AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
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112th Congress, 2d Session – – – – – – – – – – – – – – House Document 112–86

PROCEEDINGS OF 93rd NATIONAL CONVENTION *of the*

AMERICAN LEGION

Minneapolis, Minnesota

August 26–September 1, 2011

2011 : 93rd NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION : 2011

112th Congress, 2d Session – – – – – – – – – – – – – – House Document 112–86

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 93RD NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

COMMUNICATION

FROM

THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION, THE AMERICAN LEGION

TRANSMITTING

THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND INDEPENDENT AUDIT OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, PROCEEDINGS OF THE 93RD ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, HELD IN MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA FROM AUGUST 26–SEPTEMBER 1, 2011, AND A REPORT ON THE ORGANIZATION'S ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR PRECEDING THE CONVENTION, PURSUANT TO 36 U.S.C. 49

FEBRUARY 7, 2012.—Referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and ordered to be printed

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

72–732 WASHINGTON : 2012

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Washington, DC, January 27, 2012.

Hon. JOHN BOEHNER,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: In compliance with current public law we herewith transmit for printing as a House document a financial statement and independent audit of The American Legion, proceedings of our 93rd annual National Convention held in Minneapolis, Minnesota from August 26–September 1, 2011 and a report on our organization's activities for the year preceding the convention.

For God and Country,

TIM TETZ,
Director, National Legislative Commission.

112th Congress, 2d Session – – – – – – – – – – – – – – House Document 112–86

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FOREWORD

This booklet has been prepared for the information of members of The American Legion. It has come to be known as the Summary of Proceedings of the National Convention for the current year. It is a comprehensive résumé of what took place at the Ninety-Third Annual National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30 - September 1, 2011.

The final report of the National Organization for the period ending December 31, 2010, and Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2010, and Surplus Analysis, January 1, 2010, to December 31, 2010, are included in the Summary.

To make a quick distribution, speed has been necessary. Every precaution has been taken to avoid errors, but some may have occurred in the rush of Convention events and the haste of editing and printing.

Permission is hereby given to quote from this Summary without further consent. However, because of the nature of our resolution process, I urge that the full text of any *resolve clause(s)* be used when a quotation from a resolution is required for publication.

Daniel S. Wheeler
National Adjutant

Note: At various times, the National Vice Commanders, as follows, presided over the Convention sessions, when called upon by presiding officer, in accordance with the Uniform Code of Procedure as shown in the verbatim proceedings: Russell J. Henry, Louisiana; John M. Mella, Michigan; Carlos Orria-Medina, Puerto Rico; Eugene Pytka, Rhode Island; William F. Schrier, Washington.

NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND NATIONAL OFFICERS
THE AMERICAN LEGION, 1919 to Date

Note: In the following list it should be noted that the terms of each group of officers expire with that particular convention under which they are listed.

* *indicates deceased*

HONORARY COMMANDERS
General of the Armies of the United States John J. Pershing*
Marshall of France Ferdinand Foch*

PARIS CAUCUS
Paris, France, March 15 - 17, 1919
Temporary Chairman: Eric Fisher Wood*, Pennsylvania (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1955 and 1958 National Convention)
Permanent Chairman: Bennett C. Clark*, Missouri (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1926 National Convention)
Chairman Pro Tempore: Thomas W. Miller*, Delaware (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1968 National Convention)
Secretary: Eric Fisher Wood*, Pennsylvania (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1955 National Convention)
At the Paris Caucus an Executive Committee was elected to complete arrangements, the chairman and secretary of which were:
Chairman: Milton J. Foreman*, Illinois (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1921 National Convention)
Secretary: George A. White*, Oregon

ST. LOUIS CAUCUS
St. Louis, Mo., May 8 - 10, 1919
Temporary Chairman: Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. *, New York (Voted title of Past National Commander at 1949 National Convention)
Permanent Chairman: Henry D. Lindsley*, Texas (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1919 National Convention)
Vice Chairmen: John J. Sullivan*, Washington; Fred Humphrey*, New Mexico; P.C. Calhoun*, Connecticut (Voted titles of Past National Vice Commanders at 1933 National Convention)
Secretary: Eric Fisher Wood*, Pennsylvania
(Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1955 National Convention)
Chaplain: Thomas H. Wiles*, Colorado

1st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Minneapolis, Minn., Nov. 10 - 12, 1919
Chairman: Henry D. Lindsley*, Texas, Past National Commander
Vice Chairman: Bennett C. Clark*, Missouri
Secretary: Eric Fisher Wood*, Pennsylvania
Treasurer: Gasper G. Bacon*, Massachusetts
Chaplain: Thomas H. Wiles*, Colorado

2nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Cleveland, Ohio, Sept. 27 - 29, 1920
Commander: Franklin D'Olier*, Pennsylvania
Vice Commanders: James O'Brien*, California; Allan A. Tukey*, Nebraska; Joyce S. Lewis*, Minnesota; Alden B. Chambers*, Massachusetts; William Follett*, Oregon
Adjutant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Chaplain: Rev. Francis A. Kelly*, New York
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

3rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Kansas City, Mo., Oct. 31 – Nov. 2, 1921
Commander: Frederic W.Galbraith, Jr. *, (died June 9); Succeeded by John G. Emery*, Michigan

Milton Foreman*, Illinois, Past National Commander
Vice Commanders: John G. Emery*, Michigan; Thomas Goldingay*, New Jersey; Claudius G. Pendill*, Wisconsin; James G. Scrugham*, Nevada; E. Jackson Winslett*, Alabama
Adjutant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. John W. Inzer*, Tennessee
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

4th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New Orleans, La., Oct. 16 - 20, 1922
Commander: Hanford MacNider*, Iowa
Vice Commanders: H. Nelson Jackson*, Vermont; George L. Berry*, Tennessee; Raymond O. Brackett*, Massachusetts; Charles H. Kendrick*, California; John A. McCormack*, Colorado
Adjutant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Earl A. Blackman*, Kansas
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

5th NATIONAL CONVENTION
San Francisco, Calif., Oct. 16 - 19, 1923
Commander: Alvin M. Owsley*, Texas
Vice Commanders: Edward J. Barrett*, Wisconsin; Watson B. Miller*, District of Columbia; E. Erle Cocke, Sr.*, Georgia; Robert O. Blood*, New Hampshire; Chiles P. Plummer*, Wyoming
Adjutant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. William P. O'Connor*, Ohio
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

6th NATIONAL CONVENTION
St. Paul, Minn., Sept. 15 - 19, 1924
Commander: John R. Quinn*, California
Vice Commanders: Lester F. Albert*, Idaho; Celora M. Stoddard*, Arizona; William B. Healey*, Pennsylvania; F. Ryan Duffy*, Wisconsin; Dr. I. Thurman Mann*, North Carolina
Adjutant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington Resigned 2-1-24; Succeeded by Russell G. Creviston*, Indiana
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Ezra Clemens*, Minnesota
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

7th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Omaha, Neb., Oct. 5 - 9, 1925
Commander: James A. Drain*, Washington
Vice Commanders: Frank H. McFarland*, Kansas; Eugene P. Armstrong*, Connecticut; A. L. Perry, Panama; Peyton H. Hoge, Jr*, Kentucky; William Stern*, North Dakota
Adjutant: Russell G. Creviston*, Indiana, Resigned; Succeeded by James F. Barton*, Iowa
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Joseph M. Lonergan*, Illinois
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

8th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Philadelphia, Pa., Oct. 11 - 15, 1926
Commander: John R. McQuigg*, Ohio
Bennett C. Clark*, Missouri, Past National Commander
Vice Commanders: Joseph Y. Cheney*, Florida; Hughes B. Davis*, Oklahoma; Vincent A. Carroll*, Pennsylvania; Raymond B. Littlefield*, Rhode Island; Judge James A. Howell*, Utah
Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. William E. Patrick*, California
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

9th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New York, N.Y., Oct. 18, 1927
Paris, France, Sept. 19 - 22, 1927
Commander: Howard P. Savage*, Illinois
Vice Commanders: C. Thomas Busha, Jr. *, Montana; Stafford King*, Minnesota; John G. Sims*, Tennessee;

John E. Curtiss*, Nebraska; Dr. John G. Towne*, Maine
Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Joseph L.N. Wolfe*, Pennsylvania
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

10th NATIONAL CONVENTION
San Antonio, Texas, Oct. 8 - 11, 1928
Commander: Edward E. Spafford*, New York
Vice Commanders: John T. Raftis*, Washington; Ralph T. O'Neil*, Kansas; Paul R. Younts*, North Carolina; Dan Spurlock*, Louisiana; John M. Henry*, Minnesota.
Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
Chaplain: Rev. Gill Robb Wilson*, New Jersey
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Scott W. Lucas*, Illinois

11th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Louisville, Ky., Sept. 30 – Oct. 2, 1929
Commander: Paul V. McNutt*, Indiana
Vice Commanders: Lawrence E. McGann, Jr. *, Illinois; George W. Malone*, Nevada; Edward L. White*, Connecticut; Miller C. Foster*, South Carolina; Walton D. Hood*, Texas
Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
Chaplain: Rabbi Lee J. Levinger*, Delaware
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Scott W. Lucas*, Illinois

12th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Boston, Mass., Oct. 6 - 9, 1930
Commander: O.L. Bodenhamer*, Arkansas
Vice Commanders: Milt D. Campbell*, Ohio; John J. Dugan*, Delaware; Morton M. David*, Colorado; Frank Schoble, Jr. *, Pennsylvania; Willis M. Brewer*, Michigan
Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
Chaplain: Rev. George F.Kettell, D.D. *, New York
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Scott W. Lucas*, Illinois

13th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Detroit, Mich., Sept. 21 - 24, 1931
Commander: Ralph T. O'Neil*, Kansas
Vice Commanders: Bert S. Hyland*, Vermont; Roland B. Howell*, Louisiana; Harry B. Henderson, Jr. *, Wyoming; Dr. James A. Duff*, West Virginia; Dr. Neal D. Williams*, Missouri
Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
Chaplain: Rev. Joseph N. Barnett*, Wisconsin
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Scott W. Lucas*, Illinois to 6-24-31; Succeeded by Acting Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

14th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Portland, Ore., Sept. 12 - 15, 1932
Commander: Henry L. Stevens, Jr. *, North Carolina
Vice Commanders: Richard F. Paul*, Massachusetts; Forrest G. Cooper*, Mississippi; Roy L. Cook*, New Mexico; Frank N. Brooks*, Washington; Harold L. Plummer*, Wisconsin
Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
Chaplain: Rev. Harris A. Darche*, Illinois
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Remster A. Bingham*, Indiana

15th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Ill., Oct. 2 - 5, 1933
Commander: Louis A. Johnson*, West Virginia
Vice Commanders: Russell Meadows*, Arizona; Robert D. Flory*, Nebraska; William E. Easterwood, Jr.*, Texas; John J. Maloney*, Maine; Chas. A. Mills*, Florida
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Irwin Q. Wood*, Idaho
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts (died January 22, 1933); Succeeded by Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Judge Advocate: Remster A. Bingham*, Indiana

16th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami, Fla., Oct. 22 - 25, 1934
Commander: Edward A. Hayes*, Illinois
Vice Commanders: Charles R. Mabey*, Utah; Robert L. Gordon*, Arkansas; Miguel Munoz*, Puerto Rico; Ed W. Carruth*, Kansas; Charles L. Woolley*, Rhode Island
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Robert J. White*, Massachusetts
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Remster A. Bingham*, Indiana

17th NATIONAL CONVENTION
St. Louis, Mo., Sept. 23 - 26, 1935
Commander: Frank N. Belgrano, Jr. *, California
Vice Commanders: Daniel J. Doherty*, Massachusetts; Harold J. Warner*, Oregon; John K. Kennelly*, North Dakota; Milo J. Warner*, Ohio; Quimby Melton*, Georgia
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Dr. Park W. Huntington*, Delaware
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: James A. Drain*, Washington
Judge Advocate: James A. Drain*, Washington

18th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Cleveland, Ohio, Sept. 21 - 24, 1936
Commander: Ray Murphy*, Iowa
Vice Commanders: Raymond F. Gates*, Connecticut; Dr. W.E. Whitlock*, Florida; Oscar W. Worthwine*, Idaho; Dr. F. Whitney Godwin*, Virginia; Louis R. Probst*, Wyoming
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rt. Rev. Msgr. Thomas D. Kennedy*, Missouri
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

19th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New York, N.Y., Sept. 20 - 23, 1937
Commander: Harry W. Colmery*, Kansas
Vice Commanders: Salvatore A.Capodice*, California; Leo A. Temmey*, South Dakota; Leonard Sisk*, Tennessee; J. Fred Johnson, Jr. *, Alabama; Jack Crowley*, Vermont
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Bryan H. Keathley, D.D.*, Texas
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

20th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Los Angeles, Calif., Sept. 19 - 22, 1938
Commander: Daniel J. Doherty*, Massachusetts
Vice Commanders: Drury M. Phillips*, Texas; Phil M. Conley*, West Virginia; Harry M. Johnson*, Montana; James F. Daniel, Jr. *, South Carolina; James R. Mahaffy*, Hawaii
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Frank J. Lawler*, Illinois
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

21st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Ill., Sept. 25 - 28, 1939
Commander: Stephen F. Chadwick*, Washington
Vice Commanders: Edward J. Quinn*, Maine; Charles W. Crush*, Virginia; Earl T. Ross*, Nevada; James T. Crawley*, Mississippi; Henry C. Oakey*, Wisconsin
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Jerome L. Fritsche*, Nebraska
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

22nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Boston, Mass., Sept. 23 - 26, 1940
Commander: Raymond J. Kelly*, Michigan
Vice Commanders: Leo E. Ray*, New Hampshire; Charles Q. Kelly*,

Arkansas; Matthew J. Murphy*, Illinois; James B . Fitzgerald*, Maryland; H. Elwyn Davis*, Colorado
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rt. Rev. Msgr. Patrick N. McDermott*, Iowa
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

23rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Milwaukee, Wis., Sept. 15 to 18, 1941
Commander: Milo J. Warner*, Ohio
Vice Commanders: Erwin A. Froyd*, Wyoming; James L. McCrory*, Nebraska; Harold P. Redden*, Massachusetts; Edward R. Stirling*, Pennsylvania; Alcee S. Legendre*, Louisiana
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Brigadier William G. Gilks*, Texas
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

24th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Kansas City, Mo., Sept. 19-21, 1942
Commander: Lynn U. Stambaugh*, North Dakota
Vice Commanders: W. C. Sawyer*, Arizona; William DeLacy Allen*, Georgia; Charles E. Booth*, West Virginia; V. M. Armstrong*, Indiana; John F. Sullivan*, Vermont
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Frederick J. Halloran*, New Jersey
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

25th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Omaha, Neb., Sept. 21 - 23, 1943
Commander: Roane Waring*, Tennessee
Vice Commanders: John T. Batten*, Alabama; Arthur J. Connell*, Connecticut; Fred G. Fraser*, District of Columbia; Herman H. Lark*, Missouri; Jefferson Davis Atwood*, New Mexico
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas, (died July 25); Succeeded by Donald G. Glascoff*, Michigan, Acting Adjutant
Chaplain: Dr. Paul De Forrest Mortimore*, Idaho
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

26th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Ill., Sept. 18 - 20, 1944
Commander: Warren H. Atherton*, California
Vice Commanders: Martin V. Coffey*, Ohio; E.A. Littlefield*, Utah; Robert 'Roy' McMillan*, North Carolina; Edward Al Mulrooney*, Delaware; Hector G. Staples*, Maine
Adjutant: Donald G. Glascoff*, Michigan
Chaplain: Rt. Rev. Msgr. John F. McManus*, Kansas
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

27th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Ill., Nov. 18 - 21, 1945
Commander: Edward N. Scheiberling*, New York
Vice Commanders: Bascom F. Jones*, Tennessee; Frank E. McCaffrey*, Rhode Island; Dan M. McDade*, Oregon; Ray S. Pierson*, Kansas; William P. Shadoan*, Kentucky
Adjutant: Donald G. Glascoff*, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. DeWitt C. Mallory*, Florida
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

28th NATIONAL CONVENTION
San Francisco, Calif., Sept. 30 – Oct. 4, 1946
Commander: John Stelle *, Illinois
Vice Commanders: R. Graham Huntington*, New Jersey; Fred LaBoon*, Oklahoma; Sam L. Latimer, Jr. *, South Carolina; H. Dudley Swim*, Idaho; Jeremiah Twomey*, Massachusetts

Adjutant: Donald G. Glascoff*, Michigan
Chaplain: Rt. Rev. Msgr. Edward J. Smith*, Iowa.
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana, (died 7-13-45); Succeeded by Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

29th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New York, N.Y., Aug. 28 – 31, 1947
Commander: Paul H. Griffith*, Pennsylvania
Vice Commanders: Joseph W. Brown*, New Hampshire; Martin B. Buckner*, Michigan; Richard C. Cadwallader*, Louisiana; Ernest H. Dervishian*, Virginia; Edward J. Sharkey*, California
Adjutant: Donald G. Glascoff*, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Arthur L. Rustad*, Minnesota
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

30th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami, Fla., Oct. 18 - 20, 1948
Commander: James F. O'Neil*, New Hampshire
Vice Commanders: LeRoy William Barns*, South Dakota; Albert A. Cree*, Vermont; Richard B. Ott*, Washington; Myron R. Renick*, West Virginia; Joe W. White*, Georgia
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Frank L. Harrington*, Montana
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

31st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Philadelphia, Pa., Aug. 29 – Sept. 1, 1949
Commander: S. Perry Brown*, Texas
Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.*, (NY), Past National Commander
Vice Commanders: James Lane*, (AL); Leonard W. Moody*, (AR); James Annin*, (MT); Walter E. Alessandroni*, (PA);
Edward J. Kelly*, (CT)
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, (NE).
Chaplain: Rev. Thomas Grice*, (CA)
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, (AL)
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, (IN)
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, (IN)

32nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Los Angeles, Calif., Oct. 9 – 12, 1950
Commander: George N. Craig*, (IN)
Vice Commanders: Milton G. Boock*, (MN); David H. Fleisher*, (MO); Frank E. Lowe*, Maine; J. E. Martie*, (NV); Dr. D. R. Perry*, (NC)
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Edward J. Carney*, O.S.A., Massachusetts
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

33rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami, Fla., Oct. 15 – 18, 1951
Commander: Erle Cocke, Jr.*, Georgia
Vice Commanders: Joe H. Adams*, Florida; Herbert J. Jacobi*, District of Columbia; Felix Pogliano*, Colorado; Lewis K. Gough*, California; Fred C. Bramlage*, Kansas
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska
Chaplain: Rabbi David Lefkowitz*, Louisiana
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

34th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New York, N.Y., Aug. 25 – 28, 1952
Commander: Donald R. Wilson*, West Virginia
Vice Commanders: Adolph F. Bremer*, Minnesota; Frank R. Kelley*, Massachusetts; Thomas E. Paradine*, New York; Oscar B. Rohiff*, Wyoming; Audley H. Ward*, South Carolina
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska
Chaplain: Rev. Olaf G. Birkeland*, Wisconsin
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

35th NATIONAL CONVENTION
St. Louis, Mo., Aug. 31 – Sept. 3, 1953
Commander: Lewis K. Gough*, California
Vice Commanders: William R. Bourdon*, Arizona; Lyon W. Brandon*, Mississippi; Wilbur C. Daniel*, Virginia; Harry V. Groome*, New Jersey; J. Addington Wagner*, Michigan
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. John E. Duffy*, Ohio
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

36th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Washington, D.C., Aug. 30 – Sept. 2, 1954
Commander: Arthur J. Connell*, Connecticut
Vice Commanders: John A. High*, New Hampshire; Dr. Deward H. Reed*, New Mexico; Truman C. Wold*, North Dakota; Thomas W. Bird*, North Carolina; Herbert M. Walker*, Pennsylvania
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska
Chaplain: Dr. Tom B. Clark*, Oklahoma
Historian: Robert T. Fairey*, South Carolina
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

37th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami, Fla., Oct. 10 – 13, 1955
Commander: Seaborn P. Collins*, New Mexico
Eric Fisher Wood*, Pennsylvania, Past National Commander
Vice Commanders: Leonard L. Jackson*, Louisiana; Patrick H. Mangan*, Jr., Vermont; Howard C. Kingdom*, Ohio; Dr. Carl J. Rees*, Delaware; Robert L. Shelby*, Utah
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska
Chaplain: Rev. Albert J. Hoffman*, Iowa
Historian: Robert T. Fairey*, South Carolina
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

38th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Los Angeles, Calif., Sept. 3 – 6, 1956
Commander: J. Addington Wagner*, Michigan
Vice Commanders; Guy Stone*, Georgia; John H. Van Horn*, Alaska; L. Everett Page*, Texas; Gilman H. Stordock*, Wisconsin; James V. Day*, Maine (resigned Jan. 1, 1956); Succeeded by William J. Holliman*, District of Columbia
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska (resigned); succeeded by E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. Joseph MacCarroll*, New Jersey
Historian: Robert T. Fairey*, South Carolina
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

39th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Atlantic City, N.J., Sept. 16 – 19, 1957
Commander: W. C. 'Dan' Daniel*, Virginia
Vice Commanders: Gaylor M. Brown*, Iowa; George T. Lewis*, Jr., Tennessee; Carl R. Moser*, Oregon; John E. Stay, Pennsylvania; J. Edward Walter*, Maryland
Adjutant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. Bernard W. Gerdon*, Indiana
Historian: Robert T. Fairey*, South Carolina
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

40th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Ill., Sept. 1 – 4, 1958
Commander: John S. Gleason, Jr.*, Illinois
Vice Commanders: William A. Cottrell*, Hawaii; Ramon R. Guas*, Puerto Rico; Harry W. Miller*, West Virginia; Leo A. Lemos*, Rhode Island; Isadore E. Levine*, Indiana
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Feltham S. James*, South Carolina
Historian: Mrs. Charles A. (Emily) Herbert*, New Jersey
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana

Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

41st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Minneapolis, Minn., Aug. 24 – 27, 1959
Commander: Preston J. Moore*, Oklahoma
Vice Commanders: C. D. DeLoach, District of Columbia; John W. Collins*, Pennsylvania; James B. Kerrigan*, Missouri; Robert Charles Smith*, Louisiana; James C. Bangs*, Idaho
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rt. Rev. Msgr. John J. Twiss*, Massachusetts
Historian: Mrs. Charles A. (Emily) Herbert*, New Jersey
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

42nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami Beach, Fla., Oct. 15 – 20, 1960
Commander: Martin B. McKneally*, New York
Vice Commanders: William A. Brennan, Jr.*, Indiana; A. Layman Harman*, South Carolina; Nate V. Keller*, Minnesota; (died 7-25-60); Succeeded by Irven Frank Gianotti*, Minnesota (appointed 9-14-60); Willard W. Brandt, North Dakota; Charles McGonegal*, California; (died 1-27-60); Succeeded by Corydon T. Hill*, California (appointed 5-4-60)
Adjutant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rabbi Robert I. Kahn* D.H.L., Texas
Historian: Mrs. Charles A. (Emily) Herbert*, New Jersey
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

43rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Denver, Colo., Sept. 9 – 14, 1961
Commander: William R. Burke*, California
Vice Commanders: George K. Walker, Massachusetts; James M. Wagonseller*, Ohio; Vincent J. Maxheim*, Iowa; Dr. Harry H. Kretzler*, Washington; R. C. Godwin*, North Carolina
Adjutant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. William H. Moss*, Tennessee
Historian: Glenn B. Hoover*, Iowa
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

44th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Las Vegas, Nev., Oct. 5 – 11, 1962
Commander: Charles L. Bacon*, Missouri
Vice Commanders: Walter W. Barnard*, Montana; Edward T. Hoak*, Pennsylvania; Wilson H. Morrison*, Michigan; J. Milton Patrick*, Oklahoma; Edward Wysocki*, New Jersey
Adjutant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Robert G. Keating*, Connecticut
Historian: Earl David Young*, Colorado
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

45th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami Beach, Fla., Sept. 6 – 12, 1963
Commander: James E. Powers*, Georgia
Vice Commanders: Harold D. Beaton*, District of Columbia; James W. Doon*, New Hampshire; Claude A. Hamilton*, South Dakota; Paschal C. Reese*, Florida; Victor F. Whittlesea*, Nevada
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rabbi Albert M. Shulman*, Indiana
Historian: H. Armand de Masi*, Italy
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

46th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Dallas, Texas, Sept. 18 – 24, 1964
Commander: Daniel F. Foley*, Minnesota
Vice Commanders: Earl D. Franklin, Jr. *, Colorado; Emilio S. Iglesias*, Vermont; Garland D. Murphy, Jr. *, M.D., Arkansas; George Emory Sipple*, Wisconsin; Harry Wright*, Mexico
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. John J. Howard*, Virginia
Historian: H. Armand de Masi*, Italy

Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

47th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Portland, Ore., Aug. 20 – 26, 1965
Commander: Donald E. Johnson*, Iowa
Vice Commanders: David Aronberg*, Kentucky; Herbert D. Black*, South Carolina; Ward W. Husted*, Wyoming; Edward H. Lynch, Jr.*, Connecticut; Joseph Paul*, Michigan
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Morris N. Dummet*, Louisiana
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

48th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Washington, D.C., Aug. 30 – Sept. 1, 1966
Commander: L. Eldon James*, Virginia
Vice Commanders: Dr. A. R. Choppin*, Louisiana; William E. Galbraith, Nebraska; Robert O. Phillips*, Philippines; William J. Rogers*, Maine; Tom Soleng *, Arizona
Adjutant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming (died 4-21-67); Succeeded by Earnest N. Schmit, North Dakota (Appointed 5-4-67)
Chaplain: Rev. Alfred C. Thompson, New York
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

49th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Boston, Mass., Aug. 25 – 31, 1967
Commander: John E. Davis*, North Dakota
Vice Commanders: Robert M. Fritz*, Indiana; Lewis W. Emerich, Texas; Harry V. Klein*, Pennsylvania; Frank L. Orfanello*, Massachusetts; James A. Tadlock*, New Mexico
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Anthony J. O'Driscoll*, New York
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

50th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New Orleans, La., Sept. 6 – 12, 1968
Commander: William E. Galbraith, Nebraska
Thomas W. Miller*, Nevada, Past National Commander
Vice Commanders: Coleman Nolen*, Oklahoma; Louis R. J. Malo*, Rhode Island; Roscoe D. Curtiss*, Tennessee; Dr. Edwin L. Peterson*, Utah; Marvin W. Roth*, Wisconsin
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Edward P. Nolan*, Pennsylvania
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

51st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Atlanta, Ga., Aug. 22 – 28, 1969
Commander: William C. Doyle*, New Jersey
Vice Commanders: C. Russell Huber*, Alaska; John A. Jones*, West Virginia; Howard E. Lohman*, Minnesota; Lewis E. McCray*, Alabama; Maurice Parisien*, Maine
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. C. J. Olander*, Mississippi
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

52nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Portland, Ore., Aug. 28 – Sept. 3, 1970
Commander: J. Milton Patrick*, Oklahoma
Vice Commanders: Kent. T. Lundgren*, Michigan; Roland D. Marble*, Mississippi; Raymond F. Mudge*, New Hampshire; Earl R. Norgard*, Oregon; Gilberto M. Font*, Puerto Rico
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. William D. Curtis*, Minnesota
Historian: John A. May*, South Carolina

Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

53rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Houston, Texas, Aug. 27 – Sept. 2, 1971
Commander: Alfred P. Chamie*, California
Vice Commanders: Claude Carpenter, Arkansas; Max Hanson*, Idaho; Robert E.L. Eaton*; Maryland; Gabriel T. Olga*, Massachusetts; John E. Gilbert*, Pennsylvania
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Milton B. Faust*, North Carolina
Historian: Howard M. Swinney*, Kentucky
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

54th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Ill., Aug. 18 – 24, 1972
Commander: John H. Geiger*, Illinois
Vice Commanders: Howard W. Fann*, Kentucky; Arthur M. MacCarthy*, Florida; Roy Sweet*, Vermont; Harry G. Wiles*, Kansas; Wallace C.S. Young, Hawaii
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Paul J. Schwaab*, Nebraska
Historian: G. Greer McCallister*, Ohio
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

55th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Honolulu, Hawaii, Aug. 17 – 23, 1973
Commander: Joe L. Matthews*, Texas
Vice Commanders: Tim T. Craig*, North Carolina; Sam Gray*, California; Donald L. Gruenbaum*, Ohio; Albert J. Moeller*, New Jersey; Raymond J. Novak*, South Dakota
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. L. P. Fitzpatrick*, Iowa
Historian: Mrs. Loretta O. Phillips*, California
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

56th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami Beach, Fla., Aug. 16 – 22, 1974
Commander: Robert E. L. Eaton*, Maryland
Vice Commanders: John N. Roberto*, Connecticut; Frank C. Brooks*, Washington; Gilbert E. Sheeks*, Indiana; Merrick W. Swords, Jr.*, Louisiana;
N. E. Brown*, South Carolina
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Jerome D. Fortenberry, Missouri
Historian: R. Robert Filter*, Wisconsin
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

57th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Minneapolis, Minn., Aug. 15 – 21, 1975
Commander: James M. Wagonseller*, Ohio
Maurice Stember*, New York, Past National Commander
Vice Commanders: Boyd H. Clemens, North Dakota; Jack W. Flynt*, Texas; Jay E. Harville*, Tennessee; Donald H. Jeffery, Pennsylvania; William A. Lindsay*, Montana
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Harvey T. Goodling*, Oregon
Historian: Nolie C. Deas, Sr.*, Florida
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

58th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Seattle, Wash., Aug. 20 – 26, 1976
Commander: Harry G. Wiles*, Kansas
Vice Commanders: John W. Adams, Jr., Kentucky; Fred W. Anderson, Jr.*, Nevada; Leo F. Malloy, Massachusetts; Thomas W. Miller*, Arkansas; James F. Walker*, Minnesota
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Claude E. Smithmier, Georgia
Historian: Mrs. Dorothy Grimes*, Colorado

Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

59th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Denver, Colo., Aug. 19 – 25, 1977
Commander: William J. Rogers*, Maine
Vice Commanders: Lloyd J. Berken*, Wisconsin; Thomas B. Coll*, District of Columbia; Robert B. Grauberger*, Colorado; Frank A. Kelly, Georgia; Wilbur Walker*, Virginia
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. James C. Tuxbury, North Dakota
Historian: Alton H. Carpenter, New York
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

60th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New Orleans, La., Aug. 18 – 24, 1978
Commander: Robert Charles Smith*, Louisiana
Vice Commanders: Eugene V. Lindquist*, Minnesota; Roger A. Munson*, Ohio; John J. O'Connell*, Rhode Island; Chester Phillips*, West Virginia; Irving B. Selmer*, Wyoming
Adjutant: Frank C. Momsen*, Minnesota
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Walter D. Power*, Maryland
Historian: Arnold J. Stockstad*, North Dakota
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

61st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Houston, Texas, Aug. 17 – 23, 1979
Commander: John M. Carey*, Michigan
Hamilton Fish*, New York, Past National Commander
Vice Commanders: L. Max Connoly*, Arizona; Alvin F. Grauerholz, Kansas; Joseph F. Ward*, New Jersey; John H. Wienand, Jr. *, Alabama; Nathan M. Wolfe*, South Carolina
Adjutant: Frank C. Momsen*, Minnesota
Chaplain: R. Drew Wolcott*, Mexico
Historian: Harry H. Kretzler, M.D. *, Washington
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

62nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Boston, Mass., Aug. 15 – 21, 1980
Commander: Frank I. Hamilton*, Indiana
Vice Commanders: G. Y. Fails*, New Mexico; Keith A. Kreul, Wisconsin; Bob Legan*, Arkansas; Max E. Robinson*, North Carolina; Lawrence R. Spaulding*, New Hampshire.
Adjutant: Frank C. Momsen*, Minnesota
Chaplain: Rev. Karl E. Kniseley*, California
Historian: Phillip Haddad, Oklahoma
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

63rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Honolulu, Hawaii, Aug. 28 – Sept. 3, 1981
Commander: Michael J. Kogutek, New York
Vice Commanders: Ralph M. Godwin*, Mississippi; Keith H. Gwilliam*, Utah; Matthew W. Jamieson*, Michigan; Robert W. Lowry, Nebraska; Dr. Almo J. Sebastianelli, Pennsylvania
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. George S. Macres*, Minnesota
Historian: Neal S. Sundeen, Arizona
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

64th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Ill., Aug. 20 – 26, 1982
Commander: Jack W. Flynt*, Texas
Vice Commanders: Frank T. Markovich*, Missouri; Dan C. McDonough*, Alaska; Percy C. Miller*, Tennessee; Melvin 'Doc' Simon, Vermont; David A. Wade*, Maryland
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. George R. M. Rumney*, Virginia
Historian: Bernard J. Chisholm*, Minnesota
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

65th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Seattle, Wash., Aug. 19 – 25, 1983
Commander: Al Keller, Jr.*, Illinois
Vice Commanders: Robert C. Gabrielson*, South Dakota; Margaret M. Malone*, New Jersey; H. Melvin Napier, Indiana; Jack C. Plato*, Oregon; Leo O. Walker*, Oklahoma
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. John D. Kempf*, Ohio
Historian: James W. Conway*, Massachusetts
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

66th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Salt Lake City, Utah, Sept. 3 – 5, 1984
Commander: Keith Kreul, Wisconsin
Vice Commanders: J. Leslie Brown, Jr.*, Kentucky; Roberto Gonzalez-Vazquez*, Puerto Rico; Charles R. Green*, Ohio; Robert W. Groccia*, Massachusetts, John N. Lockhart*, Hawaii
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: James Clay McKee, Utah
Historian: Herberta T. Stark*, New Hampshire
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

67th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New Orleans, La., Aug. 23 – 28, 1985
Commander: Clarence M. Bacon, Maryland
Vice Commanders: Robert S. Turner, Georgia; Harold E. Collett*, Idaho; Ronald D. Birk*, Kansas; Stewart Kunde*, Minnesota; Stephen J. Mikosky*, Pennsylvania
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Charles G. Rice, Jr.*, New York
Historian: Roy B. Mahoney, Florida
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

68th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Cincinnati, Ohio, Aug. 29 – Sept. 4, 1986
Commander: Dale L. Renaud*, Iowa
Vice Commanders: Bernard Black, South Carolina; Norman Conn*, California; Vito M. DeFilipp*, Maine; Miles S. Epling, West Virginia, H. F. 'Sparky' Gierke, North Dakota
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Dr. Gordon L. Patterson*, Nebraska
Historian: Ethel M. Matuschka*, Wisconsin
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

69th NATIONAL CONVENTION
San Antonio, Texas, Aug. 21 – 27, 1987
Commander: James P. Dean*, Mississippi
E. Roy Stone, Jr.*, South Carolina, Past National Commander
Vice Commanders: William M. Detweiler, Louisiana; Doris R. Gross, Washington; Donald E. Neil, Delaware; Allen L. Titus, Indiana; Ervin F. Van Dyke, Wisconsin
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Arthur J. Jakobiak, New Mexico
Historian: J. Ruffin Apperson*, Virginia
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

70th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Louisville, Ky., Sept. 6 – 8, 1988
Commander: John P. 'Jake' Comer, Massachusetts
Vice Commanders: Neale V. Cabral*, Connecticut; Joe Frank, Jr., Missouri; W. P. 'Bill' Peterson*, Montana; Paul B. Phifer, Jr.*, Virginia; F. Leon Reed*, Arkansas
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Jerry Salveson*, Minnesota
Historian: Edward F. Brennan*, Illinois
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

71st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Baltimore, Md., Sept. 5 – 7, 1989
Commander: H.F. 'Sparky' Gierke, North Dakota
Vice Commanders; Thomas L. Gabel, Ohio; Harvey Holcomb*, Texas; Archie Pozzi, Jr. *, Nevada; Ray G. Smith, Sr., North Carolina: John P. Tipping, New York
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. F. Robert Davidson, Michigan
Historian: Richard A. Stevens, Sr.*, Louisiana
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

72nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Indianapolis, Ind., Aug. 28 - 30, 1990
Commander: Miles S. Epling, West Virginia
Vice Commanders: Vincent E. Blank, Iowa; Joseph E. Caouette, New Hampshire; Andrew J. Cooper, Alabama; Gerald Goetzinger, South Dakota;
Vinton R. Guy, Colorado
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Lynn S. Kearsley, Idaho
Historian: C. Carl Pilgrim*, South Carolina
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

73rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Phoenix, Ariz., Sept. 3 – 5, 1991
Commander: Robert S. Turner, Georgia
Vice Commanders: Lewis Adams, Nebraska; James T. Anderson, Wyoming; Fred M. Ingellis, Mississippi; Harry F. McDowell, Florida; George E. Sampson, New Jersey
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Michas M. Ohnstad, Minnesota
Historian: Harold Matthew Branton, Texas
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

74th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Ill., Aug. 25 – 27, 1992
Commander: Dominic D. DiFrancesco, Pennsylvania
Vice Commanders: James 'Jim' G. Brouillette, Vermont; Thomas P. Cadmus, Michigan; Ronald C. Murphy*, Arizona; Lawrence F. Roy, Oklahoma; Lee R. Stolfus, Kansas
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Donal M. 'Jack' Squires*, West Virginia
Historian: Bettie M. Canon*, Montana
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr, Maryland

75th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Pittsburgh, Pa., Sept. 3 – 9, 1993
Commander: Roger A. Munson*, Ohio
Vice Commanders: Joseph V. Adams*, Pennsylvania; Paul Andrejewski*, Minnesota; Robert E. 'Jack' David, South Carolina; John William 'Bill' Murphy*, Arkansas; Louis A. 'Tony' Santillanes, New Mexico
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. James R. Wagner, Mississippi
Historian: Delfo Barabani, Massachusetts
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

76th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Minneapolis, Minn., Sept. 6 – 8, 1994
Commander: Bruce Thiesen, California
Vice Commanders: Juan H. Cintron, Puerto Rico; Douglas A. Mason*, Utah; John J. Mulkern*, Massachusetts; K. W. Ohl*, Indiana; Curtis O. Twete, North Dakota
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Msgr. Raymond J. Kozlowski*, New York
Historian: Marjorie T. Simpson, Georgia
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

77th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Indianapolis, Ind., Sept. 4 – 6, 1995
Commander: William M. Detweiler, Louisiana
Vice Commanders: Joseph T. Craig, Alaska; Silas M. Noel, Kentucky; Calvin E. Patton*, Maryland; H. Gordon Burleigh*, New York; Vernon K. Grosenick*, Wisconsin
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Roy L. Pryor*, South Carolina
Historian: M. LaReine Maxey*, Nevada, (died 10-7-94); Succeeded by Carl S. Wipperman, Washington (appointed 10-19-94)
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

78th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Salt Lake City, Utah, Aug. 30 – Sept. 5, 1996
Commander: Daniel A. Ludwig, Minnesota
Vice Commanders: Keith Baker, Iowa; William L. Ciciotte, Maine; Robert D. Scott, Oregon; C. Darrel Haskell, South Dakota; Ralph J. Reel, Tennessee
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Joseph E. Reynolds*, Texas
Historian: R. Paul Tenney, Vermont
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

79th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Orlando, Fla., Aug. 29 – Sept. 4, 1997
Commander: Joseph J. Frank, Missouri
Vice Commanders: Wilson R. Timmons*, Florida; Orland H. Taylor*, Hawaii; Roger L. Wild, Nebraska; Albert M. Robotti, New Jersey; Robert L. Bowen, Virginia
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Charles H. Richmond*, Oklahoma
Historian: Barbara 'Bobbe' Stuvengen, Wisconsin
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

80th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New Orleans, La., Sept. 4 – 10, 1998
Commander: Anthony Jordan, Maine
Vice Commanders: Erwin Gus Williams, Connecticut; Conrad A. Chisholm, Idaho; Norris W. Preston, Missouri; Gerald L. Moore*, Ohio; Robert E. Vass, West Virginia
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Henry E. Eisenhart*, Pennsylvania
Historian: Tommy Mills, Mississippi
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

81st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Anaheim, Calif., Sept. 3 – 9, 1999
Commander: Butch L. Miller, Virginia
Vice Commanders: Leo P. Burke*, California; Roger L. Tingler, Georgia; James W. Gravenstein, Kansas; Fernando M. Goulart, Rhode Island; John D. Morris, Texas
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Robert J. Sweeney, New York
Historian: Robert L. Klipstine*, Ohio
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Jr., Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

82nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Milwaukee, Wis., Sept. 1 – 7, 2000
Commander: Alan G. Lance, Sr., Idaho
Vice Commanders: James F. Fraughnaugh*, Alabama; Milton W. Lobstein, Michigan; Robert Skallerud, Minnesota; Robert F. Neville, New York;
L. Harry Easley*, Washington
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: David R. Brown, Louisiana
Historian: Robert Mead, Nebraska
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Jr., Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

83rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
San Antonio, Texas, Aug. 24 – 30, 2001
Commander: Ray G. Smith, North Carolina
Vice Commanders: Charles C. Ragsdell, Arkansas; James E. Koutz, Indiana; Henry P. Bradley, Massachusetts; John C. Pellegrini, Montana; William A. Weatherly*, South Carolina
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Calvin C. Turpin, California
Historian: James Buterbaugh, Kansas
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

84th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Charlotte, N.C., Aug. 27 – 29, 2002
Commander: Richard J. Santos, Maryland
Vice Commanders: Russell H. Hanseter, Wisconsin; Charles R. John*, Oklahoma; Terry D. Lewis, Pennsylvania; James F. Mareschal, Missouri; Dale R. Salmen, Nevada
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: David F. Russell, Virginia
Historian: Walter L. Davis, Michigan
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

85th NATIONAL CONVENTION
St. Louis, Mo., Aug. 26 – 28, 2003
Commander: Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania
Vice Commanders: Jefferson 'Jeff' Luginbuel; Roy L. Kirkham, Louisiana; Robert M. Johnson, Maryland; Robert G. Bournival, New Hampshire; Donavon R. Mason, South Dakota
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Norris A. Keirn, Indiana
Historian: Donald F. Simons, Texas
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

86th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Nashville, Tenn., Aug. 31, Sept. 1, 2, 2004
Commander: John A. Brieden, III, Texas
Vice Commanders: Richard G. Denbow, Iowa; Michael Dennis Helm, Kansas; Fang A. Wong, New York; Clinton E. Thompson, North Carolina; Todd E. White, Wyoming
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Dr. William J. P. Doubek, III, Missouri
Historian: Fae Casper, Georgia
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

87th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Honolulu, Hawaii, Aug. 23 – 25, 2005
Commander: Thomas P. Cadmus, Michigan
Vice Commanders: Marco A. Valenzuela, Arizona; Charles W. Barrett, Georgia; Samuel Barney*, Ohio; Wayne B. Richey, South Carolina; Linda M. Thayer, Vermont
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. James T. Akers, Kansas
Historian: W. Frazier Brinley, Connecticut
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

88th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Salt Lake City, Utah, Aug. 29 – 31, 2006
Commander: Thomas L. Bock, Colorado
Vice Commanders: Willard F. Coffey, Michigan; James H. Hall, New Jersey; Taurino J. Trevino, New Mexico; Sebastian T. Roll*, North Dakota; Michael E. Harris, Virginia
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Steven E. Wright, Utah
Historian: Johnny B. Keel, Louisiana
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

89th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Reno, Nev., Aug. 28 – 30, 2007
Commander: Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts
Vice Commanders: Bryon W. White*, Alabama; Elgin Wahlborg, Kansas; Lloyd H. Woods, Maine; Robert C. Lahiere, Tennessee; Allan C. Setterberg, Utah

Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Stanley Gruneich, South Dakota
Historian: Michael J. Miskell, Pennsylvania
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

90th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Phoenix, Ariz., Aug. 26 – 28, 2008
Commander: Martin F. Conatser
Vice Commanders: Peggy G. Dettori, Alaska; Thomas L. Burns, Jr., Delaware; Randall A. Fisher, Kentucky; Donald Hayden, Minnesota; David A. Korth, Wisconsin
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan (Voted title of Past National Commander, effective 10/16/2008)
Chaplain: Rev. Elliott L. Foss, Jr. Georgia
Historian: James M. Holmes, Indiana
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

91st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Louisville, Ky., Aug. 25 – 27, 2009
Commander: David K. Rehbein, Iowa
Vice Commanders: James A. LaCoursiere, Jr., Connecticut
Michael J. Landkamer, Nebraska
James W. Davis, West Virginia
Harley W. Ray, Oregon; Dellan 'Shorty' T. Simmons, Texas
National Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Rev. Lawrence 'Larry' Vollink, Michigan
Historian: Charles J. Zelinsky, Illinois
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

92nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Milwaukee, Wis., Aug. 30, Sept. 1, 2, 2010
Commander: Clarence E. Hill, Florida
Vice Commanders: Morris M. Bentley, Idaho, Dr. Gordon B. Browning, Maryland, Mark A. Avis, Massachusetts, James C. Morris, Ohio, Eugene Schumacher, South Dakota
National Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Rev. John L. Beaver, Alabama
Historian: James T. Higuera, California
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

93rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Minneapolis, Minn., Aug. 30 – Sept. 1, 2011
Commander: Jimmie L. Foster, Alaska
Vice Commanders: Russell J. Henry, Louisiana; John M. Mella, Michigan; Carlos Orria-Medina, Puerto Rico; Eugene R. Pytka, Rhode Island; William F. Schrier, Washington
National Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Rev. Daniel J. Seehafer, Wisconsin
Historian: James Fratolillo, Massachusetts
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

PROCEEDINGS

of the

93rd Annual Convention

of

The American Legion

Tuesday, August 30, 2011

...At 8:00 o'clock a.m., the delegates assembled for the 93rd Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were conducted.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Ladies and gentlemen, as we begin our program, please join me in a round of applause for Peter Ole. Peter has been the organist for the National Conventions now for 34 short years. *(Applause)*

Call to Order
Jimmie L. Foster, Alaska, National Commander

The 93rd National Convention will come to order. Ladies and gentlemen, please rise as the National Champion Color Guard from Post 472, Houston, Texas, presents our National Colors, and please remain standing for the singing of the National Anthem by U.S. Army Specialist Daniella Beard of the Army Soldier Show. Hand salute.

...The delegation rose and saluted to the Colors, followed by which the National Anthem was sung by U.S. Army Specialist Daniella Beard.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Color Guard, you may retire. Thank you. Let's give a hand to the National Champion Color Guard. *(Applause)* And I might add, they won again. For the invocation, I now call on National Chaplain Reverend Daniel J. Seehafer of Wisconsin. Ladies and gentlemen, please uncover.

Invocation
Reverend Daniel J. Seehafer, Wisconsin, National Chaplain

Dear family we pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you once again for gathering our family together at this 93rd National Convention here in Minneapolis. It was certainly an emotional and personal period of time throughout this past year as we have served America's veterans every day. We ask now for Your presence. We ask that we would continue to hear and grow from this Convention as we reflect upon the many stores in which you have empowered us to touch the lives of many people, especially our veterans and their families. Lord, be with us. We give glory to You, and thank You once again for bringing us here. In Your life giving name we do pray, and together we said, amen.

Pledge of Allegiance

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Thank you, Chaplain Seehafer. Ladies and gentlemen, National Sergeant-at-Arms Ernest L. King, Sr. of Alaska will lead us in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. *...The delegation recited the Pledge of Allegiance.*

POW/MIA Empty Chair Ceremony
G. Michael Schlee, Maryland, Chairman, National Security Commission
Randall Fisher, Kentucky, Chairman, Foreign Relations Commission

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: At this time we pause to remember those who are listed as prisoners of war or missing in action from wars in which we have been engaged. We in The American Legion will never forget them. We will not ease the pressure on our government to do the right thing, and will continue to work for accounting of all those that are still missing.

I now call on the chairman of the National Security Commission, Michael Schlee of Maryland, and Randall Fisher of Kentucky, chairman of the Foreign Relations Commission to place the POW/MIA flag on the Empty Chair. *...The POW/MIA flag was placed on the Empty Chair.*

Preamble to The American Legion Constitution
Jimmie L. Foster, Alaska, National Commander

Legionnaires, if you will please recover and join me in reaffirming our commitment to the principles and ideals on which our great American Legion was founded, by reciting the Preamble to the Constitution. *...The delegation recited the Preamble to The American Legion Constitution.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Please be seated.

Post Everlasting Ceremony
John H. Geiger, Illinois, Past National Commander

On January the 10th of this year, The American Legion suffered an immeasurable loss to all national commanders of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Past National Commander John H. Geiger was our mentor and our friend. From the Department of New York, Adjutant Dick Pedro described him best when he called Past National Commander Geiger "the Fifth Pillar of The American Legion."

At our May meetings, the National Executive Committee unanimously passed Resolution No. 1, renaming The American Legion's Headquarters at 5745 Lee Road in Indianapolis, as the "John H. Geiger Operations Center." A number of John's closest friends and family eulogized him at those meetings, and we will rededicate the building in October. Rather than repeat the eulogies, I call your attention to the video monitors, where we have an in depth interview that Commander Geiger gave to the producers of a documentary about the history of The American Legion. Please let the video begin.

...At this time the delegation viewed a video. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: He was quite a guy. Let's give him a round of applause. *(Applause)*

I remember being introduced to him about 24 years ago. They said, "We want you to meet a nice, upcoming young man." Some guy said, "No, he's the kid." That was me. He said, "Wow. What an excellent suit you have on. Sharp dresser. He goes, "You want me to tell you how it would look better? You just button that top button and keep smiling, it will be perfect." There you go. *(Laughter)*

Convention Opening

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Okay. You're going to enjoy this part. Rudy. Rudy. Rudy. You're going to see why in a minute.

Those of you who attended last night's Army Soldiers Show presentation, saw this next group of talented performers in a special evening of entertainment. These men and women travel for several months performing at Army installations all across the globe. They have made a special stop to be here with us, as a way to acknowledge their bond with those of us who have served and who support today's generation of warriors. Please welcome the cast of the 2011 Army Soldiers Show to our Convention.

...The delegation was entertained by the 2011 Army Soldiers Show and then viewed a video presentation.

ANNOUNCER: Please welcome, Rudy. *(Applause)*

MR. DANIEL "RUDY" RUETTIGER: Thank you. Thank you very much. What a great honor. Number one, I almost feel like the president. But I have notes.

You know, my life was changed in 1969 because I made a choice because I wanted to be someone, and when I made that choice I didn't realize how important it was what my parents made us do when we were younger, and every choice is predicated on a thought that you had as you grew up.

But there was one thought that was given to me when I was in fifth grade, and the teacher wanted us to go home and study the first five presidents. Well, I was a rebel. I wasn't going to go home and study those first five presidents, because the Yankees were playing Boston, and my dad was a big Yankee fan, and you do nothing when the Yankees are playing. Also Notre Dame and the Green Bay Packers.

When she gave us that homework assignment she was very adamant about us going home and studying those first five presidents. I didn't realize how my life would change that day when I came to school the next day. And that night Mickey Mantle hit a home run, so did Roger Maris. I didn't have time to study the presidents. And the teacher recognized my enthusiasm, my excitement about the Yankees, but she didn't see my excitement about the presidents. So she asked me in front of all my friends, "Rudy, who is that fifth president?" And I had that look: I don't care. That's the look I had. I said, "Mickey Mantel hit a home run." She said, "I don't care." So she made me get up and made me sit in the back of the class and that's the day, ladies and gentlemen, I quit dreaming.

The point is, education is about inspiration. If she would have recognized that I was excited about the Yankees, she would have said, "Now, Rudy, I know you're going to listen to that game tonight. So the first five batters are the first five presidents," I would have learned them. She didn't do that. A person could change your life through a thought or through a word.

So I struggled through my high school years and I started focusing on what I could do and couldn't do, and I wasn't focused on the positive, I was focused on the negative. I had a learning disorder: Dyslexia. I didn't know that was it, I just thought I was stupid. I had attention deficit disorder. I didn't know what that was either. We didn't have it when we were saying the rosary after dinner with my father, because everybody had to know the five glorious mysteries and you better know them or you get whacked. So I guess I was taught differently.

Inspiration was the key because right before my dad died on Father's Day, I had my last conversation with him. He had served in the United States Air Force, flew 22 missions on a B17 bomber; very proud. I said, "Dad, how did you and mom survive for 68 years together? You had a perfect marriage." He said, "Let me ask you before I answer that." This is on his death bed. He says, "Do I have any big shots in the family?" I said, "Yeah, we're all big shots, pop." He said, "Oh, good. Good. Now I'll answer your question." He says, "Your mother and I made a commitment never to argue in front of you kids. We did not have a perfect marriage." I said, "Oh." "See, we argued up in the bedroom away from you kids. That was the commitment we had to each other." I said, "Okay. That's good." Then I walked out after that conversation and saw my mother. I

said, "Mom, dad told me about your perfect marriage." And she smiled and she said, "Yeah, well that's why there were fourteen of you." *(Laughter)* Thank you. You got that. I thought you were asleep.

You see, you've got to know what inspires. In 1994 I get a phone call from the White House. Judy, a social director, called right after the movie *Rudy* was out. It took me 10 years to play 27 seconds because of dedication and loyalty to the cause and perseverance to the dream because I got it in boot camp.

When I went to boot camp I told you I made that choice in 1969 to go see the Navy recruiter. And the only thing I asked the navy recruiter was "Can I be someone?" He says, "You can be anyone you want to be, son." I said, "Oh, great." He said, "Can you fold underwear?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "Do you fold socks?" "Yes, sir." He said, "Do you shine shoes?" I said, "Yes, sir." He says, "Good. Can you make a bed?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "You're quite a guy." He says, "Not many guys I talk to can do that." I said, "Well, my mother ironed our underwear before mass every Saturday, and then we had to fold them." And I would always ask, "Mom, why are we doing this?" "Well, if you boys get in an accident you'll have clean underwear. Besides, it's good character." *(Laughter)*

I said, "Great." I will never forget that. So yes, I can do that. He says, "Great." The first thing we ever do, we jumped off that bus in Chicago, and you had that new father in your life. He said, "I'm your new dad." We looked and he started yelling and screaming. And then he says, "All right, shipmates." This is when we were all put in the barracks. And he said, "Now, this is how I want your locker to be. And fold that underwear, fold those socks, shine your shoes and make that rack." And boy, I was good at it. So he made me a leader of all those dummies.

And that's the day I got confidence. Because when I was high school, when I was in fifth I lost it because I believed in the person who was saying and teaching, you could be someone, and when you're put down in front of all your friends you lose that. But when that drill instructor says you're somebody because you could do something, ladies and gentlemen, the little things pay off. It's called character.

And when you have character you can be anybody you want to be. You have the courage. And when you dream, you aspire to great things. You don't tell your friends what you're going to do. You don't tell your girlfriend what you want to be, because they will look at you like you're nuts. Especially when you get out of the Navy and you still want to play for Notre Dame but you only graduated third in your class from the bottom in high school. So your dream of Notre Dame is not real. It was just a fantasy until you meet someone else that says, "You know, Rudy, you can do that."

"What was your proudest moment?" this man asked me. He was great leader. I said, "When I graduated from boot camp that was the greatest day of my life. I was someone. I always wanted to be someone." He says, "You got a lot more dreams in you." He said, "You can go to Notre Dame. You'll find a way." I said, "I know, I will." So I had to do a lot of different things before I got to Notre Dame. I had to get a lot of people. I had to change a lot of friends.

Had to get rid of a lot of goofy thoughts, because in 1994 when I got that phone call, that's when I reflected back to all the goofy thoughts I got rid of. When that social director asked me, "Rudy, are you busy two weeks from Friday? The president would love for you to come to the White House and have dinner. He wants to show the movie. You can spend some time with him. Are you busy two weeks from Friday?" Even if you were, you're not. *(Laughter)*

But I had a goofy thought. I could not blurt that out to her. I said, "Ma'am, can you call me at 9:00 a.m. in the morning? My secretary will be here." Now, there's two reasons for that. One, I had no secretary, and two because my father listened to Rush Limbaugh I knew he would be mad if I went to the White House. *(Laughter)*

So I didn't want to tell my dad. I had to think about how I was going to do this. Who's the inspiration to my father? My mother. When they get mad, where do they go? So I called my mother. I said, "Mom, get dad up in the bedroom." *(Laughter)*

She said, "Why?" I said, "I'm going to the White House to meet a president." She says, "That's awesome. Can you get me Barbara Bush's autograph?" She didn't even know who the president was. I was in good shape because she was excited.

You see, my father hung around goofy thinkers. All he did was talk politics and religion with friends and he'd come home mad. But *The Price is Right* was on and he was happy. And when *Wheel of Fortune* came on he was excited. Attitudes change. Ladies and gentlemen, change your attitude. Get something positive. Get rid of your goofy thoughts. All you have to do is know what to inspire to get rid of your thought. All my mom did was take my dad up in the bedroom and tell him where I was going. He called the next day and said, "I know where you're going and I know I can't stop you." At least I have permission from my dad. *(Laughter)*

And I went to that White House. Let me tell you, when I walked in that White House, I had a reflection back to fifth grade, and my fifth grade teacher was nowhere around me. All I realized was wow, I can't believe it, I'm 45 years of age and now I know the fifth president. All the pictures are hanging up. And all I did was good to the fifth one. And I had a personal victory. *(Laughter and applause)*

Ladies and gentlemen, our victories are so small, but so huge. You see, you don't have to be that smart to be someone; that good looking to be someone. You be the best you can be and everything will come into your life. Everything you want will be there. It may take a little longer. That's why you need to have character and courage and commitment, and you must contribute. That's why I made a choice to change my friends and get rid of my goofy thoughts because it works. You can be around anyone, and not once did that president or any senator or congressman ask me the fifth president when I went there. They don't care what you know. They know what you stand for. And we stand for a lot, don't we. *(Applause)*

You bet. Saying that, we all know what we need in life is encouragement, and when we have encouragement our attitudes change. And we get encouragement many different ways. I would like to share with you a little film clip we put together. That film clip you saw earlier we put together. We thought it was appropriate for great Americans who served this country and great Americans who are serving this country. We'll never forget where we came from.

I just want to show you how powerful if you put a deaf ear to the negative and put a clean ear to the positive, look what happens. Just watch this little clip. It's called *The Little Frog*. It's only a couple minutes, but trust me, it will go a long way. So watch this.

...The delegation viewed a video.

How about that? I love that. Boy, if you put a deaf ear to the naysayers, great things will happen. You know, even when I entered the University of Notre Dame, this is after my Navy days, and thank God the Four Pillars of The American Legion were there. I used that GI Bill. And it helped pay for my education. But boy, more importantly when that coach, when I told that coach I wanted to play football for Notre Dame, he looked at me. He did not discourage me. But I did tell him I was at Holy Cross, that I was not in yet, so that relieved his pain a little bit. *(Laughter)*

But when I got there, he remembered me, and the other coaches who weren't quite involved with the passion in my heart would always remind me of certain things. They would say, "Hey, Rudy, get off your knees," and I would yell back, "I am."

You know things like that. They would just try to discourage you from fulfilling your dream. But what kept me in the game were just people, regular people. Don't quit, Rudy. It's worth it. The hard work. Be part of something. That's better than being a star. Contributing to this great football tradition is awesome, and I understood that. So I stuck in there. Many times I wanted to quit but I didn't. Many times I wanted to say to the

coach, "What are you doing? I'm a great American. Why are you looking at me and picking on me? Why aren't you letting me play?" I never said that. Did not whine or complain. I knew if I stuck in there and paid the price, somehow, someplace, some person, I will get my chance to play.

I was always in preparation. That is my point. You must be in preparation for your dream at all times. You never give up on your dream. We had dreams when we were small and we still have them now. Do not allow people to take them from you. Change is necessary. Change is good. My point is, when I made that change to become Rudy, things happened. All I did was work hard, study differently, stuck and stayed the course. Kept my faith in order. And preparation, practice, never missed. Always there. And what was great about what we do, ladies and gentlemen, if you stay the course, your moment is there.

And when I saw 27 seconds up on that clock and I wasn't in the game yet, all I said was, "God, make something happen," and Notre Dame scored. Then the student body chanted my name, Rudy. How and why? Because I was a boxer at Notre Dame, and because of that, and only because of that, I earned a right for them to say Rudy. And the only reason they said Rudy, is because they saw me get knocked down, but I got up.

Ladies and gentlemen, life is going to knock you down. It's not how hard you hit, it's how hard you take a hit and get back up and move forward. That's the secret. *(Applause)*

So, saying that, I want to share with you my dream of the last 27 seconds at the University of Notre Dame. I got to ask this question: How many people have really seen that movie *Rudy*? Cool. Some of you haven't, right? You all should.

It's probably one of the greatest movies ever made. It's proven. Top sports movies of all time. And all I did was have a dream; went to Hollywood for 10 years and convinced somebody to believe in what I was saying. We all need a second chance. We don't have to be the best, but we could be the best in our moment, then we're someone. They understood that. You give people hope. They get dreams and commitments and that's all they need. They understood that and they made the movie *Rudy*.

So I want to share with you the last five minutes of *Rudy*, and then I'll come back and say goodbye. How's that? God bless you in all your dreams. Thank you. *(Applause)*

...The delegation watched a video. (Applause)

MR. RUETTIGER: Stay the course. You know one of the most important aspects of The American Legion and what you do is the way you mentor and teach the children of America about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship through your many youth programs. We want to introduce you to a group of young people who epitomize what we have talked about today: Dedication and perseverance. Your 2010-2011 American Legion Youth Champions.

The American Legion Youth Champions

ANNOUNCER: Our first youth year champion this morning is the 2010 American Legion Baseball Player of the Year, Brandon Drozd, sponsored by American Legion Post 337 in Genoa, Nebraska. The award is based on integrity, mental attitude, cooperation, citizenship, sportsmanship, scholastic aptitude and general good conduct. Please welcome your George W. Rulon American Legion Baseball Player of the Year for 2010 and Sons of The American Legion member, Brandon Drozd. (Applause)

2010 Baseball Player of the Year
Brandon Drozd, Genoa, Nebraska

Good morning, American Legion family. I would like to start out by thanking The American Legion for allowing me to speak today. It's not every day that I have the

opportunity to thank The American Legion for the opportunities you provide the youth of our great nation. I've been very fortunate to be able to take advantage of some of your programs, like Corn Husker Boy's State, scholarship programs, Boy Scouts of America, Eagle Scout awards, and my personal favorite, American Legion Baseball. *(Applause)*

These youth programs are beneficial to the growth of our society. I can guarantee you that I would not be the same person standing in front of you today, if it was not for these programs you provide. American Legion programs develop tomorrow's leaders. I stand here before you as living proof of what leadership skills I've attained from The American Legion. As a Youth Champion, the one thing I'll miss most is putting on my American Legion baseball uniform and playing the game I love. The thrills of being an American Legion player can be easily understood by the passion each one of us shares.

I want to express my gratitude to the Nebraska American Legion for choosing me as the 2010 Nebraska American Legion Baseball Player of the Year. I'm humbled that The American Legion saw my credentials as worthy to be the 2010 George W. Rulon Gatorade Baseball Player of the Year.

I've been inspired that a Class C player from a small town in Nebraska could be honored with such a prestigious award. My brother, Blaine and I are the only two brothers ever in the history of the Rulon Award to receive it.

I was elated to represent Nebraska at Cooperstown, New York this past June, and I now stand before you at this American Legion Convention as a testament of what being an American is truly all about.

I would like to conclude my speech by thanking my parents and grandparents for all they have done for me in my education, athletics and in my life. My grandfather is a Korean War veteran and a lifelong Legion member. My father and my brother and myself were able to join the Sons of The American Legion through him. My grandmother, mother and sister are also part of the Legion Auxiliary in my hometown.

I would like to thank all The American Legion members, especially Burdette Burkhart and Jody Miller and my 70 year old coach, Ralph Gill; my always supporting parents and grandparents; my hometown Legion Post 144, and Post 263 out of Silver Creek, Nebraska, who I played for five years.

I just want to thank the Youth Champions for making this past weekend one of the best weekends in my life. It's truly been an honor to get to know them, and a privilege to hear their experiences. I would like the parents of the Youth Champions now stand and be recognized, because if it wasn't for you guys, we definitely would not be up here. Would you please stand. *(Applause)*

Through their love and support, it's the reason why we're up here today. Thank you so much. You've all influenced me to become the person I am today. Americans should be grateful for what The American Legion has done, and all the veterans for being the foundation of our great nation. For God and country, God bless. Thank you so much American Legion. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The 2011 Boys Nation President hails from Arvada, Colorado. He plans to attend the U.S. Military Academy with hopes of becoming a U.S. Army Infantry Officer. Sponsored by Colorado Legion Post 161 in Arvada, please welcome your 2011 Boys Nation President and member of the Sons of The American Legion, Michael Herbert. (Applause)

2011 Boys Nation President
Michael Herbert, Arvada, Colorado

Thank you. Thank you members of The American Legion so much, with a special thank you to all the Legionnaires from the great State of Colorado, particularly Post 161

for sponsoring me for both the Boys State and Nation programs. And of course, Mr. Bob Turner for his special role. They have both truly been weeks that shape a lifetime.

You know, as Americans we are extremely fortunate to live in the greatest country in the history of the world. A fact confirmed by the unprecedented level of prosperity and power that we enjoy today. However, what makes our nation truly exceptional is not our might or our money, as others before have achieved wealth and power. Rather, we have been distinguished through our uncompromising commitment to the ideals of liberty upon which our nation was founded.

Now, this commitment has not been easy, as you the veterans of our armed forces are well aware. From Lexington and Concord to Omaha Beach, to the deserts of Afghanistan today, our country has repeatedly been called upon to put our finest young men and women into harm's way. Many of them never to return home. However, we have never shied away from this most sacred duty, and when we have emerged victorious, we've done so not as a conquering force, but as a liberating one, as Colin Powell noted, asking in return only enough land to bury our fallen heroes. And that is what makes America a truly exceptional nation.

However, the American way of life can endure only so long as the next generation is appreciative of the inheritance of liberty we are to receive, so that we too may be willing to make the sacrifices necessary to preserve it. The American Legion Boys Nation program is unparalleled in its ability to accomplish this goal. By providing a hands-on experience of our government, and environment defined by love of country, The American Legion has guaranteed that our nation's finest young leaders will be willing to serve America in the future.

I assure you the importance of country instilled by your program has not been taken for granted. Already I have reinstated the Pledge of Allegiance at my school to ensure this nation is afforded the respect she deserves, and going forward I will not relent in doing whatever is necessary to guarantee the success of our union, as you have all done before me. It was an honor to be a part of this remarkable program. Thank you for everything you do for God and country. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless our United States of America that we may remain the shining city on a hill.

Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The 2011 Eagle Scout of the Year earned his award partly through his efforts to identify and commemorate the graves of more than 700 veterans in a local cemetery in his hometown of Hutchinson, Minnesota. He is active in numerous scouting and other activities and belongs to the Sons of The American Legion. He hopes to attend Notre Dame University. Please welcome your Eagle Scout of the Year, Robert Rasmussen. (Applause)

2011 Eagle Scout of the Year
Robert Rasmussen, Hutchinson, Minnesota

Commander Foster, distinguished guests, and most importantly Legionnaires who have made America great. It is indeed an honor and privilege to be here representing nearly the three million youth who currently participate in America's scouting program, and the more than two million young men who have attained the rank of Eagle Scout over the past 100 years.

Although the world around us has seen many changes over the past century there's a simple unchanging slogan all Eagle Scouts must live by: Once an Eagle, always an Eagle. So, at this time I would like every Legionnaire who's an Eagle Scout to please stand and be recognized. *(Applause)*

As many of you know, The American Legion and the Boy Scouts of America have had a strong partnership for many years. At the Legion's first National Convention right

here in Minneapolis in 1919, you selected scouting as the first youth organization you partnered with. Over the years it has been a perfect relationship because both organizations share a love for God and country, and both groups know what it means to give back to the community.

When I think about the importance of scouting in my life, I'm reminded of the words of veteran and Eagle Scout, Gerald R. Ford, the 30th President of the United States. President Ford often told audiences, "Boy Scouts was invaluable in shaping my life."

I have to agree. Scouting has taught me many skills, and most importantly the value of service to others. Of the numerous community service projects I've finally completed, I'm most proud of my project which honors America's veterans buried in my local cemetery. Working closely with my Legion post, I spent two summers making more than 750, eight inch by twelve inch concrete markers, and placing them at veteran's graves. Each of the 30 pound markers includes a veteran's bronze star, and an insert which can hold an American flag during veteran events and ceremonies.

Once again, thank you Legionnaires for this incredible honor and for what you've done and continue to do for our great nation. Commander Foster, I am grateful for being a part of the Legion scouting program, and am proud to acknowledge that I too am a part of The American Legion family as a member of Squadron Post 96 of the Sons of The American Legion. Thanks again for this great honor. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: In competition in Colorado Springs a few weeks ago, our next two Youth Champions took top prize in the 21st Junior Air Rifle Championships. The Precision Champion, sponsored by Edward B. Rhoades Post 2 in Olympia, Washington, with a final score of 2454.7 out of 2509 is Daniel Lowe. (Applause)

2011 Junior Shooting Sports Precision Champion
Daniel Lowe, Olympia, Washington

Good morning. I want so say before I start this, that I'm a shooter, not a speaker. Thank you all. Thank you all so very much. I can't express my gratitude here today before you. It's quite the honor. The American Legion competition has always stood out among the many that I've been to. I've been shooting for six years now all over the country, and it really sets the standard for all other national competitions. I would like to thank The American Legion, Sons of The American, and my local Post Edward B. Rhoades Post 2. Thank you and God bless. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The Junior Shooting Sports Champion in the Sporter Category is an SAL member from Meridian, Idaho, sponsored by Lloyd Hutcheson Post 113. Finishing with a final score of 2295.9 out of 2509 is your next youth Champion, Mitchell Van Patten. (Applause)

2011 Junior Shooting Sports Sporter Champion
Mitchell Van Patten, Meridian, Idaho

Can you see me now? Good morning. Thank you for having me here. The hospitality that The American Legion has given me and all the Junior Champions is really great. Thank you. I'm from Meridian, Idaho, and I'm proud to be a brand new member of the Sons of The American Legion. *(Applause)*

Now, if you're like most people, I'll bet I can guess what you're thinking right now. It's probably something like, "How old is he? How tall is he? Is he even old enough to be in The American Legion?" Or my personal favorite from a recent shooting match: "Is it even legal for him to shoot a gun?" You ought to see the looks on peoples' faces now that I have my drivers permit. Seriously though, my size is one of the many reasons I'm so

thankful for the Junior Shooting programs. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that I'm not going to be a defensive lineman. *(Laughter)* There's only one Rudy. *(Laughter and applause)* I lasted two seasons in basketball, but by then everybody else was a foot or two taller than me. *(Laughter)*

I really liked baseball too, but my size didn't help me out there either. About that time we discovered the local rifle club though. I've participated in competitive shooting for four years now through my local Optimist Club. And I'm very thankful that two of our coaches, Gary Gillespie, and 94 year old Ross Hatfield are also American Legion members. Every year, Gary and Ross sponsor our local American Legion shooting match. I've participated in this match each year, but this was the first year that I shot well enough to make it to the next level of competition. Although I barely squeaked through that second qualification round, I spent the next several months practicing harder than I ever have. Shot at The American Legion Nationals and came out on top in the Sporter Division.

