a brilliant military leader, admirably serving her nation in many challenging assignments and dedicating her career to enhancing the performance and welfare of United States service members, and the overall management of the Army-wide Health Service System.

Always upholding the core values of the United States Military, Brigadier General Cornum has earned the greatest respect and admiration of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 18th day of August, 2009. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by Glen M. Gardner, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General.

RESPONSE – BRIGADIER GENERAL CORNUM

BRIGADIER GENERAL CORNUM: Well, thank you very much. This is really quite an honor, and it is really an honor for two reasons. First, when I look at the other people and organizations who have gotten this award, I mean it is pretty remarkable and it is really amazing to be allowed to become a member of that group. But it is also at least as important when you get an award about who gives it to you.

I have to say that I am honored to receive this one from you. The acronym VFW does not really do justice to this organization. Now, I am going to have to admit I am old and I have to put my glasses on.

It doesn't do justice to what it really means is the Veterans of Foreign Wars. That is really what defines us.

I recall that when my husband Corey and I returned from Desert Storm in the spring of 1991, we were very soon after inducted into the Veterans of Foreign Wars of DeFuniak Springs, and it was an important milestone. We both had been in the military since the late '70s, but now it was like we really having gone to war and returned with honor we were accepted into a different, I would say, brotherhood. I mean by brotherhood in the best word.

You know, it is gender irrespective. It is about closeness and shared values. So, as I was reading through this Convention bulletin last night, I was struck that the values that are instilled and, in fact, expected of members of the military services, things like loyalty, selfless service and duty, never leave someone behind, those become really the foundations of your

life and you don't abandon them when you take off the uniform for the last time.

So, I saw the number of works of the many VFW Posts adopting deployed units, helping families that were left behind and are struggling, comforting and honoring those people whose service member made the ultimate sacrifice. Those are qualities that give meaning and purpose to your life. Those are spiritual strength values and not related to wearing the uniform.

I have been very, very fortunate in my entire career to the Army to have been given progressive opportunities to take my talents and knowledge and to be able to apply them to taking care of soldiers and families. Yes, at first it was doing research in wound healing and transfusion therapy, and then it was taking care of individuals, pilots and individual units, both in garrison and in training, and then when deployed to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq.

Then when I got to run the Landstuhl Hospital, I thought that was going to be the crowning glory of my career. I thought, man, there is nothing better.

I was there from 2003 through 2005, the first two years of the Iraq War. We really felt like we were saving lives every day.

I want to say thank you one more time, because the VFW even back then came and gave us \$25,000 to help those families who came to take care of their loved ones who couldn't leave the hospital yet, and to take care of the soldiers that didn't have everything they needed. So, thank you again.

I really didn't think it could get better. Now, as the Director of the Comprehensive Fitness, it is really an initiative to ensure that every family member is equipped with not just the technical and physical skills to be all they can be, I guess, but the coping skills, the mental strength, and in the mental thinking decision-making tools that will help them solve the problems as they face really big challenges in our military, in our society, and they will be able to use those skills once again after they take off the uniform.

So, thank you very much. I really am honored to have received this award, and I look forward to a continued close relationship with the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Thank you. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF CONGRESSMAN BOB FILNER, CHAIRMAN, HOUSE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: It is now my privilege to introduce the Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, Congressman Bob Filner.

Congressman Filner is in his ninth term as the Representative of California's 51st Congressional District, which encompasses his state's entire southern border, from South San Diego to Arizona.

He was born in Pittsburgh, raised in New York City, and moved to the San Diego area in 1970. He is a 20-year tenured Professor of History at San Diego State University, served on the San Diego School Board, was a member of the City Council, elected as Deputy Mayor, and then was elected to Congress in 1992.

One of his early appointments was a seat on the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, where he continues to be a tireless fighter for American veterans.

He called attention to health problems affecting soldiers serving in Vietnam and the Gulf War, as well as other VFW-supported legislation, from the new 21st Century G.I. Bill to working for more mental health care for veterans, reducing the claims backlog, increasing small business opportunities for veterans, and sponsoring advanced appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs, among many others.

Comrades and sisters, please welcome the Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, from the Golden State of California, the Honorable Bob Filner. (Applause)

REMARKS BY CONGRESSMAN BOB FILNER

CONGRESSMAN FILNER: Thank you. Good morning. It is an honor to be here with all of the heroes of America, and as the previous speaker said, you know, VFW means more than just Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. I started playing with VFW and I said, wow, you represent the valor of freedom warriors. So, we thank the VFW. Your being here today says you don't only care about yourself and your benefits, but the benefits and the treatment and the honor of your 25 million comrades. So, thank you so much for being here, thank you so much for what you do.

I think it is safe to say your agenda is our agenda at the House Committee. I know the President was here yesterday and he said that there would be, no matter what comes out of the so-called health-care reform, the VA health care will remain as a high-quality entity with no change in your situation. In fact, I would have said they are going to take the VA health care out of my cold dead hands. You know, they are not going to get that away from us. (Applause)

I have been Chairman of our Committee for now my third year. I am pleased to say that in every year that I have been Chairman, for the first time in all the 20 years I have been on the Committee, we not only met the independent budget, which you all take a great role in formulating a budget by veterans for veterans, but we exceeded it for the first three years of my chairmanship. So, we got the money, I think, in the budget that you-all need. Now, we have got to make sure it is used right. (Applause)

In addition, we are very proud of the G.I. Bill that will start this month. I am here because of the G.I. Bill of 1944. When my dad came back from World War II, he was able to get some education. For the first time we had our own home after living in apartments with all my relatives. Eight million veterans took advantage of that G.I. Bill and created the middle class for the United States. We wanted to recreate that for the current crop of veterans. I think we did.

Not only is the stipend and the tuition reimbursements equivalent to going to college, but the Reserves and National Guard for the first time can take full use of those benefits. If the soldier did not want to use them or didn't need them, they can be passed on to the spouse or to the children. Now, that is great for our current veterans. (Applause)

I know that you don't begrudge any of them of those benefits. But I must tell you we have got a lot of work to do for our older veterans. We cannot forget you or them. How many of you are from Vietnam? I have got to say something to all of you besides just thank you.

When you came home, you did not get the kind of recognition and honor and dignity that you deserved. I mean, I think that is just a fact. It

was because we all made a mistake here in America. I protested that war, but I did not distinguish the war from the warrior.

We should have said as we are saying now to the kids who come back from Iraq: Wherever we stand on the war we are going to make sure that every young man and woman that comes back from that war gets all the care, the love, the honor and dignity a nation can give; and that's what we should have said to you-all. That is what we should have said to the heroes of Vietnam. (Applause)

Because we did not do that, there is a lot of pain left in America, individuals, families, our communities. I mean, the consequences of not doing our job are so calamitous and really a blot on our moral record as a nation.

We have got to say more than thank you or I am sorry. We have got to do some other things that will concretely say, you know, we have not forgotten.

I will tell you that I know many of you and your friends and comrades, for example, have been fighting the Agent Orange claim so long that you think VA mean veterans' adversary, where it should be veterans' advocate. You know, it took us years and years to say Agent Orange actually did something. Then they tried to narrow and narrow it, and then they set up all these bureaucratic obstacles and hurdles for you to get over.

I have a motto for those of you that served in Vietnam. If you were there, we care. I don't care if your boots were on the ground or you were in the blue waters off Vietnam, or the blue skies above Vietnam, or you were at Laos and Cambodia or you were handling shipments in Guam or at some of the other bases in America where Agent Orange got opened up and disseminated.

We should honor all of those Agent Orange claims today. In fact, we should have done it yesterday. You know, you-all know people that have been fighting this long enough. It is time to bring some peace and some closure.

The Secretary earlier mentioned the backlog. It would be an easy way to clean up, I don't know, 100,000 or 200,000 claims if we just said, "Hey, stop the fight. We don't need any more bureaucratic things. We don't need any more studies. We know what Agent Orange does, and the misery it has caused. Let's just honor those claims, get them off the books, bring some peace to you and your comrades and move on." That's what I am going to fight for on the Veterans Affairs Committee when I get back to Washington. (Applause)

So, we know we have got to do things. The Secretary who is a great leader said basically we are going to have a zero tolerance for veterans' homelessness. We should not hear those two words together. I tell you, there are ways that we could do that. You know, there are some facilities around the country that supposedly we don't need and they are thinking of leasing them out. Those facilities are for veterans. We have got to keep them for veterans and we could use those for homeless if we have to.

You know, many of you have been at the stand-downs around the country, right? I was at the first one that was invented in San Diego where I represent. I was on the School Board – no, I was on the City Council and I was charged with bringing socks to the stand-downs. We have had one every year for the last 22 years in San Diego.

My speech over the last five or six years to the stand-down is I am sick of going to stand-downs. We know what has to be done. You know, for

three days we get all the people together and we get medical care and dental care, legal help, job counseling, drug-abuse counseling, security, clothing and rest. We know how to do it. Why don't we do it 365 days a year? We could do it as a nation and we should be doing it as a nation.

Now, we have got some facilities that are being freed up. Let's use them. Let's use them whether they are for healing from PTSD, or getting homeless some security. We shouldn't be commercializing those facilities which you all paid for in blood. So, that's another top priority of our Congress when we reconvene for the coming year.

Let me just say another word about those claims. The Secretary mentioned how important that is to get those claims down. I have a proposal, which I am trying to get him to accept, which says, you know, you remember what was the most dysfunctional agency in America about 20 years ago? It was the IRS. You never knew when you were going to get a refund or who was going to talk or when they got in touch with you. You never knew anything.

But today when you filed your 1040 back in April, and you had a refund coming, you get your check in three weeks, guaranteed. How do they do that? How did they go from dysfunctional to guaranteeing your check in three weeks? That was because they accept your form subject to audit. We are supposed to be honest, because we may be audited. But they send you the check.

I say, you know, if a veteran has all the medical information and files it with the help of one of your Veterans Service Officers, let's accept it subject to audit. Get that check back right away. That would bring down the claims processing to a day, not 123 days or five years or eight years.

Let them take all the time they want in the world to audit it. If there was a change, we wouldn't take back the money. But you have got these well-trained people, right, Commander? Let's honor them and their work that they do for you to accepting them. We will bring down the claims to one day. That's what we ought to be doing.

Two more things that we should do. One, the access of rural veterans to good care, and we have got to do a much better job with that. We are going to go around the country in the next few months, I think, to hear about the situation in rural areas about veterans. We can't put a center everywhere, but we can reach veterans in a much more direct way, I think, and we are going to have to do that.

Lastly, as I could tell from the audience, the VA was always a male institution. But as you have heard from the last speaker, increasingly there are women veterans, obviously, coming into our system. There has got to be some changes. You have got doctors who couldn't conceive that a lady who came in from Fallujah who had her arm blown off, lost her arm because of combat. He thought it was cancer or something, women couldn't lose their arm in combat. There was no respect for her.

Sometimes a single mom has to bring her kids with her to get an appointment. The doctors won't take you if you have got a kid with you. We have got to change some things. I think you would agree that these ladies have put in an incredible amount of effort, time and patriotic duty. It is time we recognize them, and we are going to try to make sure that the VA changes to meet the needs of those veterans also.

Everybody is our comrade. I don't care, you know, who they are or where they came from, where they live now or what their status is. We are

going to treat them all.

Well, I want to thank the VFW. Your agenda has kept us on the straight and narrow. Your agenda has kept us honest. Your efforts in the grassroots have made sure that when it came to the G.I. Bill or forward funding.

By the way, for the first time in the history of the VA, we are approving two years budgets so the VA knows what it is going to get. You will have your care stay at a high quality rather than people not knowing what kind of money they are going to get. That was due to the efforts of the VFW and the other organizations who joined in and got that. We thank you for that.

Your care is going to be much better because of that, and we are not going to forget as we deal with our OEF/OIF veterans, that we have got veterans from Korea, the Second World War, I should say. There is one veteran left from World War I, as I understand. World War II, Korea, certainly Vietnam, Gulf War I, we are not going to forget you. We made a contract and we are going to fulfill it. I thank you for making sure that we do. Thanks so much. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GOLD
MEDAL OF MERIT TO DORAL R.J. REYNOLDS COMPANY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The R.J. Reynolds Corporation is highly regarded among the VFW community for its generosity and support of U.S. service members.

For four consecutive years, the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company's Doral brand conducted the "Seals for Soldiers Fund" promotion, asking Doral smokers to send in their proofs of purchases. And for each seal received, Doral donated to VFW's Operation Uplink program.

Over the course of those years, the Doral community raised more than one and a half million dollars for the VFW's calling program, which enabled hundreds of thousands of service members to talk with their families, and provide an immeasurable boost to troop morale.

On behalf of the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary, I want to express our sincere appreciation to R.J. Reynolds and its Doral Division and to the many Doral customers for their amazing generosity. Something of this magnitude does not simply occur without the multi-faceted involvement of many professionals. Through our relationship with Doral, that professionalism is no better exhibited than by their representative here today with us.

Please welcome Mr. David Howard of the R.J. Reynolds Corporation, Doral brand, who is here to accept the 2009 Commander-in-Chief Gold Medal of Merit. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Gold Medal of Merit and this Citation awarded to Doral 'Seals for Soldiers Program Fund.'

"In praise and earnest gratitude for its enduring corporate commitment in benevolent support of United States military service members, through its employees' and patrons' contributions to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and its Operation Uplink program.

"The unprecedented generosity toward providing a crucial and personal link between our deployed men and women of the armed forces and their families has proven to be an ultimate morale enhancement, earning Doral the utmost respect and appreciation of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official

seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 18th day of August, 2009.”

Signed by Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, and Allen “Gunner” Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – MR. DAVID HOWARD,
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS, R.J. REYNOLDS COMPANY

MR. HOWARD: Thank you. Thank you very, very much for this honor. It really is an honor and a privilege to be here.

On behalf of my company, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco, and more importantly on behalf of the people who really made this program a difference, and that was the Doral smokers across the country who took part in this.

In all due respect, Commander, I do need to correct you. I don't think we included the last year that we did this, which was a donation of \$600,000. So, in the four years that we did this, we raised \$2.1 million for Operation Uplink. (Applause) Thank you very, very much.

Really, your thanks goes to the Doral smokers across the country, who took part in this program voluntarily. This was a promotion where they sent in pack seals to us and we made a ten-cent donation to Operation Uplink for every pack seal we received. So, in the four years, if I am doing my math correctly, about 21 million packs seals were donated by Doral smokers across the country. They had other things they could have done.

We had a seal redemption center that they could have redeemed those seals there for various things, like grills, power tools, and all kinds of things. They didn't.

During the four years, our sales at the redemption center absolutely plummeted, because they gave their pack seals to Operation Uplink, to our Seals for Soldiers program.

Folks asked how do you describe it? What kind of person is a Doral smoker? We said they are your regular middle American kind of folks. They like to fish, hunt, garden, they like yard sales, and clearly they like collecting, too, pack seals.

But a term that really came to mind in all of this was another way to describe them is patriotic. They love their country, they love those and honor and respect those who have served our country and currently serve our country, and give the sacrifices that all of you have and are giving to us.

This was a unique promotion in that they didn't get anything. You didn't get any prizes for being the person who donated the most seals. You didn't get a coupon, you didn't get anything. What you did get was the feeling and the gratitude of all of you and all of our soldiers out there in giving them the opportunity to talk to their families and loved ones, which really does make a difference.

I had a Retired Air Force Commander tell me that he donated seals and said you can't imagine the difference to morale that it makes just to have that phone call, that opportunity to speak to a loved one at home, to hear that child cry, to hear that child talk to you and tell you “I love you.” It makes a huge difference.

I was speaking to one of our marketing executives of the company a few weeks ago when he said looking back at this program it was one of his proudest times not only in his company, but as a professional.

When you are a marketer, you look at things as I wanted to develop

a program that has impact. What does that mean? Well, you get market share. You make money for the company.

This was a program that really wasn't focused on that at all. It wasn't about that. Yet, it was probably the most impactful thing he worked on. He said that it was impactful in that Doral smokers, those folks were able to make a difference and it was impactful because it made a difference to our soldiers and our veterans around the world to be able to call home and talk to their loved ones.

It was truly an honor for myself, on behalf of R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, and most importantly on behalf of the people who made this possible, the Doral smokers across the country, to all of you here, to all of our soldiers out there today, to their families who are sacrificing so much.

On behalf of them, I want to say to all of you, thank you, thank you, thank you.

It has been an honor and a privilege to be a part of this program and to give to you, to all of you who have given and are giving to us. God bless all of you and God bless the United States of America. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: David, thank you once again. We look forward to working with R.J. Reynolds in the future as we continue to help America's veterans.

PRESENTATION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT TO LISA COWAN

Our next guest comes straight from America's Heartland and is a wonderful symbol of all that's great with America. Lisa Cowan has selflessly dedicated her efforts to raising money for VA Hospitals and troops' needs for the past 13 years through the annual "Run Across Kansas."

Ms. Cowan's "Run Across Kansas" involves a four-day relay run from the Colorado border to the steps of the Kansas State Capitol in Topeka, ending each year on Memorial Day.

She first enacted the run involving students from Kansas City Christian School, but soon expanded it to include students from neighboring schools as well.

The students would run in relay fashion, stopping at VFW Posts for meals and an overnight stay along the way. Not only has she brought about wonderful exposure for our Posts, but more importantly, provided a unique opportunity for veterans and students to interact.

Since its inception, the "Run Across Kansas" has also raised approximately \$220,000 to benefit homeless and hospitalized veterans, VFW's Operation Uplink program, VFW Disaster Relief, and a variety of other veterans' programs.

For this selfless service rendered to her country, community, and indeed mankind, I am extremely proud to honor such a wonderful VFW benefactor, Lisa Cowan, by presenting her with the VFW Commander-in-Chief Gold Medal of Merit. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Gold Medal of Merit and Citation awarded to Lisa Cowan.

"In esteemed recognition and sincere appreciation of her unwavering commitment and steadfast dedication to assisting hospitalized and needy veterans through the annual 'Run Across Kansas.'

"Through her selfless efforts in organizing the 'Run Across Kansas' for

the past 13 years, she has been directly responsible for raising \$220,000 for morale support programs for countless soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and Coast Guardsmen. In recognition of this stellar achievement in so admirably and selfless taking care of her military, she has earned the respect, admiration and eternal gratitude of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

“In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 18th day of August, 2009.”

This has been signed by Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. “Gunner” Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – MS. LISA COWAN

MS. COWAN: Thank you very much. One thing I have learned over the past 12 years of “Run Across Kansas” is that you can’t out-think a veteran. That is evident today as I am truly honored to receive this award on behalf of the whole “Run Across Kansas.”

I want to thank, first and foremost, my husband, John, who is a constant support for such an undertaking. Also, our four sons, Paul, Scott, Johnny and Steven, who this was all designed around. I want to thank my parents, Gary and Donna Henney, for instilling in me always to put others first and for traveling with us for two years on the “Run Across Kansas.” To Bianco and Brenda, thanks for all the miles we ran and talked about this together.

I have to thank the students and the leaders from Kansas City Christian School who yearly selflessly volunteered each year, and they are the reason this was such a success. I can’t even begin to thank, and I need to find all the Kansas veterans. Where are you, guys? Yea, Kansas.

I can’t even begin to thank all of the Posts who graciously hosted us each year and became true friends of ours. What can I say about Lester Wendt, the VFW member from Jetmore, Kansas, who I called out of referral from the Kansas VFW Office as he was the Youth Services Director at the time.

Now, you have to imagine, I called him and I asked him if he could help me as I wanted to run 21, seventh-grade boys across the highways of Kansas. You have got to think of how many of you would respond to such a crazy idea like that. But he is an amazing man and we could not have accomplished this without his tireless commitment.

“Run Across Kansas” has such a special place in my heart. It began as a prayer of, Lord, what can I do for you? It ended up being a life-changing example that if you ask God to direct your steps, and if you follow obedience he will lead you farther than you ever thought you could go. He took all of the things that I love, family, friends, running, small towns, and wrapped them into a special gift.

It simply began in 1998 with 21 boys and 10 leaders running on one route through Central Kansas. It was not long before more kids wanted to participate and more Kansas VFW’s wanted to be involved. It grew to 90 kids and 30 adults each year traveling on three different routes. The routes all joined up together on Memorial Day as we concluded our 400-mile journey on the Capitol steps in Topeka.

I have to tell you that the seven-hour drive from Kansas City to the Colorado border, where our routes began, seemed to take forever. But the

four days running or driving one mile at a time across the state always went by way too fast.

We were served amazing meals and the most gracious hospitality by the VFW members and the Ladies Auxiliaries in the various towns. We went with the intentions of thanking all the men and women of these VFWs, and yet they were thanking us.

Raising funds was an extra challenge given to the students. We didn't want a cost to be inhibitive for the students to be able to participate in "Run Across Kansas, but we did ask that they make it a goal to raise \$150 to go to the VFW. Amazingly, they raised over \$200,000 in 12 years.

Over the past 12 years, we have created enough memories to fill a book. We had been told the great rate at which World War II vets were passing away, and we saw that firsthand with Harold, a World War II veteran from Beloit, who shared his amazing story with our group. The boys were mesmerized by the bravery and humility of this man.

Upon completion of his talk, Harold went to sit down next to one of our leaders. At that moment, Harold suffered a massive heart attack and died right then and there. But his memory lives on with us forever.

We heard stories from World War II, Korea, Vietnam through current veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. Through all of these stories, we were reminded that the only two souls willing to die for you and me were Jesus on the cross and the American Soldier. For that, we are forever indebted.

Lester turned 80 this year, and our youngest son, Steven – I am sorry. You guys bring out a lot of emotion in me. Our youngest son, Steven, who was a kindergartner when "Run Across Kansas" began, will be graduating from high school this year. We both agreed that "Run Across Kansas" has run its course, but to me it is as if I am saying goodbye to a very dear friend and I will certainly be wondering what to do next Memorial Day weekend.

But I thank you very much. This is quite an honor, and I thank you guys very much for all that you have done for our country. Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF THE 2009 VFW AMERICANISM AWARD TO RICK MONDAY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The Americanism Award is presented to an individual for their outstanding contribution to Americanism principles. It recognizes exemplary achievement in promoting values such as patriotism, commitment to service and love of country which adds to the betterment of the American society.

That being said, I can't think of a more worthy recipient for this year's award, who had a 19-season career with the Athletics, Cubs, and Dodgers. He is a two-time All-Star and a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserves, Mr. Rick Monday.

On April 25, 1976, during a game at Dodger Stadium, two protestors, a man and his son, ran into the outfield and tried to set fire to an American Flag. Rick, then playing centerfield with the Cubs, noticed they had placed the flag on the ground and were fumbling with matches and lighter fluid.

Without hesitation, he ran over and grabbed the flag from the ground prompting thunderous cheers. He handed the flag to Los Angeles pitcher Doug Rau, after which the ballpark police officers arrested the two intruders.

When Rick came up to bat in the next half inning, he received a standing ovation from the crowd and the big message board behind the left-field bleachers in the stadium flashed the message, "Rick Monday – You Made a Great Play."

He was later quoted as saying, "If you are going to burn the flag, don't do it around me. I've been to too many Veterans Hospitals and have seen too many broken bodies of guys who tried to protect it."

On August 25, 2008, Mr. Monday was presented with an American Flag flown over Valley Forge National Historical Park in honor of his 1976 rescue.

Before we present him with the VFW Americanism Award, I am pleased to announce that the L.A. Dodger organization wanted to help honor Rick today and is making a \$1,000 donation in Rick's name to the VFW Foundation to assist with our military support programs.

Rick, for your enduring patriotism and commitment to our country, it is now my pleasure and honor to present you with the 2009 VFW Americanism Award. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Americanism Award, Gold Medal and Citation, presented to Rick Monday.

"In sincere recognition and cherished appreciation of his extraordinarily heroic and audacious act of rescuing a United States Flag from being desecrated by two subversive men during a Chicago Cubs baseball game in 1976, and for his six dutiful years of highly admirable and dedicated service in the United States Marine Corps Reserve.

"His ardent act of loyalty to our Nation became a vivid reminder of all in America of our earned freedoms and the symbolism by our flag of those virtues we hold dear in our democracy, in honorable keeping with the highest ideals of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 18th day of August, 2009. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

Signed by Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General.

This award also comes with a \$5,000 honorarium. (Applause)

RESPONSE – MR. RICK MONDAY

MR. MONDAY: Thank you very much. I am honored and I am humbled to be here. In fact, when I received the letter back in April, I looked at it and quite frankly I was flabbergasted to look at the previous recipients. My first reaction was the VFW had made a mistake and sent it to the wrong address. Obviously, I did not notify them of my thoughts at that time.

But there are a lot of things that happened, and we are a proud country because of those of you that have served.

That afternoon, at Dodger Stadium and playing in centerfield, and the pitch had already been thrown and I looked over. You know when something is not quite right at the stadium or in your office or in your home. Well, the stadium is kind of our home on a daily basis as you are a player.

I heard something off to the side that was out of kilter. I turned and I saw two guys run on the field. I have to stay with it because quite frankly when guys run on the field you are not certain exactly what their motivation is. Is it because they have not acted like an adult while having adult

beverage? Is it because they are trying to win a bet that they had with a buddy of theirs, or they don't like you? Well, these two guys ran out and I saw that one of them had something under his arm, but you could not tell exactly what it was.

Finally they stopped in shallow left centerfield, and from my centerfield position I could see what they were doing. It proved to be an American Flag that one of them unraveled from underneath his arm, and they knelt down beside it and they began to douse it with lighter fluid. I could see the reflection of the sun on this big can that they had.

The wind blew the first match out, and as I approached them, I am thinking what do I do? What they were doing was wrong. That's the way I was raised and that feeling was also reinforced when I put my feet in the yellow footprints of the Marine Corps Recruit in San Diego. Quite frankly, there was not a chance in hell I was going to have one of my drill instructors come up later and say, "Why didn't you stop them?"

So, as the second match was being applied to the Flag was the moment that I was there. I took it from them. There was a gentleman named James Roark, who took a picture, a photo of that moment where it shows one of them was putting the match to what he believes is the position of the Flag that had already been taken away. Mr. Roark was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

They didn't have the Flag on fire, I continued to run with it, the gentleman threw the can of lighter fluid past me and we realized he was not a prospect, he missed. (Laughter) I continued on. But the moment to this day that when I see the video of that, that was taken and nobody knew it existed until 1984, this event took place in 1977.

The reaction of the people, I think, is the reaction of our country now. You set the stage. A few minutes ago it was talked about, those that have served in Vietnam and in other theaters were not brought back to this country the way you should have been.

That afternoon, the people in that stadium began to get up and without any prompting, without anything being announced or without anything being put upon the board, began to sing "God Bless America." It is a moment that I will never forget because the feeling of the people in that stadium reflect the feelings of people around this country that have a new awareness and a new appreciation for what you have done for us.

Thank you, each and every one of you, for what you have done. (Applause) You have made this a better country. Our men and women in our service and their families need our support. Unconditionally, our service people never ask why, they ask two questions: Where and when? We are honored by what you have done.

Very briefly, my wife and I, and my wife could not be here because of a little hurricane issue that may hit Florida, so she could not be here. But over the last three years she has been on a motorcycle and cared. She never had been on a motorcycle before.

Very briefly, she went in 14 states in 14 days three years ago with a Flag that was taken away from these two people in Dodger Stadium. Without any corporate sponsorship, we have raised about a half million dollars. It has all been raised and it is going to the military charities. Be on the lookout for us this next year. We are going to hit all 50 states. We have not figured out exactly how we are going to ride those motorcycles to Hawaii, but we are going to have fun trying to figure out a way to do it.

We will visit Veterans Hospitals and continue to do a lot of different things at military installations. You people have meant a lot to me. My son-in-law is currently serving in the Army, and he has made two different tours. What our people do on foreign lands needs to make sure that we recognize them on our own soil. You make me proud to be an American.

I thank each and every one of you. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Kevin Jones said I had to point out that you played with the Athletics when they were in Kansas City, right?

MR. MONDAY: Right.

PRESENTATION OF DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO COMRADE M.L. "BUD" CALE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Nearly ten centuries ago, the Maltese Cross was made the symbol of fighting men who were united by a solemn pledge of comradeship to fight for freedom and to aid the sick and the needy. Today, those ancient obligations are still symbolized by the Cross of Malta for nearly two million former service members who are members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The Cross of Malta is the symbol of their battles in time of war and of their campaign to defend the God-given rights of human beings in time of peace.

Fulfilling the position of Director of Emblem & Supply for the past 18 years, "Bud" Cale has ensured the integrity of our sacred symbol is upheld. He has protected the Cross of Malta from abuse and illegal use, while at the same time making it available to all those who cherish its meaning and all that it embodies.

This is emblematic of just one of the many responsibilities that "Bud" performed so well in his commitment to always uphold the integrity and image of our great organization.

But, even beyond this has been his love for the organization that has helped us in becoming stronger and more dynamic. "Bud's" knowledge and wisdom made him not only a teacher and mentor, but also a true friend to many throughout the VFW.

I am honored to present "Bud" Cale with the VFW Distinguished Service Award in recognition of his work as an employee of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Distinguished Service Medal and Citation awarded to M.L. 'Bud' Cale.

"In lasting appreciation and esteemed recognition of an admiral 18 years of dedicated and exceptional service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States as Director of Emblem & Supply, and for his outstanding contributions while serving on the Design Committee of the VFW Centennial Plaza.

"His fervent and instrumental commitment to the visions and objectives of the VFW, along with the exemplary professionalism which he performed his duties are in the finest traditions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 18th day of August, 2009."

Signed by Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – COMRADE "BUD" CALE

COMRADE CALE: Thank you very much. It has been a great honor and privilege to work for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Even though he didn't, and I usually get in trouble for not, let me introduce Bud's wife, Phyllis, who has been an employee of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for 40 years. She was very young when she started. She was two years old when she started. Right before she went into kindergarten, she went to work for the VFW.

As I have said on a couple of occasions this weekend, the employees who are now leaving our service, like "Bud" and Phyllis, are going to be missed by this organization, and they are going to be hard to replace. It will make it even more difficult for our Adjutant General to carry on the mission and our Quartermaster General of this great organization.

We truly appreciate all of their hard work and their dedication, because they truly have been dedicated not only employees but truly outstanding comrades and individuals and sisters who have served each and every one of you in this great organization over all these years. Thank you very much for what you have done, "Bud" and Phyllis. (Applause)

COMRADE CALE: Thank you.

PRESENTATION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT TO MICHAEL REAGAN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: As a portrait artist for more than 30 years, Michael Reagan has drawn approximately 10,000 portraits, including over 1,500 of celebrities, professional athletes, U.S. Presidents and other heads of state.

In addition to being a very talented artist, Mr. Reagan is also a kindred folk to us as a Vietnam combat veteran.

Since the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan began, his work has taken a new focus. It started with a phone call from a woman whose husband, a combat medic, was killed in the early stages of the Iraq war. She simply asked Michael to sketch a portrait of her beloved husband.

She then called a day after receiving the portrait to thank him for helping provide the first night of sleep she had had since her husband's passing.

That's when Michael decided to use his tremendous talent to provide comfort to families of U.S. service members who didn't return home, with a lasting impression of their loved one.

He has made it his goal to sketch a portrait of each and every fallen service member to the current wars, an effort he has named the "Fallen Heroes Project."

Mr. Reagan provides the hand-drawn portraits to these military families absolutely free of cost. He donates his time, often several hours each day, while the gifts of generous, patriotic Americans allow for the framing, mailing and supplies.

Michael is a great American, and his generosity, compassion and devotion to military families across the country is truly admirable, and that

makes me proud to present him with the VFW Commander-in-Chief Gold Medal of Merit. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Gold Medal of Merit and Citation awarded to Michael Reagan.

"In heartfelt appreciation and esteemed recognition of his selfless and dedicated effort to fallen soldiers and their families through the 'Fallen Heroes Project,' which forever honors the legacy of our fallen comrades through individual portraits donated to their families.

"His extraordinary and unique talent of artistry, accompanied by the benevolent sense of mission to provide comfort to the families of fallen service members is truly admirable. His compassion, commitment, authenticity and generosity have earned him the utmost respect and fullest gratitude of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 18th day of August, 2009."

Signed by Glen M. Gardner, Jr., and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – MR. MICHAEL REAGAN

COMRADE REAGAN: Thank you. I am incredibly proud to be up here. You can't wear a ball cap up on stage, but I hope that all of you can see this. This is how it was given to me by my son who is a Staff Sergeant in the Marine Corps, an Iraq vet, because he was proud of my service. That's why I wear it.

Before I explain a little bit about my project, there is a short video I would like them to play. Can we do that now? Thank you.

(Whereupon, the video is shown at this time.)

Before I left home two days ago to come down and be with you, and I don't usually travel for obvious reasons. I do two portraits a day. I spend between 12 and 15 hours a day on this project. If I am not home, I am not drawing. I finished the 1,800 portrait yesterday. (Applause)

Four months ago, I contacted the Canadian Embassies and the British Embassies, and I extended this gift to their families of fallen heroes, because, as I told them, they were brave enough to stand up with my son.

Yesterday morning, at 5:00 o'clock, I got my first request from a father in Scotland. He send me the picture of his young son, a British soldier who died. The letters I sent out to the British families all arrived on Friday, and when I checked today we have 20 requests from different families in Britain.

I was asked a question. They said, "Why would an American want to do anything free for a Brit?" I said, "I am not an American doing something for a Brit. I am a veteran of a war doing something free for a veteran of a war's family who didn't come home." (Applause)

We are all brothers and sisters. I have got some of mine here that I am going to introduce to you in a minute that I actually served with in Vietnam. I can't tell you how proud I am to have them in my life now.

I just want to tell one little quick story. I received a phone call from a mother in West Virginia. This is how all my calls go. She said, "Can you bring my son home?" That was the first thing she said to me when I answered the telephone. I didn't know what she was looking for.

I said, "I can do a portrait of your son. I don't know if I can bring him home." She said, "Well, I have seen some of the other drawings and some of the other families you have done, and they are so real, I need you to do this portrait." I said I would be happy to.

She said, "Can you do both of my sons?" I said, "Well, I have done 1,800, an awful lot of drawings, and I have a lot to do. I try to do only one per family." She said, "I lost both of my sons in the war and it is time for them to come home."

I had her mail those photographs, I stopped everything, and I did those two portraits, one Marine, one Army, one Afghan and one Iraq, incredible days in my home, very emotional.

I sent them off. About three days after she should have received them, I got a call and all she said – these are the only words she said – "Thank you for bringing my sons home."

When I was in Vietnam, all of us who were there will know this, the one question we asked ourselves, did we do everything we could possibly do to bring our brothers home? We will never be able to answer that question. But what I am trying to do right now is bring as much of these people that have died in that country home to their families, because I love them.

It is not about politics, it is about us. I am working for us. So, when you hear about this project in this room, it isn't Mike Reagan doing these portraits, it is Mike Reagan, veteran, doing these portraits, and I am talking for everybody in this room. Thank you for letting me talk for you. (Applause)

I would like to introduce three people. The first one is John Nunn. John actually was my corpsman in Vietnam. Corpsmen, by the way, are the bravest people I know. Butch Spindler, he is the head of the VFW for Illinois. Everybody in Illinois knows this guy and loves him. If you see him, please don't tell him. He takes offense.

Jim Traner is the Commander of my Post, Edmonds, Washington, just north of Seattle. We have a gift for Chief Gardner. This is what we give the families. So, if you know of somebody or if you are the family of someone I have not worked with, this is all free.

I will be in the Convention Center at the magazine booth. Just come on over and we will take care of this. But, again, this award means an incredible amount to me because it is from you. I love these families. Thank you all very much. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF TODD DAVIS, CEO, LIFELOCK

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Identity theft has topped the Federal Trade Commission's list of consumer complaints for seven years, and according to the FTC, over eight million Americans were victims of such theft just last year. That's another stolen identity every three to four seconds, at an annual cost of over \$50 billion.

When it comes to protection against identity theft, Lifelock leads the industry. Based right here in the Copper State of Arizona, Lifelock serves tens of thousands of consumers throughout the United States.

Recently, VFW and Lifelock teamed up in an effort to protect the good names of the men and women who have selflessly defended those who couldn't defend themselves. Lifelock has brought to the VFW's extensive list of benefits for its members, discounted rates on Lifelock services to help protect veterans from identity theft.

Please welcome our next guest, Social Security number 457-55-5462, the CEO of Lifelock, Mr. Todd Davis.

PRESENTATION OF \$50,000 CHECK TO THE VFW

MR. TODD DAVIS: Thank you very much. I am certainly honored today to be here. First, as a new partner with the VFW, I would like to say on behalf of Lifelock and our over 400 employees based here in Tempe, Arizona, and their family members, how honored we are to be a new partner with the VFW and how indebted we are to your services, your sacrifice, and that we have the opportunity to give back as a small token of our appreciation to the sacrifices you made for us personally for this country.

We are certainly honored to be a new partner to the VFW. As part of that, there is really two items. Number one, we all know the battlefield is beginning to change. We hear about the statistics for identity theft and really where does that happen? It is happening over the computers, it is international, it is domestically.

We want to make sure that the honored service members, both active and retired, are protected from this crime. We actually see these thieves going after the active military's identities because they know they are serving overseas and not able to be attentive to the details to seek credit card statements, to look at those places, and they may be vulnerable, and that is unacceptable to Lifelock.

So, we are going to work to support, to make sure there is someone watching their backs, protecting their family while they are out there making in some cases the ultimate sacrifice, but certainly being out there on the front line protecting us and our freedoms and our good name, Lifelock will make it their effort to protect those active servicemen, you and your family members in this fast-growing crime.

The final piece we know that communication is the key to that, knowing what is happening and when about your personal information, knowing that communications is the key piece.

We would also like to present our \$50,000 donation that we would like to give in support of Operation Uplink and call days to allow veterans overseas to call home. (Applause)

We know there are millions of these calls that will be made this year supporting the armed services communicating to their families. We will be one part of that with this donation, and certainly on VFW Day, on the 29th of September, and we are proud to be a longtime partner to the VFW. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Todd. We appreciate it very much. (Applause)

MR. TODD DAVIS: We are happy to be of service.

PRESENTATION OF VFW DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO DAVID L. SWINDLER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: As all of you know, I had the opportunity to serve this organization in the National Chairs for the last three years, but also to serve this organization as the Adjutant/Quartermaster in Texas for 22 years before that. Before that, I was active on the Post and District levels.

During that time, I had the opportunity to work with many of the long-time employees that now will be leaving in Kansas City. Most of them I am always proud to honor and call my friend. The next recipient of our award today is one of those individuals that I have always been proud to call a friend and always been very supportive over the years.

I am proud to present our next guest with the VFW Distinguished Service Medal and Citation in recognition of his outstanding 34 years of committed service to the VFW.

We take particular pride in the ability National Headquarters has to deliver assistance to VFW Posts and Departments wherever and whenever needed.

There can be no disagreement that the vital part of our organization is the employees, our people who work in National Headquarters diligently doing what they can to provide support and assistance to our Departments and Posts, and the members.

Through the years, David Swindler has been the epitome of that truism. He always played an important integral role to ensure the fulfillment of that mission.

His many years of exemplary service as a VFW employee, initially as Assistant Director of General Services, then as its Director, is a truly outstanding testimony to his commitment and dedication to his community, his nation and especially to this great organization. He is the consummate professional. Please join me in honoring Dave Swindler, Director of General Services. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Distinguished Service Medal and Citation awarded to David Lee Swindler.

"In genuine appreciation and esteemed recognition of an honorable 34 years of exceptional and intrepid service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, initially fulfilling the position of Assistant Director of General Services and then culminating his superlative career serving as Director of General Services for 22 years.

"His unyielding commitment to the visions of the VFW, faithful dedication and superior expertise with which he performed his duties, have earned him the highest admiration and in the finest traditions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 18th day of August, 2009."

Signed by Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – COMRADE DAVE SWINDLER

COMRADE SWINDLER: I, too, like those before me have some stories, but Glen told me not to share them with anyone. I would just like to say thanks to everyone. (Applause)

VFW NATIONAL HOME REPRESENTATIVES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: One of the stand-out icons of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary is the VFW's National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Michigan. The National Home is a

profound example of veterans helping veterans

Even more so, in my opinion, the Home is the ultimate example of implementing God's good protection on the most innocent of our society through his benevolent servants.

This morning, we have with us the Home's wonderful leaders, Executive Director Patrice Greene and Board President Ron Stensland, along with our 2009 Buddy Poppy Child, Beau Yabs. (Applause)

COMRADE RON STENSLAND: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Gardner. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, the staff, and the families of the VFW National Home, thank you for inviting us to appear before your Convention.

First, I would like to introduce the Trustees that are here. I represent Pennsylvania, Delaware and Washington, D.C.

We have Roger Taylor, District 4, from Ohio.

We have Jack McDermott from Florida, District 5 Trustee.

We have Jim Goldsmith, District 7, he is from Michigan, Past Commander-in-Chief. He is not able to attend due to some health issues.

We have Dave Haverly from Indiana, District 8 Trustee.

Larry Scudder, District 9 Trustee from South Dakota; and Raymond Warner from Kansas, District 11 Trustee.

Then from the National Office, we have on the Board Adjutant General "Gunner" Kent, Quartermaster General Larry Maher, and our Commander-in-Chief.

Eighty-five years ago this coming January, the Veterans of Foreign Wars established the VFW National Home for Children and since then the Home has been supported by our generous, loyal members all across the country. We can be very proud of that.

The National Home Board of Trustees makes our decisions with this important history in mind. We are working to make sure that we meet the needs of today's young veterans.

As Veterans of Foreign Wars members, we all know that the most important thing we can do for America's future is to reach out to the young men and women serving their country today, and that is what we are doing. We invite you to attend the National Home Workshop tomorrow at 1:00 p.m. to learn more about the military family program or veterans family programs, and about our National Health Line.

At our booth we have new materials to help you reach out to active duty military members and new young veterans in their communities. We thank all of you for your dedication to our young veterans and for making the program services of the National Home possible.

At this time I would like to introduce to you the Executive Director of the VFW National Home for Children, Patrice Greene. (Applause)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREENE: Thank you, Ron, and thank you, Commander-in-Chief Gardner, for allowing us to be here today. We do congratulate you on your year of service and your leadership in the VFW.

So many of you in the audience today have personally visited the National Home. You have seen firsthand the beautifully cared-for grounds and the buildings that you helped provide. You have seen the growth and improvements that have happened over the last couple of years, including the addition of two new duplexes through which we can help four more families in our on-campus programs.

Most importantly, you have met some of the children and the families,

and seen the educational and enriching opportunities that are provided at the National Home through the work that you have all done. Everyone who visits and tours the National Home for the first time is literally in awe of everything that you-all have done since the home was established in 1925.

But some of you have not been able to visit and some of the newer young veterans that you are adding to your VFW membership have not had the opportunity. So, until they can come and see the National Home, we were hoping we could share with you just a very brief one-minute video to bring the National Home to you. Hopefully, it is ready.

(Whereupon, the video is shown at this time.)

No one knows better than this assembled group that the number one concern of our soldiers is who will help their family and their children if he or she cannot. Each soldier asks that question, and each soldier is also deeply concerned for the welfare of their comrades and the families of their comrades who return injured or ailing in body and spirit, and some who do not return at all.

You-all, combat veterans yourselves, knew this when you established the home back in 1925, 85 years ago. You knew that when we support our military and their families we keep America strong. So, we do encourage all of you to attend the workshop as Board President Stensland said tomorrow at 1:00 o'clock.

You are going to be learning about the new programs at the National Home and the new ways that we help to reach out to these young veterans that need our help so desperately right now in this time.

We pledge to continue the Home's legacies of helping the children and families of our veterans, and we always thank all of you for what you do. Thank you so much. (Applause)

This morning we have members of the National Home Chorus with us. They are going to be singing at tonight's Patriotic Rally. For that reason alone, I think you should be coming tonight. They are led by two people that have been doing this for a few years, Misty Bodke, and Brian Arente. We are going to ask them to come forward so you can meet some of the children from the chorus.

(Whereupon, the chorus members were introduced at this time.)

Commander-in-Chief Gardner, we have a present for you today. Actually, the first item is just this year the National Home started a Tribute Brick Program, and already there are over 480 bricks that have been purchased and inscribed in honor of the memory of someone special across the country. It is a beautiful walkway.

So, when you come again to the National Home, come and see that. But our gift today in honor of your year of leadership in the VFW, we have placed a brick in tribute to you and your service in the walkway of the National Home. We hope that will be dear to your heart.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you. I appreciate that very much.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREENE: Then Beau has something for you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREENE: Now, it is my pleasure to introduce to all of you the 2009-2010 Buddy Poppy Child, Beau Yabs. (Applause)

REMARKS BY 2009 BUDDY POPPY CHILD

BUDDY POPPY CHILD BEAU YABS: Hi, my name is Beau Yabs. I am ten years old. I live in the North Carolina House at the VFW National Home for Children. I live with my mom, and her name is Leslie. She works and goes to school full-time. I have two brothers and four sisters. Their names are Nathan, Billy, Nichole, Natalie, Brock and Audie. I am in the fifth grade. My favorite subjects are math, science and art.

When I grow up, I want to be an architect and build houses like my Grandpa Shafer. My favorite things to do is to play sports, to ride my bike and play cards with my friends.

I had a pig to take care of and show for 4-H this summer. Because my pig was always naughty, I named her "Mud Bud". I love living at the National Home. We have fun-filled trips, like ice skating, Cedar Point, and fishing. I also like to ride my bike on the trails and end up at the Point where I can go fishing, too.

I like to go on nature walks and end up in the woods. I play basketball and baseball during the summer. I like to play Catch your Flag with all the neighborhood kids.

My Grandfather Shaffer served in the Army during the Korean War and he is the reason that my family can live in the VFW National Home. I like being Buddy Poppy Child because I can thank the veterans and my grandpa and all the men and women who are still fighting today, who are sacrificing their lives for the country. Because of them, we can all have better lives and be free.

Thank you for all of the support you give the families at the VFW National Home. Thank you. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF SUPREME COMMANDER JOHNNY HOWARD, MILITARY ORDER OF THE COOTIE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: A trip to almost any VA Hospital will reveal the importance of the work of the Military Order of the Cootie. Each year, the Cooties spend thousands of hours bringing comfort to our hospitalized veterans. Their commitment to "Keep 'em Smiling in Beds of White" is a grand tribute to the service and sacrifice of all veterans.

Our next guest was elected Supreme Commander of the Military Order of the Cootie at that organization's 89th Supreme Scratch in Orlando, in August, 2008.

Please welcome the Supreme Commander of the Military Order of the Cootie of the United States of America, Johnny Howard, from the Sunshine State of Florida. (Applause)

Johnny is from North Carolina, before I get in trouble with anybody out there from North Carolina, and also a Marine.

REMARKS – MOC SUPREME COMMANDER JOHNNY HOWARD

MOC SUPREME COMMANDER HOWARD: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Glen. Comrades, we, the honor degree of our Veterans of Foreign Wars, continually work for the veterans throughout the working year. The honor degree of our Veterans of Foreign Wars are the Military Order of the Cootie stands at 19,662 strong. We are growing in membership each

month. I am proud to say we are over 1,000 stronger than last year's membership totals. (Applause)

For any worker who would like to join the honor degree of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, please take a look at Section 1200 of our VFW By-Laws and our VFW Manual of Procedure. Take a look at our Cootie Web site, www.lotcs.org. We welcome all worthy VFW workers.

Each year the Cooties remember those veterans who have passed on by conducting our tomb trip by reaching the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Honor Guard to be laid at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. This last year, during the week of Veterans Day, the Cooties presented over 500 wreaths. The Cooties support to the best of our abilities our VFW National Home for Children. Each year many Grand Pup Tents hold special events for the children and their families at our VFW National Home.

This last December, Cooties enjoyed a wonderful time during our VFW National Home Cootie Christmas Party. Also, in support of our VFW National Home for Children, we have our Supreme Commander's special project. This year's special project is to modify an SUV to accommodate any resident at our VFW National Home who needs to be transported in a wheelchair or any other type of handicap device. This project will be completed this year. At the end of the year we had 103 percent of our Special Project Fund. (Applause)

While Cooties work in all areas of their VFW Posts, Districts and Departments, to include working in all the VFW programs, Cooties remain a strong part of their VFW Post recruiting team. Cooties this year recruited over 7,000 VFW members. Also under our VFW Booster Program, Pup Tents donated over \$379,000 to their individual VFW Posts.

The Cooties continually help hospitalized veterans everywhere by "Keep 'em Smiling in Beds of White."

Our Cooties and Ladies travel many miles, working many hours providing the best entertainment possible, dressing up as Cooties and clowns to make a special happy day for all hospitalized veterans.

This year Cooties visited 494,393 hospitalized veterans, totaling over 6.7 million hours for 128 percent of this year's visitation goal. (Applause)

Cooties do all of this in the name of our Veterans of Foreign Wars. Cooties are one who wear two hats. There will be no wall between us. A Cootie is nothing more than a worker of the Veterans of Foreign Wars with a degree of honor.

We pledge our full support to our Veterans of Foreign Wars as we take care of veterans everywhere. Commander-in-Chief Glen, comrades, we thank you for allowing us to be here. It is always a true honor.

This concludes the report of the honor degree of our Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Military Order of the Cootie. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I now call on the Adjutant General for some announcements.

...Convention Announcements. ...

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: This is for the daily cash and grand prize from Lockton Insurance Company.

Marvin E. Hamann, Michigan Post 4644, you won \$100. Joseph H. Gray, Virginia Post 637, you won \$25. Clayton Hessel, Ohio Post 7536, you won \$50. Go by the insurance booth and pick up your money.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Sergeant-at-Arms, we will now have the closing.

BENEDICTION AND SALUTE TO THE COLORS

(Whereupon, National Chaplain Bowers gave the Benediction at this time.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrades, facing the Flag of our country, join me in the salute.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the closing of this session has been completed, and the orders have been obeyed, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Sergeant-at-Arms. We are in recess until 8:00 o'clock a.m. tomorrow morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 11:45 o'clock a.m., to reconvene on Wednesday, August 19, 2009, at 8:00 o'clock a.m.)

THIRD BUSINESS SESSION
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2009

(The Third Business Session of the 110th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States was called to order in the Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Arizona, at 8:00 o'clock a.m., with Commander-in-Chief Glen M. Gardner presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I will now reconvene the 110th VFW National Convention.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will please conduct the Opening Ceremonies.

(Whereupon, National Sergeant-at-Arms Bryan O'Brien conducts the Salute to the Colors, followed by the Opening Prayer by National Chaplain Theodore Bowers. The Sergeant-at-Arms then led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the Opening Ceremonies have been completed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Sergeant-at-Arms. Everyone please be seated.

I would now like to call on Dave Butters for the report of the Credentials Committee.

REPORT OF CONVENTION CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS (Post No. 475, Delaware): Commander-in-Chief, as of the close of business yesterday, August 18, 2009, the total delegates registering their credentials are 8,924 Post delegates; 42 Department Commanders; 24 Past Commanders-in-Chief; 32 National Officers. That is for a grand total of 9,022.

Commander-in-Chief, this is my final Credentials Report for this 110th Convention. It has been a pleasure serving you and I do want to publicly thank the Past Department Commander from Arizona, Bertha Gripp and her outstanding staff who worked so hard in the registration area to make our Convention successful.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Dave. I appreciate it very much. Please express our appreciation for all of those that worked. I know how hard it is to handle the credentials and the registration for the National Convention. We appreciate everyone who gave their time and effort to make it successful. We appreciate it.

REPORT OF THE GENERAL RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE (Cont'd.)

Yesterday we received a Resolution that was referred to the Committee on General Resolutions. Past Commander-in-Chief James E. Nier, Committee Chairman, will address the Convention on the Resolution Exhibit No. 308.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. The Committee on General Resolutions has met and considered Resolution No. 308, "Retain the Selective Service System."

This Resolution meets the requirements of Convention Rule No. 4 and

was referred to the Committee on General Resolutions. I will read the Resolution in its entirety.

“Retain the Selective Service System.

“WHEREAS, the Selective Service System is the only time-tested mechanism available today that is capable of rapidly expanding the all-volunteer U.S. armed forces to respond to a national crisis or emergency; and

“WHEREAS, the Selective Service System supplied 13.3 million men to the armed forces between 1941 and 1970, thereby strengthening the security of the United States; and

“WHEREAS, in years past Congress expressed an interest to stop or divert funding for the Selective Service System, which the VFW vigorously opposed; and

“WHEREAS, it has been reported that the Selective Service System is presently grossly underfunded which has curtailed its ability to perform essential duties; and

“WHEREAS, there is no way to accurately determine when another global threat to the United States will develop, which will require the means to rapidly register and select individuals for service in the armed forces.

“NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support maintaining the Selective Service System in its entirety as a matter of national security; and

“BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Congress to provide all the necessary funds to properly staff and retain the Selective Service System.”

The Committee on General Resolutions recommends adoption of Resolution No. 308, and I move its adoption.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Comrades, the Committee is recommending adoption. Any discussion? All in favor will signify by saying “aye”; all opposed. The “ayes” have it. It is so ordered.

INTRODUCTION OF NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrades, standing behind me are the elite, our VFW National Sergeants-at-Arms. I want to express my appreciation to a group of comrades we see annually at our National Convention and our Washington Conference. They are the first ones in the hall, and among the last to leave. They work long hours in order to ensure the success of our National meetings.

These folks are strictly volunteers. So, obviously, this is mostly a labor of love for them. I am sure that everyone recognizes what an outstanding job they do for the VFW.

It is my privilege to introduce the National Sergeant-at-Arms from Post 2394, in Melrose, Massachusetts, Bryan P. O’Brien.

Bryan has been a member of the Sergeants-at-Arms for nine years. He is a Past All-State Post Commander, Past District Commander and Past County Council Commander. In 1982, Bryan was named the VFW’s National Young Veteran of the Year. He has worked for the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority for 25 years and is presently a senior controller in Boston. (Applause)

Keith McDonald has been a Sergeant for 16 years and is a member of Post 2275 in El Cajon, California. He is retired from the United States Navy after 23.5 years as a Senior Chief Petty Officer. Keith is a Past All-American

Post and District Commander. (Applause)

Gary Barringer has been a Sergeant for 14 years. He is a Life Member of the VFW, Military Order of the Cootie, DAV, AmVets, and the National Guard Association. He is a member of the American Legion and VVA. He retired from the North Carolina National Guard after 35 years of service. Gary is also retired from Norfolk Southern Railroad.

He is a Past Department Commander of North Carolina and is currently serving as the Quartermaster of Post 9134 in Rockwell, North Carolina. Gary is employed with Orica USA as a truck maintenance mechanic and a part-time security enforcement officer. (Applause)

Joe Schirmers has been a Sergeant for 47 years – that’s right, 47 years, and that deserves a separate applause. (Applause) He has been on this stage more than some of you have been in this world. Joe is a Life Member of Post 4847 in Saint Cloud, Minnesota. His volunteer work spans decades: Minnesota State Surgeon for 19 years, State Chaplain for 12 years, Big Ten Sergeant-at-Arms for 49 years, and District 6 Officer of the Day for 49 years.

He retired from Burlington Northern Railroad with 35 years of service. As a result of more than 48,000 hours of volunteer service at VA Hospitals, he has received the VFW National Hospital Award, Volunteer of the Year Award, and the Cootie Supreme Award. (Applause)

Jim Galen has been a Sergeant for seven years and is a Life Member of Post 6802, Richmond, Michigan. He is a Past All-State Post Commander and Post Quartermaster. Currently, Jim is serving as Michigan District 5 Senior Vice Commander. He retired after 30 years from General Motors. (Applause)

Ed Villiaume has been a Sergeant for eight years and is a member of Post 6827 in St. Petersburg, Florida. He retired from the St. Petersburg’s Police Department after 25 years of service. (Applause)

Lonnie Garza, our newest Sergeant, is a Life Member of Post 7110, New Braunfels, Texas. He earned All-American Post Commander honors in 2001, 2002 and 2003. For three consecutive years, he also won the Sentry Award for recruiting new members. Lonnie retired from the Army in 1987 with 22 years of service. (Applause)

Unfortunately, Joy Ausman, who has been a Sergeant for 14 years, is unable to attend the Convention this year. We look forward to seeing her in Indianapolis next year.

These are the comrades we so much depend on. Sometimes we forget to express our gratitude, so at this time I want to publicly say “thank you” to each and every one of you. All of you do a great job for all of us. (Applause)

I am proud of the professional way in which you always conduct yourselves and I am honored to have the opportunity to serve with you. On behalf of all the entire organization, thank you for your service. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF PAST COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

The Past Commanders-in-Chief attending the 110th VFW National Convention are:

1977-'78, Dr. John Wasylik, Post 2529, Ohio.

1980-'82, Arthur J. Fellwock, Post 1114, Indiana.

1982-'83, James R. Currieo, Post 9972, Arizona.

1983-'84, Clifford G. Olson, Post 8699, Massachusetts.
 1984-'85, Billy Ray Cameron, Post 5631, North Carolina.
 1986-86, John S. Staum, Post 9625 – Minnesota.
 1986-'87, Norman G. Staab, Post 6240, Kansas.
 1988-'89, Larry W. Rivers, Post 1736, Louisiana.
 1989-'90, Walter G. Hogan, Post 6498, Wisconsin.
 1991-'92, Robert E. Wallace, Post 1851, New Jersey.
 1992-'93, John M. Carney, Post 4643, Florida.
 1993-'94, George R. Cramer, Post 3873, Illinois.
 1994-'95, Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Post 9972, Arizona.
 1995-'96, Paul A. Spera, Post 144, Massachusetts.
 1996-'97, James E. Nier, Post 8919, Texas.
 1997-'98, John E. Moon, Post 2873, Ohio.
 1998-'99, Thomas A. Pouliot, Post 1116, Montana.
 1999-2000, John W. Smart, Post 483, New Hampshire.
 2000-2001, John F. Gwizdak, Post 5080, Georgia.
 2003-2004, Edward S. Banas, Sr., Post 10004 Connecticut.
 2004-2005, John Furgess, Post 1970, Tennessee.
 2005-2006, James Mueller, Post 5077, Missouri.
 2006-2007, Gary L. Kurpius, Post 9365, Alaska.
 2007-2008, George J. Lisicki, Post 2314, New Jersey. (Applause)

NOMINATIONS FOR NATIONAL HOME TRUSTEES

I will now read the nominations for the National Home Trustees.

Third National Home District, Delaware, District of Columbia and Pennsylvania, Marlin E. Hartman, VFW Post 1989, Pennsylvania; Larry M. Wade, Sr., VFW Post 7377, Pennsylvania; and Rebecca Pernol, Ladies Auxiliary to VFW Post 3792, Delaware.

Fourth National Home District, Maryland, Ohio and West Virginia, Harvey A. Stephens, VFW Post 2632, Maryland, and Yvonne Crawford, Ladies Auxiliary to VFW Post 9738, West Virginia. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF "CONSECUTIVE YEARS OF MEMBERSHIP" CITATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARIZONA

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TRADEWELL: For 42 years, the members of the Department of Arizona have come together as a team to consecutively increase VFW membership throughout the state.

Each member of the Department of Arizona can take much pride in their many years of dedication and hard work that has gone into reaching this momentous milestone.

Now, in recognition of those efforts, I would like to call on Christopher Kozakiewicz, the Immediate Past Department Commander of Arizona, to accept this "Consecutive Years of Membership Growth" Citation. Congratulations to the Department of Arizona. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Certificate of Commendation awarded to Department of Arizona.

"In recognition of the remarkable achievement of 42 consecutive years of continuous membership sustainment by a Department of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official

seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 19th day of August, 2009.”

This has been signed by Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, and Allen “Gunner” Kent, Adjutant General.

COMRADE CHRISTOPHER KOZAKIEWICZ (Department of Arizona): I would like to thank the Department for its hard work and dedication, and the Past Department Commanders whose leadership and guidance have guided the state to this point. They are the ones that have truly earned and deserve this award.

Forty-three is our new battle cry, and I know that we will make it under Joe’s guidance. Thank you again, Department of Arizona, and I thank all of you for what you do for our veterans and those on active duty. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TRADEWELL: Vince, congratulations, and go for 43.

PRESENTATION OF FRED C. HALL OUTSTANDING
COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT AWARD TO VFW
POST NO. 7806, DEPARTMENT OF MICHIGAN

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TRADEWELL: The Eugene N. Kimbel, Post 7806, Manton, Michigan, Fred C. Hall Outstanding Community Service Project Award. Accepting on behalf of Post 7806 is Commander John Robbins.

The VFW has a rich tradition associated with community service working closely with our National Organizations such as the Boy Scouts of America and America’s Promise, the Alliance for Youth. This VFW also partners with the National Rifle Association, United States Chamber of Commerce, International Association of Firefighters, and the Salvation Army.

Constructive community service is a founding VFW tenet with volunteerism benefitting education, the environment, health sciences, and civic projects.

The VFW’s Citizenship Education Program is designed to stimulate an interest in America’s history, its tradition and institutions, as well as promote patriotism.

The prestigious Fred C. Hall Memorial Outstanding Post Special Project Award is designed to recognize VFW Posts for unique and outstanding community service projects that are over and above what is expected of VFW units.

Eugene N. Kimbel, VFW Post 7806 in Manton, Michigan, Service Project Manton Museum Project, is receiving this year’s recognition.

The veterans’ museum in Manton had only a very small section of display area in its historical museum. So, it was proposed by local VFW Post 7806 that a new building be constructed in the Memorial Park for the display of military artifacts.

In the process, individuals, material suppliers, and construction companies decided to become involved. One woman bequeathed funds in excess of \$10,000. Another family donated up to \$20,000 as needed for the project.

In the process of gathering artifacts, it was necessary to become certified by the Department of the Army, which was received on October 4, 2006, through the Post’s efforts.

The Manton Area Historical Museum and Veterans Memorial Museum

also became members of the Michigan Museum Association.

The project honors the service and sacrifice of the community's veterans. It was dedicated to and for the benefit of the community. The project is truly above and beyond the normal community activities of a Post.

Please join me in presenting to the Commander of Post 7806, John Robbins, the Fred C. Hall Outstanding Community Service Project Award. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Along with this award is a check for \$1,000, which is presented to Eugene N. Kimbel, Post 7806, Michigan. It is accepted by John Robbins.

RESPONSE – COMRADE JOHN E. ROBBINS

COMRADE ROBBINS: Post 7806 had a very little corner of the Ladies Auxiliary for some collections that have been made and they invited us to leave, so we decided to build a building. I told my Adjutant, Neal Perry, that to do that we should go to an architect and get a drawing and have a seal put on it and go from there.

The first section was a 30 by 40 building, totally paid for by donations, and then there was the upper, and it was pretty well filled up. We had another 30 by 30 addition, and that is getting to the point of being filled up. They have a very interesting collection. They have a trunk that a lady that lives in the area had the history that she can document, and one of her forebearers carried that trunk with General Washington. She donated it to the museum.

We have relics from the Civil War, the Second World War, World War I, and it is amazing to say that it totally happened in five or six years and filled up, and people are interested in it. We get every day when we are around and open, people will be coming in looking at this, that and other things.

We appreciate our local citizens for that and appreciate the National for their fund. We will certainly be using that for some of the additional work. Thank you all. (Applause)

WINNERS OF THE NATIONAL BUDDY POPPY CONTEST AND SILENT AUCTION RESULTS

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TRADEWELL: John, congratulations again. Now to announce the 2009 National Buddy Poppy Contest Winners is Steve Van Buskirk, Director of Programs.

COMRADE VAN BUSKIRK: The Buddy Poppy is, without question, one of the most recognizable symbols around the world. To VFW members, it symbolizes the commemoration of our war dead and our service to living veterans. For decades, VFW members have distributed the beloved Buddy Poppy to millions of Americans each year.

Today, we are taking a few moments to honor those who have taken Buddy Poppies to the next level. These are individuals in Posts who have used our Buddy Poppies in the creation of inspirational and exceptional works of art and display.

The entries were judged by the National Buddy Poppy Committee, Chairman Johnnie L. Richard, Vice-Chairman Kim A. Deshano, John W. Minnick, Jesse J. Morando and Richard S. Udoff. The displays were judged

on effectiveness, clarity of theme, suitability, originality, beauty and the number of poppies used.

Category 1 is for the Public Promotion of a Poppy Campaign.

The Director's Award goes to Ladies Auxiliary to the Coquille Post 965, Coquille, Oregon.

Honorable Mention goes to Thaddeus H. Caraway Post & Ladies Auxiliary No. 2278, Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Third place winner is Okolona Post & Ladies Auxiliary No. 8639, Okolona, Kentucky.

Second Place is won by Robert H. Schuler, Post & Ladies Auxiliary No. 2111, Chula Vista, California.

The First Place Winner is Earl W. Homer Memorial Post & Ladies Auxiliary No. 7678, Cottage Hills, Illinois. (Applause)

Category 2 is for the use of poppies in a Memorial or Inspirational Display. The Director's Awards goes to Herbert H. Norman Post & Ladies Auxiliary No. 4830, Moultrie, Georgia.

Honorable Mention goes to Ladies Auxiliary to the Fort Mitchell Post No. 5180, Seal, Alabama.

Third Place, Category 2, is Tracy P. MacPherson Post 12043, Maricopa, Arizona.

Second Place is Franklin Wilkins Post No. 1294, Lexington, Tennessee.

First Place, Category 2, is Pewaukee Memorial Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 9537, Pewaukee, Wisconsin. (Applause)

Category 3 is for Artistic or Decorative Use of Poppies. The Director's Award goes to Hugo Matejcek Post & Ladies Auxiliary No. 3723, Owatonna, Minnesota.

Honorable Mention goes to General Lewis B. "Chester" Puller Post No. 1503, Dale City, Virginia.

Third Place is Hugo Matejcek Post & Ladies Auxiliary No. 3723, Owatonna, Minnesota.

Second Place is Robert H. Schuler Post & Ladies Auxiliary No. 3723, Chula Vista, California.

First Place is Airport Cities Post & Ladies Auxiliary No. 10454, Grapevine, Texas. (Applause)

Category No. 4 is also for using poppies in a Memorial or Inspirational Display by Junior Girls or Sons of the VFW Unit.

The Director's Award goes to Junior Girls Unit Ladies Auxiliary to the VFW Olan Forest Smith Unit 8577, Copperas Cove, Texas.

Honorable Mention goes to Junior Girls Unit Ladies Auxiliary to the Golden Post No. 4171, Golden, Colorado.

Third Place is Junior Girls Unit Ladies Auxiliary to the General Hill Post No. 3601, Paris, Illinois.

Second Place is Junior Girls Unit Ladies Auxiliary to the Chicago Bridgeport Post No. 5079, Chicago, Illinois.

First Place in Category 4, is Junior Girls Unit Ladies Auxiliary to the VFW Twin Cities Post No. 3085, Hartshorne, Oklahoma. (Applause)

Our final Buddy Poppy Award today was last given in 2005. This is a significant accomplishment reflecting dedicated work by many VFW volunteers. The One Million Poppy Award goes to the Department of Texas with Immediate Past Department Commander Jerry Murphree accepting the award. (Applause)

SILENT AUCTION DONATION TO THE VFW NATIONAL HOME

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TRADEWELL: This year marks the ninth consecutive silent auction we have had at Convention. This year 49 Departments donated items, and many reflective of their home states and commonwealths. The purpose of the auction is to raise money for issues that are close to the hearts of the VFW and its Auxiliaries.

This year's recipient is the VFW National Home for Children. I am proud to announce that this year's auction garnered a total of \$6,208. I am pleased to present this check to Ron Stensland, Board President, VFW National Home for Children. (Applause)

RESPONSE – COMRADE RON STENSLAND

COMRADE STENSLAND: I want to thank you very much on behalf of the VFW National Home for Children for this generous donation. It will be put to good use, I am sure. The only reason the National Home is the success that it is because of your generosity and donations and time that you take to promote the National Home. Without you, it wouldn't be anything.

Also, I have with me the Buddy Poppy Child from the National Home that will be coming around in the audience to collect pins and donations, or whatever you want to do. Thank you. (Applause)

VFW DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO DENNIS CULLINAN

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TRADEWELL: I am proud to present our next guest with the VFW Distinguished Service Medal and Citation in recognition of 26 years of dedicated service to the VFW.

Dennis Cullinan has faithfully fulfilled the positions of Director of VFW Action Corps, Deputy Director of Legislative Service, and for the past 11 years as Director of the National Legislative Service.

He has testified before Congress on countless VFW policies concerning veterans' interests and needs, and worked closely with congressional staffs to ensure the preparation and passage of veterans' legislation.

Through Dennis' efforts, the litany of the VFW's achievements is staggering – Post 911 Veterans Educational Assistance Act; benefits for the children of Vietnam veterans who are suffering from spina bifida; health-care eligibility reform that allowed three million more veterans to receive VA care; vastly increased VA budgets; pre-emptive government benefits for Gulf War undiagnosed illnesses, and the list goes on and on, and we would be here the rest of the morning citing them.

So, just suffice it to simply say, Dennis is the ultimate professional and will always be remembered in the VFW. Please join me in honoring Mr. Dennis Cullinan. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Distinguished Service Medal and Citation awarded to Dennis Cullinan.

"In lasting appreciation and spirited recognition of 26 years of committed and stalwart service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States as a quintessential employee, in superior fulfillment of the positions of Veterans Service Officer, Director of VFW Action Corps, Deputy Director of National Legislative Service, and an 11-year tenure as Director of National

Legislative Service.

“As a dedicated leader, his abiding commitment to the objectives of the VFW, along with the total professionalism with which he performed his duties, have earned him the admiration and sincere gratitude of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

“In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 19th day of August, 2009.”

This has been signed by Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. “Gunner” Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – COMRADE DENNIS CULLINAN

COMRADE CULLINAN: Good morning. I just want you to know how absolutely thrilled I am to be here today. It is a couple months short of 27 years of service. Each and every one of them has been very special to me. This, of course, represents the culmination of all those years.

Of course, I have to confess, as many of you know, I am actually not retired yet. I retire on September 30th. I thought it might be a little bit of conflict of getting this medal and honor, and still as an employee. So, is there a problem? But then it dawned on me, we have the National Convention that bestows this award on me is the VFW highest governing body. Not only am I gaining an award and honor, I am getting authority.

Having said that, “Gunner”, when we are done here there are a couple of things I would like to talk with you about. My hotel is three miles out. And, Maher, my per diem but we will talk about that later. Bob Wallace, watch yourself. (Laughter) I am just kidding, sort of.

You know, I have to say, too, 27 years ago when I came to work for the VFW I can see where there may have been some concern in certain quarters about bringing me on board. I mean, look at my background. When I graduated honorable from the United States Navy, I immediately moved to Europe. From there I wound up down in Tormaledo, which is a stone's throw from Morocco doing a number of things.

Then I gravitated up to Andorra la Vella in the Pyrenees Mountains, and at that time it was the smuggling capital of Europe where I tended bar.

After that, I went up to the liberal Netherlands, where I was a student for two years, and then finally I came back to the United States where I got my degrees in English Literature and Creative Writing.

Admittedly, I did not exactly have VFW written all over me. But the thing I found out, though, is that actually the VFW and I were a natural match, even though some of them tell you that my political leanings are somewhere left of Cuba. That is not completely true.

What I found out, first of all, that veterans among special interests, indeed, a very special interest. They deserve everything that they get and more.

I can tell you in those days veterans didn't even come close to getting everything that they deserved. Veterans are a very special component of American society, of the fabric of our very nation, and they deserve what they get, what we all get.

So, it is a pleasure to go into this particular area and their service. I found, too, the Veterans of Foreign Wars among all the VSOs – I know some may say I am biased, but I would say this is right on target, we are a

very special organization.

We are willing to stand up and fight for what we believe in. We are willing to walk the walk as well as talk the talk, and I would say among any other VSO we stand out, we are by far the best. We never let down our guard. We never let down our service, and we never back away from a fight. I think that is something we can all take pride in. (Applause)

From there, I have to say that the way we operate in Washington, and altogether, I want to emphasize this, this is a team effort. The VFW is the premier grassroots lobbying organization. We have been for years. We really are the first ones to take up that kind of approach where we communicated with our grassroots, the general membership, our leadership.

Of course, there is the Action Corps, the Legislative Committee, all of these things. That is what makes us stand out as a lobbying entity, and it makes us very special.

I can tell you something else. In Washington, we are known as the reasonable veterans service organization, the reasonable organization, and that does not mean that we back away from what we believe in. What it means is that we negotiate. We know the way Capitol Hill works, and that is what we have got to deal with. That is the way we operate.

There are some other organizations that refuse to negotiate. They will stand firm no matter what. There are others who just don't get involved at all, which is really a tragedy. But we are not like that. It is all of us working together.

Look at some of the things we have accomplished. Just going back over some of the years I have been with the VFW, there is the initial creation of the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Department of Veterans Affairs used to be an administration. The Department of Veterans Affairs with that, it provided the veterans with the direct access to the Oval Office that they had earned. Before that, that wasn't the case.

After that, we had things like eligibility reform. The VFW led the way in that, which cleared up the mess establishing eligibility for VA health care. Parts of the country where veterans couldn't get in, service connected, veterans could not get access to VA health care. Other parts of the country where resources were being squandered because there wasn't a sufficient patient population. Well, we remedied that to a great degree with eligibility reform.

There is the Millennium Health Care Act, another hallmark VFW accomplishment. Among other things that that did, it provided at long last entitlement to severely-disabled veterans for long-term care. That is quite an accomplishment. Moving on from there, more recently we have things such as realizing the VFW's longstanding vision of the G.I. Bill for the 21st Century. That is something we did working together.

What that means is this nation's best and brightest now have access to those institutions of higher learning that will provide them access to leadership positions in government and private sector and the non-profit world. Without those best and brightest not getting what they deserve, and we as a nation would not get what we need by putting those people in places of leadership.

Another area, another huge accomplishment, and this is where we had a fight against the stream. It was traumatic insurance. Traumatic injury insurance, what it does, it provides the loved ones of the most severely-disabled veterans with the financial means to help in their healing. It provides

them with the monetary benefits that allow them to stand by their loved one's bedside and help them heal.

Before that, there were many, many families, spouses, mothers, fathers, others who could not be where they needed to be and assist in their loved one's recovery. Now they can do it thanks to the traumatic injury insurance that we led the way on. In fact, we had to fight some other organizations to get it done. But we were willing to do it and we prevailed.

Now, we have the success of historic budgeting increases for VA health care. What that means is the system can now ramp itself up to the point where we can bring more veterans in, more veterans that need the system and provide them with a higher level of care. Additionally, there are additional monies that will allow VA to do a better job, although it is long overdue, dealing with the claims backlog.

Finally, we have advanced appropriations. That is something we have been pushing for a number of years. Advanced appropriations is basically going to take VA out of the annual budget struggles and will ensure that VA is going to get the money it needs and its managers need to prepare for the future in caring for our veterans. That in itself is a huge accomplishment.

I have to say again these 27 years, almost 27 years, have been very, very special to me working with you, all of our staff, everyone in Washington and Kansas City. It has just been a terrific experience. I guess best of all is the feeling of accomplishment that I can take with me as I move on to another part of my life. It has been a great life and I thank all of you for that. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: There again, as I have stated many times over the last couple of days, Dennis is one of those long-time unselfish employees who has worked for us many years and will truly be missed by this great organization. Please give him another round of applause. (Applause)

PRESENTATION TO COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER BY VFW POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: We will now have a presentation to Commander-in-Chief Gardner from the Chairman of the Political Action Committee, Ken Burton of Texas.

COMRADE KENNETH BURTON (Department of Texas): Greetings, comrades, from the VFW Political Action Committee. This has been a very challenging year in terms of preparing for what is about to happen on our national front. We have spent time getting our Committee in order, taking care of internal issues, but we know now that with the election coming up it is going to be an exciting year. With that, your Political Action Committee representing VFW issues will be hard at work. For that reason, Glen, I want to recognize members of the Committee.

When I read your name, please stand up and be recognized. Paul Spera, Joe T. Wood, Marty Miller, Al Bucchi, Art Fellwock, Tyrone Benson, Garry Goff, Jane Poulin. Let's give them a hand, please. With me is Larry Rivers, the Executive Director of the PAC, who has provided the leadership for this year.

In his hands is an Eagle that we are going to present to Glen now in appreciation for all of his leadership. I might say, Glen, I have watched for years as you have handed out tens of thousands of plaques and Eagles and

everything. This is the first time I get to give you one. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much.

COMRADE KENNETH BURTON (Department of Texas): Thank you again and God bless. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF LEGION OF HONOR BRONZE MEDAL
TO COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: At this time, we will have a presentation by National Chaplain Ted Bowers to Commander-in-Chief Gardner.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN THEODORE BOWERS: On January 23rd, 1943, the U.S. Dorchester carried troops, leaving New York harbor for Greenland. Just after midnight on February 3rd a submarine torpedoed it, destroying the Dorchester and the electrical supply, the steam and the many onboard died instantly. Some were trapped.

The testimony of the survivors tell us that the sole order and flagmen of hope on this day came from four chaplains who calmly guided men to their boats and stations. They built a storage locker and when the supply of boats were exhausted, the four chaplains gave away to young men their own life jackets.

As the Dorchester sank, the chaplains gathered together and led the men around them in prayer. They linked their arms together and the slanting of the deck became severe. It was just that way. With arms linked together, with their heads bowed in prayer, they sank the equator. The heroic action is especially significant to us because of the identity of these four men. Two were Protestant ministers, a Catholic priest and a Jewish rabbi.

The Chapel of Four Chaplains in Philadelphia serves as a memory of these brave men who carries zealous service to all parts of the country, recognizing the active volunteerism, brotherhood and sacrifices to Americans of every age and station of life.

The chapel established a Legion of Honor Award. It is given in recognition of exceptional, selfless service for individuals who contribute to the well-being of his or her community to a spirit of their faith of cooperation.

It is my profound honor to present the Bronze Medal Award to our Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Glen Gardner, Jr. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Chaplain. It is a great honor, and I appreciate everything that you have done this year as part of our team. Thank you very much.

Let me also say this morning, or afternoon, or good evening, to all of those who are watching us on the Internet, that were at the Convention. We received somewhere around 15,000 hits on the Internet by individuals who have watched a portion or all of this National Convention. I think that is a great asset that we can utilize in the future.

In fact, we had a couple of concerns whether we could find a way to allow those who are members of the organization to log on to be able to watch the business portion of the organization, and we did show that on Monday afternoon. I know that "Gunner" and the staff are going to look into that and see if there is a proper way a member out there could log on and watch the proceedings of our National Convention without actually having to be here. So, with that 15,000 watching, that increased the attendance of our Convention. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT DIXIE HILD

I just had the honor of going across the hall and addressing the Ladies Auxiliary to our great organization, and without a doubt it is a much better looking audience over there than it is over here, except for this one (indicating).

Without a doubt, there is about three times the number of ladies of the auxiliary over there than there are comrades over on this side.

I am extremely pleased that here to visit our Convention today is a lady that I was proud to serve with during the past year.

Dixie has worked tirelessly on behalf of the Ladies Auxiliary for many years and has left a successful legacy for others to follow for years to come. I admire her deeply.

Please welcome a wonderful lady from the great Cornhusker State of Nebraska, Dixie Hild, National President of the Ladies Auxiliary. (Applause)

RESPONSE – LADIES AUXILIARY NATIONAL PRESIDENT

NATIONAL PRESIDENT DIXIE HILD: Good morning to everyone. Commander-in-Chief Gardner, National Officers, VFW members, it is a privilege for me to be here with you this morning and to have this opportunity to greet you one more time as the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Veterans of Foreign Wars to the United States.

I mainly have one thing to tell you today, and that is simply “thank you”. I thank you for answering the call, thank you for taking up arms, thank you for marching into battle, for risking all that you hold so dearly. I thank you for that. I have a feeling that you may not have been told that enough.

There are many voices clamoring in the world about a lot of reality unimportant stuff. If you hear one thing today that is worthwhile, let it be my thank you to each of you for your service and your sacrifices. I say it not only from my heart, but from the hearts of every auxiliary sister in this world.

We belong because of you. We volunteer because of you. We beg, we sold, we raffled and, you know, we even gambled sometimes because of you. We understand, I think, more than the average American. We have been there and we know what your service to this country means.

I know we have done our fair share of bake sales and fund-raisers, et cetera, to keep our programs out there for our veterans, our veterans’ families, to take care of them.

Our 95-year partnership has made it possible to provide outstanding service to the veterans, to their families, to our communities all across America. We have stood together this year, and I know we will still remain steadfast partners in the future. Why? Because we are family. It is that pure and simple, we are family.

You are our fathers, our husbands, our brothers, our sisters and our sons and daughters and grandchildren. We do what we do best because of our love for you. And speaking of husbands and sons, where is the delegation from Nebraska? Hello, Nebraska. My husband, Ron, and my son, Troy, are in the delegation. Stand up, you two. I love you so much. (Applause) It is because of you that I do what I do. Thank you so very, very much. (Ap-

plause)

Without their love and support, I wouldn't be standing here today. I love you both.

Now, there is another group of comrades here that I ask that they stand and let me acknowledge them. It is the 2008-2009 Department Commanders. Please stand and let me say hello to you. That is a great, great group of Commanders, the best group of Commanders that have been and always will be, and I thank you for taking the time when I visited your Departments to say hello.

Most of you were there with me on my visitations. Your courtesies, your hospitality was beyond what I ever expected, and I thank you very much for that. Also, I want to thank Arizona. You have done an excellent, excellent job on this Convention. It has just been everything planned completely for us, and I thank you so much for that because without you we wouldn't have been able to do what we do.

I like 100-degree weather better than 109, but that is the way it goes.

Glen, I want to thank you for inviting me here today. I have one last chance to tell our veterans how much I appreciate them. I know that you-all as a team have made the dreams of veterans become many, many rainbows this year. Thank you so very much for having me.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

Glen, I have a presentation here for you, a gift from the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars for you personally. I want to present that to you. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much. It is not necessary, but thank you.

NATIONAL PRESIDENT HILD: Yes, it is necessary.

At this time I would like to introduce to you-all my Chief of Staff, our National Chief of Staff, Rita Byers. She is from the Department of Wisconsin. (Applause)

CHIEF OF STAFF BYERS: Good morning. I would just like to add my personal thanks to every one of you for all that you have done in the past and continue to do for both of our great organizations. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Rita.

NATIONAL PRESIDENT HILD: Thank you, Glen.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: You know, Madam President, I have said on a few occasions that it has been the greatest honor of my life to serve this organization as Commander-in-Chief, but having the opportunity to serve with the most outstanding National President that has ever served our Ladies Auxiliary has made it even a greater year.

I would have said that in the Ladies meeting, but the last time I said that in front of some of the Past Presidents I was in deep trouble when I left the stage. But it doesn't matter what they think or how they feel about it, I still believe that you have done the greatest job of any President that has ever served the Auxiliary. I appreciate that.

NATIONAL PRESIDENT HILD: Thank you so very, very much, Glen. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: You know, as I have traveled around, we have been to a few places together, we have been in Hawaii together and a few other places, and I want to say as I traveled around my Commanders and their staffs, if you have been in their state, have always

expressed how they appreciate the great job you have done and how friendly you have been to them and to our members, and the outstanding job you do. I appreciate that.

You know, when I went to Dixie's homecoming I checked into the hotel, and went up to my floor and I got off and there was a guard there. So, I went on to my room and I checked in, and I went down and told Dixie, I said, "You didn't have to hire a guard. I don't think these women are going to attack me or anything." She said, "We didn't hire a guard."

I said, "Well, there is one right outside my room." Well, we come to find out that Jessica Simpson was across the hall. In spite of how much I got on my knees and begged and beat on the door, she still wouldn't answer the door. (Laughter)

So, we had a great time, Dixie. It has been a good year and you will always be a dear friend of mine. I appreciate it very much. Thank you very much, Madam President.

NATIONAL PRESIDENT HILD: Thank you. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF LEGION OF VALOR MEMBER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Let me at this time introduce someone for some brief remarks, who has been a true veterans advocate for many years. He served as the National Commander for the Legion of Valor as well as the National Adjutant General. He was a friend of Past Commander-in-Chief Howard Vander Clute. He is a friend of Bob Wallace. We don't hold that against him. (Laughter)

But he is truly a very highly-decorated and perhaps the most highly-decorated officer who has served in Vietnam, the Past National Commander of Legion of Valor, Dave Fishes. (Applause)

REMARKS – COMRADE DAVE FISHES

COMRADE FISHES: Good morning, gentlemen. My greatest claim to fame is I am a friend of Glen's. I could tell you as a Past National Commander, I was a Past National Commander in 1978 and '79, and there is nothing more past in this world than a Past National Commander.

Yes, I knew Howard Vander Clute, I knew Cooper T. Holt, and I think I am one of the longest Life Members of the VFW in this hall, one of them. I am not saying I am the longest, but I have been a Life Member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for 42 consecutive years.

I have been a Life Member, and once you become a Life Member you are going to stay consecutively until you hit the final resting place there.

When I meet the guys in the sky, I will still be a Life Member of the VFW. So, I am proud of that. I am a native of the great state of Florida, born in Florida, Gainesville. My mother and father met in World War II. My mother was on General Douglas MacArthur's staff, and she was administrative assistant.

She left the Philippines with the General, went on to New Guinea, Australia, returned with the General. My father happened to be a courageous typewriter repairman, and he fixed her typewriter. The rest was history. The Christian family was made.