I've really enjoyed every national match in which I have shot, but I was especially impressed with how well The American Legion match was run. I would like to thank Colin Short and all the American Legion volunteers who helped run the national competition. The travel arrangements, the equipment check-in and the competition were organized so well, that I was really able to focus on what I was doing there, which was shooting and having fun. Competitive shooting isn't just a hobby for me. It really has had a huge impact on my life and my plans for the future. Now one of my goals is to represent our country in the Olympics. And once there, I'm planning on winning. I also plan to shoot in college.

I know I will pursue those two dreams, and I know that whatever happens, I will be a life-long advocate for volunteerism in excellent programs such as The American Legion and the Optimist Clubs. I will use my voice to advocate for the shooting sports, for American patriotism, and for the defense of Second Amendment right to bear arms. For in the words of Teddy Roosevelt, "The first step in the direction of preparation to avert war if possible and to be fit for war if it is to come, is to teach men to shoot." Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our next Youth Champion could not be with us today as she is attending Freshman Orientation at MIT. Your 2011 National Oratorical Champion sponsored by Legion Post 397 in Creve Couer, Missouri is Anisha Gururaj. Please turn your attention to the video monitors for a video greeting.

Video Remarks
2011 National Oratorical Contest First Place Winner
Anisha Gururaj, Chesterfield, Missouri

Hi. My name is Anisha Gururaj. I'm privileged enough to be your National Oratorical Champion. First of all I would like to apologize for not being able to make it to this National Convention. I've heard fantastic things about it, and I so wish I could be here with all of you today.

The Oratorical Contest has been an experience like none I will ever have or have ever had. Evens like these seem to defy those reports that we hear that my generation is lagging behind others in the world because the creativity, initiative, drive and imagination that I saw in this group of kids, is unparalleled. Moreover, one of the best parts about this competition was the openness and impartiality of its proceedings. Judges were from every walk of life. Contestants remained anonymous so that I and so many others could place full trust in the competition.

But perhaps the best part about this competition was that it forced me to do something that is absolutely crucial for success: Apply my knowledge. An entire year of

state mandated government education was finally put to the test, as I was forced to look into my own knowledge and see what sort of an analogy I could create to relate a centuries old document to modern society. And it was this challenge that ultimately let me create the analogy of the constitution as our parent and this country of our family.

And finally I would like to thank everyone who helped make this competition possible, from my post, Post 397, to the Missouri State Department, to the national organizers themselves. On every step of the way my family and I were met with kindness, support, and open arms, and for that I'm truly grateful. Thank you, American Legion, for giving me and thousands of other students the opportunity of a lifetime. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, your 2010-2011 American Legion Youth Champions. (Applause)

Presentation of the Spirit of Service Awards
Jimmie L. Foster, Alaska, National Commander
LTG Jack C. Stultz, Chief Army Reserve & Commanding General
United States Army Reserve Command

ANNOUNCER: Our next awards exemplify all that you as Legionnaires do throughout the year. The Spirit of Service Awards are given to men and women on active duty for their contributions to their communities and fellow citizens above and beyond the call. Assisting National Commander Foster in presenting the awards is Lieutenant General Jack C. Stultz, Chief of Army Reserve, and Commanding General of the United States Army Reserve Command. Please welcome General Stultz to your Convention.

Our first Spirit of Service Award recipient has spent countless hours in support of the Scouting communities since 2004 in Idaho, Wyoming, and now California. He is cited for his outstanding selfless service and his dedication to the Army values. Representing the United States Army, from 6th Battalion, 52nd Aviation Regiment at Los Alamitos, California, please welcome Sergeant Stephen Alder. (Applause)

SERGEANT STEPHEN ALDER: Good morning. Legionnaires, Commander Foster, distinguished guests and foreign dignitaries my name is Sergeant Stephen Alder, and I'm a soldier assigned to 6th Battalion, 52nd Aviation Regiment, out of Los Alamitos, California where I serve as a property book NCO .

I was first introduced to Scouting by my father, who showed me the values and principles that he learned from them, and since that day the Scouting program has given me countless opportunities and experiences. Growing up in Ogden, Utah I was first introduced, and over the course of eight years I have served the Scouts in three separate times. I have served as camp counselor, to the position I now hold as an assistant Scoutmaster and merit badge counselor. I have seen how much a young man or woman can learn from the Scouting program. These are lifelong skills that they can use every day.

During this time I came across an inspiration in a quote from Ronan Harris. "This is your world. These are your people. You can live for yourself today, or help build tomorrow everyone."

I serve the Scouts and community by volunteering my time so as to help young men and women develop as the leaders for the future of our nation. I plan on continuing my service with the Scouts for as long as they have need of me. Of all the many people I will thank: God, for giving me the ability to teach; my church and community for giving me the opportunity to lead; my wife, for putting up with it all; my father, for pushing me to succeed; the Boy Scouts of America for their faith in me; Captain Mitchell Rosnick and everyone from 11th Aviation and 652nd Aviation Regiment, for seeing in me the values

that I have taught for years. And of course, you, The American Legion, for everything that you do for veterans and the community, and for honoring me with such a prestigious award. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our next recipient shows a pattern of volunteerism starting with her assignment in Sigonella, Sicily, where she received the Girl Scout Outstanding Volunteer Award, and was recognized for hundreds of hours of volunteering in other causes. During her current assignment at Naval Air Station Patuxant River, Maryland, she has been awarded the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal. She is a role model, a mentor to youth and the 2011 American Legion Spirit of Service Award recipient representing the United States Navy. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Petty Officer First Class Megan Donnell. (Applause)

PETTY OFFICER FIRST CLASS MEGAN DONNELL: Thank you all very much. It is really an honor to be receiving this award today. I would like to give special thanks to my mother. She is the one who instilled in me the importance of volunteering. She always stops off and volunteers for whatever role is needed, from leading a Girl Scout troop to coaching a sports team. Mom, I truly love you. *(Applause)*

I would also like to thank my chain of command. Since joining the Navy I have been very fortunate to have great leaders. They have stressed the importance of not only serving my country with honor, but also serving the local community where I am stationed. Lastly, and most importantly, I would like to thank The American Legion for without them none of this would be possible. I have learned a great deal about The American Legion, and I am overwhelmed with all they do for veterans and the local community. I am now honored and proud to call myself a member of The American Legion. Thank you all very much, and God bless. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our next award is given to a Marine for his selfless community service while assigned to Marine Corps Air Station Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. He participated in the Adopt-A-School program, giving classes, raising money, tutoring and building playground equipment. He spent over a thousand hours dedicated to the youth sports and activity program, helped feed the homeless, and participated in many activities on and off the installation. Currently stationed at Marine Corps Base Quantico, please welcome Sergeant Omar A. Caraballo Pietri, United States Marine Corps. (Applause)

SERGEANT OMAR A. CARABALLO PIETRI: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. As I was writing this speech I was trying to figure out what I would write about. I've always given speeches, but not for receiving awards, but more for giving a presentation. Originally my speeches in the Marine Corps were for pilots who were leaving the air station who needed weather. And then it became the speeches on what will be affecting Marines in their careers. So now the question stands: What would this speech be about?

So I have received this award for volunteer work that I have done while on active duty, the time and energy that I could have spent on myself that I have chosen to give to others. It is funny, receiving this award. I was not planning on receiving this award or the medal that I now have attached to my uniform. I have to admit, those look pretty nice.

For I always thought that people who receive these medals or awards were in it just for that; the device, the symbol to be worn to separate one from the others. Then my thoughts on the process of these events and symbols changed. It started to change my thoughts when my own gunnery sergeant started to force me to track my volunteer hours. That was kind of difficult, because I never wrote anything down. Every time I volunteered I just went, did my volunteer, and then went on about my business directly

after. For volunteer work was something I did that allowed me to do something and help others.

When I started to coach soccer I was originally helping out a retired Air Force colonel. It was funny because he was coaching the older students, and I always thought what more could be taught, they should know everything by now; right? Even though they made fun of him behind his back for being older, they actually learned from him. I have seen them grow from the beginning of the season to the end. The bond that they shared grew strong. Their confidence with the game and with each other grew. And then the confidence overall grew. From then on I wanted to continue to be part of what this gentleman did.

The next season I received my own team. Actually I received more than a team. I actually received three teams, because they didn't have enough coaches signed up for that year. So not only did I have to learn about the proper ways of coaching younger students, but also had to conform my instruction to each individual personality. I then again wanted to see students grow in the same way that they had the season prior. But one thing was different. I was proud. I was proud that it was me helping these students grow. Even though this was done through a sport, I believe that these changes helped them throughout other parts of the day, throughout other parts of their life altogether.

Even though I volunteer for other causes and events, this one stands out the most because it makes me the proudest. I actually help students grow and develop. To know that there are organizations, people, and volunteers that are always doing the right thing no matter who is looking or the consequences to themselves, it helps me to appreciate everything that receiving this award stands for.

So in conclusion I have to thank the members of The American Legion like Mr. Foster; family members like my wife, Vanessa, who without her help I would never be able to push forward; the servicemembers, future, present, and past, who have been and will always continue to give their lives in order to keep America free and allow us the opportunity to help others in need. And last, but not least to the other volunteers like Stephen, Jacob, Megan, and Brandyn, who continue to show that people around world care, no matter where they come from or what they are doing. Just remember that you don't have to be a Marine to show honor, courage, commitment. Thank you very much. Semper fidelis. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The Spirit of Service Award is presented to our next recipient for volunteering hundreds of hours supporting local seniors and the youth in his community of Petaluma, California. He helps raise money for mortgage payments and basic household maintenance for the elderly, and mentors and supports low income and disadvantaged youth in his community. And he spends countless hours volunteering in the military community as well. Please show your appreciation to Seaman Jacob Lowery, United States Coast Guard. (Applause)

SEAMAN JACOB LOWERY: Thank you, and good morning. This is really a great honor, and I want to start off by thanking The American Legion and their two million plus members, as well as National Commander Jimmie Foster and Lieutenant General Stultz for presenting me the Spirit of Service Award. I also would like to thank my entire chain of command, not only for nominating me for the award, but for providing inspiration through your words and examples of the impact that one single person can make through a life dedicated to the service of others. Also I would like to say thank you to my father, who to this day has really shown me the true meaning of dedication and hard work. I would like to say thank you to the rest of my loving and supporting family and friends.

Many people have asked me how I've earned this award so early in my career. Well, how I got here was easy: Hard work, a willingness to try new things, wise man tours, an

extremely supportive chain of command, a loving family, and most importantly the endless grace of a loving God.

The combination of those things have provided me the opportunity to both create and participate in organizations dedicated to community service. However, the bigger question to me is not how I got here, but why. The best example I've had in my life of someone who has fully dedicated themselves to others is my mother, Mrs. Becky Lowery. Her life exemplifies to me how much joy a life spent in service to others can bring you. I can't thank her enough for the impact that she's had on my life.

I'm standing here today, only two years in the Coast Guard, where I serve with thousands of other Coast Guard men and women who wholeheartedly dedicate themselves to serving their country and community day by day. I have my head held high not because I am proud, but more so because I am humbled. And I am grateful; grateful and honored for the opportunity to be here as a recipient of this award. And I hope to fulfill this honor throughout the rest of my Coast Guard career, as well as the rest of my life. At a time like this there can be no better moment than now to make a difference in people's lives. Thank you and God bless. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our next recipient has distinguished himself in service while stationed at Yokota Air Base, Japan. He is active on and off base supporting Scouting programs, fundraising events, local charities and youth programs. He was nominated for the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal, donating over 550 hours to ten different agencies last year alone. Representing the United States Air Force, please welcome Staff Sergeant Brandyn M. Walter. (Applause)

STAFF SERGEANT BRANDYN M. WALTER: Good morning. I see they saved best service for last. It is a great honor for me to be here today receiving this award, and I would like to congratulate my fellow servicemembers. I would like to thank Commander Jimmie Foster and all of The American Legion members here today and all over the world.

I had a chance to meet many, many Legion members while I have been here this past week. And I had no idea what the Legion was about, and they opened my eyes and showed me a new world, especially some folks from Georgia a couple of nights ago. So I'm proud to be a part of The American Legion now, and I will be, a life-long member.

In addition, I would like to thank some folks who supported me on the way; Major Joe Cook, who was stationed with me in Yokota when I was a Boy Scout leader there; Senior Master Sergeant Dean Wilson, who entered me for this award. He believed in me and he came through with it, so I thank him for that. Tech Sergeant Andy Gilbert, a good friend of mine, who was involved with many things with me while I was there. Lastly, I would like to thank my mom and dad. My mom was not able to be here today. For instilling the values they did when I was younger. I wouldn't be here today without you. Thank you. *(Applause)* And very lastly my beautiful wife Jen, who is in Italy right now with my four children. She must be pulling her hair out, but she'll get through it. She's strong. But again I would like to thank the Legion, and God bless. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, please show your appreciation to the 2011 American Legion Spirit of Service Award winners. (Applause)

MR. RUETTIGER: Okay. That was pretty awesome, guys. So I want to thank you, and of course it's an honor for me being here today and being with you. Just seeing that magnificent group of individuals you have honored here today is proof that what you are doing is good and relevant. On behalf of a grateful nation, I thank you and all here assembled today. And now, ladies and gentlemen, please welcome back the members of the Army Soldiers Show. Thank you. *(Applause)*

...Musical Selection: 2011 Army Soldiers Show "Red, White and Blue and America The Beautiful."

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Ladies and gentlemen, the 2011 United States Army Soldiers Show. And also congratulations once again to our American Legion Youth Champions and our Spirit of Service Award recipients. And by the way, all of our Spirit of Service recipients are now proud members of our American Legion. *(Applause)*

And, Rudy, thank you for your words of inspiration. If you will please join me here at the podium. Let's give Rudy a hand. *(Applause)*

Rudy, now that you have motivated us all, we want to make sure that you do your work and do your part. You're eligible for membership in The American Legion through your service in the United States Navy in 1969 and 1970. Sir, here is your new Legion cap, your paid membership for the 2012 membership year, and a pin, and I welcome you to our family.

MR. RUETTIGER: Thank you, sir.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Prior to becoming chief of the Army Reserve and commanding general of the Army Reserve Command, our next guest served as commanding general of the 143rd Transportation Command, which provides command and control to 12 units in the southeast United States of America. In October of 2003 he was assigned as Director of Movements, Distribution and Transportation, Combined Forces Land Component Command, Kuwait. He was responsible for port and ground transportation operations for the largest movement of forces since World War II. He was a guest at our 2007 National Convention in Reno, Nevada. Legionnaires, please welcome to the podium Lieutenant General Jack G. Stultz. *(Applause)*

Address: LTG Jack C. Stultz, Chief, Army Reserve
Commanding General, United States Army Reserve Command

What a great day to be an American. Huah! All right. Hey, it's great to be back with you, with my brothers and sisters at The American Legion. First, thanks to National Commander Jimmie Foster. Thanks to all of you, The American Legion, for what you're doing, and thanks to you as veterans, because those great soldiers you've seen up here, the great ones that receive the awards -- and when I say "soldiers" that means soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen. But they're here because of you, because of the legacy that you set for us, because of the freedoms that you gave us, because of the example that you leave before us. And they serve with pride, but they serve on your shoulders. So thanks to all of our veterans for what you've done for this nation and to your families for the sacrifices that they've made. *(Applause)*

I have the greatest job in the world. I command 206,000 great men and women in uniform that serve in the Army Reserve around the world. And when I talked to you in 2007 we were about 20,000 short in our end strength. Today we're a thousand over strength in the Army Reserve. And the reason is because people believe, they believe in what they are doing. When I get the opportunity to testify before Congress, and I see my great friend Chet Edwards back here, who was a great congressman from Texas, we need him back, but I remind Congress every time, I say, you know, I've spent the last seven out of nine Christmases in Iraq or Afghanistan. And I do that because, one, I was stationed over there for two of them, but since I became the chief of the Reserve I go back every holiday. And my wife says, "That's where you need to be, you need to be with your soldiers." And I said you don't understand what it's like this past Christmas day to stand in Baghdad, Iraq, with a group of soldiers who are away from their families, missing Christmas with their kids, with their parents, with their brothers and sisters, in pretty austere conditions, many of which are getting ready to go out on missions to clear IEDs

or to secure areas, and going to risk their lives. And some of them may not come back. And they're standing there with me raising their hand, taking an oath of re-enlistment to serve their nation because they love their country. It doesn't get any better than that. That's what this nation is all about. *(Applause)*

My message to you today is: We need you. Our men and women in uniform need The American Legion. And you need them. You need them to continue to serve their country to protect our freedoms and our liberties. They need you to provide the support that they deserve. We cannot reduce our support to our soldiers and men and women in uniform. They deserve everything this nation can give them. *(Applause)*

And it can start at the grassroots level. I'll tell you a couple of stories. When I got into this job my wife said, "Finally, I get a voice." And I told her, "Honey, you've always had a voice." And she said, "No, I get a chance to be heard by someone other than you." And she said, "You know, with our active Army soldiers their base of support is the installation. They live around Fort Hood, Texas; Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Fort Campbell, Kentucky. But with our reserve component soldiers they don't have an installation. We've got to create a virtual installation. How do we do that? We've got to make every community across America a virtual installation." And so we thought, you know, technology that's the answer. But our families and our soldiers came back and said that's part of the answer. But the other part is we've got to have somebody to talk to face-to-face.

And so we started a little pilot program. We said let's try it out. We'll put some kind of a support center in one of our reserve centers and we'll see if it works. And she said, "Well, I want to call it the Army Strong Community Center." And I said, "Honey, you can't do that because ASCC has too many different meanings in the Army." Army Service Component Command, other things like that. So we opened our first Army Strong Community Center in Rochester, New York.

And we're just doing pilots right now. We've put one in Coraopolis, Pennsylvania, we've put one in Oregon City, Oregon, we've put one in Brevard, North Carolina. But what it has shown us is one, there is a need; and, number two, the community is there if they just know where to plug in. And that's where The American Legion is part of that community. And what we're seeing over and over again, is where we have these community centers, The American Legion is becoming part of it, and part of that support network. And I was out in Brevard, North Carolina, rural North Carolina, where we did a little pilot with one of these centers, and I had a young lady come up to me and give me a hug. And I said, "That was nice." And she said, "Sir, you don't know what you've done for me." And I said, "What?" She said, "My husband is an active duty soldier. My husband is in 52 Striker Brigade, Fort Lewis, Washington." For those of you who don't know, 52 Striker Brigade was the first striker brigade we put into Afghanistan, down in southern Afghanistan in Kandahar, and they took a pretty tough beating down there, with a number of KIAs and WIAs. And she said, "I couldn't stay at Fort Lewis, it was too emotional. So I packed up the kids and I came home to Brevard, North Carolina." She said, "The good news is my husband is coming home, the unit is coming back. But the bad news was I had no way to get back to Fort Lewis because the Army doesn't pay for me to come to Brevard and go back. So I came to your community center, and within a matter of hours your people here had our plane tickets because they called the community, they called organizations like The American Legion and said what do you need, we've got to get this soldier's family back to see him when he comes home. And we did. So thanks to you for doing that for us." *(Applause)*

The other thing we've done and we're getting a lot of requests from other people who say we want one of these too. So it's there. But we started an employer partnership. This was again a little grassroots movement where I got together with several employers and said how are we going to work together to make sure that you can run your business while I'm taking employees away to be soldiers, and the soldiers have the confidence that

they're going to be able to come back to a good job. What it turned into, though, was a talk about talent. It was a talk about the struggle we have as employers to find the talent. I met with the American Trucking Association, and they said we've got a challenge, we're short long-haul truck drivers in America. And I was talking to Bill Graves, who is a former Governor of Kansas, who was head of the American Trucking Association, I said, "What is the problem?" And he said, "I can't find anybody that wants to drive a truck that can pass a drug test." Number one disqualifier. And I said, "Bill, I just left Iraq, and I was in charge of thousands of truck drivers, and I can guarantee you every one of them is drug-free, every one of them is physically fit."

We started an idea that said instead of me talking to you about taking employees away to be soldiers, let's talk about bringing soldiers to be employees. So we met with Conway Trucking, Schneider, some of the big trucking companies. Conway came down to one of our units on a weekend and hired six soldiers on the spot to be truck drivers, terminal operators and other people that they needed. So we got into the medical field. Because I have 60 percent of the Army's medical structure, and the hospitals were saying we're short medical technicians, x-ray, respiratory, surgical. I've got them. I've got thousands of them. Then we got into law enforcement. The law enforcement agencies said we need law enforcement officers. I said I've got them. A small idea. Let's get together and talk.

Today we have 2,000 companies across America that have partnered with the Army to be employer partners, and we've already put 3,500 soldiers to work in those companies and 500 spouses. And this is not just about making a better military, this is making a better America with quality employees. So our soldiers need you. They need you for the jobs that they need, the confidence and the support. They need to know you're there.

You just recently saw the horrific news about the helicopter that crashed in Afghanistan, where we lost the Navy SEAL teams that were going in, and the other soldiers and airmen. And you saw the story about little Braden Nichols, who said, "What about my dad? What about him?" Braden Nichols's dad was one of my soldiers. That helicopter was out of the Bravo 158th Aviation, Olathe, Kansas, United States Army Reserve that was flying that mission. Five of those soldiers who lost their life were reserve component. Three Army Reserve, two National Guard flying together. In the Pentagon where my office is, I've got a picture in the back right behind my desk. It's been there for several years. And it's a picture of a Chinook helicopter sitting on a mountaintop, snow covered, in Pakistan. It was given to me by Bravo 158th. Because in 2006 B-158th from Olathe, Kansas, was going to Afghanistan when an earthquake occurred in Pakistan, and we diverted them to Pakistan, and for several months they flew relief supplies up to the mountaintops of Pakistan. And people said it's probably the most important thing we've done to build relationships with those people, seeing that American flag on that helicopter landing to provide them support. And then they left Pakistan and went to Afghanistan.

In Christmas of 2006 I went and visited Bravo 158th in Afghanistan. And they had just come back from a mission that day where the 10th Mountain Division out of Fort Drum had been on the mountain sides that were snow covered and you couldn't get to them. So B-158 took hot Christmas dinner and flew it out there and lowered it down on belay ropes to them so those soldiers could have hot Christmas meals. *(Applause)*

That's the same unit that was flying those SEALs, and that's why Braden says don't forget about my father. We can't. We cannot forget about all of our great men and women that have sacrificed, their families that have sacrificed, and those that continue to sacrifice. We've got to provide Braden Nichols the confidence that we'll never forget his dad.

You know, we take an oath. It's called our Warrior Ethos in the Army. It says I'll always place the mission first, I'll never quit, I'll never accept defeat, and I'll never leave a fallen comrade. That's why we need you. We need The American Legion because we

cannot leave our fallen comrades and their families. We've got to take care of them; we've got to provide them support. And I know that's why you're here. You're here for us, and I like to say our soldiers love their country because they know their country loves them. So, thanks to The American Legion for what you're doing. We've got to convince the Department of Defense to understand what you're doing for us, but also what you can do for us. And then we've got to work to integrate you in with our communities, more with our units, to work together, because we need you. And if we're going to sustain this freedom and liberty we've got, if we're going to maintain this military that we've got, it's going to be because America loves them and they know it. So, God bless you for what you're doing, God bless our men and women in uniform, and God bless the great United States of America. Huah! (A*pplause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Thank you, General Stultz. Great commander. Some of you have heard me tease our next guest, because... well, she's one hell of a shot. When we visited the rifle range at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, she registered 9 kills out of 11 rounds on an M-4 rifle. Mostly head shots. As a retired soldier and a former Marine, she made me look real bad. But what would you expect when you elect a national president from Texas?

In all seriousness, I've seen and been constantly impressed by the dedication that she's shown for veterans over this past year. She has become a true friend. A 45 year member of the Auxiliary, she is eligible through her late husband, Ray E. Hall; late husband Richard Ashworth; her father; her son and her granddaughter. She is a member of American Legion Auxiliary Unit 521 in Pasadena, Texas. Please welcome the leader of the nation's largest patriotic women's organization, National President Carlene "Annie Oakley" Ashworth. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Mrs. Carlene Ashworth
National President, American Legion Auxiliary

Good morning. Thank you, Commander. That story gets better every time I hear it. I just want to thank you all very, very much for the great support that you have given to me and to The American Legion Auxiliary as I traveled throughout the country this year. As most of you know, my passion this year has been dedicated totally towards serving our veterans, our active duty military and their families. That is my passion, and I will continue that for as long as I can still walk and talk.

But I want to especially thank all of the members of The American Legion for your tremendous support as I have traveled around the country and visited all your states, and all the great things that you are doing out there and the great support that you give to our Auxiliary members. And as many of you have heard me say time and time again, we can never ever thank our veterans enough for the service and the sacrifice that you've given to us, and continue to give to us. And we will always be indebted to you for everything that you do, continue to do, and will always do as you serve our veterans throughout the country, and as you continue to serve in your communities. So thank you, American Legion members and servicemembers all over this country for everything that you do, and for the service that you give to us. We appreciate you very much.

I also want to thank The American Legion for giving me the opportunity to work with a great commander this year who truly is dedicated to serving and to doing what is right for our veterans throughout the country. And we have traveled together across this country and around the world, and I've seen his total dedication to everything that he says and everything that he does to our veterans and to our military. We've had the opportunity to visit many times with our active duty military and to the young men and women in our hospitals and in the places where they are recovering from wounds that

they have suffered. And so I want you to know that he has totally been a dedicated soldier himself towards serving our purposes of The American Legion family. *(Applause)*

I also want to thank our great National Sons of The American Legion Commander David Dew, for his dedication and his total devoted service toward helping all of us to succeed, and the Sons of The American Legion as they have strived to work across this country with all of our American Legion posts and our Auxiliary units. And I know that the Sons of The American Legion are great supporters of The American Legion Auxiliary, and we thank you for that also very much, for your service for that. *(Applause)*

And I of course will not leave here without saying thank you to all of The American Legion Auxiliary members themselves for the great dedication and the great service that they are giving throughout this country to help to serve in our communities. And as you just heard from the last speaker, we need to make sure that we are out there doing our part in the communities to make sure those families are being taken care of. That's who we are, that's what we do, and that's where we will always be. Thank you very much for having me here this morning. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: It is fitting that when Blackhorse Productions made an officially sanctioned documentary about the history of The American Legion two years ago, and these are still available at Emblem Sales if you would like to purchase one, the only member of Congress to be included in the interviews is our next guest. A true champion for veterans and American Legion issues, he served in Congress from 1991 to 2011. Although his district was in Waco, Texas, his legislative record benefitted veterans everywhere. After becoming chairman of the Military Construction and Veterans Appropriations Subcommittee in 2007, he authored an historic $17.7 billion increase in funding for veterans health care and benefits, the largest increase in the history of the VA. He also played a key role in enacting the Post-9/11 GI Bill, legislation that he publicly said would not have been passed without The American Legion. When Auxiliary National President Ashworth and I attended D-Day observances in France this year, it was no surprise that we found our guest there. He was widely credited for raising congressional awareness and pressing for funds to restore a monument honoring our veterans at Point du Hoc. He is the son of a World War II naval aviator, and a past recipient of the American Legion's Distinguished Public Service Award. Folks, he may have left Congress, but veterans are still in his heart. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to present the highest honor that The American Legion can bestow upon an individual, The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal, to former United States Representative Chet Edwards. *(Standing applause)*

Presentation: The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal
The Honorable Chet Edwards

Good morning. You know, it is not easy following 'Annie Oakley' Ashworth and preceding Miss America. But my wife Lea Ann and I are so deeply honored to be with you on this incredibly inspiring morning. You know, I don't know about you, I think I do though, but in this age of cynicism about our country, how good or great we are, today, this morning, your youth champions, these unbelievably dedicated public servants, our military personnel, the story of Rudy, doesn't this program remind us all how blessed we are to be Americans every single day? *(Applause)*

Commander Foster, President Ashworth, Commander Dew, and leaders of The American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of the American Legion, I am deeply humbled by this award. Because of my lifelong respect for you, The American Legion, what you stand for, who you are and what you do, your patriotic values, in my book your spirit and your sense of service, your commitment to our great nation, is what is great and what is good about America. And I thank you for giving me the privilege just to be in the same

room with so many who have done so much on behalf of my family and the American family.

Now, I'm going to do something you might not expect from a recovering politician. I had a speech I had prepared, but you have had such a wonderful inspiring program, and it's taken just a few minutes longer than expected, that I'm going to put my speech aside and just share with you a couple of thoughts if I could from the heart.

I'm deeply grateful to all those who taught me along my life's journey that honoring our veterans, not just on Veterans Day or Memorial Day, but every day, is an obligation, a moral obligation of each and every American. I'm grateful to my father, as Commander Foster said, a World War II naval aviator, who told me that he was scheduled to deploy to the Pacific three weeks before the Second World War ended. But because of the brave service of millions of Americans who had gone before him, the war ended. And it reminded me from the time I was a young boy that had it not been for the service of other World War II veterans the war could have lasted longer. He would have been deployed to the Pacific, could likely have been killed in an invasion of Japan, and I wouldn't be in this world today. My dad taught me that literally my life is the product of the service of veterans, and that is a lesson that I will never forget. *(Applause)*

I accept this Distinguished Service Award today on behalf of my father, all who served with him, and all of the inspiring military men and women and families I have met in my lifetime. I accept it on behalf of that young Army soldier I met three days before my wife brought our first son, J. T., into this world, who was sitting next to his pregnant wife as he was about to be deployed to Bosnia, and I excitedly talked to him about how much it meant to me to be there, in just a few days I knew when our son would come into the world. And he looked up at me and without resignation or complaint said, "Sir, I was in Desert Storm for the birth of my first child, and I will be in Bosnia for the birth of my second child." How do we repay someone with a sense of service like that?

I wonder how I can ever thank the 29-year-old widow I met at Fort Hood, an installation I had the honor of representing through three combat deployments. I met her one day when she had a newborn baby in her arms. A little girl who would never be hugged by her dad because he had given his life for you and me in service in Iraq. Do you know what she said to me that day? She didn't ask for anything for herself, she simply asked, "Congressman, what can I do to help other widows, military widows, deal with the grief that they are having to live with?" Asked how she could help others, even as she was grieving with that newborn baby in her own arms. That is the spirit of America. That is the spirit of this great country of ours.

As a father of two teenage boys, two soon to be Eagle Scouts I'm proud to say, how do I thank the parents of Arden Cooper, who I watched receive posthumously their 22-year-old son's Silver Star, because in the midst of brutal Iraqi fire in Desert Storm he saw a wounded comrade in the sands of that desert and went and laid his body on top of his comrade, and in doing so saved his life? How do I thank them for giving their son to you and me? I thank The American Legion for constantly saying thank you in a meaningful way to our servicemen and women, our veterans, and the unsung heroes of our nation's defense, our military families.

Thank you for what you do for our youth. Thank you for what you have done both in combat and after you take the uniform off. I'll tell you what, let the cynics and naysayers say what they want, but the spirit of The American Legion is the spirit of America, and the spirit of America is alive and well in this country today. *(Applause)*

I see it our houses of worship. I see it in our schools. I see it right here this morning with your youth, with our military leaders and these great service personnel. May God bless The American Legion, and may God always bless the land that we love. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Ladies and gentlemen, please turn your attention to the video monitors as part of our next presentation. ...*The delegation viewed a video. (Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Nick Del Calzo's book, *Medal of Honor: Portraits of Valor Beyond the Call of Duty* captures the poignant images of America's greatest heroes. A previous work of Nick's, *The Triumphant Spirit: Portraits and Stories of Holocaust Survivors* was featured on the CBS Sunday Morning Show and also on CNN. Ladies and gentlemen, please give an American Legion welcome to Nick Del Calzo.

Presentation: Nick Del Calzo
In Honored Glory

MR. DELCALZO: Commander Foster, as co-chairman of the Medal of Honor Convention in Denver, I'm privileged to present you a personal copy of the book *The Medal of Honor: Portraits of Valor Beyond the Call of Duty.* It contains the signatures of 44 of our nation's most treasured heroes who attended the convention three years ago.

Good morning members of The American Legion family. Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. The book I just presented to Commander Jimmie Foster is not only a tribute to the esteemed recipients of the Medal of Honor, it was created also as a tribute to all of you who wore a military uniform and served our nation with honor and distinction. My goal is to honor all veterans, but unfortunately I realized that it was impossible to publish such a book that portrayed 25 million Americans. It is through these stories and portraits of the recipients of our highest medal for valor that I pay homage to every one of you here today.

Often I'm asked how the Medal of Honor project really got going. Well, this traditional and historical odyssey began about 68 years ago during World War II. And it's with vivid memories of this service banner that hung in our living room window, and I had such vivid memories of this banner, that it created an everlasting thought about honoring veterans. And this banner also hung in the homes of millions of other Americans who also served in the military.

But as a six year old boy, no other childhood memory left more of an imprint on my life than this cherished service banner. The three stars represent my three brothers who served in World War II, two of them in the Pacific and one in Europe. My fourth brother who was also drafted failed his physical three times, otherwise there would have been four stars on the banner.

About this time I also received a draft notice. My father was quite bewildered and astonished because I was only six years old. He took me by the hand to the local draft board and said to them, "You have three of my sons. The fourth fails his physical." Pointing to me he said to the board, "Do you really need this one too?" *(Laughter)*

Today I'm proud to introduce a new initiative to inspire young Americans to embrace patriotism and the values we all share in this hall. The project is called In Honored Glory. It is a series of commemorative and inspirational portraits, and I'm pleased to have donated the first framed set to The American Legion. *(Applause)*

So, in conclusion, it is my great honor and privilege to present one of the portraits to you, Commander Foster. I would like you to have this special Legion Post edition. It reads as follows: "In remembrance of the fallen and departed members of The American Legion, Spenard Post 28, your service shall not be forgotten." Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Ladies and gentlemen, please turn your attention to the video monitors once again as part of our next presentation. ...*The delegation viewed a video. (Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: After watching this video for the second time, I have to take issue with one thing Colonel Gadson said in the video. He did not become a Giant when Plaxico Burress awarded him the game ball. I think most of us would agree that he was a giant long before he became associated with the football team. Most importantly, Colonel Gadson is continuing to provide inspiration to his fellow servicemembers as the director of the United States Army's Wounded Warrior Program. A bomb may have taken his legs, but nobody, whether on or off the gridiron, walks taller. A member of The American Legion's Department of Virginia, I'm glad to see that Colonel Gadson is a member of our team. Please join me in welcoming our 2011 American Legion Patriot Award winner, Colonel Gregory D. Gadson. (A*pplause)*

Special Presentation: The American Legion Patriot Award
Colonel Greg Gadson, USA
U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program

COLONEL GADSON: Thank you all. First of all I have to give credit to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for without His glory I would not be here. I would like to thank The American Legion. I am truly honored and humbled to receive such a distinguished award, The Patriot Award. I can't think of a better word that epitomizes what The American Legion stands for: Patriotism. Patriotism, that means that you give of yourself. Just as I spoke to the Giants four years ago, you all epitomize, you set the standard, for what patriotism means in America. *(Applause)*

I feel blessed and fortunate that I am able to serve on active duty, not because of anything that I've done, but dream, as Rudy said. But I stand on the shoulders of those who came before me. You see, you've seen my injuries, and if it wasn't for your generation and those that have served before me, I could not continue to serve in uniform, and for that I owe you a debt of gratitude. Thank you. *(Standing applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: With us this morning is a remarkable young lady, home-schooled during her junior year, she graduated early from Scottsbluff High School in 2010. She won the title of Miss Nebraska that same year. On January 15, 2011 at the age of seventeen, she became the youngest Miss America in 74 years, and the first Miss Nebraska to win the title. Her platform is *Eating Disorders, a Generation at Risk*. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Miss America 2011, Teresa Scanlan. *(Applause)*

Address: Teresa Scanlan
Miss America

Thank you. Thank you all very, very much. Thank you so much. It's an honor and privilege to be here, and it's truly my pleasure. Thank you, each and every one of you for having me here today. Archibald MacLeish once said, "There are those I know who will say that the liberation of humanity, the freedom of man and mind is nothing but a dream. They are right. It is the American dream." *(Applause)*

This American dream is the dream that my grandparents believed in when they escaped from the communist country of Croatia, formerly Yugoslavia, over 50 years ago to come here to America to make a better life for their children and their children's children. The communist dictator Tito was taking over at the time, and several years ago my entire family had the opportunity to go to the island where my grandparents were born and raised. It's a tiny island, five miles by five miles. Not a car on the place, about a hundred people, and the thing that stood out to me the most about that trip was when my grandfather showed us the house where he grew up, and showed us this big brick bread oven, and explained that when the communists troops came through to draft all of the

young men from the island into the communist army, his mother hid him and his friends in that oven and stacked the wood in front to cover them. And the soldiers searched the house, could not find them, and the next night they took a tiny row boat and rowed to the coast of Italy where they stayed in refugee camps for two years before coming to the United States. And they did that because they believed in the American dream. They believed in making a better life here in America for their children.

It's the American dream that my parents then believed in when my father built his way up from nothing as he was paying his way through medical school, raising seven children. My mother decided to stay home to home school those seven children, to raise us in Western Nebraska where love of God and family and country were instilled in us from a very young age; where they taught us about the American dream.

And so it's the American dream that now I believe in, and that spurs on absolutely everything that I do. That spurs on my future interests in being a part of politics and government, as I would like to go into criminal prosecution as an attorney and become a judge and go into a career in public service, because it's the American dream that I believe in furthering. And that all of us here believe in furthering in all that we do.

It's the American dream that the Miss America organization believes in. The Miss America organization is a nonprofit dedicated to not only providing scholarships for the young women who compete, but also providing opportunities for those young women to serve. And service is huge point of our organization, especially in the area of serving our military men and women.

Now, when I first started competing, my parents of course did not know about these things. They had one major reason why they really supported my involvement in this competition. You can compete for Miss America from 17 to 24, and I was planning on competing every year possible until I aged out. Through my undergrad, through law school if need be to keep earning scholarships each year. And in the rules it states that you can't be married during that time, so my parents found it a form of security, I wouldn't be married until I was 25. So that sounded pretty good to them. But then I ended up winning at 17 and completely ruined that plan. Whoops!

But as I continued my involvement in the organization, my reasons for competing were quite a bit difference than theirs. There's a reason there's four points on the Miss America crown. That stands for style, success, scholarship and service. And of course service is the main point of the organization, the main point of what I do this year, and especially when it comes to the military and veterans.

The Miss America organization has been a committed and loyal supporter of the U.S. military, the troops and the families both at home and abroad for over 70 years. This commitment began back with an alliance with the USO in 1943. Miss America Jean Bartel travelled across the country from September to December of that year on a 40 city tour selling $2.5 million in war bonds. The most ever in history. She showed the nation a strong and dignified stance of support for the military, and a sense of national pride that would continue to grow throughout the decades to become a significant part of the organization today.

Well then in the 1960s of course the country became focused on the Vietnam War. The Miss America organization took bold steps to support the troops, and created the USO Miss America Troops Tour, traveling overseas to Vietnam and around the world. And although extremely difficult at that time, along with being heavily criticized, the organization and Miss America stood proudly by its decision to support of the troops in that ever-growing unpopular war. Miss America 1967, Jane Jayroe, along with five state title holders from that year crossed into the combat zone to perform a USO show and entertain the U.S. military. And Miss America, 1973, Terry Meeuwsen, became the first Miss America to wear the POW bracelet to show the support of the soldiers still abroad. Of course we've come a long way since the '60s and '70s and military support is now stronger than ever and we're proud to be a part of that.

When in 2001 once again the country would be tested by the tragic events of 9/11. And the Miss America organization again stood tall and strong for the nation, with the newly crowned Miss America, 2001, Katie Harman. Just two weeks after being crowned, Katie went to Ground Zero and began her mission as the country's ambassador of hope. And recently in 2009, seven Miss Americas traveled to Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi to distribute school supplies in Bagdad. They visited with hundreds of U.S. and coalition troops, and also visited the wounded at Landstuhl Hospital in Germany. Also at your National Convention in 2009, the Miss America organization joined with several other organizations in signing a Community Covenant with The American Legion, and in that Community Covenant we all pledged together that we would support the men and women in uniform, and their families.

So now as we reflect on the 90th Anniversary of Miss America and the 93rd of The American Legion, I'm so proud of this partnership. And as the 90th Anniversary Miss America, I am so proud to continue to serve as a representative of the citizens of this country, and especially of my generation to say thank you to all of our veterans, to all of our military, and their families. Because all that we've done throughout the history of our organization is so small, so very small in light of the sacrifices that are being made by our military every single day. And I continue to see that as I travel this year as we visit the wounded warriors in Bethesda Military Hospital. As we visit so many people who have sacrificed so much.

And so I'm here today to say thank you as a representative of the country today, to say that we do appreciate it. That my generation can't even express our gratitude for making the country what it is today and for creating this incredible place to live. It has taken so many lives. So much blood has been shed, but I don't want to take it for granted. I've seen that too much this year that so many people start to take this country for granted, the freedoms that we have, it did not come easily, and I pray every day that we will never forget those who are lost. That we will never take for granted our freedoms, and that we'll never stop gazing in wonder at the flag of our country.

So I would just like to leave you with an excerpt from the poem, *My Name is Old Glory.*

> *I am the flag of the United States of America. My name as Old Glory. I fly atop the world's tallest buildings. I stand watch in America's halls of justice. I fly majestically over great institutes of learning. I stand guard with the greatest military power in the world. Look up and see me. I stand for peace, honor, truth and justice. I stand for freedom. I am confident. I am proud. I bow to no one. I am recognized all over the world. I am worshipped. I'm saluted. I'm respected. I'm revered. I am loved and I am feared. I have been soiled, burned, torn and trampled on in the streets of countries I have helped set free. It does not hurt for I'm invincible. I have been soiled, burned, torn and trampled on in the streets of my country. And when it is by those with whom I have served in battle, it hurts. But I shall overcome, for I am strong. I have slipped the bonds of earth and stand watch over the new uncharted frontiers of space from my vantage point on the moon. I have been a silent witness to all of America's finest hours. But my finest hour comes when I am torn into strips to be used for bandages for my wounded comrades on the field of battle. When I fly at half mast to honor my soldiers, and when I lie in the trembling arms of a grieving mother at the grave of her fallen son. I am proud. My name is Old Glory. Dear God, long may I wave.*

Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: At this time we're going to take a little break. Peter Ole, if you could keep us active with your excellent organ playing. We're going to have to do some shifting. We're going to be in a little lull, so please bear with us.

…At this time Peter Ole played a musical selection.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Ladies and gentlemen, please take your seats. Our guest has arrived. They are going through the formalities of stuff in the back. While we're in a time of lull I would like to say that the year as national commander has been very gratifying. We've traveled the country, visited 53 departments out of 55. We've been to Korea, been to Japan, been to Taiwan, been to Guam. I'm going back to Guam, you can bet on that. I liked it. Been to Canada, been to Puerto Rico. We've been everywhere that we could go. It's been an honor and a privilege to be your national commander. I tried to instill The American Legion family atmosphere with the great president that you already know and met, Carlene Ashworth, and our Sons of the American Legion national commander, Dave Dew. You know, I was born and raised as an Okie. Add two Texans. That's tough to take, you know what I mean? But, you know, we did that in the friendly spirit. We went together as a team, we were always there, all three of us on many occasions, and also had the Honorary Junior National President Sabrina Cobb from Ohio joining us. And it was great. Thank you for a year that I will never forget.

The American Legion family, nearly four million members strong, is honored by the appearance of our next guest. He has said that, "We have a sacred trust with those who wear the uniform of the United States of America," and his actions as the nation's 44th Commander-in-Chief reflect that commitment.

The Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which he signed, provides VA with more than $1.4 billion to improve services to America's veterans. His administration has provided resources to effectively implement and improve the Post-9/11 GI Bill, changes that were strongly supported by The American Legion.

He has shown a commitment to winning the war against terrorists in Afghanistan by increasing our troop presence. He has taken the fight to the enemy, using drone attacks to eliminate terrorists hiding out in Pakistan and other areas. And who can forget his announcement on May 1st that a United States Navy SEAL team had successfully carried out a raid and killed Osama bin Laden? *(Applause)*

He has also felt the heavy burdens of being Commander-in-Chief, illustrated early this month when he presided over the remains of a group of SEALS and other American servicemembers as they arrived home to Dover Air Force Base.

A supporter of American Legion programs, the president took time out of his busy schedule to personally meet with every one of our Boys Nation participants. His wife, First Lady Michelle Obama, launched the Joining Forces initiative with Dr. Jill Biden to mobilize all sectors of society to give our servicemembers and their families the opportunities and support that they have gratefully earned.

Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm American Legion welcome to the Honorable Barack H. Obama, President of the United States and our Commander-in-Chief. (*Applause)*

Address: Barack Obama
President of the United States

Thank you. Thank you so much. Hello Legionnaires! It is wonderful to see all of you. Let me first of all thank Commander Foster for your introduction and for your lifetime of service to your fellow Marines, soldiers, and veterans. On behalf of us all, I want to thank Jimmie and I want to thank your entire leadership team for welcoming me here today. Thank you very much. (*Applause)*

Your National Adjutant Dan Wheeler, your executive director, your voice in Washington, Peter Gaytan, who does just an extraordinary job, and the president of the American Legion Auxiliary, Carlene Ashworth, thank you for your extraordinary service. To Rehta Foster and all the spouses, daughters and sisters of the Auxiliary, and the Sons of The American Legion, as military families you also serve, and we salute all of you as well.

There are some special guests here I want to acknowledge. They may have already been acknowledged, but they are great friends, so I want to make sure that I point them out. First of all, the wonderful Governor of Minnesota, Mark Dayton, is here. Two senators who are working on behalf of veterans every single day, Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken. Congressman Keith Ellison, this is his district. Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Ryback, a great friend. And to all the other members of Congress and Minnesota elected officials who are here, welcome.

It is wonderful to be back with the American Legion. You know, back in Illinois, my home state, we worked together to make sure veterans across the state were getting the benefits they had earned. When I was in the U. S. Senate we worked together to spotlight the tragedy of homelessness among veterans and the need to end it. As president I have welcomed Jimmie and your leadership to the Oval Office to hear directly from you. And I have been honored to have you by my side when I signed advance appropriations to protect veterans' health care from the budget battles in Washington when I signed legislation to give new support to veterans and their caregivers, and most recently when I proposed new initiatives to make sure the private sector is hiring our talented veterans. So American Legion, I thank you for your partnership. And I appreciate the opportunity to talk with you today about what we need to do to make sure America is taking care of our veterans as well as you have taken care of us.

And I'm grateful to be with you for another reason. A lot of our fellow citizens are still reeling from Hurricane Irene and its aftermath. As folks are surveying damage, some are dealing with tremendous flooding. As a government we're going to make sure that states and communities have the support they need so their folks can recover. And across the nation we're still digging out from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. It's taken longer and it's been more difficult than any of us had imagined. And even though we've taken some steps in the right direction, we've got a lot more to do. Our economy has to grow faster, we have to create more jobs, and we have to do it faster. And most of all we've got to break the gridlock in Washington that's been preventing us from taking the action we need to get this country moving. *(Applause)*

That's why next week I'll be speaking to the nation about a plan to create jobs and reduce our deficit. A plan that I want to see passed by Congress. We've got to get this done. And here is what else I know. We Americans have been through tough times before, much tougher than these. And we didn't just get through them, we emerged stronger than before. Not by luck, not by chance, but because in hard times Americans don't quit. We don't give up. We summon that spirit that says when we come together, when we choose to move forward together as one people, there is nothing we can't achieve. And, Legionnaires, you know this story because it's the story of your lives. And in times like these all Americans can draw strength from your example.

When Hitler controlled a continent and fascism appeared unstoppable, when our harbor was bombed and our Pacific fleet crippled, there were those that declared that the United States had been reduced to a third class power. But you, our veterans of World War II, crossed the oceans and stormed the beaches and freed the millions, liberated the camps, and showed the United States of America is the greatest force for freedom that the world has ever known. *(Applause)*

When North Korea invaded the south, pushing the allied forces into a tiny sliver of territory, the Pusan Perimeter, it seemed like the war could be lost. But you, our Korean veterans, pushed back, fought on, year after bloody year. And this past Veterans Day I

went to Seoul and joined our Korean War veterans for the 60th anniversary of that war, and we marked that milestone in a free and prosperous Republic of Korea, one of our greatest allies.

When communist forces in Vietnam unleashed the Tet Offensive, it fueled the debate here at home that raged over that war. You, our Vietnam veterans, did not always receive the respect that you deserved, which was a national shame. But let it be remembered that you won every major battle of that war — every single one. *(Applause)* As president I have been honored to welcome our Vietnam veterans to the White House and finally present them with the medals and recognition that they had earned. It's been a chance to convey on behalf of the American people those simple words with which our Vietnam veterans greet each other. "Welcome home." *(Applause)*

Legionnaires, in the decades that followed, the spirit of your service was carried forth by our troops in the sands of Desert Storm, in the rugged hills of the Balkans, and now it's carried on by a new generation. Next weekend will mark the tenth anniversary of those awful attacks on our nation. In the days ahead we will honor the lives we lost and the families that loved them. The first responders who rushed to save others. And we will honor all those who have served to keep us safe these ten difficult years, especially the men and women of our armed forces.

Today as we near this solemn anniversary it's fitting that we salute the extraordinary decade of service rendered by the 9/11 generation, the more than five million Americans who have worn the uniform over the past ten years. They were there on duty that September morning, having enlisted in a time of peace, but they instantly transitioned to a war footing. They are the millions of recruits who have set forward since, seeing their nation at war and saying, "Send me." They are every single soldier, sailor, airman, Marine and Coast Guardsman serving today who has volunteered to serve in a time of war, knowing that they could be sent into harm's way. They come from every corner of our country. Big cities, small towns. They come from every background and every creed. They are sons and daughters who carry on the family's tradition of service. And they are new immigrants, who have become our newest citizens. They're our National Guardsmen and Reservists who have served in unprecedented deployments. They are the record number of women in our military, proving themselves in combat like never before. And every day for the past ten years these men and women have succeeded together as one American team. *(Applause)*

They're a generation of innovators, and they've changed the way America fights and wins its wars. Raised in the age of the Internet, they've harnessed new technologies on the battlefield. They've learned the cultures and traditions and languages of the places where they've served. Trained to fight, they've also taken on the role of diplomats and mayors and development experts, negotiating with tribal sheiks, working with village shuras, partnering with communities. Young captains, sergeants, lieutenants, they've assumed responsibilities once reserved for more senior commanders, and remind us that in an era when so many other institutions have shirked their obligations, the men and women of the United States military welcome responsibility. *(Applause)*

In a decade of war they have borne an extraordinary burden, with more than two million of our servicemembers deploying to the war zones. Hundreds of thousands have deployed again and again, year after year. Never before has our nation asked so much of our all-volunteer force, that one percent of Americans who wears the uniform. We see the scope of their sacrifice in the tens of thousands who now carry the scars of war, both seen and unseen, our remarkable wounded warriors. We see it in our extraordinary military families who serve here at home. The military spouses who hold their families together, the millions of military children, many of whom have lived most of their young lives with our nation at war and mom or dad deployed.

And most profoundly we see the wages of war in those patriots who never came home. They gave their all, their last full measure of devotion. In Kandahar, in the

Korengal, in Helmand, in the battles for Baghdad and Fallujah and Ramadi. Now they lay at rest in quiet corners of America. But they live on in the families who loved them, and in the nation that is safer because of their service. And today we pay humble tribute to the more than 6,200 Americans in uniform who have given their lives in this hard decade of war. We honor them all. We are grateful for them.

Through their service, through their sacrifice, through their astonishing record of achievement our forces have earned their place among the greatest of generations. Toppling the Taliban in just weeks, driving al-Qaeda from the training camps where they plotted 9/11, giving the Afghan people the opportunity to live free from terror. When the decision was made to go into Iraq our troops raced across deserts and removed a dictator in less than a month. When insurgents, militias and terrorists plunged Iraq into chaos our troops adapted, they endured ferocious urban combat, they reduced the violence and gave Iraqis a chance to forge their own future. When a resurgent Taliban threatened to give al-Qaeda more space to plot against us, the additional forces I ordered to Afghanistan went on the offensive, taking the fight to the Taliban and pushing them out of their safe havens, allowing Afghans to reclaim their communities, and training Afghan forces.

And a few months ago our troops achieved our greatest victory yet in the fight against those who attacked us on 9/11, delivering justice to Osama bin Laden in the one of the greatest intelligence and military operations in American history. Credit for these successes, credit for this progress, belongs to all who have worn the uniform in these wars. *(Applause)*

Today we're honored to be joined by some of them, and I would ask all those who served this past decade, the members of the 9/11 generation, to stand and accept the thanks of a grateful nation. *(Applause)*

Thanks to these Americans we're moving forward from a position of strength. Having ended our combat mission in Iraq and removed more than 100,000 troops so far, we'll remove the rest of our troops by the end of this year and we will end that war. Having put al-Qaeda on the path to defeat, we won't relent until the job is done. Having started to draw down our forces in Afghanistan, we'll bring home 33,000 troops by next summer, and bring home more troops in the coming years. *(Applause)*

As our mission transitions from combat to support, Afghans will take responsibility for their own security, and the longest war in American history will come to a responsible end. For our troops and military families who have sacrificed so much this means relief from an unrelenting decade of operations. Today fewer of our sons and daughters are serving in harm's way. For so many troops who have already done their duty we've put an end to the stop loss. Our soldiers can now look forward to shorter deployments, and that means more time at home between deployments and more time training for the full range of missions that they will face. Indeed, despite ten years of continuous war, it must be said, America's military is the best that it's ever been. *(Applause)*

We saw that most recently in the skill and precision of our brave forces who helped the Libyan people finally break free from the grip of Moammar Gaddafi. As we meet the test that the future will surely bring, including hard fiscal choices here at home, there should be no doubt the United States of America will keep our military the best trained, the best led, the best equipped fighting force in history. It will continue to be the best. *(Applause)*

Now, as today's wars end, as our troops come home, we're reminded once more of our responsibilities to all who have served. The bond between our forces and our citizens must be a sacred trust. And for me and my administration, upholding that trust is not just a matter of policy, it is not about politics, it is a moral obligation. That's why my very first budget included the largest percentage increase to the VA budget in the past 30 years. *(Applause)*

So far we're on track to have increased funding for Veterans Affairs by 30 percent. And because we passed advance appropriations, when Washington politics threatens to

shut down the government, as it did last spring, the veterans' medical care that you count on was safe. And let me say something else about VA funding that you depend on. As a nation we're facing some tough choices as we put our fiscal house in order. But I want to be absolutely clear: We cannot, we must not, we will not balance the budget on the backs of our veterans. As Commander-in-Chief I won't allow it. *(Applause)*

With these historic investments we're making dramatic improvements to veterans health care. We're improving VA facilities to better serve our women veterans. We're expanding outreach and care for our rural veterans, like those that I met during my recent visit to Cannon Falls, including two proud Legionnaires, Tom Newman of Legion Post 620 in Hugo, and Joseph Kidd, Post 164 in Stewartville. *(Applause)*

For our Vietnam veterans, because we declared that three diseases are now presumed to be related to your exposure to Agent Orange, we've begun paying the disability benefits that you need. For our veterans of the Gulf War, we're moving forward to address the nine infectious diseases that we declared are now presumed to be related to your service in Desert Storm. *(Applause)*

At the same time, our outstanding VA Secretary, Ric Shinseki, is working every day to build a 21st century VA. Many of our Vietnam vets are already submitting their Agent Orange claims electronically. Hundreds of you from all wars are requesting your benefits online, thanks to the new blue button on the VA website. You can now share your personal health information with your doctors outside of the VA. And we're making progress in sharing medical records between DOD and VA. We're not there yet. I've been pounding on this thing since I came into office. We are going to stay on it, we're going to keep at it, until our troops and our veterans have a lifetime electronic medical record that you can keep for your life. *(Applause)*

Of course we've still got some work to do. We have to break the backlog of disability claims. I know that over the past year the backlog has actually grown due to the new claims from Agent Orange. But let me say this, and I know Secretary Shinseki agrees: When our veterans who fought for our country have to fight to get the benefits that you've already earned, that's unacceptable. So this is going to remain a key priority for us. We're going to keep hiring new claims processors, and we're going to keep investing in new paperless systems, and keep moving ahead with our innovation competition, in which our dedicated VA employees are developing new ways to process your claims faster. We want your claims to be processed not in months, but in days. So the bottom line is this: Your claims need to be processed quickly and accurately the first time. We're not going to rest until we get that done. We will not rest. *(Applause)*

The same is true for our missions to end homelessness among our veterans. Already we have helped to bring tens of thousands of veterans off the streets. For the first time ever we've made veterans and military families a priority not just at the VA, not just at DOD, but across the federal government. And that includes making sure that federal agencies are working together so that every veteran who fought for America has a home in America. *(Applause)*

We're working to fulfill our obligations to our 9/11 generation veterans, especially our wounded warriors. Now, the constant threat of IEDs has meant a new generation of servicemembers with multiple traumatic injuries, including traumatic brain injury. And thanks to advanced armor and medical technologies our troops are surviving injuries that would have been fatal in previous wars. So we're saving more lives, but more American veterans live with severe wounds for a lifetime. That's why we need to be there for them for a lifetime. We're giving unprecedented support to our wounded warriors, especially those with traumatic brain injury. And thanks to the veterans and caregivers legislation that I signed into law we've started training caregivers so that they can receive the skills and the stipends that they need to care for their loved ones. *(Applause)*

We're working aggressively to address another signature wound of this war which has led to too many fine troops and veterans to take their own lives, and that's Post-

Traumatic Stress Disorder. We're continuing to make major investments, improving outreach and suicide prevention, hiring and training more mental health counselors, and treating more veterans than ever before. The days when depression and PTSD were stigmatized, those days must end, and that's why I made the decision to start sending condolence letters to the families of servicemembers who take their lives while deployed in a combat zone. These Americans did not die because they were weak. They were warriors, they deserve our respect. Every man and woman in uniform, every veteran, needs to know that your nation will be there to help you stay strong. It's the right thing to do. *(Applause)*

In recent months we've heard new reports of some of our veterans not getting the prompt mental health care that they desperately need, and that too is unacceptable. If a veteran has the courage to seek help, then we need to be doing everything in our power to deliver the lifesaving mental care that they need. So Secretary Shinseki and the VA are going to stay on this, and will continue to make it easier for veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress to qualify for VA benefits regardless of the war that you served in. If you served in a combat theater and a VA doctor confirms a diagnosis of PTSD, that's enough.

Which brings me to the final area where America must meet its obligations to our veterans. This is a place where we need each other, and that's the task of renewing our nation's economic strength. After a decade of war, it's time to focus on nation building here at home. And our veterans, especially our 9/11 veterans, have the skills and the dedication to help lead the way. That's why we're funding the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which is now helping more than 500,000 veterans and family members go to college, get their degrees, and play their part in moving America forward. *(Applause)*

That's why this fall we'll start including vocational training and apprenticeships as well, so veterans can develop the skills to succeed in today's economy. And that's why I've directed the federal government to hire more veterans, including more than 100,000 veterans in the past year-and-a-half alone. But in this tough economy far too many of our veterans are still unemployed. And that's why I've proposed a comprehensive initiative to make sure we're tapping the incredible talents of our veterans. And it's got two main parts.

First, we're going to do more to help our newest veterans find and get that private sector job. We're going to offer more help with career development and job searches. I've directed DOD and the VA to create what we're calling a reverse boot camp to help our newest veterans prepare for civilian jobs, and translate their exceptional military skills into industry accepted licenses and credentials. And today I'm calling on every state to pass legislation that makes it easier for our veterans to get the credentials and the jobs for which they are so clearly qualified. This needs to happen, and it needs to happen now.

Second, we're encouraging the private sector to do its part. So I've challenged companies across America to hire or train 100,000 unemployed veterans or their spouses. And this builds on the commitments that many companies have already made as part of the Joining Forces campaign championed by the First Lady and Vice President's spouse, Dr. Jill Biden. One hundred thousand jobs for veterans and spouses. And to get this done I propose a returning hero's tax credit for companies that hire unemployed veterans, and a wounded warrior tax credit for companies that hire unemployed veterans with a disability. *(Applause)*

When Congress returns from recess this needs to be at the top of their agenda. For the sake of our veterans, for the sake of our economy, we need these veterans working and contributing and creating the new jobs and industries that will keep America competitive in the 21st century. These are the obligations we have to each other, our forces, our veterans, our citizens. These are the responsibilities that we must fulfill. Not just when it's easy, not just when we're flush with cash, not just when it's convenient, but always.

That's a lesson we learned again this year in the life and in the passing of Frank Buckles, our last veteran from the First World War. He passed away at the age of 110. Think about it. Frank lived the American century. An ambulance driver on the Western Front, he bore witness to the carnage of the trenches in Europe. Then, during the Second World War he survived more than three years in Japanese prisoner of war camps. Then, like so many veterans, he came home, went to school, pursued a career, started a family, and lived a good life on his farm in West Virginia. Even in his later years, after turning 100, Frank Buckles still gave back to his country. He would go speak to school children about his extraordinary life. He would meet and inspire other veterans. And for 80 years he served as a proud member of The American Legion. *(Applause)*

The day he was laid to rest I ordered that flags be flown at half staff at the White House, at the government buildings across the nation, at our embassies around the world. As Frank Buckles lay in honor at Arlington's Memorial Chapel, hundreds passed by his flag draped casket in quiet procession. Most were strangers who never knew him. But they knew the story of his service, and they felt compelled to offer their thanks to this American soldier. And that afternoon I had the privilege of going over to Arlington and spending a few moments with Frank's daughter, Susannah, who cared for her father until the very end. And it was a chance for me to convey the gratitude of an entire nation, and to pay my respects to an American who reflected the best of who we are as a people.

And, Legionnaires, it was a reminder, not just for the family and friends of Corporal Frank Buckles, but to the veterans and families of every generation. No matter when you serve, no matter how many years ago that you took off your uniform, no matter how long you live as a proud veteran of this country we love, America will never leave your side. America will never forget. We will always be grateful to you. God bless you, God bless all our veterans, and God bless the United States of America. *(Applause)*

...A musical selection was played by Peter Ole.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Ladies and gentlemen, the man who has led the Sons of The American Legion over the last year is the son of a United States Air Force veteran of the Korean War. A member of the Sons of The American Legion Squadron 321 in Plano, Texas, he has spent 25 years working as a contractor in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. His wife, Charlie, served as auxiliary president for the Department of Texas. He has served the Sons at every level, including national vice commander. His motto is "By their side with honor and pride." Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the immediate Past National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion David L. Dew. *(Applause)*

Greetings: David Dew, Texas
Past National Commander
Sons of The American Legion

Thank you. Thank you, Commander Foster. Ladies and gentlemen; almost afternoon. What a pleasure to be here at the National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota. As I traveled across the nation this year, many times with Madam President Carlene and Commander Foster, every attachment I came to I said, "Guys, you need to report about yourself. We've got to brag on ourselves."

So at this opportunity, and I thank you for this opportunity, I'm going to brag on them for them, because it's the hardest thing in the world — we love to volunteer, we love to get out and do everything we can for veterans and the children in communities, but we don't brag on it, we just like to have a thank you and go on. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them myself. I'm also proud to have the all time high membership again, with 344,367 members across the nation. *(Applause)*

And 5,859 squadrons across the nation. I'm going to give you just a few numbers. It's only 30 percent reporting. In Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, which is my heart and soul, there are 327,333 total volunteer hours, with $1,694,024 in cash and gifts given to our veterans across the world. I am quite proud of these guys. *(Applause)*

And our single largest contribution to the Child Welfare Foundation, again, with $392,170, and 36,550 hours in service to our young children across the country. And last, but not least, in all the Americanism programs that we promote and do through The American Legion, we had $2,006,492, and 615,893 hours of service and support to Americanism programs across the nation. That's just a piece of what we have done, less than 50 percent. Can you imagine what is really going on out there?

So thank you for this opportunity to bring you greetings. Thank you, commander, for a fantastic year, and Madam President. But it's a time in my life that I'll never forget, and I was proud to serve you. And I know I speak for all the Sons of The American Legion when I say we're by your side with honor and pride. So God bless you, and thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: As a former chief prosecutor in Minnesota's largest county, in 2006 or next guest became the first woman to be elected to represent Minnesota in the United States Senate. In 2007 she introduced Senate Bill 2139, the National Guard and Reserve Educational Benefits Fairness Act, which provides benefits based on actual active-duty service, rather than the dates that are printed on orders. She has also co-sponsored the Post-9/11 GI Bill and other veterans programs. Please welcome Senator Amy Klobuchar. *(Applause)*

Greetings: The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
United States Senate

Well, thank you so much. It is great to be here. Thank you to the Minnesota delegation over there, as well as all the other people that decided to wait to have their lunch. So I really appreciate that. It's an honor to be here with Jimmie Foster, James Copher, Tom Lannon, Chuck Kruger. My colleagues, of course the president is still here in the back, and my colleagues Al Franken and Keith Ellison, Congressman Paulsen was here, as well as Congresswoman McCollum, and also of course Governor Dayton. I saw Mayor Coleman and Mayor Rybak. They are all here because of our great respect for The American Legion.

Now, I am going to keep my remarks brief. I was reminded of this actually at a military event a few years ago at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where we had a major deployment. And I went down there with our former governor, and we were sitting there and it was 109 degrees. They put the politicians in the sun, right, so we would keep our speeches short. And in the course of the ceremony 37 people fainted from the heat. They all got water, they were fine. I got home and I was talking on the phone to a friend, telling her how 37 people had fainted, and I heard my daughter, who was then about 12 years old, run to the top of the stairs, and she yelled down to my husband, "Dad, mom talked so long today that 37 people fainted." So I will work very hard not to have that happen.

We are certainly proud here in Minnesota to host the 93rd Annual National Convention of The American Legion. For 93 years the Legion has been standing strong in support of the men and women who offered their lives to protect our freedoms. We are deeply grateful to our veterans for their service and sacrifice to our country. Minnesotans have always understood the debt we owe our military servicemembers, and this is a state where we wrap our arms around those who serve us.

Minnesota in fact has a strong tradition of service and sacrifice to our nation. It was a 250 member First Minnesota Regiment at the Battle of Gettysburg that held the line against 1,600 Confederate troops, while desperately needed reinforcements were brought

in on the Union side. That proud heritage continues today. Our National Guard is among the best in the nation, having earned repeated awards and recognition for distinguished service. From the Bulldogs of the 148th Fighter Wing in Duluth, to the Red Bulls of the 134th Brigade Combat Team who served the longest single deployment of any unit in the Iraq War in 2007. *(Applause)*

We believe that when we send our men and women overseas we make a promise to them, just as we have to all those who have gone before, that we will give them the resources they need to carry out their missions. That we will provide the support for their families, and that we will take care of them when they come home. In decades past, veterans like my father could count on their government to stand by them, and we adopted the GI Bill to provide health, housing, and educational benefits. Just as we did then, we have a responsibility now to ensure fair compensation policies, full education benefits, and the health care that our veterans and their families deserve. Because when the men and women of our armed forces signed up to serve our country there wasn't a waiting line. And when they come home to the United States of America and they need a job, or they need health care, or they need an education, there should not be a waiting line in the United States of America. *(Applause)*

I thank the Legion for its leadership with jobs, the jobs conference that you held here in Minneapolis. I think you all know, as the president noted, that we have an alarming problem of homelessness among our nation's veterans. This winter the VA put out a disturbing report that found that 16 percent of homeless adults in America are veterans, even though veterans make up only ten percent of our adult population. Right here in Minnesota 700 veterans are homeless on every given night, and 4,000 could experience an episode of homelessness this year. These numbers are unacceptable. These are men and women, sometimes with children, who have served our nation. They raised their right hands and proudly wore the uniform of this country, and this is not the care that they deserve.

Now, Minnesota is a rural state in part, and like many states one of the problems we have discovered is that the VA was having trouble providing housing services to rural veterans. Well, with the help of some Minnesota advocates, military advocates in our state, and with the key endorsement of The American Legion, along with a number of Republican Senators, including John Cornyn, Jim Inhofe and Scott Brown, I introduced a bill that allows the VA to partner with community groups to provide the case management services to our rural veterans. The Helping Our Homeless Veterans Act will help extend the VA's resources and services to our veterans in rural areas. We now have 18 Democrat and Republican co-sponsors and we are building more and more each month. When we introduced this bill we did it in the middle of a Minnesota snowstorm. We hadn't planned that snowstorm, and some people said, well, are you cancelling it? And we thought why would we cancel it when there are veterans right now who are at home, that day, on the streets without a home in the middle of that snowstorm. We had to understand what their life was like. And I was very grateful to Legionnaire Lynne Nottage, the department vice commander, for coming out to support that bill that day. General Shinseki has made eliminating veterans' homelessness in America by 2015 one of his major goals. I truly believe that those who have put their lives at risk for our country must at least have a home. *(Applause)*

Now, we all know that the best long-term solution to ending veterans' homelessness is to promote education and job opportunities for veterans so that veterans don't become homeless in the first place. Unemployment among the post-9/11 veteran population remains far too high, with rates estimated at six or even seven percentage points higher than the national average. Access to higher education is key. As the president mentioned, we have expanded those opportunities greatly with the bills that we passed in the last few Congresses. Well, now we have to implement those bills, we need to make some improvements. Apprenticeships are key. I've introduced a bill to do that so we make sure

that it's not just about those that want to go to college, but also those that want to start in with a trade immediately when they come home.

Finally, we have to continue to work with the Legion and other organizations to cut through the red tape. Too often our servicemembers have returned home after a lengthy tour, only to find that they have been shortchanged on the benefits they earned, or there is a mistake that cuts them off altogether. Well, we have made many improvements in recent years, and I think you all know that. There is still a backlog of claims at the VA.

An example of the claims difficulty that I have encountered as a senator was Staff Sergeant Ryan Hallberg, from Andover, Minnesota. I found out about this from his mom because she was standing at a funeral for a servicemember. She was a member of the Patriot Guard. She was holding a flag, and she started to sob as she told me this story. In 2006 Ryan was a gunner in a Humvee riding in a convoy from Fallujah to Baghdad when a bomb exploded under his vehicle. One of his fellow soldiers died, and two others were critically injured. The blast shattered both of Ryan's legs. He was taken to Walter Reed, where he underwent several surgeries and rehabilitation. But his right leg had suffered significant nerve damage, and it was amputated in 2008. When Ryan went to collect the payment for a prosthetic leg through the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance Program, he was denied because he was told that the paperwork from his stay at Walter Reed had been misplaced, and he didn't have written proof of his combat related injury. He didn't have a leg. So we called the Army, and I personally spoke with the secretary, and I am happy to tell you that within one week Ryan Hallberg got the benefits that he deserved. This is the least that we can do for the people who have fought and died to protect our freedom as Americans, and the freedom of hundreds of millions of people around the world.