Unfortunately, my father was of Scandinavian descent and some of the

Scandinavians like other nationalities, they like certain things, and he liked alcohol to such an extent that it became an abuse. So, unfortunately, he left my mother and she raised four children by herself.

Three of those children went on to serve in Vietnam and became disabled American veterans. All three of those boys today belong to the VFW. (Applause)

I used to see my mother cry because we would go to the VFW and here she was in the South Pacific, she was decorated with the Bronze Star, and when we would go to the VFW Hall she was a gallant woman, courageous woman, both here in the United States of America and overseas for her country.

She was asked to go to the auxiliary room all the time. It would bring tears to her eyes. I was very proud of the VFW to take a stand and step forward and recognize that women can also serve in certain capacities in war and enhance the war fighter in killing the enemy. I thank the VFW.

My mother died before that ever happened, but when I walk to her grave I tell her that she is now a VFW member. (Applause) I happened to be sitting in the front row the other day when President Obama spoke at the same podium, with our same National Commander, the same officials up here on the stage, and he said a lot of wonderful things. It was quite dynamic.

I chatted with him for a second and I said, "You really are good and I know John Kerry, and I know this person and that person, but I didn't vote for you." He was taken aback. He smiled and he was charismatic and he kind of chuckled.

He said, "You are the first person that ever told me that." I said, "Well, it is just kind of an affinity. The majority of the veterans, we kind of vote for veterans. Most of us voted for John McCain. It was just like the majority of blacks may have voted or President Obama."

He thought for a second, he was pensive, and he kind of nodded. I said, "Well, I am interested in health care for veterans. I saw in the Wall Street Journal the day you have come here, sir, and I am interested in where we are going to do tomorrow."

When I brought up the lead stress in the 1970s, late 1970, when I brought up Agent Orange, my office was broken into, was ransacked and all the papers taken. I had just testified before the United States Congress saying I have documents establishing that people were sprayed with herbicides, that people were damaged.

I testified before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, and all of a sudden all of my documents were gone. The names of the people were gone. I was almost labeled as a Communist. I only spent three years and nine months and eighteen days in the service.

I spent seven years in the military hospitals. I watched them close Valley Forge General Hospital. I went to the Philadelphia Navy Hospital for the rest of my surgeries. I was paralyzed on the left side of my body. I went from an electric wheelchair that I drove with my left hand to a regular wheelchair, to moving little crutches, and a cane, and then I ran a 26-mile marathon in New York carrying the United States Flag in honor of everybody that has ever put on a uniform in this country. (Applause)

I liked what President Obama said, many of the things he said. But in Pennsylvania, as well as in Florida, as well as in the great states that many of these people hail from, Texas, I could tell you that we have a saying, and

that is that you can talk the talk, but can you walk the walk? We have some issues as veterans, issues for the war fighters.

He mentioned we are going to have money for the war fighters in terms of needs, certain things he is going to have to cut. But let me tell you a story about a gentleman who wrote a book from the great state of California. His name was Marcus Luttrell. He won the Navy Cross in Afghanistan.

His team leader, Navy Seal was killed in the same operation as was the rest of his team. That is why the book is "The Lone Survivor". As he sat on the side of a hill in the cliffs of Afghanistan, a group of sheep herders came up. There was a moral issue in their head as Americans. We just don't massacre people.

They said shall we kill these people? Shall we move our night defense perimeter? What should we do? As Americans, the heart went out before the mind sometimes, and they let them live and they let them walk away.

If we had an unmanned vehicle, as the President talked about, an eye in the sky, the forgotten weapons from World War I, which we used to call blimps. They used them in Civil War for their intelligence, and today companies like SansWare, Incorporated, Lockheed, Boeing, L-3, all these companies are now mandated by the United States Congress to come up by the year 2014, 2018, 2022.

As a father that has a son in uniform, I don't want to wait until 2014. I want to know that if my son is on one side of the hill and he is honorable enough to let the sheep herders go to the other side of the hill they are not going to tell the Taliban to come and massacre them and have the greatest massacre and special operations in the history of the United States.

We lost 33 Rangers coming in a helicopter that were blown out of the sky. I don't care what the price is. If it is your son, your grandson, or somebody that you love, let us dig into our pockets, each and every American will find money and we will send money in like we did in World War II to protect our children on the battlefield with the best equipment, whatever that may be, reinforced Humvees, eyes in the sky from SandWare Corporation, or whatever it may be we will do it because we are Americans. (Applause)

Finally, the President mentioned, after he talked about weapons, he talked about veterans' health issues. I mention briefly the post-traumatic stress issue. Today PTSD is considered an everyday piece of jargon in our language. All the attorneys know about PTSD.

They treat PTSD for almost everything, but they forget about it for warfare sometimes. I can tell you, I was just with the Under Secretary of Health in Washington, D.C., in Secretary Shinseki's office. There are things out there that we have to move forward.

I have looked at machines, I have looked at equipment from excellent therapy that actually works in helping 80 percent of the cases recover from post-traumatic stress, from phantom pains, helps them recover from the disabilities that they may have, helps them function.

This is what we need, this is what we have in our resources. Anything that the veteran or the soldier needs, the war fighter needs, we can bring to the forefront because I am not only a member of the VFW, you are, Glen, and the rest of us, we are Americans and we are proud and we will do it for America. God bless you all. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Dave. Thank you very, very much. You are one of us.

PRESENTATION OF THE 2009 VFW AVIATION AND SPACE AWARD
TO CO-RECIPIENTS SCOTT CARPENTER AND BUZZ ALDRIN

Today, we have a unique situation in that we will be presenting not one, but two Aviation and Space Awards. And when I introduce the recipients of the award, you will understand why today is indeed a very special occasion.

America's journey into space has not been without risk or peril for those who challenge the stars. Possessed with the same pioneer spirit and vision as generations of explorers who came before them, they reached high into the sky not for their own glory, but for the betterment of all mankind.

Scott Carpenter and Buzz Aldrin were among the first of those resolute individuals who courageously sought, and gained new knowledge from the universe that lies beyond the bounds of earth.

Their intrepid spirit and sense of purpose will serve to inspire future generations of pioneers for generations to come. In every sense, they are today's Lewis and Clark.

Scott Carpenter's life has been marked by adventure, service, investigation and exploration. Commander Carpenter has flown in wartime skies over Korea, a flight-tested new aircraft during the Cold War, left earth's atmosphere to travel in space, and led expeditions to the bottom of the sea.

His pursuit of knowledge and understanding and his devotion to duty and country have made him a naval aviator and aquanaut of the first order, and a member of one of the most exclusive fraternities of all time, the Project Mercury Astronauts.

Scott was selected as one of the original seven Mercury Astronauts on April 9, 1959. He underwent intensive training with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, specializing in communication and navigation. He served as back-up pilot for John Glenn during the preparation for America's first manned orbital space flight in February, 1962.

He then flew the second manned orbital flight on May 24, 1962. He piloted his Aurora 7 spacecraft through three revolutions of the earth, reaching a maximum altitude of 164 miles. The spacecraft landed in the Atlantic Ocean about 1,000 miles southeast of Cape Canaveral after four hours and 54 minutes of flight time.

Later, on leave of absence from NASA, Scott participated in the Navy's Man-in-the-Sea Project as an aquanaut in the SEALAB II Program off the coast of La Jolla, California, in the summer of 1965. During the 45-day experiment, he spent 30 days living and working on the ocean floor.

He was team leader for two of the three ten-man teams of Navy and civilian divers who conducted deep-sea diving activities in a sea floor habitat at a depth of 205 feet.

Commander Carpenter returned to duties with NASA as Executive Assistant to the Director of the Manned Space Flight Center and was active in the design of the Apollo Lunar Landing Module and in underwater extravehicular activity crew training.

He is an Honorary Fellow in the Institute of Environmental Sciences, and a member of the Association of Space Explorers – USA.

He has been awarded the Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross, NASA Distinguished Service Medal, Navy Astronaut Wings, University of Colorado Recognition Medal, National Aeronautics Association's Collier Trophy, New York City Gold Medal of Honor, Elisha Kent Kane Medal, Boy

Scouts of America Silver Buffalo, and Ustica Gold Trident Award, and that only touches the surface of his life's achievements.

With that, ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Commander and Astronaut Scott Carpenter. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Aviation and Space Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Scott Carpenter.

"In sincere appreciation and recognition of his many stellar contributions to space flight, including the advancement of communication, navigation and engineering.

"As a member of Project Mercury, he successfully orbited a manned spacecraft, Aurora 7, while investigating the human ability to fully function in space, contributing greatly to future space missions. His manually-controlled re-entry upon Aurora 7, not only courageously salvaged what possibly could have been a total mission failure, but led to critical adjustments in capsule design and future flight plans.

"His overall pursuit of knowledge and understanding, and his devotion to duty and country have made him a naval aviator and astronaut of the first order, thus earning him the utmost appreciation of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 19th day of August, 2009. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General.

This award also comes with a \$5,000 honorarium. (Applause)

RESPONSE – COMRADE SCOTT CARPENTER

COMRADE CARPENTER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. You honor me greatly with this invitation to address you and with the award I am further honored.

An interesting situation exists here. I have been given absolutely no guidance about how long I am to speak. Therefore, it is incumbent upon me to fill you in with my decision, which is to keep my remarks below an hour and a half. (Laughter)

This is reminiscent of a very important time in the recent history of the United States, that if the post-World War II and Cold War perils for this nation. We, of course, in the '60s, the '50s and the '60s, we were guided and empowered by our patriotism, but also by our curiosity to see if we could do this strange thing to fly in space and fly to the moon.

But we were also firmly in the belief as were the Soviets on the other side of the iron curtain that pre-eminence in space at that time was a condition of our freedom. We did, and the distinction is fine, and I don't like to say that we won the space war or the space race. I prefer to think that the Soviets lost. We emerged victorious in either event.

I would like to think that that is not necessarily because we excelled in any of the capabilities that are demanded by national effort to fly to the moon. I think what won that race war, the space race war, was the simple fact that men and women who live and work in the totalitarian society are simply unable to compete successfully with men and women who live in freedom. That's what lost the war for the Soviets. It is what won it for us.

Three names that occur to me of men who bear mention. I was also

involved with an underwater project, as you have heard, and one of the three heroes that came into my life in the decade of the '60s was Jacques Cousteau, a Frenchman who was instrumental in bringing us an awareness of the ocean, and we owe him a great vote of confidence for what he did for this ocean.

The next hero in my esteem is purely American and that is JFK. He was crucial to our flight to the moon, which is the culmination of the successful space program. Through John F. Kennedy's charisma, vision, forethought, the influence of Camelot, he galvanized the nation behind this task of flying to the moon. We could not have done it without him.

The third is a German hero of mine, a space and rocket scientist, Werner von Braun. He arose at this time to take John Kennedy's edict to the nation, and he showed us how to do it. He and Kennedy were crucial to the final accomplishment of what was ordered to do, fly to the moon.

You in the VFW have had your own making a bully pulpit for all of the affairs that are important to our veterans. That's a marvelous thing that you do. I hope that you are able to use that bully pulpit for the defense of veterans in our battle, which is all the rage on the Internet today, to keep TRICARE for life benefits available to all of us.

That is an important thing to all of the veterans and veterans to come. I hope that the proposal that you have heard about doesn't make it into ratification, and I hope that you are victorious in battling that bad idea.

That said, my use of a bully pulpit that you gave me with this award for which I thank you, and I hope that the rest of your deliberations here in Phoenix go well.

I will repeat, I am honored by your recognition. Good morning and thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Commander.

Forty years ago, Colonel Buzz Aldrin became the second human, minutes after Neil Armstrong, to set foot on a celestial body other than the earth. The event remains one of mankind's greatest achievements and was witnessed by the largest worldwide television audience in history.

And as the astronauts later sat in the Eagle, waiting to begin their journey back home, knowing that they were doomed unless every system and part on board worked flawlessly, it was Buzz Aldrin who responded to Mission Control's clearance to take off with the quip, "Roger, understand. We are number one on the runway."

Buzz Aldrin graduated third in his class at West Point, was a jet fighter pilot in Korea, and earned his Doctorate in Astronautics from M.I.T.

Each of those accomplishments helped prepare Buzz Aldrin for the historic event when he and Neil Armstrong landed on the moon and took "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

When the Eagle landed on July 20, 1969, Buzz completed an American mission that is widely remembered as the greatest achievement of the 20th Century, and the most memorable event in television history.

Colonel Aldrin also piloted the Gemini 12 rendezvous space flight in 1966, during which he set a new 5.5 hour record for extended space walking.

In his speeches, Dr. Aldrin encourages audiences to "reach for the stars," in life and in their endeavors and shares his memories of his momentous walk on the moon, the travels he has taken since and his vision for the future. He draws upon his experience and insights with stories of his

spacewalks and moonwalks, and takes us on a journey into the future with his vision of a space-faring world when “citizens explorers” take space tours beyond lower-earth orbit and the Aldrin “Mars Cycler” spaceship makes frequent stops for astronaut explorers on Mars.

Dr. Aldrin has penned his dramatic memoirs in a new autobiography “Magnificent Desolation,” published by Harmony Books, in June, 2009. He continues to inspire today’s youth with his illustrated children’s books: “Reaching for the Moon,” a New York Times Best-Seller, and his latest “Look to the Stars,” a 2009 release.

He has also authored two space science-fact-fiction novels: “The Return,” and “Encounter With Tiber.” His non-fiction works include the best-seller historical documentary, “Men From Earth,” and an early 1970s autobiography, “Return To Earth.”

What a pleasure it is now to present the 2009 Aviation and Space Award to a true American patriot, doctor and astronaut, Buzz Aldrin. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: “Aviation and Space Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Buzz Aldrin.

“In special recognition and appreciation of his unique, heroic and exemplary military career spanning more than two decades, beginning with his commission from West Point through his illustrious military career, to achieving the eminent and esteemed position of Lunar Module Pilot, Apollo 11.

“As one of the first two humans to walk on the moon, his unequivocal vision, lasting contributions and continued involvement have greatly advanced space exploration for both science and transportation. His nonpareil tenacity, ambitious spirit and dedicated commitment to ensuring America’s continued leading role in manned space exploration, reflect the highest standards of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

“In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 19th day of August, 2009. Approved by the National Council of Administration.”

This has been signed by Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. “Gunner” Kent, Adjutant General.

This award also comes with a \$5,000 honorarium. (Applause)

RESPONSE – COMRADE BUZZ ALDRIN

COMRADE ALDRIN: Ladies and gentlemen, it is really a great honor for me to receive this wonderful award from the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Of all of the items in my biography, I think I am proudest clearly of my military service starting from age 17 until I retired with 21 years of service.

What stands out in that time period is the fellowship that I built up serving with fellow aviators in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean Conflict, wonderful gentlemen, heroic gentlemen who served and came to their country’s service during what many called the forgotten war.

I am a son of an Air Force and early aviation pioneer, and I can drop a lot of names for you to applaud in his career. His physics professor at Clark University was Robert Goddard. He got his Master’s Degree from Western Polytech, started at M.I.T. for a Doctor’s Degree, and that was interrupted by the end of World War I.

He transferred from the Coast Guard Artillery to fly airplanes with the

Signal Corps because that is what he was pursuing at M.I.T. His first assignment in the Army Air Corps was in the Philippines where he met the daughter of an Army Chaplain. Her name was Marian Moon.

My grandfather was an Army Chaplain, but my father was an aide to Billy Mitchell in the Philippines. Many times did I grow up hearing of the early aviation pioneers, Jimmy Doolittle, all the people who became major leaders in World War II went through my father's Air Corps Engineering School at McCook Field.

Because of his Doctor's Degree at M.I.T., he was a commandant of that school, which later became Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, the Air Force Institute of Technology.

That wonderful organization financed my Doctor's Degree at M.I.T. many years later. The benefits that have come in my life from the inspiration of military service, as I was growing up as a teenager, inspired by the leaderships in World War II, I entered the United States Military Academy even though I had a scholarship to M.I.T.

The fellowship that I developed there at the Military Academy is one of the strongest that I have today. Many e-mails that I receive on my I-Phone and my BlackBerry are from classmates. Just last night I had dinner here in Phoenix, and a classmate just happened to be attending the same wonderful restaurant and came up, and we shared thoughts about other classmates that we had been talking about as those numbers do dwindle.

Scott and I represent a very unique bunch of people who came along in their military service at just the right time. He and I are second people. Scott followed John Glenn, an outstanding Marine, and I was second to that wonderful test pilot Neil Armstrong. But I think just like Avis, the car company, many times the second people try harder. (Applause)

Scott attends almost every astronaut activity, Post service with NASA. The Association of Space Explorers, an international organization, meets at different countries around the world, and Scott is always there. He is looking for opportunities to share good fellowship.

I have a regret, because I have seen the spirit that exists among my classmates at West Point. I see the spirit that is amongst those of us who flew in the Korean War. I was stationed in Germany in an Air Force Unit in 1956 to 1959. During that time we were first patrolling the border and then we transitioned to tactical fighter, and this is 1957 and '58.

We transitioned to carrying nuclear weapons on five-minute alert. Not too many people realize that there were many of the military people serving in very crucial positions during the Cold War, and that's why in my speeches I want to mention that.

You know a good bit about my space flights, or you can look them up at buzzaldrin.com. You can communicate with me on Twitter at The Real Buzz, and I will answer your e-mails or text messages. Maybe you can even listen to my rap song with Snoop Dogg.

Now, why do I do that? Why do I keep up with the modern means of communication? Because that is where our country's future really is, and I am trying to communicate with those people. I am trying to teach the rappers about what space is all about, and the people in space need to respect what the rappers are about, too.

The nation does have a great opportunity right now in transition. We have active combat going on in Iraq and Afghanistan, and other places with Homeland Security. But I think we have a bit of a crisis in the space

program also. Because of that, and as I see it, it is not exactly the best implementation of transition from shuttle and space station back to exploration.

The President and his science advisor have commissioned a group to look at the future of human space flight, and also the national security people in the White House will undertake, starting in October, several months of review of our entire national policy. That's why I am trying to stay very alert at what we are doing in space.

But before I get into that, I want to reflect that not always do our leaders come up with wonderful promotion policies. President Johnson had a promotion policy for astronauts that would result in splash down from our first space flight we would get promoted one rank. Now, that sounds wonderful. But it has to be integrated with the timing of the normal promotion cycle.

Because if the normal promotion cycle is a week before your splash down from flight, the Secretary signed the orders, you were promoted maybe with six months backdated, and then on splash down you received another promotion. But some of us, it didn't quite work out that way. They didn't sign the orders until after splash down. So, as a result I lost six months of seniority because of LBJ's promotion policy.

Now, I am pretty sensitive to the people in the service who are part of our space program, and also in the recognition of the significant flights that carries out our President's commitment to land on the moon. There were 24 Americans that reached the moon and did considerably more than the 500 or so international people who had been in earth orbit.

But the media only want to know who was first, how many people walked on the moon. They don't seem to care that more than 12 people reached the moon, 24 did. They pioneered the ability for us, and I have opened up a bit of a movement now, and I for a while didn't want to be public about it because I just wanted it to happen. But I am trying to see that those 24 people living or deceased are recognized as the honorable lunar ambassadors.

Now, why do I want that? It is because we are getting into a space program of the future that is international, and I want the internationals to know that this nation pioneered space by landing people on the moon and accepting that challenge, which I feel really did contribute in a major way to the ending of the Cold War.

I want the international nations to realize that we are, I hope, not going to enter the race back to the moon again, we are going to help them land on the moon with our experience. We are going to take our resources and direct them outward for American leadership in space in an outward direction that may take twice as long as Kennedy's within the decade. It may take two decades, maybe a little bit more.

But the nation on this planet that has a leader that makes a clear pathway available, it may be a two-phase pathway and it may need significant reinforcement in ten years from now at the 50th anniversary of our landing on the moon.

But the leader of the nation that commits to a pathway where creatures from the surface of the earth will become settlers on another planet in this solar system is going to go down in history greater than Alexander the Great, Queen Isabella, Magellan, Columbus and President Kennedy.

It is my job to make it clear to our leaders that that is within his grasp

today. American greatness, also because of it, maybe not exactly the best recognition of those people who came along at just the right time to be in the right place to become those 24 Americans who reached the moon, 22 of them were military people.

Some of them had to resign their regular commission to go into the reserve where the promotional policies were a bit more lenient, and they reached the rank of two stars. One of them very diligently stayed in the service and reached three stars. But a number of us were rather stymied and prevented from our further advancement in our chosen service.

I think the Veterans of Foreign Wars, since most of those 22 people were engaged in combat, and certainly the space race, was combat in a different sense with the Soviet Union. I think those people deserve an elevation at no cost to the government of a two star rank.

This organization, I believe, could help us overcome the short-term objectives of what does it cost, what precedent is being set? How many times does a nation get a chance to send its citizens to the surface of the moon? That is not very often.

I have a great admiration for all of the people who came from the military academies that chose to serve this nation in a career field of serving their country and so many of you people during hazardous conditions of foreign wars chose to serve your country.

I just do not believe that our nation recognizes the true value of a commitment to serve the country the way these people up here and all of you have done.

Thank you so much for the honor that you have given me. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: As we wait for our next guest, let me once again take the privilege and honor as Commander-in-Chief to say thank you to the members of my VFW Post 3359 in Garland, Texas, and all the delegates from the great Department of Texas for all of your help and support over the years. I truly appreciate it and I would like you to give them a big round of applause. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT TO WORLD WRESTLING ENTERTAINMENT

It is now my honor to present the Commander-in-Chief Gold Medal of Merit to World Wrestling Entertainment. Under Chairman Vincent McMahon's leadership, the WWE has developed into one of the most popular and sophisticated forms of global entertainment. WWE is an integrated media and entertainment company featuring a portfolio of specialized businesses that create and deliver original content for a cultivated, passionate and intensely loyal fan base.

That loyal fan base is made up of an outstanding group of patriotic Americans, many of them being United States service members. And, I dare say, also many of you comrades here in this audience.

The outreach WWE provides to the military is without a doubt praiseworthy. WWE superstars regularly visit military bases and hospitals, including Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Bethesda Naval Hospital, immeasurably raising the morale of our troops, particularly those severely wounded.

Since 2003, the WWE has produced "Holiday Tribute to the Troops"

with WWE superstars performing before deployed troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

WWE is also a proud supporter of the National Guard's "Challenge Program" which assists underprivileged youth in obtaining their GED or becoming educated in technical trades.

And, may I add, we have with us one of those superstars who is such a great example of those who do so much for our troops.

It is now my pleasure to present World Wrestling Entertainment with the Commander-in-Chief's Gold Medal of Merit.

Please join me in welcoming the ever-popular and renowned Sergeant Slaughter, accepting on behalf of WWE.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Gold Medal of Merit and this citation awarded to World Wrestling Entertainment.

"In sincere praise and deepest appreciation of its endearing commitment, long-standing and continued support of deployed military service members, through its extremely popular events held in actual combat theaters of operation.

"WWE's responsiveness in enhancing the morale of our deployed service members, by bringing 'a little piece of home' to them, truly demonstrates its genuine care, concern and compassion for all members of the United States military, thus earning WWE the utmost respect and esteem of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 19th day of August, 2009."

This has been signed by Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – SERGEANT SLAUGHTER

SERGEANT SLAUGHTER: Good morning. I said good morning. That is better; that is better. First off, I would like to say rah. Sacrifice all those jarheads out there. Yes, sacrifice all those jarheads out there. Yes, simplify, always faithful, always prepared.

For those of you who may or may not know, my name is Sergeant Slaughter, your drill instructor, your D.I. I am sure that this cover and the sound of my voice has brought a lot of memories back to each and every one of you.

If it was not for us tough drill instructors, none of you would be here today. Isn't that clear? I can't hear you, faggots, faggots. That's better. That's better. You know traveling these days, I started performing professionally as a wrestler 36 years ago.

Of course, with all that has happened in the world the last 29 years I have been with World Wrestling Entertainment, travel these days gets tougher and tougher. In fact, yesterday when I left Charlotte, I was checking in some bags. The baggage men recognized me and said, "Hi, Sarge. Where are you going this week?"

I said, "Well, I am going to a very important place. I am going to the VFW National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona." He said, "Gosh, I wish I could go with you. I am a veteran." I said, "Well, pack your bags. Let's go." He said unfortunately he couldn't, that he had to stay there.

He looked at my bags, and he said you are checking in three bags? I

said, "Yes, sir." I said, "The first bag, I would like to have you send it to Denver. The second bag, I want you to send it to Orlando, and the third bag send that over to Detroit."

He said, "Sarge, I thought you said you were going to Phoenix." I said, "I am." He said, "We can't send your bags to Orlando, Detroit and Denver." I said, "Why not? You did it yesterday." (Laughter)

John Hamilton, I thought you said they liked to have a lot of laughs and fun. You told me to throw a couple of zingers out there. I hope I don't have to tell them to laugh, too.

Anyway, just a little bit about me. I have been, as I said, professional wrestling for 36 years. I have wrestled the likes of the Iron Sheik from Iran, Pat Patterson, Bob Backlund, Bert Giorgio, Billy Robinson. I have been told that some of the greatest matches I ever had in Madison Garden go down in the history, the one with the Iron Sheik and a Boot Camp match, in which later I found out that both Presidents Nixon and Reagan stood up and did the Pledge of Allegiance with me after the match was over, after I declared victory over the Iron Sheik.

I have wrestled in cage matches, I have been in strap matches, last man standing matches. And I have slammed

Andre the Giant twice in one match. Andre the Giant, if you didn't know, was seven feet five and 550 pounds. He was a big man. My claim to fame is Bruno Sammartino, a world famous professional wrestler.

I think he held the World Wrestling Entertainment title for longer than any other champion. But he had a hold called the pretzel hold. I am the only man to this day that ever got out of Bruno Sammartino's pretzel hold. That is a pretty big reward for me being the only one.

I had a manager at that time, the Grand Wizard. He said, "Sarge, before you go out there, let me make sure that you do not get in Bruno's pretzel hold." I said, "I will try not to get in it. I know it is over." He said, "You damn right, it is over."

So, the match got going and, of course, lo and behold Bruno got me in the pretzel hold. I saw my manager walking away from the ring and when he got back to the dressing room and later on after I won the match, he came running out. All the people were standing up cheering and going crazy.

"Sarge, I can't believe this." We are walking back to the dressing room. He said, "How did you do it?" I saw you get in the pretzel hold and I went back to the dressing room. I said, "Well, Bruno had me in that pretzel hold and I saw legs one way and the arms another way, and the feet, fingers."

He said, "What happened?" I said, "Well, I saw a pair of testicles." He said, "You saw a pair of testicles?" I said, "Yeah." He says, "What did you do?" I said, "I bit them." I said, "You don't know the strength you get when you bite your own balls." (Laughter)

John, I am dying up here. John Lowe, you told me they were going to be a fun crowd.

Well, let me get down to the reasons I am here. This district man who was the CEO of World Wrestling Entertainment, my boss, was unable to be here and he sends his regrets, but also told me to take his place and receive this prestigious honor on his behalf.

McMahon is not the kind of man who would take this award by himself. He said, "Sarge, make sure you give everyone a big WWE salute and say that is not only about me, Vincent McMahon, but thank them for my fam-

ily, thank them for all the superstars of World Wrestling Entertainment and all the hundreds of employees, because without them we couldn't do what we do today.

I send that message off to you. This is an award that doesn't come by an entertainment company such as ours too often. To receive this award from veterans such as you at the National Convention here is a great honor. I am just beside myself.

I am so proud to be here to accept this award on behalf of Vince McMahon. He would sure want me to make sure that each and every one of you know that it is not going to stop, it is going to continue. We go overseas a number of times a year, and every year we go to the troops.

We have like a Bob Hope show, visiting like the new Bob Hope. We don't just go put on a show just anywhere. We go over there and it is all volunteer. We have to tell a lot of the superstars that they can't go, they can only take so many. We make a shift ring in the middle of the battlefields.

We put up tents and get our tanks and vehicles around, and bring the troops in. For a whole week before we have the matches, we go around and visit the hospitals, the wounded, and visit those out in the battlefields. A couple of years ago we got caught in a sniper attack and a motor barrage came in while we were starting to film the show, and we do this every December for the Christmas show.

We just want you-all to know that we are not going to stop, we are going to continue, and it is just a wonderful award. Thank you so much for allowing us to be a part of your lives and thank you for all that you done for us so that we can have World Wrestling Entertainment and continue to entertain not only our WWE fans, but the troops around the world.

I would like to end this by the way I always do because I have been doing it since I was a little boy in school back in Eden Prairie, Minnesota. When I was a Cub Scout, Boy Scout, through the Marine Corps, and I still do it today, "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all."

USA No. 1, always has been and always will be. God bless you all and God bless America. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: For those of you who may not know, we also have the Past Department Commander from Minnesota, Stan Kowalski, who wrestled under the name of Killer Kowalski. And, comrades, the next Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief from the Southern Conference, from Florida, John Hamilton, who wrestled under the name of Dr. Death. John would still be wrestling, but he couldn't get out of the pretzel hold.

One thing I think sometimes we lose sight of, and forget about is that many of these individuals who are not only in the field of entertainment but in sports dealing with NASCAR, as I have this last year, visiting Iraq, visiting Kosovo, and when you go to these foreign bases you see the pictures and the autographs of the entertainers and of the professional baseball and football players, and all of those in the entertainment field who take time out of their lives to go visit these serving today.

I think sometimes we lost sight of it. We truly appreciate it on behalf of the troops, all that they do to bring a little bit of life as it did to us when we were overseas and Bob Hope and the other entertainers would come to see us. It is really something that is worth seeing.

You know, I told my good comrades from Oklahoma, when I was in

Iraq, I was having lunch at one of the mess halls, and I want to make sure it is not like the mess halls that we had, and I go in and they say that the meal is going to be in the NFL Room. I said, okay.

So we go over to a little room on the side with some of the troops that is the NFL Room. Hanging on the wall is a poster of every professional football team now in existence. It is hanging all around the wall. Right in the middle was one banner for a college team, Oklahoma University. I am not sure how that got there. I didn't put it there.

THE MOJAVE CROSS VIDEO INTRODUCTION OF MR. KELLY SHACKELFORD

Ladies and gentlemen, before I introduce our next guest, please direct your attention to the screen for a video.

(Whereupon, the video is played at this time.)

The fight for the Mojave Desert Memorial is one that we as an organization will fight until the end. Five veterans groups have joined with the non-profit Liberty Legal Institute in a campaign seeking to garner support of the American people to help save the Mojave Desert Veterans Memorial and thousands like it.

LLI was founded by Mr. Kelly Shackelford in 1997 as an organization that fights for religious liberties and protects first amendment rights in the courts nationwide.

As an expert in Constitutional Law, Mr. Shackelford has argued before the U.S. Supreme Court and Texas Supreme Court, in addition to serving as co-counsel in numerous other U.S. Supreme Court cases, and is now fighting for the Mojave Desert Cross that so proudly honors our fallen comrades.

This is just one example of hostility toward veterans' memorials. Saving the Mojave Desert Cross will save many other memorials across this great land, and continue the wonderful heritage our country's citizens have always extended, from Revolutionary times to the present, of honoring our heroes that have so gallantly protected our ideals and principles.

Comrades and sisters, please welcome a man who has so valiantly and boldly fighting for our veterans and for the VFW in that quest, Mr. Kelly Shackelford.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

REMARKS BY MR. KELLY SHACKELFORD

MR. SHACKELFORD: It is not I who deserves the standing ovation as I need to give a standing ovation to you. I want to follow up the video you just saw with a little bit of bad news, first. It is actually worse than you just saw. When the court ordered that this memorial, which has been up to honor our veterans for 75 years, when the court ordered that that be torn down and the 9th Circuit Federal Court of Appeals agreed with that, Henry Sandos, the wonderful man you saw in the video, came forward to the government.

He said, "I have five acres of private land in this federal preserve. How about if I give you my five acres if you will just give the one acre with the memorial back to the VFW?" The Congress thought that was a great idea. This would solve the problem, and we wouldn't have to disgracefully de-

stroy a veterans memorial.

So, they passed a Congressional Act to do the land transfer, but guess what happened? The ACLU went back into court. They said, "Judge, they are trying to get around your order to destroy this memorial." The judge ordered that the land transfer be stopped.

He said this memorial cannot be given back to the VFW, it has to be destroyed instead. That is the case that is currently at the U.S. Supreme Court as we speak right now. Think about this. This is not just one memorial in the desert. This is part of a national effort.

There are lawsuits against memorials across the country right now, but this is the first one that has made it to the U.S. Supreme Court. Think about the implication. If a seven-foot tall memorial in the middle of 1.6 million acres of desert is a problem, then what do they do with the 24-foot tall granite cross in Arlington Memorial Cemetery?

What do they do with every community in this country that has veterans memorials with crosses or Stars of David, or religious imagery? That is where this is heading if this goes the wrong way.

But let me tell you the good news. The good news is that when this battle was waged, when this assault started, guess who took the point, guess who took the lead? You saw it in the video. Whose memorial is this? The VFW did. You did. You took the point and you are now sitting at the U.S. Supreme Court. (Applause)

You can clap for your cause because you deserve to be clapped for. It is you who will be standing at the U.S. Supreme Court on October 7th. I will be with you. But I need your help. We need the entire country to know that this is happening.

If we do, I think they will stand with us and stand with us with force. So, that is why I would ask if you have a pen or a pencil, it showed it real quick on the video, but write this down. It is very easy. It is www, and not the World Wide Wrestling. This is the worldwide web, www.

So it is www.donttearmedown.com. You don't have to put the apostrophe, just www.tearmedown.com. That video was there, information on the case is there. It is your case. This is a way for you to get this out. I mean, your kids, your grandkids, your neighbors, anybody. Anybody on your e-mail list, they need to know about this, because if we can get all of America united it will be much more powerful by the time we get to the U.S. Supreme Court, and we really need your help doing that.

Teddy Roosevelt said, "A man who is good enough to shed his blood for his country is good enough to be given a square deal afterwards." So, let me ask you, soldiers who spilled their blood, who gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country, and you had that remembered with a memorial, and now those are being torn down, is that a square deal?

What about soldiers sacrificing and dying right now for our freedoms overseas, only to come back and to watch memorials to veterans being torn down in disgrace in front of their eyes, is that a square deal? I thought you would say that. That's why I think let's make sure that does not happen in our country.

That's why the next few weeks are important to get the word out on this. Spread the word. You are the leader on this, you have taken the point. Let's let other people know, because I think the whole country will rally around you if we do.

The enemy is coming over the hill on October 7th. It is going to hap-

pen. Let's be waiting for them. Let's have as many Americans standing with us as possible. If we do that, I am fully confident we are going to win. We are going to win at the U.S. Supreme Court.

Thank you for your leadership and thank you and please keep this case in your prayers and spread the word, and let's win at the U.S. Supreme Court on October 7th. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Please, comrades, do as he asks. Let's get everyone behind this fight, because as Kelly said it is not just this one memorial that is under attack, it is every memorial, and if they are successful in accomplishing what they want to for the memorials, what is next, the crosses on the graves at all of the cemeteries on federal land? You know, they say no, but they have said no about things before.

INTRODUCTION OF BRIGADIER GENERAL MICHAEL GARRETT, DEPUTY COMMANDING GENERAL, U.S. ARMY RECRUITING COMMAND-MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Bringing quality young men and women into the Army, people who will complete their tours of duty and make a contribution to the nation's defense, is the objective of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command as it goes about the mission of "providing the strength" for America's Army.

As you all know, the VFW has long believed in a strong national defense. And, the scope of its strength is largely reliant upon the U.S. military's ability to recruit able and qualified individuals.

We fully believe we can tangibly assist in this effort by helping the Army to connect with American communities, and concurrently reinforce the overall recruiting environment.

That is why we are honored to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Army Recruiting Command, pledging our support for building a strong Army – Army strong that is – and committing to doing our part in that process.

Here to sign the Memorandum on behalf of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command is Brigadier General Michael Garrett, Deputy Commander, United States Army Recruiting Command. (Applause)

REMARKS – BRIGADIER GENERAL MICHAEL GARRETT

BRIGADIER GENERAL GARRETT: Thank you, very, very much, Glen, for those kind remarks and really for assisting the United States Army in meeting a very important task for the strength of our nation.

I will talk a little bit about this as I go along, but I just want you to know that last year 170,000 young men and women raised their right hand to serve in our Army. Now, if you think about that number, I know we have got a number of Marines out there, that is almost recruiting the Marine Corps every year to serve in the Army, regular Army, the Reserves and the National Guard.

That's why it is important that you-all assist us in that effort. The other thing I will tell you, my father, Command Sergeant Major Retired Ed Garrett, when I was a Second Lieutenant at Fort Stewart, Georgia, the 24th Infantry Division was my Division Command Sergeant-Major.

The only reason I talked to my dad today is because my mother was there. But I was promoted to Brigadier General recently and as many of

you who are sons, and I have spent my whole life trying to make my father proud. I told him that I can't do a whole bunch more than what we did when I was promoted, because that was not just Mike Garrett being promoted, that was Command Sergeant-Major, Mrs. Garrett, my sisters, community and a whole bunch of people that have helped me get to this point.

So, veterans, soldiers, families and friends, and special guests of the VFW, it is an honor to join you for your 110th National Convention. Thank you for inviting me to be a part of this very special event.

Glen, thank you for the kind introduction, and it was also neat the other day as I was sitting in the airport to see your Commander-in-Chief on the front of the USA Today shaking hands with our Commander-in-Chief. That was a neat picture. Also, I want to take a moment to thank Glen for his service and for all of you for your service as leaders in America's most prominent veterans organization.

In one of his many speeches, General Creighton Abrams stated, "Leadership is a willingness to march a little farther, to carry a heavier load, to step out into the dark and the unknown for the safety and well-being of others."

The VFW is the very embodiment of leadership that has made this nation great, and General Abrams' statement perfectly describes what you do every single day on behalf of our soldiers and our veterans. Yours is truly a special organization, and as United States Army Recruiting Command Deputy Commanding General, it gives me great pleasure to enter into this partnership with one of America's leading veterans organizations.

As part of our organization's command philosophy, when Major General Campbell, the Commander of the USARC and I are out talking to our soldiers, we always talk about teamwork and quality of life. You know, teamwork as you all know will succeed or fail as a team. None of us can complete our mission alone.

I have learned early in my career as a Lieutenant at Fort Stewart, Georgia, as a Lieutenant First Ranger Battalion right up the road in Savannah, that if everyone focused on the team and worked together as a team there was nothing that we couldn't accomplish.

When General Omar Bradley addressed the topic of teamwork, he said, "Battles are won by the infantry, the armor, artillery, air teams and the soldiers living in the rains and huddling in the snow, but are won by the great strength of a nation, the soldiers and civilians working together."

Ensuring quality of life for our soldiers and civilians and families is as important as the goal or mission. Taking care of our soldiers and taking care of our families only makes for a more stronger team. As a team, we can recruit the best and the brightest this nation has to offer, and as a team we can ensure that the quality of life of our soldiers is commensurate with the sacrifices that are our soldiers and their families make in defense of this nation every single day.

While it is true the United States Army Recruiting Command has experienced great success this year, more so than last years, we cannot become complacent because challenges still exist. For example, less than three out of ten young Americans 17 to 24 are fully qualified to serve in the military.

I will say that again. In the greatest country on the face of this planet, only three out of ten of our 17 to 24-year-olds are fully qualified to serve in the military. One in five, again the great planet in the history of the world, and one in five of our young men and women fail to graduate from high

school.

Increasing obesity rates among our nation's youth is becoming an epidemic. Today one in five youth, 12 to 19 years old, are currently overweight compared to one and 20 in 1960, and that number is projected to grow to one in four in the next six years.

In addition to these challenges, many of you may not know that in the United States Army, our Recruiting Command was also responsible for recruiting officers. Part of our mission is to recruit officers for the Army's Medical Corps, general practice physicians, surgeons, dentists, nurses, just to name a few, and we also provide the Officer Candidate School, OCS, with active and reserve applicants who go on to serve our nation with distinction.

In coordination with the Army's officership initiative, we have strengthened our partnership with the United States Army Cadet Command at West Point to better position the Army for success in fulfilling our officer ranks. These points highlight our mission, diversity and the challenges that we face. That's why your help and partnership is so very important.

When you consider how you can help, there are five ways: speaking engagements. Thirty percent of our future soldiers are recruited from within 50 miles of the 20 largest Army Posts. Your personal stories about your military experience, notice I didn't say Army experience, your military experience will make a significant impression on our communities and prospective future soldiers, both officers and enlisted. I would ask you to call your local recruiters and ask what they need or how you and the VFW can help.

Our recruiters are consistently organizing future soldier events and school visits for presentations where your personal presence will be a significant asset.

Invite our recruiters to your activities. This will build upon the team concept and increase recruiter quality of life and help them to better integrate within your communities. I ask that you take time to recognize your hard work because our success is not possible without them.

There are a couple of things that we are doing. Partnership breeds success or Pays is a program where the Army has partnered with corporations to guarantee soldiers leaving the Army an interview. Many former soldiers have realized their goals in the private sector as a result of this program. You can assist in recruiting more corporate participation and more information about Pays can be found at www.armypays.com.

Another program that we have is March to Success. This program is a free no-obligation tool providing educational content to anyone to improve their knowledge and test scores in the areas of language arts, mathematics and science.

I would ask you to consider partnering with our local recruiting units as March to Success tutors. Going back to that one in five of our young men and women who failed to graduate from high school, these mentorship opportunities bring success to the individual and benefit the force.

Thank you for your sacrifices and interest in helping the Army recruit the best and brightest our nation has to offer. Your help in these areas will no doubt lead us to similar success next year.

In closing, I would like to take a few minutes to speak about what I think is the most precious, the most valuable aspect of our Army, and that is our Non-Commissioned Officer Corps. You know, not many people -- during my promotion ceremony, the Commanding General remarked that

not many officers have their own Command Major, and my father's comment to that was there are not many Command Sergeant Majors that have their own Brigadier Generals.

You know, this year has been dedicated as the year of the NCO, to recognize their accomplishments and to enhance the awareness and public understanding of their important place in our Army. The Army's NCO Corps has logged more than 200 years of courage, dedication and willingness to go the distance and beyond to complete a very difficult mission.

As a Sergeant Major of our Army said, our NCO Corps is unrivaled by any Army in the world, envied by our allies and feared by our enemies. I can't put it any better than that.

Until the end of my career, I will continue to showcase and make sure we take care of again what I believe to be our most precious asset in the Army, and those are our non-commissioned officers.

Many of you serving in this room served as a non-commissioned officer, and your legacy endures and is reflected in the training and mentoring that our current NCOs are using to lead the next generation of capable, competent and trained warriors.

I thank all of you again for this unique opportunity to partner with you in achieving a very important mission for our country.

It has been my distinct pleasure and honor to be in the company of such true patriots. May God bless America, our Army, our soldiers in harm's way, our families, our non-commissioned officers, civilians, and may God bless the VFW. Army strong. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: How many of you were last night at the rally when we instituted the new recruits into the Army? How many of you took the oath at the same time they did? The General has 19 buses outside the first exit, so when you leave just go right on out there and just get in line.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: While we are waiting for the 2008-2009 Commanders to come up, the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief and the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief would like to make a presentation to the Commander-in-Chief.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TRADEWELL: Glen, on behalf of our faithful part of your crew, as your Senior Vice and your Junior Vice, we just want to thank you for your leadership, your friendship, and we want to congratulate you on a fantastic job.

We have a little token of our appreciation to show that. We love that team.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much, Tommy. As I told you and Richard, and the next two officers, I am here to help you any way I can, whenever I can. All you have to do is to give me a call and I will be there to do what I need to do. If this doesn't blow up, we will all be lucky.

That is beautiful. It has my coin, Tommy's coin, and Richard's coin all mounted together in a display. Thank you very much. I really appreciate it. (Applause)

PRESENTATION BY 2008-2009 DEPARTMENT COMMANDERS

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: At this time, we will have a presentation by the 2008-2009 State Commanders to Commander-in-Chief Gardner.

COMRADE JEROME ADAMS (Department of Nevada): Comrade Commander-in-Chief Gardner, National Officers, Past Commanders-in-Chief, Honored Guests, Comrades and Sisters:

We are here to represent the Honor Sacrifice Service team, the Commanders that have had the privilege of serving with you, Glen. It has been a privilege this year. Finding a gift for a Commander-in-Chief is a little tough, and when I called National about it they said keep it compact so you can take it on the airplane and you can take it home by yourself. I think I accomplished that.

If you look behind you, there is a map with all the officers that have served with their pins on that map enclosed in plexiglas.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: That is not too hard to carry on a plane. Thank you. (Applause)

COMRADE JEROME ADAMS (Department of Nevada): There you go. As you know, yesterday we donated \$250 to the National Military Service in your name. That is also a gift from us. We have another gift for you which I will turn it over to Jerry there.

COMRADE JERRY MURPHREE (Post 3359 - Texas): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Jerry Murphree from Post 3359, Department of Texas. It is my pleasure to present you with this plaque and this silver legacy Life Member pin to you today.

But before I present this, we got together last night and we decided that our Commander-in-Chief didn't need the second best, so we got the Gold Life Legacy Pin.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much. (Applause)

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 110TH NATIONAL CONVENTION BE SUBMITTED TO THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: I move that the proceedings of the Veterans of the Foreign Wars 110th National Convention be submitted to the Speaker of the House for printing as a House document in accordance with Public Law 620, 90th Congress, approved October 2, 1968, and entitled as Title 44, United States Code, Section 1332.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TRADEWELL: I second it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: You have heard the motion that has been duly seconded. All those in favor will say "aye"; all those opposed. The motion carries.

NOMINATION OF OFFICERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: We will now have the nomination of officers for the 2009-2010 term.

For nominations for the position of Commander-in-Chief, I will call on Past Commander-in-Chief Walter G. Hogan.

NOMINATION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HOGAN: Commander-in-Chief Glen, other distinguished guests, and to all the great comrades assembled at the 110th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars: My, how time flies. Two years ago I was privileged to place in nomination this comrade

for the office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Another year passed and last year I was honored to place his name in nomination for the office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

In those two years, he has traveled extensively and represented you well in the various states that he has traveled to, in overseas travel, and, of course, many National meetings. He has gained valuable experience in these two years as your Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief and Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

He knows of the problems that exist in this organization, and he knows of the many good things this organization goes throughout our country. These two years he has gained valuable experience, which will serve him well as Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Tommy has earned his eligibility through his service in Vietnam from September 1966 to September 1967, where he served as a combat demolition expert with Americal Division, 26th Engineering Battalion. He has earned the Purple Heart, the Vietnam Service Medal, the Republic of Vietnam Service Medal, and believe it or not, the Good Conduct Medal.

He was discharged in 1968 with the rank of Specialist 5th Class. His experiences in the VFW are many since he joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars in 1968. He has served as a Post Commander, a District Commander, and State Commander of the Department of Wisconsin in the year 1999-2000.

During his term of office, he was privileged to visit over 130 Posts in his Department. On the National level, in 2000-2001, he served as Vice-Chairman of the National Youth Development Committee, and again in 2002-2003.

In 2001-2002, he was appointed Inspector General by then Commander-in-Chief James Goldsmith. He was elected to the National Council of Administration and has served on the National Budget and Finance Committee for the last five out of the last six years.

Our candidate was employed by Briggs & Stratton in Milwaukee from 1968 to 1998 as a Quality Technician, and from 1999 to 2007 as an Engineer for G&V Machine Company, and he holds an Associates Degree in Industrial Safety from Wisconsin College Technical Institute.

He and his wife, Sharon, will celebrate 43 years of marriage next week. That is 43 years, which Tom calls bliss; Sharon has some other word for it. They are the proud parents of two sons, Tom, Jr., and Gary, as well as five grandchildren.

They are all proud of his accomplishments and support him wholeheartedly in his term as Commander-in-Chief.

On a personal note, my friendship with our candidate spans 25 years. I have worked at Post meetings, Post membership, various other functions at the Post in the State and on a National level. He is a true friend, and I know he will be a dedicated Commander-in-Chief and serve you well in that capacity.

So, in behalf of his Post No. 6498, also my Post, the Department of Wisconsin, I am pleased and honored to present my candidate for Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in the year 2009-2010, my dear friend, Tom Tradewell. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: For a second, we will call on Wilfred Johnson, Commander of the Department of Wisconsin, from Post 10544, Wisconsin.

COMRADE WILFRED JOHNSON (Post 10544 – Wisconsin): My great friend, Tommy, to all the delegates from the National Convention, Glen Gardner, Commander-in-Chief, thank you for coming to our state. I am here to second the nomination of my great friend Tommy.

For many years we toured the state and did a lot of great membership programs in the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I am here to second that nomination for Tommy Tradewell for the year 2009-2010 for National Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations? Hearing none, the nominations will remain open until tomorrow morning.

We will now have nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, nominated by James R. Rowoldt, the Adjutant-Quartermaster from the Department of California, VFW Post No. 10040, California.

NOMINATION OF SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMRADE JAMES ROWOLDT (Post 10040 – California): Commander-in-Chief, I am James Rowoldt, a delegate from Post 10040, North Hollywood Sun Valley, California. It is an honor for me to stand before you today to place in nomination for the high office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States the name of a man that I have known for over 20 years.

I was fortunate while serving as Senior Vice of the Department of California to be present at the institution's ceremony when Richard became a charter member of VFW Post 10165.

Richard is now a Life Member of Post 4084, Ridgecrest, California. As we say, the rest is history.

Comrade Eubank went on to serve in elected and appointed positions at the Post, District and Department levels, culminating with his election as State Commander in 1999-2000. He is also one of the elite who has achieved triple crown status for becoming All-American Department Commander District Commander and Post Commander.

To become eligible for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Richard served in the United States Marine Corps from 1967 to 1987, including a tour in Vietnam, December 1967 to January 1969, with the 1st and 3rd Marine Divisions.

He was decorated with a Combat Action Ribbon; the Navy Achievement Medal with Combat V Device; the Vietnam Service Medal with Five Stars; the Vietnam Campaign Medal; the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry Medal; the National Defense Service Medal, and don't laugh at this one, the Good Conduct Medal with Five Stars.

Richard is the owner of Recon Construction Company in California and is a Life Member of the American Legion, Disabled Veterans, Vietnam Veterans of America, Non-Commissioned Officers Association, First Marine Division Association, Marine Corps League and the Military Order of the Cootie.

For those of you who have had the opportunity to witness Richard in action while serving as our Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, I am sure that you would agree that Comrade Eubank has the best interest of our organization and our nation in mind as he travels. But also I know that he brings levity to his audience, allowing us to enjoy and appreciate our duties as

members of the greatest veterans service organization in the world.

Comrades, it is an honor and a privilege for me, with the full support of his wife, Celeste, and their family, to place the name of Richard Eubank in nomination for the high office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the year 2009-2010. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: For a second of that nomination, we will call on Jack E. Turner, the Commander of the Department of California, VFW Post 1774, California.

COMRADE JACK TURNER (Post 1774 – California): Good morning, comrades. It is a pleasure to be with you this morning, and as you are all aware our candidate from the great state of California, Richard Eubank, is a Marine, and once a Marine, always a Marine.

If you have heard Richard speak, you know working together as a team is the priority objective with him. He must also set the example, so he asked and had an Army veteran nominate him and a Navy veteran to second it. Now, that is a classic example of teamwork with a capital "T".

So, it is my distinct honor and pleasure to second the nomination of our distinguished comrade, Richard Eubank, for the high office of National Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the year 2009-2010. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: He had an Air Force veteran that was going to second his nomination, but he is out playing golf. (Laughter)

Are there any further nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Are there any more nominations? Are there any more nominations? Hearing none, the nominations will remain open until in the morning.

We now have nominations for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, nominated by Clifford G. Olson, Past Commander-in-Chief, VFW Post No. 8699, Massachusetts.

NOMINATION OF JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OLSON: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. Good morning, comrades. Before I start, I have got to say I think this upcoming team is going to be quite unique, assuming they all get elected. I just heard the comrade say that Eubank had an Army man and a Navy man. By golly, we are going to do a little bit better. To make a better team, we are going to have a Navy man, an Army man and an Air Force man. We don't want to leave nobody out.

If you would allow the next one, we would have had a Coast Guardsman.

Good morning, comrades. As I said, I stand here the same as I stood here 26 years ago and took the oath of office as your Commander-in-Chief. After taking that oath, I made a promise to myself that I would never endorse or nominate for any office a person that I felt was not qualified nor capable to fill that office in a proper and acceptable manner.

I feel I have kept that promise over the years, and I have had the honor to nominate others that have served this organization very well. So, I stand here today to proudly nominate a comrade who I am sure is perhaps more dedicated to helping veterans, their dependents and their causes, than many that have attained the title of Commander-in-Chief.

Now, even though I am nominating a comrade for the office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, we are in effect nominating a comrade who in

two short years will lead our organization as our Commander-in-Chief. So, with that thought in mind, I believe the comrade I am about to nominate it certainly qualified to lead this organization, the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I wish to place before you a comrade with much experience, with much dedication, a comrade whose background is one of which we can all be proud, one who left high school at the age of 17 to enlist in the United States Marine Corps. During his 22 years in the Corps, he advanced through the enlisted rank to Gunnery Sergeant. He was then appointed to Warrant Officer, and still later was commissioned as a First Lieutenant prior to his retirement in 1962.

His eligibility to the VFW was attained while serving with the 3rd Marine Division in Da Nang, South Vietnam, in 1966 and 1967 where he earned the Vietnam Campaign Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal, and the Combat Action Ribbon, among other awards. I didn't notice whether he had the Good Conduct Ribbon or not. No? Well, he is in my class. I never got one either.

Following his retirement, he pursued a career assisting veterans and their dependents. He served as the National Service Officer for AmVets from 1984 to 1988. That service to veterans was followed by 16 years as a National Service Officer, Senior Benefit Advocate and National Field Director for the Paralyzed Veterans of America.

During this same period, he continued working through the ranks of the VFW, holding all chairs in his home Post, Post 1012, in Medford, Massachusetts. He continued to serve and held all chairs in his District 18, and was followed by serving on many Committees, both on the State and National level, and he served as our State Commander of the Department of Massachusetts in the year 2000-2001.

He remains a member in good standing of the Marine Corps Mustang Association, the Disabled American Veterans, the American Legion, the Vietnam Veterans of America, and the Military Order of the Cootie.

He has been married to the former Theresa Steffano for 43 years. They have two children and six grandchildren. So, comrades, I am indeed happy, proud and privileged to place before this Convention for the high office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the year 2009-2010 from the Department of Massachusetts, Past State Commander Richard L. DeNoyer. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: For a second, we will call on Paul A. Spera, Past Commander-in-Chief, VFW Post 144, Massachusetts.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, National Officers, and all of the Delegates to this 110th National Convention:

Past Commander-in-Chief Olson has had the opportunity to present to you what on paper is a very enviable record of achievement on behalf of Richard DeNoyer, but that is not the reason why we in the Department of Massachusetts and the Eastern States Conference have proposed him as the next Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

We who know him know that there is more to him than the words on that paper. We know that for all of his career in the military and in veterans services, with the tenacity of that Marine Corps Bulldog, he has provided care and concern for America's veterans.

He has achieved many things for many other people, not for reward, not for himself, but for the betterment of his fellow veteran. That is the type

of individual that we are proposing to you today to be elected as our Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

I am proud and honored to stand here to second the nomination of Richard L. DeNoyer for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Richard, I am a little concerned about the next individual because he asked me could he say anything he wanted to? You and I both know what that means.

For another second, let me call on Walter G. Gansenberg, Past National Council member and a member of VFW Post 834, Massachusetts.

COMRADE WALTER GANSENBERG (Post 834 – Massachusetts): Good morning. It is a wonderful morning. Thank you for allowing me to be up here to second the nomination of Richard DeNoyer. I have traveled with him for five years. I don't know too much about him other than he is one great guy. I say this with all my heart.

Now, the two people before me used everything I could think of because I am not a talker like they are. So, I will get down to the point. I am proud to second the nomination for Richard DeNoyer for the office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. I would like to say one thing to my state and my Eastern State Conference, thank you for all the hospitality and everything else that you did so fine for us. Thank you kindly. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Are there any other nominations for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations? Hearing none, the nominations will remain open until in the morning.

We will now have nominations for Quartermaster General to be nominated by Robert Weiss, the Adjutant Quartermaster of the Department of Michigan, VFW Post 2406, Michigan.

NOMINATION OF QUARTERMASTER GENERAL

COMRADE ROBERT WEISS (Post 2406 – Michigan): Good morning. With me today is Precilla Wilkewitz from the Southern Conference, Larry Longfellow from the Western Conference, Stan King from the Eastern Conference. I am representing the Big Ten Conference.

Larry M. Maher was elected Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States in March, 2005. Prior to his election, Maher served as Assistant Quartermaster General from 1995 to 2005, and legal counsel to the VFW National Headquarters since 1979.

Maher graduated from Rockhurst University in 1968, and the University of Missouri where he earned his juris doctorate degree in 1975.

Larry's eligibility in the Veterans of Foreign Wars was earned while serving in the United States Navy where he received the Navy Achievement Medal, Vietnam Service Medal and Vietnam Campaign Medal.

He is a Life Member of Post 7356 of Parkville, Missouri. Maher is married with three children, and resides in Weatherby Lake, Missouri.

It is my honor to nominate Larry M. Maher for the position of Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the 2009-2010 year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you. For the purpose of a second, I will call on Precilla Wilkewitz, the Adjutant-Quartermaster of Louisiana, and a member of VFW Post No. 4224, Louisiana.

SISTER PRECILLA WILKEWITZ (Post 4224 – Louisiana): Good morning, comrades. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. National Officers and Delegates, I am indeed proud to stand before you to second the nomination for Larry Maher for the office of Quartermaster General for the 2009-2010 year.

On behalf of the Southern Conference, the Eastern Conference, the Western Conference, we are indeed proud to endorse this individual who has stood up many times this past year, argued and stated facts, and some of you don't want to hear some of the facts, but he has been there and he has been true to the values of our organization.

So, we are indeed proud to endorse and second the nomination for Larry Maher for Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Are there any other nominations for Quartermaster General? Are there any other nominations for Quartermaster General? Are there any other nominations? Hearing none, the nominations will remain open until in the morning.

We will now have the nomination for Surgeon General by Thomas A. Pouliot, Past Commander-in-Chief, from Post No. 1116, Montana.

NOMINATION OF SURGEON GENERAL

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF POULIOT (Post 1116 – Montana): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. Comrades, I rise to nominate a friend and comrade from Oregon, Dennis G. Guthrie, for Surgeon General for the ensuing year 2009-2010.

Dennis enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1967. He graduated from Airborne Training and completed Special Forces Medical Training. He then volunteered for Vietnam and began serving there in April, 1969. Dennis first served in Vietnam as Head Company Field Medic with the 1st Cavalry Division, and then volunteered for Medevac.

While serving in Vietnam, he was awarded the Silver Star, the Bronze Star with "V" Device, two Flight Medals, one with "V" Device, the Combat Medic Badge, and the Good Conduct Medal. He said he received that because he was not caught.

Dennis returned to Oregon, served as a Volunteer Fireman, served as an Emergency Medical Technician, joined the VFW, Redmond Post 4108. He served through all of the chairs and became Past Department Commander of Oregon, and has also served as Past Grand Commander for the Military Order of the Cootie.

He was Council member in 2005-2007, District 17 Council member.

Dennis married his high school sweetheart, Diane. He is a father and a grandfather. His son has also served as a medic. Dennis is currently working with his Oregon Congressman to improve the medical care for the veterans in rural areas in Oregon. He continues to work with the Director of Oregon Veterans Affairs to create a Veterans Suicide Response Team.

Now, Dennis has done many and varied things. He has served our organization well over all of these years, and he will continue faithfully to do so as Surgeon General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

It is my personal pleasure to nominate him on behalf of the 17 Departments in the Western Conference to the office of Surgeon General for 2009-2010.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Tom. For the purpose of a second, we call on Thomas Laing, Past All-American Commander from the Department of Oregon, a member of VFW Post 3965, Oregon.

COMRADE THOMAS LAING (Post 3965 – Oregon): Commander-in-Chief, National Officers and Comrades. I have the great pleasure and honor to second the nomination of a great veterans' advocate for the office of Surgeon General for the year 2009-2010.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Tom. Are there any other nominations for Surgeon General? Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations? Hearing none, the nominations will remain open until in the morning.

We will now have nominations for Judge Advocate General. The nomination will be by Ron Gascon, Past Commander of the Department of Vermont, VFW Post 792.

NOMINATION OF JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL

COMRADE RON GASCON (Post 792 – Vermont): Good morning, you guys. Wake up. We are almost done. I stand before you to nominate Vito DeMarco from Post 771 in Vermont for Judge Advocate General.

I will give you a little bit of background on him. His military experience, he had 33 years of service in the United States Navy, and the Naval Reserve. He was activated for Operation Desert Storm, served in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Additionally, during this time in the Naval Reserve, he completed 13 tours in South Korea from 1984 to 1994.

His awards during that time were the Joint Service Commendation Medal, the Joint Service Achievement Medal, Navy Unit Commendation, Southwest Asia Service Medal, Navy and Marine Overseas Service Medal, Kuwait Liberation Medal, Navy Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Navy Meritorious Unit Commendation, Korean Service, and Saudi Arabia Liberation Medals.

His VFW service has been at the Post level. He was Senior Vice Commander and Commander of his Post. At the District level, he was a District Surgeon, District Judge Advocate General, and at the Department level was the State Surgeon, State Chaplain, State Junior Vice Commander, State Senior Vice Commander, and culminated in All-American State Commander.

At the National level, he has served as a National Aide-de-Camp, National Deputy Chief of Staff, a member of the National Security Committee and the Vice Chairman of the National Veterans Service Committee. He has a Bachelor of Science Degree from Fairfield University in Fairfield, Connecticut.

Why we feel he is eligible or qualified for Judge Advocate General is because he is a Retired Special Agent for the United States Department of Treasury, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms, and that has been for over 30 years.

Comrade DeMarco has extensive knowledge of investigation and prosecution within the legal system of the United States, and experience in jurisprudence and due process of law.

Prior to his starting his career with ATF, he spent two and a half years as a civilian special agent with the Office of Naval Intelligence. During his tenure with ATF, he participated in several hundred federal court cases

in which he assisted an Assistant United States Attorney in prosecution of criminal offenses.

Concurrently, Comrade DeMarco retired as a Commander after 33 years of service in the United States Naval Reserve. Twenty-six of those years were spent in Naval Intelligence.

Most importantly, Vito is probably, or is not probably, is one of the finest gentlemen I have ever known and one of the most dedicated VFW members, and he spends a great deal of his personal time in the VFW just as many of you do poring over the By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and all those things so that he understands what the VFW is all about.

It is my distinct pleasure to nominate him for Judge Advocate General for the 2009-2010 year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Now for the purpose of a second, we call on Rene Rocheleau, Past Council member from Post No. 778, Vermont.

COMRADE RENE ROCHELEAU (Post 778 – Vermont): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. It is with great pleasure and honor to second the nomination of Vito DeMarco for the office of Judge Advocate General for 2009-2010. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: For the purpose of another second, we call on Edward S. Banas, Sr., Past Commander-in-Chief, VFW Post 1004, Connecticut.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS (Post 1004 – Connecticut): Comrades, good morning. It is a pleasure and an honor to go the second for Vito DeMarco. If you are from the Eastern Conference, once in a while we call him Don Vito DeMarco. I am extremely proud of the Eastern Conference for having the foresight and the wisdom to endorse this good comrade.

I met him first in the '70s when he was an instructor and I was a student, and then we lost each other for probably 20 years, and we have hooked up in recent years in the Veterans of Foreign Wars family.

Vito will serve the Commander-in-Chief well. He will serve our organization well, and as one comrade to another, I am extremely proud to have the privilege to make this second. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Ed. Are there any other nominations for Judge Advocate General? Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations? Hearing none, the nominations will remain open until in the morning.

We now have nominations for National Chaplain. For a brief nominating speech, we will call on John Gwizdak, Past Commander-in-Chief, VFW Post 5080, Georgia.

NOMINATION OF NATIONAL CHAPLAIN

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GWIZDAK (Post 5080 – Georgia): Thank you, Chief. Comrade Commander, Officers of the National Organization, Delegates to this Convention: It is my pleasure to rise and place in nomination an individual for National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

He was born at a very early age, living in Miami for a while and, of course, the family moved on to New York. He worked at United Nations from 1962 to 1964, and worked in the position of Chief of Registry, attain-

ing that position at the age of 20 years old.

He joined the Air Force in 1964 and was first discharged in 1968. He then went back and served again in the Air Force, where he went to Thailand, Germany, Spain, Korea, Japan and various other bases in the United States, earning the decorations of Meritorious Service Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal, Air Force Good Conduct Medal with one Silver Oak Leaf Cluster. Also the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal to include, of course, retiring as a Master Sergeant from the Air Force.

He joined VFW Post 6330 in 1994 in Jonesboro, Georgia, and transferred to VFW Post 3568 in Bay Minette, Alabama, where he is a Life Member.

He was elected Quartermaster immediately upon joining the Post and selected as the Adjutant at that time, which he also continues to serve in that position which has now been 14 years.

He served as District Junior Vice, Senior Vice and Commander, and presently serves as District Chaplain, which he has held now for six years, and three years as Department Chaplain.

Our comrade earned an Associates Degree in Applied Science and Aerospace Technology from the Community College of the Air Force, and a Bachelor of Business Degree from Faulkner University. He was ordained in 1999, and is serving as the Associate Pastor and Minister of Music and Education in Stapleton, Alabama.

He also served at the VAMC in Montgomery, Alabama, from 1968 to 1994, attaining the position of Chief of Ambulatory Care. He was also appointed from the Department to represent the Veterans Home from 1994 to 2004. He retired at that position to go into full-time ministry.

He is a member of the Vietnam Veterans of America, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, and the Alabama State Defense Force.

Our candidate is married to the former Ms. Edna Gardner. They have two daughters, Kimberly and Christine, two granddaughters, Camden and Julia. They make their home in Bay Minette, Alabama.

It is with great pleasure and a distinct honor that I place before you a candidate who believes in the spiritual being, who will represent our organization well and will place God before country as he represents our National Organization.

I place in nomination the name of Valentin Obregon as National Chaplain for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The second will come from George Jones, the Commander of the Department of Alabama, VFW Post 6073, Alabama.

COMRADE GEORGE JONES (Post 6073 – Alabama): Commander-in-Chief, National Officers, Delegates and Comrades:

It is my honor and it is my privilege on behalf of the Southern Conference, on behalf of the Department of Alabama to second the nomination of Valentin Obregon for the position of National Chaplain. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The singing chaplain, we call him in Alabama. Are there any other nominations for the position of National Chaplain? Any other nominations for the position of National Chaplain? Any other nominations? Hearing none, the nominations will remain open until in the morning.

I will call on the Adjutant General for any issues that he has to discuss,

any convention announcements.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: These are the winners of the Lockton Post Insurance, and there is some good money here, so listen carefully.

The \$50 winner is Edward S. Kiba, Michigan Post 2356.

\$100, John Harron, Michigan Post 3724.

\$200, Jimmy Nelson, Nebraska Post 6159.

\$400, Richard S. Feidenkranz, Arizona Post 3513.

\$600 and the grand prize, Daniel Duffy, Florida Post 9697.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much. Sergeant-at-Arms, we will have the closing ceremonies.

BENEDICTION AND SALUTE TO THE COLORS

(Whereupon, Sergeant-at-Arms O'Brien led the assembly in the Salute to the Colors, followed by National Chaplain Bowers with the Benediction.)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the closing has been completed as you ordered.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Since he was not here in the room when you were introduced, I would like to introduce Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms Larry Garcia from the State of Texas, who had gone with me to the Ladies Auxiliary. Thank you, Sergeants-at-Arms for what you do and thank you for everything you have done.

We stand in recess until 8:00 o'clock in the morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 11:20 o'clock a.m., to reconvene on Thursday, August 20, 2009, at 8:00 o'clock a.m.)

FOURTH BUSINESS SESSION
THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 2009

(The Fourth Business Session of the 110th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in the Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Arizona, was called to order at 8:00 o'clock a.m., with Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I will now reconvene the 110th National Convention. Sergeant-at-Arms, you will please conduct the opening ceremonies.

(Whereupon, Salute to the Colors, the Opening Prayer by National Chaplain Theodore Bowers, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was had at this time.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, your order has been obeyed, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Sergeant-at-Arms.

I would now like to call on David Butters for the final report of the Credentials Committee.

FINAL REPORT OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS (Post 475 – Delaware): Commander-in-Chief, yesterday I had a senior moment when I erred and told this Convention that it was my final report. Today is my final report.

As of the close of business yesterday, August 19, 2009, for this 110th National Convention we have total possible delegates, 9,046. Total Department Commanders, 42. Total Past Commanders-in-Chief, 24. Total Officers, 32. That is for a grand total of 9,144 delegates.

Commander-in-Chief, this is my final report and I want to say it has been a pleasure serving you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Dave. You have done an outstanding job. Thank you so much for your service over the years. We have worked together many times and I know you will continue to do an outstanding job for the organization. We appreciate it. (Applause)

Comrades, as of 1630 Tuesday, no new Resolutions came to the Adjutant General's office. So, according to the Convention Rules, no more Resolutions may be brought forth before this Convention.

At this time, I will have the pleasure to dismiss the Committee on General Resolutions, and thank the Chairman, Jim Nier, the Vice-Chairman and to all the members of each Committee for your time and efforts.

INTRODUCTION OF OFFICERS

I would like at this time once again for the last time to introduce my officers who served on the year 2008-2009.

Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Thomas J. Tradewell.

Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Richard L. Eubank.

Adjutant General, Allen F. "Gunner" Kent.

Quartermaster General, Larry M. Maher.

Judge Advocate General, Walter Swanson.
Surgeon General, Dr. James Tuorila.
National Chaplain, Reverend Theodore Bowers.
National Chief of Staff, Jimmie D. Cantrell.
Inspector General, W. Benny Bachand.

I want to thank them and all those who served once again this year for this great organization; to all the State Commanders, the Department Commanders who served, as well as those who served as Committee members and other capacities, this organization truly appreciates your support.

This morning, for the final time as the Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I leave this position with a great deal of gratitude to each and every one of you for the work and dedication you have given this year. I leave the leadership of this great organization and turn it over to a comrade that we know will do an outstanding job.

I do not leave my dedication nor do I leave my desire to continue to help the veterans of this great organization, and I will do that.

I want to serve this great organization in any capacity that I am called on to do. So, thank you once again for all you have done. I hope you take away from this Convention the necessary tools to continue to work the work of the Veterans of Foreign Wars now and in the future. Thank you very much. (Applause)

I want to once again say to all of the comrades, who are watching on the Internet, as of this morning over 20,000 individuals have watched live screening broadcasts of the Convention and over 20,000 individuals have watched recorded segments of this Convention over the last three days. This is much more than we or the individuals thought would do this.

I think this is something that will increase in the future and allow us the opportunity to do more and more things with our Convention, and allow more and more of our comrades and sisters to see the workings of our great organization.

I want to thank Jerry and the individuals behind the scene for streamlining this and doing an outstanding job. (Applause)

ELECTION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

The name of Thomas J. Tradewell, Jr., was placed in nomination from the great state of Wisconsin. Nominations are now again open for the office of Commander-in-Chief. Any other nominations for Commander-in-Chief? Any other nominations? Any other nominations? Hearing no other nominations, the nominations are closed. Do I hear a motion?

COMRADE WILFRED JOHNSON (Post 10544 - Wisconsin): I move the nominations cease and the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for Tommy Tradewell for National Commander-in-Chief for 2009-2010.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Do I hear a second to the motion.

COMRADE DENNIS BARBER (Department of Texas): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade. We have a motion duly made and seconded before this body that the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for Thomas J. Tradewell, Jr., as Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States in the year

2009-2010. All in favor will say "aye"; all opposed "nay". The motion carries.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, pursuant to the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for Thomas J. Tradewell, Jr., for Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the 2009-2010 year.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Comrades, you have elected Thomas J. Tradewell, Jr., as Commander-in-Chief. Congratulations, Commander-in-Chief Tradewell.

Comrades, I present to you the Commander-in-Chief-Elect of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States from the great state of Wisconsin, Tommy Tradewell. (Applause)

REMARKS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT TRADEWELL: Thank you. Again, this is the greatest day of my life. Thank you for being here and thank you for sharing this with us. I will have a lot more to say later.

ELECTION OF SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The name of Richard Eubank was placed in nomination from the great state of California for the office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Nominations are now open again for the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Any other nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Any other nominations? Any other nominations?

Hearing none, nominations will be closed.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DAVID B. NORRIS (Post 52 – California): I move that the nominations be closed and that the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for Richard Eubank for the position of National Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the administrative year 2009-2010.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Do I hear a second to the motion?

COMRADE JACK TURNER (Post 1774 – California): I second the motion that a unanimous ballot be cast for Richard L. Eubank as Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: We have a motion and a second that nominations are closed and one unanimous ballot be cast for Richard L. Eubank as Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. All those in favor will say "aye"; those opposed. The motion carried.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrades, pursuant to the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for Richard L. Eubank for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the 2009-2010 year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Comrades, you have elected Richard L. Eubank as Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

Would you like to say a few words, Senior Vice Commander?

REMARKS BY SENIOR VICE-COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT EUBANK: Thank you. Past Commander-in-Chief Glen, comrades, as we each prepare for the battle, we have taken a solemn oath and a promise that the welfare of all of our veterans is our responsibility. We have come out of the trenches, fixed our bayonet, and Tommy Tradewell, Commander-in-Chief, has told us to charge. Thank you. (Applause)

ELECTION OF JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The name of Richard L. DeNoyer was placed in nomination from the great state of Massachusetts. Nominations are now open again for the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Any other nominations for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Any other nominations? Any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, the nominations will be closed.

I recognize the comrade at Microphone No. 2.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CLIFFORD OLSON: Commander-in-Chief, I am Cliff Olson, a delegate from Post 8699, Massachusetts. I proudly move that the nominations for the office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief be closed and that the Adjutant General cast one favorable ballot in the name of Richard L. DeNoyer.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Microphone No. 2.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF PAUL SPERA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Paul A. Spera, a delegate from Post 144, Massachusetts, proudly seconds that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The motion has been made and seconded that nominations be closed and one unanimous ballot be cast for Richard DeNoyer as Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the year 2009-2010. All those in favor of this will signify by the sign of "aye"; those opposed. The motion carried.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Pursuant to the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for Richard L. DeNoyer for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the 2009-2010 year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Comrades, I am honored to present the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect for the year 2009-2010, from the great state of Massachusetts, Richard DeNoyer.

REMARKS BY JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DeNOYER: Thank you very much. It is a pleasure and an honor to be part of the team of Tommy Tradewell, Richard Eubank and Richard DeNoyer. Basically, I have some thanks to make. Thank you to the Veterans of Foreign Wars for electing me. Thank you to my Eastern States Conference for endorsing me. Thank you to my Department of Massachusetts for endorsing me, and goodnight wherever you are. Thank you very much. (Applause)

ELECTION OF QUARTERMASTER GENERAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The name of Larry M. Maher was placed in nomination from the great state of Missouri. Nominations are now open again for Quartermaster General. Any other nominations for Quartermaster General? Any other nominations? Any other nominations?

Hearing no more nominations, the nominations are closed.

I recognize Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DAVID MORGAN (Post 5331 – Missouri): I am very proud to stand before you and move that the nominations cease for Quartermaster General and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for Larry Maher for the office of Quartermaster General for the year 2009-2010.

Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade. We have a motion duly made. Do we have a second?

COMRADE ROBERT WONNELL (Post 1894 – Missouri): Even though he is Navy, I am proud to second his nomination.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: We do have a motion made and seconded on the floor that the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for Larry Maher for Quartermaster General for the year 2009-2010. All those in favor will signify by saying “aye”; those opposed. The motion carried.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Pursuant to the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for Larry M. Maher for Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the 2009-2010 year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Comrades, you have elected Larry M. Maher as Quartermaster General. I now present to you the Quartermaster General-Elect for the year 2009-2010 from the great state of Missouri. (Applause)

REMARKS BY QUARTERMASTER GENERAL-ELECT

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL-ELECT MAHER: Thank you, and thank you again for the trust you have placed in me as Quartermaster General. I hope I don't let you down. I trust I won't let you down. I will be conducting a seminar on the Life Membership back over in this corner as soon as the installation is over this morning. (Laughter)

But seriously, like the national economy, the VFW is suffering through a difficult time financially. I am confident we will get back on the right track. I promise I will do everything that I can to leave a secure foundation for this organization.

I want to thank Glen for the great job he has done for your organization this year. It has been a tough year at times. He has handled those tough times well. He has been a great, great spokesman for our organization, and I appreciate that, Glen.

I do look forward to working with Tommy, Richard and Richard. Tommy, you may have too many Marines here, but somehow we muddle through.

The delegates have put some important issues squarely on our plates as National Officers, and on the plates of these comrades sitting down here in the row before us. We have some difficult decisions ahead, and we have an opportunity to set the steady course in the future for our organization. I am

sure working together we will be able to do that and keep the organization moving forward. Thank you very much. (Applause)

ELECTION OF JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The name of Vito S. DeMarco was placed in nomination from the great state of Vermont. Nominations are now open again for Judge Advocate General. Any other nominations for Judge Advocate General? Any other nominations? Any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, the nominations are now closed.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE RENE ROCHELEAU (Post 778 – Vermont): I make a motion that the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for the election of Vito DeMarco for Judge Advocate General for the 2009-2010 year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I have a motion that has been made. Is there a second?

COMRADE RON GASCON (Post 792 – Vermont): It is with great pleasure for me to second the motion for Judge Advocate General Vito DeMarco for the 2009-2010 year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The motion has been duly made and seconded that the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for Vito DeMarco for Judge Advocate General for the year 2009-2010. All in favor will say "aye". The motion passed.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Pursuant to the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for Vito S. DeMarco for Judge Advocate General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the 2009-2010 year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Comrades, you have elected Vito S. DeMarco as Judge Advocate General for the year 2009-2010.

Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you the Judge Advocate General-Elect for the year 2009-2010 from the great state of Vermont, Vito DeMarco.

REMARKS BY JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL-ELECT

JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL-ELECT DeMARCO: I just want to thank you all for giving me the honor of serving as Judge Advocate General for next year. It will be an absolutely pleasure to serve on the Tradewell, Eubank and DeNoyer team. Thank you very much. (Applause)

ELECTION OF SURGEON GENERAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The name of Dennis Guthrie was placed in nomination from the great state of Oregon. Nominations are now open again for Surgeon General. Any other nominations for Surgeon General? Any other nominations? Any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, the nominations are closed.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE THOMAS LAING (Post 3965 – Oregon): I move the nominations be closed and the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for Dennis Guthrie for the position of Surgeon General

for the 2009-2010 administrative year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrade. Do I hear a second to the motion?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF THOMAS POULIOT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Tom Pouliot, Post 1116, Montana. I rise and proudly second that motion for Dennis Guthrie for Surgeon General for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: A motion has been duly made and seconded that the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for Comrade Dennis Guthrie for the office of Surgeon General for the year 2009-2010. All in favor will say "aye"; all those opposed. The motion carried.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Pursuant to the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for Dennis Guthrie for Surgeon General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the 2009-2010 year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: It is with a great deal of pleasure I present to you Surgeon General-Elect for the year 2009-2010, Dennis Guthrie.

REMARKS BY SURGEON GENERAL-ELECT

SURGEON GENERAL-ELECT GUTHRIE: Good morning, comrades. I have never saluted so many times since I have been in the service. I just want to thank my brothers and sisters from the Department of Oregon for their support, my family and friends for putting up with my PTSD for the last 40 years, and one special thank you to my wife who supports me in all my endeavors.

I want you to know that I am not one that takes this position lightly, and I will do everything I can to enhance veterans' medical care during the ensuing year. Thank you very much. (Applause)

ELECTION OF NATIONAL CHAPLAIN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The name of Valentin Obregon has been placed in nomination from the great state of Alabama for the position of National Chaplain for the year 2009-2010. Are there any other nominations? Don't mess with the Chaplain.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE GEORGE JONES (Post 6073 – Alabama): Commander-in-Chief, I am George Jones, Department Commander from Alabama. I would like to make a motion that we close nominations for the position of National Chaplain for this great organization of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and that the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for his election.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, sir. We have a motion. Do we have a second?

COMRADE DAVID PIPES (Post 835 – Georgia): I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The motion has been duly made and seconded that the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for the office of National Chaplain for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the year 2009-2010. All in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all

opposed. The motion carried.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Pursuant to the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for Valentin Obregon for National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the 2009-2010 year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: It is with a great deal of pleasure that I present to you the Chaplain-Elect for the year 2009-2010 from the great state of Alabama, Valentin Obregon.

REMARKS BY NATIONAL CHAPLAIN-ELECT

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN-ELECT OBREGON: Thank you, Commander. Comrades, I am grateful and deeply moved for the honor you have bestowed upon me. I want to thank the Southern Conference and Alabama for your endorsement. Our nation is facing some difficult times. We have spiritual and moral issues. Our monuments are being threatened, our nation is divided. We have a lot of work to do, so let's get busy. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I will now call upon the Adjutant General.

PRESENTATION OF CAPS TO THE NEWLY-ELECTED COUNCIL MEMBERS

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: I will call off the new members of the National Council of Administration and the Commander-in-Chief-Elect will present them with their covers and badges.

District No. 1, Eugene Pawlik, Post 1617 – New Hampshire.

District 3, Richard S. Udoff, Post 521, Maryland.

District 5, Paul Connors, Post 30, Missouri.

District No. 7, John Ranson, Post 6095, Kentucky.

District 9, Roy C. Meares, Post 10400, North Carolina.

District 11, Larry J. Larson, Post 839, Iowa.

District 13, Charley Shoemaker, Post 12003, Kansas.

District 15, Vincent B.J. Lawrence, Post 7686, New Mexico.

District 17, Michael H. Musgrove, Post 2350, Nevada.

District 19, Thomas J. Kijak, Post 5951, Louisiana.

District 21, Steven Van Bergen, Post 6587, Minnesota.

District 23, William Dobbie, Post 4659, Michigan.

District A, Albert Thomas, Post 974, Pennsylvania.

District B, Donald Smithenry, Post 4226, Illinois.

District C, Bernard Thompson, Post 1896, New York.

District G, John P. Wolfe, Post 4084, California.

District J, Robert Shepherd, Post 4864, Florida.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Let me also say that while my wife has not been around this week, she is here and most of you will see that she has a sling. I didn't hit her. She had a torn rotator cuff and had surgery three weeks ago, and those of you who have had that know it is very painful. She has had some problems this week. She has tried to do more than she is supposed to. That is why she hasn't been here this morning.

Let me at this time call on the Commander-in-Chief-Elect Tommy

Tradewell for his announcement of appointed officers for the year 2009-2010.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF APPOINTMENTS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT TRADEWELL: As Adjutant General, Allen "Gunner" Kent. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Commander-in-Chief, thank you very much for this appointment. I will promise you I will do the very best I can. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT TRADEWELL: National Chief of Staff, one of our great recruiters from Wisconsin, Earl Banks. (Applause)

NATIONAL CHIEF OF STAFF BANKS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, thank you very much for this appointment. I will do the very best I can to take care of you. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT TRADEWELL: Inspector General, Rick Barg. (Applause)

INSPECTOR GENERAL BARG: I would just like to thank you, Commander-in-Chief Tommy, for the opportunity to serve on your team. This is a dream for me. It was never on my radar screen. It was a 100-year-old veteran who taught me the skills of being a great VFW member, and now I get to share it with the great Chief. Thank you. I will serve you the best way I can.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT TRADEWELL: As the National Sergeant-at-Arms, Bryan O'Brien. (Applause)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: To Chief Tradewell, I really covet this position. Most of all, I want to thank those six gentlemen over to my right and, of course, the lady that has done an extraordinary job since I have been here the last three years.

To outgoing Commander-in-Chief Gardner, thank you for the appointment as well as, of course, all the members forward.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: One last thing before getting to the installation. Has everyone enjoyed this Convention? I think our staff appreciates Past Commander-in-Chief Bob Currie and all the members of the Committee from the great state of Arizona for the outstanding job you have done. Give them a big round of applause. (Applause)

I do want to thank the National Sergeants for everything they do. They work long hours. They are up early and stay late. I don't think they get appreciated for all the hard work and dedication that they give to this organization. The amount of pay we give them doesn't compensate them for all the hard work that they do.

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: We will now proceed with the Installation of Officers. National Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the Installing Officer to a position on my right.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir. I have the honor to present to you Past Commander-in-Chief Wally Hogan as the Installing Officer for the National Convention.

INSTALLING OFFICER HOGAN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the

term for which you and your subordinate officers were elected or appointed has now expired. It is my duty to ascertain the following: Have the officers for the ensuing year been duly elected?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: They have.

INSTALLING OFFICER HOGAN: Have the books of the Adjutant General and the Quartermaster General been examined and approved by the National Council of Administration?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: They have.

INSTALLING OFFICER HOGAN: Does the Adjutant General have on file proof of eligibility for all the officers that will be installed during this installation?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: He has.

INSTALLING OFFICER HOGAN: I would remind any officer not having proof of eligibility on file and not being installed at this time, that the by-laws prescribe you must within 60 days of election or appointment submit to the Adjutant General for his file a copy of your proof of eligibility.

Are the funds in the hands of the Quartermaster General ready to be turned over to his successor when duly installed?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: They are.

INSTALLING OFFICER HOGAN: Have you the Charter in your possession?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I have.