I end with one story. The president referred to the fact of how we treated those soldiers that came home from Vietnam. They were greeted with protest signs, they were greeted with tomatoes and even worse. Well, we have learned a lot since then. We have learned that while we may have disagreements about war policy, we never take it out on the soldier on the front line. *(Applause)*

I was reminded of that about a year ago when I greeted a group of World War II veterans, one of the Honor Missions that had gone, many of them for the first and only time to see that World War II Memorial. They arrived back after a full day to the terminal in Minneapolis to be greeted by thousands of people with their signs and hugs and kisses for those veterans. When they got off that plane at midnight they were energized, and there were tears coming down their eyes as their family members were there to greet them. And at the very end I was by the luggage carousel, and there had been a polka band, and it stopped playing. It was now at about 12:30 at night. The polka band stops playing, and a veteran came up to me; I later found out he was in his mid 80s. He said to me, "Senator, can I have this dance?" And I said to him, "Well, sir, there is no music anymore. It really won't work." And he said, "No, I've got a great voice. I can sing." And he started singing "You're Just Too Good To Be True." We swirled around that luggage carousel. And I thought today that's what should be happening to our veterans every single day. They should be dancing with senators, they should have thousands of people waiting in an airport terminal for them, and that's what we need to do not only with veterans from past conflicts, but for those that are returning home now. Thank you, American Legion, for everything you have done for patriotism and for standing up for our veterans. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Our next guest speaker graduated from Harvard University in 1973. Before running for the United States Senate he spent 37 years as a comedy writer, author, and radio talk show host. He has participated in seven USO tours, visiting our troops in Germany, Bosnia, Kosovo, Uzbekistan, as well as visiting in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait four times. One of his first orders of business

after being elected as a senator from Minnesota was to sponsor the Service Dogs For Veterans Act, which directs VA to pair canine service partners with disabled veterans. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Senator Al Franken. *(Applause)*

Greetings: The Honorable Al Franken
United States Senate

Thank you all, and thank you — wasn't Amy great? The same guy wanted to dance with me at the airport and I wouldn't do it. *(Laughter*)

Welcome all of you to Minnesota, and to Minneapolis, and thank you to the Minnesota delegation for hanging in. We are so proud to have you here in our city. I never wore our nation's uniform. I'm not a veteran. But I have been privileged to entertain our troops overseas and to visit with wounded warriors in military hospitals abroad and here at home, and visit with veterans from every era at veterans' hospitals here at home. And I have seen the dedication, the bravery and the sacrifice. I have been humbled and uplifted by my experience with soldiers, Marines, airmen, Coast Guardsmen, and sailors.

I want to note that I am the only politician who has ever listed all the service branches and not put Coast Guardsmen last. And that's because my brother-in-law is in the Coast Guard. But I know this: I and every American owe them and we owe you. For decades you have been serving our nation's veterans at the grassroots level and advocating for them in Washington. Thank you for your tireless work. *(Applause)*

Thank you to National Commander Jimmie Foster and National Adjutant Dan Wheeler, and from Minnesota thank you Commander Chuck Kruger and Adjutant Randy Tesdahl. One reason I ran for the Senate was to do right by our veterans, and that's why my first piece of legislation was a veterans' bill, a bill to pair service dogs with veterans who have been physically and mentally wounded. And I'm very proud that the study that the bill mandated of the benefits of pairing service dogs with veterans with PTSD is being carried out now as we speak by the VA. *(Applause)*

And tomorrow I will have the honor of hosting VA Secretary Shinseki when he meets Minnesota veterans at our state fair. I have spoken to Secretary Shinseki on a number of veterans' issues, especially about making sure that all our veterans from the Greatest Generation through today have full access to the excellent care that the VA provides, and all the benefits that they are due. That's why when the Senate returns in the fall I'll be introducing legislation to improve veterans, and especially rural veterans, access to the VA. Not every veteran is able to live within five miles of a VA medical center, and that makes it all the more important that we find innovative solutions to ensure that rural veterans get access to the VA's excellent health care.

My wife Frannie and I often go to Walter Reed Army Hospital to visit wounded warriors, and we always leave in better spirits than when we arrive. That is, in fact, the universal experience for people making their first visit to Walter Reed or to Bethesda. You come to the hospital wondering what on earth can you do to cheer up a wounded soldier or a Marine, and you leave cheered up yourself.

I remember the first soldier I met. The USO asked me to go to Walter Reed, and I was like what am I going to do to cheer these guys up. The first guy I meet is standing — he's missing his left leg from a little above the knee down, and he's standing on a crutch and leaning against the wall. And I said, "What happened to you?" He said, "You know, I came in here for a vasectomy." *(Laughter)*

So I am just inspired every time I go. But these wounded warriors, many of them have a long way to go. Some will recover and be able to stay in the military, and want to do that. Others have the rest of their lives, to adjust to losing a limb or maybe more than one, or to losing their sight or their mobility. Some have traumatic brain injury and face an uncertain future. And there are those with emotional wounds and equally uncertain fates. The all volunteer Army has necessitated multiple deployments to Iraq and

Afghanistan, with some soldiers and Marines now on their sixth and seventh tours. And because each successive deployment brings with it a greater likelihood of mental health problems, veterans of those two operations are suffering record rates of PTSD and depression. Male veterans now face a significantly higher risk of dying from suicide than their civilian counterparts.

In 1985 Ronald Reagan spoke about the Americans who had lost their lives in battle. President Reagan said this: "Most of them were boys when they died, and they gave up two lives. The one they were living, and the one they would have lived. And when they died they gave up their chance to be husbands and fathers and grandfathers. They gave up their chance to be revered old men. They gave everything for their country, for us. All we can do is remember."

Probably the hardest part of the job that I have as a senator, and that Amy has as a senator, is going to the funerals of the fallen. And when I do I think of President Reagan's words and of all that we must do for the families of the fallen.

I also think about President Reagan's words when I think about the veterans. Men, and more and more women who have returned who have also lost two lives; the one they were living when they went into war, and the one they would have lived when they came back, because many come back with physical and psychological wounds that changed their lives.

But with our veterans we can do more than remember. We can act. We can and we must give them everything they need, every opportunity to regain the lives they would have lived so that they are able to heal, that there are opportunities, educational opportunities for them, and jobs for them. So that they are able to earn a good living and get a home, and have their chance to be husbands and wives and fathers and mothers and grandfathers and grandmothers, and revered old men and revered old women. That's our job. That's my job.

Thank you again for all you do for our veterans. I want to continue working with you to make sure that our veterans get the real gratitude in deeds as well as in words that they deserve. Have a great conference. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Our next speaker was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan and graduated from the University of Minnesota Law School and has represented Minnesota's Fifth Congressional District since 2007. He's been a strong supporter of legislation to extend benefits related to Agent Orange exposure and the elimination of the Disabled Veterans Tax. He currently serves on the Financial Services Committee and the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee. Please welcome Representative Keith Ellison. *(Applause)*

Greetings: The Honorable Keith Ellison
United States House of Representatives

Hey there Legionnaires, how are you doing? All right. I like that spirit. I love that spirit. I just want you to know how proud and honored we are to have you here in the City of Minneapolis. You honor us by your presence, and I want you to know that even though you got in planes and cars and trains to come here, this is your home for the time you have this conference and we're so honored to have you here. So thank you for being here.

Let me tell you, you know, when I got here this morning, I was walking through a group of people who were here for a ceremony, a religious observance. Many of them were born abroad and came to our great country and they were here to practice their religion as they saw fit, and they were here as new Americans, kind of enjoying the liberties that our country provides all Americans. My mind went to all of the world's people who come to become Americans, and all the ones who want to be. As I thought

about these people and I looked at the smiles on their faces and the freedoms they are enjoying, I couldn't help but think about you, and how without you those freedoms, this democracy, this great nation could not guarantee those freedoms to Americans born here and those who have come here by choice. Those folks who come here become Americans and enjoy the right to choose their leaders, to cast a ballot; the right to speak their mind and express themselves; to worship as they choose; to petition their government to redress grievances; to enjoy the full measure of what it means to be an American, all of them, each of them owes that right that they enjoy to you who have said that you will go forward and give all, maybe everything, to make sure that this great nation will always be one in which liberty and justice for all prevails. I want to thank you for that.

And I want to let you know that I know that freedom ain't free and it calls upon brave men and women dedicated to their nation to make sure that the freedoms we sometimes even take for granted are fought for and protected by people like you. I want you to know that we thank you for it and we want to let you know that every time we cast a ballot or express an opinion or write an editorial, that you are the ones who stand guard to make sure all those things can happen. Every school child in America should know it. And everybody who becomes a new citizen should know it. And they should know that freedom is not free, it's paid for by the blood and the sweat and the tears of veterans like you. So thank you so much. Thank you so much. *(Applause)*

I tell people, you know what, thank a veteran. You don't have to know them. Just say thank you. Thank you for putting it all out there so I can cast a ballot for someone who I choose. You know, in Washington we don't always agree, right? You might have noticed that. We fight, we argue, we debate our positions. And sometimes people think, it's not so good that in Congress they argue so much. But you know what, it's a good thing that we can express our opinions freely no matter what they may be, and we can do it because you put your life on the line for that. *(Applause)*

I want to say thank you to National Commander Jimmie Foster and Minnesota Commander Chuck Kruger, for allowing me to be here today. And by now you know that Minneapolis is a great location for The American Legion Convention. The First Minnesota regiment which organized in 1861 was the first volunteer infantry regiment to offer their services to the Union Army. And so we really go way back around here with this. Although our nickname is "The Land of 10,000 Lakes" we are also home to tens of thousands of veterans, including Charles Lindberg, a Marine who fought in Iwo Jima.

We are committed to trying to serve our veterans as much as they have served us, so our state has a wonderful program called Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Program that helps servicemembers connect to the VA after deployments, and insures that their needs are not ignored. We also are home to four polytrauma centers in the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. And as a member of Congress I was honored to support the Veterans Benefits Act, which finally now it's Veterans Administration spending as an entitlement and not just discretionary spending. This was long overdue, because veterans have served America in a big way, so anything we do, you're entitled to, you have earned it, and we owe it as a grateful nation. I also was proud to support the Post 9/11 GI Bill, that for the first time in decades increased the amount of benefits paid for college and makes the benefits transferrable to a child or a spouse.

The biggest challenge I think at this moment is to make sure that veterans returning after serving our nation have a good job. I'm so proud to see President Obama talk about the importance of getting our veterans to work. You have so much leadership, so much skill, so much character and so much honor that our nation desperately needs that when you come home to rebuild this nation. So you can count on me and everybody in our delegation, no matter what party, to stand in solidarity with you as you rebuild your life back here in America, as you have sacrificed everything abroad. So bless you and thank you. Welcome to Minneapolis and have a great convention. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Our next speaker is a true Minnesotan. According to his official website, his childhood dream was to be the starting goalie on the United States Olympic hockey team. Although he didn't make it that far, he was a high school all-state goalie and played Division One hockey at Yale. Serving Minnesotans for most of the past 34 years, he was the commissioner of Minnesota Departments of Energy and Economic Development. He was also a state auditor and is a former United States Senator. In 2010 he was elected the 40th governor of the State of Minnesota. Please give a warm welcome to Governor Mark Dayton. *(Applause)*

Greetings: The Honorable Mark Dayton
Governor of the State of Minnesota

Thank you. Thank you, Commander. It's my honor as Governor of Minnesota to proclaim today The American Legion National Convention Recognition Day throughout the State of Minnesota. So Commander Foster, on behalf of Minnesota, welcome. Welcome Legionnaires. We're delighted and honored to have you with us. *(Applause)*

I learned long ago never to stand between and audience and the bar, buffet or the bathroom. And all of you have been very patient for a long morning, so I'll be brief. I want you to know that I understand as you do and as Congressman Ellison just said that freedom is not free. I learned that by going twice to the beach at Normandy and standing on that shore and looking into those German bunkers and trying to imagine the incredible courage and patriotism it took to step off of those landing boats into that hellfire.

I learned that lesson, as you know, from going four times as a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee to Afghanistan and Iraq, right after the overthrow of the Taliban by our forces in Afghanistan; shortly after the toppling of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and only spending a few days there doesn't compare to the kind of kind heroism it takes to serve 12 or 18 months, but it's enough to understand the perils that they put their lives in, the severity of conditions of 115 degree temperatures, the burdens they face, the uncertainty and anxiety day after day.

As senator and governor I have had a chance to support so many Minnesota families, along with our Minnesota American Legion contingent, and others like that throughout the state, to understand that every family whose husband or wife or son or daughter or mother or father is serving in harm's ways is living also with that constant anxiety and concern.

And I learned that lesson, as you know, that freedom is not free, by attending in the last eight days, three funerals of Minnesotans who gave their lives heroically in Afghanistan including two of the Navy Seals, whose helicopter was shot down so tragically. And another Minnesota soldier up in Foster, Minnesota, the northwestern part of our state, who leaves behind a wife an eight-year-old daughter, and a seven-year-old son, and a three-year-old daughter. That is the ultimate sacrifice. That is the reminder to all of us of the sacrifice and the risks that all you bore so courageously, so heroically on behalf of the cause of freedom in this country. So I honor you. I salute you. We're honored to have you here in Minnesota. Enjoy our beautiful day and enjoy our beautiful state. Thank you. Have a good day. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: First elected mayor of Minneapolis in 2001, our next speaker took office facing a post-9/11 budget crisis and deep state and federal budget cuts. He responded by implementing innovative fiscal reforms that saved taxpayers millions by reducing $80 million of inherited debt, reining in government spending and producing six balanced budgets in four years. He is now leading efforts to revitalize north Minneapolis, attack juvenile crime, and end homelessness in 10 years and make Minneapolis a wireless city. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the mayor of the great city of Minneapolis, R. T. Rybak. *(Applause)*

Greetings: The Honorable R. T. Rybak
Mayor of the City of Minneapolis

Well, thank you. I want to give you some very, very good news. I'm the last and least of the distinguished list of politicians from Minnesota who will greet you today, and I will be brief. It is wonderful to be here. First, a shout out to my friends from Minnesota. Thank you for not only being here, but helping us getting this convention, you're awesome. And thank you for helping bring this great group here. Is the California delegation out there? All right. Thank you. I want to give a shout out to you. My grandfather, Harry Palmer, was a commander in California's Legion, and my mother at the time was the youngest president of the Auxiliary of The American Legion, in San Bruno, California. Good to see you guys. And my mom, as I grew up, told me many, many stories about what it was like to be a little girl right after Pearl Harbor in San Francisco where the stories were told that at any moment the Japanese would come over that hill, and how afraid she was, but how bravely her father said to her, "If they come over that hill, people my age are going to pick up the gun. You are safe here in America." But more important the stories that I heard year after year, night after night from my mother, from a person who was born in a place where war really mattered to her, was that the incredibly brave patriots, who protected us, are about the fact that we can go about our lives every day without worrying so much about that because this invisible shield is around us. You are not invisible to us, and we're just here to say thank you. Thank you so much for your service. *(Applause)*

Now, of course my job as the mayor of the city is to tell you after everything is done here I want you to go out there and spend some money in our city, and I'm going to tell you that. But I also want to very, very briefly pick up on the comments that President Obama made, and tell you that along with honoring the service for those who fought elsewhere, we need to continue to wage the war at home for equity and for economic stability for our veterans.

This beautiful convention center that is hosting you looks very different a couple times during the year, because we have something called Project Homeless Connect. Project Homeless Connect welcomes every homeless person in the city of Minneapolis and all of our surrounding areas into this hall, about a thousand people come. And then about two thousand people who serve veterans, serve the homeless in so many ways come here as well. And so in this hall you see this great exchange of people in need and people with services. The sad fact of the matter is an extraordinary number of those homeless people are veterans. But every single time we have that element and every piece of our City-County Homeless Task Force effort to end homelessness is about making those connections, one by one by several hundred. We have been able to move people who are veterans out of homelessness into homes, into jobs, and we will continue that work because it is critically important to not just give the lip service to honoring our veterans, but to make sure that they have a descent roof over their head.

And when the president laid out that effort, that I so agree with, which is to have boot camp at the end of service, as you are discharged, to make sure that you have the right training you need to go into the community. That is something we are already working on, and we can do more with the president's new initiative. We do need to put veterans to work, but we also need to make sure that people in my position tell the story that a person who comes out of service has unique skills that should frankly put them ahead of lots of other people. They have learned uniquely to work in a team, and many people who are not succeeding in our economy, we need people who understand what it is like to be in teamwork. That's part of the message we who care about veterans unemployment need to carry.

In the new technologically based world of fighting in the world today, they also come out with remarkable technology skills. One by one we need to make sure that these

skills that veterans develop in the service are translated into the private sector, and I and to guarantee you we are already working on that in the City of Minneapolis where we have a robust jobs program, and we will continue to do that. We will put roofs over heads. We will put people to jobs, and we need to because of the great work that you've done.

So, with all that being said, tonight when it's done, I want you to commit to me that you will go into this great City of Minneapolis, fill the great restaurants and night spots, and stores and spend a little money here in town and let's just say to you we are deeply honored to have you in town. Thank you so much for being part of Minneapolis/St. Paul, and we will welcome you back. Have a great convention and thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Our next guest served in the Marines during the Vietnam War and was elected commander of The American Legion Department of Minnesota during the 2010-2011 year. He was a charter commander of Prior Lake Post 447 and served nationally on the Internal Affairs Commission, National Security/Foreign Relations Commission, and Constitution and Bylaws Committee. Please welcome Immediate Past Department Commander Thomas J. Lannon. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Thomas J. Lannon
2010-2011 Department Commander of Minnesota

Thank you Commander Foster. Earlier this year I had the opportunity to spend five days in a van with the national commander as we toured around Minnesota. And I want you to know if you ever get the opportunity to have the commander in your post on karaoke night, you're in for a treat.

I want to thank you all for coming to Minnesota for this 93rd Annual Convention of The American Legion. We want to welcome you to The Land of 10,000 Lakes, 93,000 Legionnaires. We are proud to have you here for this convention. As most of you know, Minneapolis was the site of The American Legion Convention in 1919. Just a few blocks south of this building, and if there hadn't been a raging snow storm during that convention, Minneapolis might have been the site of the national headquarters.

I would like to quickly tell you a little bit about our state. Minnesotans are an inventive people, and thus far have given the world Scotch Tape; Wheaties; Bisquick; HMOs; the stapler; water skiing; snowmobiles; open heart surgery and the Greyhound bus. And for you older veterans out there, Minnesota was the producer of that wonderful taste treat known around the world, Spam.

Our Minnesota Legion family also has unique accomplishments. We have Legionville Safety Patrol Camp on a northern lake where training is held for over 800 Minnesota youngsters each year. We have a Brain Science Center at the Minneapolis VA Health Medical Center. And in the past few years have made stunning strides in early detection of PTSD, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's. And our Legion family has a hospital association that provides thousands of dollars to help our families each year, all you have to do is belong. Minnesota is also the home of the National Champion Eden Prairie baseball team, winners of the 2011 American Legion World Series. Our state is known for its scenic beauty, its abundant agriculture, its cutting-edge industries, and its changing seasons. If you don't like our weather, stick around for a couple hours. And those 10,000 lakes, Minnesota has over 90,000 miles of shoreline. That is more than California, Hawaii, and Florida combined.

While you're here, I hope you will enjoy the Mall of America, the largest shopping mall in the world, and to walk the famous Minneapolis skyway system which connects 52 blocks in the heart of the city. But mostly while you're here, I hope you will encounter what is known as "Minnesota Nice." The warm, friendly, helpful character of our people.

I hope you will get to know a little bit about this wonderful state as you conduct the very important business of this convention.

We are happy to have you here. Stay safe, and we'll be looking forward of seeing you again back in Minneapolis for the 100th Convention in 2018. Thank you for what you do for our veterans. God bless you all. God bless our troops. God bless the United States of America. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The next speaker is an Army combat veteran of Vietnam. He served as Minnesota's department commander in 2007 to 2008. He has served the Legion in numerous capacities on the post, department and national level. He is a native of Joplin, Missouri, a place that remains in our prayers after this year's devastating tornadoes. He worked for Northwest Airlines as a flight simulations engineer for 24 years. Ladies and gentlemen, the president of The American Legion Convention Corporation of Minnesota, James E. Copher. *(Applause)*

Greetings: James E. Copher, President
The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Minnesota

Thank you Commander Foster. And on behalf of the Convention Corporation of Minnesota, welcome to Minnesota. The problem with going last when you're giving your address, is everybody is afraid you don't get to say everything you want to say.

At this time though, I would like for you all to know that we welcome you here. And if you haven't had a chance to go, like Commander Lannon said, go out and enjoy the scenery here in Minnesota. We hope to see you back here in 2018. Commander Foster, I hope your Convention has gone well so far. I hope all the delegates, alternates and guests out here have had a chance to go out and admire our scenery.

Our parade was a fantastic one. I was keeping my fingers crossed because you never know in Minnesota, like Commander Lannon said, wait a few minutes and it will change. I was worried about rain, but we had a perfect day. I hope that every one of you out here has had a chance to get down to Peavey Plaza, the place where the first convention was held a few blocks north of here. With that, have a great convention. Enjoy yourselves. We hope to see you back here in 2018. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Before I move on to our next presentation, I would like to acknowledge the outstanding job one of our long time vendors has been doing for us. Markeys Rental and Staging Company has been assisting with decorating and audiovisual needs for 17 years now. It is my pleasure to announce that the company president and owner, Chuck Markey, has generously donated $5,000 to The American Legion Legacy Fund, and also another $5,000 to the Child Welfare Foundation. Let's give Chuck and his company a hand. *(Applause)*

Next I would like to call Terry Woodburn, the adjutant of the Department of Illinois to the podium so he can help lead the presentation of Legacy Scholarship Fund donations. Photographs will be taken backstage. While the photographs are being taken, I ask that National Vice Commander William Schrier from the Department of Washington assume the duties at the lectern. *...At this time National Vice Commander Schrier assumed the Chair.*

Special Presentation: Terry Woodburn, Illinois, Department Adjutant
Representing The American Legion Riders

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT WOODBURN: Thank you, Mr. Commander. Good afternoon fellow Legionnaires and guests. We have just finished ride number six and we probably got in the neighborhood of 8,000 miles and about $3 million. The bones get a

little sore, but it's all that camaraderie. It's about the scholarship, but it's about the camaraderie too. We started a week ago Saturday. I've been gone a long time. That first Saturday we were at Holt Road, Indiana. Holt Road Post Indiana for the gathering, where everybody gets together, and many times it's the last time or the first time you see someone that you haven't seen for a year or better. As one of our riders said, "It's like going to a huge family reunion. The only difference is, it's like going to a reunion you actually enjoy with people you like." *(Laughter)*

And it is an enjoyable time. We came up through Indiana, into Michigan through the Upper Peninsula, and I'm here to tell you, that's one heck of a bridge. Across the U.P. of Michigan up into Wisconsin, northern Minnesota and then down into Minneapolis. It was a very enjoyable ride. As I indicated last year up here, last year was the very first year on the rides that the whole ride was completely dry. And I'm here to tell you, it's maintained. Last year was the only year we stayed completely dry. When we hit about 30 miles into Michigan it got real wet. But that's part of the riding, part of the enjoyment of what we do. I want to give a big shout out to the national staff that allows this to take place. Their logistics planning is incredible, and they deserve all the accolades they can get without question. *(Applause)*

And our hosts, every time we made a stop in every state the hospitality, as always, is just wonderful. But if you are a member of this organization for very long, you come to expect that anyway. But there are a few that kind of stood out. Indiana, give yourselves a hell of a big hand. *(Applause)*

We got a very warm welcome at Fort Wayne. All the way through northern Indiana, I'm here to tell you if there had been a fire anywhere in northern Indiana it would have burned to the ground, because every overpass, and I mean every overpass up to the border, had fire trucks and people waving flags. It was incredible. What a great turn out. At this time I would like to share with you portions of the ride by watching a short video.

…*The delegation viewed a video. (Applause)*

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT WOODBURN: As you close down toward the end of 350 mile day, when you see that, that's why we do what we do. At this time I would like to introduce Past Department Commander Richard Groharing from the Department of Illinois, our delegation chairman, to start off the donations.

PAST DEPARTMENT COMMANDER GROHARING (IL): From the great state of Illinois donates $13,500 to start it off.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NY): China Post operating in exile since 1948, is very proud mostly through our divisions in southwest Asia, we have 400 members in combat and combat support in the current popular wars, and we're proud to donate $12,000 to the Legacy Fund.

DELEGATE RAY (NV): Mr. Commander, Jeanette Ray from the great state of Nevada, representing all of the members The American Legion family in Nevada to include Rudy. We proudly present on behalf of The Legion Riders and all the members, $7,000 to the Legacy Fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AZ): The great state of Arizona is going to donate to the Legacy Fund an additional $10,700 to our veterans' families. Thank you.

DELEGATE TOWERS (TX): Gary Towers, Texas. We have an additional $1,300 Post 491 from Granbury.

NEC MEMBER FEELEY (DE): Ed Feeley from the state of Delaware. An additional $4,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (FR): From the Department of France, an additional $500. And also from The American Legion Riders of France, plus a few of our other posts that have been good enough to add something to that, another total of $2,250.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WY): The small but powerful state of Wyoming. We have got the check made out for $616.73.

DELEGATE HAGGAN (FR): Doug Haggan, from the Department of France and a proud member of FODPAL, which stands for Foreign and Outlying Departments and Posts of The American Legion. Commander Jimmie, you weren't available when we authorized this money, so you're going to have to approve it at our October Meeting when you come back out of your commander business. We're proud to donate $200 from our annual breakfast that we had on Monday.

DELEGATE ALLEN (VT): Commander, Keith Allen from the Department of Vermont. I'm representing the newest chapter of the riders, Chapter 7, and we are donating $150.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AK): Commander, from your home state of Alaska, The American Legion Riders would like to donate $4,500.

NEC MEMBER LUSSIER (VA): George Lussier from Virginia. Commander, Chapter 28 of Virginia, celebrating their second year in existence, want to donate two dollars per member of our post, for a total of $750.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (PA): Commander, on behalf the great state of Pennsylvania, I would like to present a check for $11,365.

DELEGATE LANDKAMER (NE): Commander, Jerry Landkamer, Department of Nebraska, on behalf of Norfolk Nebraska Post 16 we have a hundred dollar memorial in the name of Sergeant Josh Mann who passed away while on active duty.

DELEGATE PEARSON: Mr. Commander, my name is John Henry Pearson. On behalf of a fallen comrade, David York, Sr., I would like to present $3,500 in his name to the Legacy Fund.

DELEGATE FATTIG (NE): Commander, Charles Fattig, Lincoln, Nebraska, on behalf of The American Legion Riders, from Post 3, Lincoln, Nebraska, I would like to present a check for $7,000.

DELEGATE OTT (NE): Rollie Ott, Nebraska. My home Post 340 in northwest Nebraska, $100. Our ALR Chapter, $300 at Columbus, Nebraska, and a neighbor up the road, $40, Richard Marling Meyer. Thank you.

DELEGATE FREIMUTH (NE): John Freimuth, Omaha, Nebraska, go Huskers, on behalf of Omaha Post Number 1, Legion Riders, $1,510. Go Badgers.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WI): Commander, from the Department of Wisconsin we have $17,731.89 raised through the efforts of the Wisconsin American Legion Riders.

DELEGATE BUSHAW (VT): Commander, NEC woman from the Department of Vermont, the Green Mountain State, we have from the Colchester Post 91 another $350.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (KY): Commander, from the State of Kentucky, number one in membership, absolutely, from Post 4, Florence, $500, Maurice K. Gordon Riders, $905, Maurice K. Gordon Post 6, Sons of The American Legion, $500. From The American Legion State Riders, $500. From the Riders of Post 113, Elizabethtown, $2,500, bringing a total of $4,905.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NY): Mr. Commander, on behalf of all members of the Department of New York, the Empire State, present a check for $25,000.

DELEGATE PHILLIPS (SC): Commander, Cecil Phillips, the State South Carolina, on behalf of The American Legion Riders, we would like to donate an additional $620.50 for the Legacy Fund.

DELEGATE STRICKLAND (AL): I'm Bob Strickland, commandeer of Post 15, Decatur, Alabama. I would like to donate $500 from our Riders.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ND): Commander Foster, on behalf of the 105 American Legion Riders in the great state of North Dakota, we would like to present you with a check for $12,435.70.

DELEGATE RICE (IN): Danny Rice from the Kenneth M. Dowden Wayne Post 64 in Indianapolis, where the Legacy Run started, our Riders, a thousand dollars, our SAL,

$2,000, Auxiliary, $1,000, Legion $2,178, and from the half and half at the National Membership Workshop was $222. I have a check here for $7,000. The total is $7,804.25.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IN): Mr. Commander, on behalf of the 5th District, Department of Indiana, I want to present a check for $1,350.

DELEGATE PROVOST (OR): Commander, I'm Mike Provost, Oregon Department Finance Officer and State Treasurer, American Legion Riders Oregon. On behalf of the Oregon American Legion family which includes The Oregon American Legion Foundation, Post 21 in McMinnville, Post 44 in Redmond, Post 45 in LaPine, the Oregon American Legion Riders and other individuals, I have some money here for a total of $12,540.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NJ): Mr. Commander, Department of New Jersey, and additional $500.

DELEGATE THOMAS (KS): Commander, Don Thomas from the great state of Kansas. Together with what's been turned in, and I currently have in my hand and will make a grand total of $28,471.

DELEGATE DORRELL (MO): Mr. Commander, Lynn Dorrell, immediate past department commander, and Richard Heigert, our National Executive Committeeman representing the great state of Missouri. Legacy Riders Scholarship Fund, a check in the amount of $16,949.63.

DELEGATE ATAMILO (NM): Commander, on behalf of the Department of New Mexico, myself, Robert Atamilo, T.J. Trevino, and Prospero Sanchez, we have $10,000 for you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (GA): Commander, from the Department of Georgia, we gave you $4,000 when you came through on your commander's visit, I have checks totaling $24,750, making a grand total of $30,500 from Georgia.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (SD): Commander, Sioux Falls Post 15, Department of South Dakota, has a check for $1,000.

DELEGATE GIBSON (SD): Commander Foster, Hoot Gibson, Rider from Sioux Falls, I have a check here for you for $500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): Post 221, Massillon, Ohio, $4,721.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): Mr. Commander, the Department of Ohio would like to present you with a check for $10,000.

DELEGATE LENOTTE (MA): Mr. Commander, on behalf of Post 338 Legion Riders, $3,380.

DELEGATE NEYLON (NH): Commander, John Neylon, NEC Department of New Hampshire, and incoming Commander Bob Blais representing nearly 500 riders from the small state of New Hampshire, we have checks totaling $17,687.42 with more to come from the department.

DELEGATE SEEBEN (IA): Mr. Commander, Jerry Seeben from the Department of Iowa. In addition to previous donations, I have a check for $1,667 from The American Legion family, Department of Iowa.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IA): Commander, I have an additional $500 from Past Department President Fran Kirk from Iowa.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (FL): Commander, American Legion Chapter 120 out of Holly Hill, Florida, $250 additional. I thought it was for me to leave town, but it's for the Legacy. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MN): Mr. Commander, The American Legion Riders of the Department of Minnesota did two weekend runs, one in the northern half of our state and the second one in the southern half, and we have donations for the Legacy Fund of $30,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MN):And commander, with the two thousand that I turned in in Indy, that makes $32,000 for Minnesota. And here's your dollar. I heard you made three hundred and fifty on those plates. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (CT): Commander, from the state of Connecticut, we have an addition to our thousand dollar check, a $250 check that comes from Chapter 38.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER (WA): Good afternoon. We'll have an announcement on the total amount turned in here today as soon as the next speaker finishes up. Veterans doing business with veterans makes for good financial sense. There is an understanding and a bond that already exists, and when both partners can benefit, the veterans' community can only get stronger. That's why The American Legion has embarked on an exciting relationship with USAA, our preferred provider of insurance and other financial services. With us today is the executive vice president and chief administrative officer of USAA. A Gulf War veteran and Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran, he retired from the United States Army as a major general. He served as senior adviser to the Secretary of the Army and as the Army's Chief of Public Affairs. As a symbol of our close working relationship between the Legion and USAA, National Commander Foster will be presenting a diamond membership pin to our guest, a member of Post 2 in San Antonio, at the conclusion of his remarks. Let's give a warm welcome to Kevin Bergner. *(Applause)*

Address: Major General Kevin Bergner, USA (Ret.)
Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer, USAA

Well, as we say in Texas, "Howdy." Hello everybody. It is really an honor to be here with everyone this afternoon, and I can honestly say I don't know that I've ever seen a more patriotic and selfless group of Americans than I just saw walk across this stage. What a great effort. Great job. *(Applause)*

I joined your ranks a couple years ago, thanks to National Adjutant Dan Wheeler. Dan Wheeler was part of your Leadership Conference in Washington, D. C. I was still a major general in the United States Army and was representing the United States Army at that conference. Dan looked over at me and said, "Kevin, why aren't you a Legion member yet?" I had just returned from a 14 month combat deployment in Iraq, but I quickly realized you don't say no to Dan Wheeler.

I'm very proud to be a Legionnaire, and I'm very proud to be a part of The American Legion partnership with USAA. To me, that feels like a very natural fit, because the Legion shares a great deal in common with USAA. We're both defined by a mission to serve the military community. We share the commitment to values, and we care deeply about veterans. And this afternoon that's what I would like to talk to you for a moment about, is our veterans. Every single person in this room today knows the veterans are having trouble finding a job and moving into the civilian workplace. Nearly a million veterans are looking for a job today.

Each and every one of them has his or her own story of sacrifice and challenge. But I would like to tell you one specific story about one of those people. His name is Gil Lombana. Gil was an young Army staff sergeant who planned to make a career in the military. He was a field artilleryman. He and I were both field artillerymen. And in 2005 and 2006 Gil was deployed as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was in a Humvee heading to Mosul. I actually was in Mosul as the deputy commanding general of our forces in northern Iraq. On his movement, Gil's Humvee was struck by IED, a roadside bomb. It hit the front of the vehicle and it left him with burns to his legs and shrapnel to his face. For two days Gil was blinded by his combat injuries. This Purple Heart recipient was actually wounded twice in Iraq but recovered physically and finished out his deployments. Then a family emergency led him to have to return from his military service and retire to head back to San Antonio, Texas to care for his daughter.

Along with continuing physical therapy, Gil suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and one of the biggest challenges for him became finding a job. He didn't know

how much and how challenging it would be to translate his military skills in his rehabilitation state into something that could find support from a civilian employer. Consequently, Gil was unemployed for months and found himself using a friend's couch as a home. Gil is one of many veterans facing the challenges of healing and transformation to the civilian workplace. In fact, for recent vets ages eight to twenty-four, that younger generation of veterans, the unemployment rate is about three times the national average. And in the next five years, our country will turn about another million members of our armed forces into veterans who are going to need similar support.

At USAA our goal is that at least one of every four new employees we hire will be a veteran or a spouse of a veteran. At least one in every four new employees that we hire is going to be a veteran or a spouse of a veteran. That commitment comes from the top from our CEO Joe Robles, who's a 28-year Army veteran himself. He earned the rank the hard way, rising from being a private to a major general, and having served in combat in Vietnam and Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and also having served in Korea and Germany. In addition to the hiring goal we have set, our practice is to review the applications of veterans and military spouses ahead of every other applicant at USAA. Our practice is to also reach out to make our company and our veteran hiring policy visible, and we do it through organizations like your own, through job fairs, through the military spouses' employment program where we can aggressively get the word out to veterans and their families.

Another way would we make the workplace veteran-friendly is to help veterans connect with one another. And if you ever visited USAA you would find both a social network and an electronic network that's called Vetnet, the Veterans Net. Where veterans like myself work with other veterans, and we support one another. We provide mentoring. We provide coaching and we provide that personal connection to our veterans to help them be successful in the civilian workplace. We aren't just committed. We are acting on the commitment that so many people have talked here today. We get it. And for us, we are honored to do so, because it really is the right thing to do. And we are a much better company as a result of the veterans in our workforce. And I'm confident that other employers who make a similar commitment would experience similar benefits and make an important and substantial impact for our country.

I told you earlier about Gil Lombana and his struggle to transition. After months of unemployment, an online application connected Gil with USAA. In 2008, USAA hired Gil as an insurance claims representative. And Gil would be the first to tell you that it was quite an adjustment going from being a staff sergeant and house or section chief, to the role of an insurance representative serving military families. But USAA gave Gil room to adjust and to continue receiving counseling for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and to connect with other veterans. A couple of promotions later, Gil is now an adjuster investigating fire and theft cases. He also helps USAA reach out to other wounded warriors. Gil Lombana is here as part of our USAA team, and I'd ask you to join me in thanking him for his service to our country and his personal courage in talking about his journey that can offer a lot of hope for his fellow veterans. So would you please join me in thanking Gil for his service to our country. *(Applause)*

Gil inspires all of us at USAA. How could anyone not be inspired by his courage and his perseverance and his willingness to share his story and to be a vehicle to encourage other people? Well, this group of people more than anybody in the United States of America understands what we all need to do. And we want to thank you personally for what you're doing for all of the vets coming home, and for those military servicemembers and their families who continue to serve. We're honored to be gathered here with you and partnered with you. The American Legion really is an organization that has a unique capability to impact our veterans and our military community. And one of the other things that you are allowing us to do today is to connect with our members as well.

I want to share just briefly a short story of Ed Sperry who is a retired Air Force colonel. He's from Montana Post 94, and he happens to have been a USAA member for the last 61 years. So could you roll the video, please? *...At this time the delegation viewed a video.*

GENERAL BERGNER: So to Colonel Ed Sperry, U.S. Air Force retired and to the rest of our American Legion teammates here today, I say we are so proud to be part of your team and to stand in your ranks and be part of your formation. Thank you very, very much. God bless you all. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: At this time we'll give an update on the Legacy Run. And I went on a Legacy Run all those miles. Okay, they called me a big wimp because I was in the cage most of the time. That's okay. That's what they call a vehicle or something. And at least I didn't have a run-in with Leo. Leo is a lion, a law enforcement officer. We were always good. No one drank, no one did bad things during the day. We went to one post and got there, and the commander said, "Commander, we have four bartenders on duty." And I said, "Why would you do that?" And he goes, "Well, I heard that the Riders like to have a good time." I said, "Commander, if one of those Riders has any type of alcoholic beverage they are gone from this ride." And he goes, "What am I going to do with the bartenders?" And I said, "Why don't you serve water, coffee, tea, and help them serve the meal? That would be just sufficient." But that's what it's all about.

Well, on the very last day, I timed this accordingly, and I looked at the mileage between stops, and I said well, I'm not a biker, so if I don't really like this I think I'll pick the shortest ride, or one where it would work out. So everybody knows Past National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion Big Earl Rotowski from Michigan. So first of all he goes, "Commander, what are you going to wear? You're going to freeze to death." So his lovely wife Bev took off her chaps, took off her leather jacket, and I put those on and I rode behind Big Earl as my windbreak for 49 miles. So I did ride in the American Legion Legacy Run, and I appreciate what they did. *(Applause)*

I told them during the travels and when we formed up at Wayne Post 64 in Indianapolis, and I told them, I said, "You know, all I want is a dollar more than Clarence Hill. One Rider said "Commander, that's selfish." I said, "No, it's not. If I get a dollar more than he got during his ride, that's progression." And, you know, ladies and gentlemen, I know that the economy is not the greatest. Some of you could be diverting money in another manner that might take away from you and your family. But today on this stage, the amount of money that was turned in, $298,029. *(Applause)*

But that's not the final ticket. Money was given out every day, every stop, wherever we went. All the video that you saw when Terry Woodburn was up here, and I echo what he said, it was very heartwarming to see all those individuals up on the overpasses, the bridges, honking horns, waving flags, had banners and everything everywhere we went. With the money we collected on the ride and today, a grand total, $642,666. *(Applause)* Thank you very much.

Our next speaker from the Royal Canadian Legion is committed to securing adequate pensions and benefits for veterans and their families by dealing directly with the federal government. Its Poppy Campaign ensures the remembrance of Canadians who have sacrificed their lives in wars and military missions around the world. Our next guest joined the Royal Canadian Legion in Saskatchewan following service in the Royal Canadian Navy. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Royal Canadian Legion Dominion President Patricia Varga. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Mrs. Patricia Varga, Dominion President
The Royal Canadian Legion

Thank you, distinguished guests, and members of The American Legion. I once again come to bring you greetings from your friends to the north, the Royal Canadian Legion and our members. I wish you much success for your Convention here in Minneapolis.

It was brought home to me yesterday that I needed to do a little bit of language translation. I am the dominion president. You have a national commander. I'm the same. I'm accompanied by our dominion secretary, who is our national adjutant. Same thing. So we are the same. We serve. We serve our country, and then we serve our fellow Canadians or Americans. This makes the third American Legion Convention that I've been privileged to attend, and I'm very happy to be here. As your commander said, I'm from Saskatchewan, which is out west, and our command has very close ties with the State of Montana. So when I come here it gives me the opportunity to renew old friendships and make new. I would really like to thank the State of New York for once again carrying our flag in your parade. You have no idea how that makes one feel. Thank you. *(Applause)*

One of the reasons I came this year was to talk about our veterans. We feel in Canada we do have one of the best veterans programs in the world. We just passed a new and upgraded bill just before the federal election. I think the night before. And so it improves benefits for our younger veterans. And we urge you to keep up that fight here in America, here in the States.

There is no greater calling than to serve your country in the military. Those who serve make a commitment, and we know that they are ready to honor that commitment and give up their lives if need be. But those who return have also made many sacrifices both physical and mental. The people of our countries need to address these issues in a meaningful way, and that means making a commitment in a different way. And when I say making a commitment I mean just that, a commitment to ensure that no one suffers because he or she went to serve his country. We as a people of our respective nations owe it to them, because they have made the commitment to freedom and a commitment to our way of life. We may differ in some ways, but one thing is for sure, our organizations were created to serve the needs of veterans. And now we have expanded that to serve their families, because they too need our care. We go to extraordinary lengths to make sure that we not only take care of our veterans, but we take care of their families with the dollars donated to us by the people of Canada through our Poppy Campaign.

We have three pillars in the Royal Canadian Legion. The pillars are veterans' service, remembrance, and service to our community. We hold the Poppy Campaign every year, which ends on the 11th of November, our Remembrance Day. That's the only time we ask the public to assist us and to donate. That money is totally used to help veterans and their families. The funds that are raised stay in the community where they are collected to care for their veterans, their dependents, and recently we have made changes that allow us to assist currently serving military and their families if it is required. That's our job, to ensure that the assistance is there when they need it.

Your Convention is where you will discuss these upcoming benefits for the betterment of all who serve. And, please, don't forget the families. They suffer too, and they need our assistance. I wish you well as you go about the business of The American Legion this week. There is something about serving those who have served that is inherent in all of us who have spent time in the military. It is that sense of camaraderie that makes our clubs, our service clubs, the same regardless of where we're located. I noted that this is not my first convention. However, it will be my last as dominion president, as next June in Halifax, Nova Scotia, I will turn over the leadership of our organization.

As I conclude I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the hospitality extended to us during our visits with you. It's been exceptional. I've often said of the Canadian Legion that there are no strangers, just someone who is going to put out the hand and say hi, I'm so and so. And that goes double for down here. I thank you so much, I would ask God to bless all of you as He blesses us in our camaraderie with each other. God bless those who serve, God bless Canada, and God bless America. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Sixty-one years ago war broke out on the Korean peninsula. Called by some, "The Forgotten War," the legacy of the Korean War veterans is one of freedom, as evidenced by the vibrant and robust nation that South Korea is today. The Korean Veterans Association is a patriotic honor organization that strives for veterans' friendship, welfare, promotion and rights. With us today is a retired Republic of Korea Air Force general. Please extend a warm American Legion welcome to Vice Chairman Park Chun-Taek of the Korean Veterans Association. *(Applause)*

Greetings: General Park, Chun-Taek, ROK Army (Ret.), Vice Chairman Korean Veterans Association

National Commander Jimmie Foster, American Legionnaires, distinguished guests, and ladies and gentlemen. On the occasion of the 93rd annual National Convention of The American Legion I would like to extend on behalf of the 8.5 million members of the Korean Veterans Association my sincere congratulations to each and every one of you. Dear American Legionnaires, you are the veterans who bravely fought in many kinds of wars such as the Second World War, Korean War, Vietnam War, Gulf War, and the recent war against terrorism. There must be many Korean War veterans here today who put their lives on the line, sacrificing for a cause they believed in. On behalf of all the Korean people I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the Korean War veterans. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

Building on the basis of your sacrifices the Republic of Korea has grown to become one of the world economic powers. Korea was the host of the 1988 Olympic Games and 2002 FIFA World Cup. Coinciding with this National Convention, the IAAF World Championships are now being held in Daegu, the focal point of the Pusan Perimeter during the Korean War. The 2018 Winter Olympic Games will be held in Pyeongchang, Korea, too. I deeply appreciate your sacrifice and support behind all these success stories.

The Korean government and Korean Veterans Association held various commemoration events last year on the 60th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War. In particular, we invited 1,500 U. S. Korean War veterans and families to Korea, and expressed the Korean people's appreciation and respect. The Korean Veterans Association will continue our efforts to appreciate and honor the sacrifices of the Korean War veterans through scholarship programs and Youth Camp for descendants of the veterans.

Today the Republic of Korea actively participates in international efforts to preserve peace and democracy in many parts of the world. Korea has fought with the U. S. in Iraq and Afghanistan to defend the universal value of democracy. Engineer and medical support teams of the Korean Armed Forces are also helping the people in Haiti and Lebanon and Sudan.

Dear American Legionnaires, contrary to the efforts of the Republic of Korea, North Korea sticks to its provocation policy. Last year North Korea sank a South Korean naval warship and attacked an island with artillery fire. North Korea is also continuing its nuclear and missile programs, threatening the Republic of Korea that you defended with great sacrifices. However, the people of the Republic of Korea are firmly determined and vigilant to defend the mother nation. Once again I would like to congratulate you on this

year's National Convention, and wish that God may bless you and your family. God bless the United States of America. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Years ago the Republic of China established the Veterans Affairs Commission to render care and services to nearly 580,000 veterans and their dependents living in the Taiwan area by solving their living problems, as well as to provide medical care, home care, employment opportunities and education assistance. Under the VAC's integrated plans all veterans are assured that the able-bodied will be employed; the well-educated, fully utilized; the ill, hospitalized; and that children, orphaned, widowed, elderly and disabled, are cared for. We are fortunate to have with us today a man who has dedicated his life to veterans and their families. He is a former commanding general of the Republic of China's 10th Army. Please welcome the minister for the Republic of China's Veterans Affairs Commission, General Tseng Jing-ling. *(Applause)[The minister's address was given through his interpreter.]*

Greetings: General Tseng Jing-ling, Minister
Veterans Affairs Commission, Republic of China

Good afternoon, Commander Jimmie Foster, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. First of all, my appreciation goes to National Commander Jimmie Foster for his kind introduction. This is the very first time for me to attend your National Convention ever since assumption of the ministry in the year of 2009.

Last year, the year of 2010, because of the previously engaged meetings, the minister had to assign me, his humble servant, to come to your Milwaukee Convention on his behalf, and we appreciate very much for your hospitality in the past year.

Once again we would like to show our utmost respect for all the efforts that you, The American Legion, have put in striving for the benefits, the best welfare for your American veterans. National Commander Foster is a very good friend of the Veteran Affairs in Taiwan. He, accompanied by National President Carlene Ashworth, came to visit with us last year, and we only hope that they have a very good impression of Taiwan. This year, the year 2011, happens to be also the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of China on Taiwan. During the week starting from October 8th through 14th we'll have a series of celebration activities showing the achievements that we have done in the past years. We have invited veterans from all over the world to come and join us in the celebration, and we are still looking forward to our representatives from The American Legion to join us on that occasion. *(Applause)*

Our two organizations have woven a very sound and cooperative relationship in the past 50 years. The high ranking leaders of our two organizations have exchanged visits in the past 50 years. Especially last year when National Commander Foster made his visit to Taiwan, the Republic of China, our president, President Ma Ying-jeou, took time from his very busy schedule. He met with the national commander and they exchanged views on serving veterans, and that is only one sign to show how appreciative that we are for the support that The American Legion as well as all other American veterans have rendered to the Republic of China in the past years.

Just like our American friends, the people in Taiwan, the Republic of China, are pursuing a life of peace and freedom and democracy. On the very day of May 20th in the year of 2008 President Ma Ying-jeou started his presidency in our country, and then he started his international policy as well as the policy over the Taiwan Strait, which stresses on the equal relationship between Taiwan and Mainland China, and the equal opportunities of developing our economies. And, very important, we stress the developing of our sound relationship between Republic of China in Taiwan as well as the relationship with the United States of America.

Two very important people in this great country, the United States of America, who one just came to speak to you in the morning and one will be here tomorrow, President Barack Obama, as well as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, they both support the signing of an economic cooperation framework or treatment between Taiwan and Mainland China; and also the joining of Taiwan, the Republic of China, into the world organizations like World Health Organization as well as international aviation coordination.

We appreciate very much the long term support for the security and stability of the situation in Taiwan. We were all active soldiers once. We know that war is cruel. We don't like war. None of us are fond of waging wars. However, self-defense is the very base that we can guarantee our own safety. *(Applause)*

So very humbly we would once again ask our good friends with The American Legion to pass resolutions and urge your government and your Congress to keep on selling us, in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act, the most advanced defensive weapons, especially the F-16, Models C and D.

In closing we would like to wish the best success for a very fruitful convention here in this great city of Minneapolis. And once again, thank you very much for allowing us to speak to your floor. *(Applause)*

INTERPRETER: To show our appreciation, the minister, General Tseng, would like to take the honor to present a medal on behalf of President Ma Ying-jeou, and Premier Wu Den-yih, as well as the defense minister, General Kao Hua-chu, in appreciation of his meritorious services and efforts in promoting the relationship. And I will also take the honor to read the citation.

Certificate accompanying the Award of the Order of Resplendent Banner with Cravat. Mr. Jimmie Foster, national commander of The American Legion, 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 Taiwan. In appreciation of his meritorious assistance, National Commander Jimmie Foster is presented the Medal of Order of Resplendent Banner with Cravat by the government of the Republic of China in Taiwan, in accordance with Article 11 of the Armed Forces Decorations Regulations. Signed by President Ma Ying-jeou, Premier Wu Den-yih, Defense Minister Kao Hua-chu, and presented by General Tseng Jing-ling, the Minister of Veterans Affairs. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada Association, or ANAVETS, is Canada's oldest veterans' and community service organization, with more than 18,000 members. There is one unit in the U.S. referred to as ANAVICUS. Today we are most fortunate to have with us a gentleman who has dedicated his life to Canada's veterans and their families. A recipient of the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal, he is a previous president of the Cape Breton Veterans Hospital Comfort Fund. Legionnaires please join me in welcoming Neil McKinnon, the dominion president of the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Neil G. McKinnon, Dominion President
Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada

Thank you, Jimmie. National Commander Foster, ANAVICUS President Carmere, National Adjutant Wheeler, honored guests, comrades; it is an honor for me to have been invited to address you today at your 93rd National Convention. On behalf of the executive and all members of the Army, Navy, and Air Force Veterans in Canada, it gives me great pleasure to bring you greetings and to be able to express our appreciation for the friendship that exists between our two great nations and our two associations. In peace

and war the armed forces of the United States have a long history of honorable service, and you have earned the right to be proud of the part that you played in that service.

More and more it seems that the world is intent on destroying itself. Every day it appears that another war begins. We are being confronted by fast changing events that require the involvement of good people like you and those whom you represent. It takes people like you and those of all our allies to continue to support the military, and they are called to make sacrifices to help make the world a better place for us all.

This must be our sacred pledge and our assigned mission. I thank you for allowing me to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with you today, and letting me reaffirm the Army, Navy, Air Force Veterans Association's solemn pledge to stand by our troops and our veterans. Thank you, and I wish you a very successful convention. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: With us today is a man who serves as the chief executive officer for a patriotic organization with direct lineage to America's original patriots. The Sons of the American Revolution conducts historical research, raises funds for scholarships and educational awards, and preserves sites and documents related to the Revolution. Our next speaker has been a member with the California Society since 1998. He was elected president general of the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution in July. Please welcome President General Larry J. Magerkurth.

Greetings: Larry Magerkurth, President General
National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution

Thank you, Jimmie Foster. Thank you. I'm also a member of the Post 131, Santa Ana, California. Is California still out there? Now, what really needs to be said at this point is that even though I live in California, I'm really an Okie. I'm from Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Where is Oklahoma out there? I'm from Bartlesville, Oklahoma. You may not know where that is, but it's 19 miles west of that famous city of Nowata, Oklahoma, hometown of Jimmie Foster. *(Applause)*

Our organizations have a long history of supporting patriotic education and in remembering the sacrifices of our patriotic ancestors. We steadfastly hold to the principles of freedom and liberty of which our country was founded. Sadly, we have long recognized the gap in our public educational system in teaching of patriotic history. Our country is at a crossroads. There is an alarming lack of knowledge of American history. In a recent assessment of our school system 80 percent of fourth graders, 83 percent of eighth graders, and 88 percent of high school seniors scored below the expected level. And 55 percent of the seniors didn't come up to the minimum expected level.

Now is the time for us to step up and rededicate ourselves to patriotic education, and remember the sacrifices made by our ancestors to bring freedom and liberty to the world. It is our duty and our privilege to give the gift of patriotic education to the future generations of Americans. The president gave a very glowing recognition of our last World War I veteran a while ago, Frank Buckles. Frank Buckles was also a member of the Sons of the American Revolution from West Virginia. Frank Buckles was faithful to the end. Frank Buckles, you will be long remembered by the Sons of the American Revolution.

And now, Jimmie, would you step forward? Our two organizations stand side-by-side today as we present this award to National Commander Jimmie Foster in recognition of your support of youth education, patriotism, citizenship, and mostly your assistance to war veterans and their families. Please accept this Distinguished Patriotic Leadership Award on the behalf of the Sons of the American Revolution. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The National American Legion Press Association is an association of editors, writers, and professional communicators who are all members of The American Legion, the Sons of The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary and other subsidiary organizations. Today more than 1,000 members of NALPA are involved in spreading the message of The American Legion family, keeping members up-to-date on local organizational happenings. Bringing greetings this morning is the newly elected president of NALPA, Brett Reistad. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Brett Reistad, President
National American Legion Press Association

Thank you, Commander Foster. Distinguished guests, delegates and fellow Legionnaires, good afternoon. I am a proud delegate to this convention from the great Department of Virginia. I'm honored as the newly elected president of the National American Legion Press Association to bring you greetings on behalf of our membership, and to wish you a productive and successful 93rd National Convention. Since its founding in 1923 the National American Legion Press Association, known by its acronym NALPA, has played a vital role as a sanctioned association of The American Legion. Comprised of newsletter editors, webmasters, social media administrators, public relations officers, historians, contributors and supporters who are members of The American Legion family, NALPA provides a forum to promote and facilitate communications at all levels of our organization through a network of active members working locally, many through their state press associations.

NALPA's mission is to promote the Legion's organizational goals by encouraging the exchange of ideas, promoting the development of local communications, advancing professional development, and recognizing achievement through an annual media awards competition. I cannot overemphasize the importance that post level communications plays in the success of our collective programs and activities. A well informed membership fosters participation, loyalty, and support. Moreover, it's critical to keeping our membership motivated and active at all levels. There is no question that posts, units, squadrons, and chapters that communicate information effectively to their membership also enjoy a greater membership growth and retention. We, the members of NALPA, working closely with the National Public Relations Division, remain steadfastly committed to promoting the best image of The American Legion.

I bring this message to you today because we need your support. I need your support. NALPA's message is the message of us all, to tell the story of the good works of The American Legion family, and to promote participations in our programs that do so much for our veterans and our communities. I invite you to become a member of NALPA. If you were previously a member, we would like to welcome you back. If you serve your post, county, district or department as a communicator, we invite you to join our team. Your membership support will go a long way toward ensuring that those who bring you the news of our American Legion family continue to have the resources and support necessary to do their work effectively. NALPA has a desk located in the national staff office in Room 200-H on the second floor of the convention center. I welcome you to come upstairs and join our team. Our website can be found at www.nalpa.org.

I look forward to serving NALPA and our American Legion family this next year, and I hope that I can count on your support as well. Thank you for your time, and for all you do for The American Legion. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Sixty-seven years ago, my father, Lynn Foster, was flying over Normandy, France, in one of history's most important and deadly military conflicts. As part of an Army Air Force combat engineer battalion he helped knock out Hitler's Atlantic Wall during the D-Day invasion, which opened a path to

victory in World War II. My father was among thousands of Allied forces who fought with their lives to liberate others. They came by transport planes, parachutes, gliders, Higgins boats, and jeeps. They came from farms and factories, cities and towns, all across America. They came to change the course of history. In June of this year I had the honor of going to Normandy myself. I walked among the gravestones of heroes. I met surviving veterans. And I spoke with French citizens who continue to show their gratitude. Our next guest is a life-long ambassador of that gratitude. Before I introduce him, please turn your attention to the screens to my right and left for a brief video. *...A brief video was shown to the delegation*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Ladies and gentlemen, let's all welcome Maurice Renaud, son of the wartime mayor of Ste. Mere Eglise, representing a group called Friends of American Veterans, based in Normandy. *(Applause)*

Address: Maurice Renaud, Normandy, France
Friends of American Veterans

Well, thank you Commander Foster for this kind introduction, and thank you my friends. It is a great honor and a privilege to be here today. Since June 6, 1944, my family has lived by two very important words. "Never forget." I'm here to tell you that Normandy has not forgotten. American Legion National Commander Jimmie Foster saw this in person less than three months ago. The American Legion was once again very well represented in Normandy on the 67th anniversary of the historic D-Day invasion. Over the past four years we have been honored to welcome American Legion National Commanders Conatser, Rehbein, Hill, and Foster, their wives, aides, and American Legion Auxiliary presidents to share in our annual tribute.

I was a small boy when the paratroopers came to Ste. Mere Eglise, the first city liberated in France. My parents and my two older brothers watched as many of them fought to their death in our town square. When daylight came, the wounded and dead were revealed. Fallen heroes were everywhere. They were brought up from the beaches and in from the fields to our town. They were buried in three cemeteries in and around Ste. Mere Eglise. We care for their graves and grieve with their families. More than 13,000 Americans were laid to rest in and around Ste. Mere Eglise, a town of no more than 1,500 in normal population.

In August 1944 a photograph in *Life Magazine* showed my mother placing flowers at the grave of Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., a founder of The American Legion who was first buried in our town. That photograph began a deep relationship between my family and American veterans of World War II. It is a relationship that continues to this day 67 years later.

One year after the invasion my mother and father helped arrange the very first D-Day anniversary commemoration. World War II was not yet over in the Pacific when we began honoring the American soldiers who liberated us. My mother especially dedicated her life to the fallen heroes of D-Day and the veterans who fought in Normandy. After the photograph of her appeared in *Life Magazine* hundreds of American families wrote to her. They asked her to place flowers at the graves of their loved ones. Day and night she wrote to these families one letter at a time. Every day she went to their graves and tended to them. She did this every day for the rest of her life, working eight to ten hours a day for the next 44 years. She is an important reason the annual D-Day anniversary now attracts tens of thousands of visitors, including many world leaders, to Normandy every year.

My brothers and I were raised to share in her commitment. In fact, we had no choice in the matter. She was relentless. We were never to forget. Our mother has been gone for 23 years now, but her legacy lives on, and we carry her life's mission forward. In Ste. Mere Eglise and the countryside surrounding it the D-Day anniversary remains a

monumental event. This year the event was so big it was standing room only throughout the town. Active duty soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division, led by General James L. Huggins and U. S. Special Forces soldiers, marched in honor of World War II heroes. This year at La Fiere Bridge we unveiled a new monument devoted to the combat medics of the invasion. Honor was bestowed upon these veterans, many of whom returned once again to be among us.

One such veteran this year was a longtime friend of mine and a proud member of the American Legion, Mr. Zane Schlemmer. He is in his late 80s now, but still fits into his jump jacket. All on his own, this year he flew to France from his home near Honolulu and rented a car, drove through Holland and Belgium to pay respects to his fallen comrades, and then continued his journey by himself to Normandy for the anniversary. A truly remarkable man. As a matter of fact, he received two years ago the Legion of Honor from French President Sarkozy in the presence of President Obama at the Omaha Beach Cemetery.

Included this year was a special awards ceremony in memory of my late friend Maureen Kennedy, a famous American nutritionist who was devoted to veterans of World War II. One of the Maureen Kennedy Award winners, Kaye Weninger of Locust Valley in Oyster Bay, New York, was recognized for her efforts to revive Operation Democracy. Operation Democracy was a sister city relief program between Locust Valley and Ste. Mere Eglise after World War II. Kaye is now bringing Operation Democracy back to provide relief in Iraq and Afghanistan. Like my mother, she understands that military intervention may sometimes be necessary of course, but lasting peace depends on friendship, kindness and compassion.

This year's anniversary also included a special ceremony to rededicate the Army Ranger Memorial at Pointe du Hoc, which was rebuilt to keep it from falling into the sea. Former U.S. Congressman Chet Edwards, another friend of The American Legion, fought for funding to save it. National Commander Foster and his traveling companions saw with their own eyes that Normandy will never forget the sacrifices made by Allied troops during World War II.

This was my mother's dream, that the passing of generations would not erase this memory. In 2010, last year, a documentary film about my mother's life premiered at the GI Film Festival in Washington D. C. Soon afterward a book about her life, *Mother of Normandy: The Story of Simone Renaud*, was published. The documentary screenplay and the book were written by Jeff Stoffer, editor of *The American Legion Magazine*. Jeff, could you stand up, please? *(Applause)* Proceeds benefit the American Legion Overseas Decoration Trust Fund, which pays for U.S. Flags at American military cemeteries in Europe. My father's book, *Ste. Mere Eglise*, was the first comprehensive account of the D-Day invasion. His book spent three years on the French bestseller list following its publication in 1945.

For as long as I can remember my life has been intertwined with American soldiers, veterans, and members of The American Legion. I take great pride in that. It has been good company. I have had a prosperous and happy life, a life filled with opportunities and freedoms. For that I am forever indebted to those who paid for my future with their blood. When I'm gone I'm confident that Normandy will continue to show its gratitude for generations not yet even born; thanks partly to my mother's efforts, but more importantly because of soldiers and veterans of World War II that showed us that some things are indeed worth fighting for. So remember my message to you: Normandy loves American veterans. God bless the American soldiers, and thank you, American Legion. *(Applause)*

National Commander's Report to Convention
Jimmie L. Foster, Alaska

Ladies and gentlemen over the last several months, the media and the American public have been fixated on the debt. The key issues being, where do we cut the trillions of dollars needed to balance the budget? Do we raise taxes, and how did we get into this mess in the first place? While The American Legion welcomes this important discussion, it seems to us that this debate is incomplete. America owes a debt all right, but no debt is greater than that which America owes her veterans.

George Washington was absolutely correct when he said, "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 veterans of early wars were treated and appreciated by our nation." Did you notice how he said young people instead of young men? It's almost if Washington knew that the Army of his day may have to change with the times.

It's one of the reasons why The American Legion released a groundbreaking survey about women veterans and the care that they are receiving, or in some cases not receiving, at the VA. The survey found that in most categories 25 to 35 percent of the women veterans were less than satisfied with the VA's service. This is totally unacceptable, but we believe that VA is becoming more serious about providing responsive, reliable and competent treatment to this important segment of our veterans community.

The American Legion has long believed that in a VA that serves all veterans, not just the select few who are fortunate enough to get in. This also means allowing veterans to use Medicare at the health care system that was created specifically for them. It means funding VA with enough resources so they can accept all categories of veterans, all of whom have answered our nation's call. It also means finding jobs for those who through their service to the nation have proven that they have what it takes to contribute in the workplace. Hiring veterans is not only the right thing to do; it's a smart business decision. Moreover, shouldn't veterans who have made it possible for us to live safely in our homeland, at least have a home of their own?

VA Secretary Eric Shinseki has promised to eliminate homelessness among veterans. It's a big goal, but The American Legion applauds the secretary for his endeavor, and we offer him our complete assistance and support. This is just another example of how interconnected most veterans issues are. By fully funding VA to treat PTSD and substance abuse and providing the resources needed for veterans to receive adequate job training and higher education, we can ensure that no veteran must resort to sleeping on a pavement grating or in a downtown alley.

The Federal government must lead on employment issues by remembering that veterans preference is not the goal, it's the law. We applaud some of the progress made in this area, but more work must be done. Only about 25 percent of federal employees are veterans, even though veterans are disproportionately unemployed. The American Legion sponsors veterans' job fairs around the country because we understand and appreciate the skills and training required to succeed in the military. It is up to us as a society to serve these young men and women as well as they have served us.

And we also must remember the flag that they fought under. To the families who shed tears over a flag-draped coffin containing a hero who paid the ultimate price, that flag means sacrifice. Desecrating the flag is simply wrong, and The American Legion wholeheartedly supports a flag amendment to the United States Constitution. *(Applause)* Please call upon your congressional delegation to support House Joint Resolution 13 and Senate Joint Resolutions 19 so we can give Old Glory the respect and protection that she rightly deserves.

Amazingly, some of the same people who believe it's okay to desecrate our flag in the name of free speech, don't seem to have a problem with removing our right to worship. Reports that bureaucrats are preventing chaplains and honor guards from mentioning God at veterans' funerals are outrageous. Simply put, "Houston, we do have a problem." The American Legion has filed a "Friend of Court" brief to correct the religious discrimination that has occurred at the Houston National Cemetery and we want to make sure that these abuses are not occurring elsewhere.

While our First Amendment certainly prohibits Congress from establishing a religion, too many people forget the rest of that clause, and that part prohibits Congress from prohibiting the free exercise thereof. One of the most precious freedoms that our young men are fighting for today overseas is the right to worship freely, regardless of whether they belong to an organized religion, most soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen strongly support the four words that open the Preamble to The American Legion Constitution: For God and country. Just as the Patriot Guard and American Legion Riders protect the sanctity of so many, many, many military funerals, The American Legion family will fiercely defend religious memorials and the right of veterans to practice the faith of their choice.

The military is undergoing a culture transition as it moves away from the "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy. The American Legion was pleased that the Obama administration agreed with us and successfully appealed a decision last month by a panel from the 9th Circuit Court of appeals, which would have immediately lifted the ban on open homosexuality in the ranks. While the military is already at the time process of lifting the restrictions, doing so by judicial fiat would have undermined the Commander-in-Chief, Congress and the entire military leadership. We call on the military leadership to ensure that chaplains and other service personnel not be penalized because their faith might be contrary to a political or social agenda.

Let us never lose sight of the primary purpose of the United States military: To win our nation's wars. In order to win these wars, I go again back to George Washington's wise admonition to treat and appreciate our veterans accordingly. When I hear proposals coming from some in Congress to take away or restrict Agent Orange benefits, drastically increase Tricare premiums, or mess with the military retirement system, I have to wonder if they truly understand the nature of the military service and exactly what our troops and their familiar have had to sacrifice.

When someone complains about the cost of a veterans program, please remind them of the cost of being a veteran. And if they don't want to take your word for it, tell them to Google the name of Crystal Nicely. Crystal is the wife of a Marine. Her husband is a quadruple amputee. She recently told the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, "For me, I'm not only my husband's caregiver, nonmedical attendant, appointment scheduler, cook, driver and groomer, but I'm also his loving wife faced with my own stresses and frustrations. To be clear, this is not an issue of being overwhelmed with caring for my husband, but what is upsetting is the lack of support, compassion and benefits for the individuals. It needs to be just a little bit easier." No, Crystal, let me reply. I'm afraid it needs to be a lot easier. President Obama personally assured me during a White House visit in the Oval Office a few months ago, that the new caregivers law would be promptly implemented. Crystal, you and your husband Todd, an American hero who lost both arms and legs to an IED, are my inspiration. You are the reason why I chose S.A.V.E.D., Serving America's Veterans Every Day, to be my motto during my year as national commander of The American Legion. *(Applause)*

It may be my motto, but it is The American Legion family that makes it all possible. You, the Legion family members in this audience and those in posts, units and squadrons all around the world are indeed serving America's veterans every day.

Through programs like Operation Comfort Warriors, Heroes to Hometowns, the Legacy Fund, the Family Support Network, the National Emergency Fund and countless

others, you are ensuring that America does not forget the debt that we owe our heroes. Our programs are always rewarding, but implementing them can at times be frustrating. But when those frustrations may mount or if you think you had a bad day, consider those other words that Crystal Nicely said of her husband: "It's been a long journey since that day in early 2010 and you would think that it would be easy for someone to lose hope and motivation after such a catastrophic injury, but my husband's always been a fighter since day one. In recovery, he displayed the same irresistible warrior spirit for which the Marines are so beloved for." I have seen that spirit among many of the wounded warriors who I have met, and I'm sure that many of you in this audience have as well.

We often tell ourselves that we are visiting VA and military hospitals to lift the patients' spirits, but it's usually the other way around. These young men and women usually inspire us. It's the same warrior spirit that Americans displayed in the aftermath of the deadly attack 70 years ago on December 7, 1941. We saw it again in Vietnam, Korea, and in another war that ended 20 years ago, the Gulf War in 1991. Ten years ago saw another pivotal moment in American history as we suffered the worst terrorist attack on United States soil. It was a blow to be sure, but the enemy made a fatal error by failing to get the complete knockout.

We should be grateful for the fighting spirit that exists in Corporal Nicely and the countless other men and women who have served in the past and will serve in the future. It is up to us, The American Legion, to provide support to these heroes and their many families. When the government, media or general public discuss our national debt, always remind them of the real debt, the one that we can never truly repay, but should never stop trying, the debt America owes her veterans. Thank you, and may God bless all of you. *(Standing applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: For the purpose of introducing our next guest, I now call on the vice chairman of our National Finance Commission, Mr. Carl Levi from the Department of Tennessee.

FINANCE COMMISSION VICE CHAIRMAN LEVI (TN): My fellow Legionnaires, it is indeed a distinct pleasure for me to introduce to you our next speaker. He's a retired Army Lieutenant Colonel Special Forces. He's a helicopter pilot with over 100 combat hours flying time. And the next part I can't understand. He's jumped out of so many good airplanes, why anybody would do that, I don't know, but he's done it over 700 times. He's a past 4th district commander of the Department of Tennessee, and is currently the assistant director of the Tennessee American Legion Boys States program. He's also the section counselor with The American Legion Boys Nation program. Our speaker is the director of Student Activities at the Tennessee Technological University, and his son is a former governor of the Tennessee American Legion Boys State. Ladies and gentlemen, my fellow Legionnaires, I introduce to you my fellow Legionnaire from the great state of Tennessee, Colonel Mark Ochsenbein. *(Applause)*

Address: Mark Ochsenbein, Director
Office of Student Activities, Tennessee Tech University

Carl, thank you so much for the introduction. Commander Foster, distinguished guests, my fellow Legionnaires, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to first give a great shout out to the delegation from Tennessee back there, and it's great to be in Minnesota. Mike Bredeck, that's for you buddy. My name is Mark Ochsenbein, and I'm very proud to stand before you today and call myself a veteran and a member of The American Legion.

I've been asked to address you today on the importance of leadership. General Patton once said, "Lead me, follow me, or get out of my way." So to paraphrase the great general, listen to me, tune me out, or go to the latrine now. Now, I know that there are a

lot of Marines sitting out there in the audience. And I know that word latrine is a big word. So for them, go to the head now. *(Laughter)*

You know, as veterans we have all found ourselves in the company of great leaders. Personally, in my 22 years of military service I served with some exceptional men and women who I would have followed to the bowels of hell. Many of those great leaders are with us today.

Since 1775 when the first shots of the Revolutionary War were fired at Lexington, service men and women like you and I have followed the battle call of great leaders. From Bunker Hill to Hamburger Hill we have followed those who stood to protect the liberties that many of our fellow countrymen often took for granted. From the bloody beaches of Normandy to an imaginary line in Korea, those leaders have helped us form a bond of kinship with others who wear the uniform. They have huddled with us in bunkers and Quonset huts, gunfire all around, leading us in prayer to see the dawn of a new day. Great military leaders have allowed America the opportunity to be exceptional.

I am proud to stand behind this podium today to talk about leadership, but I must say I am humbled. I'm humbled because like most of you I tend to shun the spotlight that many civilians covet. A microphone has never been my weapon of first choice. I did not wear my country's uniform so I could stand behind a podium. In my life I left that to the politicians. Yet as I prepared for today, I came to understand that I spent a lifetime training to adapt and overcome so here I am. And besides, as you all know, there isn't an officer in the military, active or retired, who doesn't like to hear himself talk. So today for a short time, humor this aging soldier. Aging is the new political term for old. So we're aging, we're not getting old. Legionnaires, as leaders of your posts and communities, I would like for you to remember and take home with you three simple points.

First, The American Legion has a dramatic impact on the lives of our veterans and their families. Second, if we are to continue our impact, we need to be strong in membership and unified in our efforts. And finally, the future of our organization, and our country for that matter, lies with developing leadership qualities in our young people.

To my first point, we must always remember that The American Legion has an important impact on our nation's veterans and their families. Our veterans are our credentials. As I began to prepare for this speech I learned that thirty of our nation's finest were killed in Afghanistan when a Chinook helicopter they were being transported on was shot down by Taliban forces. This incident struck me particularly hard. In my career, I often sat as a pilot of a Special Operations Black Hawk helicopter, the Navy Seals and that Chinook were from a unit that on many occasions transported to and from harms' way. From the time it was first reported I cannot get those brave young men out of my mind. I thought of their families; spouses who would go to bed at night grieving their loss; young boys and girls who wouldn't know their dad. All this reminded me that the veteran and their families are why The American Legion is so important.

Long after the conscious of America has moved on, The American Legion will continue to remember their sacrifice. As you know, when a servicemember goes into harm's way, they need to have the peace of mind that their family is the going to be taken care of if something should happen. And the Legion always remembers their sacrifice by providing assistance and help through its many established veterans programs. In particular, our fallen are honored by The American Legion's Legacy Scholarship that assists the children of our fallen service men and women to continues on and receive a college education. Programs like this just don't happen. It takes caring leadership, and I want to give a special thanks to the voice of the Legacy Scholarship program, country music singer, Michael Peterson, and Colonel Jill Chambers. They have put their hearts and souls into this scholarship. Michael and Jill, thank you for all you do in promoting this great scholarship. Leadership such as this is critically important to continue the lasting impact The American Legion has own our veterans.

My second point on leadership has to do with our membership. If The American Legion is to be the most important organization for veterans, we must continue to increase our membership. In 1985 I happened to be south of the border and that's further south than Fort Bragg, North Carolina. A few of us were to go and retrieve some information from an area asset. We had planned every detail, so we thought. Seven others and I headed out on an information gathering mission. You always think you have things planned, but one detail we hadn't planned for, and that was banditos, and they were not the kind from Taco Bell.

We came around a sharp curve on an old dirt road and low and behold we came upon a roadblock with four heavily armed men. I can't tell you exactly what happened but I can tell you that two to one are pretty good odds when it comes to banditos, and a lesson they quickly learned, you don't bring machetes to a gun fight. I can assure you the old adage about strength in numbers is true. And what is true about banditos is true about Washington as well. We need numbers in order to stand up to the roadblocks that are placed in front of us.

In the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, we trained to fly with absolute precision. In flight, when the lead aircraft moved, we all moved, and we moved in unison. We too in The American Legion must continue to move with precision and unity which gives us the ability to better our country in many aspects such as working to have the Constitution of the United State amended to protect our flag. Legionnaires, it is our responsibility as blue caps and leaders, to ensure our membership continues to grow. It's not a hard thing to do. Like most of you, I joined The American Legion because someone asked me.

Seventeen years ago I had a crusty old retired command sergeant major named Perry Roberts ask me if I was a member of The American Legion. I thought I had dodged him when I explained I was still on active duty. But hell, I knew better than try to dodge a command sergeant major. In front of everyone assembled, he properly informed me that I could join, as he pulled out an application. He pulled it out of his wallet, and the rest is history. Leaders act, and we as the blue cap leadership must act. Membership is key to our mission. So follow the leadership of Command Sergeant Major Roberts. Take it upon yourself to take the lead and recruit at least one new member of The American Legion in the next year.

My final point on leadership is this: The American Legion is special because we work so hard on developing leadership qualities in our young men and women. When I was on temporary duty again down south, I was on the ground at a clandestine location where we had a forward area refueling point set up for my helicopters. One evening it was getting dark and we heard a Huey out in the distance and it was heading towards our location. Well, when you're in a clandestine location and an unknown Huey starts coming your way, things get a little intense. Needless to say, one wrong move and that aircraft would have turned into a boat anchor. We let the Huey land and shut down. A passenger emerged. He looked like one of us so we let him approach. He explained that they were: A, 10 minutes into their 20 minute fuel reserve. B. Carrying precious cargo. Three piece suit types from D.C. And C: It was getting dark and they were afraid they were going to get shot down. And I looked at the guy and I said, "You think?" So I gave him his fuel and I sent him on his way. My point is the pilot knew where to refuel. As The American Legion, we must continue to refuel, and our forward area refueling point is the youth of America. When we think about the problems our nation is facing, we can always impact the next generation via our youth programs.

Recently I once again had the opportunity and privilege to participate in The American Legion Boys State and Boys Nation programs. There I met young men who gave me renewed optimism in the future of this country. We got a little small delegation of the Boys Nation program sitting over here, but there are two young men with them, and I need to talk them a little bit because they're playing hooky from college. But those

guys came to the program here to see what it's all about. They are Joseph Wells and Andy Benkendorf who are junior counselors, and I appreciate you for doing that. Thank you.

Legionnaires, you are doing a great job with our future leaders. I am so thankful that this great organization knows how to refuel and had the vision to put youth programs in place to keep America strong. So the message on leadership is just that simple. The American Legion does matter because you as leaders matter. As leaders we are responsible to ensure our veterans are taken care of. As leaders we are responsible to ensure our membership grows. And as leaders we are the ones responsible and hold the key to a better future with our youth programs. Thank you for your service to your communities and our country. Thank you so much for your unwavering support of The American Legion. God bless you. God bless The American Legion, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER MELLA: Thank you, Mr. Ochsenbein. I now call on National Adjutant Daniel S. Wheeler of the Department of Virginia to issue the Call for Convention.

Call for Convention
Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia, National Adjutant

Thank you Mr. Commander. Call for the 93rd Annual National Convention of The American Legion.

By the authority of the National Executive Committee, the 93rd Annual National Convention of The American legion is hereby called to meet in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30 through September 1, 2011.

The Convention business sessions will be held in the Minneapolis Convention Center, Hall B, first level.

Purpose

The Annual National Convention is a legislative body of The American Legion. The Convention is called for the purpose of setting the programs of The American Legion for the ensuing year, amending the National Constitution and Bylaws, and for the transaction of such other business as may be brought before it.

On Thursday, September 1 at 12:00 o'clock noon of the final session or at the conclusion of all of the other business of the National Convention, whichever first occurs, officers for the ensuing year will be elected, these being the National Commander and five National Vice Commanders in that sequence.

Representation

Representation in the Convention shall be by department, and in accordance with the provisions of the National Constitution, Section 3, Article V.

"... Each department shall be entitled to five delegates and one additional delegate for each 1,000 members, or major fraction thereof, whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer 30 days prior to the meeting of said Convention, August 1st, 2011, and WHOSE registration fees as fixed by the National Executive Committee for its total authorized delegate strength have been paid and to one alternate for each delegate."

In addition to the above, the members of the National Executive Committee are delegates to the National Convention with vote, which shall be exercised with their respective departments, except that the vote of the National Commander shall be exercised only in his capacity as Chairman of the National Convention. Section 3, Article VII. "... Each duly registered delegate shall be entitled to one vote." Section 4, Article V.

Delegates to the National Convention shall be accredited in writing to the National Adjutant in the number and manner prescribed by Article V of the National Constitution.

The rights of the departments to make and accredit substitutes for absentee delegates shall be recognized by the National Adjutant, provided that such substitutions shall be officially certified by the Delegation Chairman and the Delegation Secretary at the time of the certification required by the National Constitution, or at any time prior to adjournment of the first session of the National Convention.

Alternates

Alternates shall have the power to vote only in the absence of the regular delegates. The selection of alternates to represent absent delegates is a matter for decision within the respective delegations. The vote of any registered delegates absent and not represented by an alternate shall be cast by the majority of the registered delegates present from his or her department.

National Executive Committee

A meeting of the new National Executive Committee will be held at the call of the National Commander within 24 hours after the adjournment of the National Convention as provided by the National Bylaws.

Department Officials

Department officials, unless elected as delegates or alternates to the National Convention, have no privileges in the Convention except as guests of their respective delegations.

Convention Committees

First I'll read the committee and next the number of members per department. Americanism, one delegate. Children and Youth, one delegate. Constitutional Amendments, one delegate. Credentials and Internal Affairs, Credentials and other Internal Matters, one delegate. Membership, one delegate. Economic. Employment and Veterans Preference, one delegate. Other Economic Matters, one delegate. Finance, one delegate. Foreign Relations, one delegate. Legislative and Rules, one delegate. Security, Aerospace, one delegate. Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness, one delegate. Law and Order, one delegate. Merchant Marine, one delegate. Military, one delegate. Naval, one delegate. Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, Claims and ratings, one delegate. Hospital and Medical Services, one delegate.

Signed Jimmie L. Foster, National Commander. Attest, Daniel S. Wheeler, National Adjutant. Mr. Commander that completes the Call to the 93rd National Convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Thank you very much, Mr. Adjutant. I now declare the 93rd Annual National Convention of The American Legion to be regularly convened. The chair recognizes Larry J. Besson of Illinois, chairman the National Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters
(Section I of Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs)
Larry J. Besson, Illinois, Chairman

To the 93rd Annual National Convention of The American Legion, Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31, September 1, 2011.

The section on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs met at 9:00 a.m., August 28, 2011, in the Minneapolis Convention Center, Room102F, Level One. Larry J. Besson of Illinois was elected Chairman, and George West of New Hampshire was elected Secretary.

It was regularly moved, seconded and carried to accept the Delegate Strength Report as reported by the National Adjutant certifying membership 30 days prior to National Convention. It was regularly moved, seconded and carried that the report be based upon the provisions of Section 3, Article V, of the National Constitution: Five delegates for each Department, plus one additional delegate for each 1,000 members or major fraction thereof, whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer thirty (30) days prior to the opening of the Convention (August 1, 2011); and one alternate for each delegate. In addition, in accordance with Section 3, Article VII, members of the National Executive Committee which committee includes the National Commander, who exercises his vote only in his capacity as Chairman of the National Convention, and five (5) National Vice Commanders are delegates to the National Convention. For a total of 2,760 delegates to the National Convention.

All living past National Commanders are members of the National Executive Committee without vote and life delegates to the National Convention with vote, which is exercised in their respective Departments. (Voting strength figures attached.)

Motion was adopted by majority vote that the Committee Chairman and Secretary be authorized to sign the Committee report on behalf of the Committee.

It was also regularly moved, seconded and carried that the Committee Chairman and Secretary be authorized to make technical corrections to the resolutions reported out of this Committee to ensure proper wording and form without changing the substance or meaning of the resolution(s).

In accordance with the membership report certified to the Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs by the National Adjutant on August 1, 2011, and in accordance with Article V of the National Constitution, the voting strength of the 55 Departments is 2,760 allocated as follows:

Alabama	31	Montana	19
Alaska	13	Nebraska	48
Arizona	54	Nevada	17
Arkansas	26	New Hampshire	27
California	127	New Jersey	67
Colorado	32	New Mexico	20
Connecticut	31	New York	152
Delaware	18	North Carolina	57
District of Columbia	8	North Dakota	25
Florida	142	Ohio	130
France	9	Oklahoma	32
Georgia	58	Oregon	30
Hawaii	9	Pennsylvania	207
Idaho	18	Philippines	7
Illinois	115	Puerto Rico	13
Indiana	109	Rhode Island	14
Iowa	67	South Carolina	34
Kansas	46	South Dakota	29
Kentucky	37	Tennessee	38
Louisiana	37	Texas	95
Maine	31	Utah	16
Maryland	73	Vermont	21
Massachusetts	57	Virginia	63
Mexico	7	Washington	43
Michigan	94	West Virginia	30
Minnesota	102	Wisconsin	75
Mississippi	25	Wyoming	14
Missouri	60		

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BESSON: Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of Illinois, I move for the adoption of this report. *...Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Motion has been made and it's been seconded. Is there any discussion? The question has been called for. All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed. The report of Credentials and Internal Affairs Section I is adopted. Thank you, Larry. The chair recognizes Daniel Dellinger of Virginia, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules
Daniel Dellinger, Virginia, Chairman

The National Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules met on Sunday, August 28, 2011 in the Hilton Minneapolis in Minneapolis, Minnesota. There were 40 delegates to the Committee present and 29 guests in attendance.

Following the preliminary activities to officially organize the Committee, the Permanent Chairman and Secretary were duly elected. I, Daniel Dellinger, a delegate from the Department of Virginia, was elected Permanent Chairman. Russell H. Hanseter, a delegate from the Department of Wisconsin, was elected Permanent Secretary.

The Committee proceeded to the business agenda by considering the Rules of the Convention. A motion was unanimously approved by the Committee to adopt the Standing Rules of the Convention as they appear in the Uniform Code of Procedures for Organizing National Conventions of The American Legion.

A unanimously approved motion allowed the Permanent Chairman and Permanent Secretary to make technical corrections to the Committee Report, as necessary and appropriate.

The final unanimously approved motion authorized the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules.

The Legislation and Rules Committee did not receive any resolutions for consideration or action.

The Committee heard remarks from Tim Tetz, Legislative Director, The American Legion concerning the critical issues currently at the forefront of the legislative agenda of The American Legion. Director Tetz summarized point papers on budgets for the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs and Labor as they related to security and veterans issues. He further covered HR 2369, the bill to amend The American Legion's charter in accordance with Resolution 1 of the National Convention 2010 as well as the topic of Medicare Subvention. The final topic with the new Congressional "Supercommittee" to address budget cuts in accordance with the compromise reached by Congress to deal with the Debt Ceiling in the summer of 2011. Director Tetz outlined the scope of the Supercommittee's potential threats to funding for military and veterans' programs, and the legislative strategy being implemented to ensure that vital spending in those areas are protected.

Legislative Point Papers related to these topics were distributed to delegates and guests. Assistant Director for Grassroots Jeff Steele from the National Legislative staff presented information on grassroots advocacy focusing on utilizing online and electronic tools to maximize effectiveness.

The American Legion anticipates legislative activity in the remainder of the current session to be heavily focused on cost cutting measures related to the Supercommittee and the residual fallout of the Debt Ceiling debates. Paramount in the efforts of The American Legion will be to ensure overzealous budgetary cuts cannot negatively impact the national security in any way, and to ensure the these same cuts do not erode earned

veterans' benefits or compromise the disability or health care systems in place to provide for America's veterans.

On September 21, Legionnaires from across the country will accompany the newly-elected National Commander to Capitol Hill. The purpose of this visit will be to discuss the legislative mandates adopted by the delegates at this National Convention. This hearing will be held on a Wednesday; therefore, members of The American Legion family attending this event should have an opportunity for face-to-face meetings with their elected officials.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DELLINGER: National Commander Foster, as a duly authorized delegate to this Convention from the Department of Virginia, I move the adoption of this report and the adoption of the Standing Rules of the Convention as they appear in the Uniform Code of Procedures for Organizing National Conventions of The American Legion. ...*Second*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: You heard the motion. I heard a second. Is there any discussion? The question has been called for. All in favor, the usual sign. Opposed. Carried. Thank you, Dan. The report of Legislation and Rules is adopted.

The chair recognizes Ken Danilson of Iowa, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Finance for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Finance
Kenneth D. Danilson, Iowa, Chairman

39 members met at the Minneapolis Convention Center Room 103C at 9 a.m. on Sunday, August 28, 2011 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Shawn Long, CPA (Indiana), National Finance Director, opened the meeting as staff liaison and informed the committee that nominations were in order for Chairman and Secretary. Kenneth D Danilson (Iowa) was elected chairman, and Carl E. Levi (Tennessee) was elected secretary, by unanimous vote.

The Chairman introduced the National Treasurer, George A. Buskirk, Jr. (Indiana), who updated the committee on the economy. A summary of his report stated:

S&P placed the responsibility for its decision to assign the AA+ rating on United States Government securities directly on the political process in Washington D.C. In the opinion of the rating agency, even though lawmakers reached a decision on August 2nd to raise the government's debt ceiling and avoid a potentially disastrous default on U.S. debt, the deficit-reduction that accompanied the legislation will not adequately improve the countries fiscal health in the next few years. The downgrade of the federal government's long-term credit rating one level, from the top AAA to AA+, serves as a warning to buyers of these bonds that the chance that they won't get their money back is greater, however slightly. In theory, downgrades should lead to higher borrowing costs for the government, since investors demand a higher interest rate to induce them to purchase these bonds.

While the economic data is quite gloomy, there is evidence that we are still in the midst of a very slow recovery that will take longer than many investors are happy to endure. The S&P downgrade of government bonds is just another hurtle we must overcome to get the country back on track.

While U.S. Treasuries lost their AAA rating this month, the world responded to the downgrade by purchasing more government securities despite the action by S&P. This caused U.S. government bonds to rise instead of going down in value. Which is good for the Legion which has 75% of its investments in U.S. Government bonds. It appears that investors world-wide have absorbed the downgrade without much turmoil, and the increase in value represents a flight to safety and quality by conservative investors leaving the stock market.

Treasurer Buskirk then recommended that the national dues be set at $13.50. A motion from Silas Noel (Kentucky) was made that the 2012 - 2013 per capita dues remain at $13.50. Dale Heiligenthal (New Mexico) seconded the motion, and it was adopted by unanimous vote.

The Chairman then recognized Dennis Henkemeyer (Minnesota), chairman of The American Legion Magazine Commission for a report on the Magazine. Mr. Henkemeyer reported the following:

The American Legion Magazine Division continues to evolve with the times. The printed magazine itself has settled into an advertising revenue expectation of approximately $8.5 million per year, while advertising sales in the Legion's electronic media have been re-projected to hit $225,515, up from a revenue budget of $187,000.

As of the September issue of the magazine, the division had printed 40 fewer pages than were budgeted, which reduces cost of printing and distribution enough to ensure a budget surplus will be returned at the end of the year.

Paper, printing and postage costs have been stable in 2011 with no expectation of a substantial increase in the coming months.

The Magazine Division provides a variety of services in support of programs for other divisions. In many cases, that support does not generate direct bottom-line benefit for the Magazine Division but improves the overall image of the organization and aims to increase use of electronic media.

In 2011, those projects have included the construction of web module to survey visitors about VA Regional Office performance, new e-newsletters and landing pages for the Youth Alumni Association and for Flag Alerts, creation of the new "Why You Should Belong" brochure and the new Legion Annual Report. The Magazine Division also provides technical and customer service support for users of The American Legion Baseball team registration platform and produces online materials for all other division.

Chairman Danilson reported that the 2010 consolidated financial statements were audited by Crowe Horwath who issued an unqualified opinion.

National Finance Director Shawn Long, CPA presented to each delegate and discussed a nine page seven-year financial review and forecast. He informed the committee that 2010 total assets increased $574 thousand to $136 million. Membership and DMS revenue decreased 10% during 2010 but remained 51% of our total revenue. Total revenue for 2010 increased approximately $4.8 million and total expenses increased approximately $4.6 million.

Gaither Keener (North Carolina) moved to empower the Chairman and Secretary to write and/or amend the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Finance. Kevin Bartlett (Michigan) seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous vote.

As there was no further business, the meeting recessed at 9:30 a.m.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DANILSON: Mr. Commander, as a duly elected delegate from the Tall Corn State of Iowa, I move this report be adopted. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: You've heard the motion. I heard a second. Is there any discussion? Question is called for. All in favor indicate by the usual sign. All opposed. Carried. Thank you Ken. The report of Finance is adopted.

The American Legion Magazine Prize Drawing
Jimmie L. Foster, Alaska, National Commander

The American Legion's new website and electronic media continue to evolve to better meet the needs of our members. The newest developments in our online presence have been on display the last few days in the convention exhibit hall. Visitors have been able to take a close look at the website, pick up brochures and enter their names in a drawing for a new iPad. We'll be giving away two. Those who took a few minutes to visit

the Magazine Division's booth in the exhibit hall this week were treated to a firsthand look at The American legion's evolving online presence. We appreciate your interest and involvement, and invite you to get involved with the Legion online.

Right now it's time to draw the names of the iPad winners. So, if you hear your name drawn out of this bin by myself, make sure you holler up to make sure you're here, and if you know the person, let them know so that they can come tomorrow and contact Larry Anthony from our Purchasing Division, and tomorrow he will have an iPad if you're not fortunate enough to be in attendance today. I can't take any bribes. I'm just going to reach out there and pull them out, all right?

The winner is, it's an Okie. All right. He's from Midwest City, Oklahoma. The winner of the first iPad is Charles Irwin. Are you in the hall? Well, come back up here pretty soon and get it. Next one is somebody from New York. There you go. He's from Cheektowaga. Joe Porempski, it looks like. Is he here? He'll have to come back and see Larry tomorrow. Let's give those two winners a hand. *(Applause)*

If Charles Irwin is here, you come up here and we'll present it to you and you'll get a nice photo, along with the iPad. While he's making his way up here, National Emergency Fund donations will be collected after the Membership Awards tomorrow. We will also collect for the Child Welfare Foundation after the Children and Youth report tomorrow.

...Delegate Irwin is presented the iPad (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: I told Charles if he's unsure how to work that, go next door and find someone's six year old. They'll give you a quick class.

I now call on the national adjutant for any announcements.

Announcements

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: No announcements, sir.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Right on. He said no announcements. Legionnaires, please join me in a salute to the flag of the United States of America.

...The delegation stood and saluted the Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: One, two. The time is now 3:25 p.m. by my watch. The Convention stands in recess until 8:30 a.m. tomorrow. Thank you.

... At 3:25 p.m., the Convention was recessed to reconvene the following day, August 31, 2011, at 8:30 a.m.

PROCEEDINGS
SECOND DAY

Wednesday, August 31, 2011

...At 8:00 a.m., the delegates listened to the prelude by Mr. Peter Ole at the organ.

...At 8:30 a.m., the delegates assembled for the second day of the 93rd Annual National Convention and the following proceedings were conducted.

Call to Order
Jimmie L. Foster, Alaska, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The Convention will come to order. Please take your seats. Ladies and gentlemen, as we begin our program please join me in a round of applause for Peter Ole, our Convention organist for 34 years. *(Applause)*

Sergeant-at-Arms, the delegates are standing. Please render the proper respect to our flag.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS KING: Hand salute! Two!

...The delegation saluted to the Colors,

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: For the invocation I now call on National Chaplain Daniel J. Seehafer of Wisconsin. Ladies and gentlemen, please uncover.

Invocation
Rev. Daniel J. Seehafer, National Chaplain

Family, we pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for being with us and for giving us such an inspirational day yesterday as Commander Foster called our Convention to order. Having Rudy, yes, Rudy, move us with his words, his life experiences, even to join our ranks, receiving his brand new Legion cap that the commander placed upon his head. To have our Commander-in-Chief in the house. To see in person finally the reason you didn't answer my prayer as the Giants defeated my beloved Packers that year.

But seriously, Lord, what a true giant in Colonel Greg Gadson, and then to continue to see throughout the whole day the reality of our Four Pillars, the reality of for God and country. Yes, the reality of serving America's veterans every day. So we do humbly ask that we would have another day like yesterday. To have time to grow and learn, time to thank and praise those who serve and sacrifice. And a time like right now to just say thank you, Lord. Thank you for once again being with us and empowering us to be that shining example of service. We pray this in Your almighty and lifesaving name, and so it shall be. Amen.

Pledge of Allegiance

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Thank you, Chaplain Seehafer. Ladies and gentlemen, please remain uncovered and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. *...The Delegation recited the Pledge of Allegiance.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The Convention is now in session.

The man who has served as our national chaplain this year is truly dedicated to the principle of God and country. He is a member of Post 157 in Horicon, Wisconsin. A past department chaplain for Wisconsin, Reverend Dan also served as a chaplain in the United States Navy, and is currently the administrative pastor for St. Stephen's Lutheran Church and School in Horicon, Wisconsin. It is an honor for me to present a Certificate of

Appreciation marking his year of service as your national chaplain to Daniel J. Seehafer. Let's give him a big round of applause. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The citation reads, "Certificate of Appreciation, presented to Reverend Daniel J. Seehafer, National Chaplain of The American Legion, 2010-2011. Given in recognition of faithful and honorable service to The American Legion."

Certificate of Appreciation
Rev. Daniel J. Seehafer, Wisconsin, National Chaplain

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DANIEL J. SEEHAFER: The commander said a small response. So, thank you. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: I would now like to call our five national vice commanders to join me on the stage for our next presentation, which will be given by Bron Mogenis, trustee for the Chapel of Four Chaplains Foundation, and the department commander of the District of Columbia, Carlton D. Durham.

ANNOUNCER: The Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion from the Chapel of Four Chaplains is granted for extraordinary contributions to the well-being of others at the national or world level, to world peace or to interfaith or inter-ethnic understanding. The medallions are being presented by Bron Mogenis, Trustee, Chapel of the Four Chaplains, and D.C. Department Commander Carlton D. Durham, and awarded to National Commander Jimmie L. Foster, National Vice Commander Russell J. Henry, National Vice Commander John M. Mella, National Vice Commander Carlos Orria-Medina, National Vice Commander Eugene Pytka, and National Vice Commander William F. Schrier.

Presentation: Chapel of Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion
Bron R. Mogenis, Trustee, Chapel of Four Chaplains Foundation
Carlton D. Durham, D.C. Department Commander

BRON MOGENIS (DC): Good morning. My name is Bron Mogenis, and I'm the past department commander of the District of Columbia, and I had the distinct pleasure, singular honor, to do this several times. And each time with a great amount of pleasure, because you're doing this and you're honoring people that have proven their generosity, devotion to God and country, and love for their fellow man. At the last function that we had in Philadelphia at the Chapel of Four Chaplains Foundation they had the only survivor of the *Dorchester* there, an elderly gentleman who made a presentation, and he vividly described what it felt like to be in the middle of confusion, frigid waters pouring in, no life jackets, everybody is confused, a torpedo in the boiler and the ship is going down, and the four chaplains trying to help.

I would like to read a little bit about the Chapel of Four Chaplains. I would like to read a little bit about the people that have been selected to receive this award which has been approved by the Board of the Chapel of Four Chaplains Foundation in Philadelphia.

The Legion of Honor Award for the Chapel of Four Chaplains program publicly recognizes members of our society whose lives model the giving spirit and unconditional service to the community, nation, and humanity without regard to race, religion, or creed, as so dramatically exemplified by the four Army chaplains of different religious denominations who on February 3, 1943, on board the sinking USAT Dorchester, gave away their only life jackets, their only means of survival so that the other servicemembers can live.

That was truly a heroic act. The *Dorchester* was a transport ship, and had a capacity of 902 servicemen on board when a German submarine in Torpedo Alley, off the coast of Greenland, torpedoed the ship. Everyone thought the war was over, everyone thought, "We're going home." Only 132 servicemen from the 902 abroad survived. The frigid waters, the lack of life jackets, needless to say, created a disaster.

Distinguished Service Cross Medals were awarded on December 19, 1944 to the next of kin at Fort Myers, Virginia. A special Medal of Heroism was finally authorized by Congress and signed into law on January 18, 1961. In February of 1951 the Chapel of Four Chaplains, an interfaith memorial chapel, was dedicated in Philadelphia. The ceremony was attended by former President Harry S. Truman.

Today, as it has for many years, the chapel serves the memories of these brave men and carries their message of interfaith cooperation and selfless service to every part of the country. Thus, to continue to recognize and encourage acts of brotherhood and sacrifice among Americans of every age, station in life, the Chapel established the Legion of Honor Award, which is the award we're giving today, to individuals who have demonstrated the selfless and transformative achievement that is above and beyond that of the professional organization position the individual holds.

Over the years, this award, not given lightly, has been presented to President Harry S. Truman, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan and George Herbert Walker Bush. A number of other U.S. legislators and politicians also received that award, and a whole series of luminaries, such as Bob Hope, John Glenn, James Mitchener, C. Everett Koop, Mickey Rooney, and the last four national commanders and their five vice commanders.

Today it is my honor to present the Chapel of Four Chaplains Bronze Medallion Award to current National Commander Jimmie L. Foster and his five national vice commanders, namely; Midwest, Russell J. Henry; Central, John M. Mella; Southeast, Carlos Orria-Medina; Northeast, Eugene Pytka; and Northwest William Schrier. The Legionnaires named above as a result of their faithful and patriotic service in the Armed Forces of the United States, and subsequently in The American Legion, holding numerous leadership positions at the Legion post, the state, the national levels, to serve U.S. veterans. Thus, they have indeed demonstrated a lifelong selfless and transformative achievement that is above and beyond the required by any organizational position or individual they helped. It is my pleasure to present the awards now. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: At this time we will present the Plaque of Appreciation to Wayne Jensen, president of the 2010 National American Legion Convention Corporation of Wisconsin, for hosting the successful 2010 National Convention. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Plaque of Appreciation to the City of Milwaukee, Wisconsin Host City of the 2010 National Convention

MR. JENSEN: Thank you, Commander Foster. Fellow Legionnaires, top of the morning to you. On behalf of the City of Milwaukee and the Department of Wisconsin American Legion family, and over 125 volunteers, I accept this plaque in deepest appreciation for the work that was done for the 2010 National Convention. Keeping in mind the motto, and, incidentally, I'm an old sailor, and I didn't mind stealing this from the Army, but "Mission first, people always," is what we functioned under for the entire National Convention. But I must remind you that no convention can be any kind of a success without the proper attitude of the Legionnaires that are coming to the respective convention. You folks, you Legionnaires, made our convention a success, and for that I'm deeply appreciative. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: As an organization anchored in the belief that we must maintain law and order, The American Legion annually selects an individual as its Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. Our 2011 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year is an Eagle Scout who joined the Raleigh, North Carolina Police Department in 2004. In 2009 he helped prevent a major industrial catastrophe when suspected crystal meth dealers allowed large quantities of ammonia to escape from an external tank owned by a local company. His efforts to develop cost-effective methods for the industrial tank owners to stop future leakages not only increased the physical safety of innocent bystanders, but also prevented an interruption of commerce at nearby Raleigh Durham Airport, and the displacement of thousands of citizens. He is a member of a number of charitable organizations, and currently resides in Raleigh with his wife, Jenny. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm round of applause to Raleigh Police Officer Scott P. Womack. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "This is to certify that The American Legion has bestowed the title of The National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year to Scott Preston Womack, for outstanding service over and above normal duties through community service and professional achievement, thereby exemplifying the meaning of the phrase: America's Finest. You've reflected great credit upon yourself, the Raleigh Police Department and law enforcement officers everywhere. Presented by The American Legion at the 2011 American Legion National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota."

Presentation: 2011 National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year
Officer Scott P. Womack, Raleigh Police Department
Raleigh, North Carolina

Good morning everyone. First let me start by saying thanks to Larry Rozier and Swift Creek Post 530 for making all of this possible; the Department of North Carolina Commander Ben Lee; National Executive Committeeman Jerry Hedrick, and members of the North Carolina delegation. Also all my co-workers at the City of Raleigh, my wonderful family, and most importantly everyone who has sacrificed and continues to sacrifice at home and abroad to preserve our freedom.

What is true patriotism? True patriotism is not forsaking your duty to your country, regardless of the circumstances you may face. This is clearly displayed on battlefields across the world, as many of you all have so valiantly experienced. But it is also displayed domestically through the actions of our public safety professionals. In my position I'm often asked what do police officers do? Many people say help people. Some say put people in jail. And probably the most popular answer would be pull people over and give people tickets. I like to refer to that as recommitments to excellence. *(Applause)*

My profession does go much deeper. Oftentimes it is apprehending that dangerous criminal that poses a safety threat to us all. It can be managing natural disasters such as Hurricane Irene that just recently devastated my home state and many states up and down the East Coast. Or it could be as simple as reuniting a lost child with a parent. Quite simply, we preserve the peace you sacrifice for all citizens to have. And we bear this stewardship proudly, because ultimately we're protecting the families of veterans while they are protecting us abroad.

This year has been a tough year for law enforcement. There have been 127 officers killed in the line of duty so far this year. That's up 22 percent from last year. There are some that wrote that they believe criminals are specifically targeting law enforcement officers for assaults and otherwise. However, I don't think society is to that point. I think we're better than that.

As a government agency we do face budget cuts like any other government agency, which is causing us to have to do more with less. However, we're embracing these

challenges by finding creative ways to preserve tranquility. We're using these challenges as inspiration, embracing them as learning opportunities, as well as doing our best to inspire a new generation of young minds to achieve.

My profession continually renews its commitment to apprehend threats to liberty following the example set before us by our military veterans. We do what we do as a calling for our citizens, for our freedom, and for the eternal betterment of our nation. Thank you, and may God bless America. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The images that we have of firefighters ten years ago running into the Twin Towers as others were running out on 9/11 simply reminded us of what we already knew. It is a dangerous profession full of heroes. Just as members of The American Legion answered our nation's call during time of war, America's firefighters answer their community's call during time of emergency. Our 2011 American Legion Firefighter of the Year belongs to Pike County Georgia Emergency Services. As a volunteer captain with the department, his actions have saved numerous lives. He was awarded citations for saving four lives in 2009 and 2010 alone. Since he is a station officer, he is often part of an interior team charged with finding and attacking the seat of a fire. He uses all of his training, ability and experience as he gives consistent guidance, while calmly leading personnel in dangerous and quickly evolving environments. Please extend a warm welcome to the Firefighter of the Year, Captain Brian S. Michel. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "This is to certify that The American Legion has bestowed the title of The National Firefighter of the Year to Brian S. Michel, for selfless service over and above normal duties through community service and professional achievement, thereby exemplifying the meaning of the phrase: America's Bravest. You reflect great credit upon yourself, Pike County Emergency Services, and firefighters and emergency medical technicians everywhere. Presented by The American Legion at the 2011 American Legion National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota."

Presentation: 2011 Firefighter of the Year
Captain Brian S. Michel, Pike County Emergency Services
Zebulon, Georgia

Good morning. It's an honor to be here, it's an honor to receive this award. First off, I want to thank God. Without Him none of us would be here and I wouldn't be able to receive this award. I would like to thank The American Legion for giving me this opportunity, but I didn't do it alone. Firefighters never work alone, we always work in teams. So I also want to thank each and every firefighter that I have worked with in Pike County and in Griffin in the State of Georgia, and also every firefighter that has fought fires in the United States. Thank you very much, and God bless America. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: If you attended the Public Relations luncheon at this year's Washington Conference, you know our next guest. In fact, you will probably never forget her. And that should be the lesson that we take from seeing her. Never forget. She is a living witness to history's most unspeakable horrors. When the German troops invaded her town, her family was wrenched from their home and put in a squalid ghetto. Her father was taken to his death, but this young girl miraculously survived transfer to additional concentration camps and an ultimate death march. Fortunately, not only did Nesse survive, but so did her mother. By 1954, our guest had married a fellow Holocaust survivor named Jack. They settled in the United States, and we are certainly glad that they did. She has not only inspired participants in our Boys and Girls Nations programs with her heartfelt and poignant addresses, but she is also deeply

involved with the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington. In this age when extremely ignorant people have for very suspicious reasons doubted or attempted to diminish the horrors of the Holocaust, I say meet Nesse Godin, listen to her, and don't you dare forget. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my great honor and privilege to introduce to you Nesse Godin. *(Applause)*

Address: Nesse Godin, Holocaust Survivor

Thank you so much for inviting me once again to participate in this wonderful convention. I'm really not a speaker or a teacher or a lecturer. What I am, as you heard, I am a Holocaust survivor. I survived the ghetto, concentration camp, four labor camps, and a death march. In the ghetto I experienced hunger, fear, witnessed all kinds of killings and hangings. I'll just share with you one of those selections in the ghetto.

I was already fifteen-and-a-half years old in 1943. I had a job outside of the ghetto. So when I gathered with a group to leave the ghetto for my job I saw some trucks outside of the ghetto. We were ordered to go back in our little rooms. I ran quickly to the room that I shared with my parents, my two brothers, two uncles, two aunts. I remember mamma putting layers of clothing on me, bread in my pockets. The words that she said I'll never forget. She said, "My child, there may be a selection, we may be separated, we have to be prepared."

But a little bit later orders came for us to go to work. All day long we wondered what were the trucks doing near the ghetto. Were they delivering food or taking someone out? That evening, as we were coming back from work, blocks away from the ghetto we heard cries, such cries I hope no human beings will hear.

When we got into the ghetto the few people that were left there told us exactly what happened that day. SS, Gestapo, and Ukrainians had joined the evil cause. Why do people join evil causes? They ran through the ghetto. They found everyone there. At the gate one Nazi would appoint at the time who shall live and who shall die. Is it up to one human being to decide who shall live and who shall die? One thousand innocent children, 500 elderly and sick, and a few hundred healthy and strong men and women. The Nazi soldiers made sure to take them out of the way so they wouldn't fight back. We didn't know then where they were taken to. After the war we found out that they were taken to the concentration camp of Auschwitz, that they were put in the gas chambers and killed, and their bodies were burned in crematoriums. That is what we call the Kinder Action, the Children Selection.

My dear friends, on that selection I lost my father. He was 47 years old. Why was he killed? He was a kind man, a good man. He was killed because of that evil that was allowed in humanity. In 1944, we were deported to the concentration camp of Stutthof. I came there with my mother, my brother, two uncles. As soon as we arrived there our belongings were taken away. Next the families were divided. And the last thing that was taken from me was my name. I became Prisoner 54,015 in the concentration camp of Stutthof.

Again, selections every morning. The young were taken away. I was lucky to be deported into labor camps. I was in four of those. But due to time, I'll just share with you a little bit. In the labor camps they did not have to kill us, we died of starvation and abuse. At the beginning of 1945 we were rounded up in the camp, we were told we are leaving the camp. We thought we were going to another labor camp. But instead we started the death marches. What was the death marches? We marched through the towns and villages on roads in Poland and Germany, leaving many, many people behind. Some died and fell, some were shot to death.

How did I survive that Holocaust? I survived the Holocaust by the grace of the Lord in heaven, by whatever name we call him. And by kindness of Jewish women, Jewish women that gave me hope that when I cried of hunger gave me a bite of bread. When I

shivered of cold they wrapped my body in straw. When I laid on the ground on the death march, beaten up, from which I carry a scar on my face, they picked me up and told me not to give up, and have hope and live an extra day and try to survive. But they also said if I survive I have to promise them to tell the world what happened, and teach the world what hatred and indifference and prejudice can do. So I dedicated my life to teaching the world, the young and the old and the military.

And I have been involved with The American Legion from 1950. In 1950 I came to the United States with my husband, and I had already two children. My husband got a job with the Glaziers Union, and he was introduced to many wonderful young people. And one of our friends invited us to go to a New Year's party that was sponsored by The American Legion. And when those people found out who we were they invited us many times. Many years later, when I worked for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, I had the pleasure to meet John Minnick, who is here somewhere today, and he introduced me again to The American Legion, to the Boys Nation and the Girls Nation.

My dear friends, I am so proud to be able to be part of that United States government and The American Legion, and do my share of teaching love. I want to thank all these people that know me and that helped me, and to make sure for me to be here today, too many to enumerate. May God bless you, may God bless the American Legion, may God bless the Women's Auxiliary, and may God bless America, the country that gave me a home. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Thank you, Nesse. Our next guest is committed to the health and well-being of all veterans. At the age of 17 he enlisted in the Army National Guard, and later earned the title "Nebraska Citizen Soldier of the Year" in 1989. With service in both the Nebraska National Guard and then the Minnesota National Guard, he retired as a command sergeant major. He has served in the United States House of Representatives since 2007, and has spoke of the need for a seamless transition between the military and Veterans Affairs health systems when he addressed our National Convention delegates in Louisville in 2009. He truly understands and appreciates the sacrifices made by Reserve, Guard, and Active-duty military members and their families. Please welcome the United States Representative from Minnesota's First Congressional District, the Honorable Tim Walz. *(Applause)*

Address: The Honorable Tim Walz
United States House of Representatives

Good morning. And commander, thank you so very much for the invitation to be in I would argue the most special place in America today, and for the kind words of introduction. Good morning to each of you, my fellow Legionnaires, and especially my brothers and sisters from Minnesota. Thanks for putting on this party. *(Applause*)

A special thank you to each of you. The service that you and your families have already given put you into a very, very small minority in this country. We know we've got less than ten percent of the population that are veterans. We've got less than one percent of the population currently serving us and protecting freedom around the world. You did your time. You could have come back, you could have furthered your careers, as many of you did on that side, but you also gave your time, your energy and your expertise to be involved with The American Legion. For one very, very simple, eloquent, and I would say the most noble of reasons, you love this country with all of your heart. You choose to come here to try and further things that make this country stronger, make this country more prosperous, and make this country fairer. And because of you this country stands head and shoulders above, because of the work you've done. And for that I thank you deeply.

I have to tell you, the honor of serving in Congress is a singular honor. But I have to tell you that you can get yourself put into place very quickly. Shortly after I was elected I got the opportunity to go out to Walter Reed Army Medical Center and visit some of our wounded warriors. And there was this young man there coming back from Iraq, recovering from his injuries. And they said, "This is Congressman Walz. He's a retired sergeant major in the Army."And this kid never missed a beat, and he said, "Oh, I'm sorry to hear that." My first thought was this kid is a Marine. He's tough. But he set me straight. I said, "Why is that?" And he said, "Well, I'm sorry you took the demotion to Congress, sergeant major." *(Laughter)*

And I have to tell you right now the sense of frustration that many us of feel. I saw a poll the other day. It said 12 percent of America approves of what Congress is doing. My first thought was who the hell are the 12 percent? They're not in my family. But let me be very clear in all seriousness on this. The sacrifice that each of you and that our warriors throughout time have made, was for the very purpose to allow a high school teacher and a citizen soldier to run for elected office to govern ourselves. Truly a government of the people, by the people and for the people.

The sacrifices of blood and life that have been left on battlefields across the world that allow us to govern ourselves and allow us to go to Congress, I have to tell you, the sense of almost disillusionment that we could disrespect the memory of what it takes to govern and what it takes to have us in the United States Congress, must hold us to a higher standard. I hold myself to the standard of how you conduct yourself and how our warriors conduct themselves. The highest ideals of this country of working in a common purpose for a common goal to better this nation, that's where I hold myself, and that's what the Legion has always done. *(Applause)*

Let me be absolutely clear: The most realistic people in this country are sitting in this room. People that have seen, and as we heard Nesse speaking, have seen what tyranny can do. We've seen how it can crush the human spirit. And we also understand that that beacon and that shining light that is the United States must always be there. So when people stand in front of you and talk to you about responsibility, and talk to you about shared sacrifice, and talk to you about how we can do better, they certainly are preaching to the choir. And I'll have to tell you, when I watch this and I see the things that you do and the focus you bring, this room is far more than a group of people advocating for veterans benefits. This is a room advocating for American values, this is a room advocating for democracy done right, this is a room advocating that we have no choice but to get this right.

In Congress everything is polarized in black and white. We could not vote today and agree it's Wednesday. That would be the situation we're in. *(Laughter and applause)* What you understand, this polarization doesn't strengthen this nation, it doesn't make us more prosperous, it doesn't make us fair, and it doesn't make the American people happier. And the model that you present here, and the way we go about our business, is exactly the way we should be conducting business across the board. When I watch Commander Foster and folks from the Legion come forward to Washington to testify about the priorities of national security and veterans issues, they do it in a manner that is dignified. They do it in a manner that is based on facts. They do it in a manner that in the VA committee, when you come and watch that, many of you have been there, you don't know who the Democrat is and the Republican. You know they're all Americans working for the same cause. *(Applause)*

That model works. And again, I don't need to tell you, the most realistic and pragmatic people in the country, national security falls on many fronts. And just because on one side of that ledger we're taking care of business and our warriors are doing their job, there are different sides of that ledger, and things like fiscal responsibility that everyone is talking about. There is a reason we're talking about it. It's important. Our national security depends on us getting it right. And this nation has done so time and time

and time again. But let's be very clear. This polarization that sets up false choices be very, very clear, there are no two choices when it comes to national defense. Because the choice to get it right is the only one this nation can pursue. If we make a false choice and say we don't have the ability or we don't have the financial security to defend this nation that is an unacceptable option. It cannot be pursued and it will not be pursued.

With that in mind, as we talk about security and we talk about our veterans, let's be very, very honest. There are multiple ways to solve this problem. I can tell you this, that this is a group that is willing and has asked for every bit of the way, as I tell my friends in the VA, and when you see Secretary Shinseki in front of you in a few moments, this group is his staunchest supporters. But because of that we will also be the harshest critics. So if there is waste in the VA, we'll find it. If there are inefficiencies, you will find it. If there are better ways to serve our veterans, we'll find them. But this idea of false choices, this idea of coming and laying and talking about we need to increase co-pays for veterans health care and TRICARE; well, the thing I say about that was that co-pay was paid at Chosin Reservoir, it was paid in the jungles of Southeast Asia, it was paid in Iraq, and it was paid in Afghanistan. *(Applause)*

Before you come in front of this group or send your member to Congress, you had better have closed every tax loophole on mortgage interest deduction on yachts, and cut every redundant useless program before you come and ask those very same people who paid that co-pay and who sacrificed, to make that payment again. *(Applause)*

As the greatest nation the world has ever seen, to tell our veterans we don't have the financial stability to help them with their health care, or to tell our veterans we're going to have to ask them to increase a co-pay or wait longer to get their care, is absolutely unacceptable. It is not a road we can go down. And I say this for one very simple reason. That will not in any way make us more financially secure, but it will undermine our moral authority and the ethics that this country was founded on. There is no group of people more deserving of this nation's care than our veterans. And I'll have to be very honest with you. I will stand against and stand firm with supporting things like Medicare and Social Security, but even those programs and those benefits were not gained in the same way that veterans' benefits were earned. Veterans' benefits were earned with blood, sweat, and time away from family. And because of that they hold a separate place when we prioritize for them, and The American Legion knows it. *(Applause)*

Let's be very clear, because of your advocacy I would like to mention just two things over the last couple of years that The American Legion did. One of them was you advocated for, helped produce, helped pass, and helped improve the 21st Century GI Bill. An incredibly smart program that is a benefit, yes, to the individual warrior and to their family, but the investment in America's future for our best and brightest as they leave the military and transition to civilian life, to make sure they are able to take those lessons they learned about loyalty, about country, about hard work, about accountability, transfer those into civilian skills and move forward, that is what is going to make our country stronger. That investment in the GI Bill will do more to pay down this deficit than almost anything else we can do. And it's because of The American Legion that that is now law.

The next model that you advocated for they told us could not happen. You watched for 21 out of 22 years where a budget was put forward, an independent budget that said we have this much care that needs to be delivered to veterans, and this is what it's going to cost. And year after year after year we failed to meet it and we failed to deliver it on time. So 21 out of 22 years the VA health care system was sitting waiting to see what would happen on budgeting. Not being able to hire nurses, not being able to put money into research for prosthetics and traumatic brain injury. But the Legion gathered together and said we should never in this nation allow politics, bickering and brinkmanship to delay the care of our veterans. So you advocated for, helped craft, helped build a coalition, unanimously passed and signed into law advance appropriations for the

veterans health care. That is an incredible win for this country, and it's because of you that it happened. *(Applause)*

As we move forward we're going to have decisions to make. This organization spends countless hours advocating for policies that make sense, policies that move us forward on the care of our veterans, both in terms of mental health care and physical health care. You move those things forward in a way that respects our democracy. You move those things forward in a way that respects the facts and the economics. You move those things forward in the best tradition of what we were founded on. And I know it gets frustrating, I know the bickering gets frustrating. But I have to be honest, and Churchill knew this. Winston Churchill made a quote once where he said, "Yes, this democracy is the worst form of government ever, except for every other one that has been tried."

You have provided, and our warriors have provided, a nation with the greatest freedoms and the greatest privileges the world will ever know. Turn on your news on any single day and you will watch young Libyans dying for the chance to have the basic privilege of free speech and self-determination that we have here. You understand that these are not givens, that there will always be tyranny trying to push them down.

But the other side of the coin The American Legion also understands. With great privilege and great rights comes great responsibility. And that responsibility to conduct our business, to defend this democracy, to conduct ourselves in a manner that is reflective of the sacrifice that was given on battlefields across this country, is what is incumbent upon me. I only need look at this room and watch what you do here. What is right about America, what is right about moving America forward, and what is right about closing that division amongst us, sits right here in this room.

Without The American Legion, that anchor that draws Americans together, that pragmatic common sense. And then I would argue this is what America needs: That absolute steadfast resolve that this nation will not separate on itself, this nation will not weaken, and this nation will be here tomorrow and for every tomorrow afterwards because of one very, very important thing. Nesse just spoke about it. I don't think anyone in this room can imagine a world where America doesn't exist. America is far more than just an entity. America is an ideal. America is that shining beacon that makes things that seem so impossible at the darkest hours, possible. And it's done because our young warriors who serve us as we sit here today, our young warriors who just experienced the deadliest month in Afghanistan. And when the frustration comes with the politics, and the discussion comes about which direction we should go, there is one thing that those folks know: They are out there serving to not just preserve my children's freedom or your children and grandchildren's freedom, they are preserving the freedom of countless children that not only do they not know, they will never meet. And so that little girl in Afghanistan, that after so many years of persecution, so many years of hopelessness, now has the opportunity to actually dream and believe perhaps I can go to school. Perhaps I can be a teacher, perhaps I can live my life with the dignity and the respect that we know the creator gave to each of us. And it comes at a sacrifice.

So to you I say on behalf of not just 305,000,000 Americans, but to the six-and-a-half billion people of this world, this light must continue to shine. We, as your elected representatives, have a responsibility to take the lesson from you and the warriors that gave it to us. The option of failure is simply not there. The option to not get this right is not there. And our dignity as a nation and our responsibility is being echoed by the work that you do here today. So on behalf of the people of Minnesota and southern Minnesota, for some of you I represent that beautiful swath that stretches from South Dakota all the way to the Mississippi River. It includes Hormel and the Spam Museum, if you haven't got a chance to see it. That's religion here. It also has the Mayo Clinic, and I'll have to say it also includes now the City of Byron and Minnesota Commander Chuck Kruger's hometown. We welcome you, we thank you, and may God bless each and every one of

you. May God bless The American Legion, and may God bless this great nation. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Thank you, Tim. As a U.S. Senator from New York, former First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton was a fierce advocate for veterans. Not just in the Empire State, but across the country. When The American Legion launched its *I Am Not A Number* campaign, precursor to our annual *System Worth Saving* reports, she quickly embraced our initiatives and concerns. Due to her current responsibilities as the United States secretary of state, she could not be with us today. However, I call your attention to the video monitors for recorded remarks from Secretary of State Hillary R. Clinton. *...Delegates viewed video remarks by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.*

Special Address: The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
United States Secretary of State

Thank you, Commander Foster, for that introduction. And I am so delighted to be able to send greetings to each of you attending this year's annual convention in Minneapolis, as thousands of Legionnaires come together to celebrate the rich history of this important organization. For over 90 years The American Legion has served as a voice for our nation's veterans. You know it's a place where soldiers can come home to, where they can help create a community of support and share their common bond. They come home to rural towns and big cities, they come home to families and newborn children, to eager parents, husbands, wives, all looking to help integrate and build back the lives of their loved ones. And wherever they call home, The American Legion is there to help.

As this latest generation of soldiers return, whether they come from Iraq or Afghanistan or any of the other countries where we have a presence, your work is more important than ever. I've seen firsthand the dedication, skill, and bravery of our men and women in uniform. I've seen you stand up against the violent forces of extremism and against dictators. I've seen how you've prevented wars and secured borders, delivered food and medicine to communities devastated by natural disasters.

As your secretary of state I have the great honor to represent our country around the world, and I am proud to know that The American Legion stands as a partner as we advance peace and stability, and as we work toward giving more people the opportunity to realize their own God-given potential. It is my great honor to thank our soldiers and to thank our Legionnaires in the field and in this room, for your dedicated ongoing service to our country. Thank you all very much. *(Applause)*

... At this time National Vice Commander Pytka assumed the Chair.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER PYTKA: The fundamental activity of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is to develop and implement policy on major issues affecting business. Key to this effort is the work of committees, task forces and councils involving more than 1,500 representatives of member corporations, organizations, and the academic community who serve voluntarily. With us today is a retired Marine lieutenant colonel and the vice president of the Chamber's Veterans Employment Initiative, a program aimed at helping veterans find meaningful employment. Please welcome Vice President of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce Kevin Schmiegel.

Address: Kevin M. Schmiegel, Vice President
United States Chamber of Commerce

Good morning, everyone. I want to thank Commander Foster for inviting me here today. I am truly humbled to be in all of your presence. I have to admit that I was a little bit nervous when I read the agenda and found out that I was speaking today after the president. I was involved in a forum similar to this a couple of months ago, and as I spoke after the president the audience was much thinner than what is before me today, so I appreciate you all staying around to listen to me and to hear what we're doing across the country to help our nation's veterans. I hope I don't disappoint you.

Two years ago I retired from the Marine Corps after 20 years of active duty service. I have to admit not a day goes by when I don't miss the men and women who I served with as a Marine. That's why it's so special for me to be here today, surrounded by people, men and women like you, who have served our country. And in a community like Minneapolis that truly appreciates the value and the sacrifices our military families make every day to defend our freedoms.

This morning I hope you hear something different in my presentation. I'm not here to describe what could be done or what should be done, or what would be done if we had more funding or laws were changed. I'm here today to talk about a program that is focused on doing things every day to help our nation's heroes.

In March of this year the U. S. Chamber of Commerce launched a program called Hiring Our Heroes, a yearlong nationwide initiative to help veterans and military spouses find jobs in 100 communities across the country. We started in collaboration with the Department of Labor Vets, and the employer support of the Guard and Reserve. And as part of the White House's Joining Forces Initiative, because we understood that the government and the private sector needed to work more closely together to do a better job of matching veteran talent with opportunities that exist in the private sector.

We also started the program with the understanding that the key to success for this initiative is the local community. I can have discussions every day in Washington with politicians about what we need to do, but it is the local communities and small business owners that are going to make a difference in this effort. It's also organizations like The American Legion that can play a significant role in helping veterans find meaningful employment after they serve our country.

My own transition from the military was full of good fortune. I was lucky to have a mentor like General Jim Jones, who was the commandant of the Marine Corps and President Obama's National Security Advisor. He took a very special interest in my transition from the military to the private sector. I was lucky to be at the right place at the right time, and I was lucky to go to an organization like the U. S. Chamber of Commerce that understands and appreciates the value of hiring a veteran. Not every veteran is that lucky.

This map captures many of the reasons why I'm here today. Of the 12,000,000 veterans in the civilian work force, there are nearly 1,000,000 unemployed veterans in America. In my mind that is simply not acceptable. On top of that we have over 160,000 servicemembers that are getting ready to leave active duty year after year. On top of that we have 100,000 Guard and Reservists that are demobilizing this year. Many people have asked me why is this such a big issue if veterans' unemployment nearly mirrors the national average? The fact is, if we don't do something about this now, right now, the situation will get dramatically worse. And why do I say that? I say it for three reasons. If you look at Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, their unemployment rate is 13.3 percent. Among Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, if you look at 18- to 24-year-olds, their unemployment is at 30 percent.

Secondly, and I talked a little bit about the Guard and Reserve as the 100,000 demobilizing this year, they are suffering from 14 percent unemployment. In some rural

communities they have 20 to 30 percent unemployment when they're coming back after serving their country for a year in places like Afghanistan and Iraq.

Thirdly, the president announced a couple of months ago that we're going to bring 33,000 additional troops back from Afghanistan. And we all know that there are plans in the works right now to significantly draw down the armed forces. Well, if you take all those things together and you look at the populations we just talked about, the number is going to grow to 1.1 to 1.2 million, and that is not acceptable.

Why else did the Chamber get involved? First of all, many of our members want to hire veterans. Small companies, medium size companies, big companies, want to hire veterans. Before I took this job I was the chief of staff at the Chamber when I retired from the Marine Corps. I traveled all over this country and heard hundreds of Fortune 500 CEOs say, "How do I get a hold of veterans?" So here we have 1,000,000 unemployed veterans in America, and we have CEOs all over this country saying how do I get veterans? How much sense does that make?

Even with high unemployment there is a significant skills gap in America. We have something called structural unemployment. There are over 3,000,000 jobs in America that can't be filled right now because we have a lack of a trained work force. Veterans can fill that gap because they have unique leadership experience, they have advanced technical skills, they are reliable, and they are problem solvers. And if they don't have the skills, they are highly trainable.

So how much sense again does it make that we have 3,000,000 jobs that can't be filled because we don't have the skills to fill them, but you have this ready work force just waiting to do it? And 90 percent of all military occupations are directly transferrable to jobs in the private sector. How many people know that? How many people take the time to learn that? Just because a kid's résumé doesn't have a college degree on it? We've given them hundreds of thousands of dollars of training to be mechanics and technicians and machinists, and there are jobs that could be filled right away if we would just take the time to match these talented young men and women with the opportunities that already exist in the private sector.

And, finally, as the world's largest business federation, we, the Chamber, have a civic responsibility to make sure that veterans get a special place in the private sector work force. We have 1,700 state and local chambers. We have 600 trade associations that are members of the Chamber. We have 3,000,000 businesses that are affiliated with the U. S. Chamber of Commerce. With that scale, with that size, with that scope, we have a responsibility to do something about it.

So what did we decide to do? On April 12th as part of the Joining Forces Initiative, the Chamber committed to conduct 100 hiring fairs over a 12 month period, connecting 10,000 veterans and military spouses with employers in local communities across the country. The results thus far have been palpable. Since the launch of Hiring Our Heroes just five months ago, we have conducted 19 hiring fairs. We have connected 20,000 veterans and military spouses with over 1,000 employers in 15 different states. Our 19th hiring fair was held in this very building on Saturday, in close coordination with The American Legion who put together this wonderful convention. We had the help of every government agency you could think of in the State of Minnesota. In addition, we had seven state and local chambers from the State of Minnesota that came together to put on a hiring fair with 60 employers, small, medium and large businesses, that had job opportunities for over 400 veterans and military spouses that attended that hiring fair. That's significant in a state where veterans suffer from an unemployment rate that is two and-a-half times for non-veterans in a state. We'll be in Minnesota again and again and again until the difference is made. And we'll be in 81 other cities before the end of March. So many of you are asking, so what about the jobs? How many veterans and how many military spouses have you placed? I'll answer that question in two ways.

First of all, we are tracking measures, and it's not easy. We send surveys to every veteran that attends the hiring fair and every employer, and we have a 20 percent response rate. They are part of the problem. So we're pushing every day to make sure we get better measures. But there are success stories. In Chicago, at our first hiring fair, we had 127 employers, 1,200 veterans, and over 200 of them got jobs. Again, so what, right?

We're going to do 100 of these hiring fairs, and we may place 15,000 to 20,000 veterans. Okay. I get that. I'll be the first person to say that doesn't even scratch the surface. But this is not just about numbers. This is about creating a movement in local communities. This is about connecting the public and private sectors in a meaningful way, so that when we shut down the tables and pull the chairs away from the hiring fair we've created a team of leaders in that community that will take ownership of this issue. It's not about the one day hiring fair, it's about what they do the day before and the day after, because veterans and their families are returning to those communities every day, not just on the day we're doing the hiring fair. It's a means to an end.

We are on the verge of creating such a movement. I can tell you that because in the 15 states that we have done hiring fairs; those core groups of leaders have already decided to do more fairs in three or four more cities. Over the course of the last four weeks we've received calls from 13 state and local chambers that said, hey, we know you've already got 100 hiring fairs planned, we know we're not on the list, we're going to do one anyway. That is about creating a movement. That is a campaign. In the next three months alone we will conduct 54 hiring fairs in 36 states. So the momentum is building and building and building.

Some of these successes have been because of the media. I know there is a PR aspect to this. But my only concern, my only measure of success, is jobs for the 1,000,000 unemployed veterans in America. 100 different media outlets covered our events in New York and L. A. Alone. 300,000,000 people viewed or listened to those lead-ups to the hiring fair, to the media that was surrounding those events. To that end we're partnering with NBC, who has agreed to cover all 100 of the hiring fairs through their 212 local affiliates. They've also announced the broadcast of a national show by Brian Williams, called *Making A Difference On The Home Front*.

It didn't hurt that when we forged the relationship with NBC that their vice president, Val Nicholas, happened to be a Legionnaire. With these tangible successes to build on, the Chamber announced last week our intent to significantly expand this movement to several hundred cities in 2012. So what can be done to achieve this vision?

First, we have to have a call of action of our own members. This map shows 1,700 state and local chambers that we have across the country. But we can't do it alone. The chambers can't do this without the help of organizations just like The American Legion that have the grass roots infrastructure to marry up with what the local chambers of commerce are trying to do across the country. I, looking out in this room, am confident that we can go from 100 to 300 or 400 or 500 hiring fairs in local communities, in rural areas, in suburban cities, with the help of men and women like you, because you understand. You understand the sacrifices these young men and women have made, and you have done it yourself. Imagine if you took a map of every Legion post across the country, and overlaid it with the map I just showed you. Imagine the potential of what we can do and the movement that we can create together by just taking a Legion post and a local chamber of four or five employees, and saying, hey, let's just get a lunch. Let's throw a lunch, five or six employers with jobs for veterans, and we'll get all the 20 or 30 unemployed veterans in that small rural community and bring them together for a couple of hours to talk about job opportunities.

We've already started this with a pilot program in New Jersey. We're working with Bob Luby and Rich Gato and Paul Zimmerowsky in Ocean and Burlington County, to do hiring fairs on October 22nd and November 4th. Is there going to be as much fanfare? No.

Are there going to be 100 different media outlets? No. But NBC will be there, because they are a proud partner of this initiative.

While this chamber Legion model may seem simple to some people, this is the way to create a movement. For all the posts that are represented here today, we look forward to working with you to make a difference on the issue that impacts veterans and their families the most, and that's jobs. Make no mistake about it; I'm not here to talk about tax credits or tool kits for kids, or any of those things that a lot of other people are talking about. I'm here to talk about jobs, because none of those other things matter unless someone can put food on the table and a roof over their head for their families, and have the same satisfaction of going to a job every day that they did when they wore the uniform. Think of the potential too with all of you, and the mentoring roles you can play to the young men and women that have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, and can benefit from your leadership and your insights. And I guarantee you if I did a survey of this room, I guarantee you some of you still own businesses, and maybe you'll hire a veteran.

We are going to do three other things, and we're going to announce them on Veterans Day, but you're getting a sneak peak. On Veterans Day the U. S. Chamber of Commerce will launch a private sector National Veterans Employment Advisory Council. It will be comprised of the 25 biggest companies in America. Walmart, FedEx, Tri-West, Siemens, have already agreed to do it. And we're having discussions with companies that are industry leaders, because if we put 25 industry leaders together, representing millions of jobs, think about the voice in Washington, and think about their change, the paradigm shift, if they think about, okay, well, someone just retired, I'm going to hire a vet first. Think about the impact we can have.

It's not going to be done with big business alone, which brings me to my second point. We're going to exercise our network of state and local chambers to get as many of the 3,000,000 small businesses that are part of that network involved with veteran hiring, to commit to hire one veteran when the conditions are right. If you tie that with the three-and-a-half million veteran-owned small businesses that we're going to reach out to, and we can just get ten percent of them, ten percent to hire one veteran by 2013, just one, we will cut veterans unemployment in half. That's a movement.

And, third, you can't just do these high touch events everywhere, so we're going to create an IT architecture that veterans and employers can go to 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and veterans will have the tools they need to transition by getting advice on résumé building, by getting advice on how to get a mentor, because we'll have a network of millions of mentors, men and women just like you that are willing to help veterans. It will be a cradle to grave system. It's not just about the hiring fair; it's about the day before and the day after.

As I conclude, I want to stress one thing. This is not about charity. It's not about good PR. This is about connecting talented veterans and military spouses with job opportunities that we know exist in the private sector. Veterans are the most resilient, strong, adaptive team players who will rise to any challenge and never recognize failure. We all know that. We all know that because we see it every day on our televisions when we look at places like Iraq and Afghanistan. I'm often asked why we do this for veterans when the rest of the nation is suffering from high unemployment. As a veteran myself I want to say, "Are you kidding me?" We have men and women putting themselves in harm's way every day and serving their country, and you ask the question? Really? We have men and women in uniform leave their family and loved ones behind for 12 months, and we shouldn't make a special effort to help them find jobs?

But instead I leave those personal feelings aside, and I make the business case for why we should hire veterans and military spouses. I talk about the increase in productivity. I talk about the effectiveness. I talk about the efficiency, and I state what is good for business is good for the economy. So companies should hire veterans. We believe that there is an incredible opportunity right now, an incredible moment in time, to

really make a difference. Everyone is talking about this. Admiral Mullen once called it the sea of goodwill. We have to take advantage of that opportunity. The White House is talking about this, the Congress is talking about this, non-profits are talking about this, and the business community is talking about it. Martin Luther King once said, "The time is always right to do what is right." There has never been a moment in time more right than this to help veterans and families.

As you leave Minneapolis and reflect on all the things that you have heard from the host of speakers who stood before you, I want you to consider one thing going forward: What is more important, talking about what can be done, or getting out there and doing it? You have my word, as a Marine, that the U. S. Chamber of Commerce is going to continue to do everything it can, every day, to make a difference in the lives of our nation's heroes, namely by helping them find jobs in the private sector. As I look out across this ballroom full of patriots, I hope we can count on each of you to help us to do even more. Thank you for your time. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: It gives me great pleasure to introduce our next honored guest. A 1965 graduate of West Point, Secretary Shinseki completed 38 years of uniformed service in the United States Army, including two combat tours in the Republic of Vietnam and service as the Army's chief of staff from 1999 to 2003. Secretary Shinseki became the seventh secretary of Veterans Affairs on January 21, 2009. As secretary, he has promised to end homeless among veterans, a daunting but important goal. Ladies and gentlemen, give a warm welcome to the Honorable Eric Shinseki. *(Standing applause)*

Address: The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki, Secretary
United States Department of Veterans Affairs

Thank you very much. Good morning Legionnaires. Great, generous welcome from you Jimmie. Thank you for that kind introduction, and for our own service to the nation and for your leadership of The American Legion. Let me acknowledge two members of Congress with whom I work very closely and who have been most supportive of veterans, of VA and of this secretary. They both serve in the House Veterans Affairs Committee, and first is Representative Tim Walz of Minnesota, a Guardsman, and the second is Committee Chairman Jeff Miller of Florida, whose leadership has been crucial and will continue to be crucial to VA and its mission of serving veterans. So to Mr. Chairman and Congressman Walz, good to see both of you again, thanks for your leadership and support. My greetings also to former chairman, Chet Edwards for well deserved recognition by all of you for his many years of service to veterans.

Let me also acknowledge members of the Legion's leadership, Dan Wheeler, Peter Gaytan, with whom I work most frequently in Washington. Carlene Ashworth, national president of your Auxiliary. Two members from State Directors Conference, Pete Wheeler of Georgia and Terry Schow of Utah with whom I work very closely. They're my counterparts at the state level, and if there are other state directors here, I acknowledge you as well. Members of the Legion family, fellow veterans, other distinguished guest, ladies and gentlemen. I'm pleased to be here there Minneapolis for the Legion's 93rd annual National Convention.

Last week at nearby Fort Snelling, I think some of you know this, we have a cemetery there. Two American warriors were laid to rest: Thirty-one-year-old Chief Special Warfare Operator John Foss, and 24-year-old Special Warfare Operator Second Class, Nick Speehar, both of them Navy Seals. John and Nick both perished when their helicopter went down in Afghanistan earlier this month. Twenty-eight fellow special operators also perished with them. This is a particularly difficult time as all of you know

for their families, and we pray for John and Nick and their twenty-eight mates, and are reaching out to all of their loved ones at this time.

The sacrifices of our young and their families continue unabated, and the risks they face daily are undiminished. When incidents of tragic proportion strike, we're snapped back to their realities, the realities they live with every day. They fight for us, and they are making a difference, and risk and sacrifice should not be theirs alone. We owe them the best this country can offer while they're fighting, and we owe them the best this country can offer when they come home to join the ranks of our veterans. That is our moral obligation.

And that's why I'm thankful to President Obama, for giving me this opportunity to serve veterans. I know he spoke here yesterday, and he's a tough act to follow. This is like a warm up act coming after the main event. But thank you for the warm reception you provided him. It is sometimes said that we honor the fallen by how we care for the living. The ones who made it home. Well, that's what President Obama and VA, and frankly members of Congress have been about for the last two-and-a-half-years, and I can speak firsthand about the three members that I recognized.