INSTALLING OFFICER HOGAN: You will now surrender the gavel to me.

Past Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner, you have now been relieved of your duties as Commander-in-Chief of this organization. It is proper to remind you that in assuming the chair of Past Commander-in-Chief it will be your duty and privilege to counsel and otherwise assist your successor through the experiences you have gathered during your term of office.

You will now station yourself to my right. For you Marines, that is over here. (Laughter)

National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will now present the officers-elect at the altar as the Adjutant General reads the list of officers to be installed.

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL McNEILL: Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Richard Eubank.

Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Richard DeNoyer.

Adjutant General, Allen "Gunner" Kent.

Quartermaster General, Larry M. Maher.

Judge Advocate General, Vito DeMarco.

Surgeon General, Dennis Guthrie.

National Chaplain, Valentin Obregon.

National Chief of Staff, Earl D. Banks, Jr.

Inspector General, Rick W. Barg.

District No. 1, Eugene A. Pawlik.

District No. 2, John Martin.

District No. 3, Richard S. Udoff.

District No. 4, Richard Kennedy.

District No. 5, Paul E. Connors.

District No. 6, Melvin Reed.

District No. 7, John H. Ranson.

District No. 8, John Hancock.

District No. 9, Roy C. Meares.

District No. 10, A. M. Armstrong.
District No. 11, Larry J. Larson.
District No. 12, Wayne Paulsen.
District No. 13, Charley Shoemaker.
District No. 14, Ray Lutz.
District No. 15, Vincent B.J. Lawrence.
District No. 16, Preston "Nick" Nelson.
District No. 17, Michael H. Musgrove.
District No. 18, Leo R. Swider.
District No. 19, Thomas J. Kijak.
District No. 21, Steven Van Bergen.
District No. 23, William Dobbie.
District A, Albert S. Thomas.
District B, Donald R. Smithenry.
District C, Bernard Thompson.
District D, Bill Seagraves.
District G, John P. Wolfe.
District H, A. R. "Russ" Richards.
District J, Richard Shepherd.
Past Commander-in-Chief, Glen M. Gardner.

INSTALLING OFFICER HOGAN: Thank you. National Officers-Elect of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I will now administer to you the Officers' Obligation. You will raise your right hand, touch the flag of our country with your left hand and repeat after me.

(Whereupon, the following Officers' Obligation was given at this time: "I do hereby solemnly promise that I will faithfully discharge to the best of my ability the duties of the office to which I have been elected or appointed, according to the Constitution, By-Laws and Ritual of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. I solemnly promise that at the close of the term to which I have been elected or appointed, or sooner if so ordered by proper authority, I will surrender immediately to only the duly authorized person or persons, all records, money, or other properties of this organization in my possession or under my control. All this I freely promise, upon my honor, as a loyal citizen of our great Republic. So help me God.")

INSTALLING OFFICER HOGAN: As you were.
Comrade Chaplain.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: Almighty God, our guide and divine protector, give Thy blessings upon these our comrades who now become fellow officers. We beseech Thee, O Lord, who are ever present among us. Grant the wisdom unto them so that during their deliberations they continue to favor Thee, our glorious country and the veterans organization. May Thy strength sustain them, may Thy power preserve them, may Thy hand protect them in the faithful and fruitful performance of their duties. Amen.

INSTALLING OFFICER HOGAN: As you were. National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will escort the officers to their respective stations.

National Officers of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, you now occupy the position of honor to which your comrades have elected you. You learn well the responsibilities entrusted to you so you may intelligently discharge the duties you are to undertake.

The Constitution, By-Laws and Ritual of our organization prescribe in detail the duties of your respective offices. By virtue of the confidence placed in you for your election or appointment, we assume that you will

acquaint yourselves thoroughly with your duties. You may be seated.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief-Elect Tradewell, before administering your Obligation, it is proper to remind you of certain duties. You will be held personally responsible for the Charter of this organization. At the end of your term of office, you will deliver it to the officer appointed to install your successor.

It is your duty as Commander-in-Chief to see that all National Officers perform their duties to the best of their ability. You shall keep yourself informed on all proposed legislation which may affect the welfare of potential and actual comrades of this organization, and strive for adoption of only those measures which will be beneficial.

You will be required to devote all of your time to the many duties of your office. You are expected to make a special study of the Constitution, By-Laws and Ritual of this organization so that you may render firm and impartial decisions on important questions referred to you.

As Commander-in-Chief, you will be regarded by your comrades and by the general public as typifying wise and vigorous leadership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. May all of your efforts and accomplishments bring credit to your administration and to our organization.

Comrade Thomas Tradewell, are you willing and ready to assume you solemn Obligation?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT TRADEWELL: I am.

INSTALLING OFFICER HOGAN: You will raise your right hand, touch the flag of our country with your left hand, give your name and repeat after me.

(Whereupon, Commander-in-Chief-Elect Tradewell received the following Obligation: "In the presence of Almighty God and the Officers and Delegates of this Order here assembled, I, Thomas Tradewell, do hereby solemnly promise that I will faithfully discharge to the best of my ability, the duties of the office of Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States to which I have been elected in accordance with the Constitution, Ritual and By-Laws of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. I solemnly promise that at the close of the term to which I have been elected, or sooner if so ordered by proper authority, I will surrender immediately to only the duly authorized person or persons, the National Charter, all records, money and other properties of this organization in my possession or under my control.

"I do further solemnly promise that I will be fair and impartial in my actions towards all comrades, and I will always strive to promote the best interests of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. So help me God.")

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I now place in your possession our Charter, and I also present you with this gavel, which is the emblem of your authority. Use it firmly, but with discretion.

All National Officers, you will stretch forth your right hand and repeat after me: "Comrade Commander-in-Chief Thomas Tradewell, to you I pledge my sincere allegiance."

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Officers and Delegates of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I now proclaim the National Officers duly installed and this organization in working order for the ensuing year. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
LAPEL PIN AND GOLD LIFE MEMBERSHIP CARD

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: I will now present the Past Commander-in-Chief's Lapel Pin and Gold Life Membership Card to Past Commander-in-Chief Gardner. (Applause)

ACCEPTANCE ADDRESS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TRADEWELL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TRADEWELL: Thank you. Thank you so much for this great honor. (Applause)

There are a number of people I owe a huge thank you to, and it all begins with Sharon, my best friend, buddy, soul mate, lover and wife of 43 years as of next Thursday. Thank you, honey. Happy anniversary and happy birthday. (Applause)

To my sons, Tom, Jr., and Gary, daughters-in-law Kris and Gail, and five grandchildren, Andrew, Matthew, Scottie, Lauren and Peyton, thank you.

To my Post in Milwaukee, Gross-Yaksh, Post 6498, to District 5, the Department of Wisconsin, its award-winning State Honor Guard, the Big Ten Conference, and my extended VFW family throughout the United States and the world.

To my Installing Officer who has been with me every step of the way, Past Commander-in-Chief Wally Hogan.

To all of our Past Commanders-in-Chief for the groundwork that you laid over the last 110 years. Your leadership served to make the VFW the greatest combat veterans organization in the world.

To the VFW Ladies, thank you so much for electing Jan Tittle as your new President. I could not have hand-picked a better choice. (Applause) I am positive that as a team we will accomplish everything that can be done for our organization, our communities, for our military, veterans and their families.

To the National staff, it's been a tough few months, but I just want you to know how much your continued service to our great organization is appreciated and needed.

There are many more individuals I need to thank. I will just say thank you to all who have mentored and supported me over the years.

I am truly proud to have served on the Lisicki-Gardner-Tradewell team, and the Gardner-Tradewell-Eubank team. Because of the tough challenges we faced and the changes we made together, I believe the new Tradewell-Eubank-DeNoyer team is better prepared to face the future.

The theme for this year is "Honoring Our Military Heroes." To me, this is more than just a slogan or a motto.

This theme is about who we are and what we do on a daily basis in all of our Posts, Districts, Departments, and at our National Headquarters in Kansas City and the Washington Office.

To "Honor Our Military Heroes" is to ensure that our military and our veterans are honored, recognized and cared for, which is the focus of every program we conduct at every level of this great organization.

Last November we invited 13 current war vets to Kansas City. They had many good ideas on how to recruit and retain new members in the VFW, primarily at the Post level, which is exactly where my theme of "Honor Our Military Heroes" has to begin.

I ask each of you today to go back to your communities and seek out those Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, because they will be the main force of this organization in the not-so-distant future. I also ask you to seek out the many other veterans from other wars and conflicts who are eligible to join our great organization, but don't just shove a membership application in their hands and expect them to join.

First, we must explain to them who we are, what we do, and who we do it for. I ask you to explain our legacy, our story that goes back to the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection. This was the first time our nation deployed large numbers of American troops to fight on foreign soil.

Tell them about our forefathers who returned home to a government that bore no responsibility to care for their injuries, their rehabilitation or their families. And then I ask you to tell them that it was the VFW who changed the way this country treats her veterans, treats her service members and treats all of our families.

Every quality of life program military members and their families enjoy today is because of the efforts of the VFW. Every benefit that veterans and their families now receive is because of the VFW.

The fact that there even is a Department of Veterans Affairs is because of the VFW. The VFW is the largest organization of combat veterans in the country. At 110 years young next month, we are also the oldest major veterans' organization in the country.

Comrades, everything that we do is for somebody else. That is the VFW legacy, and that is a recruiting pitch.

Wanting to be part of a legacy is why our youth continue to enlist and re-enlist in our military, even after eight years of constant war.

Today's eighteen-year-old high school graduate was in the fifth grade when 9/11 happened. Let me repeat that, they were in the fifth grade. To them, this country has always been at war, yet they still enlist to do their part as citizens of the greatest country on earth. They join our military during a time of war because it is the legacy of what Americans do.

The VFW legacy of service to others is the recruiting pitch we need in order to get them to join us, but they have to want to join, not be pressured into it. We must show them what the VFW does for veterans, for service members and for their families.

If you pressure them into joining, they will be gone in a year. But if you get them interested you will have them for a lifetime.

My primary goal this year is to increase membership, which over the past years shrunk by 300,000 members, from 1.8 million to 1.5 million. The loss of membership also corresponds to a significant reduction in the number of Posts over the same five-year period, from 8,600 to 7,900.

Membership is the key to everything the VFW does, and my primary goal to increase membership applies to Posts as well as the Member-at-Large Program, which allows veterans to join us because they believe in what we do for America.

We cannot raise money for worthwhile community projects, Operation Uplink, student scholarships or our Unmet Needs Program without membership. We cannot donate millions of volunteer hours in our communities without membership.

We cannot open doors in Congress without membership, and we will no longer be able to call ourselves the largest organization of combat vet-

erans without a strong, effective and involved membership.

I guarantee you the National Office and your Departments are very concerned with the current state of affairs. It's no secret that the reason some Departments are in tough financial shape today is because of the loss of members and their dues over the past years, and trust me when I say that VFW everywhere is feeling the pain of lost revenue.

Membership recruiting is not something that everyone can or will do, so I ask that you properly recognize those recruiters who do the grunt work.

I also ask that everyone support my new membership goal. I am asking everyone to recruit or reinstate five new members either at the Post level or as Members-at-Large.

Every VFW member is valuable for your commitment and expertise; membership recruiting just increases your value.

Aside from enhancing membership, the VFW has other challenges. We have also been hit by the nationwide financial crisis, but I predict we will emerge stronger, because that's how great organizations tackle challenges, they get better.

Just this past year, our 980 VFW-Certified Service Officers helped almost 95,000 veterans to recoup more than \$1.2 billion in earned compensation and pension.

Our service work helps to fill a nationwide need, comrades, and with a new generation of warriors returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan, the need for VFW assistance is not going away and nor is our willingness to get involved.

Look at VFW Post 7779 in Hyde Park, Vermont. They led a community fund-raising to rebuild a home for Army PFC Andrew Park, who came home paralyzed from a roadside bomb in Afghanistan.

VFW nationwide donates more than \$66 million to help thousands of worthwhile community projects every year.

Navy Reserve wife Rianne Toll received a new roof, thanks to VFW Illinois District 16 Commander Robert McLeod. He was able to quickly work an Unmet Needs grant after an emergency situation occurred while husband was deployed.

Rianne now joins almost 1,900 other military families who have received a total of \$2.7 million in help from Unmet Needs since 2004.

VFW California member Tom Burford raised and donated \$10,000 to Operation Uplink in honor of his best friend's son, Corporal Nicholas Olson, who died of an IED explosion in Iraq.

Tom's donation helps to continue a valuable program that since 1996 has distributed more than 11 million free phone cards to deployed personnel and those recuperating from their wounds.

And to the memory of Marine Corps PFC Chance Phelps, who died in combat in Iraq in 2004, and whose homecoming was immortalized in the recent HBO movie called, "Taking Chance."

In the movie, as in real life, VFW Post 10056 was the centerpiece of the town of Dubois, Wyoming, and we should all be extremely proud how the VFW was portrayed.

Communication is an important facet of any great organization, and it is no different with ours. As leaders, we must always keep an eye out for good stories and tell those stories to others.

I also hope that every Department, District, Post Commander visits the VFW Web site weekly. It is a tremendous resource and administrative tool

for those who take advantage of its features.

As you help spread our legacy, tell people about our tremendous legislative victories on Capitol Hill, tell them that it was the VFW that led the way for a new G.I. Bill for the 21st Century; that it was the VFW that championed the new Traumatic Injury Insurance program for today's service members, and that the VFW continues to be at the forefront of new legislation to improve mental health programs, increase VA health-care funding, and assist family caregivers of our wounded.

This new generation of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans must be made aware that the VFW is first and foremost a veterans service organization, and we need to be there to answer their questions on what VA programs are available, and where to go for claims assistance.

The new generation needs to know that America's veterans, every service member and all of their families, need a strong voice in Washington, and that, comrades, is the voice of 2.1 million members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and our Auxiliaries.

I also ask that you keep and display a positive attitude at all times. Confidence breeds confidence, and right now that is what our nation needs.

We have many people out there looking for positive images to follow. Every one of us must be that positive image, a beacon of hope, because better times are ahead.

Comrades, our nation has been at war for almost eight years. It's a war that continues to impact every community in every state and territory, wherever there are military men and women serving in uniform and wherever there are anxious family members who await their safe return. Yet, like all wars, this, too, will end some day.

We, who have been there, must ensure that there is a strong and vibrant VFW to welcome home a new generation of warriors, and to properly thank them for doing their duty as citizens of our great country.

And as we welcome them home, we need to ensure that they know that our military and VA medical care is second to none because the VFW continues to fight for proper funding and increased services.

That the benefits our veterans and uniformed personnel enjoy today exist because the VFW fought for them in the past, and will continue to lead the fight today and far into the future.

And that our missing servicemen from all of our wars are being returned home to their loved ones because the VFW leaves no man or woman behind.

Comrades, that is our legacy. Please pass it on.

A strong and vibrant VFW needs to be there to welcome home a new generation of warriors, to shake their hand, to look them in the eye, and to say thank you for your service, for your commitment, and for your sacrifice. Someone has to be there to say, "Welcome home." That someone has to be the VFW.

I thank you again for this great honor, and may God continue to bless our troops, their families and the United States of America. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

MOTION TO CLOSE CONVENTION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TRADEWELL: At this time we will entertain a motion to close the Convention.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE KEVIN JONES (Post 4050 – Missouri): There being no further business to come before this Convention, and the officers having been duly elected and installed for the ensuing year, I move that the 110th National Convention of the Veterans of the Foreign Wars of the United States be closed sine die.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TRADEWELL: Is there a second to the motion?

COMRADE JOHN LOWDELL (Post 2170 – California): I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TRADEWELL: The motion has been seconded to close the 110th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Any discussion? All those in favor will say “aye”; all opposed “nay”. The “ayes” have it. It is so ordered.

Now, I will call on the Sergeant-at-Arms for the Closing Ceremonies.

CLOSING CEREMONIES

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, Commander-in-Chief. Captain of the VFW National Honor Guard, advance and retrieve the flag of the United States of America.

(Whereupon, the Honor Guard retired the Colors at this time.)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade National Chaplain, the Benediction, please.

(Whereupon, National Chaplain Obregon gave the Closing Prayer from the Ritual.)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the Closing Ceremonies for the 110th National Convention have been completed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TRADEWELL: Thank you. I now declare the 110th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars closed sine die.

(Whereupon, the Convention was duly adjourned at 10:00 o'clock a.m., sine die.)

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO NATIONAL BY-LAWS AND MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL BY-LAWS, MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL

B-1 (Proposed by the Adjutant General and Quartermaster General)
ARTICLE I - MEMBERS

Sec. 102-Applications-Affiliation of New Members.

Amend Section 102-Applications-Affiliation of New Members., National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Sec. 102--APPLICATIONS-AFFILIATION OF NEW MEMBERS.

Every application for membership shall comply with the rules and regulations as prescribed in Section 102 of the Manual of Procedure.

Except as otherwise provided herein, with respect to Members-at-Large, each eligible member shall be a member of a Post. Membership in more than one Post at one time is prohibited. Any person who is or becomes a member of more than one Post shall elect to remain in the Post of his choice and surrender membership in any other Post. In the event no election is made, the Commander-in-Chief or his designee shall assign the member to a Post.

Any membership application erroneously accepted by a Post shall be a nullity and no person shall obtain any right or privilege of membership by reason of erroneous acceptance of an application or admission to membership.

Members-At-Large. Anyone eligible for membership who is unable to join or does not desire membership in a Post may become a National Member-at-Large upon application to the Adjutant General, proof of eligibility and payment of annual dues of thirty-five dollars (\$35.00) to the Adjutant General or such other amounts as may be proposed by the Adjutant General and Quartermaster General and approved by the National Council of Administration.

Department Members-at-Large. Anyone eligible for membership who is unable to join or does not desire membership in a Post may become a Department Member-at-Large upon application to the Department Adjutant, proof of eligibility and payment of annual dues in the amount to be determined by the Department Council of Administration. The Department Quartermaster shall transmit to the Quartermaster General twenty-one dollars (\$21.00) of the dues collected for each Member At Large on a monthly consolidated report. (Disapproved)

B-2 (Proposed by Department of Virginia)

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS

Sec. 105-MEMBERS IN GOOD STANDING.

Amend Section 105– Members in Good Standing., National By-Laws, by adding the following paragraph at the end of the section:

New and reinstated members' annual membership renewal dates will be calculated through the end of the month following the completion of application processing. Their membership card will reflect the same. (Dis-approved)

B-3 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS

Sec. 109-RIGHT OF APPEAL.

Amend Section 109-Right of Appeal, National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Except with respect to those matters for which other provisions for appeal are made in Article IX, any member, Post, District or Department aggrieved by any acts or decisions may appeal the rights afforded by these By-laws to the next higher authority as prescribed in Section 109 of the Manual of Procedure.

The determination of the Department Commander shall have full force and effect unless and until reversed by competent authority. Any member aggrieved by the acts or decisions of a Department Commander, the Department Council of Administration or the Department Convention shall have the right to appeal to the Commander-in-Chief. The decision of the Commander-in-Chief shall have full force and effect unless and until reversed by the National Council of Administration. Any member aggrieved by the acts or decisions of the Commander-in-Chief may make a final appeal to the National Council of Administration. (Approved)

B-4 (Proposed by Department of Maine)

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS

Sec. 111-LIFE MEMBERS.

Amend Section 111– Life Members., (b) Life Membership Fees:, National By-Laws, by deleting “81 & over 170” and inserting “81 & over 5”. (Disapproved)

B-5 (Proposed by Department of West Virginia)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 203-REGULAR, SPECIAL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS; QUORUM; AUTHORIZED ATTENDEES.

Amend Section 203– Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Quorum; Authorized Attendees., Guests., National By-Laws, by inserting in the first sentence before the word “member”, “visiting”. (Approved)

M-1 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 209-CONSOLIDATION OF POSTS.

Amend Section 209-Consolidation of Posts, Manual of Procedure, first paragraph, 4., by adding “District Commander” after “Department Commander.”. (Approved)

M-2 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 210-SURRENDER OF CHARTER.

Amend Section 210-Surrender of Charter, Manual of Procedure, first paragraph, numbers 1. and 2., by substituting the following:

1. A motion to consider surrendering a Post charter shall be made and approved at a stated meeting of the Post. If approved, the Post Commander shall immediately provide to the Department Commander a list describing all assets and liabilities of the Post.

2. A Post may then, after at least twenty (20) days written notice to the Department Commander, District Commander and members of the Post, vote to surrender the charter upon a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present and voting at a stated meeting. (Approved)

B-6 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 216-ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICERS; CHAIRMEN AND COMMITTEES.

Amend Section 216 –Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees, National By-Laws, by deleting the first paragraph and substituting the following:

(a) The elected officers of each Post will consist of a Commander, Senior Vice Commander, Junior Vice Commander, Quartermaster, Chaplain, Judge Advocate, Surgeon and three (3) Trustees. (Approved)

M-3 (Proposed by Department of Kentucky)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 217-NOMINATION, ELECTION, INSTALLATION AND TERM OF OFFICE.

Amend Section 217– Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office., Election., Manual of Procedure, by deleting the last sentence of the first paragraph. (Disapproved)

M-4 (Proposed by Department of Michigan)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 218-OFFICERS: DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS.

Amend Section 218– Officers: Duties and Obligations., Manual of Procedure, (a) Officers. (1) Commander., g., after the word “bonded” by adding the words “or insured”. (Disapproved)

M-5 (Proposed by Department of Minnesota)

ARTICLE V – DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 218-OFFICERS: DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS.

Amend Section 218– Officers: Duties and Obligations., Manual of Procedure, (a) Officers. (5) Quartermaster., c., in the second sentence insert a period after Quartermaster, deleting the remainder of the paragraph. (Disapproved)

B-7 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 219

Amend Section 219- National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Sec. 219-Relief Fund.

A relief fund will be established and maintained by the Posts. In this fund shall be credited the net proceeds of the distribution of Buddy Poppies and such other monies as may be solicited or donated for veterans relief purposes. Expenditures from the relief fund shall be as prescribed in Section 219 of the Manual of Procedure. (Approved)

M-6 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 219

Amend Section 219, Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Sec. 219 -- Relief Fund.

The Quartermaster of the Post will be the custodian of the relief fund and will expend monies there from, as directed by the Post, for the following purposes:

(a) Aid, assistance, relief, and comfort of needy or disabled veterans or members of the Armed Forces and their dependents, and the widows and orphans of deceased veterans.

(b) Maintenance and expansion of the VFW National Home for Children and other facilities devoted exclusively to the benefit and welfare of the dependents, widows, and orphans of disabled, needy or deceased veterans or members of the Armed Forces.

(c) Necessary expenses in providing entertainment, care, and assistance to hospitalized veterans or members of the Armed Forces.

(d) Veterans rehabilitation, welfare, and service work.

(e) To perpetuate the memory of deceased veterans and members of the Armed Forces, and to comfort their survivors.

(f) To foster true patriotism through historical and educational programs.

(g) Remission of dues of sick, needy or disabled members.

(h) Necessary expenses to support the relief fund such as the purchase of Buddy Poppies.

Relief funds may be invested in approved securities but shall not be loaned to the Post or other units or transferred from the relief fund in any manner or under any guise. (Approved)

M-7 (Proposed by Department of Kentucky)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 221-Voting.

Amend Section 221–Voting., Manual of Procedure, by adding the following at the end of the section:

Absentee voting by printed ballot is permitted to deployed members of the Armed Forces only. (Disapproved)

B-8 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 222-Delegates, County Council, District, Department and National Conventions.

Amend Section 222-Delegates, County Council, District, Department and National Conventions., National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Sec. 222-Delegates, District, Department and National Conventions.

(a) Delegates and alternates to District meetings and convention shall be elected in April and will serve until the next Post election of delegates with one (1) delegate and one alternate for each thirty (30) members or fraction thereof in good standing in the Post on March 31.

(b) Delegates and alternates to the Department and National Convention shall be elected in April and will serve until the next Post election of delegates with one (1) delegate and one alternate for each thirty (30) members or fraction thereof in good standing in the Post on March 31.

(c) Each Post will pay, in advance, a convention registration fee of twenty-five dollars (\$25), which fee shall entitle the Post to a packet of convention information and materials. Posts failing to comply with this provision shall be considered delinquent and in arrears and will be assessed a late registration fee of fifty dollars (\$50). Payment of convention registration fees does not entitle the delegate(s) voting privileges at the National Convention. Each delegate attending the convention will pay a ten dollar (\$10) delegate fee.

(d) By the passage of a motion before balloting, candidates for delegates and alternates may be voted for on the same ballot. The member(s) receiving the highest number of votes shall be declared delegates and alternates.

(e) Delegates elected under this section shall not be considered instructed and may exercise full authority in the duty to be performed. (Disapproved)

M-8 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 222-Delegates, County Council, District, Department and National Conventions.

Amend Section 222-Delegates, County Council, District, Department and National Conventions., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Sec. 222-Delegates, District, Department and National Conventions.

(a) Delegates and alternates to District meetings and conventions shall be elected at a regular meeting of the Post held not less than thirty (30) days prior to the District Convention at which District officers are to be elected with one (1) delegate and one (1) alternate for each thirty (30)

members or fraction thereof in good standing in the Post on March 31. Posts instituted subsequent to April 30 shall as promptly as possible elect delegates and alternates to the District Convention. All delegates and alternates to the District Convention shall be members in good standing in their respective Posts.

(b) Delegates and alternates to the Department Convention shall be elected at a regular meeting of the Post held not less than thirty (30) days prior to the Department Convention with one (1) delegate and one (1) alternate for each thirty (30) members or fraction thereof in good standing in the Post at the time of the election or as the Department By-Laws may provide.

Posts instituted during the thirty (30) days prior to convening date of the Department Convention shall on the night of institution or as soon thereafter as possible elect delegates and alternates as herein provided.

National and Department dues covering the membership of the Post shall be in the hands of the Department Quartermaster not less than thirty (30) days prior to the Department Convention, or in the case of a new Post, within fifteen (15) days of the date of institution, and the delegate strength shall be based on the Department Quartermaster's records as of the date of election of such delegates.

Where the Department By-Laws so provide, a delegate registration fee shall be paid by each Post for every delegate to which each Post shall be entitled, based upon and as shown by the Department Quartermaster's records as of not less than thirty (30) days prior to the convening of the Convention, with such additions as may be necessary by new Posts only. The delegate registration fee shall be forwarded by every Post regardless of the number of delegates present at the annual Department Convention, and must be in the hands of the Department Quartermaster not later than fifteen (15) days before the convening of the Department Convention. Posts failing to forward the full delegate registration fee shall be considered delinquent and in arrears.

The Department Quartermaster shall set up a Department Convention fund and all Department delegate registration fees received by him shall be placed therein and used and expended only as and for expenses incurred and expenditures made in the holding of an annual Department Convention.

(c) Delegates and alternates to the National Convention shall be elected at the last meeting night in April of each year with one (1) delegate and one (1) alternate for each thirty (30) members or fraction thereof in good standing in the Post at the time of the election. All delegates and alternates to the National Convention must be members in good standing in their respective Posts.

Posts instituted after June 30 and prior to the National Convention shall on the night of institution or as soon thereafter as possible, elect one (1) delegate and one (1) alternate for each thirty (30) names or fraction thereof according to the number of names listed on the charter application, or such number as are members in good standing on the date of election of delegates.

Transmittal reports and dues covering the membership of the Post shall be in the hands of the Quartermaster General on or before July 5 or in the instance of a Post instituted after June 30, dues and transmittal forms shall be forwarded within fifteen (15) days from date of institution, and

the delegate strength of each Post shall be based upon the Quartermaster General's records as of July 5, with such additions as may be necessary by new Posts only.

(d) Delegates will be issued credentials at the conventions. Delegates and alternates to District, Department and National conventions shall be recognized only when Posts have complied with the provisions of the By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual. (Disapproved)

M-9 (Proposed by Department of Michigan)

ARTICLE IV – DISTRICTS

Sec. 418-Officers: Duties and Obligations.

Amend Section 418– Officers: Duties and Obligations., Manual of Procedure, (a) Officers. (1) Commander. , h., after the word “bonded” by adding the words “or insured”. (Disapproved)

B-9 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 421-Voting.

Amend Section 421-Voting., National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Each member of a District Convention or District meeting are those persons defined in Section 404, except delegates elected by the Posts, present at a District Convention or meeting shall be entitled to one vote, and an individual possessing more than one qualification for membership in the District Convention or meeting shall have no more than one vote. The delegate or delegates of a Post present at a District Convention or meeting shall be entitled to vote the full delegate strength to which the Post is entitled.

Should there be a division among the delegates representing the Post, each delegate present shall cast his pro rata share of the total voting strength of the Post. For the purpose of this section, a Post Commander shall be considered a delegate.

A roll call vote may be required and entered upon the record at the call of any three officers or delegates representing three different Posts. (Approved)

M-10 (Proposed by Department of Michigan)

ARTICLE V – DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 518-Officers: Duties and Obligations.

Amend Section 518– Officers: Duties and Obligations., Manual of Procedure, (a) Officers. (1) Commander., g., after the word “bonded” by

adding the words “or insured”. (Disapproved)

B-10 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI– NATIONAL CONVENTION

Amend ARTICLE VI-NATIONAL CONVENTION, National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

ARTICLE VI-NATIONAL (Approved)

M-11 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Amend the title of ARTICLE VI-NATIONAL CONVENTION, Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

ARTICLE VI- NATIONAL (Approved)

B-11 (Proposed by Department of Montana)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 601-Supreme Governing Body; Composition.

Amend Section 601– Supreme Governing Body; Composition., National By-Laws, 1., by inserting the word “Immediate” before the words “Past Commanders-in-Chief “ in the sentence paragraph. (Disapproved)

B-12 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI– NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 601-Supreme Governing Body; Composition.

Amend Section 601-Supreme Governing Body; Composition., National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Sec. 601 – Formation.

The National organization shall be formed in accordance with the Congressional Charter. (Approved)

M-12 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 601-Supreme Governing Body; Composition.

Amend Section 601-Supreme Governing Body; Composition., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Sec. 601-Formation.

(See Section 601 By-Laws.) (Approved)

B-13 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI– NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 602

Amend Section 602, National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Sec. 602-By-Laws.

These By-Laws and the Manual of Procedure may only be amended as prescribed in Section 1401. (Approved)

M-13 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 602

Amend Section 602, Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Sec. 602-By-Laws.

(See Section 602 By-Laws.) (Approved)

B-14 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI– NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 604

Amend Section 604, National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Sec. 604-Governing Body; Composition.

The supreme power of this Organization shall be lodged in the National Convention.

The National Convention shall consist of:

1. The Commander-in-Chief and Past Commanders-in-Chief and all other elective National officers, the Adjutant General, Inspector General and Chief of Staff who are members in good standing in their respective Posts.

2. All Regional Council of Administration members.

3. Department Commanders. In the absence of the Department Commander, the Department Senior Vice Commander, or, in his absence, the Department Junior Vice Commander may be registered and function as a member of the National Convention.

4. Elected Post delegates. (Approved)

M-14 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 604

Amend Section 604, Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Sec. 604-Governing Body; Composition.

(See Section 604 By-Laws) (Approved)

B-15 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI– NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 605-National Dues.

Amend Section 605-National Dues., National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Sec. 605 (Approved)

M-15 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 605-National Dues.

Amend Section 605- National Dues., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Sec. 605 (Approved)

B-16 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI– NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 606-Solicitation of Funds.

Amend Section 606- Solicitation of Funds, National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Sec. 606-National Dues.

The National Organization dues shall be \$11.50 for every member (except Life Members) of a Post in good standing, which includes an annual subscription to the VFW Magazine.

When collected, \$8.50 of the National Dues will be retained by the National Organization and \$1.00 will be rebated back to the Department to which the member belongs. The remaining \$2.00 will be distributed as outlined in Section 606 of the Manual of Procedure. (Approved)

M-16 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 606-Solicitation of Funds.

Amend Section 606-Solicitation of Funds., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Sec. 606-National Dues.

Nine dollars and fifty cents (\$9.50) of the \$11.50 National Dues will be distributed as set forth in Section 606 of the By-Laws. From the remaining \$2.00, \$1.00 will go into the Endowment Fund for Veterans Service Officer Training, and \$1.00 will go into the Veterans Service Grant Fund. (Approved)

B-17 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI– NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 607-Eligibility to Office.

Amend Section 607-Eligibility to Office., National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Sec. 607 (Approved)

M-17 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 607-Eligibility to Office.

Amend Section 607-Eligibility to Office., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Sec. 607 (Approved)

B-18 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI– NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 608-Officers, Elected and Appointed.

Amend Section 608-Officers, Elected and Appointed., National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Sec. 608 (Approved)

M-18 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 608-Officers, Elected and Appointed.

Amend Section 608-Officers, Elected and Appointed., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Sec. 608 (Approved)

B-19 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI– NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 609-Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.

Amend Section 609-Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office., National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Sec. 609 (Approved)

M-19 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 609-Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.

Amend Section 609-Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Sec. 609 (Approved)

B-20 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI– NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 610-Officers, Powers and Duties.

Amend Section 610-Officers, Powers and Duties., National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Sec. 610 (Approved)

M-20 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 610-Officers--Powers and Duties.

Amend Section 610-Officers—Powers and Duties., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Sec. 610 (Approved)

B-21 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI– NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 612-Vacancies and Inactive Officers.

Amend Section 612-Vacancies and Inactive Officers, National By-Laws, substituting the following:

Sec. 612 (Approved)

M-21 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 612-Vacancies and Inactive Officers.

Amend Section 612-Vacancies and Inactive Officers., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Sec. 612 (Approved)

B-22 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI– NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 613-Voting.

Amend Section 613-Voting, National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Sec. 613-National Headquarters.

The National Headquarters of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall be situated in Kansas City, Missouri. (Approved)

M-22 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 613-Voting.

Amend Section 613-Voting., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Sec. 613-National Headquarters.

(See Section 613 By-Laws.) (Approved)

B-23 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI– NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 614-National Headquarters.

Amend Section 614-National Headquarters, National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Sec. 614-Solicitation of Funds.

No funds or donations shall be solicited by the National Organization

except by prior action of the National Convention or the National Council of Administration. (Approved)

M-23 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 614-National Headquarters.

Amend Section 614-National Headquarters., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Sec. 614-Solicitation of Funds.

(See Section 614 By-Laws.) (Approved)

B-24 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI– NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 615-National Committees.

Amend Section 615-National Committees., National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Sec. 615-Eligibility to Office.

Any member in good standing in a Post shall be eligible for any National Organization office, provided that no member shall hold two (2) elective National Organization offices at the same time but may hold one (1) elective and one (1) or more appointive National Organization offices. National officers elected or appointed shall be eligible to hold office in a lower body, and such offices may be held concurrently. Regional National Council members shall be ineligible to simultaneously hold an elected National office. (Approved)

M-24 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 615-National Committees.

Amend Section 615-National Committees., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Sec. 615-Eligibility to Office.

(See Section 615 By-Laws.) (Approved)

B-25 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI- NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 616

Amend Section 616, National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Sec. 616- Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

(a) The elective officers of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall be the Commander-in-Chief, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Quartermaster General, Chaplain, Judge Advocate General and Surgeon General.

(b) The Commander-in-Chief shall appoint an Adjutant General, Chief of Staff, Inspector General, and Sergeant-at-Arms and other such officers and committee chairmen as may be necessary. (Approved)

M-25 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 616

Amend Section 616, Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Sec. 616-Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

National officers, elected and appointed, shall submit proof of eligibility to the Adjutant General. National officers shall not be installed or assume the duties of their office until proof of eligibility has been submitted and properly reviewed. Such proof of eligibility shall be open to and reviewed by the Commander-in-Chief, Adjutant General and Quartermaster General prior to installation to office. In the event an elected or appointed officer fails to submit proof of eligibility within sixty (60) days of election or appointment, any right of the officer to hold the office shall be forfeited, the office declared vacant and the eligibility qualifications of such officer shall be questioned in accordance with the provisions of Section 108 of the National By-Laws. (Approved)

B-26 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI- NATIONAL CONVENTION

**Sec. 617-Regional National Council of Administration
Members-How Elected.**

Amend Section 617- Regional National Council of Administration

Members-How Elected., National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Sec. 617-Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.

The elective National officers shall be nominated, elected and installed as prescribed in the Manual of Procedure.

An officer, elected and installed, shall continue to hold office for the period for which elected and until his successor is installed unless the position is declared vacant pursuant to the terms of Section 620 of these By-Laws or Manual of Procedure. An appointed officer shall hold office during the pleasure of the appointive power. In either case the elected or appointed officer must remain a member in good standing in a chartered Post. (Approved)

M-26 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 617-Regional National Council of Administration Members-How Elected.

Amend Section 617- Regional National Council of Administration Members-How Elected., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Sec. 617-Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.

Order of nominations and elections. The order of nominations and elections shall be Commander-in-Chief, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Quartermaster General, Chaplain, Judge Advocate General and Surgeon General. The elective National officers shall be nominated and elected by voice vote or roll call at the annual National Convention.

Nomination. A member may be nominated and elected although not present at the National Convention. A member making a nomination of an absentee for any office shall have presented to the Adjutant General, in writing, the consent of the member being nominated prior to the closing of nominations. Any nominee shall have the opportunity to decline nomination for the office to which he has been nominated before nominations are closed. Nominations shall remain open until the National Convention is ready to vote.

Election. In balloting for National officers, a majority of all the votes cast shall be necessary for election. If there is no election on the first ballot, the name of the comrade receiving the lowest number of votes shall be dropped and so on in successive ballots until an election is made.

Challenging Election Results: If irregularities are claimed with respect to the election to any office, such challenge must be made prior to the close of election unless otherwise prescribed in the National Convention Rules.

Installation. National officers will be installed before the adjournment of the convention at which elected. The installation shall be conducted by a Past Commander-in-Chief in good standing. The Commander-in-Chief

elect shall select the installing officer. An officer who may be absent for good and sufficient reason or cause shall be installed by an officer holding a position equal to or higher than his office within ninety (90) days of the date of installation. If not then installed, the office will automatically become vacant.

Term of Office. National officers shall take office at the close of the National Convention. Officers shall be elected for a term of one (1) year. (Approved)

B-27 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI– NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 618-National Council of Administration-Composition, Powers and Duties.

Amend Section 618- National Council of Administration-Composition, Powers and Duties., National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Sec. 618-Officers: Duties and Obligations.

(a) **Commander-in-Chief:** Among the duties of the Commander-in-Chief, he shall:

- (1) Preside at all meetings of the National Convention and Council of Administration, conducting such conventions and meetings in accordance with Article X of the By-Laws and Manual of Procedure and other applicable parliamentary procedures,
- (2) Enforce strict observance of the laws and usages of this organization, including the Congressional Charter, National By-Laws, Ritual and Manual of Procedure and all lawful orders and mandates of the National Convention and National Council of Administration.
- (3) Decide all questions of law and usage, subject to such appeal as may be made pursuant to these By-Laws.
- (4) Issue such orders as are necessary and appropriate to carry out his duties.
- (5) Insist that the business and activities of the organization are conducted in such a manner that they do not violate any applicable governmental law, ordinance or regulation or bring or tend to bring dishonor or embarrassment on this organization.
- (6) Immediately after entering office, appoint the Adjutant General, Chief of Staff, Inspector General, and Sergeant-at-Arms and all other officers, Aides-de-Camp, committee chairmen and committees not otherwise provided for.
- (7) Approve and sign, or authorize the Adjutant General to approve and sign, vouchers for expenditure of funds before the same shall be paid.
- (8) Assure that good and sufficient security in the sum approved by the National Council of Administration is given by the Quartermaster General.
- (9) Assure that all reports are correctly prepared and that all business of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is handled with

dispatch.

(10) Assure that the Adjutant General and all other officers, committee chairmen, committee members and employees appointed by the Commander-in-Chief perform their respective duties in accordance with these By-Laws.

(11) Call a meeting of the National Council of Administration not more than ninety (90) days after the adjournment of the National Convention for the purpose of adopting the annual budget and the transaction of any business which may properly come before the National Council of Administration. Other meetings of the National Council of Administration may be called as the Commander-in-Chief deems advisable.

(12) Cause the Adjutant General to issue proper credentials to all elective and appointive National officers, aides and other subordinate officers.

(13) Assure that eligible members are encouraged to join and maintain membership. The Commander-in-Chief may order a review of applications for membership to assure that eligibility has been properly determined.

(14) Perform such other duties as are incident to such office or may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of the organization or by the National Convention, National Council of Administration or these By-Laws and the Manual of Procedure.

Failure without just cause to perform these duties may result in removal from office.

(b) **Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief:** The Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief shall discharge the duties of the Commander-in-Chief in the event of his disability or inability to perform them, preside in the absence of the Commander-in-Chief, assist the Commander-in-Chief in preserving order, provide such advice and assistance as may be required, and perform such other duties as are usually incident to such office or may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of the organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

Failure without just cause to perform these duties may result in removal from office.

(c) **Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief:** The Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief shall preside in the absence of the Commander-in-Chief and the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, assist the Commander-in-Chief in preserving order, provide such advice and assistance as may be required, and perform such other duties as are usually incident to such office or may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of the organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

Failure without just cause to perform these duties may result in removal from office.

(d) **Quartermaster General:** Among the duties of the Quartermaster General, he shall:

(1) Immediately upon entering into office, appoint an Assistant Quartermaster General who shall be a full-time salaried officer of the organization, subject to the approval of two-thirds of the members of the National Council of Administration.

(2) Immediately upon entering into office, appoint Directors who shall be full-time salaried employees of the organization, subject

to the approval of a majority vote of the members of the National Council of Administration. The Quartermaster General may employ such other personnel as may be necessary or appropriate.

(3) Have charge all employees of the Quartermaster General's staff for the Kansas City and Washington offices and supervise the Quartermaster General's operations at both offices.

(4) Have charge of the funds, securities and other property of the organization, all of which shall be placed in his care. He shall be the accountable officer of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the Treasurer of all committees handling funds.

(5) Have charge of, and manage, all real property of this organization.

(6) Keep a correct account of all monies due and payable to this organization from any source and give such written receipts as may be required.

(7) Disburse funds as authorized by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, using accepted banking practices, and keep a record of such disbursements.

(8) Keep a record of all liabilities of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

(9) Have charge of the Emblem and Supply Department and the Insurance Department under the direction of the National Council of Administration.

(10) The books and records of the Quartermaster shall be maintained in a legible and uniform format to include reconciliation and verification of all transactions listed on all bank statements to assure the accuracy of National records. Unless authorized by the National Council of Administration to remove such books and records from its facilities, all such books and records shall be kept at the National Headquarters.

Record keeping by electronic means may be used, provided a back-up and a hard copy is maintained. Books and records shall be available for inspection by authorized officers and National Council members at all reasonable times.

(11) Prepare a quarterly report for the National Council of Administration and provide copies thereof to the Department Commanders. Prepare other reports as directed by the National Council of Administration or the National Convention.

(12) Prepare for the Adjutant General a list showing the Posts in good standing and the number of delegates to which each Post is entitled before each National Convention.

(13) Give good and sufficient security in a sum to be approved by the National Council of Administration for the faithful discharge of his duties.

(14) Receive such compensation for his services as the National Council of Administration may from time to time determine.

(15) Prepare a tentative budget for the financial operations of the ensuing year. Said budget shall set forth all anticipated income and estimated expense. Restricted funds shall be budgeted separately in every instance, and the budget shall be in balance. Final action must be taken on the adoption of the budget at the first stated meeting of the National Council of Administration and, when adopted, the

budget shall be the expenditure guide for the ensuing year. Not later than thirty (30) days after the first meeting of the National Council of Administration, he shall forward to all Department Commanders a detailed copy of the National budget adopted by the National Council of Administration for their information.

(16) Perform other duties as are incident to the office or may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of the organization or by the National Convention, National Council of Administration or these By-Laws and the Manual of Procedure.

Failure without just cause to perform these duties may result in removal from office.

(17) Provide access and transfer to the successor in office or anyone designated by higher authority, without delay, all books, records, papers, monies, securities and other property of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States in his possession or under his control.

(e) **Assistant Quartermaster General:** Among the duties of the Assistant Quartermaster General, he shall:

(1) Discharge all duties delegated to him by the Quartermaster General.

(2) During the absence of the Quartermaster General, discharge the duties of Quartermaster General to the extent designated by the Quartermaster General.

(3) Discharge the duties of the Quartermaster General in the event of his inability to perform them except that he shall not serve as a member of the National Council of Administration.

(4) Give good and sufficient security in a sum approved by the National Council of Administration for faithful discharge of his duties.

(5) Receive such compensation for services as the National Council of Administration may from time to time determine.

(f) **Adjutant General:** Among the duties of the Adjutant General, he shall:

(1) Immediately upon entering into office, appoint Assistant Adjutants General who shall be full-time salaried officers of the organization, subject to the approval of two-thirds of the members of the National Council of Administration.

(2) Immediately upon entering into office, appoint Directors who shall be full-time salaried employees of the organization, subject to the approval of a majority vote of the members of the National Council of Administration. The Adjutant General may employ such other personnel as may be necessary or appropriate to fulfill his duties.

(3) Have charge of all employees of the Adjutant General's staff for the Kansas City and Washington offices and supervise the Adjutant General's operations at both offices.

(4) Under the direction of the Commander-in-Chief, conduct all correspondence on behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States as the official corresponding officer, attesting to all official communications and reports with his signature and seal.

(5) Under the direction of the Commander-in-Chief, issue all necessary and appropriate orders.

(6) Keep correct records and minutes of the proceedings of the National Convention and the National Council of Administration and

preserve and distribute copies of same as directed. He shall call the roll or, under his supervision, cause same to be called at all official meetings and shall read to the body assembled, or cause to be read under his supervision, all official communications, resolutions or other information pertinent to the meeting and consistent with the records of his office. Abstracts of the business transacted will be submitted to all Department Commanders not later than sixty (60) days after meetings of the National Council of Administration.

(7) Under the direction of the Commander-in-Chief, conduct such programs and provide such services as are directed by the National Convention, the Commander-in-Chief or the National Council of Administration.

(8) Prepare such books and forms as may be required for the use of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

(9) Maintain such records, files and lists as may be necessary for the efficient conduct of the business of the organization, including, but not limited to, general and special orders, copies of proof of eligibility submitted pursuant to Section 608, a current roster of the names and addresses of all National, Department and Post officers and other records as may be directed by the National Convention, the Commander-in-Chief or the National Council of Administration. Record keeping by electronic means may be used.

(10) Receive as compensation for his services such sum as the National Council of Administration may from time to time determine.

(11) Perform other duties as are incident to the office or may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of the organization or by the National Convention, National Council of Administration or these By-Laws and the Manual of Procedure.

Failure without just cause to perform these duties may result in removal from office.

(12) Provide access and transfer to the successor in office or anyone designated by higher authority, without delay, all books, records, papers, monies, securities and other property of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States in his possession or under his control.

(g) **Assistant Adjutants General:** Assistant Adjutants General shall discharge the duties delegated to them by the Adjutant General and as directed by the Commander-in-Chief. They shall perform other duties as are incident to the office or may be required of them by the laws and usages of the organization, the National Convention, the National Council of Administration, these By-Laws and the Manual of Procedure.

(h) **Chaplain:** The National Chaplain shall be concerned with the spiritual needs of the members and by precept and example point the way toward a high moral plane for the organization. He will be familiar with the Ritual and shall conduct the annual memorial service held in connection with the National Convention. He shall perform such other duties as may be incident to his office or as may from time to time be required of him by the laws and usages of the organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

(i) **Judge Advocate General:** The Judge Advocate General shall give the National Convention, the Commander-in-Chief and the National Council of Administration such legal assistance and counsel and perform such other duties as may be incident to his office or as may from time to time be

required of him by the laws and usages of the organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

(j) **Chief of Staff:** Under the supervision of the Commander-in-Chief, the Chief of Staff shall perform the duties incident to his office as the Commander-in-Chief and National Council of Administration may require and such other duties as may from time to time be required of him by the laws and usages of the organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

(k) **Inspector General:** Under the supervision of the Commander-in-Chief, the Inspector General shall perform the duties incident to his office as the Commander-in-Chief and National Council of Administration may require and such other duties as may from time to time be required of him by the laws and usages of the organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

(l) **Surgeon General:** The Surgeon General shall perform the duties properly pertaining to the office and such other duties as may be incident to his office or as may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of this organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

(m) **Sergeant-at-Arms:** Under the supervision of the Commander-in-Chief, the Sergeant-at-Arms and Assistant Sergeants-at-Arms shall perform the duties incident to their office as the Commander-in-Chief and National Council of Administration may require and such other duties as may from time to time be required of them by the laws and usages of the organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

(n) **Other Officers:** Other officers shall have such powers and duties as may be provided in the By-Laws, the Manual of Procedure or may be assigned by the National Convention, National Council of Administration or the Commander-in-Chief. (Approved)

M-27 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 618-National Council of Administration-Composition, Powers and Duties.

Amend Section 618-National Council of Administration-Composition, Powers and Duties., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Sec. 618-Officers; Duties and Obligations.

(See Section 618 By-Laws.) (Approved)

B-28 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI– NATIONAL CONVENTION

Add Section 619- National Committees., National By-Laws, as follows:

Sec. 619-National Committees.

There shall be the following National committees:

- a. National Veterans Service Advisory Committee.
- b. National Committee on Awards and Citations.
- c. Trust Fund Committee.
- d. Political Action Committee.

The Commander-in-Chief may establish such other committees as may be appropriate to properly conduct the affairs of the National Organization and disband such other committees as may be appropriate. The Commander-in-Chief may appoint the committee chairmen and members and remove them at his pleasure.

(a) **National Veterans Service Advisory Committee.**

(1) **Composition:** The National Veterans Service Advisory Committee shall consist of the Commander-in-Chief, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief and the four immediate Past Commanders-in-Chief. Whenever a Commander-in-Chief shall retire at the end of his term, he shall thereupon become a member of the National Veterans Service Advisory Committee and the senior Past Commander-in-Chief shall thereupon retire from the Committee.

(2) Under the supervision of the National Council of Administration, and subject to provisions of the National By-Laws and orders of the National Convention, the National Veterans Service Advisory Committee shall establish the policy under which the Veterans Service work of the organization shall be conducted and may thereto make appropriate budget recommendations.

(3) The National Veterans Service Advisory Committee shall establish the practice and procedures for representation by service officers accredited by the Department of Veterans Affairs or other federal government agencies through the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

(4) All welfare, poppy and service monies allocated to Veterans Service work shall be kept in a separate fund and disbursed as prescribed in Section 618(d) of these By-Laws.

(5) Departments may provide in their By-Laws the means of organization and control of their respective Veterans Service work.

(b) **National Committee on Awards and Citations.**

(1) **Composition:** The National Committee on Awards and Citations shall consist of five (5) members appointed by the Commander-in-Chief, subject to confirmation by the National Council of Administration, with the Commander-in-Chief serving as an ex-officio member. One member shall be appointed each year for a five-year term. The Commander-in-Chief shall designate the Chairman each year.

(2) The National Committee on Awards and Citations shall determine the name, title, type and style of each authorized award or citation, the qualifications and/or accomplishments of the suggested recipients and shall make recommendations with respect thereto to the National Council of Administration for its approval.

(c) **Trust Fund Committee.**

(1) **Composition:** The Trust Fund Committee shall consist of the Commander-in-Chief, Adjutant General, Quartermaster General and three (3) members elected by the National Council of Administration. One member shall be elected each year for a three-year term. The Quartermaster General will be the Treasurer of the Trust Fund

Committee.

(2) The Trust Fund Committee shall have custody of monies contributed by donors for the express purpose of promoting the objectives and purposes of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. The committee shall have broad administrative powers. It shall invest and reinvest funds in its custody in Class A securities and administer said trust funds in the best interests of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

(d) **Political Action Committee.**

(1) **Composition:** The Political Action Committee shall consist of a Director, a Treasurer and a nine (9) member Board of Directors. The nine (9) member Board of Directors shall be appointed by the Commander-in-Chief. Two members shall be appointed each year for a four-year term. One member, as recommended by the National President, Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, shall be appointed each year for a one-year term. The Director and Treasurer will be appointed annually by the Commander-in-Chief with the approval of the Board of Directors. The Commander-in-Chief may also appoint members to fulfill unexpired terms created by a vacancy on the board.

(2) The Political Action Committee shall have custody of and authority to expend monies contributed to it for the advancement of the purposes of the Veterans of Foreign Wars by political action in elections to federal office in the United States. The Political Action Committee shall report annually to the National Convention and periodically to the National Council of Administration at its request detailing all receipts and expenditures. The Political Action Committee shall adopt By-Laws governing the operation of the Committee. Said By-Laws and any amendments thereto shall be presented to and approved by the Council of Administration. (Approved)

M-28 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Amend ARTICLE VI-NATIONAL CONVENTION, Manual of Procedure, by adding the following:

Sec. 619-National Committees.

(See Section 619 By-Laws.) (Approved)

B-29 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI– NATIONAL CONVENTION

Add Section 620- Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members., National By-Laws, as follows:

Sec. 620- Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members.

Vacancies. All vacancies occurring in the elective offices of the National organization will be filled as prescribed in Section 620 of the Manual of Procedure.

Removal. Elective officers or committee members can be removed as prescribed in Section 620 of the Manual of Procedure.

The Commander-in-Chief with the concurrence of the National Council of Administration may, with respect to any elected or appointed officer, remove any National officer who fails to fulfill the duties of his office as required by Section 618.

Any National officer removed by the Commander-in-Chief for reason of failure to pay current dues or under the provisions of this section, shall not be eligible to serve in any National office in the same administrative year in which the officer is removed. (Approved)

M-29 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Amend ARTICLE VI-NATIONAL CONVENTION, Manual of Procedure, by adding the following:

Sec. 620-Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members.

Vacancies: In the event of a vacancy in the office of Commander-in-Chief, the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief shall at once succeed to the title and duties of the office, and the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief shall become the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. In the event of a vacancy in the office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief shall at once succeed to the title and duties of that office. In the event of a vacancy in the office of a Regional Council member, the respective Department Council of Administration shall fill the vacancy for the unexpired term.

All other vacancies occurring in the elective offices of the National Convention shall be filled by the National Council of Administration. The Commander-in-Chief shall duly notify all members of the Council that the vacancy exists and fifteen (15) days thereafter shall advise them of the names of comrades presented for the same. Members of the council may vote to fill such vacancy by using sealed envelopes marked "ballot," enclosed in an envelope, and forwarded directly to the Adjutant General. These ballots shall be opened at a time specified by the Commander-in-Chief by tellers appointed by him in the presence of such officers of the National Convention as the Commander-in-Chief may designate. The comrade receiving the highest number of votes shall be declared duly elected to the office designated.

Removal: The Commander-in-Chief or the National Council of Administration may declare vacant the position of any National officer or Regional Council member who, without valid excuse, misses two (2) consecutive

meetings of the constituent body of which he is an officer or Regional Council member. When such removal is by the Commander-in-Chief, the officer or Regional Council member may appeal to the National Council of Administration. Such appeal shall be in the manner prescribed in Section 109 for appeals to the National Council of Administration.

The Commander-in-Chief retains authority to remove officers, committee chairmen and committees appointed by him at any time provided, however, that salaried officers appointed by the Commander-in-Chief may only be removed by the Commander-in-Chief with the concurrence of the National Council of Administration. (Approved)

B-30 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI– NATIONAL CONVENTION

Add Section 621- Voting., National By-Laws, as follows:

Sec. 621- Voting.

Each member of the National Convention as those persons are defined in Section 604, except delegates elected by the Posts, present at a meeting of the National Convention will be entitled to one (1) vote, and an individual possessing more than one (1) qualification for membership in the National Convention shall have no more than one vote. The delegate or delegates of a Post present at a meeting of the National Convention shall be entitled to vote the full delegate strength to which the Post is entitled. The Department Commander shall be vested and directed to cast the entire voting strength of his Department, subject to the will of the delegation present. A roll call vote may be required and entered upon the record at the call of any ten (10) delegates from Posts in separate Departments. Procedure not outlined herein shall be according to rules of procedure adopted by the National Convention or according to Demeter's Manual of Parliamentary Law and Procedure. (Approved)

M-30 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Amend ARTICLE VI-NATIONAL CONVENTION, Manual of Procedure, by adding the following:

Sec. 621-Voting.
(See Section 621 By-Law.) (Approved)

B-31 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI– NATIONAL CONVENTION

Add Section 622- National Council of Administration-Composition,

Powers and Duties, National By-Laws, as follows:

Sec. 622- National Council of Administration-Composition, Powers and Duties.

(a) **Composition:** There will be a National Council of Administration which shall consist of:

1. **National:** All elective National Officers, the Adjutant General, Chief of Staff and Inspector General.
2. **Department:** Each Department shall be entitled to representation on the National Council of Administration as prescribed in Section 623 of the By-Laws.
3. **Past Commander-in-Chief:** The immediate past Commander-in-Chief shall also be a member.

(b) **Powers and Duties:**

(1) **Administration of Affairs Between Conventions:** The National Council of Administration shall be responsible for administering the affairs and transacting the business of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States in the intervals between conventions. The Council shall be governed in its duties by the mandates of the National Convention and by the Congressional Charter, By-Laws, Manual of Procedure, Ritual and laws and usages of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

(2) **Budget:** The National Council of Administration shall, at a stated meeting not less than thirty (30) days nor more than ninety (90) days following the National Convention, approve and adopt an annual budget. The National Council of Administration shall have full power to fix salaries of all officers and employees of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

(3) **Audits--Accounts:** The National Council of Administration shall have the power to audit the accounts of the National officers and/or employees and require that the records and accounts of the Adjutant General and Quartermaster General be audited at least once annually by a Certified Public Accountant (firm).

(4) **Disposition of Property:** In the case of surrender or forfeiture of the charter of a Department, the National Council of Administration shall have the authority to make disposition of all properties taken over from such Department, and its actions therein shall be final. The National Council of Administration shall have full power, by resolution, to authorize the purchase by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of real estate deemed necessary and incidental for the corporate purposes of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and to authorize the sale and conveyance of any real estate owned by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. They may direct the execution by the Commander-in-Chief, on behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, of any deeds or other documents necessary to convey title to a purchaser, pursuant to such resolution, any such deed or document to have the seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States affixed and to be attested by the Quartermaster General.

(5) **Manual of Procedure:** It shall be the duty of the National Council of Administration to adopt, amend and promulgate a Manual of

Procedure and provisions and amendments thereto for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States not inconsistent with these By-Laws. The Manual of Procedure or amendments adopted by the National Council of Administration may also be amended or deleted by a majority vote of the National Convention.

(6) **Ritual:** It shall be the duty of the National Council of Administration to adopt, amend and promulgate a Ritual for governmental and ceremonial purposes. The Ritual may also be amended or deleted by a majority vote of the National Convention.

(7) **Regular Meetings:** The National Council of Administration shall meet in regular session not less than twice each year

(8) **Special Meetings:** The Commander-in-Chief may call a special meeting of the National Council of Administration whenever the same may be necessary for the welfare of the National Organization. The Commander-in-Chief shall call a special meeting upon written request signed by a majority of the members of the National Council of Administration. In case the Commander-in-Chief refuses to call such meeting, the National Council of Administration may proceed to hold such meeting, due notice of which shall be sent to all members of the National Council of Administration by the Adjutant General not later than ten (10) days prior to the date of said meeting. The meeting shall be convened within thirty (30) days after the request is submitted to the Commander-in-Chief. When a special meeting of the National Council of Administration is to be held by order of the Commander-in-Chief or upon the call of the members of the National Council of Administration acting within authority conferred by this section, it shall be the duty of the Quartermaster General to pay to the members of the Council of Administration minimum necessary expenses required to attend the special meeting, wherever it may be held.

(9) **Time and Place:** Regular and special meetings, shall be conducted in Kansas City, Missouri, except that one meeting may be held in such other place as the council shall determine, and except such meetings as may be held in the National Convention city immediately prior to and subsequent to the National Convention.

(10) **Quorum:** A majority of the members of the National Council of Administration shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

(11) **Proceedings:** The National Council of Administration shall keep a full and detailed record of its proceedings and shall submit to its members and Department Commanders abstracts of its proceedings.

(12) **Voting:** Each member of the National Council of Administration present at a meeting shall be entitled to one vote. On matters requiring action by the National Council of Administration between stated meetings, the Commander-in-Chief may direct the Adjutant General to conduct mail ballots, the results of such mail ballots shall be reported for the record at the next stated meeting.

(13) Any valid action taken by the National Council of Administration in the performance of its duties shall be effective upon passage and shall remain in effect until such time as it may be terminated or superseded by the National Council of Administration or by a

National Convention acting within the limits of its own authority.
(Approved)

M-31 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Amend ARTICLE VI-NATIONAL CONVENTION, Manual of Procedure, by adding the following:

Sec. 622-National Council of Administration-Composition, Powers and Duties.

(See Section 622 By-Laws.) (Approved)

B-32 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI– NATIONAL CONVENTION

Add Section 623- Regional National Council of Administration Members –How Elected., National By-Laws, as follows:

Sec. 623- Regional National Council of Administration Members –How Elected.

Each Department of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall be entitled to representation on the National Council of Administration for a consecutive period of two years in the order listed below.

Each Regional District enumerated below shall be represented by a National Council Member who is a member in good standing of a Post in the Department currently entitled to representation on the National Council of Administration. The Department Convention preceding the National Convention at which the term is to commence shall, in the same manner and at the same time as Department officers are elected, elect a National Council Member who shall be installed into office at the National Convention. Council members representing even-numbered districts shall be elected in even-numbered years and those representing odd-numbered districts shall be elected in odd-numbered years.

Regional districts consisting of a single Department having in excess of 70,000 members shall bear alphabetical rather than numerical designations. The regional districts designated D and H shall elect a National Council Member in even-numbered years for a two-year term and Districts A, B, C, G and J shall elect a National Council Member in odd-numbered years for a two-year term.

1. Maine, New Hampshire.
2. Vermont, Massachusetts.
3. Maryland, New Jersey.
4. District of Columbia, Delaware, Europe.
5. Indiana, Missouri.

6. Virginia, West Virginia.
7. Tennessee, Kentucky.
8. Georgia, Alabama.
9. South Carolina, North Carolina.
10. Oklahoma, Arkansas.
11. Wisconsin, Iowa.
12. North Dakota, Wyoming.
13. Kansas, Colorado.
14. Montana, Washington, Idaho.
15. New Mexico, Arizona.
16. Latin America/Caribbean, Pacific Areas, Alaska, Hawaii.
17. Utah, Nevada, Oregon.
18. Connecticut, Rhode Island.
19. Louisiana, Mississippi.
21. Minnesota, Nebraska.
23. Michigan, South Dakota.
- A. Pennsylvania.
- B. Illinois.
- C. New York.
- D. Ohio.
- G. California.
- H. Texas.
- J. Florida.

If a Department attains membership in excess of 70,000 total members before July 1, it shall constitute a regional district. If any Department previously constituting a regional district fails to reach a total Department membership of 70,000 members before July 1, the Department shall no longer constitute a regional district. In the event any Department changes status as the result of a change in membership, the Commander-in-Chief shall submit a proposed amendment assigning Departments to respective numerical or alphabetical regional districts as appropriate. Notwithstanding any other provision of this Section, it is the intent that each Department shall be represented on the National Council of Administration at all times. If any action, or failure to act, on the part of the National Convention would result in a Department not being represented, the Commander-in-Chief shall, with the concurrence of the affected Departments, immediately after the National Convention, assign a National Council Member from one of the numerical regional districts to represent that Department until the next National Convention. Should the issue of representation not be resolved at the next National Convention, the National Council of Administration would be empowered to assign the Department to a Regional District.

Notwithstanding the provisions in Section 1401 of the National By-Laws, any amendment to this Section shall take effect immediately upon passage at the National Convention. (Approved)

M-32 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Amend ARTICLE VI-NATIONAL CONVENTION, Manual of Procedure, by adding the following:

Sec. 623-Regional National Council of Administration Members – How Elected.

(See Section 623 By-Laws.) (Approved)

B-33 (Proposed by Department of Michigan)

ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 703-Bonds.

Amend Section 703 –Bonds., National By-Laws, by adding the words “or Theft Insurance” to the end of the section title and adding the following paragraphs at the end of the section:

Or, if the Department By-Laws so provide, each officer accountable for funds or property pursuant to any provision of the By-Laws may be insured against theft with an insurance company in a sum at least equal to the amount of the liquid assets for which, so far as can be anticipated, he may be accountable. The theft insurance premium shall be paid from the funds of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the Department, District or Post, as the case may be, to which each officer is accountable.

The theft insurance of such accountable officers, in amount and as to insured officer, shall be approved by their respective units and held by their respective Commanders. The Commander of each unit shall be responsible for the proper and adequate theft insurance of all accountable officers in his unit. Each office to be covered by the policy shall be specifically named and each such officer shall be covered by the policy regardless if that person is an employee or a volunteer. (Disapproved)

B-34 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VII– MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 705-Official Publication.

Amend Section 705- Official Publication., National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

An official publication will be issued by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Orders and official notices published in the official publication shall be deemed to be sufficient notice to all members. (Approved)

B-35 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VII– MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 707-Name in Newspapers and Periodicals.

Amend Section 707-Name in Newspapers and Periodicals., National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Sec. 707 (Approved)

M-33 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 707-Name in Newspapers and Periodicals.

Amend Section 707- Name in Newspapers and Periodicals., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Sec. 707 (Approved)

B-36 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VII– MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 708-Incorporation of Units and Other Activities.

Amend Section 708-Incorporation of Units and Other Activities., National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Posts, Districts, and Departments of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall be incorporated within the state where they are located as prescribed in the Manual of Procedure.

No unit chartered by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, and no activities, clubrooms, holding companies or units sponsored or conducted or operated by, for or in behalf of any such chartered unit, shall separately from the Post, incorporate under the laws of the state in which it is located for any purposes whatsoever unless the Articles of Incorporation of such chartered unit and any incorporated activities, clubrooms, holding companies or units sponsored, conducted or operated by, for or in its behalf shall include those provisions specified in the Manual of Procedure. Chartered units failing to comply with the provisions of this Section or failing to cause compliance by activities, clubrooms, holding companies or units sponsored, conducted or operated by, for or on behalf of such chartered unit shall be subject to suspension or revocation of charter.

Should any state incorporation law prohibit provisions specified in the Manual of Procedure for Articles of Incorporation, it shall be permissible to change the wording of such provision sufficiently so that the Certificate of Incorporation will conform to the state laws and at the same time protect the interests of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

The name “Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States” or some col-

orable imitation thereof by any corporation shall be by license only, which may be revoked for cause. (Approved)

M-34 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 708-Incorporation of Units-Permission to Incorporate.

Amend Section 708-Incorporation of Units-Permission to Incorporate., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Sec. 708--Incorporation of Units and Other Activities.

Proposed Articles of Incorporation and amendments thereto shall be forwarded to the Department Commander for review through channels to the Adjutant General for review by the Commander-in-Chief for compliance with this Section. Articles shall not be filed with the appropriate state officials until review has been completed. No proposed Articles or amendments thereto shall be reviewed by the Commander-in-Chief unless so recommended by the Department Commander.

The Commander-in-Chief shall assure the Articles of Incorporation contain the following provisions: (1) "The active and voting membership of this corporation shall at all times consist of and be confined to the active membership in good standing in Post No..... Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, with eligibility to, acquiring of, suspension from and discontinuance of membership being in accordance with the National Charter and By-Laws of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States." (2) "This incorporated subordinate unit of the Veterans of Foreign Wars shall, at all times, remain under the jurisdiction of and be governed according to the Congressional Charter and By-Laws of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. In the event that any provision of this Certificate of Incorporation conflicts with the National Charter and By-Laws of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, such conflicting provisions shall be deemed null and void, and the National Charter and By-Laws shall, at all times, govern." (3) "In the event of dissolution of this corporation all of the assets shall be the property of Post No. Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States; and in the event of the simultaneous dissolution of this corporation and of the forfeiture of the charter issued by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States to said subordinate unit then, and in that event, title to all of the assets of this corporation shall pass to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States to be disposed of in accordance with the National By-Laws, rules and regulations of the said Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. At no time shall the assets of the corporation be distributed among the individual members thereof."

To the extent the Articles of Incorporation of incorporated units provide that title to property shall pass to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States in the event of simultaneous dissolution of the corporation and forfeiture of the charter, the disposition of such property will be made

in accordance with sections 210, 410, and 510 of the National By-Laws.
(Approved)

B-37 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VII– MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 709-Control of Units.

Amend Section 709-Control of Units., National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall not be responsible for the negligent or wrongful acts or omissions nor the contractual obligations or debts of any Post, County Council, District or Department nor for the negligent or wrongful acts or omissions or contractual obligations or debts of any activity, clubroom, holding company or unit sponsored, conducted or operated by, for or in behalf of any Post, County Council, District or Department. Any activity, clubroom, holding company or unit sponsored, conducted or operated by, for or in behalf of a Post, County Council, District or Department shall be at all times under the direct control of such Post, County Council, District or Department and all funds derived there from shall be at all times under the direct control of such Post, County Council, District or Department.

Any Post owning and/or operating, directly or by reason of a holding company or other entity substantially controlled by the Post or its members, a canteen, clubroom or other facility available to members or guests must maintain general liability insurance, including, if necessary or appropriate, liquor liability insurance. Such insurance must be of a type and amount sufficient to protect the Post and must name, as additional insureds, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the Department in which such Post is located.

All money, property or assets of any kind or nature, as well as all books and records, owned, held or used by any activity, clubroom, holding company or unit sponsored, conducted or operated by, for or in behalf of a Post, County Council, District or Department shall be the property of such Post, County Council, District or Department and must be placed in the care and custody of the respective Quartermaster. Such money, property, assets, books and records shall be subject to the same rules and under the same procedure as any other Post, County Council, District or Department money, property, assets, books and records.

No Post, County Council, District or Department and no activity, clubroom or holding company or unit sponsored, conducted or operated by, for or on behalf of any Post, County Council, District or Department may own any property jointly or in common with any individual, firm, partnership, association, corporation or other business or charitable entity, including veterans organizations nor may they participate in any arrangement whereby the funds of such Post, County Council, District or Department or activity, clubroom, holding company or unit sponsored, conducted or operated by, for or in its behalf are expended on property held by another entity for the joint use of such Post, County Council, District or Department

and other individuals, firms, partnerships, associations, corporations or other business or charitable entities, including veterans organizations.

Title to all real property of unincorporated Posts, County Councils and Districts shall be taken in the name of the regularly elected trustees of said units, and their successors in office, to be held, used and enjoyed in trust for its members. When the laws of the respective states shall require the delivery of a bill of sale to establish ownership of property, such bills of sale shall also be made to the trustees of said units, and their successors in office, in trust for the members thereof.

In addition to other legal requirements under existing local laws or Department By-Laws, no Post, County Council, District, or any holding company or corporation subordinate thereto, shall purchase, sell or otherwise transfer title or any interest in any real estate unless written notice of such proposal has first been given to each member of said unit ten (10) days prior to such regular or special meeting at which the proposal is to be considered, and then only by two-thirds (2/3) vote of approval of those members present and voting at such regular or special meeting. In addition, at least thirty (30) days prior to such meeting, notice shall be provided to the Department Commander who shall review any sale, purchase, transfer or encumbrance to determine whether such transaction serves the purposes of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States as prescribed in the Congressional Charter. Failure to comply with these provisions shall nullify said transaction.

When properly approved by the members of the Post, the Commander and Quartermaster shall be authorized to sign such legal documents required to sell or purchase real property. (Approved)

M-35 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 709-Control of Units.

Amend Section 709-Control of Units., Manual of Procedure, by inserting in the first sentence the word “an” before “Act of Congress.” and in the last sentence of the second paragraph after “historical,” add “charitable”. (Approved)

B-38 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VII– MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 710-Inspection.

Amend Section 710-Inspection., National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

The Commander-in-Chief or any Department Commander may require, within his respective jurisdiction, the inspection of any Department, District, County Council or Post, or any holding company or corporation

subordinate thereto, whenever he may believe the best interests of the Organization will be served to insure compliance with the National Charter, By-Laws, Manual of Procedure, lawful orders of the National Convention, the National Council of Administration and the Commander-in-Chief and the laws and usages of the Organization. For this purpose he may detail any member within his respective jurisdiction whose duties shall be prescribed by the appointing power. All books, papers, accounts, records and proceedings pertaining to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall be subject to inspection at all times. (Approved)

M-36 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 710-Inspection.

Amend Section 710-Inspection., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

(See Section 710 By-Laws.) (Approved)

B-39 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VII– MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 712-National Honor Guard.

Amend Section 712-National Honor Guard., National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Sec. 712-National Color Guard.

A National Color Guard of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States may be organized and function as prescribed in the Manual of Procedure. It shall be governed by and under the control of the Commander-in-Chief. (Disapproved)

M-37 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 712-National Honor Guard.

Amend Section 712-National Honor Guard., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Sec. 712-National Color Guard.

Name and Control. The National Color Guard, Veterans of Foreign Wars

of the United States, shall be governed by and under the control of the Commander-in- Chief.

Eligibility. Only active members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall be eligible for membership in the National Color Guard of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

Inspection. The National Color Guard, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, shall be subject to inspection by the Commander-in-Chief or such officer or officers as he may designate for such duty as occasion arises. (Disapproved)

M-38 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 713-Language Prescribed.

Amend Section 713-Language Prescribed., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

(See Section 713 By-Laws.) (Approved)

M-39 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 714-Control of Mailing Lists.

Amend Section 714-Control of Mailing Lists., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

(See Section 714 By-Laws.) (Approved)

M-40 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 715-Rebate on Sales.

Amend Section 715-Rebate on Sales., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

(See Section 715 By-Laws.) (Approved)

M-41 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 716-Title of Department Officers.

Amend Section 716-Title of Department Officers., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

(See Section 716 By-Laws.) (Approved)

B-40 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VII– MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 719-Past Officers.

Amend Section 719-Past Officers., National By-Laws, by removing the words “County Council” from the first paragraph and substituting for the second paragraph the following:

For purposes of Sections 404, and 504, the term “Past Commander” includes only those persons whose service as a Commander was in that respective District or Department or in one which was consolidated or merged into it. (Approved)

M-42 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Amend ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS, Manual of Procedure, by adding the following:

Sec. 719 – Past Officers.

(See Section 719 By-Laws.) (Approved)

B-41 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VII– MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 720-Definitions.

Amend Section 720- Definitions., National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

“Unit,” as used in Section 709 of these By-Laws refers to an entity or group other than the sponsoring Post, District or Department. In all other instances the term “unit” or “subordinate unit” refers only to a duly chartered Post, District or Department and does not, under any circumstances, refer to any activity, clubroom or holding company sponsored by any Post,

District or Department.

“This Organization” or “National Organization,” as used in these By-Laws, refers to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the body corporate created by Act of Congress, 36 U.S.C. 111 et seq.

“He, His, Him” as used in these By-Laws, Manual of Procedure, and Ritual shall include both male and female persons.

“Resign, Resignation” means deliberately giving up an office or membership, i.e. quitting. Resignation from an office in this Organization or any unit shall become effective immediately upon the communication to resign in writing or orally to the respective Commander, or at a regular or special meeting of the chartered unit. (Approved)

M-43 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Amend ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS, Manual of Procedure, by adding the following:

Sec. 720 – Definitions.

(See Section 720 By-Laws.) (Approved)

B-42 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VIII– UNIFORMS, BADGES, ETC.

Sec. 803-Manufacture and Use of Seals, Emblems, Badges, Insignia and Uniforms.

Amend Section 803- Manufacture and Use of Seals, Emblems, Badges, Insignia and Uniforms., National By-Laws, by substituting for the first two paragraphs the following:

The design, manufacture and use of seals, uniforms, emblems, badges and insignia and goods and services using such seals, uniforms, badges, emblems or insignia shall be as provided in the Manual of Procedure.

No person shall be entitled to use or wear any seal, emblem, badge, insignia, or uniform of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States unless he is a member in good standing or is authorized by the National Headquarters.

Ownership of all seals, badges, emblems and insignia shall remain vested in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the right to use or wear such seals, badges, emblems, insignia or uniforms shall be a license only which shall be automatically revoked when such person ceases to be a member or authorization is revoked.

No member or other person shall use or wear any seal, emblem, badge, insignia or uniform of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States while engaged in any commercial or political activity in such a manner as likely to falsely convey that such activity is approved or endorsed by the

Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. The Commander-in-Chief may, in his sole discretion, order that a member or other person cease and desist from any activity determined by him likely to falsely convey approval or endorsement by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. (Approved)

M-44 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VIII – UNIFORMS, BADGES, ETC.

Sec. 803-Manufacture and Use of Seals, Emblems, Badges, Insignia and Uniforms.

Amend Section 803-Manufacture and Use of Seals, Emblems, Badges, Insignia and Uniforms., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

Authority to Manufacture. The seals, uniforms, emblems, badges and insignia of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, or goods bearing same, shall be manufactured only on order of or with the express written consent of the Commander-in-Chief, Quartermaster General, or with the express written consent of the National Convention or the National Council of Administration. No subordinate unit, member or person shall engage, by contract or otherwise, for the manufacture of such seals, uniforms, badges, emblems or insignia, or goods bearing same, unless written consent for doing so has been obtained from the Commander-in-Chief, Quartermaster General, the National Convention or the National Council of Administration.

Cap. A cap of the overseas type, lettered with VFW initials, Post numerals, state, rank of office (when applicable), and bearing the Cross of Malta emblem, shall be the regulation cap to be worn with or without the uniform. The color shall be green, shade 51. Lettering on each cap shall be in gold.

Organizational echelons will be designated by the color of the braid (piping) and letters on the caps as follows:

Post officers, members and Past Post Commanders -- gold braid; County Council officers and Past County Council Commanders -- bright blue braid; District officers, except District Commanders and Past District Commanders -- bright green braid; Department officers and Past Department officers, Conference officers and Past Conference officers, and District Commanders and Past District Commanders -- bright red braid; National officers and Past Commanders-in-Chief -- silver braid.

The National Council of Administration may designate other colors or color combinations of the cap, braid and lettering to be worn on the caps of All-American and All-State honorees, life members and aides-de-camp. Past Commanders-in-Chief and National officers with a Council vote, other than National District Council Members, may wear white caps with gold lettering and braid.

Regulation caps shall be worn by elected and appointed officers at all official meetings.

Uniforms. Subject to the approval of the sponsoring units, color guards, drill teams and similar units may adopt optional uniforms and campaign

hats, berets, helmets or other headgear for wear at parades, assemblies and similar events and at official functions in the performance of duties. Headgear shall be uniform for all members of the unit. If organizational emblems are worn on VFW Color Guard Headgear, one of them must be the Cross of Malta.

Uniform Patches and Pins. American or US Flag patches may be placed on either or both sleeves, provided the star field is on top and facing forward. When worn in this manner, it gives the effect of the flag flying in the breeze as the wearer moves forward. Hence it requires a proper left and/or right-sided flag patch, which is worn centered on the sleeve(s) one-half of one inch to one inch (1/2"-1") down from the shoulder seam.

Collar pins, VFW and unit number, may be placed as follows: VFW pin(s) on left or on both collar tabs so that the bottom is parallel to the ground one-half of one inch to one inch (1/2"-1") above the tip; the Unit Number Pin, if used, on the right collar tab so that the bottom is parallel to the ground, one-half of one inch to one inch (1/2"-1") above the tip.

Grave Markers. The official grave marker of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall be the same design as the Great Seal of the Order and shall be manufactured only under authority granted by the National Council of Administration in such size and of such materials as the Council shall from time to time determine. (Approved)

M-45 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VIII – UNIFORMS, BADGES, ETC.

Amend ARTICLE VIII – UNIFORMS, BADGES, ETC., Manual of Procedure, by adding the following:

Sec. 804-Official Name.

(See Section 804 By-Laws.) (Approved)

B-43 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VIII– UNIFORMS, BADGES, ETC.

Sec. 805-Trademarks; Service Marks.

Amend Section 805- Trademarks; Service Marks., National By-Laws, by substituting the following for the section title:

Sec. 805-Trademarks; Service Marks, Publications.
and the following paragraph at the end of the section:

Publications. The name “Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States” or any colorable imitation thereof, shall not be used by any individual members, group of members, Post, County Council, District, Department or any other individual, firm or corporation in connection with any publication, including electronic unless permission for the use of the name

“Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States” or some colorable imitation thereof has been granted to the publisher of such publication. Such permission will be a license only subject to immediate revocation by the Commander-in-Chief, with or without notice. (Approved)

M-46 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VIII – UNIFORMS, BADGES, ETC.

Amend ARTICLE VIII – UNIFORMS, BADGES, ETC., Manual of Procedure, by adding the following:

Sec. 805-Trademarks; Service Marks, Publications.

(See Section 805 By-Laws.) (Approved)

B-44 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE IX– DISCIPLINE

Sec. 901-Discipline of Members.

Amend Section 901- Discipline of Members,. National By-Laws, by deleting the last paragraph of the section. (Approved)

B-45 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE IX– DISCIPLINE

Sec. 902-Offenses.

Amend Section 902-Offenses., National By-Laws, by substituting the following for numbers 13., 14., 15. and 16.:

13. Willfully or neglectfully, directly or willingly suffering the damaging, destroying or losing any such money or other property described in subparagraph 12 above.

14. Aiding, abetting, counseling, concealing, commanding, conspiring, soliciting, procuring or causing to be done any act which, if done, would be punishable under this Article.

15. Knowingly making or causing to be made a false entry in or false alteration of a government record. Knowingly conveying or causing to be conveyed in any form false information concerning one’s military record.

16. Knowingly providing false information or statements in connection with the initiation of charges against another member. (Approved)

B-46 (Proposed by Department of North Carolina)

ARTICLE IX – DISCIPLINE

Sec. 902-Offenses.

Amend Section 902– Offenses., National By-Laws, by substituting the first sentence of the first paragraph with the following:

Members of the VFW and its Auxiliaries who commit offenses recognized by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall be subject to Disciplinary Action and may be assessed the penalties provided in this Article. (Disapproved)

B-47 (Proposed by Department of Missouri)

ARTICLE IX – DISCIPLINE

Sec. 903-Procedures for Disciplinary Actions.

Amend Section 903– Procedures for Disciplinary Actions, National By-Laws, (e) Procedure-No Hearing Requested. , by adding the following sentence at the end of the first paragraph:

Penalties imposed shall have full force and effect unless and until reversed by appeal.

and also amend (f) Procedure-Disciplinary Hearing Requested., by adding the following sentence at the end of the paragraph:

Determinations of the hearing panel shall have full force and effect unless and until reversed by appeal. (Disapproved)

B-48 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE IX– DISCIPLINE

Sec. 906-Prima Facie Case.

Amend Section 906- Prima Facie Case., National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

If the accused member has been convicted of a felony, or a misdemeanor or ordinance violation subjecting him to discipline under Section 902 (6) or (7), certified copies of the court record of conviction or plea shall be conclusive evidence of a violation of said Section and a Disciplinary Hearing Panel may hear the matter as if the accused were willfully absent. (Approved)

B-49 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE IX– DISCIPLINE

Sec. 907-Penalties.

Amend Section 907- Penalties., National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Penalties for offenses recognized by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall be:

1. Termination of membership.
2. Suspension from membership for a specified period of time.
3. Suspension of certain rights or privileges of membership for a specified period of time.
4. Suspension or removal from office.
5. Reprimand.
6. By other administrative action deemed appropriate.
(Approved)

M-47 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE X – RULES OF ORDER

Sec. 1002-Order of Business-National and Department Conventions.

Amend Sec. 1002-Order of Business-National and Department Conventions., Manual of Procedure, by deleting the number 11. before the last sentence of the section. (Approved)

M-48 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE X – RULES OF ORDER

Sec. 1003-Order of Business-Districts and County Councils.

Amend Sec. 1003-Order of Business-Districts and County Councils., Manual of Procedure, by removing “and County Councils” from the section title. (Approved)

B-50 (Proposed by Department of Florida)

ARTICLE XIII – MEN’S AUXILIARY

Sec. 1301-Formation.

Amend Section 1301 –Formation., National By-Laws, by deleting the second paragraph, and adding the following:

Departments are authorized to issue charters to units other than those sponsored by a Post. Departments are authorized to issue charters to Districts determined by the Department Convention assembled. The Depart-

ment Convention assembled shall determine the number of Districts and the geographical boundaries thereof that shall be established in the Department. No District shall be established with less than (3) auxiliaries and seventy-five (75) members. Formation, control and disbandment of these associations, as well as suspension or cancellation of charters, shall be in the manner prescribed in the Manual of Procedure and as may be provided in Department By-Laws not inconsistent with the Manual.

A charter shall be issued by the Department Commander to such Districts as the Department Convention determines to establish. The charter shall be signed by the Department Commander and countersigned by the Department Adjutant. (Disapproved)

B-51 (Proposed by Department of Virginia)

ARTICLE XIII – MENS AUXILIARY

Sec. 1301-Formation.

Amend Section 1301– Formation., National By-Laws, by replacing the section with following:

Sec. 1301-Organization and Disbandment of Auxiliaries.

The Men's Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is a national association of eligible members heretofore chartered by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Such association shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the Commander-in-Chief and the National Council of Administration.

The Men's Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall be governed by such By-Laws, Rules and Regulations and Ritual as may be adopted by it and by the lawful orders issued by the National Officers of the Veterans of Foreign wars of the United States, provided such By-Laws, Rules and Regulations, Rituals, and orders do not conflict with the Congressional Charter or the orders or directives of the National Convention.