President Obama handed me two priorities when he offered me this appointment two-and-a-half years ago. Pretty strategic. Pretty straightforward. First, make things better for veterans, and then transform this great department of yours, the Department of Veterans Affairs, so that it better serves veterans throughout the 21st Century. He provided not just strategic guidance; he also provided his personal support, time and again. If you know anything about the budget process, it's an iterative process. Time and again, at the fork in the trail where we could have gone left or right, the president sided with VA and veterans, and provided us resources. And so he has not just provided personal support, he's assured the availability of much needed and scare resources to address some longstanding issues. And then he allowed me as secretary, the freedom to make decisions and to act on behalf of veterans.

With congressional support, President Obama increased the VA's 2010 budget to $115 billion, a 16 percent increase over the Congressionally enhanced budget that I inherited in 2009 when I arrived. The largest single year increase in over 30 years. This year the 2011 budget grew to $126.6 billion. And the president's 2012 budget request for next year, currently before the Congress, is for $132.2 billion. Very few organizations, public, private, profit, nonprofit, military or civilian have had this kind of resourcing support over the past three budget cycles, and every bit of it has been needed to fix some longstanding issues in this department. So thanks to the president, we have clear direction. We have predictability in resourcing, and we have unwavering leadership support. Now it's up to us to deliver. Veterans remain a very high priority with President Obama, and I know that personally. I know that firsthand. And I can tell you that it goes deep with him.

That commitment will be reflected in the care and benefits VA continues to provide the men and women who safeguarded our nation in its darkest hours. These are tough economic times, and that's especially true for veterans. Always of June this year, one million veterans remain unemployed. The jobless rate for post-9/11 veterans is 13.3 percent, an extremely hard-hit generation. And as troops return from Iraq and Afghanistan, an additional one million youngsters are expected to leave the uniformed ranks over the next five years between 2011 and 2016. So, three weeks ago the president again demonstrated his unwavering support of veterans and of business by announcing new aggressive initiatives to get veterans back to work.

First, tax credits for any firm hiring unemployed veterans. Short-term hires, long-term hires, a max credit of $9,660 per veteran for firms that hire veterans with service-connected disabilities who have been unemployed long-term.

The second, the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs will spearhead a government-wide effort to reform the way members transition out of the

military services. Every member will receive the training, education and credentials needed to successfully transition to the civilian workforce or to pursue higher education. If we can spend nine weeks in boot camp getting youngsters ready to go operational, we can find the requisite time to fully and properly assure their successful transition back to their communities, either to go to work or to go to school. *(Applause)*

And finally, the president challenged the private sector to hire or train 100,000 unemployed veterans or their spouses by the end of 2013. In my personal opinion, that's a chip shot. VA already employs over 100,000 veterans in our workforce, and they make up about 30 percent of our workforce. We're going to increase that to 40 percent. That's what we're working on.

We're also working to expand opportunities for veteran-owned businesses. Two weeks ago in New Orleans we conducted our National Veteran-Owned Small Business Exposition. It was training conference providing an unprecedented opportunity for veteran-owned small businesses to build capacity, to grow their businesses and to have direct connection with VA's procurement decision-makers. Over 4,100 people attended. Sixteen hundred of who represented either a veteran-owned or a service-disabled veteran-owned small business. Additionally, we recently awarded seven of our fifteen major contracts at VA. Major T4 information technology contracts specifically to veteran-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses. And then we're requiring all 15 contract awardees to meet our subcontracting goals of having veteran-owned or service-disabled veteran-owned businesses on their teams. We know historically veterans hire veterans. And so increasing the number of successful small business owners who are veterans increases our opportunity to assure that veterans will have job opportunities.

VA is also continuing its historic mission, thanks to the Congress of preparing the next generation of leaders by administering the education of over 518,000 veterans and family members under the new 9/11 GI Bill. When you add VA's other educational assistance programs, that number of veterans and family members in school today is over 840,000 youngsters. This fall, thanks to the Congress, we're going to expand that GI Bill program to provide a vocational training and other non-degree job skills for veterans who want to work but who aren't necessarily interested in sitting in a college seat for four years. And so this will be another tremendous opportunity for veterans to add value to their communities.

The president budgets have enabled us to attack three key priorities that I set for us back two-and-a-half years ago. One is extending and increasing veterans' access. I was told it's hard to get into VA, and so we decided to do something about it. The second priority was to end veterans' homelessness. And the third was to eliminate this thing called the claims backlog.

On access. Through our reenergized outreach programs we have increased the number of veterans enrolled in VA healthcare by 800,000 in the last two-and-a-half years, a 10 percent uptick. We have qualified 89,000 veterans for benefits under new rules for presumption of service-connection for conditions related to exposure to Agent Orange. We have made it easier for combat veterans to receive care for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and have hired an additional 3,500 mental health professionals since 2008. We have built more than 30 new community-based outpatient clinics, and we are building five new VA hospitals. We've also invested heavily in telehealth, connecting all of these access points so that we have a constellation of care out there for veterans. We've also improved our outreach to women veterans, with women's program coordinators at each major medical center. And over 1,200 care providers have received advanced training in women's health care.

Homelessness. Our progress in the fight against homelessness has been significant. Since 2008 VA has helped house over 29,000 homelessness veterans and family members, and another 30,000 have been assisted through the homeless call center. We intend to reduce the number of homeless veterans to below 60,000 by June, 2012, less

than a year away, with the goal of ending this national embarrassment in 2015. VA is in this fight with all of our capabilities. We don't talk about homelessness as though it's a one vector discussion. We're in it across the board. Primary medical and dental care. Mental health. Substance abuse. Education. Case management. Housing, as well as jobs counseling. We're also conducting justice outreach to support the creation of veterans courts which would remand veterans, those what facing minor charges, petty crimes, repeated substance abuse offenses, the kinds of things you end up in jail for if you do it often enough. Remand those veterans to us at VA for treatment in lieu of incarceration. And we're working with state and federal prisons to afford veterans being released from prison, an opportunity to break that cycle of incarceration, homelessness, and incarceration which plagues many of them. There are 1,310 federal and state penitentiaries, and we are into 950 of them linking up with those veterans. We are committed to ending veterans' homelessness by 2015, and we are after it. And ending veterans' homelessness is not just rescuing the individual on the street. Our image usually is someone wrapped in blankets and clothes, sleeping on a heating grate. That is true. That is a very visible part of the homeless issue. But it's much broader other than that. We're after it, and we're going to end it in 2015.

Claims backlog. In 2009 you asked me to fix the backlog in disability claims, and I have committed to ending it in 2015 by putting in place a system that processes all claims within 125 days. Not an average of 125 days, but within 125 days, and less would be better. And at a 98 percent accuracy level. That's the challenging part. You can go fast and do it ugly, or you can do it right and go slow. That's not good enough. We're going to go fast and get it at 98 percent accuracy. Of the things you asked me to take on, this one is most challenging. It's taken us a little longer to get momentum, but we have a host of promising options being piloted today and we expect them to be begin paying off in 2012 as we begin fully automating the disability claims process.

And the reason I'm fairly confident that we've got a good handle on this, is our success in automating the new GI Bill program. As you know, we started that as a stubby pencil drill, and as we were getting the first 173,000 youngsters into college classrooms in the fall of 2009, we were doing a parallel effort to build the automation tools that we needed, and didn't have frankly. And so here today, we went from 173,000 in the fall of 2009, with over 518,000 today going to school under that program. So that gives us a measure of confidence. *(Applause)*

Now attitude. Two years ago, many of you told me that some in VA had an attitude problem. And I agreed with you. Sometimes you guys are hard. And I agreed with you. So, since last December with input and recommendations from a variety of panels, work groups, and VA senior leaders and other stakeholders, we have settled on five core values that we believe underscore the moral obligations that are inherent in VA's mission. These are integrity; commitment; advocacy; respect and excellence. Those five words. Integrity, commitment, advocacy, respect and excellence. And now if you take the first letter of each of those words, it spells the acronym ICARE. And I know there's at least one person in the audience wondering whether or not this is a cute marketing device where you start with ICARE and you back your way into a set of values. Didn't happen that way. Maybe ten iterations of differing members from all levels within VA, leaders, members of the workforce, VSOs, and they wrestled hard to settle on these five words. Started out maybe with a hundred ideas. And you know a hundred values don't make any sense. We thought it had to be less than seven if it was going to be fruitful, and so how to get to the right five, six or seven. We settled on five. And that came out of that process. What a tough argument, a lot of debate, a lot of heated opinions, but we've agreed on this five. And yes, once you get the five, you know, some bright person arranged this so that it spelled the acronym ICARE. It's helpful for us to remember those values. It's an aid for memory. But it also incurs a promise. I care incurs a promise.

This is the way it works: Integrity, because I care I will act with high moral principles, adhere to the highest professional standards, and maintain the trust and confidence of all with whom I engage. Commitment. Because I care, I will work diligently to serve veterans and other beneficiaries, be driven by an earnest belief in VA's mission, and fulfill my individual and organizational responsibilities. Advocacy. Because I care I will be truly veteran-centric by identifying, fully considering, and appropriately advancing the interests of other veterans and other beneficiaries. Respect. Because I care I will treat all those I serve and with whom I work with dignity, showing respect, to gain respect, to earn respect. Excellence. Because I care I will strive for the highest quality and continuous improvement, be thoughtful and decisive in leadership, be accountable for my actions, willing to admit my mistakes, and then rigorous in correcting them.

You'll begin to see these core values demonstrably at work in our daily business. It's an education process and we are leadership, to workforce, having those education discussions now. It's not a done day event. It's not a one week initiative or one a month priority or this year's good idea. This is a routine, continuous education process where members of the workforce and leadership will revisit why these values are the ones we settled on, and what it means in serving veterans. Every new employee will go through the same training program. You do have my assurance that VA has embraced these promises, and that's what they are, promises, with serious dispatch.

Now, with your help and support we've two-and-a-half good years for veterans. There's much more to be done, but we do have momentum in key areas and clear directions for the future. We will not fail to honor the dedication and selflessness of the men and women we serve. Warriors like Army Ranger Joe Kapacziewski who was severely wounded when an Iraqi grenade shattered his right leg, extensively damaged the entire right side of his body, severing a nerve and an artery in his right arm. Doctors didn't expect him to walk without support ever again, let alone fulfill his wish of returning to the ranger regiment as a squad leader. Then again, most of us don't fully appreciate iron will. And in Sergeant Kapacziewski's words, "I just like people telling me I can't do something."

Kapacziewski had been serving with the Rangers since May 2002. When he was injured in 2005, three years later, he was on his fifth combat deployment. After multiple surgeries, slowly regaining the use of his right arm and enduring unimaginable pain in that right leg that was so severely damaged, he made the courageous call to have his right leg amputated below the knee, opting for greater mobility and faster recovery with a prosthetic leg. At March 2007 the leg was removed. Five months later, Kapacziewski was running. Six months later he rejoined the Ranger Operations Company in Fort Benning. That's that transition unit where you have to go in and show the right stuff before you get an assignment to the regiment, if that's what's going to happen. Ten months after surgery, Kapacziewski completed an Army PT test, a five mile run, and a 12 mile road march with a 40 pound ruck. In March 2008, one year after surgery he became the only amputee ever to assume combat duties in the ranger regiment as a squad leader. He has since deployed. He would be a great recruit for the Legion. He has since deployed four more times. He's been promoted to platoon sergeant. He's received the Bronze Star with "V" device for having saved a comrade who was severely wounded.

Sergeant Kapacziewski is a member of the 9/11 generation that the president spoke to you about yesterday. More than five million Americans have served in the military during this past decade. Three million of them joined after 9/11, knowing full well that they would probably be going to combat. Their accomplishments are extraordinary. We all know that. Unseating the Taliban; pushing out al-Qaeda from its sanctuaries; capturing Saddam Hussein; delivering justice to Osama bin Laden, and even today still training Iraqi and Afghan forces to defend their own countries so our kids can come home. The 9/11 generation includes more than a million spouses and two million children, many of whom have lived only in a country at war since their birth.

More military women have served in combat than ever before. Hundreds of thousands of troops have deployed multiple times and they've all borne a heavy burden on behalf of this nation. But despite the enormous strains of 10 years of continuous operations, our military remains as strong as it's ever been. And I reflect that as someone who used to sit in positions where I watched this quite closely.

Sergeant Joe Kapacziewski's 9/11 generation is defined just as every generation before it. Every generation of America's veterans has been defined by the virtues of selfless service, sacrifice and devotion to duty. These men and women who serve and have served are the flesh and blood of American exceptionalism. That's a term you hear used a lot. My definition of it is those who have served and who serve today.

The living, breathing embodiment of our national values and our special place in the world, resides with all of you. We are blessed to have them just as we were blessed to have you in your time. God bless our men and women in uniform. God bless all of our veterans, and may God continue to bless this wonderful country of ours. Thank you all very much. *(Standing applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: At this time I am going to present a diamond lapel pin to the Secretary of the VA. We call him Mr. Secretary. I called him General when I was there, but that's okay. Here's our newest member of The American Legion. (*Applause)*

Our next speaker is chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee which is responsible for authorization and oversight of the VA, the second largest department in the federal government, with more than 300,000 employees and a budget of more than $119 billion. Since winning a special election for his Florida Congressional seat in 2001, he quickly established himself as a strong advocate for veterans, supporting positive changes to concurrent receipt and requirements for greater data sharing between military and veterans clinics. He is also a strong supporter of the Defense Department and the Global War on Terrorism. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the Honorable Representative Jeff Miller. *(Applause)*

Address: The Honorable Jeff Miller, Chairman
Veterans Affairs Committee, United States House of Representatives

Thank you very much Commander Foster. It is an honor for me to be here, and Rehta, it's a pleasure to have spent some time with you last night at dinner. I enjoyed it. I enjoyed The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band. All the entertainment. And Carlene Ashworth, thank you for your service to The American Legion Auxiliary. It is a group that I know the Legion depends on a lot. And to Secretary Shinseki, thank you for your leadership over the last two-and-a-half years. It's been an honor to work with you, and it's an honor to call you a friend. And I'm honored to be here amongst you for the 93rd Annual Convention of The American Legion, and I appreciate the invitation, and I thank you so much for the warm welcome this morning.

Two weeks ago, two days after one of our Chinook helicopters had been shot down in Afghanistan, I stood on the tarmac at Bagram Air Force Base in Afghanistan for a battlefield memorial. And I witnessed what is perhaps one the most solemn ceremonies in the military. It was a ramp ceremony. Forty souls were honored that night. All died fighting a heroes fight. I stood shoulder-to-shoulder with members of our armed forces to pay our final respects to the soldiers, the Navy Seals and the airmen as they prepared for their final journey home. We stood united in our grief, in our pain, and our anger over such a horrific loss of life. As we watched, I reflected on one truth we must always remember, that these heroes died for a nation they loved, doing a job that they loved, knowing that their sacrifice would advance the cause of liberty. None of us should ever lose sight of that dedication to duty and to country.

Later that night, our military, with infinite resolve, continued the mission on behalf of their fallen comrades. This is what they do, day in and day out, year in and year out as service men and women have done since those early days in Lexington and Concord. Our military and you, our veterans, are truly America's heroes. As we honor and remember each and every life that we have lost, we recommit ourselves and share gratitude to serve those who have served us. It's impossible to put a price tag on freedom, but we all know the cost of war is all too apparent. Our men and women return home some caring with them the lasting effects of war. Wounds that are both visible and invisible. Some return having difficulty adjusting to civilian life. Some come back and cannot find employment in today's tough economic climate. But just as on the battlefield, these men and women continue to put others before themselves to ensure lives are made better and that the ideals that they fought for in lands far away are still cherished here at home.

It is that simple and often forgotten concept which is at the heart of The American Legion. It is what you, its members stand for. And more important what you fight for on behalf of your fellow veterans. And thankfully, America realized long ago that those who have worn the cloth of our nation are owed not only a debt of gratitude, but tools to help support them when they return. After each war and conflict we reevaluate the programs and services that are offered by VA, to ensure that they are not only meeting the needs of today's veterans, but that we are keeping the promise for past and future generations of veterans, a promise that has not always been kept. Today we find ourselves in a new era. Washington has a spending problem. It's not something that happened overnight. It's not news and it doesn't surprise anybody. We need to cut up the credit cards and put America back on the path to fiscal sanity. *(Applause)*

This summer there has been much debate on just how to accomplish that. And we've taken the first step, the difficult step I believe, toward fiscal responsibility. Elected representatives all across this country need to recommit themselves to the job that we were elected to do. Those of us that are in Washington need to recommit ourselves to the job that we were elected to do, and that is to serve the American people. And that's exactly the message that I and my colleagues intend to bring back to the Capitol when we return next week. Now look, our Constitution is pretty clear. It's pretty clear on how we can tax and what we're supposed to be spending our money on. And again, this is not a new revelation. First and foremost, the Constitution provides for spending for the common defense, and providing for the welfare of our citizens. Funding for American veteran programs I believe is a critical element to the common defense of this nation, and I believe you will see that reflected in the spending priorities in this Congress.

While we tighten our belts, let us not remember that we are still engaged in two wars, and that we are in conflicts around the globe. Now, in the Budget Control Act of 2011, veteran benefits and services were not affected. Every veteran should still be receiving their check, and VA hospitals are operating as normal. But the new select committee what has already begun its work, will have to trim a minimum of $1.2 trillion out of our budget, and we are out of options. But let me again state very clearly, funding for our military and our veterans is, and will remain, one of this nation's highest priorities. This is a joint select committee established for a particular purpose, for a particular amount of time. And the Deficit Reduction Committee is really similar in structure to the Intelligence Committee that I serve on, or a conference committee which is actually a temporary committee of the members of the House and the Senate that are brought together to reconcile differences in legislation that has passed both chambers.

And while this committee has received more press than probably any other select committee, it has no special powers than any other select committee has. In fact, the joint committee is comprised of 12 members of Congress, all members of Congress both in the House and the Senate. And yes, the American people will still have an opportunity to play a role in that committee's process. All recommendations from the committee will have to pass both the House and the Senate and be signed by the president before

becoming law. Now, coming to an agreement is not going to be easy. You're going to hear a lot of rhetoric from the media and from other special interest groups, but as chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, again, I promise to you that I will not only fight for America's veterans, but that I will stand steadfast in ensuring that America's veterans are not used as political pawns in the process. *(Applause)*

And we intend to be proactive keeping our veterans informed with the facts in the coming months, and will provide information on the progress of the select committee as it goes about its work. But just as important as getting our fiscal house in order, is putting our American veterans back to work. Every veteran in every state across this country deserves better than to stand in unemployment lines. To that end I have pledged to help reduce unemployment in our veteran communities by half, lowering the unemployment in the next two years. A rate we haven't seen since 2007.

To do this, I have introduced a comprehensive veterans' jobs legislation bill, actually back in July, and it's called The Veterans Opportunity to Work Act of 2011, or the VOW Act for short. Now, the VOW Act will ensure that we have the most trained, the most skilled workforce since the Second World War. Our soldiers, our Marines, our sailors, our airmen and our coast guard returning from Afghanistan and Iraq face higher unemployment than the national average. While our older veterans who make up two-thirds of the unemployed veteran community, are faced with a changing job market. In total, nearly one million veterans are out of work, and I'm sure that you'll agree with me that that number is unacceptable. Now, our committee has focused on this issue for much of this year, and I would like to commend the president for joining us in this fight in making veteran employment a priority.

The VOW Act has five pillars. First, we must enhance the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) which provides career counseling. TAP will be mandatory for all separating servicemembers. And we will also make sure that it is meeting the needs of our veterans for the 21st century.

Second, we all know that education is one of the keys to success. Right now 48 percent of veterans using the Montgomery and Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits are enrolled in four year colleges and universities. But we need to make sure that our Vietnam, our Cold War and Persian Gulf War era veterans also have opportunities to advance in the workplace. Therefore, under the VOW Act, up to 100,000 veterans of past eras can receive up to one year of Montgomery GI Bill benefits to retrain for careers in this new and ever-changing marketplace.

Third, when members of the National Guard and Reserve are called to duty, their employer must keep their position open until they return, and must not discriminate against them based on their Guard and their Reserve status. Too often this has not been the case. So, we will strengthen the protection provided by the Uniform Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, USERRA. We must be willing to defend veterans' rights even when others are unwilling to do so.

Fourth, despite America's military having the best trained professionals in the world, the inability to be credentialed or licensed in their equivalent civilian field when they return home, prevents these men and women from obtaining meaningful and gainful employment in their area of expertise. Some of these professions include medics, truck drivers, and aircraft technicians to name a few. Our states hold the key to breaking down this barrier. I've been working with several governors and governors' associations as well as the Department of Labor to create uniformed standards to ease this transition from active duty to civilian life. A combat medic, who has seen the worst of war in Iraq or Afghanistan, is surely qualified to be an EMT here at home. *(Applause)*

And lastly I have introduced a bill providing meaningful tax incentives for small businesses that hire unemployed veterans, which will not only provide capital for the business which spurs growth, but also protects the veteran from being a mere tax break

hire, a trick that we often see. And as important as its other features, the VOW Act does not increase the deficit one penny.

I would like to thank the Legion for their support of this legislation. Many of these proposals were supported by The American Legion's National Economic Division, and we would not be where we are today without having their help. But as you know, and as I know, and as the president knows, the government's role is not to create jobs, but what the government can do is create the right environment for the job market itself to flourish. And we do this by reducing the burdens of over-reaching regulations that encumber America's small businesses, the engine of our economy. In other words, your government, your government needs to get the hell out of the way of the economy, get the boot off the back of small businesses and let the engine roar. *(Applause)*

The time to talk is over. We've got to act, and we've got to do it quickly. I encourage each of you to take an opportunity to read the bill available on our committee's website at veterans.house.gov, and let your elected officials back home know what you think. And I look forward to the president signing the VOW Act into law as soon as possible.

And while we get our veterans back to work, we cannot and we must not forget those who are suffering with the invisible wounds of war: Post-Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injury. These can be some of the hardest wounds to treat. But we can and we will help these men and women get on a path to recovery. That was and still is the mission of the VA, to heal our veterans and to provide them with the support necessary to lead full and productive lives. Now today we face a choice. Either we take action to address the deficiencies in the current system, which many opt out of before even receiving treatment, or we maintain the status quo. The status quo with a rising suicide rate is not an option. It is unacceptable to me.

This summer a veteran of the Marine Corps testified before the full committee. He told us that he took the money from VA that he was receiving for PTS and its treatment, and he spent it on alcohol and other vices. It was not until this young man hit absolute rock bottom that he reached out to somebody for help. But instead of going to the VA, he turned to a private organization right here in Minnesota, and in 15 months he had his life back. He courageously fought his demons and came back a stronger Marine.

We've got to find a way to reach these men and women and provide them with the support that they need. We need to transform the culture of VA so that all veterans feel welcome. Again, it's not an easy task, but I believe it can and it must be done. It is incumbent upon all of us to reach out to those who are in pain, and we've also got to help them get as well as possible and to stop just masking the symptoms with drugs. Each of us has the ability to help, especially in our own communities.

Legislation is about partnerships. The American Legion's Washington team is one of the finest. You should be very proud of the work that they do on your behalf in the nation's capitol. Next month we will welcome the Legion to Washington for its annual legislative hearing before the House and the Senate Veteran Affairs Committees. And this year our committee intends to continue its aggressive oversight of VA to ensure that taxpayer dollars are not only being spent wisely, but being spent on veterans needs, not on bureaucracy.

We must also turn the corner on the shameful disability compensation claims backlog, and I heard Secretary Shinseki talking about that. We have heard for too many years too many promises. And this Congress will turn the corner and make VA accountable to ensure accuracy for the first time a claim is submitted. We also want to hear from veterans just like you all over this country, for them and their families to help us find solutions to problems within the system. Therefore, we want to hear from each of you, whether it's visiting our offices personally, calling us on the phone, sending us an email or reaching out to us on Facebook. These issues are not partisan issues. They are veteran issues and that's exactly the way that it should be. A quote from General Omar

Bradley, former VA secretary, stated quite bluntly in 1947, "We are dealing with veterans, not procedures. With their problems, not ours."

I promise to each one of you here today I will not let bureaucracy, red tape, or political brinkmanship, stand in the way of caring for America's veterans during my tenure as chairman. You are my priority. This country's commitment to our veterans will never waver and nor will mine. I applaud each of you and your families for your service to our country and to The American Legion. I thank you for the invitation. God bless you and may God bless the United States of America. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Thank you Congressman Miller. At this time would all membership award recipients to please assemble behind the stage if you're not already there. The chair recognizes Denise H. Rohan of Wisconsin, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs/Membership, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters
(Section III of Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs)
Denise H. Rohan, Wisconsin, Chairman

Forty-one members of the Credentials and Internal Affairs Committee Section III (Membership), considered one resolution which originated from the Department of Illinois. The resolution was referred to the standing Membership & Post Activities Committee.

Jim Demarest of Iowa nominated Denise Rohan of Wisconsin as Chairman. It was seconded by Elmer Palmer of Montana. The motion to close nominations was made by Mike Bowen of New York and seconded by Elmer Palmer of Montana. Both motions carried. Ron Daum of Illinois nominated Gerald Goetzinger of South Dakota as Secretary. It was seconded by Elmer Palmer of Montana. Motion carried.

Elmer Palmer of Montana made a motion that the Chairman and Secretary be authorized to sign the report of the Committee. The motion was seconded by Jim Wallace of Michigan.

Elmer Palmer of Montana made a motion that the Chairman and Secretary be authorized to make technical corrections to the Resolutions reported out of the Committee to insure proper wording and form without changing the substance or meaning of the Resolution. The motion was seconded Jim Demarest of Iowa.

The following resolution was referred to the standing Membership & Post Activities Committee:

Referred to the Standing Committee for Membership and Post Activities

Resolution No. 92 (IL): **Include Department Service Officer Website on Annual Dues Notices**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ROHAN: Mr. Commander as a duly authorized delegate to this convention from the Department of Wisconsin, I move for the adoption of this report. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: You heard the motion. I heard many seconds. Is there any discussion? Question has been called for. All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed. Carried. The report of Credentials and Internal Affairs/Membership is adopted. Thank you, Denise.

It is now time for the membership awards. The departments and individuals who will be joining me on the stage did an outstanding job in 2011. We are continuously building relationships with the active duty and Reserve military components and the

National Guard. We have signed memorandums of understanding with the United States Recruiting Command, plus our own programs, to reach out to all veterans and their families. Programs and activities such as The American Legion Riders, Heroes to Hometowns, Operation Comfort Warriors, assistance through the Family Support Network and many others have expanded the opportunity for The American Legion to fulfill the promises of the Four Pillars. Couple all this with our continued commitment of service to veterans, their families and our communities, and you can clearly see why The American Legion's growth potential is unlimited.

While our membership numbers are roughly the same as last year, we have shown some signs of improvement in gaining new traditional members. We still have work to do on getting the renewals. We cannot not hope to grow with new members if we don't remain engaged with our existing members as well. Membership gives The American Legion strength, because as we all know, there's strength in numbers. The American Legion is stronger today thanks to the efforts of the departments and individuals who are about to be recognized. In doing that, I now ask that National Vice Commander William F. Schrier of Washington, assume the duties at the podium, and national vice commanders assigned to each department, join me as we congratulate the different departments from their areas. *...National Vice Commander Schrier assumed the Chair.*

Presentation: Department Membership Awards

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER: Good morning. We all know there are places where we can develop and start a new post. Places where The American Legion does not have a presence in the community. The past year one department recognized this need and took their post development and revitalization efforts to a new level. The Department of Texas started seven new posts this year. Over the last three years, the Department of Texas has started 19 new posts. A plaque is being presented to Department Commander Kenneth Mueller, Department Adjutant Bill West, and Department Membership Chairman Harry Hicks, for their efforts. Please give them a round of applause for their work. *(Applause)*

During the Spring Meetings of 1998, several resolutions were passed to prepare The American Legion for the 21st century. The final resolve clause of resolution number 28 stated: "That there should be an American Legion post for every high school where department, districts and post leadership will work together to ensure the success of the post in its support of programs in the local community." This resolution resounded loudly with one Legionnaire in particular. Al Ford, from the Department of Michigan heeded the call and implemented his team's plan. Since 1998, Michigan has either started or revitalized 109 posts. *(Applause)* And now I invite you to watch this short video.

... The delegation viewed a video narrated by Past National Commander Spanogle.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER SPANOGLE: I've known Al Ford for a very long time, at least two or three decades. And I've known him as a very dedicated Legionnaire and a great volunteer. One who cares about The American Legion and cares about his country. Al started out about 15 years ago with a goal to form and revitalize 100 posts in the Department of Michigan, and he has done that. He's done that in cooperation with the leadership of the Department of Michigan and many of our state commanders.

DELEGATE FORD: I don't remember what year it was, but I do remember Past National Commander Dan Ludwig made a presentation to the NEC back about 15 years ago, and one of his comments was that if The American Legion is going to survive and grow in the 21st century, we have to have an American Legion post in every community that has a high school.

For some reason that stuck in my little brain. I was a NECman at that time, and our department commander, who is now a national vice commander, John Mella, asked me if

I would head up post development in Michigan. And I said, 'Well, yeah, I don't have anything to do, but yeah, I'll do it.' And we started. And we started from scratch, writing the procedures and so forth. And it has developed into I think a pretty good program for the Department of Michigan. We've either revitalized and/or started new, over a hundred posts in this particular period of time since post development was started.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER SPANOGLE: I think Al does it deep down because he's dedicated his life to the future of this nation, and the people of this nation. I mean, if he had to explain it, to be a good American is that you care about your community; you care about your state. And Al was chosen the Legion as the vehicle for his energies, and I think we're very fortunate to have Al as an active member of The American Legion.

DELEGATE FORD: I believe in The American Legion, and I think that I'm helping the community. I'm helping the veteran. I know that I talk a lot about benefits for belong to The American Legion and benefits for talking to our service officers and letting them know what VA benefits are available for them. I know that I'm helping in the community. I got to believe that I am a good Christian and I think that's part of my calling to do that. It's exciting when you can get participation like we've had here today and get all of these folks out to talk about The American Legion, and about what we can do for our communities. It's a high point every time we do it. I just enjoy doing it, and I have an understanding wife.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER SPANOGLE: And I'm proud to be here to endorse the support for Al Ford. A Legionnaire's Legionnaire, and a great American. One who cares about The American Legion and this nation. (Applause)

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER: Please give a warm American Legion welcome to Al Ford. He's being presented a shadow box and post development and revitalization pin. Al, thank you for all that you do for The American Legion. *(Applause)*

DELEGATE FORD: Thank you, Commander Foster, for this honor. And I accept it on behalf of the Post Development Committee in Michigan that has worked so hard over the years to make this possible. And I want to thank them and all of the other Legionnaires in Michigan, that when we put out a call that we're going to do and event for revitalization or form a new post, we get the Legionnaires out and they all volunteer their time on their dollar, and I appreciate it and I thank you all very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER: Will National Vice Commander John Mella assume the duties at the podium for the reading of the O.L. Bodenhamer Trophy, Market Penetration, All Target Dates Achievement and Race to the Top winners.

...At this time National Vice Commander Mella assumed the Chair.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER MELLA: Good morning. This past year we saw one department, Kentucky, go from being at the bottom of the membership standings to being number one, and the only department to make 100 percent through traditional efforts. How did they do it? In a moment we will let Mike Phelps explain their secret. In the meantime, the next six membership awards are a testament to their hard work.

The O.L. Bodenhamer Trophy is presented to the department that led The American Legion in traditional membership for the Flag Day report June 14th. This department exceeded their goal by the Flag Day report by achieving 100.628 percent. Please give a warm welcome to the Department of Kentucky. This presentation is to the Department Commander Michael Phelps, Membership Chairman Ted Austin, and Department Adjutant Sydney Shouse. Gentlemen please do not go too far. We have some more for you. *(Applause)*

The General Henri Gouraud Trophy is given to the first department to exceed its national membership goal in its respective category based on the same six categories as

the Big Twelve award. Kentucky is the only recipient of this year's award. A plaque is being presented to Department Commander Mike Phelps. *(Applause)*

Market penetration is a measuring stick showing how well we are reaching potential veterans and asking them to join our ranks as members of The American Legion. The Department of Kentucky earned the most improved award by achieving 9.58 percent which was an increase of .65 percent. A plaque is being presented to Department Commander Mike Phelps. *(Applause)*

This is the first time in many years that a department has achieved its goal by meeting each target date during the membership year, but the Department of Kentucky is the recipient of the All Target Dates award. A plaque is being presented to Department Commander Mike Phelps, Membership Chairman Ted Austin, and Department Adjutant Sydney Shouse. *(Applause)*

We are also presenting them with a plaque for achieving 100 percent of their membership goal through traditional methods by the May target date. *(Applause)*

Department Commander Mike Phelps is being recognized as the Department Commander of the Year because Kentucky exceeded its membership goal by the May target data. A plaque is being presented to Commander Phelps for his leadership and hard work in achieving its goal this year. Please join me in congratulating the Department of Kentucky for an outstanding job this year. *(Applause)*

Commander Phelps, would you explain briefly how the Department of Kentucky was able to achieve their membership goal?

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER PHELPS: Good morning everyone. It's a pleasure to be here. That was pretty impressive. I was told I was going to get an award. That was pretty good. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Commander.

Mr. Commander, national officers, distinguished guests, fellow members of The American Legion family. On behalf of the 25,700 Kentucky Legionnaires thank you for this very special award, plural. You asked how we went from last to first. Very simply, hard work and paying attention to detail. We had a five step plan.

Number One: It started with Commander Foster giving us an obtainable goal.

Number Two: We had a department commander, me, with the goal from day one to be a 100 percent department. I knew I could only be a department commander one time, and I had one chance to be a 100 percent department.

Number Three: We had a great department membership chairman, Past Department Commander Ted Austin, and a great department adjutant, Past Department Commander Sydney Shouse, who is with me back here. Both working closely with district and post commanders, adjutants, and membership chairmen.

Number Four: We had great communications throughout the entire department, mostly via our website kylegion.org.

Number Five: Most importantly, we paid attention to detail. We knew everyday where we stood and we made sure the entire department was aware.

You see, our department goal dates were two weeks prior to the national dates. If we did not meet the national membership goal by our date, we were on the phone calling for membership. We met every membership goal. We're a hundred percent and first in the nation. We went from 52nd place to first in the nation. As Rudy told us yesterday, you can meet your goals, but first you must have goals. We were tired of being in last place. Everyone wants to be part of a winning team. I can assure you all it is great being in first place. It is well worth the hard work. Again, thanks for the special award. And finally, go Kentucky. We are winners. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER MELLA: The next presentation is for the District Commander's Race to the Top award. This is a prestigious award that can be very competitive for the district commanders. The separation between qualifying for the award and the first, second and third place winners comes down to just one-hundredth of a percentage point in some categories. There are five categories, and this year we only have

winners in the first three categories. Please join me in welcoming these district commanders to the stage.

Category I: Nolen Wayne Jackson, Department of Utah.

Category II: Bernard L. Remoaldo, Department of California.

Category III: Jay Conti, Sr., Department of Florida.

These district commanders are being presented a new Legion cap, a polo shirt and a shadow box. We sincerely appreciate your hard work and dedication. *(Applause)*

...At this time National Commander Foster resumed the Chair.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: On stage are the past recipients of the National Recruiter of the Year Award since 2005. They are James Topps from Michigan, the 2005 winner. Frank Carr, Virginia, 2006, 2007 and 2008. R.V. Martin, Mississippi, 2009. These individuals have recruited 4,297 members. Give them a hand. *(Applause)*

Presentation: National Recruiter of the Year

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Now, this leads me to our next membership award. It goes to a man who always seems to be in the running for the National Recruiter of the Year Award. This year, Nathaniel King of the Department of Georgia recruited 531 new members into The American Legion. This is his third time as our National Recruiter of the Year. He also won the award in 2004 and again in 2010. Unfortunately, Nathaniel is unable to attend the convention this year, but Department Commander Charlie Tucker and Post 267 Commander Vickie Dykes will accept the award on his behalf. Will National Vice Commander Eugene Pytka please assume the duties here at the lectern.

...National Vice Commander Pytka assumed the Chair.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER PYTKA: Commander Foster is presenting two new Legion caps, a shadow box plaque, and two polo shirts signifying that Nathaniel earned the title of National Recruiter for the 2011 membership year. Our congratulations go to Nathaniel, and we hope that he continues to recruit more members into our great organization. Perhaps there's someone out there that would like to challenge and dethrone Nathaniel? Maybe one of our past recruiters might want their title back? *(Applause)*

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER TUCKER (GA): Regretfully, Nathaniel King couldn't be with us. Guess what he's doing? He's working membership. It is his third award. He does have a great area to work in, Columbus, Georgia area, Fort Benning. From Post 267, his commander, Miss Vickie Dykes has always supported him, and Nathaniel truly loves working membership. I assured Secretary Shinseki that Sergeant Kapacziewski will be signed up as our newest member from Georgia as soon as Nathaniel gets the phone call. On behalf of the Department of Georgia and Nathaniel King, thank you so much for this award. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: I have a rebuttal. Why does he have to go to Georgia? I signed up the secretary. *(Laughter)*

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER TUCKER: Nathaniel is on his way to Kentucky, let it be known. *(Laughter)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER PYTKA: As far as that goes, I might quit and join again if they give me a diamond. *(Laughter)*

Presentation: Special Four Pillars for Bob Brewster

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER PYTKA: During the 2010 National American Legion College, one of the students made a suggestion that has made our Four Pillars more visible, literally. This suggestion was turned into a resolution that was passed

during the most recent Spring Meetings to engrave the four columns on the east and west sides of our National Headquarters building located in downtown Indianapolis.

Please give a warm welcome to Bob Brewster from the Department of Florida. Commander Foster is presenting him a plaque which includes the resolution. Bob, thank you for your suggestion. *(Applause)*

DELEGATE BREWSTER (FL): Thank you. My name is Bob Brewster, Fifth District, Florida, as they know I don't give many speeches. This is an award that came to me, but I really owe it to the Department of Florida. They gave me the opportunity to go to the college at my age. I thank you. Thank you all. God bless. *(Applause)*

...At this time National Commander Foster resumed the Chair.

Membership/Consolidated Post Reporting 2010-2011 Year

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The Consolidate Post Report is a summary of what The American Legion posts have accomplished in their committees. It's an opportunity to tell the story of your post on an easy to fill out form. When I testified before Congress in September, I used the data from this report as part of my testimony. For the 2010-2011 membership year our response rate was only 60 percent with 8,334 posts reporting out of a total of 13,807. As you can see, we need to improve our reporting so we can truly show what The American Legion is doing in our local communities. A certificate was mailed to the departments who met the challenge of a 75 percent response rate. Those departments were: California; Kentucky; Maryland; New York; Ohio; Rhode Island; Vermont; West Virginia and Mexico. I think they deserve a large round of applause. *(Applause)*

Now we must recognize those that exceeded the challenge and had a response rate of 95 percent or higher. I have asked them to join me on the stage today for special recognition. At this time we present their plaques to their department commanders. Will National Vice Commander Russell J. Henry assume duties at the podium for the reading of the winners. *... At this time National Vice Commander Henry assumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HENRY: Would the following recipients please come forward? Albert Porter, Department of Florida; David Driver, Department of Montana; Ronald Corbett, Department of Nebraska; Jacqulene Collison, Department of Oregon; Michael Mitrione, Department of Virginia; Robert Batty, Department of Wisconsin; and last, but not least, Hugo Lenz, Department of Wyoming. *(Applause)*

... At this time National Commander Foster resumed the Chair.

National Emergency Fund Awards

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The National Emergency Fund is perhaps one of the most visible ways we can demonstrate our devotion to mutual helpfulness to our fellow Legionnaires. During the challenge year, The American Legion distributed $102,100 to 73 Legion family members for the disasters experienced in 2010-2011. We raised $248,699 this year, and currently have $2.6 million available for those in need. It is great to know that when a Legion family member needs help, the Legion family will step up and give without reservations. And it is because of your continued giving that we're able to sustain this fund. I think we all deserve a round of applause. *(Applause)*

Those department commanders who were the top fundraisers in their respective categories based on their membership size will be presented a plaque. We have five department commanders being recognized here today. At this time we will present their plaques. Will National Vice Commander Carlos Orria-Medina please assume the duties at the podium for the reading of the winners. *... At this time National Vice Commander Orria-Medina assumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER ORRIA-MEDINA: Those department commanders who are being recognized as the top fundraisers for the National Emergency Fund based on size are: Vincent Troiola, Department of New York; Michael Mooney, Jr., Department of Maryland; Daniel Leonard, Department of Louisiana; Edward Feeley, Department of Delaware; Hugo Lenz, Department of Wyoming. *(Applause)*

Congratulations. Thank you for your hard work and ensuring Legion family members in local communities know where to turn during a natural disaster. Please continue your fundraising efforts because we never know when and where the next natural disaster will strike and interrupt someone's daily life. Remember that each and every dollar donated to the National Emergency Fund stays in the National Emergency Fund and we will take care of our own when they need help. At this time I would like to ask those departments that would like to present checks for the National Emergency Fund to come forward and make your presentations now.

NEC MEMBER HEDRICK (NC): The Southern Block this morning had their annual caucus and had a grits gathering, and a few donations and some fines, we're proud to present $5,665 to the National Emergency Fund.

DELEGATE GOTH (MO): I'm Kenny Goth, department commander of the great state of Missouri, and we're proud to present $4,726.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (SC): The Department of South Carolina is proud to donate $1,934.50 to the National Emergency Relief Fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AZ): The great state of Arizona, ALR Post 29 gave us an additional check for the Legacy Scholarship Fund of $1,125.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): From the Department of Ohio, we are proud to present you with a check for $10,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (PA): On behalf the great state of Pennsylvania, I would like to add a second check for $11,781.25, bringing our grand total to $27,822.75.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IA): The American Legion family, Department of Iowa, presents a check for the National Emergency Fund of $1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NE): On behalf the Department of Nebraska, we would like to present this check to the National Emergency Fund in the amount of $3,077.18, which will bring our total to a little over $8,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MN): The Department of Minnesota is proud to donate $5,000 to the NEF.

DELEGATE MILLER (AZ): Scott Miller. John Adams Post 42, Department of Arizona, a thousand dollar check to the National Emergency Relief Fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ND): The Department of North Dakota would like to present a check for $3,815.10.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NY): On behalf of the entire delegation from the Department New York I present this check for $65,000. And I also have a check for the Comfort Warriors for $2,000 on behalf of Post 274 in Peekskill, New York.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MI): The Department of Michigan pledges two thousand dollars to the National Emergency Fund.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER ORRIA-MEDINA: Thank you to all the departments who made these donations. *(Applause)*

The chair recognizes Dennis Boland of Florida, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Children and Youth, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Dennis R. Boland, Florida, Chairman

Good morning. Mr. Commander, Legionnaires and guests. The Convention Committee on Children and Youth met at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, August 28, 2011. The

meeting was organized by electing delegate Dennis Boland of Florida as Chairman and delegate Herbert J. Petit, Jr. of Louisiana as Secretary. There were 50 members of the committee present.

No resolutions were received for consideration. The Committee was briefed on the important work of the National Commission on Children & Youth.

Our Areas of Concern for the 2011-2012 year deal with quality of life issues affecting America's children. They are: Child Health, Family Support and Child Safety. These are timely topics that impact the lives of all young people.

Our Temporary Financial Assistance Program continues its rich tradition of service to veterans and their families. Last year the TFA program awarded over $515,500 in non-repayable grants to veterans' families benefitting over 1,400 children.

Last year, The American Legion Family Support Network fielded over 2,000 requests for assistance and information from our comrades currently serving on active duty and their families. So far this year, the Legion has averaged over 40 calls per week for assistance.

A motion was made and seconded to allow the Committee Chairman and Secretary to sign the report on behalf of the committee. A voice vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BOLAND: As a duly elected and registered delegate for the Department of Florida, I move for the adoption of this report. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Okay. You heard the motion and many seconds. Is there any discussion? The question has been called for. All in favor, so indicate the usual sign. Opposed? Carried. The report of the Convention Committee on Children and Youth is adopted.

Presentation: Garland Murphy Award

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: I now have the pleasure of presenting the Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award to the department that raised the most money for the Child Welfare Foundation during the past program year. Ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure for me to present this award to none other than the Department of Ohio. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award presented by the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to the Department of Ohio for the program year 2010-2011. In recognition of their designation as the number one department in total contributions received from their volunteers, in support of our annual program designed to meet the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs of our nation's children through productive and meaningful grants. (Applause)

Presentation: The U. S. 'Udie' Grant Legacy Award

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: It is now time for me to present the U. S. "Udie" Grant Legacy Award. This award recognizes the collective efforts of The American Legion family in a department. It goes to the department that collectively raises the most money for the Child Welfare Foundation during the past program year. The winner of this prestigious award is none other than the Department of Ohio. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The U. S. "Udie" Grant Legacy Award presented by The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to the Department of Ohio for the program year 2010-2011, in recognition of outstanding support for The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. We thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: At this time if anyone has donations to the Child Welfare Foundation, I will now accept them on stage. Here comes Ohio.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): Commander, on behalf of the Department of Ohio and the Charities, Inc., we are donating $30,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MN): Commander, on behalf of the State of Minnesota we proudly give you a check for $2,500 for Child Welfare.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IA): On behalf of The American Legion Family Department of Iowa I have two checks. One for the National Child Welfare Fund, for $1,000, and one for Operation Comfort Warrior for $1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MA): Mr. Commander, the Department of Massachusetts is proud to give you a check for the Child Welfare Foundation for $1,634.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MO): Mr. Commander, on behalf of the Department of Missouri I give you a check for the Child Welfare Foundation in the amount of $1,728.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (CT): Commander, on behalf of the Department of Connecticut I would like to present a check for the Child Welfare Foundation in the amount of $1,525.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (SC): Commander, on behalf of the members of the Department of South Carolina I would like to present a donation of $1,600 for the Child Welfare Foundation.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NE): Commander, on behalf of the great State of Nebraska I would like to donate this check of $1,617.18 to the Child Welfare Foundation.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MI): The State of Michigan will pledge $2,000 to the Child Welfare Fund also. Pat Lafferty, our department adjutant, says the check is in the mail.

CHAIRMAN BOLAND: Commander Foster, as president of the Child Welfare Foundation, on behalf of the Board of Directors I would like to recognize your leadership with the Spirit of Excellence Award. I would like to present you with the Child Welfare Lapel Diamond Pin, to wear on your lapel, sir. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Our next speaker is truly an historic figure, currently the minority leader in the United States House of Representatives. She served as the speaker of the House in the 110th and 111th Congresses. In 2004 she received an American Legion "Unsung Hero" Award at our Washington conference. Chet Edwards, this year's American Legion Distinguished Service Medal recipient, said this about our next guest. "As speaker of the United States House from 2004 to 2010, Mrs. Pelosi made caring for veterans the highest priority. Under her personal leadership Congress passed the New GI Bill, the first ever advance appropriations for VA health care, and the largest increases in veterans' budgets than under any other speaker in our nation's history." Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the House minority leader, the Honorable Representative Nancy Pelosi.

Address: The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader, United States House of Representatives

Good morning. Thank you, National Commander Jimmie Foster. It is my honor to join some of my colleagues who have already spoken to bring greetings and thanks of the Congress of the United States, to you, Commander Foster, and to all of the Legionnaires. I'm especially honored every time I get this invitation to come here. It's a very special privilege for me, but I'm especially honored to be with you as we approach the ten year anniversary of 9/11.

Thank you, Commander Foster, for your introduction, for your leadership, and for your service to our country as a Marine, and to your fellow veterans and Legionnaires. When Congress worked with you, Mr. Commander, to pass the Omnibus Veterans

Benefits Bill last year to provide support to veterans and caregivers, The American Legion said that the bill offers bold solutions to major challenges facing servicemembers, veterans, and their families. The same could be said of Commander Foster's tenure, and the work of all Legionnaires. Bold leaders for your communities, committed to helping your fellow men and women in uniform face every challenge, overcome any obstacle, and succeed.

As a Californian I would especially like to take this opportunity to recognize The American Legion's Department of California and its commander, Mark Foxworthy. Any Californians in the house? As a proud daughter of Baltimore, my native city, I also want to acknowledge the work of the Department of Maryland and its commander, Michael Mooney. The D'Alesandro family, my family, took great pride that four of my brothers wore the Army's uniform. *(Applause)*

On behalf of my colleagues I want to thank you. For everyone who served with Chet Edwards in Congress knew of his leadership, and we want to thank you for awarding the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion's highest civilian honor to Chairman Chet Edwards, who is here with us on the stage today. *(Applause)*

When he was in the House he served admirably as chairman of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriation Subcommittee, leading the charge to provide the VA with advance appropriations. Thank God for Chet Edwards, authorizing the largest ever increase in veterans health care. And even before he was chairman he played a key role in crafting and passing the landmark Post-9/11 GI Bill. You know how important that bill was, but Chet wasn't just content on passing it, to say thank you to our veterans and send them to college. He wanted to be sure that it would be transferrable to other family members should that be the wish of the family.

But in addition to that, when it became obvious that we needed to do even more, he brought to the forefront the Sergeant John David Frye legislation. And many of you know what that does. But for those of you who do not, and I do think it bears repeating, because Chet's leadership was so great in this regard. It said that if our soldier, sailor, guardsman, Marine, airman, was lost in battle, that the benefit survived them, and that their children or another family member could use the benefit. It's hard to believe that the benefit was transferrable if you lived, but if you died it disappeared. Thank you, Chet Edwards, for making that possible for so many families in our country. I name but a few of his many, many achievements. All of us in Congress who served with him are proud to call him colleague and his work and his commitment to our veterans continues. *(Applause)*

For the men and women of The American Legion service is not simply a lofty goal, but a way of life. Sacrifice is what binds you together; heroism is what sets you apart. From the first Legionnaires, the veterans of World War I, to your newest members, those who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, you embody the call to service. For your country, your neighbors, and your fellow veterans. On the battlefield your mission is to ensure the safety and security of our nation. Our first responsibility, to protect and defend. At home your task is to uphold our moral responsibility to serve and support all of our soldiers with deeds as well as words.

Legionnaires go beyond the call of duty, making a difference in their local communities. Consider what local Legion posts have given back. Stunning. Nearly 4,000,000 hours of community service, more than $2.3 million for emergency aid, more than 3,600 veterans placed in jobs with help from the Legion. Almost 14,000 college scholarships granted by local posts. These figures represent just a fraction of the extraordinary work you do to strengthen our nation every day. Thank you, Legionnaires, for always staying true to your mission of mutual helpfulness on the frontlines abroad and here at home. *(Applause)*

The spirit of The American Legion and of so many veterans was captured in the recent story of Marine Captain Brian Stann. In the heat of combat in Iraq, Captain Stann protected his unit, while surrounded by enemy forces and coming under heavy fire in a

distant desert. He saved the lives of his fellow Marines. Upon his return home he won the Silver Star for his heroism and for his courage. Some in his unit were lost that day on the battlefield, and would never see their native soil again or their families again. And when back in the United States, Captain Stann knew he had to find a way to honor the memory and the sacrifice of the fallen heroes, of his fallen brothers in arms. Because in his words, "I lost friends who will never have the opportunities I've had. I live every day for them,"

For Captain Stann, living every day for them meant starting Hire Heroes, an organization to help returning veterans re-enter the work force and find jobs. As you know, it connects employers with veterans, and helps soldiers craft their résumés, prepare for interviews, and apply skills learned in the military to civilian lives. It's a big boost for them. Echoing the work of Captain Stann's efforts with Hire Heroes, Congressman Sanford Bishop offered the Hiring Heroes Act. And what that does is increase contracting opportunities for veteran-owned small businesses so they could grow higher and boost our economy.

In our regular meetings of our veterans service organizations the emphasis has been on jobs, jobs, jobs, jobs. And one of the suggestions, made forcefully by all of you at that time, was that the federal government should use its contracting power and honor its commitment to veterans' preferences in contracts. It's a wonderful thing to create jobs, to be a model to the country and ask businesses to do so, and we support all of those initiatives. But ownership and equity and exploiting the leadership qualities of our men and women in uniform by having them own their own businesses, to be job creators, to be entrepreneurial, that is really one of the priorities you have brought to us.

It's one that we will fight for, and it is contained in the Hiring Heroes legislation, which also helps veterans obtain good jobs by strengthening training initiatives and encouraging businesses and government contractors to hire the men and women of our armed forces. And if we as a nation, as a people, as a community of Americans, are to live every day for our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Guardsmen, we cannot accept high jobless rates for veterans and a lack of opportunity for those who serve. We must make certain job creation and economic growth are a priority for our veterans and for our country.

Congressman Tim Walz, whom you heard from this morning, the highest ranking enlisted soldier ever to serve in Congress, introduced a bill to cut bureaucratic red tape and offer employers a tax credit for hiring unemployed veterans discharged from the military in the last five years, the veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. We have a Make It In America Initiative, a plan to create jobs and strengthen our manufacturing, industrial and technological base. It is a national security issue that we stop the erosion of our manufacturing base in our country. We must be self-reliant. We cannot defend our country if we are depending on other countries to supply us with the means to produce what we need to defend. Congressman Keith Ellison, who you heard from, is working with our whip, Steny Hoyer on this subject. When we make it in America, the American people can make it in America. And it has a special emphasis on good paying, clean energy jobs for our veterans. *(Applause)*

Supporting our veterans is a bipartisan cause. That's the beautiful part of it. It's a place where we can all come together. I know you heard from the chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee this morning, Jeff Miller. We must work together, Democrats and Republicans, with The American Legion by our side, to pass these critical measures and invest in our economic well-being, the economic well-being of all of our servicemembers and their families. Yesterday you heard from President Obama about his comprehensive agenda to expand job opportunities for America's veterans, and to ensure that they have the support they need and deserve to enter the civilian work force.

Following The American Legion's lead, many of these initiatives the president talked about yesterday, you were in the lead on and Chairman Chet Edwards put into legislative form, and now it's into better public policy to improve the lives of our

veterans. But we need more, and the president's plan offers tax credits to hire unemployed veterans and wounded warriors. That's on your agenda. It challenges the private sector to do their part to hire and train veterans and their spouses, pushes federal agencies to update the way they educate and prepare soldiers for transition to civilian life, and improving how they hire and retain veterans.

These steps are critical to our community of veterans, and to the strength of our economy. And because ensuring that veterans are given a chance to succeed as small business owners, it develops entrepreneurship and encourages growth. And to that end The American Legion has urged to strengthen veteran entrepreneurs. The Legion is pushing the Small Business Administration to boost outreach to veteran owned businesses, encourage and aid their growth, and ensure that they can access the capital they need to expand and to hire and to thrive. In the weeks ahead, as you know, you have been hearing about it all over I'm sure, Congress will take up the budget at a table of twelve. Twelve people sitting around that table. I want The American Legion and all of America to know that the values of America's veterans will have a strong presence at that Congressional table. I want to assure you that as we reduce the deficit, and we must reduce the deficit. America's veterans will not be shortchanged. The job of creation and economic growth must prevail. *(Applause)*

Meeting the needs of our veterans is not an issue for us at that table, it is a value of the American people that we will protect in those negotiations. Our work will not be complete until every American who has fought for our country abroad can find a job when they come home. We must build a future worthy of our veterans' sacrifice. We must build an economy that welcomes our servicemembers home with opportunity, a paycheck, and a fair shot to succeed. Working with Secretary Shinseki and The American Legion we can continue to make progress for the health, stability, and security of our veterans. With your voices, your advocacy, your leadership, we can meet today's challenges: Putting veterans to work, and in doing so, strengthening the economy for all Americans. In every way, in all that you do, you are a source of strength to America. America's veterans have earned our respect by their actions, their bravery and their valor, their willingness to step forward and serve on our behalf. In the words of one former Marine, "I do believe that we have something to contribute. We know how to lead."

In this spirit, the willingness to contribute, the desire to lead, the urge to give back, that characterizes millions of servicemembers. It certainly characterizes The American Legion. You believe in the potential of our country, you live by the values that make our military the finest fighting force in the world, and that will make our economy a bastion of prosperity. We must make certain that our nation lives up to the ideals protected and preserved by those who serve, by those who serve as a beacon of opportunity for all, as the land of the free and the home of the brave. As Captain Stann said, we must live every day for them, for the men and women who volunteer, who put their lives on the line, who fight on distant shores so that we can know safety, security, and freedom here at home. Together with The American Legion we will continue to uphold our solemn pledge. As the military says, on the battlefield we will leave no soldier behind. We say, and when they come home we will leave no veteran behind. *(Applause)*

God bless our veterans, our troops and their families. God bless The American Legion, may God always bless the United States of America. Thank you for the opportunity to be with you today. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Thank you, Mrs. Pelosi. As everybody else likes to know whenever all of the departments are up here, post, units and squadrons are all giving money to our very worthy programs. We had the NEF, Child Welfare, Comfort Warriors, Legacy Fund. Just today, on stage for the National Emergency Fund, the amount of money graciously donated by all of the departments, $107,411.43. Donations

to the Child Welfare Foundation just here on the stage, $38,009.15; Operation Comfort Warrior, $3,000; and the Legacy Fund, $644,666. *(Applause)*

Now, you've got to remember I grew up in Oklahoma. We had some different math. My granddaughters say, Papa, "That's old math." Well, I went to school and had to learn the right way, without computers and calculators. By my tabulations that's a little over $800,000 just in donations. We know times are tough, but we appreciate you supporting all the programs of The American Legion. Give yourselves one more hand. *(Applause)*

At this time the chair recognizes Harold Dale Barnett of Georgia, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Economics, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committees on Employment and Veterans' Preference and Other Economic Matters
Harold D. Barnett, Georgia, Chairman

Seventy-six (76) members of your Committees on Employment and Veterans Preference and on Other Economic Matters met at 9:00 a.m. on August 28, 2011, in the Minneapolis Convention Center, Room 101B, Level One, Minneapolis, Minnesota, and agreed on the following report, which is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

The Committees were called to order by Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr. (DC), Liaison Representative appointed by the National Adjutant to act as temporary chairman. Robert Madden (DC), Assistant Director for Economic Division, acted as temporary secretary and called the roll. A quorum being present, nominations were received for chairman. Harold Barnett (GA), Chairman of the Standing National Economic Commission, was unanimously elected Chairman of the Convention Committees.

With unanimous consent, the Chairman elected George A. Bannon (TX), as Committee Secretary; Albert M. Robotti (NJ), Chairman of the Employment and Veterans Preference Committee and James E. Amos, Jr. (NJ), Secretary; Wendall J. Sandell (PA), Chairman of the Other Economic Matters Committee and Eric W. Measles (CA), Secretary.

A Screening Committee on Economic Resolutions, in a preconvention meeting, screened and grouped the resolutions. A report of their actions, with recommendations, was presented to the Convention Committees for consideration.

The Screening Committee conserved the time of the Convention Committees substantially. It was chaired by Harold Barnett, (GA), Chairman of the Economic Commission and was composed of the following persons:

George Bannon (TX)
Albert M. Robotti (NJ)
William Christoffersen (UT)
Wendall J. Sandell (PA) Absent

The 12 Economic resolutions presented for the consideration of this Convention were referred by the Resolutions Assignment Committee. The following actions on the resolutions were taken by the Convention Committees:

Approved or Approved w/Amendment.....3
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved.....1
Referred to the Standing Commission 4
Received and Recorded 4
Rejected.....0

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Chairman and Secretary to sign and deliver the report on the Convention Committees' behalf.

A report of action taken on the 12 resolutions referred to the Standing Economic Commission will be made to the National Executive Committee and to the Adjutant of the Department concerned.

Employment and Veterans' Preference Committee

Approved Resolutions or Approved with Amendment

Resolution No. 108: Support Verification Improvements for Veterans' Businesses Within the Department of Veterans Affairs
Origin: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, The historical high unemployment rate of returning veterans and the current state of the economy present a career challenge for former military personnel, resulting in unemployment; and)

WHEREAS, The military is downsizing, which means that thousands of former military personnel who have honorably served their country will be unemployed; and

WHEREAS, Small business development assistance to veterans who have honorably served this country is a veterans' benefit that dates back to the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944; and

WHEREAS, Small business benefits specifically for veterans always have included assistance in creating and operating veteran-owned small businesses; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is authorized under the Veterans First program to enter into contracts first with Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSBs) and then with Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSBs); and

WHEREAS, Congress has made findings that VA has entered into contracts pursuant to the Veterans First program with companies that were not legitimate SDVOSBs or VOSBs; and

WHEREAS, Pursuant to recent legislation, VA has implemented a formal verification process which companies must undergo prior to being found eligible to participate in the Veterans First contracting program; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans have found the verification process to be overly burdensome, lengthy and too troublesome to undergo; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota August 30, 31, September 1, 2011, That The American Legion recommend the simplification and streamlining of the Department of Veterans Affairs verification of Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses (SDVOSBs) and Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSBs) interested in participating in the agency's Veterans First Contracting Program; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion endorses VA's efforts to ensure that contracts awarded pursuant to the Veterans First Program are awarded to companies that truly are entitled to receive these contracting benefits.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Economic

Resolution No. 36 (NY): **Support an Investigation of Hiring Practices in the Federal Government**

Received and Recorded Resolutions

Resolution No. 11 (TX): **Support Increase of Funding Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOPs) Specialist/Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs)**
Resolution No. 12 (TX): **Support Department of Labor's-Veterans' Employment Training Service (DOL-VETS) Establishing Job Bank for Veterans**
Resolution No. 13 (TX): **Require Department of Labor's-Veterans Employment Training Service (DOL-VETS) to Hire Veterans for Professional Staff**
Resolution No. 14 (TX): **Support Restoring Language for Review of Programs with Department of Labor's-Veterans' Employment Training Service (DOL-VETS)**

Committee on Other Economic Matters

Approved Resolutions or Approved with Amendment

Resolution No. 50: Support Legislation to Improve the Post-9/11 GI Bill
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
(As amended, Consolidated with Resolution No. 49 (UT))

WHEREAS, The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, the original GI Bill was one of the most successful pieces of legislation and spurred over 50 years of economic prosperity; and

WHEREAS, The Post-9/11 GI Bill was signed into law in 2008 and is a robust and comprehensive education benefit, rivaling the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, providing the tools and resources veterans need to be a success; and

WHEREAS, Congress introduced and passed the Post-9/11 GI Bill Improvements Act of 2010, which aimed at fixing some of the unintended consequences of the Post-9/11 GI Bill; and

WHEREAS, The Post-9/11 GI Bill Improvements Act of 2010 has a provision which allows the Department of Veterans Affairs as being the payer last resort after any other aid was provided, such as state funded tuition; and

WHEREAS, The Post-9/11 GI Bill Improvements Act of 2010 eliminated break pay, otherwise known as interval pay, for students of both the Post-9/11 GI Bill and Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program (chapter 31); and

WHEREAS, Certain veterans rely on this break pay to meet financial obligations they and their family require and cannot afford to miss interval/break pay even for a brief period, which the Post-9/11 GI Bill Improvements Act of 2010 eliminated; and

WHEREAS, Under current law, states that offer free tuition to veterans will be the first payer with the Department of Veterans Affairs paying the disparity for those eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill; and

WHEREAS, This change makes it difficult for the schools to keep track of the funding and where the money should come from and then the VA deducts this funding from the veteran's GI Bill pay; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31, September 1, 2011, That The American Legion support legislation ensuring the Department of Veterans Affairs and Post-9/11 GI Bill as a first payer and the non federal entities for those who require additional funding to go to those veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to restore funding in the Post-9/11 GI Bill and Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program for veterans attending school during this break or interval between terms.

Resolution No. 107: Supporting the U.S. Economy and Increased U.S. Energy Security Through a Canadian-American Oil Pipeline
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The American Legion the nation's largest veterans service organization is a strong advocate for programs and policies that enhance our nation's economic strength, and national security, and opportunities for veterans and all citizens; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's sense of obligation to community, state and nation drives honest advocacy for veterans in Washington; and

WHEREAS, The strength of our nation's economy relates directly to the economic opportunity available to veterans of the U.S. armed services and all other citizens; and

WHEREAS, The proposed pipeline will increase our nation's energy security by delivering 900,000 barrels per day of North American Crude oil to our nation's refineries; and

WHEREAS, The construction of the currently proposed pipeline to transport oil from the oil fields in Canada and the upper Midwest of the United States to U.S. refineries will significantly and immediately strengthen the U.S. economy; and

WHEREAS, This added stability will stimulate annual gains in U.S. business activity including at least 250,000 permanent jobs, $100 billion in total spending and $29 billion in output; and

WHEREAS, The pipeline will deliver crude oil without the need to deploy American citizens to respond to potential disruption involving foreign conflicts, piracy or other unforeseen risks; and

WHEREAS, All these benefits result entirely from private-sector expenditures, involving no taxpayer money whatsoever; and

WHEREAS, America's veterans, who have been hit hard by the Great Recession and its aftermath, will benefit significantly from these economic gains; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31, September 1, 2011, That The American Legion, in order to increase U.S. energy independence, the creation of 20,000 jobs, the investment of $7 billion of private capital, the generation of almost $6 billion in taxes for local government, and the improved stability of the U.S. oil market, strongly recommend the permitting, construction and operation of the pipeline; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges all segments of the United States government pursue and grant all required permitting necessary for the proposed pipeline without further delay.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Economic

Resolution No. 7 (MT): **Support Extended Time for Mortgage Payments for Service Members**
Resolution No. 26 (MT): **Support Amending Public Law 106-50 for Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses**
Resolution No. 51 (UT): **Increasing Tuition at Private Institutions to Original Highest In-State Tuition**

Consolidated Resolutions

Resolution No. 49 (UT): **Reinstatement of Break or Interval Pay for Post-9/11 GI Bill Recipients**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BARNETT: Mr. Commander, I, Harold Dale Barnett, Georgia, as a duly elected and registered delegate to this convention, move for the adoption of this report. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER: I've heard a second. Is there any discussion? Call for the question. All those in favor will indicate in the usual sign. Those opposed? It carries.

DELEGATE GLATT (ND): Mr. Commander. Discussion. Microphone one, to your left. Florence Glatt, Department of North Dakota, clarification on the pipeline, please. What are the parameters of the pipeline that is outlined in the resolution, please?

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER: Mr. Chairman?

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BARNETT: Understanding the concerns of location of that pipeline is not within the parameters of the resolution. There is a concurrent proposal. The pipeline would connect those oil fields also of our upper Midwest region of our country. It was within the "whereas" clauses of the resolution, and it does that. It will create jobs for Americans throughout the United States' mid-section. And the intent of the resolution absolutely was for national security and economic reasons it was in the best interest of the United States of America. Thank you.

DELEGATE GLATT: Question further, please. Is the pipeline going from Canada through the northern tier of states, taking their oil to Texas, to the refineries for refinement and then redistributing it across the United States?

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BARNETT: Our particular resolution does not talk about specific location. All current refineries that are online are currently in Texas. Other refineries coming online was not part of our resolution, was not part of the context of the resolution, but we do understand the concerns of the delegation from North Dakota.

DELEGATE GLATT: I would further ask that that resolution be set aside, please.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER: This resolution has already been passed.

DELEGATE GLATT: What about discussion? This is part of the discussion process.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER: You've had your discussion, ma'am. Two questions per person. And you can take this up with the chairman in the back of the room. That resolution has been passed. I'll ask once again for a vote on the floor. Those in favor? And those opposed? It's accepted.

DELEGATE RENNEISEN (FL): Commander? Florida delegation.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER: Microphone three.

DELEGATE RENNEISEN: Paul Renneisen, Florida delegation, Post 142, Pompano Beach, Florida. I sat on the subcommittee that brought one of the resolutions forward for this one in its final form. I stand here asking for a division of the house and a count of the votes, but I would also ask that we recognize that the 20,000 jobs listed in the resolution should be American jobs by American contractors. And being a Legion organization, specifically address the hiring of U. S. veterans in those many jobs. Thank you, sir.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER: I can certainly understand your concern.

DELEGATE RENNEISEN: I call for a division.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER: I'll call for the parliamentarian. As I said earlier, it has already been passed. Your request is out of order. The ayes have it.

Presentation: Employer of the Year Awards for Hiring Veterans

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER: Now it's time to extend special recognition to three employers for their outstanding record of making jobs available to veterans. That special recognition comes in the form of The American Legion Employer of the Year Award. We recognize three organizations as 2010 Employers of the Year. One award is for companies employing 50 or less people, another for companies

employing 51 to 200 people, and a third for companies employing more than 200 workers. Each is nominated by a post and advances through department and national levels. The award in the 50 employees or less category goes to Georgia Vietnam Veterans Alliance of Doraville, Georgia. Accepting on behalf of the company is Mr. Richard Sale, vice president. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans for 2010. Presented to Georgia Vietnam Veterans Alliance for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 93rd annual National Convention, Minneapolis, Minnesota." (Applause)

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER: In the 51 to 200 category the award goes to Millennium Security Services, LLC, Alpharetta, Georgia. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "The American Legion National Award for outstanding employer of veterans 2010, presented to Millennium Security Services, LLC, for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 93rd annual National Convention, Minneapolis, Minnesota." (Applause)

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER: In the large employer category of 200 plus employees, the award goes to Eagle Systems and Services, Inc., CIF, Fort Benning, Georgia. Accepting on behalf of the company, Mr. Daniel Crowley and Ms. Melanie Walton. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans 2010. Presented to Eagle Systems and Services, Inc., CIF, for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 93rd annual National Convention, Minneapolis, Minnesota." (Applause)

Presentation: Local Veterans Employment Representative of the Year Award

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER: Another employment award that I'm honored to present goes to the top Local Veterans Employment Representative, LVER, in the nation. The award honors those who have done such a remarkable job of placing veterans in jobs that even their peers take notice. The Employment Service Award to the Local Veterans Employment Representative for 2010 goes to Robert Shoeman, of Post Falls, Idaho. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "The American Legion National Award for outstanding Local Veterans Employment Representative of the Year 2010, presented to Robert Shoeman for your outstanding service to the veterans of the State of Idaho."

Presentation: Disabled Veterans Outreach Program of the Year Award

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER: The American Legion is also proud of the men and women who work on behalf of disabled veterans seeking employment. This year I'm happy to present the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program, DVOP Award, to Johnny Moreno, Twin Falls, Idaho. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The Award reads, "The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year 2010, presented to Johnny Moreno for your outstanding service to the veterans of the State of Idaho."