The Men's Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States may issue charters to Post Auxiliaries provided by the By-Laws of the Department having jurisdiction separately constituted as a subordinate unit.

Departments are not authorized to issue charters to units other than those sponsored by the Post. Formation, control and disbandment of these associations, as well as suspension or cancellation charters, shall be in the manner prescribed in the Manual of Procedure. (Disapproved)

M-49 (Proposed by Department of Virginia)

ARTICLE XIII – MENS AUXILIARY

Sec. 1301-Organization and Disbandment of Mens Auxiliaries.

Amend Section 1301– Organization and Disbandment of Mens Auxiliaries., Manual of Procedure, (a) Formation., by deleting the first paragraph and substituting the following:

Men’s Auxiliaries shall be formed in accordance with the following provisions and such other provisions as may be required by the Standard Operating Procedure and Department By-Laws and the By-Laws, Rules and Regulations and Ritual of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Such association shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the Commander-in-Chief and the National Council of Administration. (Disapproved)

B-52 (Proposed by Department of Tennessee)

ARTICLE XIII – MENS AUXILIARY

Sec. 1302-Eligibility.

Amend Section 1302– Eligibility., National By-Laws, by substituting the first paragraph sentence with the following:

Membership in the Mens Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars shall be limited to husbands, widowers, fathers, grandfathers, sons, brothers and half brothers who attained that status prior to age sixteen (16) and male direct descendants and husbands of direct female descendants of persons who were or are eligible for membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. (Disapproved)

M-50 (Proposed by Department of Tennessee)

ARTICLE XIII – MENS AUXILIARY

Sec. 1302-Eligibility.

Amend Section 1302– Eligibility., Manual of Procedure, by substituting the paragraph sentence with the following:

(See Section 1302 By-Laws.) (Disapproved)

B-53 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE XIV– AMENDMENTS

Sec. 1401-Amendments.

Amend Section 1401- Amendments., National By-Laws, by substituting

the following:

By-Laws: Any member in good standing, a Post, a District, or a Department, may propose an amendment to the National By-Laws; provided, however, before consideration at the National Convention, the proposed amendment must be approved by a Department Convention. Immediately following a Department Convention, the proposed amendments must be forwarded to National Headquarters.

A national officer may propose an amendment to the National By-Laws and forward the proposed amendment to the Adjutant General.

All proposed amendments will be available to each Post by the Adjutant General at least fifteen (15) days before the assembling of the National Convention.

Amendments require a two-thirds vote of the members present at the National Convention.

All amendments adopted at any National Convention according to the provisions of this section shall take effect thirty (30) days after the final adjournment of the National Convention at which they were adopted.

Manual of Procedure and Ritual: Amendments to the Manual of Procedure and Ritual will be in accordance with Section 1401 of the Manual of Procedure. (Approved)

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE RITUAL

R-1 (Page 3) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – GENERAL RULES

Amend Chapter Title-General Rules, Ritual, by deleting the first sentence following 13. (a) and substituting the following:

All members who are able will stand during the offering of the prayers;
(Approved)

R-2 (Pages 4-8) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – SPECIAL PRAYERS

Amend Chapter Title-Special Prayers, Ritual, by deleting all verbiage within the section and substituting the following:

Additional special prayers are included in the Chaplain’s Handbook. (The Chaplain’s Handbook is part of the VFW Leadership Reference Guide CD.)

PRAYER OF THANKS

Our Heavenly Father, we come to You in this moment because we believe that You are our God and we are Your people, and You are the creator and sustainer of life.

We acknowledge that every good and perfect gift comes from above and that all that we have comes from Your divine beneficent hand.

We thank You for this food and ask for Your blessing upon us as we partake. Teach us to be always mindful of Your loving kindness and tender mercies. .Amen.

BENEDICTION

Our Heavenly Father, we ask that You will dismiss us with Your blessing, and grant that we may continually experience the calmness and serenity of heart and soul which comes from You. Make us useful servants in all things. Amen.

VETERANS DAY PRAYER

Almighty God, Father of us all! We, Your servants, turn to You for continuance of Your blessings upon us. You who have spared us veterans from the grasp of our enemies, grant us the full understanding of Your precious comfort.

We thank You for the privileges of life and the blessings we enjoy through Your graciousness in our country, the land in

which we are given the freedom of speech, religion and the pursuit of happiness. Assist us to know You better and the wisdom to acknowledge You as the God of the universe and our ideal.

In Your mercy, may we the living find our peace. Grant us from above, this day, the challenge of high endeavor, the beauty of an humble spirit, the strong courage and will, without exertion, to continue to glorify You; to praise You, and to love You to the end of time. Amen.

PEARL HARBOR DAY MEMORIAL PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we are gathered here to commemorate those among Your servants who gave their lives at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Because of their dedication to duty we still enjoy the freedoms we inherited from our forefathers. Because they served well, we are proud to call them our own. We ask that, following in their footsteps, we may continue in Your service until Your summons comes. Then, in the knowledge that we have striven to observe Your councils and precepts, may be worthy to be united with them and with You forever. Amen.

PRAYER FOR GOLD STAR PARENTS

O Lord, we thank You for the many blessings You have bestowed upon us and on our Country. We ask You to bless and to comfort our Gold Star Parents who are here today. Give them the strength to do their daily tasks and the courage to meet the problems of life. Grant that their example may be our inspiration. Amen.

PRAYER ATTRIBUTED TO GEORGE WASHINGTON

Almighty God, we make our earnest prayer that Thou wilt keep the United States in Thy holy protection; that Thou wilt incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of obedience to government, and entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another and for their fellow citizens of the United States at large; and, finally, that Thou wilt most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacific temper of mind which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion, and without a humble imitation of whose example in these things we can never hope to be a happy Nation.

Grant our supplication, we beseech Thee, O Lord!

PRAYER OF SAINT FRANCIS

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there

is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.

Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR THE SICK

Lord, Almighty God, we pray Your healing grace in behalf of (Name of Person). May (Name) know the blessing of good health in this hour and throughout life. Bless all who minister to (Name) in body, mind and spirit and grant that we may always give praise to You, our heavenly Father. Amen.

PRAYER AT A FUNERAL WITHOUT FORMAL RITUAL

Eternal Father, giver and sustainer of life, we come before You in the joy of our Faith and in thanksgiving for the life of (Name of Deceased). We commend the soul of our departed Comrade (Sister) to You. Lord, we ask You to help us honor the memory of (Name) by service to the living. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE OPENING OF AN INFORMAL MEETING

Almighty God, we thank You for bringing us together this day. Inspire us to worthy deeds and sound decisions and direct us toward the attainment of our goal. We pray that You would bless and protect all of our people. Guide us on the path to unity and harmony that we may serve You and Your people in keeping with Your holy will. Amen.

PRAYER AT THE CLOSING OF AN INFORMAL MEETING

Glory be to You our Lord and our God as we behold the blessings You have given us as citizens of these United States of America. We thank You Lord, for this blessed and bountiful Land. Help us to renew our loyalty to this great Country and enable us to rededicate ourselves in Faith to Your service. We pray Lord, in Your holy name. Amen.

PRAYER FOR DECEASED COMRADES AND/OR SISTERS

Heavenly Father, we are gathered here to commemorate those among Your servants who have been called to Your bosom in the land of light. We pray that Your mercy and justice have made right their human failings and faults. We pray that whatever justice was denied them in this vale of tears has been granted them a hundredfold. We pray that whatever comforts they were denied in this life, whatever evil they endured, may now redound to their everlasting happiness.

We are thankful for their companionship and association in

this life. By their efforts we are assured security and strength. Because they served well, we are proud to call them our own. We ask that, following in their footsteps, we may continue in Your service until Your summons comes. Then, in the knowledge that we have striven to observe Your truths and precepts, may we be judged worthy to be united with them and with You forever in heaven. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR PEACE IN THE WORLD

O God, source of all holy desires, right counsels and just works, grant us that peace which the world cannot give, so that we may be obedient to Your commands and that under Your protection we may enjoy peace in our days and freedom from fear of our enemies. We ask this in Your great and holy Name. Amen.

A PRAYER AT THE CONCLUSION OF A MEMORIAL SERVICE

Almighty God, our gratitude for Your generosity grows with each passing day. We acknowledge this day's special blessings. We have honored those who now enjoy Your eternal embrace. We ask Your blessing on all here present. Especially do we seek Your consolation for those recently bereaved. May Your grace be with them and with us now and forever. And, if it be Your will, may we all be favored to gather again in these circumstances and in this company before another year has passed. Amen.

VETERANS PRAYER OF THANKS

Almighty God, Father of us all! We, Your servants, turn to You for Your continuing blessings upon us. You, who spared us, combat veterans, from the grasp of our enemies, grant us the full understandings of Your precious comfort.

We thank You for the privileges of life and the blessings we enjoy through Your graciousness to our country, the land in which we are given freedom of speech, religion and the pursuit of happiness. Continue Your presence with us always and may we continue to serve you faithfully. Amen. (Approved)

R-3 (Page 14) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – OPENING POST CEREMONIES - PRAYER

Amend Chapter Title-Opening Post Ceremonies-Prayer, Ritual, by deleting the first nine (9) paragraphs under Prayer and substituting the following:

Chaplain: Let us bow our heads. Heavenly Father and Ruler of All Nations, we come asking Your blessings upon our families and us.

We ask blessings on the dependents of our departed comrades, and comfort for those who have given loved ones for our Nation's cause.

Bless and strengthen the sick, the needy and those undergoing hardship.

Guide us during our business session that our discussions will be fruitful and beneficial for our organization, community and Nation. Enable us to better the community in which we live through our devotion to duty as citizens.

We pause now for a few moments of silent prayer for our departed comrades, for those missing in action and for those held as prisoners of war.

(Pause)

All these things we ask in Your Great and Holy Name. Amen. (Disapproved)

R-4 (Pages 17-18) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – ORDER OF BUSINESS (Post), 15. – 16.

Amend Chapter Title-Order of Business (Post), 15., Ritual, by deleting the paragraph after Chaplain:, substituting the following and deleting 16.:

Almighty God, we ask for Your divine blessing on the children, families and staff of our National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Michigan.

May Your Spirit dwell with them forever, giving them health and guiding their lives. Help us to always be faithful to our fallen comrades by providing (shelter and guidance) support for their families. We ask in Your Holy Name. Amen. (Approved)

R-5 (Page 19) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – CLOSING CEREMONIES (Post) - PRAYER

Amend Chapter Title-Closing Ceremonies (Post)-Prayer, Ritual, by deleting the four (4) paragraphs after Chaplain: and substituting the following:

Holy Father, the time has come when we must close our meeting. We commit ourselves to Your care. We acknowledge that You are our strong Tower of Defense and Protection.

May we in life's battles live in such a way as to bring glory to Your Great and Holy Name and honor to the Veterans of Foreign Wars and our Nation.

May Your Spirit protect and shield us from all harm. Watch over those who even now guard the gates of freedom and bring us together again at the appointed time and place.

(All respond – Amen.) (Disapproved)

R-6 (Page 22) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – INITIATION CEREMONY (Brief Form) - PRAYER

Amend Chapter Title-Initiation Ceremony (Brief Form)-Prayer, Ritual, by deleting the first paragraph and substituting the following:

Chaplain: Almighty God, we ask Your blessing upon these comrades

who now become fellow members. May the bonds formed during the difficulties and dangers of foreign service draw us even closer by our fellowship in this organization. May our affiliation foster among us an enduring comradeship and a spirit of mutual loyalty and support in every walk of life. May these comrades dedicate and devote their lives to Your service and grant that they may continue to lead useful and productive lives to the honor and glory of Your Holy Name. Amen. (Disapproved)

R-7 (Page 33) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – CEREMONIAL INITIATION - PRAYER

Amend Chapter Title-Ceremonial Initiation-Prayer, Ritual, by deleting the first four paragraphs and substituting the following:

Chaplain: Almighty God, we ask Your blessing upon these comrades who now become fellow members. May the bonds formed during the difficulties and dangers of foreign service draw us even closer by our fellowship in this organization. May our affiliation foster among us an enduring comradeship and a spirit of mutual loyalty and support in every walk of life.

May these comrades dedicate and devote their lives to Your service and grant that they may continue to lead useful and productive lives to the honor and glory of Your Holy Name. Amen. (Disapproved)

R-8 (Page 44) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – INSTITUTING NEW POST - PRAYER

Amend Chapter Title-Instituting New Post-Prayer, Ritual, by deleting the first paragraph and substituting the following:

Chaplain: Almighty God, we ask Your blessing upon these comrades who now become fellow members. May the bonds formed during the difficulties and dangers of foreign service draw us even closer by our fellowship in this organization. May our affiliation foster among us an enduring comradeship and a spirit of mutual loyalty and support in every walk of life.

May these comrades dedicate and devote their lives to Your service and grant that they may continue to lead useful and productive lives to the honor and glory of Your Holy Name. Amen. (Disapproved)

R-9 (Page 47) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – INSTITUTING NEW POST - PRAYER

Amend Chapter Title-Instituting New Post-Prayer, Ritual, by deleting the first paragraph and substituting the following:

Acting Chaplain: Almighty God, our Guide and Divine Protector, give

Your blessings upon these our comrades who now become officers of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Grant to them wisdom so that in their deliberations they continue to honor You and our great Nation, and better our organization. May Your strength sustain them; may Your power preserve them; and may Your hand protect them in the faithful performance of their duties. Amen. (Disapproved)

R-10 (Page 51) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – INSTALLATION OF POST OFFICERS - PRAYER

Amend Chapter Title-Installation of Post Officers-Prayer, Ritual, by deleting the first paragraph and substituting the following:

Retiring or Acting Chaplain: Almighty God, our Guide and Divine Protector, give Your blessings upon these our comrades who now become officers of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Grant to them wisdom so that in their deliberations they continue to honor You and our great Nation, and better our organization. May Your strength sustain them; may Your power preserve them; and may Your hand protect them in the faithful performance of their duties. Amen. (Disapproved)

R-11 (Pages 54-56) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – DEDICATING POST COLORS

Amend Chapter Title-Dedicating Post Colors, Ritual, by substituting the words "he/she" whenever "he" occurs and "his/her" whenever "his" occurs. (Approved)

R-12 (Page 59) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS (National or Department) - PRAYER

Amend Chapter Title-Installation of Officers (National or Department)-Prayer, Ritual, by deleting the first paragraph and substituting the following:

Retiring or Acting Chaplain: Almighty God, our Guide and Divine Protector, give Your blessings upon these our comrades who now become officers of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Grant to them wisdom so that in their deliberations they continue to honor You and our great Nation, and better our organization. May Your strength sustain them; may Your power preserve them; and may Your hand protect them in the faithful performance of their duties. Amen. (Disapproved)

R-13 (Page 65) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – MEMORIAL SERVICE

Amend Chapter Title-Memorial Service, Ritual, by inserting the following after the twelfth (12th) paragraph (referencing Memorial Roll Call):

National Chaplain: Will all please be seated. We will now have the lighting of the POW/MIA candle and the Armed Forces Vigil candle by the Commander-in-Chief and National President of the Ladies Auxiliary.

(The Commander-in-Chief and National President of the Ladies Auxiliary will light the two appropriate candles on the altar escorted by the Sergeant-at-Arms, and return to their seats.)

National Chaplain: (Delivers a prayer for the POW/MIA'S and a "Prayer of Gratitude" for those serving in harm's way.)

PRAYER

National Chaplain: O God Almighty, Creator and Ruler of the Universe, some of our comrades and companions are prisoners of war and missing in action. Comfort them, we pray, in their isolation from their homes and loved ones; supply their needs and protect them from want and deprivation; strengthen and sustain them that they may face discouragement with courage and hardship with resolution. Grant that they may find patience to endure, and peace in the knowledge of Your continuing presence.

O God, we ask that You will strengthen and protect all our members of the armed forces of the United States of America. In the day of battle may they be courageous and strong, resourceful and capable, resolute and victorious. In the time of peace may they serve with dignity and honor, as effective emissaries of good will for this Nation. May their devotion and loyalty to You and to their homeland inspire them in moments of challenge, and comfort them in tribulation and long separations from loved ones.

And finally, we ask they may return safely to serve You and our Country in the days and years to come. Amen. (Approved)

R-14 (Page 66) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – MEMORIAL SERVICE

(For National and Department conventions and for Posts of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and Their Auxiliaries)

Amend Chapter Title-Memorial Service, Ritual, by deleting the words after Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief: and substituting the following:

"For we are aliens and pilgrims before You, as were our fathers; our days on earth are as a shadow, and without hope."

Further amend Chapter Title-Memorial Service, Ritual by deleting the words after Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief: and substituting the following:

I have. The Book of Life tells us that: "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; and He

remembers that we are dust.”

Further amend Chapter Title-Memorial Service, Ritual by deleting the words after Chaplain of the Ladies Auxiliary: and substituting the following:

I have a message of hope that should inspire our comrades at this solemn moment and all through life. The message is from our sacred scriptures, assuring us that there is life after death and whoever is faithful to the end, shall inherit eternal life. (Disapproved)

R-15 (Page 67) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – MEMORIAL SERVICE

(For National and Department conventions and for Posts of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and Their Auxiliaries)

Amend Chapter Title-Memorial Service, Ritual, by deleting the sentence spoken by the National Chaplain, “I place upon our sacred shrine these red flowers, which symbolize the zeal of our departed comrades in upholding brotherhood, truth and justice.” and substituting the following:

“I shall place upon our sacred shrine these red flowers, which symbolize the zeal of our departed comrades in upholding brotherhood, truth and justice.”

Further amend Chapter Title-Memorial Service, Ritual, by deleting the sentence spoken by the Past Commander-in-Chief, “These white flowers I place as a token of the purity of affection we have for our departed comrades.” and substituting the following:

“These white flowers I shall place as a token of the purity of affection we have for our departed comrades.”

Further amend Chapter Title-Memorial Service, Ritual, by deleting the sentence spoken by the Commander-in-Chief, “Therefore I place these blue flowers from nature’s bosom in token of our sincere respect for all departed comrades.” and substituting the following:

“Therefore I shall place these blue flowers from nature’s bosom in token of our sincere respect for all departed comrades.”

Further amend Chapter Title-Memorial Service, Ritual, by deleting the first two sentences spoken by the National President of Auxiliary, “I place upon our sacred shrine this wreath as a symbol of eternity. Its color bespeaks life everlasting.” And substitute the following:

“I will place upon our sacred shrine this wreath as a symbol of eternity. Its color represents life everlasting.” (Disapproved)

R-16 (Page 68-69) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – MEMORIAL SERVICE

(For National and Department conventions and for Posts of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and Their Auxiliaries)

Delete the paragraph following the fourth stanza of “America” and add the following:

(If there is a speaker, he or she will now be introduced and deliver a brief inspirational message.

The chaplain will offer the benediction, either extemporaneous or from the Prayers for Various Occasions, followed by a period of silence and the playing of taps.) (Approved)

R-17 (Page 71) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – MEMORIAL DAY SERVICE

Amend Chapter Title-Memorial Day Service, Ritual, by deleting the first three paragraphs after Chaplain: and substituting the following:

Almighty and Merciful God, Father of us all! In the depths of our silent reverence we realize the truth that eternal life may be our possession if we believe and are faithful to the end.

As comrade after comrade departs, we march on with our ranks growing thinner. Help us to be faithful to You and to one another. Look in mercy on the spouses and children of our departed comrades, we pray, and by Your Spirit console and comfort those who are bereaved.

Heavenly Father, bless our Nation with freedom, peace and righteousness.

Through Your favor may we meet at last before Your throne in Heaven. We praise Your Holy Name forever and ever. Amen. (Disapproved)

R-18 (Page 76) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – DEDICATING A MEMORIAL

Amend Chapter Title-Dedicating A Memorial, Ritual, by deleting the first two paragraphs after Chaplain: and substituting the following:

Almighty God, we ask that You guide these men and women we honor through every day and night. Give them strength and courage to continue their efforts for lasting peace. Make their victory a true service to all humanity. Give them growing faith in Your teachings.

Make them Your chosen servants--to carry on forever a victorious crusade against the evil forces seeking to destroy that which is just and good in the hearts of humankind. Help them to bring true brotherhood love to all nations. O, God, help us to increase our spiritual unity and love for all mankind. In reverent humility we ask these things. (All respond – Amen) (Disapproved)

R-19 (Pages 78, 90, 98) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – FUNERAL CEREMONIES

Amend Chapter Title-Funeral Ceremonies, Ritual, by substituting “military regulations” for “Army regulations” in the fourth paragraph (4) and the eleventh paragraph (11) and under Benediction, fourth paragraph (4).

Further amend Chapter Title-Funeral Ceremonies, Ritual, by deleting the last sentence of the chapter, replacing it with the following:

(For further details see latest Army Manual (FM22-5), Drills and Ceremonies, or, Bureau of Navy Personnel, Navy Military Funerals, NAVPERSS15555D.) (Approved)

R-20 (Page 91) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL– FUNERAL CEREMONIES – CHAPEL SERVICE

Amend Chapter Title-Funeral Ceremonies-Chapel Service, Ritual, by deleting the first paragraph following Chaplain: (prayer) and substituting the following:

(May use extemporize prayer or one of the other Memorial Prayers): O God, Father of us all, we extend these final earthly tributes to our comrade. Accept our prayers in behalf of Your departed servant. Welcome him/her into Your House of Rest in peace. Look with mercy upon the loved ones bereaved by his/her passing. Comfort and console them through Your own tender mercies. These things we ask humbly in Your Holy Name. Amen. (All repeat--Amen. Replace covers.) (Disapproved)

R-21 (Page 93) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL– FUNERAL CEREMONIES – CHAPEL SERVICE

Amend Chapter Title-Funeral Ceremonies-Chapel Service, Ritual, by deleting nine paragraphs following Chaplain: (Delivers brief address extemporaneously or repeats the following): and substituting the following:

We come today to honor the memory of one who offered his/her life as a service to our Nation’s cause and to our God. Proudly we remember his/her service. Because of men and women like our comrade, we live in a land of freedom, peace and justice. May our ceremonies of today deepen our reverence for our honored comrade and friend.

We believe that our comrade is now in the hands of our Heavenly Father, the Supreme Commander and Judge of all. We lay our comrade’s body (ashes) to rest. Let us cherish his/her virtues and learn to imitate them. Let each of us be loyal and faithful to our remaining missions in life that we too will be able to join in that grand fraternity which is on earth and in heaven, and remains unbroken.

We realize how futile mere words are to express our deep and abiding

sympathy in our loss. May we be comforted by the assurance that our comrade, friend and loved one is at rest in God's eternal peace, and abides in a place where all burdens are lifted and there is no more sickness and pain.

Comrades, let us now pledge ourselves anew to provide support and protection for those left behind; to pick up the banner laid down by our comrade, and continue his/her march to face the challenges that confronts us in this life, and may our God always be our companion and guide. (Approved)

R-22 (Page 94) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – FUNERAL CEREMONIES – CHAPEL SERVICE

Amend Chapter Title-Funeral Ceremonies – Chapel Service, Ritual, by deleting the second sentence in the second paragraph after “Commander: This concludes our service.” and substituting the following sentence:

They remove the casket flag and fold it in the regulation manner illustrated in the VFW Ritual.

Further amend the last sentence in Chapter Title-Funeral Ceremonies – Chapel Service, Ritual, by replacing it with the following:

In that case, the VFW action at place of interment is described under the headings Committal and Benediction. (Approved)

R-23 (Page 94) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – FUNERAL CEREMONIES – VFW BURIAL RITUAL

Amend Chapter Title-Funeral Ceremonies–VFW Burial Ritual, Ritual, by deleting the first paragraph. (Disapproved)

R-24 (Page 95) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL– FUNERAL CEREMONIES – VFW BURIAL RITUAL - PRAYER

Amend Chapter Title-Funeral Ceremonies-VFW Burial Ritual-Prayer, Ritual, by deleting seven paragraphs after Chaplain: and substituting the following:

Almighty and Merciful God and Father of all, in the midst these monuments of the dead we see Your hand of mercy.

In the depth of our sorrow, we realize the truth (***) that though we die, we shall live again in the shelter of Your love. As comrade after comrade departs this life, we march on with our ranks growing thinner. Help us to be faithful to You and to one another.

We ask that You would look in mercy upon all of us here assembled and with Your compassion and tenderness, console and comfort those bereaved by the hand of death. Give them the “oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”

Heavenly Father, bless our Nation with freedom, peace and righteous-

ness, and through Your Sovereign and Holy Spirit's favor, may we all meet at last before Your throne of Grace in Heaven. And to Your Great Name shall be praise forever and ever. Amen.

(** At a Christian burial: "of the inspired words: 'I am the resurrection and life; he that believes in me, though he were dead yet shall be live.'") (Approved)

R-25 (Page 97) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL– FUNERAL CEREMONIES – VFW BURIAL RITUAL - PRAYER

Amend Chapter Title-Funeral Ceremonies-VFW Burial Ritual-Prayer, Ritual, by deleting seven paragraphs following (Address by Chaplain. The Chaplain shall here repeat the following, or may make an address of the same length): and substituting the following:

We come today to honor the memory of one who offered his/her life as a service to our Nation's cause and to our God. Proudly we remember his/her service. Because of men and women like our comrade, we live in a land of freedom, peace and justice. May our ceremonies of today deepen our reverence for our honored comrade and friend.

We believe that our comrade is now in the hands of our Heavenly Father, the Supreme Commander and Judge of all. We lay our comrade's body (ashes) to rest. Let us cherish his/her virtues and learn to imitate them. Let each of us be loyal and faithful to our remaining missions in life that we too will be able to join in that grand fraternity which is on earth and in heaven, and remains unbroken.

We realize how futile mere words are to express our deep and abiding sympathy in our loss. May we be comforted by the assurance that our comrade, friend and loved one is at rest in God's eternal peace, and abides in a place where all burdens are lifted and there is no more sickness and pain.

Comrades, let us now pledge ourselves anew to provide support and protection for those left behind; to pick up the banner laid down by our comrade, and continue his/her march to face the challenges that confronts us in this life, and may our God always be our companion and guide. (Approved)

R-26 (Page 98) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL– FUNERAL CEREMONIES – VFW BURIAL - COMMITTAL

Amend Chapter Title-Funeral Ceremonies-VFW Burial Ritual-Committal, Ritual, by deleting the first five (5) paragraphs and substituting the following:

(If the Chaplain is in charge, he will then offer the following committal):

Almighty God, in whose eternal care are all Your people we commit our comrade _(Name)_ to (the earth/sea/the elements/this resting place) in the confident hope of the resurrection to eternal life. Amen. (Disapproved)

R-27 (Page 98) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL– FUNERAL CEREMONIES – VFW BURIAL - BENEDICTION

Amend Chapter Title-Funeral Ceremonies-VFW Burial Ritual-Benediction, Ritual, by deleting the first paragraph and substituting the following:

The Lord bless and keep us. The Lord make His face to shine upon us and be gracious unto us. And may the Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us His peace. And may the blessings of Heaven be on all our comrades wherever they are dispersed in our world. Amen. (Approved)

R-28 (Page 98) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL– FUNERAL CEREMONIES – VFW BURIAL - BENEDICTION

Amend Chapter Title-Funeral Ceremonies-VFW Burial Ritual-Benediction, Ritual, by replacing the second sentence of the second paragraph with the following:

See detailed instructions.

Further amend Chapter Title-Funeral Ceremonies-VFW Burial Ritual-Benediction, Ritual, by replacing the first word in the fourth paragraph “Army” with “Military”.

Further amend Chapter Title-Funeral Ceremonies-VFW Burial Ritual-Benediction, Ritual, by replacing the last two sentences in the fourth paragraph with the following:

See last paragraph of instructions to body bearers and Plate 9 for proper instructions for folding the flag.

Further amend Chapter Title-Funeral Ceremonies-VFW Burial Ritual-Benediction, Ritual, by replacing the last paragraph with the following:

When the graveside services are concluded the Chaplain remains to render any assistance required by the family. The band, escort and firing party, color guard, body bearers, honorary pallbearers and other VFW comrades leave the scene. (Approved)

R-29 (Page 100) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

**RITUAL – FUNERAL CEREMONIES –
CEREMONY FOR DRAPING CHARTER**

Amend Chapter Title-Funeral Ceremonies-Ceremony For Draping Charter, Ritual, by deleting the first paragraph after Chaplain: (Proceeds to altar. Gives following prayer): and substituting the following:

Eternal God, let Your mercy rest upon us as we, with grateful affection, remember Comrade _(Name)_, who has departed this life. We thank You for his/her days upon earth and the joy that he/she brought. May our remembrance of him/her live long among us and be to us a source of guidance and strength. Give to those who miss him/her most deeply, wells of consolation from which to draw comfort, and enable us to be Your ministers of mercy to them in their time of need. Amen. (Approved)

R-30 (Page 105) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – TRIBUTE TO COMRADES – P.O.W. or M.I.A.

Amend Chapter Title-Tribute To Comrades – POW or MIA, Ritual, by deleting the prayer after Chaplain: and substituting the following:

“Almighty God and Everlasting Father, we praise and glorify You. Thank you for the many blessings You have bestowed upon our great Nation.

Father, we ask You to guide our missing comrades through every day and night. Give them unbound strength and courage to continue their efforts to survive and return home to their loved ones. If they perish, Lord, we ask You to welcome them to the place You have prepared for them where they will rest in eternal peace. Amen.” (Approved)

R-31 (Page 106) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – TRIBUTE TO COMRADES – P.O.W. or M.I.A.

Amend Chapter Title-Tribute To Comrades – POW or MIA, Ritual, revising statement of Chaplain, by deleting the first paragraph after Chaplain: and substituting the following:

“As our Flag symbolizes undying love for our country, this evergreen tribute whose color is a symbol of life everlasting and signifies our undying love for our imprisoned and missing comrades.” (Approved)

R-32 (Page 107) (Recommended by VFW Post 8896, Department of Pennsylvania. Proposed by National Chaplain)

RITUAL – TRIBUTE TO COMRADES – P.O.W. or M.I.A.

Amend Chapter Title-Tribute To Comrades – POW or MIA, Ritual, Chaplain’s closing benediction, by deleting the four paragraphs after Chaplain: and substituting the following:

“Almighty God, we praise You, we glorify You and we thank You for sparing us from the grasp of our enemies. Grant us full understandings of the suffering being endured by our comrades who are being held as prisoners of war or are still missing in action.

We ask Your blessings upon them, that whatever comforts they are denied, whatever evil they must endure, they will feel Your presence and

peace.

Especially do we seek Your support for their loved ones. May Your grace be with them always giving them the strength to do their daily tasks and the courage to meet the problems of life.

We pray for those missing comrades who have gone to their just reward, that whatever justice they have been denied in this life will be granted them a hundredfold in the next. Amen." (Disapproved)

**RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION**

Resolution No. 201 (Submitted by Department of Florida)

CROSS OF MALTA

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Adjutant General and Quartermaster General develop a way to clearly identify VFW National employees and authorized vendors, who are not members of the VFW, by any other method than the use of the VFW Cross of Malta. (Disapproved, in favor of 208)

Resolution No. 202 (Submitted by Department of Georgia)

**CHANGES VFW MEMBER DUES FROM CALENDAR
YEAR TO SUBSCRIPTION YEAR**

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the Annual/Continuous Member Dues System be changed to a subscription based system within two (2) years of the close of the 2009 National Convention. (Disapproved)

Resolution No. 203 (Submitted by Department of Montana)

REDUCE UNNECESSARY SPENDING ON A NATIONAL LEVEL

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that the National Officers of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States initiate immediate steps as recommended to enhance the financial situation of the National Office of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. (Disapproved)

Resolution No. 204 (Submitted by Department of Virginia)

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FOR NEW AND REINSTATED MEMBERS
TO BE TWELVE (12) MONTHS IN DURATION**

BE IT RESOLVED, that the membership policy of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States as it relates to "annual" members be changed so that new or reinstated members have their annual membership renewal dates calculated through the end of the month in the year following the completion of application processing together with a membership card reflecting same and that Sections 105 and 106 of the National By-Laws and Manual of Procedure be changed accordingly. (Disapproved)

Resolution No. 205 (Submitted by Department of Virginia)

NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR VFW MEN'S AUXILIARY

BE IT RESOLVED, that revisions to Article XIII of the By-Laws of the VFW and Manual of Procedure be made to expand the Men's Auxiliary to a

National program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a four-year program be established that will provide Men's Auxiliaries equal representation at the County Council, District, Department, and National levels as enjoyed by any other auxiliary to the VFW. (Disapproved)

Resolution No. 206 (Submitted by Department of Pennsylvania)

RESOLUTION TO AMEND RITUAL

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that updates and additions are needed to modernize the VFW Ritual. (Approved)

Resolution No. 207 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR VFW MEN'S AUXILIARY

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Commander-in-Chief appoint a committee to research the feasibility of establishing the men's auxiliary as a national organization and present options at the 111th convention. (Approved)

Resolution No. 208 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VFW CROSS OF MALTA

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Adjutant General and Quartermaster General develop procedures to clearly identify VFW authorized vendors, who are not members of the VFW, by other methods than the use of the VFW Cross of Malta. (Approved)

CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 301 (Submitted by Department of Connecticut)

AWARD THE MEDAL OF HONOR TO GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition the Congress of the United States of America to award the Medal of Honor posthumously to General George Washington and to direct the President of the United States to present the Medal of Honor to a representative of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association which preserves and perpetuates the legacy of George Washington. (Approved)

Resolution No. 302

SUPPORT OUR NATION'S GOLD STAR MOTHERS (Submitted by Department of Massachusetts)

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

and all of its Auxiliaries should join in assisting with raising awareness of the efforts for the construction of such a memorial. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 303 (Submitted by Department of California)

RESTORE MEMORIAL DAY TO MAY 30

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, petition the U. S. Congress to enact legislation that would reestablish May 30th of each year to be observed as the National Holiday for observance as "Memorial Day" to honor all of America's deceased veterans. (Approved)

Resolution No. 304 (Submitted by Department of Iowa)

SUPPORT FOR USS IOWA AS A MUSEUM

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the assignment of the USS Iowa BB 61 as a museum at the former Naval Station Mare Island, and that we ask our sister Veterans Service Organizations, our Congressmen, Senators and Representatives to join us in this support, by introducing and supporting legislation to further this assignment and the funding necessary to support the assignment of the USS Iowa BB 61 to museum duty. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 305 (Submitted by Department of Pennsylvania)

FLIGHT 93 NATIONAL MEMORIAL

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States endorses the building of a Flight 93 National Memorial as a permanent and lasting tribute to the bravery, courage, and self-sacrifice exhibited by the passengers and crewmembers of Flight 93. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 306 (Submitted by Department of Wisconsin)

ESTABLISH PROTOCOL FOR THE POW/MIA FLAG

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States establish a priority goal to assist and offer support to the National League of Families in this endeavor. (Disapproved)

Resolution No. 307 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

WWI MUSEUM AS A NATIONAL MEMORIAL AND ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMISSION FOR THE CENTENNIAL OF THE WWI

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we fully support Congressional legislation for the designation of the Liberty Memorial at the National World War I Museum in Kansas City, Missouri, as the National World War I Memorial; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the

United States, that we additionally support Congressional legislation in the establishment of a commission, in Kansas City, Missouri, to plan, develop, and execute programs, projects and activities to commemorate the centennial of World War I. (Approved)

Resolution No. 308 (Submitted by Department of Colorado)

RETAIN THE SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support maintaining the Selective Service System in its entirety as a matter of national security; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Congress to provide all the necessary funds to properly staff and retain the Selective Service System. (Approved)

CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE ON POW/MIA

Resolution No. 401 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

POW/MIA FULL ACCOUNTING COMMITMENT AND AGENCY FUNDING

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we remain steadfast in our commitment to the goal of the fullest possible accounting of all U.S. military personnel from all of our nation's wars; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon Congress to fully fund the efforts of the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office and all operations of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 402 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

POW/MIA PUBLIC AWARENESS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we will provide routine distribution to the field of pertinent, credible and responsible information and reports, such as those initiated by the VFW National Security & Foreign Affairs Director; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that each Department, District and Post is encouraged to exercise maximum effort to maintain the vitality and thrust of the POW/MIA program and appoint an interested member to act as the POW/MIA project officer or committee chairman; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we support the annual National POW/MIA Recognition Day and encourage the display and daily flying of the POW/MIA flag. (Approved)

Resolution No. 403 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

FULL FUNDING FOR THE JOINT POW/MIA
ACCOUNTING COMMAND

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we remain strongly supportive of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and urge the President and Congress to demonstrate their resolve to keeping this issue a high national priority by earmarking a fully funded dedicated line item appropriation for the JPAC budget. (Approved)

Resolution No. 404 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

RECOVER THE REMAINS OF THE GEORGE ONE CREW

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge the Department of Defense and the United States Navy to fully fund and support the recovery operation to retrieve the remains of the George One crew; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon Congress to provide the needed funding and direct the Department of Defense to carry out this operation. (Approved)

Resolution No. 405 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

RENEW POW/MIA DISCUSSIONS WITH NORTH KOREA

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we encourage the renewal of bilateral talks between the U.S. government and North Korean officials for the purpose of resuming humanitarian operations to recover and account for Americans still missing and unaccounted for from the Korean War. (Approved)

Resolution No. 406 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

CALL FOR VIETNAM POW/MIA UNILATERAL ACTION

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we encourage Socialist Republic of Vietnam Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung to continue in this cooperative effort by authorizing officials in his government to locate and release immediately to the United States all records relating to Americans still missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam conflict; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we strongly urge the Vietnamese government to find and repatriate Americans or the remains of Americans last known alive in captivity or in immediate proximity to capture by their forces that are in Vietnamese possession or control. (Approved)

Resolution No. 407 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

U.S. – RUSSIA JOINT COMMISSION ON POW/MIA AFFAIRS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge Russian Federation Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and President Dmitry Medvedev to commit to the agreement made between our governments when the U.S. – Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIA Affairs was established, and requests their full cooperation on all humanitarian objectives of this committee; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon the Speaker of the House of Representatives to appoint a qualified Member of the House to actively serve as Democrat Commissioner. (Approved)

Resolution No. 408 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

USE OF U.S. NAVY VESSELS AND/OR U.S. GOVERNMENT VESSELS FOR VIETNAM UNDERWATER ACCOUNTING ACTIVITIES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the government of Vietnam to honor the 2006 agreement and permit humanitarian underwater recovery missions in the territorial waters of Vietnam that could help account for Americans lost during the Vietnam War; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon U. S. Government officials to implement the terms of this agreement in an expeditious manner. (This was pulled by Mr. Bob Jackson, Washington Office, citing it had already been accomplished) (Disapproved)

Resolution No. 409 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT FOR THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we continue to support decisive action in the war on terrorism by staying on the offensive against international terrorist organizations and groups, as well as rogue or outlaw states guilty of inciting, harboring or aiding and abetting terrorists; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we unequivocally support the men and women of our armed forces who carry out the orders to prosecute the war on terrorism around the world and across the nation. (Approved)

Resolution No. 410 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT FOR THE TROOPS AND THEIR MISSION IN THE WAR ON TERRORISM

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the Commander-in-Chief and the brave men and women fighting the war on terrorism in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, as a matter of security for the American people: and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon the Administration and Congress to provide all the funding necessary to ensure the safety of our armed forces and to secure victory in the war on terrorism. (Approved)

Resolution No. 411 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

INCREASE THE DEFENSE BUDGET

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge the Administration and Congress to increase defense spending to a minimum level of at least 5% of the Gross Domestic Product in order to adequately provide for the readiness, training, modernization, health care, and quality of life initiatives for our armed forces; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call for an increase in personnel end strength for all branches of the military. (Approved)

Resolution No. 412 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE IS A NATIONAL SECURITY PRIORITY

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the development and deployment of a ballistic missile defense system to protect our country and our deployed military forces; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon the Congress to fully fund a ballistic missile defense program as a high priority national security requirement. (Approved)

Resolution No. 413 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

MAINTAIN GLOBAL AIR SUPREMACY

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon Congress and the Department of Defense to provide the aircraft that the Air Force and all services need to carry out their mission and maintain global air supremacy. (Approved)

Resolution No. 414 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT FOR THE COAST GUARD DEEPWATER PROGRAM

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we fully support the United States Coast Guard Deepwater Program, and call upon the Congress to fully fund the modernization and recapitalization of the Coast Guard through this program initiative. (Approved)

Resolution No. 415 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT FOR THE ARMY'S FUTURE COMBAT SYSTEMS PROGRAM

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States,

that we support the Army's Future Combat Systems program that will better prepare and protect soldiers for current and future threats; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon Congress to fully fund the Future Combat Systems program this year and into the future to achieve program stability. (Approved)

Resolution No. 416 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

RE-DESIGNATE THE POSITION OF SECRETARY OF THE NAVY AS
THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY AND MARINE CORPS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation to re-designate the position of the Secretary of the Navy to Secretary of the Navy and Marine Corps. (Approved)

Resolution No. 417 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

RAISE MILITARY BASE PAY TO EQUAL PRIVATE-SECTOR WAGES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon the Administration and Congress to provide a military base pay raise that will restore full comparability with private-sector wages. (Approved)

Resolution No. 418 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

ENERGY DEPENDENCE AND NATIONAL SECURITY

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we encourage the President and Congress to develop and implement a long-term comprehensive strategy that reduces our dependence on foreign oil through conservation; substitute and alternative fuels; and the development of more efficient propulsion systems, power generators, machinery, and light-weight vehicles; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we encourage the President and Congress to secure our oil supply by diversifying the geographic sources of U.S. oil imports; investigate the feasibility of expanded production of bio-fuels; and enhance the protection of critical shipping choke points (i.e., Straits of Hormuz, Malacca, Gulf of Aden) and develop contingency plans for seaborne terrorism aimed at tanker ships. (Approved)

Resolution No. 419 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

LOWER THE RESERVE COMPONENT RETIREMENT PAY AGE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress and the Administration to lower the retirement pay eligibility age to 55 for all Reserve Component members. (Approved)

Resolution No. 420 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

CORRECT THE FY08 NDAA RESERVE RETIREMENT PAY PROVISION

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress to provide all Reserve Component members who served on active duty in support of a contingency operation since September 11, 2001, with eligibility for early receipt of retirement pay as outlined in the provision included in the FY08 National Defense Authorization Act. (Approved)

Resolution No. 421 (Submitted by the Commander-in-Chief)

OPPOSE TRICARE FEE INCREASES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we oppose all TRICARE fee increases and urge Congress to prevent the Department of Defense from escalating or realigning co-payments or any other fees for TRICARE services and benefits; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we support legislative action to move the authority to set TRICARE fees to the United States Congress. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 422 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

UNIFORMED SERVICES FORMER SPOUSES PROTECTION ACT

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress to reform the Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act to include granting divorce awards based on the service member's rank at the time of divorce, and not require service members with more than 20 years of service to divide their expected retired pay before they actually retire. (Approved)