Presentation: Outstanding Employer of Disabled Veterans Award

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER: When the Employer Awards Program was established in 1947, its purpose was to recognize employers across the country who had established outstanding records in employment and retention of the disabled. In doing so, we're able to educate employers and the general public about the many positive aspects of hiring disabled persons, and thereby increasing their

employment opportunities. The award goes to Veterans Employment Development Council, The American Legion Post 155, Crystal River, Florida. Here to accept is Mr. Jay Conti, Sr. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Disabled Veterans 2010, presented to Veterans Employment Development Council, The American Legion Post 155, Crystal River, Florida, for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 93rd annual National Convention, Minneapolis, Minnesota." (Applause)

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER: On behalf of every veteran in America I extend to you our congratulations, and say those words that all workers love to hear: "Thank for you a job well done." We're certain you will keep on hiring and assisting veterans. Please tell other businesses about our reliability and our work ethic. Thank you, and congratulations. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Employment Service Office of the Year Award

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER: Continuing with our recognition of those who assist our fellow veterans in finding meaningful work, it is time to honor the top Employment Service Local Office of the Year. The award goes to Gwinnett Career Center, Georgia Department of Labor, Norcross, Georgia. Accepting the award is Ms. Melrobin Cothran. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "The American Legion National Award to the Outstanding Employment Service Local Office of the Year 2010 is presented to Gwinnett Career Center, Georgia Department of Labor, for outstanding service to the veterans of the State of Georgia." (Applause)

Presentation: Homeless Veterans Outreach Award

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER: The charge of The American Legion is to serve veterans and their families. This includes helping our homeless vets as they try re-entering society as productive, self-supporting citizens. I am honored to present the Homeless Veterans Outreach Award to one department of The American Legion that goes above and beyond the call of duty in helping our homeless. That department is the Department of Idaho. Accepting the award is Ms. Brandia Young.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "The American Legion National 2010 Homeless Veterans Outreach Award is presented to The American Legion Family Department of Idaho for exceptional efforts toward the elimination of homelessness among veterans in the State of Idaho. Presented at the 93rd annual National Convention, Minneapolis, Minnesota." (Applause)

Presentation: Outstanding Employer of Older Workers Award

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER: The American Legion strongly believes that older workers are a valuable economic resource of proven skills, stability and experience. We also encourage employers to hire and retain older workers in the work force. The purpose of the Older Workers Award is to recognize employers for their outstanding record in hiring and retaining those older workers. This year's award goes to Point Security Company, Inc., of Youngwood, Pennsylvania. Accepting the award for Point Security is Mrs. Kim Diperna. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Older Workers 2010 is presented to Point Security Company, Incorporated, of Youngwood, Pennsylvania, for an exceptional record in the employment of disabled persons. Presented at the 93rd annual National Convention, Minneapolis, Minnesota." (Applause)

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHRIER: Thank you all again for your dedication to employing our veterans. Let's give them all a big hand. *(Applause)*

... At this time National Commander Foster resumed the Chair.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: A 25-year veteran of the United States Navy, and Navy Reserve, our next speaker knows what it takes to succeed in business. The president and CEO of Walmart U.S., he oversees one of the nation's largest employers of veterans, including many active duty Guard and Reserve members. Walmart's charitable foundation has teamed up with the nonprofit, Wreaths Across America, to ensure that our heroes resting in national cemeteries are remembered. A new member of the American Legion, I will be giving him a diamond membership pin. Ladies and gentlemen, the president and CEO of Walmart U.S., Bill Simon.

Address: Bill Simon, President and CEO
Walmart U.S.

Thank you all so much for having me here. What a great, great honor it is to be with you. I would like to thank Commander Foster and the rest of the National Executive Committee for what, for me, is an incredible honor. Now, I know you're probably wondering why a CEO of Walmart would be addressing you here at your convention. I'm not a politician, and I don't really have anything for you. Actually I want something from you, and I'm going to talk about that later.

But I would like to talk to you about what we see. We see America through a particularly unique lens: Through the eyes of our customers. And I want to talk to you today about the issues that we're facing, veteran to veteran, and how we get this country that we all love back on track again, and the critical role that we all play in doing that.

We all have similar stories. Mine starts at 22-years-old when I checked aboard my first ship, a destroyer based out of Charleston, South Carolina, and met the captain, a man named Don Dyer. As you can imagine, I was nervous, as we all were. Now, Captain Dyer was a salty old sea captain. And when I presented him with my orders, at the very least I was expecting a lecture. But what I got was something completely different, something that stuck with me my entire life. He sat me down and he looked me in the eye and he said, "I want you to know I trust you, that your country is counting on you. And while you might make mistakes, we're all in this together." And then he said, "Get out there and go do your job."

The feeling of confidence that gave me has been one of the most enduring gifts that I got from my service. And I know many of us have similar stories. That confidence that we gained in ourselves, our ability to do things we never thought imaginable, and what we can do together is what America needs today. It's what we need to bottle and deliver to our country.

My company, Walmart, has been called a microcosm of America. And let me tell you what we're seeing in our stores. Tonight, the 31st of the month, at the end of every month, around 11:00 p.m. crowds start to gather at our store, and we see families, young mothers, starting to shop. And they buy formula, diapers, things that they need. And they mill about the front of the store until about midnight, and then they start to check out. And why, you might ask. Well, we have a crowd at midnight on the 31st of the month because that's when the electronic benefits, electronic food stamps, hit their cards, and they can check out. And I'm telling you, it will break your heart to watch. People lining

up for food at midnight. And the only reason you do that is that you have nothing to feed your family for breakfast the next morning. We're open 24 hours. You could just as easily come in the morning.

Our customers are working hard for their families, but the economy is not working for them right now. They feel like sometimes their leaders aren't listening to them. And then things like this credit downgrade, while it may not impact them personally financially, it just hurts them on a gut level, hurts them for our country's sake. And I hear a lot of people say maybe our country is in a bad time right now, maybe things are bad in America. Many of you have seen what bad looks like. And while this is rough, it's not bad. It's certainly not Pearl Harbor bad or 9/11 bad. This is all man-made.

Thirty Americans, 17 of them Navy SEALs, making the ultimate sacrifice in Afghanistan, now, that's bad. In fact, a national tragedy. A credit downgrade, it's just Wall Street's opinion. These are not acts of God or war, they are man-made problems, and we can solve them together. What do I mean by "we?" I mean we the people. We all of us. In my case we the business community, or we Walmart. But I also mean we the people in this room, the people that are listening, and the veterans of the American armed forces, those who've stormed beaches and parachuted behind enemy lines, stood watch on long hot nights. Everybody is hoping the cavalry is going to ride in and save the day. But actually we don't need to wait. We don't need to wait for that at all. Just think about our history. America's veterans, you are the cavalry.

After World War I the Dough Boys came home and we had the roar of the 1920s. After World War II the GIs came home and led our country to the largest economic growth period in our history. Today, after ten years of war, there is a new group of American men and women coming home, ready to lead us to the next American renewal. Now, I've got a ton of confidence in this generation. They are incredible. When I signed up to serve we knew combat was a possibility. But this generation, for this generation it's a probability.

I recently had the privilege of taking part in my nephew's commissioning. He was just commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army. He's at Fort Rucker in Alabama right now learning to become a helicopter pilot. He and his peers impressed me so much because two, three, four deployments and still they answer the call of duty. They are why I'm so confident that everything is going to be okay.

Now, for us, our obligation is to create the conditions for their success, so that when they come home they can lead us to a better day. This work of American renewal that we talk about, and you've heard it, it's about jobs. It's all about jobs. You know, we act like job creation is some big mystery. But we know how to create jobs. You hire somebody. People with capital employ others in a productive way. It's not really that complicated. With respect to jobs, now is not the time to retreat or wait now is the time to tackle our problems head-on. I run Walmart U. S., a company founded by a veteran. And Walmart is helping tackle America's job problem. Today I'm pleased to announce that Walmart will open more than 100 new stores by the end of the year, with new opportunities for new associates. And more than 15,000 people will be hired for these stores.

We'll create more jobs by buying local products from people. Things like produce grown by local farmers. And we're not stopping there. In October we'll announce growth plans for next year. More stores, more jobs. I'm real proud of the jobs we have at Walmart. These are good jobs, good careers. Inside our stores every day the American dream comes to life. For example, last year we promoted 140,000 hourly associates. That's like giving everybody in Dayton, Ohio, a promotion. And over 200,000 of our employees have been with the company over ten years. There is actually one rumor about Walmart and Walmart's benefits that is true. If you work for Walmart and your spouse in the military gets transferred, we will guarantee you a job at your new location. *(Applause)*

You've heard a lot this week about unemployment among veterans being too high, and it is. And we're doing something about it. I'll just come right out and say it. We love hiring veterans. *(Applause)* Thank you. But, frankly, it's selfish. Veterans not only have a record of performance under pressure. They are educated, technologically savvy, quick learners, and of course team players. And while it's difficult to fact check, we're quite certain we're the largest private employer of veterans in the country. I would actually like to introduce one of them to you today. Michelle Caraballo is with me here. She was a captain in the United States Army, and she was part of the surge in Iraq. And we didn't hire Michelle because she was a great retailer. In fact, she didn't have any retail experience when we hired her. But we hired her because she is a proven leader. And today she's a successful store manager in Streamwood, Illinois, with responsibility for almost 400 associates and over $50,000,000 in sales, and she has a very, very bright future in our company. *(Applause)*

Now, all the details of our veterans recruiting efforts are available on our new website, careerswithamission.com. There is even this really cool application where you can go in and enter your military background and it will tell you which jobs you would be qualified for at Walmart. I encourage everyone to check that out. And one last thing, and this is important. Walmart and the Walmart Foundation made a commitment last year of $10,000,000 over five years to promote job training and entrepreneurship among veterans. *(Applause)*

Thank you. Now, we're on track already in the first year to donate $5,000,000 of the $10,000,000 in the first year, so I'm proud to announce today that we're doubling our commitment to $20,000,000 over the next five years for veterans programs. So we're not waiting on government, on businesses or anybody else. Frankly, if your business plan involves waiting for somebody else, I wish you all the best. We believe that there are a few things that our leaders could do, things that won't save the day, but sure could help put the wind at our backs.

As I said, first and foremost we could start by taking care of our veterans when they come home. It's our moral obligation, yes, but they have so much to offer our country. Second, we need to promote American exports, because more exports means more jobs. There are a couple of free trade agreements that are ready to go. Let's pass them, get on with it. Third, we need a comprehensive reform of our corporate tax code to broaden the tax base and lower the overall tax rate. This will unleash America's job creators. Every tax break, every incentive, needs to be on the table. And, finally, together we can work to bring back American manufacturing. Rising international labor costs and fuel and transportation costs are making it much more efficient to source products locally and create local jobs. This is a real opportunity. And we at Walmart are working with our suppliers and helping tip the scales where we can. But revitalizing America's manufacturing base will take all of us; business, government, labor and community leaders. It won't be easy. Actually it'll be pretty hard. But it won't be Fallujah hard, and it starts by believing that we can do it. So that's what the business community can do and what Walmart can do, and a few things the government ought to do. But I told you at the beginning I was going to ask you for something. Now I'm going to ask you, what can we all do together?

I'm going to tell you another story, and I know you'll be able to relate to this too. In the spring of 1984 my ship sailed for home after being off the coast of Lebanon during that horrible tragedy. We stopped in Newport, Rhode Island, for a port visit, not far from my hometown of Hartford, Connecticut. This is in the day long before cell phones, and I didn't tell my mom I was coming home. I just rented a car and drove. And to this day I can remember exactly what it felt like to get out of the car in my dress whites and walk up to her house. I was never so proud to serve my country. I've never felt so good about myself, not before and not since. And you all know that feeling. That's what we need to

recapture today. And why, despite everything that is happening in our country that might make us want to turn away, we love this country and we believe in its future.

America is still the greatest nation on earth. It's still the most dynamic and the most free. This is still the best place to start a business, still the best place to fall in love, raise a family and grow old. And if you're lucky, maybe even have a few grandkids. So let's all remember that feeling, that pride, that certainty, that our best days are ahead of us. That's what is going to get us through.

So here is what I need you to do: Join me, and us, and commit to this new generation of heroes. As they come home they're facing some incredibly tough challenges. We owe them that. But you know what? We're going to get back far more than what we give. With these leaders there is discipline, training, and a passion for service. And whether you finished your service a few weeks ago or a few decades ago, join us in this effort. Secondly, and all of us need to do this, go back to your communities and tell them about The American Legion and what you heard here this week. Remind them why you served this great country, remind them why you put on the uniform, said goodbye to your loved ones and traveled to faraway places. Why you got your orders and you grabbed your weapon and you looked our enemies in the eye. Remind them why you believed America was worth fighting for and dying for, and why you still believe that today.

Pride, conviction, confidence, are the first steps toward getting our economy going again. We don't need to wait on anybody to do that. America's veterans can again lead the way. I know you've already given so much. It's hard to ask any more of you. But as I said, you were the cavalry. And like Captain Dyer told that nervous, hopeful kid so many years ago, I trust you, your country is counting on you, and we're all in this together. Now, let's go do our jobs. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Before we go to our next order of business I would be remiss if did not acknowledge the ending of an outstanding military career.

Today a past recipient of The American Legion's Distinguished Service Medal hangs up his uniform for the last time. When a leading member of Congress declared that the war in Iraq was lost, General David Petraeus knew better. He never doubted the ability of the United States military to get the job done. The surge in Iraq, of which he was one of the chief architects, was proven effective. Even after a career in military service General David Petraeus will continue to serve his country out of uniform. He will soon oversee the CIA as its director, a position for which he is highly qualified. The American Legion thanks General Petraeus for the military service he's already rendered to his country, and we have confidence that he will continue to serve the nation well in his new position. *(Applause)*

Our next guest enlisted in the United States Air Force Security Forces following the September 11th attacks on our country. He was deployed to Iraq from August 2006 through March 2007. Upon completion of active duty he enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and served as president of the school's Student Veterans of America Chapter, Vets for Vets. He soon became the SVA state director, the Midwest Regional director, and then served on the Student Veterans Association's Board of Directors. Today he is employed as a program manager on SVA's staff, and remains dedicated to helping yesterday's warriors and today's scholars become tomorrow's leaders. Please welcome Gerald V. Kapinos of the Student Veterans of America. *(Applause)*

Address: Gerald V. Kapinos, Program Manager
Student Veterans Association

Ladies and gentlemen, Legionnaires and distinguished guests, good afternoon. Thank you for that kind introduction. First I would like to thank Jimmie Foster, The American Legion national commander, for inviting me to speak here today. I would also

like to thank all the Legionnaires for your continued support and advocacy in helping to reintegrate servicemen and women back into civilian life. As I am sure you are all well aware, we are approaching the tenth anniversary of the September 11th attacks. While preparing for this speech I couldn't help but reflect back on the past ten years of my life. Little did I know at that time, because of these attacks, my life was about to radically change.

Ten years ago I was working for Walmart as an associate unloading semi trucks and stocking shelves. Immediately following the attacks I enlisted in U.S. Air Force. Eight years ago this week I was in the middle of my first deployment, supporting combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Seven years ago this week I just had been reassigned to the Security Forces Squadron at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado. Shortly thereafter my supervisor had recommended that I enroll in an English class at night to improve my writing ability with my poorly written reports. I took his advice and went to the local community college, where I was placed in a remedial English class. That semester I spent most of my free time diagramming sentences and identifying prepositions. It was humbling to have to start at such a low level. However, I applied the same focus I learned in the Air Force and did well. I thought it was a good idea to continue my studies at night and pursue an associate's degree in my career field.

Five years ago this week I had just arrived in Camp Bucca in Iraq for my second deployment. During that deployment I was able to collect my final credit that I needed to complete my associate's degree. Also during that time I decided to set a goal for myself, pursuing a bachelor's degree full-time once I returned home. Three years ago this week I had just finished my first semester full-time as a civilian, and was preparing to transfer to the University of Wisconsin-Madison. During my first semester at a different school in the spring of 2008 I had encountered many obstacles I had not anticipated while transitioning out of the military. For instance, my DD Form 214 had been delayed, and I was unable to access my full GI Bill benefit the entire semester. Because the decision was still pending, the financial aid office at my school would not offer any form of aid, and I found it difficult to support my family on the reduced pay that I was receiving.

I also found it difficult at times to openly discuss my military experiences with my fellow students. I turned to the campus' resources available at the time, to no avail. I found them either severely lacking or disconnected. Despite these obstacles I managed to earn a 4.0 and was able to transfer to the prestigious University of Wisconsin-Madison, three years ago this week. *(Applause)* Once on this campus I connected with an established peer-to-peer student veteran support group called Vets for Vets. Instantly I met fellow veterans whom I was able to connect with.

Within days they shared with me their tips and tricks for going to school. They shared with me how the system works, and who to contact for the things that I still needed. I related instantly to this group, and not only found valuable resources, but also started making friends. These new friends showed me how to relate to my fellow students, and I felt more connected to this school than my last. This group helped me tremendously during this time, and I saw firsthand the value of this type of organization, and how it helped me make the transition to civilian life.

That same semester I accepted a leadership position with this group. Through this work I learned that Vets For Vets was originally founded in 1972 by a group of returning Vietnam Veterans attending class at the University of Wisconsin. Then, as now, they saw a need for support while pursuing their academic goals. Consequently, they formed a peer-to-peer support group. This group immediately provided a value for those students, as it did me. This group was so valuable it was continuously operated through the 1970s, '80s, and '90s. This was not the only group of its kind. There were others, created by other student veterans of varying generations at different schools, spanning from the 1950s to present.

Leading up to 2008 these groups started banding together to form mutual levels of support for each other, as well as export this peer-to-peer support model to new college campuses across the country. The network officially incorporated as Student Veterans of America in 2008. With the aid of information age technology it became much easier to seek out, connect, and export this concept all across the country. From the beginning these student veterans did not build or expand this organization on their own. In fact, they had external support and guidance.

Principally this came from some of the experienced leaders within The American Legion. As I am sure many of you well know, this was not the first time The American Legion pioneered student veteran issues. In fact, that involvement could be traced back a couple of generations in the mid-20th century. Two years after Pearl Harbor the United States was embroiled in war. Beginning in 1943 some leaders of the American Legion were concerned with how servicemen would readjust back into the civilian world after their service. What eventually became known as the Serviceman's Readjustment Act in 1944 was not only supported by The American Legion, but was first penned by the Past National Commander Harry Colmery in the Mayflower Hotel. This piece of legislation addressed many transition issues for returning servicemen from that conflict, including money to help these veterans obtain a college education.

Empirical research has determined that as a direct result of this program, for every dollar spent on veterans' education there is approximately seven dollars return on GDP. This legislation was successful enough to inspire similar pieces of legislation, offering education benefits for veterans of Korea and Vietnam. During those periods some student veterans of those generations on some campuses discovered an unmet need at their school. As a result, some of them banded together to support each others' academic ventures, including the student veterans at Northern Illinois University and the University of Wisconsin, to name a couple. These small, independently operated groups filled the gaps of existing levels of support, allowing student veterans to graduate and fully transition back into the civilian world. As I stated, many of these groups operated until present day, and in 2008 Student Veterans of America, with the support of The American Legion, banded these groups together and started developing new groups on new campuses. SVA started with a handful of less than 30 of these groups, or chapters. Today, in three short years, there are over 400 chapters in 48 states.

Student Veterans of America is a coalition of these groups, and the organization is designed to provide the resources and support for the independent student operated groups. The mission of SVA is to provide military veterans with the resources, support and advocacy needed to succeed in higher education and following graduation. SVA does this through a variety of programs. Some of the programs of note are a scholarship program, an internship support program, a chapter grant program, and a conference series. Since the passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which has improved the ability of many veterans to financially achieve their academic goals, it still has gaps. To compensate, Student Veterans of America has instituted three different scholarships to assist some of these veterans with still unmet financial needs. This program offers up to three $10,000 scholarships for three identified areas.

Next, SVA has established an internship support program, which provides student veterans with a monthly stipend to offset the financial burden of an unpaid internship. We recognize that student veterans are non-traditional students with financial obligations. Some student veterans use their GI Bill benefits as a primary source of income. This may cause student veterans to choose between taking max course loads to support their financial obligations and finding paid employment. Since internships are an invaluable way to get an inside look at a potential career, and often lead to a job offer, we are providing financial aid for unpaid internships to improve their employability post-graduation. In addition, SVA chapters are encountering numerous institutional restrictions with respect to funding their student organizations. Many chapters have great

plans, but no funds to implement their event, activity or initiative. As a result, many chapters are unable to reach their full potential, which affects our overall mission. Consequently, SVA has established a chapter grant program to address this specific issue. This program is a reimbursable grant for chapters to host any event or activity that furthers the SVA mission, bolsters the local student veteran support network, or promotes institutional awareness of student veteran issues.

Finally, to strengthen our network SVA hosts a conference series of two events annually. First, SVA has established a leadership summit. This leadership development seminar is designed to bring student veteran group leaders together and exchange some chapter best practices from around the country. These workshops are intended to develop the leadership and management skills of these student veterans on the chapter level, so they can take this information back and accomplish our overall mission on their school's campus.

SVA also hosts a national conference. The SVA national conference supports SVA's goals by developing local student veterans groups to create a network of resources, ideas and support. It's open to all members and supporters, and a national conference provides seminars, workshops and networking events to accomplish this task. On the campus level SVA chapters are responsible for creating their own programs to address the specific needs of their campus, which varies. Some examples of these programs are a new student orientation, counseling, community service, social support, and outreach. The existence of these chapters has proved valuable for many student veterans. In fact, according to a recent Rand study, the presence of student veteran groups was identified as one of the key factors which contributed to a veteran's academic success.

This would not have been possible without The American Legion's longstanding support. Beginning with the advice and guidance, expanding to financial support, including donated office space, The American Legion has been with SVA from the beginning. Additionally, the American Legion has remained supportive of student veteran issues, particularly in bringing together key stakeholders at education symposiums and an education round table discussion last week at this convention. For this, and your continued support, I sincerely thank you. Had it not been for the existence of a GI Bill I would not have been able to graduate from college after serving in the global war on terrorism. Without the existence of my SVA chapter I would not have been preparing for my final semester one year ago this week. Ten years ago I barely graduated high school. Last December I walked across the stage at the University of Wisconsin, where I received a bachelor's degree in history with honors. Hopefully SVA and The American Legion will continue to work together to help yesterday's warriors become today's scholars and tomorrow's leaders. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The chair recognizes Joseph Caouette of New Hampshire, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Americanism, for the purpose of making a report.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN CAOUETTE: Before I proceed with my report, Mr. Commander, I ask for a point of personal privilege to introduce a special guest to this stage. We have had a very special relationship with Michael Peterson since his first appearance at our National Convention in Salt Lake City in 2006. Since then he has become our national spokesman for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund, generously donating his time and the proceeds from his DVD *It's Who We Are*, and his CD *You Could Hear a Pin Drop*, to the fund. Today he is here to debut the video for his recording of *He Ain't Heavy* a DVD he's making available for sale through Emblem Sales. Again, a portion of the proceeds will be given to the Legacy Fund. Please welcome our friend and partner, country music star, the recipient of several prestigious national awards, Mr. Michael Peterson. *(Standing applause)*

MR. PETERSON: Thank you very much. Please be seated.
...Mr. Peterson performed "He Ain't Heavy" for the delegation. (Applause)

Report: Convention Committee on Americanism
Joseph Caouette, New Hampshire, Chairman

Forty-four members of your Convention Committee on Americanism met at 8:30 a.m. on Sunday, August 28, 2011, in the Hilton Minneapolis, Conrad A, Second Floor, Minneapolis, Minnesota to discuss matters of Americanism-related resolutions assigned to the committee.

The committee organized by electing Joseph Caouette (NH), Chairman; James Gates (CO), Vice Chairman; and Charles Tucker (GA), as the Secretary.

The committee discussed nine resolutions that were assigned to the group. The resolutions that were considered continue to reflect the desire by the departments of The American Legion to address matters of patriotism and government, and to maintain strong general Americanism programs that compliment the organization and benefit the Nation.

A motion was made by Ernest Paradis (ME) and seconded by James Heath (TX) that the Convention Committee on Americanism authorize the chairman and secretary to sign and deliver the report, on behalf of the committee, to the National Convention and that the staff be authorized to make any necessary changes to the resolutions, such as spelling or changes in wording, as long as it does not change the intent of the resolution. The motion was approved.

Nine resolutions were considered, 2 received and recorded and 7 referred to the Standing Commission on Americanism.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 30 (MN): **Reaffirm Support for Constitutional Protection of the Flag of the United States**
Resolution No. 84 (IL): **English Language be Declared Official U.S. Language**

Referred to the Standing Commission on Americanism

Resolution No. 6 (MT): **National Boy Scout Jamboree**
Resolution No. 17 (CO): **The American's Creed**
Resolution No. 29 (SC): **Scouting Square Knot Award**
Resolution No. 32 (NY): **National Anthem Etiquette**
Resolution No. 76 (CT): **American Legion Baseball Eligibility**
Resolution No. 77 (CT): **Junior Law Cadet Program Administration**
Resolution No. 99 (IA): **Flag Essay Contest**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN CAOUETTE: As a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of New Hampshire to this convention, I move for the adoption of this report. *...Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: You heard the motion. We heard many seconds. Is there any discussion? Call for the question. All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed. Carried. The report of Americanism is adopted.

Presentation: Frank N. Belgrano, Jr. Trophy
The Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Having completed the adoption of the Americanism report, we will announce the winners of the two Americanism awards. The Frank Belgrano, Jr. Trophy is given annually to the department rendering the most outstanding service during the 12 month period beginning August 1st to the Boy Scouts of America program. This year's winner is the Department of California. *(Applause)*

The Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy is given to the department within the United States documenting the greatest activity in operating The American Legion School Medal Program. The winning department shows what can be accomplished by an active and involved American Legion. The winner is the Department of Maryland. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Over the years, the William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy has been one the most impressive awards that The American Legion presents during each National Convention. It was named in honor of one of American journalism's most prominent and influential figures and given to the department achieving the most outstanding results in conducting Americanism programs. While we are grateful for the many years of support that we received from the Hearst Corporation, the company has decided to discontinue its sponsorship beginning this year.

The American Legion strongly believes that recognition of outstanding Americanism work by departments must continue, and therefore, on Monday the National Executive Committee passed resolution number one, which authorizes the creation of the Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy, meant to replace the Hearst award. Daniel J. O'Connor was a longtime and much beloved chairman and chairman emeritus of our National Americanism Commission. He developed many new and innovative programs that advanced patriotism among the citizens of this nation and participation in our youth activities.

This year's trophy will be presented at the Fall Meetings of the National Executive Committee in Indianapolis, but we would also like to recognize the winning department here at the Convention. Ladies and gentlemen, the winner of the first Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy is the Department of Virginia. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: "Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy awarded to The American Legion Department of Virginia, in recognition of the most outstanding Americanism program, presented at the 93rd National Convention of The American Legion, Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 26th through September 1, 2011. Signed, Jimmie L. Foster, National Commander, and Joseph Caouette, Chairman of The American Legion National Americanism Commission."

Presentation: National Education Award

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The winner of our 2011 National Education Award is no stranger to most of us. He is an accomplished songwriter with multiple number one songs in country and gospel and has performed at Legion events several times over the last few years. A member of the Sons of The American Legion, he has been an official spokesman for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund and has raised funds for the program by sharing the proceeds of some of his works.

He has visited the troops in Iraq and Afghanistan nine times and is the 2008 recipient of the Bob Hope Spirit of Hope Award. He has spoken to young people in schools across the country as part of his "Tag You're It" program recognized by educators and his chief sponsor, the United States Army, as a remarkable and inspirational blueprint

for youth to accept personal responsibility and positive direction in their lives. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm welcome to The American Legion 2011 National Education Award winner, the one and only, Michael Peterson. *(Applause)*

MR. PETERSON: Thank you very much. There's a fourth grade girl who was always disrupting the classroom. The teacher could never get her to pay attention or keep her hands to herself, until one day about halfway through the year they were doing an art segment. And for the first time all year the young lady sat quietly in the back of the room with her head down, not disrupting anyone. The teacher noticed this. She couldn't help but notice because usually she had to work to keep her quiet. She walked back to see what the little girl was doing. And as she got back to the back, the girl was hunkered down over this piece of paper so tightly that the teacher couldn't see it, and finally had to tap her on the shoulder and say, "Honey, what are you drawing?" The little girl didn't look up. She just said, "I'm drawing at a picture of God." And the teacher thought out loud as she said, "Well, nobody knows what God looks like." And the little girl didn't blink an eye or raise her head. She just said, "They will in a minute." *(Laughter)*

And in many ways as a young man, that was me. Heart, full of hope, in spite of the significant life challenges that I faced. Somehow I found opportunity in spite of the difficulties. And that is the message that we have carried to hundreds of thousands of high school students and middle school students over the last five years and to veterans in transition, disabled veterans through the EBV, entrepreneurship boot camp for veterans, that helps to train our veterans to be successful business owners.

Education isn't just about our grades in science and math. For me the most important part of education was the hope that it engendered in my life as a young man, and continues to do so today. Without the help of The American Legion we wouldn't have the opportunity to build a future, to build bridges between schools and Legions in communities across this nation, who right now are facing some of their most difficult times. This is the perfect opportunity for us to help them in middle of their difficulty.

If you are interested in knowing about the EBV program for disabled veterans or about the "Tag You're It" program, please come and see us in the back. We'll give you a card. We'll contact you and we'll partner with you to help reach your community in significant, relevant, sustainable ways through education.

Receiving an award usually means the end of the race. For us it just means the beginning. We look forward to doing more with you. And I have got to tell you, I'm sure proud to be a part of The American Legion. God bless you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: "2011 National Education Award presented to Michael Peterson in recognition and appreciation of your dedication to, and promotion of The American Legion Legacy Scholarship and creation of 'Tag You're It', a national program to help empower America's youth to take control of their lives and plan their futures regardless of their pasts."

Certificate of Appreciation

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Working closely with Michael on many of his projects over the past several years has been Colonel Jill Chambers, who retired from the United States Army in 2009. Colonel Chambers has worked tirelessly to reduce the crippling stigma often associated with mental health challenges facing today's war veterans. She has served four Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and is a valued member of The American Legion's Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Ad Hoc Committee. It is my honor to welcome and present a certificate of appreciation to Colonel Jill Chambers. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: "Certificate of Appreciation awarded to Colonel Jill Chambers, retired, in recognition of enduring commitment, support and devotion to the principles and ideals of The American Legion, 2011." (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The chair recognizes Michael D. Helm of Nebraska, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Michael D. Helm, Nebraska, Chairman

Seventy-five members of your Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation met at 9:00 a.m. on August 28, 2011, in Minneapolis Salon G, Level Three, Minneapolis Hilton, Minneapolis, Minnesota, and agreed on the following report, which is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

The Committee was called to order by Verna L. Jones (NC), Liaison Representative appointed by the National Adjutant to act as temporary chairman. Jacob Gadd (DC), Deputy Director for Healthcare, VA&R Commission, acted as temporary secretary and called the roll. A quorum being present, nominations were received for permanent chairman. Michael D. Helm (NE), Chairman of the Standing National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, was unanimously elected Chairman of the Convention Committee.

With unanimous consent, the Chairman appointed R. Michael Suter (NY), as Committee Secretary; R. Michael Suter (NY), Chairman of the Claims and Rating Subcommittee and Jeanette Rae (NV), Secretary; Michael D. Helm (NE), Chairman of the Hospital and Medical Services Subcommittee and Terry Schow (UT), Secretary.

Subcommittee liaison assignments were as follows: Rolando Moore (DC), Deputy Director for Claims, to Claims and Rating and Jacob Gadd (DC), Deputy Director for Healthcare, to Hospital and Medical Services.

As has been the custom for the 66 previous National Conventions, a Special Department Service Officers Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Resolutions, in a preconvention meeting, screened and grouped the resolutions. A report of their action, with recommendations, was presented to the Convention Committee for consideration.

The Screening Committee conserved the time of the Convention Committee substantially. It was chaired by Michael D. Helm, Chairman of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and was composed of the following Department Service Officers:

REGION 1 – Gary W. Wayman (NH)
REGION 2 – David F. Fletcher (AR) *ABSENT*
REGION 3 – Cajun A. Comeau (NC)
REGION 4 – Thomas B. Newman (MN)
REGION 5 – Dwight S. Null (WY)

The Convention Committee recommended that such a Committee be appointed for this purpose to serve the Ninety-Third National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation.

The 33 Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation resolutions presented for the consideration of this Convention were referred by the Resolutions Assignment Committee. The following action on the resolutions was taken by the Convention Committee:

Approved or Approved w/Amendment	9
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved	3
Referred to the Standing Commission	11

Received and Recorded	9
Rejected	1

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Chairman and Secretary to sign and deliver the report on the Convention Committee's behalf.

A report of action taken on the 11 resolutions referred to the Standing National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission will be made to the National Executive Committee and to the Adjutant of the Department concerned.

Approved Resolutions or Approved with Amendment

Resolution No. 4: The American Legion Policy on Environmental Exposures
Origin: Maine
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 3 (AK) and Resolution No. 27 (WA))

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long been at the forefront of advocacy for veterans exposed to environmental hazards such as Agent Orange, Gulf War-related hazards, ionizing radiation and the various chemicals and agents used during Project Shipboard Hazard and Defense (SHAD); and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense's (DoD) disclosure of information regarding various potential hazardous exposures and the current advancement of scientific research continue to reveal new potential environmental threats to service members on an ongoing basis; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) was congressionally mandated by Public law 102-4 (1991) to contract with the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to review existing peer-reviewed research on herbicides – to include their components – exposure and medical evidence on related health effects; and

WHEREAS, In the last several years new concerns have been raised regarding contamination of stateside and international military installations such as, but not limited to: groundwater contamination at Camp Lejeune, NC; environmental contaminants at Gagetown, New Brunswick located in Canada; Fort Drum, NY; Fort Dugway, UT; post-hostility Vietnam and Fort McClellan, AL; and

WHEREAS, Major overseas situations regarding exposures such as sodium dichromate in a water treatment facility in Qarmat Ali, Iraq; Toxic exposures at the Naval Air Facility in Atsugi, Japan; dioxins and other contaminants at Johnston Atoll; and others; and

WHEREAS, During the past year, the VA has announced a major study concerning whether or not burn pits in Balad, Iraq and other locations in the Gulf region and Afghanistan caused or are continuing to cause a variety of health problems in service members; and

WHEREAS, The importance of developing a comprehensive policy that allows for maximum flexibility to fluidly respond to new research as it becomes apparent in the most timely and proactive manner possible is recognized; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31, September 1, 2011, That The American Legion's comprehensive policy on environmental exposures be an all inclusive policy recognizing the traditions of previous advocacy on behalf of veterans exposed to environmental hazards; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Department of Defense (DoD) to provide a full disclosure of all wartime and non-wartime locations to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) where hazardous environmental exposures exist and that armed forces members were exposed through testing, transportation, storage, disposal, and environmental contamination; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the VA to expeditiously conduct peer reviews and scientific investigations through the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) within the Institute of Medicine (IOM) on all locations provided by the DoD; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That veterans reporting to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical care facilities claiming exposure to such environmental hazards be provided examinations and treatment which are thorough and appropriate, and that VA physicians demonstrate compassion in responding to the medical needs of these veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion vigorously advocate for the liberalization of the rules relating to the evaluation of studies involving exposure to any environmental hazard and that all necessary action be taken by the Federal government, both administratively and legislatively as appropriate, to ensure that veterans are properly compensated for diseases and other disabilities scientifically associated with a particular exposure; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue to closely monitor the development of all ongoing research on the long-term effects of all environmental exposures and point out to the proper officials any perceived deficiencies or discrepancies in these projects; and to ensure that government committees charged with review of such research are composed of impartial members of the medical and scientific community; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion will continue to consult with medical experts in order to ensure the effectiveness of its advocacy.

Resolution No. 8: The American Legion Policy on Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans
Origin: Montana
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Annually the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) updates the list which includes vessels that operated primarily or exclusively on Vietnam's waterways; and

WHEREAS, The list includes ships that temporarily operated in these waterways or were moored at the shoreline and ships that operated in close coastal waters of Vietnam for extended periods with evidence that the crewmembers went ashore; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated that more than 500,000 service members served aboard ships off the coast from 1964-1975; and

WHEREAS, Many of these personnel now have health problems commonly associated with herbicide exposure and have endured lengthy legal struggles to prove these problems are service-related; and

WHEREAS, In 2011, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies of Science (NAS) released its results of the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans and Agent Orange Exposure Report, which found no consistent evidence to suggest "Blue Water Navy" veterans were at higher or lower risk and were unable to state with certainty that "Blue Water Navy" veterans were or were not exposed to dioxins from Agent Orange; and

WHEREAS, Current legislation is seeking to reverse VA's decision preventing "Blue Water Navy" military retirees and veterans from claiming presumptive status for the diseases associated with Agent Orange exposure; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31, September 1, 2011, That The American Legion support legislation that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) include as part of the Republic of Vietnam, 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, harbors, waters offshore, and airspace; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges VA to conduct an epidemiological study of the long-term health outcomes of veterans that were "Blue Water Navy" compared to their brown water and ground troop counterparts to evaluate "Blue Water Navy" veterans' current injuries and illnesses, which may be related to Agent Orange and dioxin exposures.

Resolution No. 37: Protection of Religious Rights and Ceremonies at National Cemetery Administration (NCA) National and State Cemeteries
Origin: New York
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Some National Cemetery Administration (NCA) national and state cemeteries do not allow graveside services that include a reference to God; and

WHEREAS, This policy is pursuant to a memorandum of the Undersecretary of Veterans Affairs for Memorial Affairs dated November 1, 2007; and

WHEREAS, This policy involves prior restraint of speech and religion in violation of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion and other veteran service organizations have challenged this policy in the United States District Court; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31, September 1, 2011, That the National Cemetery Administration amend the November 1, 2007 memorandum of the Undersecretary of Veterans Affairs for Ceremonial Affairs on Honor Guard Funeral Flags to uphold and guarantee the freedom of all religious rights and ceremonies for veterans and their families at national and state cemeteries; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion petition Congress to support legislation guaranteeing the right that all religious rights and ceremonies be permitted at all national and state cemeteries; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support litigation against policies that violate the use of speech and religion in accordance with the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

Resolution No. 38: Policy to Provide the Department of Veterans Affairs the Ability to Purchase Medications Located Outside the United States
Origin: New York
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, 41 U.S.C. Sections 10a-10d prohibits the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) from purchasing pharmaceutical products manufactured in *Food and Drug Administration* (FDA) approved facilities located in non-approved trading partner countries; and

WHEREAS, Over the past 24 months there have been an unprecedented number of VA pharmaceutical product shortages; and

WHEREAS, Some of these pharmaceutical products can be directly or indirectly linked to FDA product recalls while others cannot; and

WHEREAS, At times, even the manufacturer cannot or will not explain the reason for the shortage; and

WHEREAS, Outsourcing of pharmaceutical production, to areas outside of the U.S., is occurring at an increasing rate; and

WHEREAS, There are multiple instances of either primary product selection and/or secondary options that are only manufactured in countries from which the VA cannot purchase; and

WHEREAS, This forces the VA to either utilize costly brand name products or switch the veteran to a totally different product; and

WHEREAS, In almost all cases this procurement restriction has resulted in a higher cost to the VA, with no corresponding increase in quality; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31, September 1, 2011, That The American Legion petition Congress to enact legislation to provide the Department of Veterans Affairs authority to purchase needed pharmaceuticals, manufactured in *Food and Drug Administration* approved facilities located outside the United States.

Resolution No. 39: Policy to Increase the Transparency of the Veterans Benefits Administration's Claims Processing
Origin: Nevada
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended, Consolidated with Resolution No. 91 (IL))

WHEREAS, The American Legion, while supporting the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in its efforts to provide support to military veterans of the United States of America, recognizes the growing backlog of claims for disability and compensation submitted by military veterans; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has continued to challenge the VA to improve both the efficiency and accuracy with which veterans' claims are processed; and

WHEREAS, Testimony by The American Legion before the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, United States House of Representatives informed Congress that the VA continues to be inefficient and inaccurate in processing veterans' claims for disability and compensation; and

WHEREAS, Senior executive employees in the Veterans' Benefits Administration (VBA) received bonuses averaging $14,000 in 2010 while the backlog of claims and inaccuracy of claims prepared by the VBA continued to increase; and

WHEREAS, The VBA continues its inefficiency and inaccuracy in processing valid veterans' claims for compensation and pension and medical services without penalty for poor performance; and

WHEREAS, Military veterans who have submitted claims with required documentation continue to suffer from the denial of medical services and monetary compensation due to VBA inefficiency and inaccuracy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31, September 1, 2011, That The American Legion urges Congress to pass legislation requiring the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provide, in a venue readily available to the citizens of the United States, a monthly report of the number of claims for compensation and disability that were submitted, that were granted/awarded, that were denied and that remain in a pending status; and, be it further

RESOLVED, The American Legion petitions Congress to pass legislation that requires VA be held accountable for achieving the VA Secretary's stated goal to achieve an operational state for VA in which no claim is pending over 125 days and all claims have an accuracy rate of 98 percent or higher; and, be it further

RESOLVED, The American Legion asks Congress to pass legislation that, should VA fail to meet the VA Secretary's claims processing goals stated above, the department be required to pay to the veteran a penalty in an amount to be

determined by Congress for each day, from the date of original submission, for any claim decided after the 125 day limit; and, be it further

RESOLVED, The American Legion urges Congress to pass legislation requiring that any veteran whose claim is overturned on appeal be paid an amount – to be determined by Congress – which would be compounded daily, from the date of original submission of the claim; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, Bonuses for VA senior executive staff be tied to qualitative and quantitative performance measures developed by VA.

Resolution No. 52: Policy to Prevent Any Organization or Person from Charging for Claims Assistance
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As Amended)

WHEREAS, Veterans and widows of veterans qualify for Aid and Attendance and Pension benefits with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, There are groups or individuals that charge veterans and their families to file for these benefits some as much as $2,000 and as a result have turned claims assistance in this area into a profit center; and

WHEREAS, The VA does not inform veterans and/or their families that they cannot be charged for services provided when filing an initial claim; and

WHEREAS, There are no statements on the VA Form 21-526 mentioning that veterans and/or their families should not be charged when filing initial claims; and

WHEREAS, Veterans Service Organizations, VA, State Veterans Offices and County Veterans Service Officers all provide claims assistance without charge; and

WHEREAS, The VA does not readily provide a list of all accredited representatives and organizations broken down by for profit and not for profit which can lead to veterans being charged inadvertently for services that should be rendered for free; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31, September 1, 2011, That the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) write a statement on the printed and electronic versions of the claims submittal form saying that no person or organization is allowed to charge for services provided on the initial filing of a claim; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the VA readily furnish a list of all accredited representatives and organizations delineated by for-profit and not-for-profit services.

Resolution No. 109: Veterans Treatment Courts
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, When veterans return from combat, some turn to drugs or alcohol to cope with mental health issues as a Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and/or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI); and

WHEREAS, An unfortunate number of veterans are entering the criminal justice system to face charges stemming from these issues; and

WHEREAS, In 2008, a judge in Buffalo, NY, created the first Veterans Treatment Court after seeing an increase in veterans' hearings on his dockets; and

WHEREAS, Veteran Treatment Courts are hybrid Drug Courts and Mental Health Courts and have evolved out of the growing need for a treatment court model designed specifically for justice-involved veterans to maximize efficiency and economize resources while making use of the distinct military culture consistent among veterans; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans that enter the veteran treatment courts are not aware of their federal, state, county and a variety of additional benefit programs, in particular, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits for compensation, pension and healthcare; and

WHEREAS, Grouping justice-involved veterans into a specific court docket significantly expedites access to veteran-specific resources, including benefits and treatment earned through military service; and

WHEREAS, In 2009, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) sent a memorandum to the 152 VA Medical Centers recommending that a Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Coordinator be established at each of the VA Medical Centers nationwide to provide veterans with assistance in Veteran Treatment Courts and connect these veterans with VA benefits and assistance; and

WHEREAS, Currently, VA has not established a national Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive on the VJO program and a single staff person manages this program under the auspices of the VHA Homeless Office; and

WHEREAS, Only 120 of the 153 VA Medical Centers nationwide currently have VJO coordinators and their schedules are inconsistent in coverage of veteran treatment courts necessitating the need for national oversight, funding and clearly established policies and responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, Veteran Service Organizations, such as The American Legion, can assist these veterans in the Veteran Treatment Courts in pursuit of their VA claims and benefits or volunteering to help connect them with resources and assistance; and

WHEREAS, Veterans deeply value their military experience and share an inimitable bond among their peers and Veteran Treatment Courts build upon this camaraderie by allowing participants to go through the treatment court process with people who are similarly situated and have common past experiences, and pairing veterans with volunteer veteran mentors; and

WHEREAS, Veteran Treatment Courts are able to better serve veterans and are greatly enhanced when American Legion Department Service Officers are involved with the court process; and

WHEREAS, Justice For Vets, in coordination with the National Drug Court Institute, both professional service organizations of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, a 501(c) 3, non-for-profit organization, serves as the national clearinghouse for veteran treatment courts and ensures Veteran Treatment Courts receive the proper training and technical assistance to be successful; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31 and September 1, 2011, That The American Legion urge Congress to continue to fund the establishment and expansion of Veterans Treatment Courts; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to establish a separate program office within VA Central Office with an increased program budget and hiring of staff to expand the Veterans Justice Outreach program and policies; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion work with Justice for Veterans, at no cost to The American Legion, to provide training to The American Legion Department Service Officers and American Legion volunteer veteran members interested in creating and/or supporting a Veterans Treatment Court in each appropriate community; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion recommends the various Departments and Posts provide non-monetary assistance and support to veteran treatment courts by having Department Service Officers serve on the Veteran Treatment Court or having volunteers provide information on VA benefits and services.

Resolution No. 110: Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Programs
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, According to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Public Health estimates in July 2011, 2.3 million servicemembers have deployed to support Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation New Dawn (OND), 1,318,510 have left active duty and are eligible for VA health care, of which, 645,491 have enrolled in VA for health care; and

WHEREAS, The "signature wounds" of Iraq and Afghanistan are Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); and

WHEREAS, Mental disorders are the second largest frequency of diagnoses among returning OEF/OIF/OND servicemembers which are currently estimated at 50.7 percent; and

WHEREAS, In 2007, VA established a TBI, PTSD Clinical Reminder in VA's electronic medical record for any new patient to identify veterans that need additional screening for a possible TBI or PTSD diagnosis; and

WHEREAS, VA has screened and diagnosed hundreds of thousands of veterans with TBI/PTSD and continues to have several challenges in the proper diagnosis and treatment of TBI and PTSD because of the overlap of symptoms; and

WHEREAS, According to VA, the overlapping symptoms between mild TBI and PTSD are headaches, dizziness, fatigue and noise/light intolerance, re-experiencing, avoidance and emotional numbing; and

WHEREAS, Currently, there are not any definitive medical treatments for TBI and providers/clinicians use therapy and medications to treat the symptoms; and

WHEREAS, Evidence-based treatments for PTSD include Cognitive Processing Therapy, Prolonged Exposure Therapy, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, as well as medication management; and

WHEREAS, VA's Veteran Health Administration has several different research offices involved in studying TBI/PTSD including: VA Office of Research and Development; TBI Centers of Excellence; National Center for PTSD; Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Centers; War Related Illness and Injury Study Center; and Office of Public Health Environmental Epidemiology Service Office but lacks central oversight for management of all the different research studies and trials through the current decentralized research model; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DOD) and VA developed a DOD/VA Integrated Mental Health Strategy which recommended as one of the strategic objectives to "develop a system to deliver evidence-based psychotherapies" but in the plan it does not mention coordinating research jointly between both departments; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion developed a TBI/PTSD Ad Hoc Committee in 2010 to investigate the existing science and procedures and alternative methods for treating TBI/PTSD; and

WHEREAS, The committee has found several concerns including: the overlapping of symptomology between TBI/PTSD and Substance Abuse Disorder which makes it difficult to diagnose and treat the correct injury/illness; ineffective and overuse of medications; and reluctance of servicemembers and veterans to receive and continue mental health treatment; and

WHEREAS, VA conducted a study on Risperidone, a second generation antipsychotic, which is not approved by the Federal Drug Administration for use in treating PTSD; and

WHEREAS, Researchers of the study concluded that Risperidone did not improve PTSD symptoms but had several negative side effects which included weight gain, sleepiness and increased saliva in the mouth; and

WHEREAS, Researchers in the study concluded that in FY 2010, VA treated 86,852 veterans for PTSD last year, of which nearly 20 percent were prescribed this off-label and ineffective medication, and currently the only antidepressants and serotonin reuptake inhibitors such as sertraline and paroxetine are currently approved for treatment; and

WHEREAS, Veterans that have participated in past DOD/VA TBI/PTSD research studies have not always been properly informed that they are participants in the study and are not given a disclosure of the effects of any treatment they may be receiving through a study; and

WHEREAS, Additionally, the TBI/PTSD committee in their charge found several new innovative treatments for TBI/PTSD which include Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy and Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy that have not been prioritized for clinical studies to determine if they are evidence-based treatments; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31 and September 1, 2011, That The American Legion urge Congress to provide oversight and funding to the Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for innovative Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) research currently used in the private sector, such as Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy and Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy and other non-pharmacological treatments; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to increase the budgets for DOD and VA to improve the research, screening, diagnosis and treatment of TBI/PTSD as well as provide oversight over DOD/VA to develop joint offices for collaboration between DOD/VA research; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That DOD/VA both establish a single office for their agency's research and serve as a clearinghouse to track all DOD or VA research, and that all DOD/VA individual research programs and activities coordinate and provide monthly and as needed updates on research activities; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That servicemembers and veterans who participate in DOD/VA TBI/PTSD research studies are properly informed and give their consent to be included in the study as well as be provided with a disclosure of any negative effects of treatment; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That DOD/VA accelerate research efforts to properly diagnose and develop evidence-based treatments for TBI/PTSD; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to exercise oversight over DOD/VA to ensure servicemembers and veterans are only prescribed evidence-based treatments for TBI/PTSD and not prescribed off-label and non-Federal Drug Administration approved medications or treatments for TBI/PTSD.

Resolution No. 111: Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, On April 9, 2009, President Obama provided direction to the Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to develop a Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER), which would create a unified lifetime electronic record for members of the Armed Services; and

WHEREAS, The VLER plans to include administrative and medical information for service members from when they first join the service throughout their lives until they are laid to rest; and

WHEREAS, The VLER plan seeks to expand the departments' health information sharing capabilities by enabling access to private sector health data as well; and

WHEREAS, VLER is a federal, inter-agency initiative to provide portability, accessibility and complete health, benefits and administrative data for every servicemember, veteran and their beneficiaries; and

WHEREAS, DOD and VA for years have yet to fully implement a bilateral medical record between both agencies with no target end date in sight; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 2.1 million members of the military have served in Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn and are returning home in unprecedented numbers needing care for their injuries and illnesses sustained in service to our nation; and

WHEREAS, Failure to implement a bilateral medical record and VLER to date has caused significant delays in the veterans' treatment process from DOD to VA because the VA treatment team does not have full access to the patient's DOD records and have to rely on a patient's self report of their medical history and symptoms; and

WHEREAS, Servicemembers and veterans are forced to make copies of their records at their last duty station or submit a request to the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, which can take months to process; and

WHEREAS, Veteran service organizations, such as The American Legion, have not been invited to VLER meeting to provide stakeholder input and sharing of mutual concerns; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has over 2,000 accredited department (state) and county veteran service officers that will continue to need access to Veteran Benefit Administration databases in order to file for VA benefits and claims for those claimants represented; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is concerned that within VA's three branches – Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Veterans Benefits Administration, and National Cemetery Administration – there are numerous computer-based programs that are inoperable between these branches which are not addressed in the VLER plan; and

WHEREAS, Because a bilateral medical record is not currently available, there is not an ability for a patient's record to be flagged at the time of injury/illness occurred during military service, which makes it difficult and more time-consuming for DOD/VA physicians and raters to find proof of service connection; and

WHEREAS, Currently VA has the ability to send patients encrypted email messages and a VHA program, Myhealthyvet, allows patients to refill their VA prescriptions, view their labs and receive VA wellness reminders but does not allow VA patients to schedule appointments online; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31, September 1, 2011, That The American Legion urge Congress to provide oversight to the Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to ensure that the Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER) is fully implemented by Fiscal Year 2013; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge DOD and VA to implement VLER no later than FY 2013 to ensure returning servicemembers' medical records are able to be accessed by both agencies which will improve the timeliness and delivery of VA health care and claims benefits; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion recommend the following be included in design and implementation of VLER:

- **Include veteran service organizations, such as The American Legion, in VLER meetings to offer stakeholder input and sharing of mutual concerns;**
- **Allow servicemember records to be flagged at the time of injury/illness in the military to speed up processing of VA benefits (health care and claims) during and after discharge;**

- **Ensure computer systems and programs within the Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, and National Cemetery Administration are interoperable and able to communicate with each other;**
- **Allow VA patients to be able to make appointments online by choosing the day, time and provider and that VA sends a confirmation within 24 hours.**

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 35 (NY): **Policy for the Full Support of Returning Veterans with Mental Health Conditions**
Resolution No. 69 (ID): **The American Legion Policy on The Department of Veteran Affairs Beneficiary Travel**
Resolution No. 71 (ID): **The American Legion Policy for the Adjustment of the Means Test**
Resolution No.82 (IL): **Advocate Against Lump Sum Payments for Compensation**
Resolution No. 85 (IL): **The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) Establish a Marker for Cremation Urns**
Resolution No. 86 (IL): **Policy to Oppose Increased Co-payments and Enrollment Fees for Priority Group 7 & 8 Veterans**
Resolution No. 87 (IL): **Including Veteran Information on the United States Census**
Resolution No. 88 (IL): **Expanding Caregiver Services to All Seriously Injured Veterans**
Resolution No. 89 (IL): **Grant Automatic Waiver of Overpayments of $300 or Less**

Referred to Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

Resolution No. 18 (CO): **The American Legion Policy on Hyperbarix Oxygen Therapy (HBOT)**
Resolution No. 31 (MN): **Policy for Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal Recipients to be Considered War–Time Veterans**
Resolution No. 33 (NY): **Policy on the Use of Service Dogs for Injured Service Personnel and Veterans**
Resolution No. 41 (MI): **Policy to Investigate the Feasibility of a National Cemetery in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan**
Resolution No. 65 (MO): **Policy to Expand Burial Benefits to All National Guard and Reservists with Honorable Discharges or Those Whose Death Occurred During Service**
Resolution No. 66 (MO): **The American Legion Policy on Camp Hope**
Resolution No. 70 (ID): **The American Legion Policy for the Increase of Compensation for 100% Disabled Veterans**
Resolution No. 78 (AZ): **The Department of Veterans Affairs Create a Form for Claims Requiring Expeditious Action**
Resolution No. 83 (IL): **Including Compensation Benefits Processing and Contact Information at the Initial Intake Interview**
Resolution No. 90 (IL): **Reducing or Eliminating the Benefit Payment for all Incarcerated Veterans**
Resolution No. 96 (DC): **Applauding and Recognizing the Contributions of a Project for Wounded Warriors**

Rejected Resolutions

Resolution No. 16 (CO): **The American Legion Policy on National Cemetery Administration's Headstone Writing**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN HELM: Mr. Commander, I, Michael D. Helm, Nebraska, a duly elected and registered delegate to this Convention, move for the adoption of this report. Respectfully submitted. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: You heard the motion. We noted a bunch of seconds. Is there any discussion? Question has been called for. All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed. It's carried. The report of the Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation is adopted. Thank you, Michael.

A couple pieces of information. Michael Peterson CDs are available at 1-888-4Legion, or online at legion.org. The latest total on the Legacy Scholarship Fund, people just keep on giving. They're like the Energizer Bunny. It's up to $651,744.06. *(Applause)*

Presentation: William F. Lenker National Service Trophy

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: With the adoption of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Report, it is appropriate to announce the winner of the William F. Lenker National Service Trophy. This trophy is awarded annually to the department that best supports and implements programs to benefit veterans, their families and their survivors. For the 2010-2011 program year, the trophy is awarded to the Department of Michigan. *(Applause)*

The chair recognizes Larry Besson of Illinois, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II of the Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs) Larry J. Besson, Illinois, Chairman

Forty-five members of the Credentials and Internal Affairs Committee, Section II, elected Larry J. Besson of Illinois as Permanent Chairman, and George West of New Hampshire as Secretary, and considered twenty-three resolutions, twenty-two of which originated with Departments of The American Legion and one which was created by the committee. Of these, one was approved; one was approved as amended; seventeen were referred; and four were received and recorded.

Approved

Resolution No. 1: Appreciation to Host City
Origin: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)

WHEREAS, The 93rd National Convention has been held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31, September 1, 2011; and

WHEREAS, There has been a spirit of cooperation and friendship along with mutual helpfulness evidenced by the Legionnaires of Minnesota, the officers of the Convention Corporation and the Department, and by the officials and the people of Minneapolis, Minnesota; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31, September 1, 2011, That we express our

deep appreciation to the Department of Minnesota, Governor of Minnesota Mark Dayton; Mayor R.T. Rybak; the city of Minneapolis, Minnesota, including the Fire Department, Police Department, and other Public Safety Officials, and to the 2011 National American Legion Convention Committee, Inc., James Copher, President; Around this nucleus has been built the moving force that provided for every necessity that made for a successful and enjoyable convention.

Approved as Amended

Resolution No. 58: Appreciation to the September 11th National Memorial Trail Alliance
Origin: Virginia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)
(As amended)

WHEREAS, September 11, 2001, is a day Americans will forever remember, due to the terrorist attacks that resulted in nearly 3,000 lives being lost at New York City's World Trade Center; in a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania; and the Pentagon in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of active duty military and veterans formed to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is further dedicated to preserving the memories and incidents of association in the great wars, and to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom, and democracy; and

WHEREAS, The September 11th National Memorial Trail is an 1,100-mile planned continuous connection of trails, roads and greenways being established as a perpetual remembrance of the heroes America lost that fateful day; and

WHEREAS, The September 11th National Memorial Trail would begin at the Flight 93 National Memorial in Pennsylvania, continue to New York City and then to the Pentagon, and then back to the Flight 93 National Memorial; and

WHEREAS, One leg of proposed trail would extend from Virginia along the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, following the Potomac River to Cumberland, Maryland, and then continue along the Great Allegheny Passage which passes near Shanksville as it terminates in Pittsburgh; Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, The second leg of the proposed trail would connect the Great Allegheny Passage to the Flight 93 National Memorial near Shanksville to continue east through Harrisburg to New Jersey and then to the September 11 National Memorial at the World Trade Center site in New York City; and

WHEREAS, The third and final leg of the proposed trail would extend along the East Coast Greenway from New York City to the Pentagon; and

WHEREAS, The September 11th National Memorial Trail would provide a connecting on-road or off-road trail between all of the September 11 sites never to be broken; and

WHEREAS, The September 11th National Memorial Trail would be a multi-use trail for enjoyment by our veterans, including hikers, cyclists, boaters, and equestrians, along varied sections of the trail to portray the story of how America responded to the crisis on that fateful day; and

WHEREAS, The September 11th National Memorial Trail would be highly beneficial to our active duty military and veterans and other citizens as a recreational trail to promote healthy bodies and minds, and provide economic benefit to the local communities along the trail corridor through tourism; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The America Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31, September 1, 2011, That The American

Legion commend the September 11th National Memorial Trail Alliance for the development of the National Historic Trail connecting the planned and existing memorial sites of the World Trade Center, Pentagon and the Flight 93 National Memorial on or before the tenth anniversary of September 11, 2011, by sending them a letter of appreciation.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Internal Affairs

Resolution No. 24 (NE)**: Additional Names to be Added to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial**
Resolution No. 25 (FL): **Transcribe Material Into Braille**
Resolution No. 28 (IN): **Support Friends of Ernie Pyle**
Resolution No. 34 (NY): **Add Support Our Troops to the Consolidated Post Report**
Resolution No. 53 (UT): **Consistency in Internal Publications**
Resolution No. 54 (CA): **Emblem Use on Map Websites**
Resolution No. 55 (CA): **Support Congressional Gold Medal for Members of the World War II Coastal Patrol**
Resolution No. 61 (VA): **Oppose Bust of Joseph Stalin at the National D-Day Memorial**
Resolution No. 62 (VA): **American Legion Riders Participation in Rolling Thunder**
Resolution No. 67 (MO): **100th Anniversary Event in St. Louis to Commemorate 1919 Caucus**
Resolution No. 68 (MX): **Change Name of Department of Mexico to Department of Latin America**
Resolution No. 72 (GA): **Plaque at the World War II Memorial on Use of the Atomic Bomb**
Resolution No. 79 (AZ): **Additional Names to be Added to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial**
Resolution No. 98 (IA): **Military Dogs Postage Stamp**
Resolution No. 103 (CA): **The American Legionnaires Cruising Association**
Resolution No. 104 (CA): **Name a United States Naval Vessel After Staff Sergeant Rafael Peralta**

Referred to the Standing Commission on Public Relations

Resolution No. 93 (IL): **Recognize Bill O'Reilly**

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 5 (SD): **Endorsement of Charemon Dunham for National Historian**
Resolution No. 63 (MO): **Endorsement of Paul D. Bennett for National Historian**
Resolution No. 97 (IA): **Endorsement of Milton G. Heifner for National Vice Commander**
Resolution No. 101 (NJ): **Purple Heart Forever Stamp**

It was regularly moved, seconded and carried that the Committee Chairman and Secretary be authorized to sign the Committee report on behalf of the Committee.

It was also regularly moved, seconded and carried that the Committee Chairman and Secretary be authorized to make technical corrections to the resolutions reported out of this Committee to ensure proper wording and form without changing the substance or meaning of the resolution(s).

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BESSON: Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of Illinois, I move for the adoption of this report. *...Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: You heard the motion and many seconds. Is there any discussion? Question is called for. All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed. Carried. The report of Credentials and Internal Affairs is adopted. Thank you, Larry. The chair now recognizes the Honorable Vincent Gaughan of Illinois, chairman of the Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments
Vincent Gaughan, Illinois, Chairman

Commander Jimmie Foster, National Officers, National staff members, Brother and sister Legionnaires, friends and guests. I have some good news. This is the last report of the day. I didn't want to break it to you all at once. This is going to be a short report.

To the 93rd National Convention of the American Legion. The Committee on Constitutional Amendments met at 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 28th, at the Hilton Minneapolis Hotel.

Committee Liaison, Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., called the roll and announced 39 members of the Constitutional Amendments Committee were present. The following report was authorized by the members and is hereby submitted to this Convention.

The meeting was opened by Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., who acted as temporary chairman. He state a quorum was present and proceeded to the first order of business, which was the election of the permanent chairman and secretary. Vincent M. Gaughn of Illinois was elected Chairman, and Cathy Gorst of Wisconsin was duly Secretary. Thereupon they assumed their respective places.

Copies of the Resolutions to Amend, the Report of the Standing Committee, the Godwin Report, the National Constitution and By-Laws and Uniform Code of Procedures for the Organization of National Conventions of The American Legion, which include the Standing Rules of Convention, were made available to all of the members of the Committee.

The Chair called upon Philip B. Onderdonk, our National Judge Advocate, who gave a summary background report on the resolutions assigned to the Committee.

A motion was made by Charles Mills of New York and seconded by Gary White of Montana, that all the members of the Standing Committee on Constitution and By-Laws who were present at the meeting, but not actual delegates to the Convention Committee be seated with voice but no vote. The motion was carried by the members.

The Chair then stated, based upon the National Judge Advocate's report to the Committee concerning the requirements for consideration of the resolutions to amend the Constitution of The American Legion, and the details as stated in the Standing Committee's report, he would rule out of order those resolutions which did not meet the requirements.

The Chair further announced that he was in agreement with the Report of the Standing Committee on Constitution and By-Laws.

Resolution 57 from California was considered. The Chair announced that this resolution was out of order. It did not contain requisite language to be voted on by the convention, and failed to provide for a change in The American Legion Charter, and the Auxiliary constitution.

James Dombrose of Ohio made a motion, seconded by Ed Barry of Connecticut, that the committee adopt the chairman's ruling on **Resolution 57**. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution 64 from Missouri was next considered. The Chairman reviewed the resolution and said it was in order. This resolution would change the Preamble to the National Constitution by changing the reference from "The Great Wars" to "All Great Wars." So it's just important to know that the only change was to substitute the T-H-E, and put in All. The change is not only unnecessary, but it also raises questions of about what is a Great War. And this would also result in substantial and unintended financial consequences at all levels of our organization because of the need to reprint documents, change plaques. Hence, it is cost prohibitive.

Ronald Roberts of Mississippi made a motion to reject **Resolution 64**, seconded by Ed Barry of Connecticut. The motion was carried overwhelming with one dissent.

The Chair reviewed **Resolution No. 80** from Arizona, and stated that the resolution was out of order. This resolution does not provide language for the National Convention to vote on. It does not provide for a change in the Auxiliary constitution and The American Legion Charter.

Lloyd Woods of Maine made a motion to affirm the ruling of the Chair, seconded by William R. Stevens of Idaho. The motion was carried unanimously.

At this time the Committee stated its view that these resolutions were not made to harm The American Legion, but they had good intent. So, what we were looking at in some of the discussions is the subject covered in the Godwin Report. It reads: "Membership Eligibility Study Committee Report." This was made in 1985. The Committee then discussed the necessity to restudy the eligibility requirements of The American Legion. The recommendation was that a new committee be appointed to upgrade or revise the Godwin Report to more accurately reflect the current state of military operations in the United States Army.

The Chair then asked for a motion that the Chairman and the Secretary be permitted to sign the report to the Convention on behalf of the Convention Committee. Harold Burson of Louisiana made a motion, and it was seconded by James Dombrose of Ohio. The motion carried.

Ed Barry of Connecticut made a motion to recess, subject to the call of the Chairman. The motion was seconded by Lloyd Woods of Maine.

The Chairman then thanked the Committee for its cooperation and productive meeting. The meeting was then declared in recess pending a call from the Chairman of the Committee.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN GAUGHAN: Mr. Commander, as a delegate to the 93rd American Legion National Convention, I move that this report be adopted. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: You heard the motion. I heard a few seconds. Is there any discussion? Question is called for. All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed. Carried. The report of Constitutional Amendments is adopted. National Adjutant, have you any announcements?

Announcements

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, I have no announcements.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: He has no announcements. Sergeant-at-Arms, please bring the body to the proper salute. ...*The delegation saluted the Colors.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The time is now 1:47 p.m. The Convention will stand in recess until 8:30 a.m. tomorrow.

... At 1:47 p.m., the Convention was recessed to reconvene the following day, September 1, 2011, at 8:30 a.m.

PROCEEDINGS
THIRD DAY

Thursday, September 1, 2011

...At 8:30 a.m., the delegates assembled for the third day of the 93rd annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were conducted.

Call to Order
Jimmie L. Foster, Alaska, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The Convention will come to order. Sergeant-at-Arms, the delegation is at attention.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS KING: The Colors of our country in place. Hand-salute. Two.

...The delegation rendered a salute to the Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: For the invocation I now call on National Chaplain Daniel J. Seehafer of Wisconsin.

Invocation
Rev. Daniel J. Seehafer, Wisconsin National Chaplain

Family, we pray. Heavenly Father, it was music to my ears early this morning in which my little son Jacob told me his memory work as he was on his way to school, in his little six year old voice saying, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding." Proverbs 3, verse 5. One would think, "How in the world can he do that?" I'm thinking, Lord, he's a chip off the old block. But isn't that what we ask of our family? How can we accomplish all that we do for God and country? So, Lord, thank You for giving us the understanding that is through You and by You to accomplish our goals, to overcome obstacles as we have served America's veterans every day. Be with us now, Lord, as we have reconvened to carry out the last orders of business. We pray this and other petitions that are silent upon our hearts, we lay them before You in Your Almighty name, and so it shall be, Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Thank you, Chaplain Seehafer.

Pledge of Allegiance

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Ladies and gentlemen, please remain uncovered and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. *...The delegates recited the Pledge of Allegiance.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The Convention is now in session. As I mentioned in my report to you Tuesday, The American Legion is still committed to obtaining constitutional protection for the United States flag from desecration. Even though most polls over the years have shown 80 percent of the public agrees with us, our next speaker bravely helps lead this fight from what many would consider an unlikely place, at Harvard Law School. A constitutional law professor at Harvard for 37 short years, Richard Parker is the chairman of the board for the Citizens Flag Alliance, a coalition of more than 140 organizations, including The American Legion. Unfortunately, Professor Parker is unable to be with us today, but please turn your attention to the monitors for his recorded remarks.

Video Remarks: Professor Richard Parker
Chairman of the Board of Directors, Citizens Flag Alliance

I'm Richard Parker. I have been teaching constitutional law at Harvard Law School for 37 years. For 17 years I've been working with the Citizens Flag Alliance to enact a constitutional amendment restoring to Congress the power to protect the American flag. For the last few years I have been the chairman of the board of the Citizens Flag Alliance. I would like to talk to you today about where the campaign for the amendment stands now, and what you can do and what you should do to support that campaign.

Our campaign to amend the Constitution has been in motion now for 17 years. It's one of the most successful campaigns in American history to amend the Constitution. Amending the Constitution takes time, as we've learned, but we have made dramatic progress. As a matter of fact, we came within one vote of getting the two-thirds of both houses of Congress to send this amendment to the states. We have accomplished a great deal, and now we're at a turning point.

As you know, the Constitution has been amended many times in the past. On many occasions amendments have been designed, as ours is, to correct a mistake by a majority, a majority of justices on the Supreme Court. There is nothing sanctified about those people who wear the black robes. Authority in America lies ultimately with the people. Here, the people rule.

Our amendment provides that Congress shall have the power to prohibit physical desecration of the American flag. Now, when we talk to friends and candidates for office we must remember that this is a power which Congress did have for the first 200 years of our history. The amendment would simply restore to Congress a power which was taken for granted for a very, very long time.

The Flag Amendment has been introduced in the House of Representatives and in the Senate. In the House it's H. J. Res. 13, in the Senate it's S. J. Res. 19. We must remember that we need more co-sponsors now in the House as well as in the Senate. And the way to get more members of Congress to co-sponsor the amendment is to ask them to do it. So please contact your member of Congress, members of the House as well as members of the Senate, and ask them to join the present sponsors as co-sponsors of this amendment. The American people love their flag. As a matter of fact, polls show that most support, an overwhelming majority, supports our constitutional amendment.

Many American people believe that the flag is still protected simply because they don't know that the Supreme Court 20 years ago declared that the First Amendment protects people who would burn a flag. Our job is to inform those who don't know what the state of the law is, and then to change the law. Right now, in the middle of a presidential election, we have a wonderful opportunity to push this over the goal line, to amend the Constitution. Now, what it's going to take is not just work by the national Citizens Flag Alliance in Washington. Much more important, in fact crucial, is grassroots energy and support.

We have for many years persisted at the grassroots level in supporting this amendment, and now I am calling on you again to redouble your efforts, to write to your members of Congress, ask them to co-sponsor the Flag Amendment. Then in town hall meetings with candidates it's vital that at the grass roots citizens ask the candidates whether they support the Flag Amendment. And if they don't, ask them why not. And I mean candidates for Congress and of course for president as well. You can bring your cameras or your iPhones to these events, and put the candidates' responses on YouTube.

It's vital that we get the word out that this is an important issue this year. I understand that many people, and perhaps many of you, feel tired, feel that we have been at this for a long time, as we have. Feel that we have come very close but didn't quite make it. That I want to say to you is a reason for us not to give up, quite the contrary, to push on. American history is full of examples of campaigns on issues like ours that have

gotten tired, that have slacked off. But it's also full of campaigns that have re-energized themselves in moments of opportunity. Having come so close, we must be in the second group, we must re-energize this campaign, because now is the time when we can smell victory.

In closing, I want to thank you for all of the effort that you have put into this cause over the years, and the effort that I know you will put in this year and next. I understand that you, like everyone else, are busy, that you have many things on your plate. This is a time for you to remember that you are also a citizen, and as a citizen you are one of the rulers of this country. You make the law. All you have to do is write a letter, write several letters, go to candidates' meetings, and speak up. It is not terribly time consuming, but it is terribly important. This is our time. This is the time when if we all join hands, every member of every organization that is part of the Citizens Flag Alliance, if we all join hands we can make history.

ANNOUNCER: The success of the Citizens Flag Alliance has come through the grassroots persistence in communicating to Congress the importance of the flag and the desire of the American people to see it legally protected from desecration. You can help. Contact your U. S. Representative and both of your U. S. Senators by calling the Capital switchboard at 202-224-3121. Or follow the link found on the Citizens Flag Alliance website, at cfa-inc.org.

Presentation: The American Legion Fourth Estate Award
Jimmie L. Foster, Alaska, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: We begin this morning by recognizing outstanding achievements in journalism that had a positive impact on a community. The American Legion Fourth Estate Award is very difficult to earn. It is a testament to the demanding nature of the competition, and the quality of the entries. With the changing and growing media technologies The American Legion has adapted by expanding the Fourth Estate Awards to include three categories, print, broadcast and Internet. This year's print category award goes to the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* for a series of articles by reporter Walter Roche, Jr., which exposed serious shortcomings and abuses occurring in area veterans homes. The reports resulted in significant improvements. Accepting the award today is *Tribune-Review* Metro Editor Dave Conti. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "The 2011 Fourth Estate Award for outstanding achievement in the field of journalism is presented to the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, for the series of investigative reports of abuse at Pennsylvania veterans homes that resulted in a wide range of corrective actions. Presented at the 93rd National Convention, September 1, 2011, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

MR. CONTI: Thank you, Commander. And on behalf of Wally Roche and the entire *Tribune-Review* and Trib Total Media I thank you, The American Legion. And special thanks to Commander Ron Conley and all the gang back in Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania that keep on fighting back there.

This is an honor. It's an honor to me professionally as a journalist, but it's also an honor to me personally as the grandson and great-grandson of veterans who fought for this country. And I remember when we were working on these stories and when Wally was writing these stories, I remember saying to him and to our managing editor; I was thinking about the people that were really affected by this, and I pictured my grandfathers and my great-grandfather, and I said, "These are someone's grandfather or father or brother or sister or mother or aunt." And I said, "We as a society, we as people, we shouldn't treat anyone this way, but especially the people we're talking about here, people

who already put their lives on the line in ways that I can't even imagine. They deserve better."

Our job in the media is to make sure that those who deserve better get better. And it's also to make sure that those who deserve scrutiny, those who deserve a watchful eye, someone looking over their shoulder when they collect money from veterans or collect money from taxpayers and what they do with it, they deserve to have questions, they deserve to be watched, and we're supposed to show everyone what is going on there.

So the fact is we were doing our job. So on behalf of the *Tribune-Review* and Wally Roche and Trib Total Media, I'm going to donate the $2,000 stipend we received from The American Legion to Operation Comfort Warriors for patients at military hospitals and transition units. They deserve to get what they get for doing their jobs. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Being honored in the broadcast category is WTVF NewsChannel 5 from Nashville, Tennessee. WTVF investigated suspicious fundraising activities and expenditures by a group called Veterans Support Organization. Accepting the award for NewsChannel 5 is investigative reporter Jennifer Kraus. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "2011 Fourth Estate Award for outstanding achievement in the field of journalism is presented to WTVF NewsChannel 5, for investigative reports that uncovered deceptive fundraising practices, and ten violations of Tennessee's Charitable Solicitations Act. NewsChannel 5 Investigates: Veteran Support Organization. Presented at the 93rd National Convention, September 1, 2011, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

MRS. JENNIFER KRAUS: Thank you and good morning. It is indeed a pleasure and an honor to be here in front of all of you accepting the Fourth Estate Award from The American Legion for the second time. NewsChannel 5, as you mentioned, is based in Nashville, but we cover all of middle Tennessee and southern Kentucky. We are home to Fort Campbell and the 101st Airborne Division Screaming Eagles. We are also home to the Alvin C. York VA Medical Center, and we are home to countless veterans just like you. We are committed to serving our viewers, and one of our priorities is serving viewers and veterans and veterans' issues.

When I stood here before you four years ago with my producer, Kevin Wisniewski and photographer Bryan Staples, we were being honored for our work exposing the Tennessee State Veterans Nursing Home; state run nursing homes across the state that we had found problems with patient neglect. Our investigation then led to the Department of Justice launching an investigation, and they found problems; among them that veterans were dying needlessly there. That led the federal government to order the state to make immediate changes.

The investigation that we did for which you honor us today involved the Veterans Support Organization, a group that set up shop in Tennessee. They are set up in many states across the country right now. We found that they were collecting donations in front of Walmart stores and other businesses. Middle Tennessee has a very generous heart, especially as far as veterans' issues. We found that these people, many of them not veterans, were dressed in fatigues claiming to be veterans, and they were not. We went undercover and found that many of these people were telling people who were passing by that they were volunteers, and they were not. We found that they were telling people that they were building a shelter for veterans, homeless veterans in our area, and they were not. We found that they were telling people that they were helping to build a Fisher House in our neighborhood, and they were not. We also found that they were telling people they were giving nearly all of the money that they were collecting to help veterans

in need. And what we found was they were donating 15 cents out of every dollar to help veterans. Our investigation prompted the State of Tennessee to get involved and take action against the group. It also prompted television stations and newspapers around the country, which have also done similar investigations exposing what was going on with the VSO in their neighborhood. How did this all get started? Because I got a call from several veterans who said this is a concern of mine, can you help us, can you look into this and see if these people are in fact helping veterans.

Two very different investigations, the nursing home and VSO, but both very time consuming and very labor intensive. Fortunately, I work at one of the few stations in this country that is devoted to investigations and exposing problems in our community, in our country, and in our neighborhoods. They realized and recognized the importance of investigative journalism, and for that I have to recognize our station managers Debbie Turner, Lyn Plantinga, Sandy Boonstra and Michelle Bonnett. Kevin Wisniewski and Bryan Staples, who worked with me on the nursing home investigation, also worked with me on this story, and I want to recognize them. I know you will join me in thanking them for this work. I know they join me in thanking all of you for honoring us and recognizing us with this second award. We look forward to coming back to future conventions. Our goal is to continue to do the work that you find is important and is worthy of recognition like this. We remain committed to telling your stories, to doing work that is important for you, and exposing problems that affect veterans. It is the very least we feel we can do to thank you for all that you have sacrificed, for all that you have done for this country, for what you have done to make the country what it is today, and for making this country so great. Thank you again for honoring us. God bless America. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Thank you, Ms. Kraus. The Fourth Estate Internet Award goes to an excellent series of internet blogs, videos and interactive reporting by the *Indianapolis Star*, titled *Hoosier Veterans: Faces of War.* Accepting are digital photo editor Dawn Mitchell, multimedia photojournalist Danese Kenon, and photographer Kelly Wilkinson.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "2011 Fourth Estate Award for outstanding achievement in the field of journalism is presented to The Indianapolis Star for producing an online documentary package that provided poignant and touching wartime experiences of Indiana military veterans. "Hoosier Veterans, Faces of War." Presented at the 93rd National Convention, September 1, 2011, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

MS. MITCHELL: Thank you. On behalf of Danese Kenon and Kelly Wilkinson and myself and the *Indianapolis Star*, I would like to thank for you this award, and to The American Legion for allowing us to come here and thank you in person for this, and to thank you all for your service. I'm happy to see the Indiana delegation is in full force.

In January of 2010 I approached my colleagues and asked them, I said, "We need to do something for Veterans Day. We've got so many amazing veterans in Indiana, and we would like to have them share their stories."

So we interviewed some individuals. They didn't flinch, they said sure. Then somebody said why don't you do a documentary? We said sure, how hard can that be? So we did that. After 22 interviews, 40 hours of video, we had amazing individuals. We had Sammy Davis, a Medal of Honor recipient. We had a Pearl Harbor survivor, a U. S. S. *Indianapolis* survivor, a WASP, and so many more. And these people opened their hearts, they opened their homes to us, showed us just how amazing their spirit is. And a lot of the individuals, their families, said that after they watched the interviews, they had never told those stories to their own families.

Our point was for people in our generation and for kids in school today, they need to ask their parents, their grandparents, people that they know, "What is your story?"

Everyone has a story. In wartime and in peace you individuals put on the uniform of the United States military. We honor you for that. Tell your story. Thank you so much for this award. God bless America. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: At this time the chair recognizes Randall Fisher of Kentucky, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Foreign Relations, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
Randall Fisher, Kentucky, Chairman

At 8:30 a.m. Sunday, August 28, 2011, 45 delegates assigned to the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations met in the Minneapolis Convention Center, Minneapolis. Mr. Randall Fisher (KY) was elected Chairman and Dennis M. Duggan (MD) was appointed Secretary.

At this meeting, motions were approved authorizing the committee chairman and secretary to make technical corrections to the resolutions reported out of the committee to ensure proper wording and form without changing the substance or meaning of the resolutions and to sign the report on behalf of the delegates. A total of 5 resolutions were assigned to the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations.

The Committee report contains resolutions that will, in conjunction with resolutions previously adopted, provide and an effective viable foreign relations program for the American Legion. This program will fully support a strong dynamic US Foreign policy to promote democracy around the world and discharge America's responsibility as leader of the free world in the continuing struggle to defend and promote liberty.

Approved

Resolution No. 48: Securing Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenal
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, Pakistan is a long-time ally, which has partnered with the United States against terrorist threats in Iraq and Afghanistan during the Global War on Terror; and

WHEREAS, Pakistan's nuclear program is a vital concern to U.S. national security, due to the close proximity to al-Qaida and Taliban insurgents as well as suspected Islamist sympathizers embedded within Pakistan's army; and

WHEREAS, The recent audacious attacks on Pakistan Navy Aviation Base Mehran, in close proximity of a nuclear holding facility and alongside a Pakistan Air Force Base, once again brings renewed focus on the safety of Pakistan's nuclear weapons arsenal; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion seeks to deter the possibility of terrorists gaining access to nuclear weapons as the potential for the intersection of terrorism and nuclear weapons is arguably the greatest threat to U.S. national security; and

WHEREAS, In an effort to prevent the infiltration of a nuclear establishment by individuals sympathetic to al-Qaida goals, the U.S. must construct and implement policies that proactively thwart the unwelcome possibility of Pakistan's nuclear weapons falling into the wrong hands; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31, September 1, 2011, That The American Legion urges the President and the Congress to carefully formulate and execute policies toward Pakistan in order to deter the possibility of terrorists gaining access to nuclear weapons; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the U.S. should seek to provide assistance to Pakistan in implementing programs that will improve security and effective accountability at

nuclear facilities thereby transforming Pakistan from a source of insecurity in the Middle East to a country committed to eliminating terrorism and ensuring security from nuclear proliferation.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 2 (AK): **Taiwan Straits Dialogue**
Resolution No. 43 (MD): **The American Legion General Foreign Policy Objectives**
Resolution No. 45 (MD): **POW/MIA Accounting Policies**

Referred to Standing Commission on Foreign Relations

Resolution No. 102 (NJ): **Repatriation of United States Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN FISHER: Mr. Commander, as a delegate to this Convention from the Department of Kentucky, I move the adoption of this entire report. ... *Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: You heard the motion. I heard many seconds. Is there any discussion? The question has been called for. All in favor, so indicate by the usual sign. Opposed? Carried. The report of Foreign Relations is adopted. Thank you, Randy.

At this time the chair recognizes G. Michael Schlee of Maryland, chairman of the National Convention Committee on National Security, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on National Security
G. Michael Schlee, Maryland, Chairman

At 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 28, 2011, 220 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security met initially in the Minneapolis Convention Center, Rooms 211A-D, Second Level. Mr. G. Michael Schlee (MD) was elected Chairman and Mr. E.C. Toppin (NC) was appointed Secretary.

General Security Ad Hoc
Douglas C. Haggan, France, Chairman
Leroy Thorton, Secretary, Maryland, Secretary
Conservation of Natural Resources Ad Hoc
E. C. Toppin, North Carolina, Chairman

Aerospace
Robert C. Weyenberg, Wisconsin, Chairman
Andrew Robertson, Virginia, Secretary
Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness
Charles E. Kruger, Minnesota, Chairman
James Mareschal, Missouri, Secretary

Law and Order
George E. Wehrli, Florida, Chairman
Harvey Daggett, Connecticut, Secretary
Merchant Marine
Chuck Moreland, Florida, Chairman
Charles Powell, Secretary
Military Affairs
Leo F. Malloy, Massachusetts, Chairman
Marie Rhyne, Virginia, Secretary
Naval Affairs
William B. Goede, Minnesota, Chairman
James Whitfield, Missouri, Secretary

At 10:30 a.m., Sunday, August 28, 2011, the delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Security reconvened in the Minneapolis Convention Center, Rooms 211A-D, Second Level. Reports of all Convention Committees were read and their recommended actions on resolutions considered. A total of 25 resolutions were assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security or prepared by the Committee to meet problems which were held to be of concern to The American Legion and germane to its principles and objectives. The Convention Committee authorized the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report of the Convention Committee on National

Security on behalf of its delegates and make technical corrections to the resolutions reported out of the Committee.

In addition, the delegates and the and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Security gave a courtesy review of Resolution No. 107 Supporting the U.S. Economy and Increased U.S. Energy Through A Canadian-American Oil Pipeline assigned to the Convention Committee on Economics. Convention Committee on Security supports the adoption of Resolution No. 107.

General Security Ad Hoc Committee
Douglas C. Haggan, France, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 40: Military Occupational Specialty Standards
Origin: Michigan
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long recognized the significant role and the contributions of women serving in the military services of the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, Women veterans have been eligible for full membership in The American Legion since its founding in 1919, prior to the full franchise of women to vote in Presidential elections; and

WHEREAS, There are 213,828 women serving on active duty in the military comprising 14.5% of the total active force, and 71,182 women serving in the National Guard and Reserve comprising 15.2% of the total Guard and Reserve all serving with distinction, honor, and valor; and

WHEREAS, Women are excluded from serving in Combat Arms Military Occupational Specialties in the Army, Marine Corps, infantry, armor, artillery and Navy Seals where close combat, high intensity engagements with the enemy on a daily basis is expected; and

WHEREAS, The combat exclusion clause is based in large part on the findings of the Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Military, final report dated November 15, 1992, based on the physical requirements of combat; and

WHEREAS, Women are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan in low intensity combat, truck convoys, military police units, female engagement teams, where they are interacting and assisting Afghanistan women and a number of other military occupations; and

WHEREAS, Wherever any member of our armed services serving in Iraq and Afghanistan are on the battlefield, which undergoes a constant changing definition, there are no truly secure areas; and

WHEREAS, 100 female service members have been killed in Iraq and 27 have been killed in Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, A number of female service members are suffering from what is termed the "signature wounds" of service in Iraq and Afghanistan – Post Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injury; and

WHEREAS, Congress, in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, Section 596, mandated the creation of the Military Leadership Diversity Commission (MLDC), whose report has been delivered to the President, the Secretary of Defense and Congress on March 15, 2011; and

WHEREAS, Recommendation 9 of the MLDC states: "DOD and the Services should eliminate the 'Combat Exclusion Policies for women,' including the removal of barriers and inconsistencies, to create a level playing field for all qualified:

a: Women in career fields/specialties currently open to them should be immediately able to be assigned to any unit that requires that career field/specialty, consistent with the current operational environment;

b: DoD and the services should take deliberate steps in a phase approach to open additional career fields and units involved in "direct ground combat" to qualified women;

c: DoD and the Services should report to Congress the process and time-line for removing barriers that inhibit women from achieving senior leadership positions"; and

WHEREAS, The President of the United States, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on receiving the MLDC, March 15, 2011, made public statements in favor of the elimination of the "combat exclusion clause" for women; and

WHEREAS, The Congress and the courts have held that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which ensures all individuals are treated equally before the law with respect to civilian employment, does not apply to the military profession, no less than seven major Supreme Court decisions are distilled in these words from Goldman v. Weinberger;

[T]he military is, by necessity, a specialized society [separate] from civilian society…'The military must insist upon respect for duty and a discipline without counterpart in civilian life,' in order to prepare for and perform its vital role…The essence of military service 'is the subordination of the desires and interests of the individual to the needs of the service.'; and

WHEREAS, Some countries have repealed "combat exclusion policies" in recent years, while others such as the Soviet Union and Israel have maintained their "combat exclusion policies"; and

WHEREAS, Retired Army General Norman Schwarzkopf, former Commander of Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm, spoke for many Americans when he declared, "Decisions on what roles women should play in war must be based on military standards, not women's rights"; and

WHEREAS, There are valid concerns about the physical demands required of soldiers to qualify and service in the combat arms; Army and Marine Corps infantry, armor, artillery, Army Special Forces and Navy Seals; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31, September 1, 2011, That The American Legion, believes strongly that the Department of Defense and all branches of the military services must maintain the current physical, mental requirements and qualifications for acceptance into military service that has created the best and most respected military in the world; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the mental and physical qualifications of all military personnel, regardless of gender or age, should be held to a single duty position specific standing depending on Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) and not be amended without Congressional authority; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion requests the Congress of the United States to hold extensive and in depth hearings on Military Leadership Diversity Commission Recommendation 9 eliminating the "Combat Exclusion Policies for Women," since Congress and only Congress can codify the elimination of the "combat exclusion clause for women"; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes that without such Congressional hearings and oversight there exists the distinct possibility that changes will be made to lessen the current standards or set a double standard, one for men and one for women, for the sake of accommodating personnel for "social experiments," therefore, reducing our nation's military effectiveness.

Resolution No. 42: The American Legion's Position on the Operational Reserve
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, One of The American Legion's four founding pillars is National Security; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has tirelessly advocated for a strong national defense in times of conflict and times of peace; and

WHEREAS, Historically, America has in times of relative peace looked for an immediate economic "peace dividend"; and

WHEREAS, This fervent call for cost savings has repeatedly placed the national security of the nation at risk; and

WHEREAS, The nation is currently undergoing severe economic times; and

WHEREAS, Once again the Department of Defense, in order to meet budget constraints has been required to reduce active duty end strength; and

WHEREAS, A reduction in end strength will require a continued and even increased dependence on the reserve component in the form of an "Operational Reserve" to meet mission requirements; and

WHEREAS, National security imperatives placed on the Department of Defense due to worldwide instability will increase the need for forward projection of the military instrument of national power; and

WHEREAS, The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review states the need for; but not the mission of an operational reserve; and

WHEREAS, The 2012 Department of Defense base budget request does not identify missions nor budget line items for an operational reserve; and

WHEREAS, An operational reserve requires increased commitment by service members and their families; and

WHEREAS, An operational reserve requires sufficiently increased, timely, and dedicated funding for training, equipment, and family support issues; and

WHEREAS, In order to insure sufficient, timely, and dedicated funding, the operational reserve must be properly missioned in accordance with the current National Security Strategy; and

WHEREAS, In the case of emergency, the President has the authority to "call up" for Federal Duty, Reserve personnel; and National Guard personnel with the consent of the Governor; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always considered itself a partner with the Department of Defense, making The American Legion a part of the solution rather than part of any problem involving national security issues; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion, in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31, September 1, 2011, That The American Legion shall prevail upon Congress to reform the laws and policies governing the reserve components in ways that provides them programmable sustainability as an operational force; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Defense should be directed to, in compliance with those laws and policies, establish missions and funding streams supporting taskings consistent with the National Defense Authorization Act, the Quadrennial Defense Review, the National Security Strategy, and the National Military Strategy, which directly impact national security and support the readiness of and the rotational nature of the operational reserve; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the President of the United States should delegate to the Secretary of Defense, the authority to "call to Federal Service," and mission those Reserve Component personnel necessary to support the National Security Strategy, and the National Military Strategy by maintaining the operational reserve as a vital part of the operational force.

Receive and Record

Resolution No. 10 (TX): **Support for the Selective Service Registration Program**
Resolution No. 15 (CO): **Support for the Selective Service Registration Program**
Resolution No. 21 (OH): **Support for the Selective Service Registration Program**
Resolution No. 59 (VA): **Support for the Selective Service Registration Program**
Resolution No. 74 (OR): **Support for the Selective Service Registration Program**
Resolution No. 75 (CT): **Support for the Selective Service Registration Program**
Resolution No. 94 (DC): **Support for the Selective Service Registration Program**

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 56 (CA): **Oppose Elimination of Don't Ask, Don't Tell Policy**

Conservation of Natural Resources Ad Hoc Committee
E.C. Toppin, North Carolina, Chairman

No Resolutions

Aerospace Committee
Robert Weyenberg, Wisconsin, Chairman

No Resolutions

Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness Committee
Charles E. Kruger, Minnesota, Chairman

[Resolution set aside during discussion.]
Resolution No. 9: Secure Northern Border
Origin: Montana
Submitted by: National Security Committee

Receive and Record
Resolution No. 23 (OH): **Secure Border with Mexico**
Resolution No. 81 (OH): **The American Legion Opposes Amnesty for Illegal Immigrants**

Law and Order Committee
George E. Wehrli, Florida, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 44: Stolen Valor Act
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Congress of the United States in 2005 amended the Stolen Valor Act, Title 18, Part 1, Chapter 33, Section 704, of the United States Code to include as criminal violations of the Act the making of false representations, verbally or in writing, that a person has been awarded decorations or medals for acts of valor in the military services; and

WHEREAS, Congress amended the Stolen Valor Act, 18 U.S.C. Section 704, upon findings that fraudulent claims of receipt of the Medal of Honor and other medals of valor damage the reputation and meaning of such decorations and medals; and that

federal law enforcement officers have limited ability to prosecute fraudulent claims of receipt of such medals and decorations; and that legislative action was necessary to protect the reputation and meaning of military decorations and medals; and

WHEREAS, Notwithstanding Congress' actions to protect the reputation and meaning of military decorations and medals by its 2005 amendments to 18 U.S.C., Section 704, which included enhanced penalties of up to one (1) year in prison for claiming receipt of the Medal of Honor and other enumerated medals, they have not been effective in stopping false claims of receipt of medals and decorations of valor, which criminal acts appear to be escalating as the Act remains but a misdemeanor and not a felony; and

WHEREAS, According to the Office of Inspector General of the Veterans Administration, false claims of military service and receipt of medals of valor have resulted in literally millions of dollars in fraudulent claims for VA services, as well as related costs of investigation by the VA, and law enforcement agencies, to uncover false claims, all of which, "takes away valuable resources from those who are entitled," in the words of the VA Inspector General; and

WHEREAS, An example of the need for reform is the recent case of U.S. vs. Xavier (Javier) Alvarez in the Central District of California, in which an elected director of a municipal water district was convicted of violation of the Stolen Valor Act for claiming service in the U.S. Marine Corps leading to receipt of the Medal of Honor, a Silver Star, and Purple Hearts, all of which were utterly false as he had never served a day in the military. Notwithstanding his conviction, he has refused to resign his elected position and cannot be barred from office because violation of the Act remains a misdemeanor and not a felony; and

WHEREAS, There is a manifest need to amend the Stolen Valor Act, 18 U.S.C. Section 704, from a misdemeanor to a felony offense in order to make it a more effective deterrent; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31, September 1, 2011, That the Congress of the United States should amend the Stolen Valor Act, Title 18, Part I, Chapter 33, Section 704, to provide that it shall include penalties rendering a violation of the Act a felony rather than a misdemeanor crime in order to be a more effective deterrent and provide law enforcement with a more effective means to protect the reputation and meaning of military decorations and medals and to deter fraudulent claims which have the effect of taking away valuable benefits from the deserving, by and to the undeserving.

Approved with Amendment

Resolution No. 47: Support for Legislation Prohibiting Hate Speech at Military Funerals
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(As amended, Consolidated with Resolution No. 22(OH))

WHEREAS, Since its creation, the United States has honored its war dead by a sacred tradition of military funerals, and continues to treat its war dead with sanctity, dignity and honor, and recognizes the ultimate sacrifice made to protect, defend, and preserve the freedoms and way of life in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Certain groups oppose various policies of the United States, particularly the armed conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and protest those policies at the time and location of military funerals of servicemembers who were killed in combat or who died from battle wounds; and

WHEREAS, Such protests have included chants against the President, the United States and its armed forces; laced with profanity, insults to the deceased service member,

and his or her family, desecration of the Flag of the United States, and other sacred symbols of our country; and

WHEREAS, Such protests at military funerals have led to confrontations between protestors and family or community members including members of veterans organizations who vociferously oppose the positions advanced by the said protestors, and who support and honor the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and others serving in the armed forces; and

WHEREAS, These protests are targeted at the deceased servicemember and the families and can be considered hate speech; and

WHEREAS, These protests interfere with the bereaved family's grieving process during the mourning period in connection with funerals administered by the United States Armed Forces and Congressionally chartered veterans organizations thereby violating Title 18 USC 13§ 245 Federally Protected Activities 1(b), which states, "Whoever attempts to interfere with any person participating in any service or activity provided or administered by the United States… shall be fined under this title, or imprisoned not more than one year, or both"; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a Congressionally chartered organization pursuant to USC Chapter 217; and

WHEREAS, Under the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, citizens have the right to free speech; and

WHEREAS, It is not an unreasonable or unconstitutional intrusion of the free speech rights of protestors to preclude them from intentionally targeting military funerals and dishonoring those servicemembers who have died in armed conflict and their families; and

WHEREAS, Justice Samuel Alito has stated, "…it is clear that the First Amendment does not entirely preclude liability for the intentional infliction of emotional distress by means of speech" and "in order to have a society in which public issues can be openly and vigorously debated, it is not necessary to allow the brutalization of innocent victims" in addition to "our profound commitment to free and open debate is not a license for…vicious verbal assault"; and

WHEREAS, The legislatures of 44 states have enacted legislation that restricts time, place, content and manner of such protests; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31, September 1, 2011, That The American Legion finds the targeted protest of servicemember funerals to be a vile and despicable act and not worthy of American citizens who enjoy the freedoms purchased by sacrifice and death of military heroes; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Legion urges Congress to designate political protests planned and conducted at targeted servicemember funerals as hate speech prohibited by law; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress define the official mourning period for service members killed in combat to be at least one week; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress prohibit the planning for, or conduct of, protests aimed at a specific member of the military or the related family within the one mile radius of activity pertaining to funeral services, procession, and internment for a period of one day before and one day after the official mourning period.

Merchant Marine Committee
Chuck Moreland, Florida, Chairman

No Resolutions

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: We are going to suspend the rest of the National Security Committee's report. Our next guest this morning represents Minnesota's Sixth Congressional District. Prior to her election to Congress she served in the Minnesota State Senate, where she championed a taxpayers' bill of rights. A mother of five who has cared for 23 foster children, she has supported expanded educational benefits for veterans and their families. She supported generous increases in the VA budget to include the hiring of 1,000 new claims adjusters to ease the VA backlog. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the Honorable United States Representative Michelle Bachmann. *(Applause)*

Address: The Honorable Michele Bachmann
United States House of Representatives

Good morning. Thank you so much for the invitation to be here today. Welcome to Minnesota. On behalf of all Minnesotans, we are thrilled you are here, and we hope that you enjoy our beautiful city and our beautiful state while you're here. I also would like to express my thanks to National Commander Jimmie Foster for his service to The American Legion.

We are so proud that 92 years ago the newly formed American Legion hosted their very first convention right here in the beautiful city of Minneapolis, Minnesota. And after its founding in 1919, the Legion served more than 4,000,000 American veterans of the First World War And just in the last few months the last of those veterans in the "War to End All Wars," Frank Buckles, was laid to rest after living to be an astounding 110 years of age. Frank was the very last Dough Boy, who was dedicated in his very last years of his life to ensuring that the sacrifices of all of the Dough Boys were appropriately remembered. What an incredible man Frank was.

Generations of military men and women have sacrificed their time, their comfort, and unfortunately all too often their very lives, to protect not only our Constitution, but our God-given liberties, our freedoms. Because every single day our freedoms need defending, and I'm thankful for the thousands today who are serving us in Afghanistan, those winding down the operations in Iraq, and those who are stationed in bases all across the globe. They now deserve the distinction, as all of you do, as our very best Americans, and we owe them a debt that we can never fully repay.

Throughout our history, you, our veterans, have faced different enemies, but you've always had the same friend and ally in The American Legion and in the VFW, and in the other veterans service organizations. There are those who want to tell us that our day as the free world's leader has passed. I don't believe that statement. And when we conduct our foreign policy apologetically, from leading from behind, I believe that that in fact weakens the United States' credibility across the world. *(Applause)*

Such was the case for the United States and for Britain in the late 1970s. Both countries, as you recall, had declined both economically and militarily, and both had lost their standing as the world's leaders. Their weakness in turn led to the adventurism by the Soviet Union and by other nations, including Iran. It took two very strong leaders on the world stage, one a woman and one a man, to reverse the course of their respective countries. It was 31 years ago that the radical mullahs in Iran released the American hostages. It almost seems like a day ago, doesn't it, when we thankfully welcomed home after over four hundred days the illegally held hostages. And rather than face President Reagan in the Argentine junta's invasion of the Falkland Islands in April of 1992, they were met by Margaret Thatcher in the firmest way, and with the most assuring touch. These were the first victories of Ronald Reagan's presidency, and of Margaret Thatcher's tenure as the prime minister of Britain, and we should heed the lessons that they hold for dealing with those who seek to wreak havoc on peace and on democracy across the world today. Because I believe for the sake of our own security and for the defense of our

values in the affairs of the world, American leadership has always been critical to the peace and safety and prosperity of the world.

Throughout decades of struggle free nations have prevailed over tyranny, because of the sacrifices of the men and women of the United States armed forces. Those we depend on, our troops should know that when they become veterans they can depend on us. And honoring this obligation will require leadership, and I promise you that I will lead not from behind, but I will lead from the front. Because it is our duty first and primarily to protect our veterans and to make sure that you receive not only the respect, but also the care that you have paid for very heavily with your service to our nation.

As president I will assure that those who serve today as well as in the past have the highest access to the best care both of health, mental health, and rehabilitative care that the world has to offer. And that begins I believe by repealing Obamacare. *(Applause)*

Which I not only believe, but know, will have terrible consequences for you, our veterans. Why? Because it will help you with a new increased tax on medical devices that many wounded veterans need, and by cutting payments to doctors that treat TRICARE patients. This will only make access to doctors tougher for all of you and for all Americans, and I will make sure that we keep our promises regarding your veterans' retirement benefits.

Many of our young men and women have served multiple tours in Iraq and in Afghanistan, and many have had their tours extended. And now as many of our nation's finest heroes return home, we should appropriately honor them and welcome them with a hero's welcome, just as we should rightly honor those who have gone before in wars of other generations. I honor my own father, who served honorably in the United States Air Force, and who is now laid to rest here in Fort Snelling in Minneapolis and St. Paul. And I honor my stepfather, who honorably served in the United States Army, and my brother who retired full United States Navy.

Those who serve today also deserve a country where when their service is over they can know with complete and full assurance that they will also have the same opportunity for a good life like all of you had. But our current economic path is making that less and less possible for returning soldiers. Earlier this year you may recall that Congress was embroiled in a bitter funding battle. If the government would have shut down, our troops would not have received their paychecks on time, including our deployed soldiers overseas. This must never happen. *(Applause)*

I committed to donating my pay as a member of Congress during any government shutdown to any military nonprofit, but I went a step further. I joined one of my colleagues, Louie Gohmert of Texas, and co-sponsored a bill to ensure that military paychecks would always go out on time, and that our men and women in uniform would never again become political pawns in Congress' budget battles. *(Applause)*

But, sadly, even this year, and just months later, history repeated itself again. Because troop pay became another point of uncertainty again this summer during the debt ceiling debate. We saw a variety of scare tactics that were employed not only by our president, but also by the treasury secretary as well. And I believe that the debt ceiling did not need to be raised, because I believed we needed to pay the interest on the debt, and instead focus on prioritizing America's spending. Because the problems of this nation are today, they are not tomorrow, and Congress needs to step up and solve the problems now and not push them off to the future. *(Applause)*

I joined my fellow Congressman from Iowa, Steve King. We introduced the Promises Act because we believe that we need to do exactly what the act says, keep America's promises. We need to pay both the interest on the debt and send to the military the paychecks that they not only deserve, they've earned. *(Applause)*

The debt ceiling deal that was signed by the president could have even more drastic consequences, I am sorry to report to you today. Because it could come in the form of, and I'm serious, over a half trillion dollars in cuts, of non-discriminating cuts, to our

military's budget. If a super committee, which I believe is one of the worst ideas we have ever seen in our country, of 12 members of Congress fails to reach agreement, over half a trillion dollars will be cut out of the military, all while the United States is engaged in three conflicts overseas. As president of the United States I want to assure you completely and wholly that our armed services will never again be political pawns in political deal-making in Washington, D. C. *(Applause)*

It is a sobering thought to think that even today our federal government is adding every single day $4 billion in overspending. That means every day we are borrowing $4 billion from somewhere; either the next generation, or from nations who don't necessarily have our best interest at heart. We were, very shortly, at the very beginning of Ronald Reagan's presidency, the greatest creditor nation in the world. I am sorry to report that today we are the world's leading debtor nation. When we are borrowing $4 billion a day, this is a disservice to our United States military.

Very soon cuts will be the norm and not the exception. But we must, and I will, keep the faith to you, our veterans. And, in fact, our spending and debt is so out of control that by 2020, within nine years, the interest on repaying our debt will be larger than the United States' entire military budget. That's sobering. And even worse, the interest on the payments on the debt is going to the Chinese, and those payments are going to build up Chinese military efforts. The Chinese military, as you know, recently purchased their first aircraft carrier. The United States is now sending money to build up the Chinese military. That's why I believe Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mullen, wisely said the American national debt is the greatest threat to America's national security. I believe a president should pay sobering heed to those words of our Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Serving you, our veterans, doesn't have to be complex; it just has to be done. Some of the challenges that were created by these terrible economic conditions that we find ourselves in are leading to the unemployment level of veterans. That's unacceptably high, and it's sad because it's higher than the national average. Because I believe that the jobs that we need to have in manufacturing and technology and innovation would be well-served by our veterans. They are perfect for these jobs. As president I want to see the United States of America make things in this country again. We can't have other nations doing all the making; we need to do the making. *(Applause)*

And I stand against the current administration's assault on national security apparatus. The White House is taking power away from the military through a never before seen reduction in resources during wartime. I'm a member of the Permanent Select Committee in the House of Representatives on Intelligence. We deal with the nation's classified secrets, and I am regularly briefed on the threats that the United States receives, both within our borders and both externally against our borders. I understand the threats that America faces every day. As Commander-in-Chief I will commit the necessary resources to our first constitutional duty of government, which is to protect our nation, to keep our people safe and secure and sovereign. Because never forget, we are home to the greatest military force the world has ever known, and it is my intention to keep it that way. *(Applause)*

And like you, I am also committed to winning the war on terror. We have to. We don't have a choice. Killing bin Laden did not end the war on terror, and we can never forget that every day there are terrorists who wake up thinking about how they will kill Americans today, and destroy the United States of America today. That is America's challenge. But America is up for that challenge.

Very shortly we will observe the tenth anniversary of 9/11, and we will never forget that that plan was hatched in the mountains of Afghanistan. As president, my decision to withdraw troops from Afghanistan will be based upon military considerations. They will not be based upon my own political considerations. We must, and we can, win Afghanistan. But we must provide General Allen the resources he deserves in order to win this conflict. In 2007 I spoke out in support of the surge that was brilliantly employed

by David Petraeus, a national hero, and I will continue to support that strategy. But we should never put our troops into harm's way unless there is first a clear and vital United States interest in mission. We never will half-heartedly commit our troops to battle without a true end plan, without knowing our enemy and also knowing our mission. And as president I will always use the full resources of our military to bring about a quick and ready resolution to achieve victory. When the president has had his attention on instructing Israel to give back land necessary to protect their existence, he has taken his eye off the real threat in the Middle East, and that is a nuclear Iran. As president, I want you to know I will stand with our ally, Israel, and I will stand against a nuclear Iran.

Several years ago I had the distinct privilege of standing with one of the veterans in my district here in Minnesota, along with the local American Legion. He received a Silver Star Medal. After 40 years it was awarded to him. His name is Ron Kane. And Ron told me that he did what he had to do. Ron was serving in Vietnam as an Army platoon sergeant in the First Battalion in the 506th Infantry. It was July 11th in 1969 when his battalion found itself under very heavy enemy fire. But Ron Kane didn't hesitate. He put himself out in the line of fire. He saved many of his fellow soldiers, just like many of you bravely did. He secured a defensive perimeter around the men, and he fired 18 rounds of his M-16 at the enemy. Several years later the Army report on his Silver Star stated the nature of Ron Kane's heroic effort, and I quote, "His courageous actions in close combat with a hostile force were in keeping with the highest tradition of his military service, and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army." Kane didn't ask me for a ceremony so that he could have a medal pinned upon his chest. But for me and for our district it was a very small way to say thank you. On Memorial Day of this year, in front of a crowd of several hundred people, and 41 years behind schedule, Ron Kane was finally pinned with the Silver Star he so richly deserved. You see, it was something that the United States had to do.

Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher did what they had to do. They forged a powerful partnership. They turned their countries around. They restored them as economic and military superpowers, and the world was better for it. And in the process they defeated the Soviet Union without firing a shot, and they fundamentally changed the economies of both nations that ushered in a period of peace and prosperity that was unparalleled in the history of the world. We find ourselves today in search of another Margaret Thatcher to restore our great country to the thriving nation that I believe we can be again, and as the leader for global peace and through its resolute strength. But the good news is we can take our country back, because the principles that made our nation great lie here in this hall today. You have lived them; you have exemplified them not only in this nation, but across the world. We cannot thank you enough for the example that you have given to subsequent generations, and to the civilians of this great country. But still, each one of us together, with the right leadership, I know we can see America's greatness will once again shine across the world.

So American Legion members, I say to you thank you, thank you for your unwavering service, to the greatest and best Americans, you the veterans. As we approach this tenth anniversary of 9/11, thank you also for supporting the men and women who answered the call to fight terrorism. Thank you for telling the story of American freedom, because you stand for America's freedoms and for America's heroes. And like American veteran Ron Kane, you're doing what you had to do. God bless you all, God bless the United States of America. Thank you for allowing me to share with you today. God bless you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Thank you congresswoman. As a matter of note, Past National Commander Jake Comer just signed her up in The American Legion Auxiliary. He's always recruiting. At this time we will continue the report of the National Security Committee.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN SCHLEE: Military Affairs Committee. Leo F. Malloy, Massachusetts.

Military Affairs Committee
Leo F. Malloy, Massachusetts, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 60: The American Legion Policy for the United States Government to Provide Maintenance to Clark Veterans Cemetery in the Philippines
Origin: Virginia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 100 (PI))

WHEREAS, The United States closed its military bases in the Philippines in 1992; and

WHEREAS, The devastation caused by the volcanic eruption of Mount Pinatubo in 1991 caused the United States Air Force (USAF) to leave Clark Air Force Base on the Philippine island of Luzon; and

WHEREAS, For almost fifty years the USAF maintained the Clark Veterans Cemetery on the U.S. Clark Veterans Cemetery on the U.S. Clark Air Force Base; and

WHEREAS, This cemetery was established in 1948 to receive and honor the remains from four other United States military cemeteries that date back to the Spanish American War, cemeteries Fort Stotsenburg One and Two, the Canacao Naval Hospital at Sangley Point, and the Fort William McKinley Army Cemetery in Manila; and

WHEREAS, Over eight thousand veterans and their families and others authorized for U.S. interment repose in the Clark Veterans Cemetery, with more than half being the American veteran dead of all services; and

WHEREAS, Following base closure in 1991 the Clark Veterans Cemetery fell into disrepair and disgrace because provision was not made by the United States Government for its perpetual care; and

WHEREAS, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2485 with assistance of American Legionnaires has labored since 1994 to maintain the military cemetery and honor the hallowed ground and the traditions of warrior burial without support of the United States Government; and

WHEREAS, An Associated Press news article on the depressing state of the cemetery and the valiant efforts of retired veterans to support and sustain it recently appeared in newspapers throughout the United States on the fourth of July 2011; and

WHEREAS, The United States Government, through the Department of Veterans Affairs and the American Battle Monuments Commission, provides eternal and perpetual care for other military cemeteries wherein are buried our valorous comrades; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31, September 1, 2011, That the American Legion calls upon the United States Government to reassume its century old responsibility for the care and maintenance of this U. S. Military cemetery, Clark Veterans Cemetery, and with that act further validates the lives of service to their county of those interred there.

Resolution No. 105: Military Commissaries
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has evaluated options to downsize or privatize the Military Commissary System by seeking reduced federal funding, reducing

the number of operating military commissaries, and evaluating the privatizing of military commissaries; and

WHEREAS, The value of commissaries in the quality of life equation for junior enlisted families and military retirees and others is indisputable: Military commissary usage has ranked second only to medical health care in the non-pay compensation package according to surveys conducted among active duty and retired beneficiaries as commissaries save patrons on the order of 26 percent in food costs; and

WHEREAS, The nearly $1 billion in subsidized Congressional appropriations permit commissaries to sell items virtually at cost, and the removal of this funding would drastically raise food costs which would effectively cause commissaries to close; and

WHEREAS, Contrary to popular belief, military commissaries are not competitive with civilian grocery chain stores as commissary sales represent only 1.7 percent of total U.S. grocery sales; and

WHEREAS, Without commissary savings, pay compensation for active duty and military retirees would have to rise and retired as well as drilling Reservists and National Guardsmen are now authorized to use the Commissaries; and

WHEREAS, With the downsizing of the military to include reductions in force and military benefits, any effort to reduce or dismantle the integrity of the military commissary system would be seen as a serious breach of faith with a benefit system that currently serves as a mainstay for the active and reserve components, military retirees and military survivors, military personnel involuntarily discharged or released from active duty, and 100 percent service-connected disabled veterans and others; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31, September 1, 2011, That The American Legion urges the Department of Defense and the Congress to continue full federal funding of the military commissary system and to retain this vital non-pay compensation benefit system which is essential to the morale and readiness of the dedicated men and women who have served, and continue to serve, the national security interests of the United States; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose any efforts to institute "variable pricing" or to privatize the military commissary system or to dismantle or downsize the Defense Commissary Agency.

[Resolution set aside during discussion.]

Resolution No. 106: The American Legion's Position on DOD's Military Retirement System

Origin: Convention Committee on National Security

Submitted by: National Security Committee

Receive and Record

Resolution No. 46 (MD): **Support for Military Quality of Life Standards**

Resolution No. 73 (PA): **Oppose the Exploitation of any Names or Images of Killed in Action Service Members for Profiting Purposes**

Referred to the Standing Committee on National Security

Resolution No. 20 (OH): **Military First**

Resolution No. 95 (DC): **Overseas Military Voting Program**

Naval Affairs Committee
William B. Goede, Minnesota, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 19: Honoring the Four Chaplains
Origin: Ohio
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Four Chaplains died in the sinking of the Troop Ship Dorchester when a Catholic Priest, two Protestant Ministers, and a Jewish Rabbi gave up their life jackets when the supply ran out; and

WHEREAS, There are only three memorial markers at Arlington National Cemetery representing the Catholic Priest and one memorial for each of the two Protestant Ministers; and

WHEREAS, There is no memorial marker for the Jewish Rabbi; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion, in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30, 31, September 1, 2011, That there should be a memorial marker for Jewish Chaplains at Arlington National Cemetery along with the other memorials at the cemetery; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That a 1977 law that requires all new Arlington monuments be approved by a joint Resolution of Congress be executed as soon as possible by Congress, and put to rest the Jewish Chaplains with their fellow comrades.

Presentations

Mr. Commander, National Officers, and Fellow Delegates. I am particularly pleased to announce the winners of the National Blood Donor Awards for this past year.

Category I - Departments with 100,000 or more members
Post Participation: Department of Ohio
Individual Participation: Department of Ohio

Category II - 70,000 to 99,999 members
Post & Individual Participation: No Form Submitted

Category III - 40,000 to 69,999 members
Post Participation: Department of Virginia
Individual Participation: Department of Nebraska

Category IV - 25,000 to 39,999 members
Post Participation: Department of Washington
Individual Participation: Department of Tennessee

Category V - 10,000 to 24,999 members
Post & Individual Participation: Department of Montana

Category VI - less than 10,000 members
Post & Individual Participation: Department of Alaska

The results of the competition for the Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy are as follows:

Many of our Departments participated in the ROTC Awards Program this year. A total of almost 6,100 Medals were awarded to deserving cadets in Senior ROTC and Junior ROTC Units. The winning Departments for 2010-2011 are the Departments of Alaska, Hawaii, Illinois, Minnesota, Montana, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, and Virginia. This speaks well for these Departments and The American Legion in their recognition of the youth of America enrolled in ROTC programs.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN SCHLEE: Mr. Commander, as an accredited delegate to this Convention from the Department of Maryland, I move the adoption of this report. *...Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: You heard the motion. I heard many seconds. Is there any discussion? The Chair recognizes microphone number two.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER CONLEY: Mr. Commander, Ron Conley, delegate to the 93rd National Convention. I move that resolution number nine and resolution 106 be set aside.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Is there any further discussion? Microphone number one.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER SPANOGLE: Mr. Commander, my name is Bob Spanogle, a delegate from the great Department of Michigan, the Wolverine State, and we're proud to have hosted the Legacy Run through the Lower Peninsula and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and across the Mackinaw Bridge.

I support Mr. Conley's second. I'm concerned with resolution 106, which results would change the military retirement plan due to the Defense Business Board's recommendation that somehow military service is equated to civilian service. I take great exception with that. Civilians don't jump out of airplanes. Civilians are not deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan and 130 other countries. They give us their youth and training, rucking sacks across the sands in the combat zones. So I support Mr. Conley. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Is there any further discussion? At this time, all in favor, the usual sign. Opposed. Report is adopted with the exception of resolutions number nine and 106. I now call on the chairman to read resolution number nine. *...Chairman Schlee read resolution number nine as follows.*

Resolution No. 9: Secure Northern Border.
Origin: Montana.
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

Resolved, By the American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30-31 and September 1, 2011, That The American Legion National Organization encourage the Congress of the United States to:

1. Provide full control to the Department of Homeland Security full control and responsibility of the security of the northern border.

2. Assign operational control in the northern border to the U.S. Border Patrol and report to the Department of Homeland Security and Congress, progress in improving coordination of all federal, state and local agencies, and security efforts to secure the northern border and issues demonstrating the lack of cooperation from federal agencies in the securing of the northern border.

3. The Department of Homeland Security will report to Congress a review of all environmental regulations and guidelines which hinder immigration enforcement along the northern border by any federal, state, local or tribal laws and regulations which hinder the securing northern border and recommend corrective action.

4. The Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Border Patrol will no longer be prevented from land manager's access to their land in the performance of their duties. All necessary access roads will be gated only.

5. The Department of Homeland Security will meet with all tribal leaders and keeping in mind tribal sovereignty will do everything in their power to enlist the assistance of tribal law, enforcement officers to assist the Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Border Patrol in securing the northern border.

6. The Department of Interior, Agriculture, and Immigration, Control and Enforcement will be subordinate to the U.S. Border Patrol and Department of Homeland Security and fully cooperate and share information to secure the northern border in areas targeted by drug smugglers, human traffickers and potential terrorists.

7. The U.S. Armed Forces will be deployed to assist the Department of Homeland Security and Border patrol whenever necessary to prevent the introduction of illegal contraband into the United States.

8. All federal, state, local and tribal agencies will coordinate their border security efforts with the Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Border Patrol.

CHAIRMAN SCHLEE: Mr. Commander, due to an administrative error, changes were not made to this resolution to ensure its constitutional and legal soundness. Resolution nine is no longer a part of the report of the Convention Committee on Security. Therefore, as a delegate to this 93rd National Convention, I move to refer this to the Standing Commission on National Security.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER CONLEY: Ron Conley seconds that motion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Discussion? You've heard the motion. There is a second. All in favor the usual sign. All opposed. Carried. I now call on the chairman to read resolution number 106. ...*Chairman Schlee read resolution number 106 as follows.*

Resolution 106: The American Legion's Position on DoD's Military Retirement System.
Origin: Convention Committee on Nation Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

Resolved, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 30-31, September 1, 2011, that The American Legion urges Congress and DoD not to make any changes to the current military retirement system which reduces the incentive for enlistment or re-enlistment; and be it further resolved, that retirement benefits of those who are currently serving not be changed from the original contract made at the date of enlistment, and be it finally resolved that any changes to the existing DoD Retirement System become effective only on those individuals who enlist the day after those changes to the system are instituted.

CHAIRMAN SCHLEE: As an accredited delegate to this 93rd National Convention, Mr. Commander, I move that this resolution be referred to the Standing Commission on National Security.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER CONLEY: Mr. Commander, Ron Conley, seconds that motion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Any discussion? The chair recognizes microphone number two, PNC Ron Conley, Pennsylvania.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER CONLEY: Mr. Commander, normally we do not have a discussion on a resolution that's going to be referred back to the commission to be restudied and rewritten. But I think it's imperative that we leave this National Convention under one mind that we do not want to see Congress or our government mess with changing the military retirement pay of our servicemen and women. They go and serve our country 365 days a year, 24/7, go through some areas of conflict under stress and strain both physical and mental. The only thing that they might have looking forward to is after 20 years of committed service defending our flag and defending our way of life and our constitution, to look forward to retirement pay that politicians aren't going to

mess with. I believe if they want to mess with any retirement pay, they ought to start with their own first before they go messing around with the military. So I believe the that we need to leave this Convention united in one front, to make sure we go back and get the message to every congressman, every senator, that we are not going to stand by and let them change our military retirement pay. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Thank you PNC Conley. The chair recognizes microphone number one.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER SPANOGLE: Mr. Commander, I fully concur with Past National Commander Conley's remarks. I have with me the report of the Defense Business Board that would change this retirement. It is composed of all civilians, I am told.

There's a lot of difference between being a civilian from 20-years-old to 40-years-old and facing IEDs and six deployments and serving in 130 countries, and serving in Iraq and Afghanistan and 3,000 deaths occur each year of our military men and women in training. I say if they want to find the money, which is $24 billion that it costs for that retirement currently, then take it out of foreign aid. Take it out of foreign aid to Egypt and Jordan and all those other countries. *(Applause)*

And take it out of the $2 billion that we just gave Brazil to develop their oil reserves. We stand solidly behind our military men and women, and there should be absolutely no change in their retirement benefits whether they just joined the service or whether they're in combat now, because they come back with physical injuries, 20 years of ruck sacking and all of that sort of thing; takes a toll on their bodies and their minds, just like it does with our police and our fire departments in our hometowns, and the first pillar of The American Legion is National Security, and we've got to keep faith with these men and women who are protecting our hearths and our homes. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Thank you Past National Commander Spanogle. Is there any further discussion? If not, I'll call for the usual sign. All in favor. All opposed. Carried. Thank you. The National Security report is adopted as amended. Thank you, Michael. Let's give him a hand. That wasn't easy to do. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: If my wife Rehta would please join me on stage. For those that have never met her, this is my wife of 42 years. Seems like yesterday. Obviously I wouldn't be here without her support, love and all of that through the years. Expenses this year were low, mainly because she did a lot of my laundry; met me at the airport, we exchanged suitcases. That's part of the deal. But I wouldn't have made it without her. *(Applause)*

I want to thank my post, Spinnard Post 28 in Anchorage, Alaska. If any of them are out there, stand up over here on the right. They ran all kinds of raffles; sold all kinds of tickets; did all kinds of feeds. I called him my 'Chief Spoon,' my little leprechaun buddy, Pat Barney and his wife Judy. Let me tell you, we had some heated words in that little room back there off to the side because of the crock pot didn't work or the Dutch oven wasn't working or something wasn't on. But it all worked out for the good. It just shows that a department that's small, that's detached, but regardless of the membership, as long as they all work together, they can get a viable candidate up to the national helm to wear his hat, and I appreciate it.

I want to thank my department. They were always behind me and Team Alaska and the Department of Alaska has done well. I appreciate it. I want to thank everybody across the country. In our visits, if my wife was with me and my aide, Jim Van Horn from Ketchikan, who many of you might not know, his wife died this year. She passed away. He didn't go with me to the Far East. My campaign chairman and NEC Jim Pisa stepped up and took over the position of temporary aide. He wanted to come back immediately. I said, "It ain't going to happen, dude." I said, "You need to stay at home. You need to get your faculties and all your stuff in line, and whenever I think it's ready and we have a

talk, you'll come back." Well, he came back the Monday after the first of the year and he's been with me ever since. He has major medical problems himself, which people don't know anything about, but that's okay. But he tried to do the best he could. He did a great job, and I thank him for being my aide. Jim Van Horn. *(Applause)*

My campaign chairman, Jim "Wildman" Pisa. You might remember him. He likes to wear Hawaiian shirts. He likes to wear tennis shoes of colors. I have no idea where he buys those tennis shoes, but that's okay. That's his forte. Everything works. If somebody spilled a drink or food in the hospitality room, he was on it, just like an instant vacuum cleaner. But that's what it takes. A lot of time, energy and effort, and I want to thank each one of you.

I want to thank you for the hospitality when we went to your department. People have no idea what it means. One guy said, "Commander, that suitcase is heavy." I said, "Sir, those two suitcases are our life. We're on the road 340 days." One guy said, "How many of them blue shirts do you have?" I said, "I have twenty. They look alike. They all say the same thing. But if I can't get to a laundry or turn my dry cleaning in, I have nineteen dirty ones other than the one I have on." So it means a lot. I appreciate it. I want to thank the team for their confidence in me. And I want to thank two old dudes about 30 years ago took a chance on a kid. Thank you very much. *(Standing applause)*

It's a framed picture. It says, ″To Commander Foster. Thank you for your service to our nation. Barack Obama.″ I now know where his coin went. I was in the White House in the West Wing with the president for 21 minutes. Sitting there. We got ready to leave. He presented me that coin. I presented him my bigger coin other than the challenge coin. He turns to his staff director, Darian, who was here this past week with him, he looked at her, and he goes, "Darian." She goes, "Yes, Mr. President?" "Please tell me why the national commander of The American Legion's challenge coin is bigger than the president of the United States." She said, "We'll work on that, sir." He goes, "Good."

Would my national vice commanders please come forward? You have represented me well during the past 12 months with your devotion to this great organization and with much personal sacrifice on your part. As a token of my appreciation to each of you, I would like to present each of you with a gift. Thank you. Let's give them a hand. They represented The American Legion well within their own regions. *(Applause)*

I now call on National Historian Jimmy Fratolillo, National Sergeant-at-Arms Ernest L. King, Sr., and National Chaplain Daniel Seehafer, and my aide, Jim Van Horn to come forward. Each of you has played an important role in the successes of our organization during this past year. I salute all of you, including my five national vice commanders for your service and your dedication to The American Legion. Please accept the gifts as my token of my appreciation. Something small, but it does come from the heart. Let's give each one of them another hand. Very well deserved. *(Applause)*

The national vice commanders and the national officers want to say a word.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER PYTKA: Perhaps for the last time I would like to introduce those officers that served with me and National Commander Jimmie Foster. National Chaplain Dan Seehafer. National Historian James Fratolillo. National Sergeant-at-Arms Ernest King, Sr. National Vice Commanders Bill Schrier, John Mella, Russell Henry, Carlos Orria-Medina, and myself, Gene Pytka. *(Applause)*

I would be remiss if I didn't take the opportunity to do a couple of things on behalf of the officers here. First, I would like to thank all of you that welcomed us with tremendous courtesies and hospitalities as we traveled through the year. You made the road of travel one of enlightenment. Second, I would like to thank National Adjutant Dan Wheeler and his staff for the great job they did for us all year, and I think you should join with me in a round of applause for them. *(Applause)*

That brings us to our commander, Jimmie L. Foster, a no-nonsense, nose to the grindstone commander. I don't know if you can get that. He's not. *(Laughter)*

A hard working, dedicated, devoted, beloved fun loving commander he was. Jimmie, one of the best complements ever paid to me was, "I'm a better person having known you." And I think I can speak for a lot of people out there in saying that I am a better person for having known Jimmie L. Foster. *(Applause)*

At this time, Larry, if you would make the presentation of the gift from the national officers and vice commanders.

...A portrait of the national commander was presented. (Applause)

Thank you one and all.

MR. VAN HORN: Mr. Commander, a small token of my appreciation for everything you have done for me. I know you're going to be traveling on the road, so this is help a little bit with a GPS.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: All right. A dash-mount universal GPS. The whole system here. Good. How did you know I needed that? *(Laughter)*

MR. VAN HORN: A few little discussions I've overheard. Also, this is a book, *The Travels of National Commander, Jimmie L. Foster, 2010 to 2011*. And in it are pictures from every department you've visited, including the Far East, Taiwan and some of the other ones. When you get time, I hope you enjoy that very much. *(Applause)*

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS KING: Commander, I would just like to present a little token since you're my commander, my partner from Post 28.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Oh, cool beans. I like that. Look at there. A stone sculpture, American eagle. Wonderful.

...A gift was presented to First Lady Rehta Foster.

FIRST LADY FOSTER: It's a hand-blown Christmas ornament. I collect Christmas ornaments. *(Applause)*

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS KING: Mr. Wheeler, you've made a change in my life and I appreciate it. A token for you.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Thank you, Ernest. This is cardholder, right? "Strangers are friends we have yet to meet." Isn't that nice? Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Ernest presented a gift to each of the national officers that served with him. Dan opened it on their behalf. Let's give all the national officers a hand for their whole year. *(Applause)*

National Vice Commander Russell Henry will please take the gavel and preside over the next order of business.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HENRY: We're going to have a few words from the national adjutant at this time.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, I wonder if you would allow the national judge advocate and national treasurer and the three executive directors to join us here for the purpose of a presentation.

Commander Jimmie's fellow Oklahoman Will Rogers once said, "I never met a man I didn't like." Well, that's how we on the national staff and just about everybody else feels about you. And we've been blessed to know you because everyone likes you. You're kind, you're soft-spoken, and you're not quick to judge people or situations. You're very easy to get along with and you genuinely like Legionnaires. I don't think there was anyone at his banquet that he didn't shake their hand. Our biggest problem was finding him again at official functions because he wanders off to shake hands with everybody and talk with them. The only thing we ever heard from the field about him is that he is a genuinely compassionate person, and it's not unusual to see him get touched to the verge of tears when he hears about sad situations, or tales of individual sacrifice or heroism. He's truly a Legionnaire's Legionnaire. Mr. Commander, your staff considers it to have been a great privilege and honor to have had the opportunity to serve you, to work with you and to call you a friend. It was hard to find a gift for you because you're just a real people person and we couldn't find the people to give you. *(Laughter)*

So we're going to give you a thrill instead. You may not know this, but National Commander Foster started out to be a rodeo cowboy. He was a bronco buster. I think his career lasted about 20 minutes when he was thrown off and broke his collar bone and had to seek something else. Also he was a basketball player in high school. He missed one foul shot in four years. So when it came down to the last 15 seconds, they never fouled Jimmie Foster. So in December of 2011, he and Rehta are going to the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas, the sport's premier championship event. They'll be staying at the world famous Caesars Palace, and they'll be viewing the rodeo from prime seats selected by his beautiful wife, Rehta, for the final three days of the 10-day tournament. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Plaque and Colors to Outgoing National Commander
John P. 'Jake' Comer, Massachusetts, Past National Commander (Colors)
Richard M. Pedro, New York, Department Adjutant (Plaque)

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HENRY: After serving this past year as national vice commander, I am honored to represent all the members of The American Legion in presiding over the next order of business.

First, I would like to say Mr. Commander; I hope you don't forget us, because we'll never forget you. This is the time when we present National Commander Jimmie L. Foster of Alaska, the Colors of his year in office, and a plaque. At this time I would like to call on Past National Commander John P. 'Jake' Comer of Massachusetts to present the Colors.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Would the delegates please rise. And I ask for the National Champion Color Guard from Post 472, Department of Texas, to bring the Colors of the national commander to center stage. Hand salute.

...The delegation stood and rendered a salute to the Colors.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Two. Commander Jimmie Foster, on your watch, The American Legion issued a groundbreaking survey on women veterans and obtained needed increases in VA funding. Many initiatives that we have long advocated have been passed during your tenure, including the veterans caregivers bill, improvements to the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and GI employment programs.

You truly have been serving America's veterans every day. For that, veterans will always owe you a debt of thanks. We, the members of The American Legion here assembled and throughout the nation certainly commend you for your year of service, and your travels throughout the world. With these Colors of the national commander of The American Legion and the Colors of our great country, the United States of America, you have represented those Colors and worked and walked with them side by side because you represent and you have represented the greatest organization that you were privileged to serve this past year. And you truly represent what I have always passed on at every one of my talks, that when we hear, we forget, and when we see, we remember. It's when we do, we understand. God bless you, Commander Jim. *(Applause)*

I ask the Color Guard of Post 472, Department of Texas, to retire the Colors of our national commander. Two.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Thank you, Commander Comer. You and so many other past national commanders have been an inspiration to me on how to conduct myself in this office. I only hope to be able to provide the same wise counsel and advice to my successors as my predecessors have provided to me. I now call on again, National Vice Commander Henry.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HENRY: I would now call on Department of New York Adjutant Richard M. Pedro, to present the plaque to our outgoing national commander.

ADJUTANT PEDRO (NY): Commander Foster, would you please join me at the podium? Jimmie, you have been a solid advocate for veterans, their families and The

American Legion. You've led us with pride and dignity. I'm proud to present you a plaque which attests to your election to the high office of national commander of The American Legion for the 2010-2011. It is given in appreciation of your dedicated leadership, and in recognition of your devoted service to God and country, and in token of the high esteem of your fellow Legionnaires. It is presented this first day of September, 2011, before the delegates assembled at the National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Congratulations. God bless you Commander Foster. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Thank you Adjutant Pedro. There have been so many wonderful people that I have met over this past year and so many Legionnaires, Auxiliary members, both senior and junior and Sons of The American Legion that have made this an unbelievable year for me. I thank you for your friendship, and even though my year is winding down and almost over, I'm extremely excited about the great things that The American Legion family members are going to continue to do every day.

Special Order of Business: Election of National Officers

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: At this time we have now come to a special order of business, the election of national officers for our next year. I will now you call on National Judge Advocate Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., who will read the rules of the Convention governing the nomination and election of our officers.

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE ONDERDONK: Mr. Commander, it's not often I get to the podium at a convention, but if you will grant me a personal privilege, sir, I would like to publicly thank you for making my job so easy this year. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Commander, the Rules for Election of National Officers:

Rule 15. Final sentence. Election of National Officers shall be by roll call.

Rule 17. Prior to the election of National Officers, the National Commander shall appoint, subject to approval of the Convention, a judge of election and such number of tellers as he deems necessary provided that the total tellers so appointed shall be an odd number. In a contested election each candidate going to the ballot shall be entitled to one teller of his choice.

Ruled 18. Nominations for National Officers shall be from the floor on roll call of the departments alphabetically arranged. Each department may present as many candidates as it chooses.

Rule 19. Nominating speeches for National Officers shall be limited to five minutes each. Not more than two seconding speeches shall be made for any candidate, and said speeches shall be limited to three minutes.

Rule 20. When more than two candidates are nominated for any office, balloting shall continue until one candidate receives a majority of the votes of the convention, except in the election of National Vice Commanders.

Rule 21. In a contested election for National Vice Commanders, balloting shall continue until (a) majorities and (b) pluralities are established for one or more candidates under the following provisions: If on any ballot taken, less than five candidates receive the necessary majority to elect, the candidate or candidates receiving a majority vote shall be declared elected and a new ballot shall be taken for the remaining number of places to be filled, the candidate receiving the lowest number of votes on the preceding ballot shall be disqualified; except should two candidates remain to fill one place, a new ballot shall be taken.

Rule 22. The convention will nominate and elect a National and five National Vice Commanders, in this sequence.

Rule 23. At the conclusion of balloting on National Vice Commanders, each Department Delegation Chairman shall deliver a written ballot to the tellers. Such ballots

shall be in the hands of the tellers before communication is made to the National Commander for announcement of the results.

Mr. Commander, that completes the reading of the rules pertaining to the election of national officers.

Election of the National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: As chairman of this Convention, I now appoint the following: As judge of the elections, W.E. Billy Gene Franks, adjutant, Department of Alaska, and as tellers of the election, Tom Davis, adjutant, Department of Maryland; Stephen W. Short, adjutant, Department of Indiana, and Dale D. Chapman, adjutant, the Department of Virginia. Will the judge and the tellers of the election please come forward and be seated?

National Adjutant Daniel S. Wheeler will now call the roll of the departments. The purpose of the roll call is to receive nominations for the high office of national commander of The American Legion.

[The national adjutant calls each department in turn.]

DELEGATE FRAZIER (AL): Mr. Commander, Willis Frazier, a duly elected and registered delegate from the great state of Alabama, rise to yield to the gentleman from the great state of New York for the purpose of making a very important nomination.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Alabama yields to New York for the purpose of a nomination. I now recognize New York.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN TROIOLA (NY): Mr. Commander, V. James Troiola, chairman of the delegation from New York. Mr. Commander, I request the chair recognize Robert L. Morrill for the purpose of a nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Permission granted. The chair recognizes Robert Morrill from New York for the purpose of making a nomination.

DELEGATE MORRILL (NY): Thank you, Mr. Commander. Commander Foster, Chaplain Seehafer, Adjutant Wheeler, all past national commanders, delegates and alternates to this 93rd annual National Convention of The American Legion, members of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion and guests. I stand before you today a very proud and humble Legionnaire representing the great Empire State of New York. It is not every day that one has the opportunity to place in nomination the name of an outstanding Legionnaire and good friend to the high office of national commander of the largest veterans organization in the country, The American Legion.

Others will tell of you of his many accomplishments in The American Legion and his life of which there are many. I would like to tell you a little bit about the man, the man that New York feels is the right person at the right time in the history of The American Legion to lead us into the future. That person is Fang A. Wong. Mr. Wong was born in Canton, China and lived in Hong Kong from 1953 to 1960 before immigrating legally to the United States in November, 1960 at the age of 12. Fang was educated in the New York City public school system, and has been a naturalized citizen since January, 1963.

Feeling the need to serve his adopted country, Fang volunteered for the United States Army in 1969. His service included 25 continuous months in Vietnam. Having completed 20 years in the Army, Fang retired in May of 1969 as a chief warrant officer, CW3. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration from New York Institute of Technology in 1978, and a Masters degree in management from Central Michigan University in 1981. Though retired from the Army, Fang continued to serve the United States through his long-term employment as a senior operations specialist for L3 Communications Command and Control Systems in Software Division in support of

Army Software Engineering Center at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey for over 20 years. He has recently retired from that position.

Fang has been married to the former Barbara Lam for over 35 years. Fang and Barbara have one son, Eric. Barbara is active in The American Legion Auxiliary and is a past district president of the Department of New York. Eric is a charter member of the Lieutenant B.R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post 1291, SAL Squadron. Fang joined The American Legion, Lieutenant B. R. Kimlau Memorial Post 1291, in New York City in 1989. Remaining active in the post as well as serving in both appointed and elected offices at the post, county and district levels. He was awarded an honorary life membership by the post in 2001. In 2002 Fang was elected commander, Department of New York, and 2003-2004 he was elected to the high office of national vice commander serving with Past National Commander John Brieden.

I first met Fang in 1991 as I traveled New York State on the department membership team holding membership workshops in various areas of the state. Each year when the team would get to the metropolitan New York City area, there was always this young Legionnaire that stood out among all others at the workshop. He stood out because he was there to learn. He stood out for the number of questions he would ask, questions that were unique to the area of the state and the problems of signing and retaining members in a major metropolitan area.

He was only a member of The American Legion for a short time, but he had an enormous energy and eagerness to learn about and improve the organization. As with any great leader, his many questions soon turned to answers, and the answers did not stand alone. They came with colorful pie charts and line graphs and Excel spread sheets showing numbers and trends and what would happen if we did it this way, and work toward this goal, and always with realistic solutions and the best interest of The American Legion in mind.

Fang is a man of the highest integrity and character, and in all of my years that I have known him, I have never heard him say a foul word, or talk ill of anyone. He lives a life style that many would seek to emulate, but few attain. He's personable and at times self-deprecating as many of you have come to learn as he visited your department in the last two years. He is truly a humble man, and certainly appreciates all that has been given to him through hard work. He's a devoted family man, and believes that The American Legion family has many of the answers that our nation is seeking today. President John Quincy Adams once said, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."

The election of Fang A. Wong as our next national commander will inspire others to do more and to learn more and most importantly to dream. For today the door is truly open wide and we can honestly say that a veteran is a veteran is a veteran, and that all veterans have an opportunity to serve in any position in The American Legion they dare to dream of, and with the God-given talents that they possess. All in The American Legion family will feel a strong sense of pride when Fang is elected national commander. But none will be more proud than the members of the Lieutenant B. R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post 1291, and The American Legion family of New York who knew him from the beginning, and we have always been proud of his accomplishments.

My friends, we have a saying in New York, "You can't go wrong with Fang A. Wong." And so Commander Foster and delegates to this 93rd annual Convention, on this day and at this historic hour, as a duly registered delegate from the great Department of New York, it is my distinct honor and privilege to place in nomination for the high office of national commander of The American Legion, the name of a good friend and great Legionnaire, New York's favorite son, Fang A. Wong, and I so move. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The name of Fang A. Wong has been placed in nomination. National Adjutant, please continue the roll.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN PISA (AK): Mr. Commander, Jim Pisa, chairman of the delegation of Alaska. Mr. Commander, Alaska, where the summers are short, the winters are long and the bears are always happy, yields to the great state of Georgia.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN YOUNGBLOOD (GA): Mr. Commander, Phil Youngblood, chairman of the delegation from the great state of Georgia. Mr. Commander, I request that the chair recognize Dale Barnett, for the purpose of seconding the nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The chair recognizes Dale Barnett for the purpose of a second.