Resolution No. 423 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

INTERSTATE COMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR MILITARY CHILDREN

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon all state governments to expeditiously adopt the language of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a duly authenticated copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Council of State Governments and the Department of Defense. (Approved)

Resolution No. 424 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

CHILD CUSTODY AND MILITARY DEPLOYMENTS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to prevent courts from convening child custody hearings or changing child custody arrangements while a service member is deployed. (Approved)

Resolution No. 425 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

MILITARY ABSENTEE VOTING

BE IT RESOLVED, that we call upon state and federal government officials to implement measures to ensure all military absentee voters have ample time to request, complete, and return by the due date their absentee ballot for a federal election. (Approved)

Resolution No. 426 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

OPPOSE ALL EFFORTS TO REPEAL THE 1993 LAW BANNING HOMOSEXUALS FROM SERVING IN THE ARMED FORCES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly oppose all efforts to repeal Public Law 103-160 (Section 654, U.S. Code Title 10), which bans homosexuals from serving in the U.S. Armed Forces; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Department of Defense to review the current, "don't ask, don't tell" policy and replace it with a policy more consistent with the intent of Public Law 103-160. (Approved)

Resolution No. 427 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SECURE AMERICA'S BORDERS / HALT ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Administration and Congress to fast-track funding to departments and agencies responsible to halt the flow of illegal immigrants from entering the United States; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon the Department of Homeland Security to expedite all initiatives to secure the entire United States border and ports of entry; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we insist the U.S. government aggressively work to identify all illegal immigrants and determine who should be deported and who should be allowed to apply for citizenship under existing laws. (Approved)

Resolution No. 428 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT NATO EXPANSION

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the continued expansion of the NATO Alliance to ensure the future security of Europe, as well as U.S. strategic interests in that region. (Approved)

Resolution No. 429 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT FOR THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the government of the United States to keep a substantial military presence in South Korea and increase its military aid and assistance to the Republic of Korea by providing modern state of the art weapons and technology to safeguard its freedom and promote security in the Pacific and Asian regions. (Approved)

Resolution No. 430 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT FOR THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON TAIWAN

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Administration and Congress to strictly adhere to the concepts of the Taiwan Relations Act by approving the sale to the Republic of China on Taiwan such state-of-the-art military equipment, weapons and technology as may be necessary to maintain adequate defense capability; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Administration to employ its full range of influence to contain aggressive posturing of the Peoples Republic of China; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon the Administration and Congress to support the admission of the Republic of China on Taiwan into the United Nations and the World Health Organization; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we encourage the Administration to afford the President of Taiwan (ROC) the same respect and privileges as afforded to other visiting heads of state. (Approved)

Resolution No. 431 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

INVESTIGATE THE ISRAELI ATTACK ON THE USS LIBERTY

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon Congress to immediately investigate the attack on the USS Liberty that was perpetrated by the armed forces of the State of Israel on June 8, 1967, in order to determine the truth behind the attack, and bring closure to the families and crew; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we support the efforts of the USS Lib-

erty Veterans Association calling for an investigation to unmask the truth.
(Approved)

Resolution No. 432 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

HALT NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon the Administration to halt North Korea's nuclear weapons development program and the proliferation of nuclear weapons or material to third world countries, terrorist states or organizations. (Approved)

Resolution No. 433 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

ARMED FORCES EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL AUTHORIZATION DATE CHANGE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition the President of the United States to issue an executive order changing the effective date to qualify for the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal to March 3, 1946; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Joint Chiefs of Staff to review all military operations during this period and award the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal to participants of those operations that qualify. (Approved)

Resolution No. 434 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

EUROPE DEFENSE SERVICE MEDAL

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon the United States Congress to establish a Europe Defense Service Medal to recognize the significant contributions of U.S. military personnel in the defense of Europe that resulted in the Cold War victory. (Approved)

Resolution No. 435 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

COLD WAR VICTORY MEDAL

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the creation and awarding of a Cold War Victory Medal to all eligible U.S. service personnel who served in the military during the Cold War era, 2 September 1945 to 26 December 1991, and whose service has not already been recognized by a campaign or service medal. (Disapproved in favor of R447)

Resolution No. 436 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

AMEND CRITERIA FOR AWARD OF THE
ARMY OF OCCUPATION WWII MEDAL

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition the Congress of the United States, the Secretary of Defense, and/or the Secretary of the Army to rectify this injustice by awarding the Army of Occupation Medal to those who served in Trieste, Italy with the U.S. Army from May 8, 1945, to October 25, 1954. (Approved)

Resolution No. 437 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

RECOGNIZE MILITARY VETERANS WHO WERE KILLED OR
WOUNDED DURING THE EARLY PERIOD OF THE COLD WAR

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition the President to sign an Executive Order that will award the Purple Heart Medal to members of the military during the period 9 May 1945 to 25 April 1962 under identical circumstances as contained in Executive Order 11016 and Executive Order 12464. (Approved)

Resolution No. 438 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

EXPAND ELIGIBILITY FOR THE ARMY COMBAT ACTION BADGE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition the Congress to direct the Department of the Army to expand the eligibility for the Army Combat Action Badge to those soldiers who served during the dates ranging from December 7, 1941, to September 18, 2001. (Approved)

Resolution No. 439 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

AUTHORIZE THE COMBAT ACTION BADGE FOR PENTAGON
SERVICE ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition the Congress to direct the Secretary of the Army to authorize the Combat Action Badge for service members who were present for duty in the Pentagon on 11 September 2001; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Combat Action Badge be posthumously awarded to those service members killed in action on 11 September 2001 or who subsequently succumbed to wounds suffered on 11 September 2001. (Disapproved due to lack of clarity)

Resolution No. 440 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

ESTABLISH A COMBAT ACTION MEDAL FOR NAVY AND MARINE
CORPS PERSONNEL

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition the Congress to direct the Secretary of the Navy to es-

establish a suitable corresponding medal to the Combat Action Ribbon and rename it the Navy and Marine Corps Combat Action Medal; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we support the Navy and Marine Corps Combat Action Medal as a replacement for the Combat Action Ribbon with the same eligibility criteria, thereby authorizing its wear by all who previously were awarded the Combat Action Ribbon; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the eligibility for the Navy and Marine Corps Combat Action Medal be authorized retroactive to 7 December 1941, which is the same date now established for the Combat Action Ribbon. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 441 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

EXPAND THE DATES OF ELIGIBILITY FOR THE VIETNAM SERVICE MEDAL

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition the Congress to direct the Secretary of Defense to authorize the Vietnam Service Medal to those that served in the Republic of Vietnam, Thailand and on the ships in the Gulf of Tonkin in support of military operations during the period of 29 March 1973 to 28 April 1975, providing the service member meets the eligibility criteria considered as qualifying service during 3 July 1965 through 28 March 1973. (Approved)

Resolution No. 442 (Submitted by the Commander-in-Chief)

CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL FOR ALL CODE TALKERS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to support the efforts to identify all Native Americans who served as "Code Talkers"; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon Congress to award all Native American Code Talkers the Congressional Gold Medal. (Approved)

Resolution No. 443 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

WORLD WAR ONE (WWI) GENERATION NATIONAL HONORS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that in recognition of a grateful nation's homage to its WWI veterans' courage and service, we urge the Congress to endorse and the President to proclaim that the flag of the United States be flown at half-staff from all public buildings, military installations, and naval ships for the time of notification of the passing of the last WWI veteran until that individual is laid to rest, or for one week, whichever is shorter. (Approved)

Resolution No. 444 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT FORMER POW SLAVE LABOR
CLAIMS AGAINST JAPANESE FIRMS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the U.S. Congress to emulate our Pacific War Allies and provide support for fair and just compensation for the injuries suffered by all American POWs who were forced to work as slave laborers for Imperial Japan during World War II; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Congress and Administration to encourage the Government of Japan: to communicate to the Japanese business community to follow the government's example to unequivocally and in a public way apologize to the former POWs of Japan; to include the American POWs in a new and permanent Peace, Friendship, and Exchange Fund (or Peace and Reconciliation Fund); and to release all remaining Japanese government and industry records and documents regarding Allied POWs and wartime forced labor. (Approved)

Resolution No. 445 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL FOR THE WOMEN
AIR FORCE SERVICE PILOTS (WASP)

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition Congress to award the Congressional Gold Medal to the Women Air Force Service Pilots. (Approved)

Resolution No. 446 (Submitted by Department of New York)

FIRST AWARD OF NAVY GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL FOR
INDIVIDUALS KILLED IN COMBAT OR SEPARATED FROM ACTIVE
DUTY DUE TO WOUNDS OR DISABILITY INCURRED FROM COMBAT

BE IT RESOLVED, that all Navy personnel, on their first Navy enlistment, who were killed or separated/discharged from active duty because of wounds or disability incurred in combat in World War II, Korea and Vietnam be eligible for the first award of the Navy Good Conduct Medal and the accompanying certificate. This would bring Navy policy in awarding the Good Conduct Medal, First Award, in adherence with the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Army, U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Marine Corps. (Approved)

Resolution No. 447 (Submitted by Department of New York)

AWARD A COLD WAR VICTORY MEDAL

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the creation and awarding of the Cold War Victory Medal to all eligible U.S. service personnel who served in the military during the Cold War era, 2 September 1945, to 25 December, 1991 and whose service has not been already been recognized by a campaign or service medal. (Approved)

Resolution No. 448 (Submitted by Department of New York)

AWARD OF NAVY MEDICAL BADGE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the U.S. Navy authorizes a Navy Expert Medical Badge for all U.S. Navy personnel completing the Field Medical Service School (FMSS) and a subsequent qualifying examination, and authorize a prestigious Navy Combat Medical Badge for hospital corpsman performing their duties with a U.S. Marine Corps Infantry unit during combat. The qualifying time periods would be the same as the U.S. Army's covering World War II, Korea, Vietnam and other conflicts. (Approved)

Resolution No. 449 (Submitted by Department of Ohio)

CONCURRENT RECEIPT OF MILITARY LONGEVITY RETIREMENT PAY AND DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS DISABILITY COMPENSATION

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we support legislation requiring the concurrent receipt of military longevity pay and VA disability compensation for any veteran who is compensably rated by the VA. (Approved)

CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 601 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

ADEQUATE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS BUDGET

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress of the United States to mandate a budget and authorize appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs, which will fully fund and maintain the integrity of, and enhance, veteran entitlement programs and health care system. (Approved)

Resolution No. 602 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

CONSIDER TREATMENT FOR A PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE CONNECTED CONDITION AS A CLAIM FOR VA COMPENSATION

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to enact legislation requiring that treatment by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for a condition or disease recognized as presumptively service connected will be considered to be an informal claim for service connection for compensation purposes. (Approved)

Resolution No. 603 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

EXTENDING GULF WAR PRESUMPTIONS, REGISTRY AND HEALTH CARE TO AFGHANISTAN THEATER VETERANS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress and the VA to include Afghanistan in the Southwest Asia theater of operations so that appropriate benefits, including eligibility for compensation based on undiagnosed illnesses, and medical care eligibility, will be provided, retroactive to the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom. (Approved)

Resolution No. 604 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

OPPOSE VA PHARMACEUTICAL CO-PAYMENT INCREASES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we oppose increases in the VA pharmaceutical co-payment. (Approved)

Resolution No. 605 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

ENTITLEMENT TO NURSING HOME CARE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to establish a standard VA nursing home entitlement for all veterans. (Approved)

Resolution No. 606 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

HEALTH CARE FOR VETERANS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to provide sufficient funding to the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure that appropriate screening, diagnostic services, treatment and life-long case management services are available to every veteran suffering from TBI; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to increase research pertaining to, screening methods, diagnostic tools, and more effective treatments for traumatic brain injury patients to ensure that TBI veterans are receiving the best treatment and rehabilitation care available. (Approved)

Resolution No. 607 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VETERANS EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support viable and effective veterans employment and training systems, which have necessary funding and capability to assist veterans in seeking and maintaining meaningful employment and re-employment opportunities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that programs which are proven to be effective should have the necessary funding and personnel to fully assist veterans seeking employment and reemployment opportunities in both the public and private sectors; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that such programs must be held accountable for the effectiveness of the services provided and their funding should be adjusted to reflect their abilities in creating long-term meaningful employment for veterans. (Approved)

Resolution No. 608 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

HIGH QUALITY VA SERVICES FOR WOMEN VETERANS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge VA to increase priority given to women veterans by providing adequate mental health care services to include individuals trained to provide care for Military Sexual Trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge VA to ensure that it has a full-time women veterans program manager at all VA medical centers and to ensure necessary and gender-specific health care services are available to women veterans at all VA facilities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Secretary of Veteran Affairs to improve outreach and expand programs for women veterans to close critical gaps by offering a full-range of services designed to meet their current and future needs. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 609 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

EXTEND A PRESUMPTION OF SERVICE CONNECTION TO BLAST SURVIVORS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to approve a presumption of service connection for the conditions associated with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 610 (Submitted by the Commander-in-Chief)

ADVANCED FUNDING FOR VETERANS HEALTH CARE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we urge Congress to implement an advanced funding process for VA health care appropriations so that VA is assured of its budget ahead of time, enabling VA to adequately care for this nation's veterans. (Approved)

Resolution No. 611 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VETERAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars that Congress expand entrepreneurial education and networking for veterans via veterans small business centers funded through the Small Business Administration in order to reach all governmental agencies 3% goal; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress expand veterans and disabled veterans access to capital by creating and funding a direct loan program through the Small Business Administration in order to reach all governmental agencies 3% goal. (Approved)

Resolution No. 612 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION VETERANS PROGRAMS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the strengthening and sufficient funding of an effective veterans entrepreneurship program in the Office of Veteran Business Development within the United States Small Business Administration. (Disapproved)

Resolution No. 613 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

EXPAND DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD) PRE-SEPARATION COUNSELING AND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL) TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we request that Congress require a comprehensive DOL review of TAP sites and encourage state cooperation in providing adequate Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) staff and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) personnel to conduct TAP sessions and further allow the inclusion of nationally accredited service organizations in their programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that DOD expand and standardize their existing pre-separation counseling programs to ensure counseling services are available to all service members during regular duty hours and by adding additional information on the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) benefits, to include healthcare and entitlements, federal and private sector employment opportunities, information on homelessness, and to assure that individual service members will receive appropriate transitioning services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that DOD's pre-separation counseling and DOL's TAP programs include information pertaining to National Guard and Reserve members in an effort to ensure that they receive the same level of services as regular active duty members prior to demobilization. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 614 (Submitted by Commander-in Chief)

VA CLAIMS BACKLOG

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to continue to exercise its oversight capacity and provide the resources necessary to hire, train and sustain a workforce sufficient to overcome the backlog and provide quality and timely service to those claiming benefits or appealing decisions from VA. (Approved)

Resolution No. 615 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

IMPROVE TREATMENT FOR CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISORDER

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we urge VA to improve the health care treatment options for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder to include making necessary adjustments to the formulary to ensure that pharmaceuticals that have proven effective are easily available to veterans without hassle and that VA create specialty clinics to educate, train and recruit health care professionals to deal with this disease's harmful effects. (Approved)

Resolution No. 616 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

OPPOSE ATTEMPTS TO PRIVATIZE VETERANS HEALTH CARE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we urge the Congress and the Administration to resist any attempts for wide-scale privatization of the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system. (Approved)

Resolution No. 617 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE CONNECTION FOR TINNITUS AND HEARING LOSS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to grant service connection on a presumptive basis for any veteran diagnosed after discharge with hearing loss or tinnitus when the evidence shows that the veteran participated in combat or worked in a position or occupational specialty likely to cause acoustic trauma. (Approved)

Resolution No. 618 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

EXTEND THE SERVICE DISABLED VETERAN-OWNED SMALL BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS OF P.L. 109-461 TO ALL FEDERAL AGENCIES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, we urge Congress to pass legislation like that of P.L. 109-461, "The Veterans Health Care, Benefits and Information Technology Act of 2006," for each specific agency in relation to Service Disabled Veteran-owned Small

Businesses (SDVOSB); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge Congress to exercise oversight to ensure adherence to existing laws related to SDVOSB and Executive Order 13360 with the goal of meeting and exceeding the three percent government procurement goal for SDVOSBs. (Approved)

Resolution No. 619 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

BURIAL PLOT ALLOWANCE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that Congress pass legislation increasing the burial plot allowance; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress pass legislation expanding eligibility for the burial plot allowance to include the spouse and dependent child eligible for burial with the veteran. (Approved)

Resolution No. 620 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

MINIMUM COMPENSATION FOR HEARING LOSS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to amend the Schedule for Rating Disabilities to provide a minimum compensable evaluation for any service connected hearing loss for which a hearing aid is medically indicated. (Approved)

Resolution No. 621 (Submitted by the Commander-in-Chief)

REPEAL THE SURVIVOR'S BENEFIT PLAN AND DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION OFFSET

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to repeal the Survivor's Benefit Plan and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation offset. (Approved)

Resolution No. 622 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

INCIDENT REPORTING OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND HEALTH CARE FOR MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA (MST)

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge VA and DOD to ensure that necessary and appropriate health care services are available to all veterans who experience sexual assault and/or suffer from MST, to include access to rape kits, confidential counseling and other treatment options, and additional gender-specific facilities for the treatment of MST and PTSD resulting from MST amongst the veteran population; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that DOD should establish an independent authority with oversight capacity, outside the chain of command, to be the

primary respondent and advocate for those reporting a sexual assault, better ensuring confidentiality and the protection of the rights of victims; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the current assessment and treatment process for sexual trauma be conducted in a way that will convince members of the armed forces and veterans that the process protects the confidentiality of survivors and assures that appropriate investigations and disciplinary actions will be taken against the perpetrator; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that DOD must aggressively support a zero-tolerance policy for sexual assault; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that servicemembers be provided educational programs aimed at the prevention of, response to, and the reducing of stigmas associated with sexual assault during initial training and pre-deployment. (Approved)

Resolution No. 623 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

PAYMENT FOR LOSS OF QUALITY OF LIFE

BE IT RESOLVED by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we urge Congress to enact legislation which changes the purpose of compensation to include both loss of earnings capacity and loss of quality of life. In doing so, we urge Congress to increase compensation to adequately address the impact that service connected disabilities have on veterans quality of life. (Approved)

Resolution No. 624 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

EXEMPT CATASTROPHICALLY DISABLED VETERANS FROM PAYING ANY VA CO-PAYMENTS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to exempt category 4, catastrophically disabled veterans from paying any VA co-payments. (Approved)

Resolution No. 625 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we urge Congress to change the eligibility delimitating date for VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program by eliminating the 12-year-delimitating date for eligibility to Chapter 31 benefits and allow all veterans with employment impediments or problems with independent living to qualify for VR&E services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA streamlines eligibility and entitlement to VR&E programs to provide earlier intervention and assistance to all disabled veterans. (Disapproved)

Resolution No. 626 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

HOMELESS VETERANS PRIORITIES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the President and Congress to establish homeless veterans as a priority by increasing the availability of affordable housing, ensuring the opportunity to earn an adequate income through increased educational and employment opportunities and training, and by expanding access to health-care services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VA should ensure that all veteran homeless programs are fully funded to include the VA's Grant and Per Diem program and the DOL's Homeless Veterans Reintegration program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VA should periodically review the economy so as to take into account instances of inflation to adequately adjust Grant and Per Diem program rates as necessary for sufficient operation of homeless veteran assistance programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA programs extended to homeless veterans be equipped with the staffing and resources necessary to respond to the growing needs of a diverse veterans population, including women, dependents, the elderly, and disabled; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that preemptive measures to address homelessness are developed and utilized to prevent and minimize the risk of possible homelessness that current service members and veterans face.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Department of Veterans Affairs service connected compensation and non-service connected pension not be considered as countable income by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 627 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

EMPLOYER TAX CREDIT

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we urge Congress to establish and appropriate funds for a federal tax credit program for employers who agree to hire and train recently discharged veterans for positions within their companies. ((Disapproved))

Resolution No. 628 (Submitted by Department of Pacific Areas)

INCLUSION OF OVERSEAS VETERANS ALL-INCLUSIVE MEDICAL SERVICE UNDER THE FOREIGN MEDICAL PROGRAM (FMP)

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we fully support expanding the Foreign Medical Program so that it provides all-inclusive medical services to veterans who have been adjudicated by VA as 100% disabled. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 629 (Submitted by Department of New York)

AMEND THE NVS ADVISORY COMMITTEE POLICY AND
PROCEDURE TO ALLOW FOR VA ACCREDITATION OF POST,
COUNTY COUNCIL AND DISTRICT SERVICE OFFICERS

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States National Veteran's Service Advisory Committee amend the Veterans Service Policy and Procedure, (Article VI, National Convention, Section 615.a. National Veterans Service Advisory Committee) to provide for the accreditation of Post, County Council and District Service Officers providing that they meet the established criteria for accreditation, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VFW Post, County Council and District Service Officers are not required to being a full-time paid employee. (Disapproved)

Resolution No. 630 (Submitted by Department of Iowa)

FULL VIETNAM VETERAN STATUS FOR THOSE CURRENTLY
REFERRED TO AS VIETNAM-ERA VETERANS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support providing all veterans who served their country in waters offshore, in airspace above, and in Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia during the Vietnam War, currently known as Vietnam Era Veterans, to full Vietnam veteran status. (Disapproved)

Resolution No. 631 (Submitted by Department of Michigan)

MARKER MEDALLION

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support amending Public Law 110-157 to allow the Department of Veterans Affairs to furnish a medallion or other device notwithstanding the fact that the veteran did die prior to November 1, 1990. (Approved)

Resolution No. 632 (Submitted by Department of Michigan)

EXPOSURE OF HERBICIDES FOR CERTAIN VETERANS WHO
SERVED IN THE VICINITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support HR 2254, to amend the Agent Orange Act of 1991 to add for purposes of the presumption of service connection for diseases associated with exposure, by veterans to certain herbicide agents while in Vietnam, such Republic's inland waterways, ports, and harbors, waters offshore, and airspace above; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this amendment includes as veterans eligible for such presumption those who: (1) served on Johnston Island during the period beginning on April 1, 1972, and ending on September 30,

1977; or (2) received the Vietnam Service Medal or the Vietnam Campaign Medal. (Disapproved)

Resolution No. 633 (Submitted by Department of Oregon)

REQUIRE WAIVER OF TUITION AND FEES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN AND SPOUSES OF SERVICE MEMBERS
DECEASED FROM WOUNDS OF INJURIES INCURRED ON
ACTIVE DUTY OR RATED 100% DISABLED BY VA

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to enact legislation requiring all public institutions of higher education, and private institutions of higher education receiving federal fund, to waive tuition and mandatory fees for the children and widows and widowers of service member deceased from wounds or injuries incurred in the line of duty, and for the spouse and children of service members rating by VA as 100% disabled due to injuries or disabilities also incurred in the line of duty. (Disapproved)

Resolution No. 634 (Submitted by Department of Oregon)

REQUIRE DEFENSE CONTRACTORS TO RECRUIT
AND PROVIDE VETERANS PREFERENCE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to enact legislation requiring all defense contractors to conduct special outreach programs to recruit veterans and to provide preference to qualified veterans similar to that provided by the federal government when hiring to perform defense contracts. (Disapproved)

Resolution No. 635 (Submitted by Department of Oregon)

REQUIRE OPM TO ISSUE A SINGLE REGULATION GOVERNING
VETERANS' PREFERENCE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to enact legislation requiring the United States Office of Personnel Management to issue one single regulation governing the administration of veterans' preference as relates to appointments to both competitive and excepted service positions in the executive branch of the federal government. (Approved)

Resolution No. 636 (Submitted by Department of Ohio)

REDUCE THE TEN-YEAR RULE FOR DEPENDENCY
AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation to reduce this ten-year rule for DIC qualification to a more reasonable period of time. (Approved)

Resolution No. 637 (Submitted by Department of Ohio)

VIETNAM VETERANS' EQUITY ACT

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation to expressly provide that the phrase "served in the Republic of Vietnam" include service in the waters offshore. (Approved)

Resolution No. 638 (Submitted by Department of Ohio)

OPPOSE THE IMPOSITION OF TIME LIMITS FOR FILING COMPENSATION CLAIMS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we oppose any change in law to limit the time for filing compensation claims. (Approved)

Resolution No. 639 (Submitted by Department of Ohio)

OPPOSE REDUCTION OF THE APPEAL PERIOD FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS DECISIONS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we oppose any change in law to reduce the period for appealing VA claims decisions. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 640 (Submitted by Department of Ohio)

OPPOSE REGIONAL DISPERSION OF THE BOARD OF VETERANS APPEALS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we categorically oppose any decentralization of the Board of Veterans' Appeals. (Approved)

Resolution No. 641 (Submitted by Department of Ohio)

REQUIRE THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO PAY FEES OF ATTORNEYS, AGENTS, AND CLAIMS REPRESENTATIVES

WHEREAS, no disabled veteran should have to pay attorney fees to obtain the benefits that a grateful nation provides and the veteran is rightfully due; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that to ensure that the veteran receives all the funds to which the veteran is entitled the Veterans of Foreign Wars seek legislation requiring that the Department of Veterans' Affairs pay fees that would have accrued under current regulations and that these fees will meet current requirements of the EAJA. (Disapproved)

Resolution No. 642 (Submitted by Department of Ohio)

INCREASE THE REIMBURSEMENT RATES FOR FEE BASIS CARE AND FULLY COVER THE COST OF TREATMENT THROUGH FEE BASIS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress and the Administration to establish new mechanisms to ensure VA reimbursement rates for the fee basis care are adequate and indexed to the appropriate annual health care consumer inflation rate recognized by the Federal government; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge VA to promote incentives among private health care practitioners and medical facilities to accept fee basis reimbursements as payment in full for the cost of treatments provided through the fee basis program for service-connected disabled veterans. (Approved)

Resolution No. 643 (Submitted by Department of Ohio)

PROVIDE EDUCATION BENEFITS FOR DEPENDENTS OF SERVICE CONNECTED VETERANS RATED AT 80 PERCENT OR MORE DISABLED

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we seek the enactment of legislation which would extend educational assistance under chapter 35 of title 38, United States Code, to the dependents of veterans who have a service-connected disability rating of 80 percent or more. (Disapproved)

Resolution No. 644 (Submitted by Department of Ohio)

SUPPORT DVOPS/LVER GRANTS BEING RETURNED TO STAFFING GRANTS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation by U.S. Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service Grants supporting DVOPS and LVERS be returned to a staffing grant Veterans priority of service be expanded to include any agency or organization, state or federal, that receives federal funding for employment and training, i.e. directly or through federal grants through the States (including the Workforce Investment Act (WIA)); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Ohio requests that the VFW support action that would require the Congress through the Secretary of Labor ensure that adequate funding be provided to support adequate DVOPS/LVER(s) staff within States to provide services to all veterans' requiring employment and training assistance residing within that State. (Disapproved)

Resolution No. 645 (Submitted by Department of Ohio)

VETERANS' PREFERENCE IN FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT

BE IT RESOLVED by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we make it a legislative priority to require Congress amend Title 5

United States Code to require preference be provided to all honorably discharged veterans of the United States Military, in employment, training and promotion in all hiring authorities. (Disapproved)

Resolution No. 646 (Submitted by Department of Ohio)

ENFORCEMENT OF VETERANS AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMS
IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of Ohio request that the Veterans' of Foreign Wars of the United States make it a legislative priority to require Congress to require enforcement of Title 38 Section 4214; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that to be in line with enforcement of veterans' preference that the enforcement of section 4214 be provided by the U.S. Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Service as this Agency currently enforce Chapter 41 and 43 of Title 38, U.S.C. (Disapproved)

Resolution No. 647 (Submitted by Department of Kentucky)

RECOGNIZE ROBLEY REX

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition the Department of Veterans Affairs to name the new VA hospital to be built in Louisville, Kentucky, the "Robley Rex Memorial Hospital"; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the members of the United States House of Representatives and the members of the United States Senate that represent the Commonwealth of Kentucky be petitioned to co-sponsor such needed legislation to cause the naming of this hospital for Robley Rex. (Approved)

Resolution No. 648 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

PROVIDE FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to create an effective family caregiver program that includes a training and certification program so that family caregivers are eligible to receive a family allowance for the care they are providing on behalf of VA to their loved ones; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a comprehensive caregiver program must include continuous support options for the family member including the availability of respite care, mental health counseling for the family member, as well as the availability of health care and other services to help them cope with caregiver burden thereby improving the quality of life for severely disabled veterans. (Approved)

Resolution No. 649 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT
PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to change the eligibility delimitating date for VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program by eliminating the 12-year-delimitating date for eligibility to Chapter 31 benefits and allow all veterans with employment impediments or problems with independent living to qualify for VR&E services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VR&E's educational housing stipend needs to be increased to reflect the current state of other educational benefits; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VA must restructure performance measures to emphasize long-term rehabilitation versus the current short-term indicators of success. Furthermore, VR&E should continually follow up with veterans considered to be rehabilitated to ensure that the rehabilitation and employment placement plans have been successful; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VR&E ought to be expanded to include services for spouses and children; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA streamlines eligibility and entitlement to VR&E programs to provide more timely intervention and assistance to all disabled veterans. (Approved)

Resolution No. 650 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

INCREASE THE BENEFIT LEVEL FOR THE SURVIVORS AND
DEPENDENTS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (DEA)

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress to increase DEA Program benefits to reflect the rising cost of education, and that the benefit should be indexed to reflect the level of tuition as reported by the Department of Education; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Congress should ensure eligibility for these benefits is extended to all survivors equitably. (Approved)

Resolution No. 651 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

ENFORCEMENT OF VETERANS EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to hold the Department of Labor and federal contractors responsible for abiding by the law, particularly Title 38 USC 4212; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW urges Congress to modify

Title 38 USC 4212 to stipulate penalties for all federal contractors that are found to be in non-compliance of such section; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW urges Congress to modify Title 38 USC 4212 to require that any information collected through the VETS-100—a required annual filing for federal contractors receiving over \$100,000 that lists the number of veterans they employ—be made available to the public and in a user friendly format for both veterans and those who assist veterans in locating employment; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW urges Congress to hold regular hearings with governmental departments that have a poor record in hiring veterans, particularly disabled veterans, to highlight the issue and take necessary actions to discontinue such actions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED; that all governmental agencies clearly supply information to veterans, at the time of their application for employment, which clearly identifies the proper procedure for filing complaints should any veteran believe his or her rights have been violated under any law or regulation related to veterans' preference. (Approved)

**COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL BY-LAWS,
MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL**

Chairman: Larry Rivers, Past Commander-in-Chief, Louisiana
Vice Chairman: Jimmie Cantrell, National Chief of Staff, Texas

(Room 221, Phoenix Convention Center)

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Alaska	Duane E. Gonzales	9365
Alaska	Martin E. Miller	9785
Arizona	George K. Mead	9400
Arizona	Allen F. Kent	9972
Arizona	Timothy M. Borland	9972
Arizona	Lindsey C. Botkin	10342
Arkansas	Ruben Tamariz	2256
Arkansas	Bobby G. Julian	6527
California	Mike M. Maynor	52
California	David B. Norris	52
California	Steven D. Jacobs	9415
California	Judge Brown	7792
Colorado	Wayne J. Thompson	5061
Colorado	Charles G. Watkins	3917
Colorado	James E. Mauck	2601
Colorado	Ronald J. Lattin	5061
Connecticut	Ronald Rusakiewicz	9460
Connecticut	Fred Schluntz	5095
Connecticut	Robert P. Tozzoli	9929
Delaware	Paul R. Phillips	2863
Delaware	Gary Frederick	2863
Dist. of Col.	Lynn R. Hill	7284
Dist. of Col.	Troy E. Gatling	341
Europe	James L. Holliman	10692
Europe	Anthony V. Classe	10708
Florida	Michael J. White	3559
Florida	W. Benny Bachand	4287
Florida	William J. Gault	8154
Florida	Eugene Le Shore	10174
Florida	William R. Kirsop	8083
Georgia	Byron A. Scogins	2776
Hawaii	Nicholas Young	1540
Illinois	Barbara R. Wilson	2649
Illinois	George R. Lobb	3579
Illinois	Rick Frank	1461
Illinois	Robert A. Crider	2801
Indiana	Allen E. Chlupacek	1954
Indiana	Johnny R. Capps	6653
Iowa	Roger D. Schwieso	941
Iowa	William L. Kendall	9599
Kansas	George Nunnemacher	2993

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Kansas	John A. Berkley	8873
Kentucky	Michael R. Whitfield	5484
Kentucky	Brian J. Duffy	1170
Louisiana	Joseph A. Escott	4858
Louisiana	Larry B. Minton	1736
Louisiana	Kenneth G. Wilkewitz	4224
Maine	Marvin W. Woodbury	887
Maine	Robert R. Worthley	8835
Maryland	Harvey A. Stephens	2632
Maryland	Victor W. Fuentealba	9083
Massachusetts	Theodore R. Eaton	2104
Massachusetts	Walter Gansenberg	834
Michigan	John J. Harrow	3724
Michigan	Garold T. Gamble	345
Michigan	David E. Prohaska	4434
Michigan	Robert D. Weiss	2406
Minnesota	Alcuin G. Loehr	4847
Minnesota	David L. Adams	1782
Missouri	Kevin C. Jones	7356
Missouri	Lawrence M. Maher	7356
Missouri	Roger D. Massey	3944
Missouri	Bill J. Myrick	5331
Montana	Carey F. Dill	2252
Nebraska	Rolland E. Hild	8334
Nebraska	Harold Schlender	5289
Nevada	Michael H. Musgrove	2350
Nevada	Gilbert Hernandez	2350
Nevada	Leonard Wenson	1753
New Hampshire	Paul J. Chevalier	168
New Hampshire	John M. Lilly	1698
New Jersey	Donald E. Marshall	9503
New Jersey	Gary L. Stoop	4589
New Mexico	David C. Wimmer	7686
New York	Robert E. Barnhart	686
New York	Harold M. Burke	1895
New York	William Schmitz	524
North Carolina	Raymond J. Yamrus	7318
North Dakota	Richard J. Belling	7564
Ohio	Andrew J. Caprella	9648
Ohio	Gerald J. Ward	5713
Ohio	Terry R. Roan	3124
Ohio	Chuck Keller	3761
Ohio	James W. Dickens	5532
Oklahoma	Donald R. Fenter	5263
Oklahoma	Kenneth C. Pike	4876
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Oregon	Cheryl E. Campos	10626
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South Dakota	Rick W. Barg	628
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Tennessee	Henry L. Damron	4641
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Texas	Joseph McCullough	4676
Texas	Carlos Sustaita	8787
Texas	Lavern H. Terbl	7873
Texas	Kenneth Burton	9182
Texas	Eliseo Cantu	2397
Utah	Frederick D. Jones	1481
Vermont	Kevin T. Maloney	6689
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Virginia	John T. Edwards	8545
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Washington	Charles E. Vitiritti	9430
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West Virginia	David R. Ash	6450
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Wisconsin	Gundel Metz	1318
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Nebraska	Billy C. Smith	7028
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(Room 231, Phoenix Convention Center)

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Illinois	Marshal C. Hawk	454
Illinois	Donald Smithenry	4226
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Indiana	Terry J. Bruning	2839
Indiana	Jack L. Heflin	2839
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Kansas	Norman Staab	6240
Kentucky	John Ranson	6095
Kentucky	Joe Schnitterbaum	8639
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Louisiana	Gene Olivier	8971
Louisiana	Landry E. Saucier	1736
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Maryland	James L. Youngblood	9083
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Massachusetts	Edward C. Walsh	6712
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Michigan	Larry A. Coleman	1888
Michigan	Matthew J. David	423
Michigan	William A. Dobbie	4659
Michigan	Garry J. Goff	8260
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Minnesota	Michael A. Eisenstadt	4847
Minnesota	James R. Tuorila	428
Minnesota	Steven P. Van Bergen	6587
Mississippi	Richard M. Fetters	3937
Mississippi	Samuel C. Ladner	4808
Mississippi	William H. Long	4302
Missouri	Philip M. Duncan	7356
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New Jersey	Henry J. Adams	3525
New Jersey	Albert J. Bucchi	3020
New Jersey	James W. Manning	2639
New Jersey	Arthur R. Taylor	5479
New Mexico	Tyrone M. Benson	7686
New York	Anthony M. Ferrarese	16
North Carolina	Stephen L. Amos	1134

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Oklahoma	Robert Allen Clark	4876
Oklahoma	J. Richard Elsheimer	3077
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Pennsylvania	Dwight R. Fuhrman	8896
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South Carolina	Oliver L. Smith	4262
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Texas	Wilbur R. Dudley	6115
Texas	Danny R. Henry	4372
Texas	Ronald C. Hornsby	10428
Texas	Manfred J. Knapp	2544
Texas	N. F. Layne	3990
Texas	Robert J. Lyons	8246
Texas	Tashawnya McCullough	4676
Texas	Sylvia C. Sanchez	8936
Texas	Clifford T. Teer	2148
Texas	Lazaro Velasquez	2397
Texas	Ferrell E. Warden	8552
Vermont	Robert L. Colby	782
Virginia	Robert Jackson	3150
Virginia	Shelby S. Lasseter	4809
Virginia	Margo D. Sheridan	7327
Virginia	Melissa Van Wagner	3160
Washington	Roger L. Fleishour	3067
West Virginia	Gary R. Miller	896
West Virginia	Melvin L. Reed	573
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Wisconsin	John L. Fredrickson	2204
Wisconsin	William C. Knudson	1866
Wisconsin	Steven D. Lawrence	10272

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Vice Chairman: Delilah A. Washburn, Texas

(Room 132A, Phoenix Convention Center)

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Alabama	Max L. Hyatt	6226
Alabama	James St. John	6073
Alaska	Scott D. Griffith	9785

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Arizona	Anthony D. Mangine	6790
Arizona	Ralph F. Arvizu	6310
Arkansas	Larry B. Kirk	4556
Arkansas	Don R. Reynolds	4548
California	Scott H. Langhoff	11387
California	Larry E. Spurlin	9546
California	Ralph H. Duncan	2122
California	Howard L. Hagen	2967
California	Edward J. McCoy	2275
California	Lee A. Quarcelino	2041
Colorado	Charles K. Ackerman	4663
Connecticut	Raymond F. Hackett	10004
Delaware	James R. Withrow	6483
Dist. of Col.	William L. Bradshaw	284
Dist. of Col.	Thomas Boaston	7284
Europe	Dale R. Nagan	10708
Florida	Paul Y. Goldych	4256
Florida	Lee F. Kichen	12055
Florida	Arthur W. Travis	4300
Georgia	Joe T. Wood	8452
Georgia	Ray E. Brooks	2785
Georgia	Albert R. Spears	6330
Hawaii	Norbert K. Enos	2875
Idaho	Tom Ressler	63
Idaho	Patrick D. Teague	63
Illinois	Barry F. Walter	5220
Illinois	Paul E. Kallembach	2287
Indiana	Arnold L. Marion	6606
Indiana	Les W. Stamm	2839
Indiana	Randy J. Adams	2839
Indiana	Craig F. Carr	2839
Indiana	Jerell O. Herston	6978
Iowa	Steven N. Hyde	839
Kansas	Darrell F. Bencken	2981
Kentucky	William E. Garwood	1170
Kentucky	Gerald L. Kayrouz	1170
Latin Amer/Carib	Luis R. Quiles Barries	11113
Latin Amer/Carib	Jose Ruiz Soto	11103
Louisiana	John R. Fauver	3784
Maine	Malcolm P. Kenney	5744
Maryland	D. Harvey Cunningham	8185
Maryland	Phillip S. Medlin	2678
Massachusetts	James R. Williams	8164
Michigan	Jerry L. Smith	7581
Michigan	Daniel J. Crocker	796
Michigan	Gene N. Furgason	4249
Michigan	Elmer R. Liimatta	6507
Michigan	Jackie L. Pickard	2780
Michigan	Kirk S. Kennedy	701
Minnesota	Richard A. Zierdt	6587

Department	Name	Post No.
Minnesota	Robert H. Bjorkman	141
Minnesota	Tate R. Doom	742
Minnesota	Louie R. Mrozek	6316
Mississippi	Addison Blackmon	2539
Mississippi	James E. Grayson	4970
Missouri	Dennis F. Flynn	2866
Missouri	Michael Orchard	7628
Missouri	James D. Rippy	4398
Missouri	Kevin T. Speis	5077
Montana	Robert T. Schwegel	6786
Nebraska	Bernard B. Brosnihan	10727
Nebraska	James H. Pierce	5547
Nevada	Walter J. Dybeck	3848
Nevada	John W. Stroud	2313
New Hampshire	John J. Calo	1772
New Jersey	George O. Lott	10152
New Jersey	Bernard J. McElwee	10184
New Jersey	Joseph G. Retkovis	5579
New Mexico	Vincent B. J. Lawrence	7686
New York	Jack L. Haight	2883
New York	Stephen Neffleberg	107
New York	Michael Pascal	9486
North Carolina	Donald W. Priem	8593
North Carolina	Michael W. Ayscue	2417
North Carolina	Roy C. Meares	10400
North Dakota	Dale T. Ronning	7564
Ohio	David K. Nielsen	7741
Ohio	Robert A. Poole	2850
Ohio	Christopher W. Haynes	7670
Ohio	Larry D. Moore	3494
Ohio	Charles B. Adams	892
Ohio	Gary B. Bentfeld	2799
Ohio	Francis L. Clendenen	9473
Ohio	Ralph K. Jeffers	4464
Oklahoma	Darrell R. McGee	5263
Oregon	Dennis G. Guthrie	4108
Pacific Areas	Peter C. Scalzo	2485
Pennsylvania	William J. Mayer	8896
Pennsylvania	Carmen A. DeSanti	2198
Rhode Island	James P. Boardman	4487
South Carolina	Harold Copeland	6561
South Dakota	David W. Parr	628
Tennessee	William G. Crawford	2120
Texas	David R. Herod	3359
Texas	Richard K. King	8790
Utah	Vernon R. Wade	3586
Vermont	Vito S. DeMarco	771
Vermont	Ronald L. Welch	2571
Virginia	Dennis M. Cullinan	7916
Virginia	Gunnar Gudjonsson	392
Washington	Roger D. Proctor	4278

Department	Name	Post No.
West Virginia	Clifford K. Gwinn	3466
Wisconsin	Lee R. Guerrero	7485
Wisconsin	Allen W. Kochenderfer	10406
Wyoming	Robert J. DeBernardo	10969
Wyoming	Bobby L. Hoard	4343

COMMITTEE ON CREDENTIALS

Chairman: David Butters, Post 475, Delaware

COMMITTEE ON CONVENTION RULES

Chairman: James Mueller, Past Commander-in-Chief, Missouri

Vice Chairman: George Lisicki, Past Commander-in-Chief, New Jersey