DELEGATE BARNETT (GA): Commander Foster, distinguished officers of The American Legion, guests and fellow delegates of this convention. It is a great honor to second the nomination of Fang A. Wong for national commander. I have seen Fang's tireless efforts on behalf of veterans of this great organization. Fang is a man of action, and I would like to highlight some of his military service as well as some other accomplishments that make Fang exceptionally qualified to fulfill the duties and responsibilities as our national commander.

Fang gained his eligibility in The American Legion through his service in the U.S. Army from May of 1969 to May of 1989, ultimately retiring as a chief warrant officer three. Fang's service in Vietnam should be especially highlighted as few people would serve 25 months of continuous service. Fang initially went to Vietnam as a personnel specialist. However, the Army quickly realized his unique linguistic talents and put him in a position as a military intelligence unit as a translator in Vietnam.

Fang has served a variety of assignments in his 20 year career with service in Germany as well as many stateside assignments. Fang was honored in 1973 at Fort Ben Harrison, Adjutant General Corps, where he received the Outstanding Young Man of America Award. Fang's last assignment in the U.S. Army was a personnel officer at the Defense Personnel Support Center in Philadelphia. It should be noted that Fang's last assignment was a purple assignment, a joint assignment, which gives him great working experience with all branches of our military. Fang's awards include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, as well as three Meritorious Service Medals.

Fang has always been community minded, working tirelessly on behalf of veterans, their families, and the youth of America. For example, Fang has served four years on the Board of Directors of the New York Boys State staff. That New York Boys State has over 1,000 young men each year, and Fang's support has really changed the lives of many of those young men. Fang has been honored by a variety of community and national organizations to include the Department of Homeland Security in 2006, where he was recognized as an Outstanding American by Choice Award Winner. His efforts totally reflect upon his individual dedication to others and selfless service.

Without reservation I can attest to the dedication and the love of The American Legion that Fang A. Wong possesses. As a duly elected delegate of this convention, I proudly second the nomination of Fang A. Wong, Department of New York, for national commander. *(Applause)*

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN PERRY (AZ): Mr. Commander, Dick Perry, chairman of the delegation from Arizona, the hottest state in the west but it's a dry heat. Mr. Commander, Arizona yields to Oregon.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN COLLISON (OR): Mr. Commander, Jacqulene Collison, chairman of the delegation from Oregon. Mr. Commander, I request the chair recognize Charlie Schmidt for the purpose of seconding the nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The chair recognizes Charlie Schmidt from the Department of Oregon for a second.

DELEGATE SCHMIDT (OR): National Commander Jimmie Foster, national officers, my fellow delegates to the 93rd National Convention of The American Legion, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

The American Legion election process is an evaluation of the past and present performances of a candidate and their abilities, and their potential to serve in the future. It is not about gender, race, ethnicity, but whether a candidate has prepared themselves through service and commitment to lead, to lead The American Legion.

We have just heard some of the credentials of candidate Fang Wong, but Fang's credentials really began to develop as a young boy in grade school when he was awarded an American Legion medal for his scholastic achievement by American Legion Post 1291. The medal not only recognized Fang's potential as a student, but it instilled pride, motivation and patriotism in Fang, and gave him a memory of The American Legion that has been with him every day since.

An Army veteran, Fang is steeped in the traditions of service to our country, and brought those traditions and values and commitment with him to The American Legion. His admiration for veterans and his willingness to continue to serve with and serve for veterans is why he is our candidate today. His service to his post, county, department and our national organization has prepared him well. Candidate Wong's 140,000 miles of journeys to 50 departments have enabled you and me to see firsthand his dedication, energetic spirit, his vision, and his unwavering commitment to The American Legion.

Fang Wong is prepared to confront the challenges that may lay ahead of The American Legion, challenges that may test the strength of our Four Pillars, or contest our commitment to our five cardinal principles, or question our resolve to the ten phrases in our Constitution's Preamble. Fang Wong has the utmost respect for these honored fabrics for which The American Legion was built upon, and will continue to work diligently to preserve our heritage. Thanks to Post 1291 for sowing that seed some 40 years ago. You made a lasting impression on a young Fang Wong then. And in the coming months, The American Legion will benefit from the fruits of your efforts on that day.

It is my privilege as a delegate to this convention to second the nomination of a proud American and a true Legionnaire, for the high office of national commander of The American Legion, Fang A. Wong of the Department of New York. *(Applause)*

...A demonstration of the delegation in support of the nomination ensued.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Ladies and gentlemen, I would ask that this convention to come back to order. If we can get the delegation to please take their seats. That was all right. National Adjutant Wheeler, please continue the roll.

DELEGATE MCVAY (AR): Gene McVay, duly authorized delegate from the state of Arkansas, we have no further nominations.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CROOKS (CA): Hugh Crooks, commander of the state of California, we second the nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN FRIEND (CO): Colorado, Comrade Adjutant, Rick Friend, Colorado chairman. We would like to cast all our 32 votes to our friend from New York, Fang Wong.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN THURSTON (CT): Dan Thurston, chairman of the delegation from Connecticut, the home of the Huskies women's basketball team, the greatest women's basketball team. We cast 31 ballots for the election of Fang A. Wong for national commander of The American Legion for 2011-2012.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN FEELEY (DE): Ed Feeley, delegate of the 93rd National Convention from the Department of Delaware, seconds the nomination for Fang A. Wong, Department of New York for national commander of The American Legion.

DELEGATE ROBINSON (DC): Corinne Robinson, District of Columbia, we happily cast all of our votes for Fang A. Wong.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN PORTER (FL): Al Porter, department chairman. Our delegation casts 135 votes for the next national commander of The American Legion, Fang Wong.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HAGGAN (FR): Doug Haggan, department delegation chairman of the Department of France, birthplace of The American Legion is proud to cast all its nine votes for my friend and the department's friend, Fang A. Wong as national commander 2011-2012.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JOHNSON (HI): Andy Johnson, delegate from the great state of Hawaii, cast its nine votes for Fang A. Wong.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ID): Duly elected delegate from Idaho, we would like to cast our 18 votes for Fang Wong.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GROHARING (IL): Richard Groharing, delegate chairman, seconds the nomination for Fang A. Wong for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MILLER (IN): Mr. Chairman, Michael Miller, delegate from Indiana, proudly seconds the nomination and casts all of our votes for Fang A. Wong.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IA): Home of Past National Commander Dave Rehbein, seconds the nomination of Fang A. Wong, and casts all 67 votes for him.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN THOMAS (KS): John Thomas, chairman of the delegation of the Sun Flower State, Department of Kansas, seconds that nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN FARLEY (KY): Mr. Chairman, Doug Farley, delegate chairman from the great state of Kentucky, number 1 in membership, would like to second the nomination for the next commander, Fang Wong.

DELEGATE ABSHIRE (LA): Mr. Chairman, the great state of Louisiana, Larry Abshire, department commander, cast all votes for our next national commander, Fang A. Wong.

DELEGATE OWEN (ME): Mr. Commander, Robert Owen, delegate to this 93rd National Convention of The American Legion from the rockbound coast of Maine, home of Past National Commander Tony Jordan and passed away Bill Rogers, past national commander. Maine casts its 31 delegate votes for Fang Wong as our next national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SMULLEN (MD): Mr. Chairman, Melvin Smullen, commander of the Department of Maryland and delegation chairman, casts all delegate votes to our incoming national commander, Fang A. Wong, for the year 2011-2012.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LENOTTE (MA): Mr. Chairman, John Lenotte, delegation chairman for the Department of Massachusetts, home of Past National Commanders Jake Comer and Paul Morin, cast its 57 votes for Fang A. Wong of New York.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN STERN (MX) Mr. Chairman, Tim Stern, Department of Mexico, delegation chairman, we cast all our votes for Fang Wong.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HAFEMAN (MI): Bill Hafeman, delegate chairman for the great state of Michigan. Home of Past National Commanders Spanogle, Cadmus, and current National Vice Commander John Mella, seconds the nomination for Fang Wong.

DELEGATE KRUGER (MN): Chuck Kruger, commander of the great state of Minnesota, home of Past National Commander Dan Ludwig, and host of the 93rd National Convention, seconds the nomination.

DELEGATE GOSA (MS): Robert Gosa, NEC from the great state of Mississippi, proudly seconds Fang A. Wong as the next national commander. Thank you.

DELEGATE GOTH (MO): I'm Kenny Goth, duly elected delegate to the 93rd National Convention and department commander of the great state of Missouri, the birthplace of Legionnaire Harry S. Truman and also of The American Legion. We proudly second the nomination of Fang A. Wong for national commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MT): Montana casts its 19 votes for Fang A. Wong for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CORBETT (NE): Mr. Chairman, Ron Corbbett, delegation chairman for the Department of Nebraska and home of Mr. Douglas Boldt, our National Executive Committeeman, cast all votes for Fang A. Wong for national commander.

DELEGATE GOTSMAN (NV): Mr. Chairman, Ron Gotsman, delegate from the state of Nevada, casts 17 votes to Fang Wong for national commander. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NH): Mr. Chairman, the great state of New Hampshire delegates cast their votes for Fang A. Wong for national commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NJ): New Jersey, the Garden State, seconds the nomination of Fang A. Wong for national commander.

DELEGATE SEMRAU (NM): Mr. Chairman, Al Semrau, past department commander from the state of New Mexico, cast 20 votes for Fang A. Wong.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN OXFORD (NC): Mr. Chairman, Bill Oxford, chairman of the delegation from North Carolina, that's the Tar Heel State and the home of The American Legion World Series, casts 57 votes for Fang A. Wong.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN VETTER (ND): Mr. Chairman, Larry Vetter, delegate chairman for North Dakota. We cast all our votes for Fang A. Wong.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CLAUSING (OH): Mr. Chairman, Dennis Clausing, delegate chairman. The great Buckeye State cast all ballots for Fang A. Wong, our next national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HARDISON (OK): John Hardison, department commander from the great state of Oklahoma, cast all 32 votes for Fang A. Wong for national commander.

DELEGATE SWAIN (PA): Pennsylvania Delegate Chairman Kerrie Gill, the home of Past National Commanders Ron Conley and Dominic DiFrancesco, and Past National Vice Commander Terry Lewis, seconds the nomination of Fang Wong.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SCHOLTEN (PI): Herbert Scholten, legally representing the Department of the Philippines and thankful to the State of Virginia and to this body for recognizing Clark Cemetery, unanimously seconds the nomination of Fang A. Wong for commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN COLON (PR): Mr. Chairman, Ildefonso Colon, Jr., chairman of the delegation of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, proudly seconds the nomination of Fang A. Wong.

DELEGATE VADNAIS (RI): Mr. Chairman, Norm Vadnais, NEC from the state of Rhode Island, the home of National Vice Commander Gene Pytka, we proudly second the nomination for Fang A. Wong.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN PHILLIPS (SC): Mr. Chairman, Cecil Phillips, delegation chairman for the great Palmetto State of South Carolina, cast all 35 votes for Fang A. Wong.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GIBSON (SD): Mr. Chairman, Hoot Gibson, delegate chairman from South Dakota, home of the National Shrine, Mount Rushmore and birthplace of The American Legion Baseball, we second the nomination for Fang A. Wong for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ALEXANDER (TN): Mr. Chairman, Dave Alexander, delegation chairman from Tennessee, the Volunteer State, proudly casts all its votes for Fang A. Wong.

DELEGATION SECRETARY WEST (TX): Mr. Adjutant, Bill West, delegation secretary from the great state of Texas, the home of Past National Commander John Brieden, seconds the nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BRADFORD (UT): Mr. Chairman, Glen Bradford, delegation chairman for the Department of Utah. Utah casts all 16 votes for Fang A. Wong.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BROWN (VT): Mr. Chairman, Ed Brown, delegation chairman, casts all delegate votes from Vermont, the Green Mountain State, for Fang A. Wong.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MITRIONE (VA): Mr. Chairman, Mike Mitrione, delegation chairman for the Department of Virginia. Virginia is for lovers. We would love to cast all 63 votes for the next commander, Fang A. Wong.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LEE (WA): Mr. Chairman, Ken Lee, delegate chairman from the Great Northwest, where the eagles soar high above in the Cascade Mountains and the deep blue seas and the rivers below, where the wheat fields of Eastern Washington run tall and meet the Canadian border of the north. Washington State's full delegate strength is united and proudly seconds this nomination for our next national commander, Mr. Fang A. Wong. Thank you.

DELEGATE LONG (WV): Fang A. Wong, the great state of West Virginia gives you all our votes for the next national commander for the year 2011-2012.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ROHAN (WI): Mr. Chairman, Denise Rohan, delegation chairman from the great state of Wisconsin, it is with great pride that the state of Wisconsin pledges all of our votes for Fang A. Wong for national commander.

DELEGATE WRIGHT (WY): Mr. Chairman, Bob Wright, delegate from the Department of Wyoming, the Quality State, whose members hereby second the nomination of Fang Wong as our next national commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander that completes the roll call.

DELEGATE TURNER (AL): Mr. Chairman, Alabama hasn't voted yet. To insure his election, we vote 31 ballots for next commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: You yielded, sir. It's noted. Thank you. At this time I recognize from the floor microphone number one.

DELEGATE MORRIS (OH): Mr. Commander, Jim Morris, delegate from Ohio. Mr. Commander, in view of the fact that there is but one candidate for national commander, I move we suspend the rules of this convention; close nominations, and that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this convention, and that Fang A. Wong be elected national commander by acclimation. I will now make the first motion. Mr. Commander, I move that we suspend the rules of this convention pertaining to the election of national commander and the nomination and election of national vice commanders, which rules shall be reinstated at the conclusion of the election for national vice commanders.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Thank you, sir. There is a motion before us to suspend the rules of this convention pertaining to the election of the national commander and the nomination and election of national vice commanders, which rules shall be automatically reinstated at the conclusion of the election of national vice commanders. Is there a second? ...*Second.*

Hearing a second, this motion is non-debatable and requires a two thirds vote. All in favor of the motion signify by the usual. Opposed. Motion carried. I now recognize from the floor, microphone number one.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MILLER (IN): Mr. Commander, Michael Miller, delegate from the great state of Indiana. Mr. Commander, I move that the nominations for the office of national commander be closed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: We have a motion that nominations for the office of national commander be closed. Is there a second? ...*Second.*

Hearing a second, the motion to close nominations is a non-debatable motion and requires a two thirds vote. All in favor signify by the usual. All opposed. Motion carried. I now recognize from the floor, microphone number two.

DELEGATE CONNOWAY (KS): Mr. Commander, Clark Connoway, delegate from Kansas. Mr. Commander, I move that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this convention, and that Fang A. Wong be elected national commander by acclimation. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: There is a motion before us that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote relating the entire delegate strength of this convention for Fang A. Wong, and he be elected national commander by acclimation. All those in favor of the motion signify by the usual sign. Those opposed. Carried. I now call on the national adjutant.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, as national adjutant, I cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this convention for the election of Fang A. Wong as the national commander of The American Legion. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: As national commander, I declare Fang A. Wong elected the new national commander of The American Legion. Let's all give him a big hand. *(Applause)*

Will the sergeant-at-arms assist the new national commander of the American Legion to the platform. Richie Keiser, please bring the new commander forward. The chair recognizes Past National Commander John Brieden of Texas for the purpose of administering the Oath of Office to the new national commander of The American Legion.

Administering the Oath of Office to the National Commander

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER BRIEDEN: Congratulations, my friend. You now assume the leadership of The American Legion. You are the representative of the 2.4 million members to Congress, to the armed forces of the United States, and to the citizens of the United States of America. You know, this Convention is not just today, the election. It started on Saturday and Sunday with commission and committee meetings where resolutions were debated and either adopted or rejected. It's also Tuesday and Wednesday, when these resolutions came up before this Convention and were debated and passed or rejected. Now the actions of this Convention you carry forward before Congress and before the United States. You are a servant leader. You're bound by these decisions of this Convention. It's a big challenge and it's a big responsibility. Do you now assume willingly that challenge and that responsibility?

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Yes, sir.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER BRIEDEN: Very good. If you will raise your right hand and repeat after me.

... At this time the Oath of Office was administered.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER BRIEDEN: Congratulations, Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Ladies and gentlemen, the 2011-2012 national commander of The American Legion, Fang A. Wong. *(Cheers and applause)*

Acceptance Speech: Newly Elected National Commander
Fang A. Wong, New York

Thank you very much. Please be seated. Wow. I don't know. You heard of New York Long Island traffic jams. We just gave you a taste of it earlier. One-tenth of it. It was a great show. Thank you very much. Where is New York? *(Cheers and applause)*

Thank you. You know, I have been here for a little over a week, and during this week I got so many questions that I was getting sick of hearing. And finally I told everybody, "Wait until Thursday, I'll give you an answer." So here are my answers.

Number one, are you excited? *(Applause)* No, I said am "I" excited. Do I look like I'm excited? *(Cheers)* Okay. The number two question that I get asked, are you nervous?

Do I look like nervous? *(Laughter)* Okay. Number three, are you tired? I could answer that one. After 28 months of campaigning, yes, I'm tired. *(Laughter)* The fourth question. Are you ready? Well, it's not for me to answer that question. I should ask you. Are you ready for me? *(Cheers)* There goes your answer.

Dignitaries on the dais and my fellow Legionnaires, this is certainly a great day, and I thank you for your confidence in electing me as your national commander. Commander Foster, I want to extend to you appreciation not only for myself, but from the entire American Legion for a job well done. *(Applause)*

Thank you for the assistance that both you and Team Alaska provided to me and Team New York for the past two years. It's certainly made the journey much easier. Jimmie, you're a true friend, and I thank you very much. I would like to thank the Department of Minnesota, and especially the City of Minneapolis, for putting on such a wonderful Convention. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

A big thank you to our national adjutant and his headquarters and Washington staff. They have done an outstanding job, especially on the election part. I love it. Thank you very much.

I would like to thank Bob Morrill for making my nomination speech today. As you know, Bob has been my campaign manager. Those of you who have been through the hospitality room for the last two years know what an awesome performance that Team New York put together. I bet you that a lot of you are still talking about those home-baked cookies, those New York red and white hot dogs, those daily updated photo slide shows and New York's own, the one and only short slim Uncle Sam. You know, Bob is a very smart man. Back in 1998, when he was the department commander, he actually selected me as his aide. Isn't he smart? Thank you, Bob, for your friendship, for your support and for your guidance this year.

Special thanks go to Dale Barnett of the Department of Georgia, and Charlie Schmidt of the Department of Oregon. Thank you for your seconding speeches. Two outstanding Legionnaires. Mark my word; I'm sure you're going to hear from them in the near future.

I have to thank the Honorable Judge John Brieden, III, for giving me the oath of office. Past National Commander John was my national commander when I proudly served as number four of his five national vice commanders in 2003 and 2004. Thank you also in advance to Past National Commander Ron Conley who will present my colors a little bit later. I was one of Ron's department commanders when he served this great organization as national commander in the years 2002-2003. They've both been good friends, great mentors, and I thank you for that guidance. Thanks to both of you.

You know, I wouldn't be here if I didn't get lots and lots of help from lots and lots of people along the way. Dick Pedro, my mentor and great friend for the last 20 years, taught me so much about the organization, and he navigated my path to this podium today. Thank you, Dick, for all your guidance and your support.

Jake Comer, dear friend, supporter and mentor for the last decade. You know, Jake taught me about the Boston Red Sox, the Boston Red Sox's perseverance of still wanting to win a World Series after 80 some odd years. He always stressed the importance of our individual commitment to the organization. Thank you, Jake, for your friendship.

Jerry Hedrick. He's been a good friend for the last couple of years, but Jerry taught me something that is a big secret. I finally got it right. He taught me that in order to win great support, especially from the Southern Bloc, first you've got to bring a lot of money to the breakfast. On top of it, one must eat grits with a smile. Jerry, I thank you for your friendship, advice, and great support. Among the three of them I also learned that just like our Legionnaires, the fans of the New York Yankees and the Boston Red Sox are one and the same. They are both fearless competitors and good sports.

Next I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Department of New York Legion family. From the time we started the campaign, from the time Bob put out

the action call, the support from Team New York has been tremendous. Donations and volunteers poured in from the Legion, from the Auxiliary, from the Sons, and from the Legion Riders. We have the most capable campaign manager in Bob Morrill, and he assembled a team second to none, and we ran a first class campaign. If anybody wants to rent us for the years to come, we are available. Standing behind me today, representing Team New York, are the folks that helped me along, and I would like for you to give them a big applause for a job well done. Thank you. *(Applause)*

Today I'm very proud and truly honored to be able to represent New York's finest before you. It's hard to explain the emotion that I have for the next group that I have to say thank you to. They are the members of the Lieutenant Kimlau Post 1291. It was them that back in 1961 gave me a check for $15 and a scholarship award. That inspired a young immigrant's dream to want to be part of this great organization. It was them who ten years ago provided the encouragement and support for me to seek the great honor of being the commander of the Department of New York. And it was them who for the past five years worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make sure this day happened. If it wasn't for them I definitely wouldn't be here today.

I would especially like to acknowledge my deepest gratitude to my friend, my mentor, and the godfather of my post, Peter Woo. Peter's vision and leadership in guiding not just me, but my beloved post, all this year has been inspirational. You know, Peter, I'm not sure who is the happiest guy here, you or me today. But I feel honored that Peter was able to pin on the award that the post gave to me 48 years ago. I never did put it on. But today I believe I earned the right to wear it for the first time. *(Applause)*

There are a group of men among us who have served this great organization as national commander. I would like thank them for their service, friendship and advice the last few years as I tried to follow their path. I would also like to thank all the Legionnaires out there from all the departments I visited the last two years. You have shown your friendship, your encouragement and support in so many ways. It means a lot to us in Team New York that we can count on you not just today, but for the next 365 days to serve our brother and sister veterans. Thank you.

Now I must thank my wife, Barbara, and my son, Eric, for their understanding, the encouragement and steadfast support since the day I joined The American Legion. All those missing weekends and night meetings, events, and numerous family gatherings that I wasn't able to attend because of Legion business. They have been there with me every inch of the way, and they deserve this day as much as I do. Thank you. I love you both very much. *(Applause)*

There are also family members and dear friends, special friends that are here today that I would like to acknowledge. I have my nephew, Wilson, coming in from Los Angeles. My niece, Linda, and her husband, Chris, and their little boy, Jacob, from Los Angeles. A dear friend for 50 years, ever since I arrived in this country, Chuck Jones from New York. Thank you, Chuck. My boss in the military has been a close friend for the last 30 years. They are the godparents of my son, Eric. Retired Colonel and Colonel, Nick and Dianne Monje. Thank you for being here, Nick and Dianne. *(Applause)*

America is known as the land of the free and the land of opportunities. I dreamed about it when I was a little boy in Hong Kong. I learned about it when I would go to the school system in New York City. I defended it when I was a young man marching to serve my country. And today I believe it by standing before you to accept what is probably the biggest challenge of my life, the opportunity to serve the 2.4 million Legionnaires in this organization, and the 24 million veterans of this great nation. I'm humbled and honored. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

To our veterans of World War II and the Korean War, allow me to quote one of our American Legion's finest, Vahan Dukemejian, who at the age of 101, he said, "We have outgrown our bodies, but not our minds and our hearts." He was telling us that Legionnaires have paid in blood for our rights, especially the right to freely express our

voice on behalf of the veterans we serve. It is our continuing job to never let the government forget their responsibility to all who have served our nation, regardless of the war era, in defense of freedom and an unparalleled way of life. *(Applause)*

To my fellow Vietnam War veterans, first let me say, "Welcome home." *(Applause)*

Much has happened for the last half a century that has passed since the start of war. Now, we all know the numbers. 3.4 million deployed to southeast Asia. 2.7 million served in the theater of operation. 58,000 killed, including 4,120 from my home state of New York. 153,000 wounded. And today, after four decades, almost 2000 still unaccounted for. We know how some of us were treated upon our return. We all heard the cries of the anti-war crowd. Some of us even suffer through a lack of acceptance by older veterans. We also know the deadly effect of Agent Orange as it kicks in even 40 years later after their exposure in Vietnam. Some wounds will never heal. Most of us will never forget the way veterans were treated as they came home from the war, and as they fought for recognition of the unique war-related health problems in the years that followed. However, Vietnam veterans, you and I, are the largest block of veterans represented in this organization today. Those of us who served in Vietnam, we are duty-bound to ensure the same mistake will not happen to the next generation of veterans coming home. *(Applause)*

It is our duty to uphold and defend the rights and benefits of today's new generation of wartime veterans, and welcome them into The American Legion with open arms. They are the future of this organization.

To the new generation of veterans, let me start by saying for God and country, Geronimo! What a great moment it was in May when the U. S. Navy SEAL team took down the perpetrator of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. This was an extraordinary success in the global war against terrorism that has been so well prosecuted by our active duty force. Fewer than 2,000,000 active forces are tasked with defending more than 300,000,000 Americans, and many more millions around the globe. It is a credit to the skill, to the loyalty and dedication of our armed forces that the world has been freed of tyrants and terrorists such as Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden. Our military protected us at home and abroad throughout the war, and delivered hope of peace and prosperity for millions who have never had it. This generation of military personnel proudly took its place at the tip of the spear to do this.

As your commander, my biggest task is to represent and advocate on your behalf all the policies and programs adopted by this Convention and the NEC. I promise you that I will to the best of my ability support and promote your wishes. Working together with National Auxiliary President Kris Nelson and new National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion Jim Roberts I know we will be a strong team. We will work hard together, and I promise you we will make The American Legion family proud.

Some priorities we need to concentrate on this year. Membership. We all know that training and leadership are two of the key ingredients for a successful organization. In order for the Legion to survive we must develop and provide meaningful training so that we can all do our jobs better. We must establish a forum where communications can flow horizontally and vertically, so that experience and lessons learned can be shared by all. We must develop leaders of the future so that we can have a future. We must create an atmosphere of learning so that the Legion history and our worthwhile programs can be preserved for future generations.

During a recent membership workshop meeting I asked that the new department commanders, in addition to having a plan for their committed membership goal for the coming year, to also review and consider the adoption of some of the recommendations from the 21st Century Committee Report. There is a lot of good information in that report, and solutions that are accurate and valid for our situations today.

I asked your commanders to start a process review, concentrating on what is needed at each level of your organization, to improve or rebuild your mode of operation. We

need to know how we operate. We need everyone to understand why the Legion exists. We need to have our priorities in line with the Legion's Four Pillars. We need to do this at the post level, at the district level, and maybe even at the department level. To sum it up, we need to have a gut check, an attitude change, a road map of how we should conduct business as we head into our centennial.

Past National Commander Conley led the charge eight years ago on a System Worth Saving, the VA health care system. I would like to borrow and change the face to an Organization Worth Saving, The American Legion. Ladies and gentlemen, if we do not take this issue seriously and correct the membership situation now, we may not have an organization anymore. This task will not be easy. It will be a long-term process, but we must start now. So please join us in this exciting journey of commitment and investment in our future by taking part at whatever level to save this great organization.

Job training and employment opportunities for our returning heroes are key ingredients to our success. They deserve the full support of our nation as our veterans return to a normal life. We need to work hard with the Department of Labor and America's major employers to ensure the marketplace will consider and hire veterans, especially at the federal, state, and local government sector.

Health care. We must stay on top of both DOD and the VA to ensure medical facilities are well staffed and funded for those who require treatment. We will continue to study the PTSD and TBI issue so that the best method can be determined and provided to those in need.

Last year The American Legion took the lead in conducting a women veterans survey. The findings and results were released during our 2011 Washington Conference. We must now continue to focus on women veterans programs and issues. They deserve no less.

Military families. The Family Support Network is one program that we perform extremely well at almost any level, to help the families of those who defended our freedom, especially at this time of tight budgets and reduced manpower. They will need our help more than ever. I ask that you continue your magnificent work in helping to care for some of the military families' needs. I also ask that you coordinate and document your activities so that we can collectively demonstrate to the Department of Defense our capabilities. As a VSO we are relevant in this issue, and they need to understand that.

Veterans benefits. With the federal deficit crisis we all expect government services and benefits to be on the chopping block for years to come. While we certainly are willing to take our fair share in helping this great nation go back on the road of recovery we must also be vigilant and proactive for our rights and benefits. We must stand strong against any disproportional cutback of services and benefits to the veteran community. Active force, veterans, and national security should not and will not bear the major burden of any government reduction plan. We heard it from the president, we heard it from the chairman of the VA committee, we heard it from the minority leader of the House. It sounds like they are on our side. We have to stay on top of it and make sure they deliver what they're saying. *(Applause)*

Flag Amendment. A proposed constitutional amendment to protect Old Glory from physical desecration has been introduced as Senate Joint Resolution 19 and House Joint Resolution 13 this year. You need to contact your senators, your representatives, ask them to be co-sponsors. If they are co-sponsors, thank them for their support. Let's push for the long overdue passage of this bill during this Congress.

My project for this year will be the Child Welfare Foundation and the Legacy Scholarship Fund. The Child Welfare Foundation provides needed services and programs for the betterment of children. The Legacy Scholarship Fund provides for children of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice while defending this nation against terrorism. So please join me in support of these two worthwhile programs of The American Legion.

You probably know my theme for the year is "We Serve With PRIDE" and you probably already know what "We Serve With PRIDE" stands for, so I'm not going to bore you with that. *[People-Research-Ideas-Develop-Execute]*

My membership pin this year is what we call a Super 8. It's an eagle PRIDE pin which will be awarded to anyone that signs a combination of eight new members, renews, or transfers from DMS. A combination of eight. So, please, it's an easy task. We have a few thousand already ordered. I would love to ask national to order more, so you have to help me. Let's go for it.

Ladies and gentlemen, I look forward to an exciting year working with you. I look forward to meeting you in person, and I look forward to visiting your great departments again. I'm excited at the opportunity to share our views on many issues. I cannot promise you that I have answers for everything. I know I don't. But if we work together I'm sure we will find the right answers. With your support we will be successful. Yes, we are proud to serve our veteran family. Yes, we know we are proud to serve our community. Yes, we know much is expected for ourselves. Yes, we also know much is expected of us by others. Yes, we are proud to serve our country. And, yes, we are proud to be Americans! Thank you. God bless you, God Bless America. *(Standing applause)*

First Lady Presentation

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Ladies and gentlemen, as a point of personal privilege, I would like to call on Mary Ludwig, wife of Past National Commander Daniel Ludwig, for a presentation to Mrs. Barbara Wong on behalf of all the past first ladies of The American Legion.

MRS. MARY LUDWIG: Barbara, on behalf of us former first ladies, I would like to extend our best wishes to you, and our sincere hope that you have a good year, and our congratulations, and it is my honor to welcome you as our newest first lady.

MRS. BARBARA WONG: Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

Election of the National Vice Commanders

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Thank you, Mary, and ladies. I now recognize microphone number one.

DELEGATE WHITFIELD (MO): Mr. Commander, I'm James Whitfield, delegate, duly elected from the Department of Missouri. And, Mr. Commander, since the rules of this Convention have been suspended, I move that nominations for the office of national vice commander be made from the floor of this Convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Thank you. There is a motion before us that nominations for the office of national vice commander be made from the floor. Do I hear a second? ... *Second.*

The motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All in favor, signify by the usual. Opposed? Carried. We will now entertain nominations for the office of national vice commander from the floor. I now recognize microphone number one.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN PORTER (FL): Mr. Commander, Al Porter, chairman of the delegation from Florida. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize Dennis R. Boland for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The chair recognizes Dennis Boland from Florida for a nomination for national vice commander.

DELEGATE BOLAND (FL): Mr. Commander, national officers, American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion, my fellow Legionnaires and guests. As a duly elected delegate to this 93rd annual Convention, it is indeed an honor to nominate my friend and fellow Legionnaire, Larry D. Sheets, for the high office of national vice commander for the year 2011-2012.

Larry earned his eligibility for membership in the American Legion through his service in the United States Air Force from July 1964 to July 1968. During his commitment to America Larry served in Thailand from 1967 to 1968. And upon his discharge he joined Post 154 in Nappanee, Indiana. In 1972 Larry transferred to Sullivan-Babcock Post 32 in Hialeah, and is presently an active member of that post. Besides being a ten-time post commander, obtaining three all-time highs in membership, Larry has served in virtually every position at the post level, and in 1978 the City of Hialeah, Florida, recognized Larry as a Vietnam era Veteran of the Year.

Larry's proven leadership as the 10th district commander led them to 100 percent in membership, and also obtaining 100 percent in membership as Southern Area commander. In 1990, as department commander of Florida, Larry led us to our 25th all-time high in membership. Larry's dedication to Legion programs has covered over 40 years, while serving as chairman of the Time and Place Committee, the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, the Resolutions Committee, and the Internal Affairs Committee of the Department of Florida.

Excluding his year as department commander in 1989 and 1990, Larry has served since 1985, and is presently serving on the National Internal Affairs Commission. Larry's volunteerism throughout his community I believe is unmatched, serving at the Miami VA hospital as an escort for church services and nursing home patients; also hosting activities at a veterans' nursing home and sending care packages to our troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

His personal life also shows a commitment learned from his military service. Upon his release from active duty in 1968 Larry began working for Eastern Air Lines until their demise in 1989. Undaunted, he eventually obtained employment in 1992 with Executive Airlines, i.e., American Eagle Airlines, as a mechanic, and retains that position today.

As you can see, Larry has shown a commitment to The American Legion, his community, and in his personal life to his employer. That is why the Department of Florida is proud to put in nomination one of our favorite sons, Larry D. Sheets, for national vice commander, and solicit your support and vote. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The name of Larry D. Sheets from Florida has been placed into nomination for national vice commander. I recognize microphone number one.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ROSS (IA): Mr. Commander, John Ross, chairman of the delegation from Iowa. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize Jerry Sebben for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The request is granted for Jerry Sebben from Iowa for a nomination for national vice commander.

DELEGATE SEBBEN (IA): Mr. Commander, delegates, members of The American Legion family and guests. As we go about the every day job of the work of the great organization that we belong to, The American Legion, we have the opportunity to meet hard working and dedicated Legionnaires. Today I have the opportunity and the honor of telling you about one of them.

Milt Heifner is a 29-year member of The American Legion Post 211 in Woodward, Iowa, where he lives with his wife Pat. They have been married for 45 years, and have four children and eight grandchildren. He and his wife Pat are active members of the United Methodist Church in Woodward. Milt has also been active in the Rotary Club, and continues to be active in the Lions Club and Masonic Lodge. Milt attended college at Iowa State University in Ames, where he was also a part of the ROTC program.

In 1965 he graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture. In 1966 he received a letter from the president, and his neighbors, like all of us did sometimes. He enlisted into the United States Air Force, entering the OTS program. He was later selected for pilot training. Afterward he was assigned to a C-130 squadron out of Naha Air Base, Okinawa. He assumed flying missions over Southeast Asia between 1968

through 1970. After separating from the United States Air Force he began a career in banking, but the military pulled him back. In 1973 he joined the Air Force Reserve, retiring in 1992 as a lieutenant colonel.

Milt has served The American Legion in various offices at the post, county, district, department, and national levels. He served as department commander for 2006-2007; later, as aide to National Commander Dave Rehbein in 2008 and 2009. Milt's experience with and commitment to The American Legion are evidence of his strong leadership abilities.

I, Jerry Sebben, a duly elected delegate to this Convention from the Department of Iowa, proudly nominate Milton G. Heifner for the office of national vice commander for the years 2011 and 2012. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The name of Milton G. Heifner from Iowa has been placed into nomination for national vice commander. I now recognize microphone number one.

DELEGATE HEIGERT (MO): Mr. Commander, Richard A. Heigert, NEC and delegate from Missouri. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize Lynn M. Dorrell for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The chair recognizes Lynn Dorrell from the State of Missouri for a nomination for national vice commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DORRELL (MO): Mr. Commander, national officers, delegates, alternates and guests to the 93rd annual Convention of The American Legion. As immediate past department commander and the 2011 delegation chairman for the great State of Missouri, and on behalf of the Show Me State, it gives me great pleasure to stand before you to place into nomination the name of a Missourian who has served his department well, and seeks the high office of national vice commander.

Our candidate earned his eligibility by serving 18 months of duty in Vietnam as a member of the 75th Infantry Recon section from August of 1970 to March of 1972. The Show Me candidate has over 36 years of continuous membership in the American Legion. Missouri's candidate is a member of Pony Express Post 359 in St. Joseph, Missouri, where he has served the post in all offices, and as commander led the post to exceed its membership goal.

During his term as post commander he inaugurated several activities and projects designed to serve the community and to further the principles of The American Legion. As post chairman of the World War II Memorial Celebration Committee, which resulted in the public recognition of over 500 World War II veterans as part of the dedication of the memorial, he received honors from the community.

Our candidate is no stranger to committees or commissions within his district, department, and he has served on the Cadet Patrol Committee, Baseball Committee, Boy Scouts, Membership, Education and Scholarship, Constitution and Bylaws Review, and has been chairman of the Distinguished Guest Committee, Missouri's Distinguished Legionnaire Award, Baseball Commission, and is currently chairman of the Education and Scholarship Foundation, which is responsible for the financial stability of the scholarship awards to our young Missourian students.

Nationally our candidate has been a member of the Veterans Preference Committee, Liaison Chairman for Public Relations, and a liaison member of the Foreign Relations Commission, and is currently serving on the Foreign Relations Commission. Our candidate nationally has held the office as alternate National Executive Committeeman for four years, and represented Missouri as National Executive Committeeman from 2004 to 2008.

His service to his community has been recognized by his employer. Under his leadership as union president, the company and union collectively bargained a new facility for Johnson Controls in St. Joseph, Missouri, which was instrumental in saving approximately 100 production positions in the community. Although retired, he still

receives endorsements from his former employer, Johnson Controls, and the Department of Missouri. We firmly believe his integrity and trustworthiness is an asset to The American Legion organization. His service to community, state and nation is second to none. As a duly elected delegate to this Convention, I proudly present you the name of David N. Voyles for national vice commander. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The name of David N. Voyles from Missouri has been placed into nomination for national vice commander. I now recognize microphone number one.

DELEGATE BEALS (MT): Mr. Commander, Sylvia Beals, NEC, from the State of Montana. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize David McLean for the purpose of a nomination for the office of the National vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The chair recognizes David McLean from Montana for the purpose of a nomination for national vice commander.

DELEGATE MCLEAN (MT): Comrade Commander, delegates, members of The American Legion family and guests. As a past department commander from the Big Sky State of Montana I have the honor of placing into nomination the name of my friend, Mervin G. Gunderson, for national vice commander.

In 1995 Merv joined The American Legion. He immediately began to take part in programs. On one occasion early in his career our past national vice commander from the State of Montana, John Pellegrini, was asked to introduce him, and he introduced him as Merv Griffin. Over the last 16 years Merv has been so active in The American Legion family that there are very few that would confuse him with Merv Griffin. Let me tell you about him.

Montana's Merv is a Vietnam era veteran who was drafted into the Army in 1968. He underwent his basic training at Fort Lewis, Washington, and served at Fort Rucker, Alabama, and in Korea. He joined The American Legion in 1995, and was immediately the driving force in chartering a new American Legion post in his hometown of Belgrade, Montana.

He is a Paid-Up-For-Life member of The American Legion. At the post level he served as post commander, post adjutant, post finance officer, and has served on almost every committee in his post. He was elected by the Department of Montana as a district commander twice, and he was instrumental in revitalizing two posts and chartering one new post at that time.

He advanced to the position of department zone commander, where he helped revitalize another post. He has twice served as the chairman of the Department of Montana Convention Committee. Merv was elected as vice commander for the Department of Montana for 2005-2006, and for 2006-2007 served as department commander, during which time he chartered two new posts and led the Department of Montana to the top ten nationally in membership. We have been there every year since, which is why we're seated in the fifth row here.

He presently serves as chairman of the Department Finance Committee, and he serves on the Department Ways and Means Committee. At the national level Merv has been the alternate National Executive Committeeman from 2009 to the present. He has served on the Children and Youth Commission since 2000, and he currently serves on the National Legislative Council as the congressional liaison to Montana's Senator Jon Tester. He is a graduate of The American Legion Institute course. He attended three NLIC workshops, and is a member of The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation Action Team.

Merv works tirelessly recruiting new members. Whenever the opportunity presents itself he can be found in the company of the infamous Jim Fiedler, tracking down potential leads. To demonstrate this point, Merv holds six consecutive Gold Brigade awards, including 2011.

He has other outstanding qualifications for his position that are due to his associations with the Sons of The American Legion. He's a charter member of Sons of The American Legion Squadron 30 in Belgrade, Montana. He has served that squadron as commander, adjutant, and finance officer. At the detachment level he has served as zone commander and adjutant. He is presently the National Executive Committeeman for Montana's Sons of The American Legion, and serves on the Committee on Committees.

Merv holds a Bachelor of Science degree in criminal justice from Montana State University. He was employed by the Montana State University Police Department for 23 years. He was then regional manager of the Argus Security Service for five years, and during that time received the Department of Montana Employer of Veterans Award. He is now the owner of All Secure, Incorporated. He has received the employer support of the Guard and Reserve, and the Department of Montana Employer of Veterans Award again. As a fringe benefit of employment for all of his employees he pays their annual membership dues in The American Legion. He is a member of ANAVICUS, the VFW, the DAV, the Elks, the Eagles, the City of Belgrade Police Commission, and the Royal Canadian Legion.

He has been married to Patricia Gunderson for 43 years. Patty is a member of American Legion Auxiliary Unit Number 3 of Great Falls, Montana. They have one son, Orin, who is a charter member of the Sons of The American Legion Post 30 in Belgrade.

At a recent meeting of the Western Caucus, held here in Minneapolis, he was endorsed as the national vice commander candidate by the Western Caucus. The motto of the Western Caucus is "The West is the Best." To illustrate that point, our past national commanders include Al Lance, Tom Bock, and our present commander who is now retiring, Jimmie Foster. And so it is with a great deal of pleasure on behalf of the Department of Montana and the Western Caucus that I place in nomination the name of Mervin Gunderson for national vice commander for the year of 2011-2012. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The name of Mervin G. Gunderson from Montana has been placed into nomination for national vice commander. I now recognize microphone number two.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GILL (PA): Mr. Commander, Kerrie Gill, chairman of the Pennsylvania delegation. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize Richard A. Coccimiglio for the purpose of the nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The chair recognizes Richard Coccimiglio from Pennsylvania for the purpose of a nomination for national vice commander.

DELEGATE COCCIMIGLIO (PA): National Commander Foster and distinguished national officers and guests, and all of you, the distinguished members of our American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, and Sons of our American Legion it's with Pennsylvania pride, and I deem it an honor to place the name of an outstanding person, a great American, a dedicated Legionnaire, to be considered for the high office of national vice commander.

The person I present to this delegation establishes eligibility as a member of The American Legion with his service in Vietnam starting in 1964, taking his training at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. He was assigned as a ceremonial honor guard at Marine barracks in Washington D. C., where his duties included guarding the president of the United States at Camp David, and also foreign diplomats at Blair House in Washington, D.C. A combat veteran serving as an infantryman with the First Marine Division, the Third MP Battalion, he excelled there as well, being meritoriously promoted to the rank of corporal and sergeant in a combat zone. Right from the start of his 21-year career in the United States Marines he has shown the traits that make a great leader, dedication to duty, attention to detail, reliability, responsibility, and accountability. Continuing his honored career, after graduating from the University of North Carolina and completing Officer Candidate School in Quantico, Virginia, he was commissioned as a second

lieutenant with numerous assignments throughout the United States, the Far East, as well as the Mediterranean. He retired from the Marine Corps in 1985 at the rank of captain.

Even with his outstanding military career, he deemed his most notable accomplishments have been with The American Legion. He has held many offices and commanderships at the post, the county, the district, the state level, and also served on many committees and commissions at the national level.

After being elected as the state commander for the Department of Pennsylvania in 2005, his leadership played a major role in the success of many of the programs and accomplishments of our American Legion. As department commander he was the first department commander to include The American Legion Rider logo in conjunction with our American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion, showing a complete unity of our Legion family and our veteran community family.

He knows and understands the obligations we have as Legionnaires. He understands the commitments that we have to our communities, our state, and this great nation of ours. His guiding principles are the Four Pillars of our American Legion. Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation; assisting veterans through the quagmire of VA benefits. National Security; knowing the importance of citizenship and a strong national defense. Children and Youth; ensuring that our future generation remains the future of our nation. Americanism; stressing that our beautiful red, white and blue remains the beacon of the greatest nation on the face of this earth, and holding to the moral values of God and country. It is with Pennsylvania pride and a personal honor, to place the name of James H. Hales, Jr. in nomination for the office of national vice commander of our American Legion. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The name of James H. Hales, Jr. From Pennsylvania has been placed into nomination for national vice commander. I now recognize microphone number two.

DELEGATE MARCICIAK (IL): Mr. Commander, Tom Marciciak, delegate from Illinois. Mr. Commander, I move that the nominations for the office of national vice commander be closed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: We have a motion that nominations for the office of national vice commander be closed. Is there a second? ...*Second.*

Hearing many seconds, the motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor signify by the usual. Opposed? Carried. I recognize microphone number two.

DELEGATE HOFF (GA): Mr. Commander, Larry Hoff, delegate from Georgia. Mr. Commander, I move that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this Convention, and that Larry Sheets, Florida; Milton Heifner, Iowa; David Voyles, Missouri; Mervin Gunderson, Montana; and James Hales, Pennsylvania, be elected national vice commanders by acclamation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: We have a motion that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this Convention, and Larry D. Sheets, Milton G. Heifner, David N. Voyles, Mervin G. Gunderson, and James H. Hales, Jr., be elected national vice commanders by acclamation. Is there a second? ...*Second.*

Hearing this second, the motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All in favor signify by the usual. All opposed? Carried. I now call on the national adjutant.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, as national adjutant for The American Legion, I cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention for Larry D. Sheets, Florida; Milton G. Heifner, Iowa; David N. Voyles, Missouri; Mervin G. Gunderson, Montana; James H. Hales, Jr., Pennsylvania, for the offices of national vice commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: I declare Larry D. Sheets, Milton G. Heifner, David N. Voyles, Mervin G. Gunderson and James H. Hales, Jr., elected national vice commanders of The American Legion. *(Applause)*

At this time I am honored to swear you into your newly elected office as a national vice commander. I know you will uphold the trust that has been placed in you by the comrades who nominated and supported you, and the Convention delegates that elected you. I trust you will fulfill every obligation required of you. I challenge you to familiarize yourselves with the duties of your office, and carry them out with the same spirit from which The American Legion was founded. The welfare, success and integrity of this great organization depends largely upon you, as you travel in the departments and throughout this country promoting the mandates of The American Legion as approved by the National Convention and the National Executive Committee.

It is your duty to protect the good name of The American Legion with the people of our great nation that you meet as you travel. Help them to know the Legion's purposes and policies. Remember the Four Pillars that motivate us as members to serve this nation. As you serve, always remember there is no rank among us, as we all serve as equals. We are all aiming for the same goals, the ideals of justice, freedom, democracy and loyalty. This means you should always employ the cardinal principles of The American Legion to all of those that we serve. And they are: the rehabilitation of all disabled veterans, and the care of those who now are suffering from wounds, disease, and want to include the care of their family members; the education of our children; educating citizens on the ideals of true Americanism; and maintaining a strong national defense. In your travels representing The American Legion, always practice these Four Pillars in your promotion of service to the community, state and nation. If you will please raise your right hand and repeat after me, giving your name where I give mine.

...The national vice commanders were administered the oath.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: You may lower your hands. Congratulations, national vice commanders. Ladies and gentlemen, let's have a round of applause for your newly elected national vice commanders. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Colors to Incoming National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: I now call on Past National Commander Ron Conley of Pennsylvania to present the Colors to our incoming national commander.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER CONLEY: Thank you, Commander Foster. Legionnaires and distinguished guests, please rise for the presentation of the National Colors by the Color Guard of Post 472 of Houston, Texas, to National Commander Fang A. Wong. Hand salute. *...The delegation stood and saluted the Colors.* Two!

National Commander Wong, please join me here at the podium. You stand before this Convention having received the unanimous vote of confidence in your ability to represent not only the Legionnaires, but also all American veterans in these coming months. As a veteran, I know that you are up to the challenge. You have served The American Legion in numerous capacities over many years. You have the experience and knowledge to lead The American Legion. I know, and the delegates know, that you are the right man to carry our great organization forward in the coming year.

As a naturalized citizen you volunteered for the United States Army, having served a lifetime of dedicated service in the protection of the American way of life, defending our Constitution and protecting the flag of our country. Our flag represents many different types of people; many that have come from far-away lands as you have. You have seen fit to have this as your permanent country, and making the determination to defend that flag. Through your service in the United States Army you joined The American Legion, and again you decided to serve the banner of our organization. Even though these flags represent each and every one of us, you are determined to carry this banner forward to the

American people and throughout the world. I had the opportunity to watch you as a department commander of New York; your love and dedication to your family, your love and dedication to the veterans of New York, your love and dedication to our nation and to these flags. It's with great pride that I now present to you the flags of our country and our organization. National Commander Wong, God bless you and our American Legion as you lead us this coming year.

Color Guard! Return the Colors of the national commander of The American Legion. Right-hand salute. ...*The delegation rendered a salute to the Colors.* Two!

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: This is an exciting time for any National Convention. We have elected a new national commander and look forward to a time of growth and community involvement. This is also the time when The American Legion Auxiliary elects a new national president. As this important part of our Legion family is also poised for a bright future, the woman chosen to lead The American Legion Auxiliary has worked many years for veterans and families. She is a member of the Department of Minnesota, and holds the Auxiliary's mission near and dear to her heart. Her eligibility for membership is through her husband, Terry; her stepfather, Arthur Tarnowski, and brother Rick Tarnowski. She has served the Auxiliary in many capacities, including national vice president. Legionnaires and guests, please give a warm American Legion welcome to new national president of The American Legion Auxiliary, Mrs. Kris Nelson. *(Standing applause)*

Greetings: Kris Nelson, Minnesota, National President
American Legion Auxiliary

Thank you. I would like to congratulate Commander Fang Wong. Congratulations. I would like to pledge our service, that of myself and The American Legion Auxiliary, to the Legion. We are only members of the Auxiliary because of a veteran in our life. This year, as we honor the service of our veterans and look into their faces, we will meet their needs by remembering the veteran in our own life who gave us our eligibility.

I look forward to serving with Commander Fang Wong and SAL Commander Jim Roberts. Our goals are the same. We believe we need to increase the membership of all three of our organizations, and at the same time have public awareness of what The American Legion family is and what we do. Because by serving and inviting our community, by becoming diverse and inclusive we will be able to grow the membership in all three organizations. Thank you for your confidence in me, and thank you for giving me a great commander to work with. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The man chosen to lead the Sons of The American Legion is an honorary life member of Squadron 4 in Lakeland, Florida. His eligibility for membership is through his grandfather's World War II service, and his father's Vietnam service. He has served in the Sons for 33 years. In 2004, amidst the worst hurricane season in Florida's history, he was elected to serve as the national vice commander of the Southern Region. Employed by the Florida Division of Emergency Management, he and his wife, Anita, have been married for 19 years and have two teenage daughters. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the new national commander of the Sons of The American Legion, James K. Roberts, III. *(Standing applause)*

Greetings: James K. Roberts, III, Florida
National Commander, Sons of The American Legion

Mr. Commander, if you don't mind, I would like to take a point of personal privilege. My father passed away August the 20th of this year and was not able to be here

at the Convention with us, and I dedicated a distinguished guest badge to my father, and I would like to have that stay here while I give my remarks today.

Thank you to The American Legion family. That's because that's what we are. To our veterans in the audience, thank you for your service. It's your service that gives me the ability to be here today as the national commander of the Sons of The American Legion. And I thank you for your service. It means a lot to me, and it means a lot to the Sons of The American Legion. To Commander Fang, I extend to you the congratulations of the over 344,000 members of the Sons of The American Legion, and we are looking forward to working with you this year.

And I will tell you that I had the opportunity to see Fang in Kansas on one of the campaign trips that we had. And without having an opportunity to sit down face to face and really start talking a little bit about our year, his message and my message, albeit different, were the same. And I know just because of that that we are going to have an outstanding and fantastic year. I want to just say one thank you to my Florida American Legion family. It's been your leadership and your support over these last 30 plus years that have given me the ability to learn and prosper within this great American Legion family, and I want to thank all of you very much for everything that you do. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to serve this year. And with that, I know you all have a lot of business to take care of today. So thank you very much, and I look forward to serving with you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Commander Roberts, please remain with us for a few moments. Also National Commander Wong and National President Nelson. Please join us here at the lectern. Ladies and gentlemen, National Commander Wong, National President Kris Nelson and SAL Commander James K. Roberts, III, our dynamic leadership team for your upcoming year. Let's give them a big round of applause. *(Applause)*

Okay. Just a reminder that the Post-Convention National Executive Committee meeting will occur in Room 101 I and J, immediately following adjournment. All the new national officers are to attend. Is there any further business to come before this Convention? Please uncover as the outgoing national chaplain, Daniel J. Seehafer, offers the benediction.

Benediction
Rev. Daniel J. Seehafer, Wisconsin, National Chaplain

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we now have come to the close of this 93rd National Convention. We thank You for the gift You have given us in Commander Foster; his leadership, his commitment to serving America's veterans every day, and his compassion and friendliness. We also thank You for his family, for sharing him with us; for Team Alaska and for all the leadership who were elected and appointed this past year who faithfully served You and our country.

So, Lord, thank You for these precious gifts. However, still serving America is not just some cute phrase, but the reality of our organization. So, Lord, empower us now as we serve with pride, embracing, supporting and serving with our newly elected national commander, Fang Wong, as he leads us into another year of service with our other national leaders.

Therefore, Lord, grant us safety as we return to our homes and loved ones. Enable us to share with our posts, communities and districts what we have learned and experienced throughout this emotional and powerful Convention. And may You continue to protect our military personnel and watch over our American Legion family. Until we meet again, we pray this in Your lifesaving name, and so it shall be. Amen.

Retirement of Colors

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: The Color Guard will retire the flag of the United States of America. The delegates will stand and render a hand salute on my command. Present arms. *...The delegation stood and rendered a salute to the Colors.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Two! The time is 12:54 p.m. I now declare this 93rd annual National Convention of The American Legion adjourned, *sine die*. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCEMENT OF ANNUAL RECIPIENT(S)

The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal Award: Awarded annually to an individual(s) or organization for their outstanding service to the nation and to the programs of The American Legion by nomination by department action or by the National Commander.
RECIPIENT: Honorable Thomas Chester (Chet) Edwards

American Legion Baseball Graduate of The Year Award: Presented to the major league baseball player who played American Legion Baseball as a teenager and best exemplifies the principles and purposes of the program in sportsmanship, citizenship, general good conduct, integrity and playing ability.
RECIPIENT: Corey Hart – Milwaukee Brewers

Bob Feller American Legion Pitching Award: Awarded annually to that American Legion Baseball player recording the greatest number of strikeouts during the regional tournaments and World Series of American Legion Baseball.
RECIPIENT: Colton Loomis, Midland, Michigan

Commissioner of Baseball Trophy: Awarded annually at the Major League World Series to that baseball team which becomes the National Champion as a result of playing in The American Legion World Series.
RECIPIENT: Team from Eden Prairie, Minnesota

Dr. Irvin L. "Click" Cowger Memorial R.B.I. Award: Awarded annually to The American Legion Baseball player who is credited with the most runs batted in by the official score keepers of the respective regional tournaments and World Series of American Legion Baseball.
RECIPIENT: Blake Schmit, Eden Prairie, Minnesota

Ford C. Frick Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department having within its jurisdiction the runner-up team in the National Finals of The American Legion Baseball program.
RECIPIENT: Department of Mississippi

The Frank N. Belgrano, Jr. Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department which has rendered the most outstanding service during the year to the program of the Boy Scouts of America.
RECIPIENT: Department of California

George W. Rulon Baseball Player of the Year: A Plaque is presented to recipient by appropriate official upon conclusion of The American Legion Baseball World Series. Citation is presented to recipient at a special Hall of Fame ceremony at Cooperstown, NY, the following summer.
RECIPIENT: Blake Schmit, Eden Prairie, Minnesota
The Howard P. Savage, Jr. Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department having the baseball team which becomes the Champion as a result of playing in The American Legion World Series.

RECIPIENT: Department of Minnesota

Jack Williams Memorial Leadership Award: Awarded annually to the manager and coach of the national championship team, as representative of the adult leadership Jack Williams stressed during his lifetime.
RECIPIENT(s): **Manager: Scott Hackett, Eden Prairie, Minnesota**
Coaches: Mike Halloran and John Buteyn, Eden Prairie, Minnesota

James F. Daniel, Jr. Memorial Sportsmanship Award: Awarded to The American Legion Baseball player participating in the World Series that represents the principle of good sportsmanship emphasized by the program.
RECIPIENT: **Brandon Woodruff, Tupelo, Mississippi**

American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Trophy: Awarded annually in four categories to the top performing Individual and Team in the Sporter and Precision categories competing in the annual USA Shooting National Junior Olympic Air Rifle Championship who are members of clubs and teams affiliated with The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program.
RECIPIENT(s):
Precision Team: **Palmyra Junior Rifle Team (Pennsylvania), Post 72**
Nathan Brandeburg, Briann Derr, Elizabeth Embeck and Alyssa Gestl

Precision Individual: **Daniel Lowe, Capital City Junior Rifle Team (Washington), Post 2**

Sporter Team: **Patriot Shooting Club (Virginia), Post 233**
Joshua Black, Sarah Osborn, Timothy Teller and Thomas Wheeless

Sporter Individual: **Maneva Gill, Pacifica 4-H (California), Post 238**

Louisville Slugger Trophy: Plaque is presented to recipient, or designated representative, by appropriate official upon the conclusion of The American Legion Baseball World Series.
RECIPIENT: **Dylan Huskey, Gaffney, South Carolina**

Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department within the continental limits in the United States showing the greatest Americanism activity in use of The American Legion School Medal Awards.
RECIPIENT: **Department of Maryland**

Rawlings "Big Stick" Award: Awarded annually to that American Legion Baseball player having the highest total number of bases as determined by the official score keepers of the respective regional tournaments and World Series of American Legion Baseball.
RECIPIENT: **Tony Skjefte, Eden Prairie, Minnesota**
Spafford National Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department of The American Legion having within its jurisdiction the winner of the National High School Oratorical Contest.
RECIPIENT: **Department of Missouri**

Francis M. Redington Sportsmanship Award: Awarded annually to the athlete competing in The American Legion Junior Air Rifle National Championship who best exemplifies good sportsmanship and fair play.
RECIPIENT: **Dahkota Hayes, Mineral County 4-H Shooting Club, Superior, Montana**

Daniel J. O'Connor Award: Awarded annually to that Department attaining the greatest number of percentage points compiled from information contained in the Consolidated Post Reports and supporting Department narrative. (Originally named the William Randolph Hearst Trophy)
RECIPIENT: **Department of Virginia**

The American Legion and Scouting "Square Knot" Award: This award is designed to recognize American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion members who are actively involved in the Scouting program. This award is not meant to be a selective or limited award, but one that is available to any American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion member who completes the requirements for the award. The Award is meant to recognize dedication and work required by an American Legion, American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion member to assist in furthering the Scouting program in The American Legion.
RECIPIENT(s):
2010 - Michael Billig, Vaughn Keaton, Roger Borden, Gail Butler, Christie Butler, Robert J. Owens, Dwight Jekel; 2011 – Bobby Martin, John M. Welborn, Robert L. Warren, Harold J. Schoeffler, Ashley W. White, Michael S. Welsh, Francis H. Guess, Lee R. Wise, Ernest S. Kelley, Joseph E. Baker, Arnold E. Boyle, Robert L. Tweer, Curtis Kamichoff, Ron Hooker, George Lambert, Hilory H. Hammond, Jr., Gregory J. Lisinski, Brian Lamberg, Stephen E. White, James F. Watts, Ray C. Geeseman, Jr., Russell B. Chorpenning, Jay L. Wieland, Joseph Bach, Shawn Youngberg, Emil L. Mesko, Andrea Mesko, Joe C. Bishop, David Perkins, Rees D. Morgan, Alfred D. Gates, Michael W. Stalcup, David V. Koss, Peter S. Pate, Nicholas J. Gray, Cynthia A. Gray, Rob Kimball, Richard J. Sanne, Scott C. Hemgren, James A. Larsen, Helena Johnson, Brian Foster, Curtis E. Ware, Donald H. Wolf, III, Connie B. LaRose, Leonard M. Peterson, Mark A. Poyzer
(as of: 11/9/2011)

The American Legion National Education Award: Awarded annually to an individual, group or organization that has promoted the education programs of The American Legion, including the promotion of "Need A Lift?", correspond to the goals of The American Legion or has promoted or advanced education programs at the national level.
RECIPIENT: **Michael Peterson, Country Music Singer, Nashville, Tennessee**

The American Legion Canadian Friendship Award: Awarded by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the National Executive Committee at such times and places as may be consistent and appropriate. It shall be awarded to specific individuals who shall be war veterans within the accepted meaning of the term and members of authentic veterans' organization in Canada. It shall be awarded to such individuals in recognition of outstanding service in the field of veterans' affairs and in the development and perpetuation of the spirit of international good will and comradeship between the United States and Canada and between their veterans' organization and The American Legion.
RECIPIENT(s): **Pat Varga and Dick Stasuik**

Department Award for 100% Post Children & Youth Reporting: Awarded annually to those Departments which achieve 100% of Posts indicating Children & Youth activity on Consolidated Post Reports.
RECIPIENT: Nebraska and Virginia

National Employer of Veterans Award Recipient(s): Awarded to an employer in recognition of outstanding achievement in the employment and retraining of veterans.
RECIPIENT(s): 2010 Winners
Category I Georgia Vietnam Veterans Alliance, Doraville, Georgia
Category II Millennium Security Services, LLC, Alpharetta, Georgia
Category III Eagle Systems and Services, Inc., Lawton, Oklahoma
Note: The 2011 National Employer of Veterans Award Recipient(s) will not be announced until 2012 National Convention.

National Employment Service Award Recipient(s): Awarded in three categories: Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) of the Year; Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP) of the Year; Employment Service (ES) Office of the Year.
RECIPIENT(s): 2010 Winners
LVER of the Year: Robert E. Shoeman, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
DVOP of the Year: Johnny Moreno, Twin Falls, Idaho
ES Office of the Year: Gwinnett Career Center, Norcross, Georgia
Note: The 2011 National Employment Service Award Recipient(s) will not be announced until 2012 National Convention.

Enhance the Lives of Disabled Persons Award Recipient: The program is a joint project between the National Organization & the AETNA Company, to award those Posts that enhance the lives of disable persons by providing opportunities for their participation in community activities.
RECIPIENT(s): 2010 Winner
Veterans Employment Development Center, Beverly Hills, Florida
Note: The 2011 Enhance the Lives of Disabled Persons Award Recipient will not be announced until 2012 National Convention.

National Employer of Older Worker Award Recipient: The program provides an Employer of Older Worker Award for a company that consistently hires older workers, especially veterans and serves as an inspirational recognition of a company with a record of support and commitment to the hiring of America's older workers.
RECIPIENT(s): 2010 Winner
Point Security Company, Inc., Youngwood, Pennsylvania
Note: The 2011 National Employer of Older Worker Award Recipient will not be announced until 2012 National Convention.

National Department History Contest Awards: Awarded annually at the Fall Meeting of the National Executive Committee to those contestants entered in the National Department History Contest having submitted the One-Year History Narrative or Yearbook of the Department which best meets the standards established for that particular competition.
RECIPIENT(s):
Department of North Carolina (One-Year Narrative History)
Department of Ohio (One-Year Yearbook History)

National Post History Contest Awards: Awarded annually to those contestants entered in the National Post History Contest deemed by a duly authorized panel of judges to have submitted the One-Year History of the Post which best meets the standards established for the competitions.
RECIPIENT(s):
Matthews-Crawford Post 131, Warrensburg, MO (One-Year Narrative History)
Lt. J.L. Shryer Post 430, Durant, IA (One-Year Yearbook History)

International Amity Award: Awarded by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the National Executive Committee at such times and places as may be consistent and appropriate. It shall be awarded to specific individuals who shall be war veterans within the accepted meaning of the term and members of an authentic veteran organization established in the territory of any of the nations associated as war-time allies of the United States of America. It shall be awarded to such individuals in recognition of outstanding service in the field of veterans affairs and for service and contributions made in the development of international good will and comradeship between their organization and The American Legion.
RECIPIENT(s): None awarded for 2011

Distinguished Public Service Award: Awarded annually by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the Commander's Advisory Committee at the time of the annual Washington Conference. It may be awarded to one or more person(s) of the United States Congress.
RECIPIENT(s): Senator Daniel K. Akaka, Hawaii

The Arthur D. Houghton Sons of The American Legion Trophy: Awarded annually to that Detachment of Sons of The American Legion in each of five membership categories (I – 200-1,000 members; II - 1,001-3,000 members; III - 3,001-6000 members; IV – 6001-12,000 members; V – 12,001 or more), each of said Detachments attaining the greatest percentage of increase over previous year's membership when compared with all Detachments in its category.
RECIPIENT(s):
Category I Detachment of Mississippi
Category II Detachment of Wyoming
Category III Detachment of Missouri
Category IV Detachment of California
Category V Detachment of Pennsylvania

General Henri Gouraud Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department in each of six categories established by the National Membership and Post Activities Committee, each of said Department having been the first in its respective category to attain or exceed its nationally assigned membership quota (effective 1986).
RECIPIENT(s):
Category I None Qualified for 2011
Category II None Qualified for 2011
Category III None Qualified for 2011
Category IV Department of Kentucky
Category V None Qualified for 2011
Category VI None Qualified for 2011

General John J. Pershing Honor Award: Awarded annually to that Department having the greatest percentage of its posts receiving the Honor Ribbon for having 100 percent or more, of the post's previous year's membership enrolled for the coming year by December 31, and having reported such achievement to National Headquarters by not later than January 31.
RECIPIENT: Department of Vermont

Henry D. Lindsley Trophy: Awarded annually to the Department attaining the highest percentage of membership over its preceding year's membership by March 31.
RECIPIENT: None awarded for 2011

The American Legion National Recruiter of the Year: Awarded annually to the individual certified with the highest number of new members recruited from among all of the departments.
RECIPIENT: Nathaniel King, Department of Georgia

North Carolina Trophy: Awarded annually to the Department, not included among the several state Departments or the Department of the District of Columbia, attaining the highest percentage of membership as of March 31, over its preceding year's membership.
RECIPIENT: None awarded for 2011

O. L. Bodenhamer Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department designated to lead the parade at the time of the ensuing National Convention.
RECIPIENT: Department of Kentucky

The American Legion Air Force Academy Award: Awarded annually to that cadet of the graduating class at the Air Force Academy who demonstrates the highest proficiency in all academic subjects.
RECIPIENT: Cadet Erick J. Robinson, Louisiana

The American Legion Coast Guard Academy Award: Awarded annually to that cadet of the graduating class of the United States Coast Guard Academy who is considered to have personally excelled in athletics.
RECIPIENT: Ensign Carl Luxhoj, Michigan

The American Legion Merchant Marine Academy Award: Awarded annually to that graduating midshipman of the Merchant Marine Academy, enrolled in the Pre-Commissioning Seminar Course, and selected by the Academy Faculty, as achieving the highest grade pertaining to a 1,000-word composition dealing with the subject of National Security.
RECIPIENT: Midshipman Nicolas A. Mann, Puerto Rico

The American Legion Military Academy Award: Awarded annually to cadet of the graduating class at the United States Military Academy with the highest standing in Chemistry.
RECIPIENT: Cadet Woo S. Do, Washington

The American Legion Naval Academy Award: Awarded annually to that graduating midshipman of the United States Naval Academy who stands highest in those English, History and Government courses taken to complete a Foreign Affairs major.
RECIPIENT: Ensign Nicholas R. Birger, Rhode Island

National Commander's Blood Donor Awards: Presented to departments in different sized categories for participating in The American Legion's Blood Donor Program.
RECIPIENT(s):
Category I — Departments with 100,000 or more members:
Post Participation: **Department of Ohio**
Individual Participation: **Department of Ohio**
Category II — Departments with 70,000 to 99,999 members:
Post Participation: **No Form Submitted**
Individual Participation: **No Form Submitted**
Category III — Departments with 40,000 to 69,999 members:
Post Participation: **Department of Virginia**
Individual Participation: **Department of Nebraska**
Category IV — Departments with 25,000 to 39,999 members:
Post Participation: **Department of Washington**
Individual Participation: **Department of Tennessee**
Category V — Departments with 10,000 to 24,999 members
Post Participation: **Department of Montana**
Individual Participation: **Department of Montana**
Category VI — Departments with Less than 10,000 members
Post Participation: **Department of Alaska**
Individual Participation: **Department of Alaska**

The American Legion National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award: To recognize an outstanding law enforcement officer as selected from Department law enforcement officer winners for distinguished on-and off-duty service. The accomplishments for which the award is presented shall have been in accordance with, or in furtherance of, established American Legion policies or programs and it shall have contributed to the preservation of law and order as well as the American way of life.
RECIPIENT: **Officer Scott P. Womack, Raleigh Police Department, Raleigh, North Carolina**

The American Legion National Firefighter of the Year Award: To recognize an outstanding firefighter as selected from Department for distinguished on-and off-duty service. The accomplishments for which the award is presented shall have been in accordance with, or in furtherance of, established American Legion policies or programs and it shall have contributed to the preservation of law and order as well as the American way of life.
RECIPIENT: **Captain Brian S. Michel, Pike County Emergency Services, Zebulon, Georgia**

Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department giving the highest degree of support to the ROTC program within its jurisdiction, based on criteria drawn up by the National Security Commission.
RECIPIENT(s): **Departments of Alaska, Hawaii, Illinois, Minnesota, Montana, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont and Virginia.**

The American Legion Fourth Estate Award: Awarded to press, radio, TV, or other communications media; to associations of same, to owners, executive heads or staff members; such award to be in recognition of outstanding service to community, state, or nation, which service shall have been in accordance with or the furtherance of established American Legion policies and programs.
RECIPIENT: **Newspaper - Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, Pittsburgh, PA**
Internet - The Indianapolis Star, Indianapolis, IN
Broadcast - News Channel 5, Nashville, TN

The American Legion National Commander's Public Relations Award: Awarded to an outstanding individual and/or organization for distinguished public service in the field of communications.
RECIPIENT: **Nesse Godin, Holocaust Survivor**

The American Legion Patriot Award: Awarded to an outstanding citizen who has demonstrated a profound and exceptional commitment to military personnel and their families.
RECIPIENT(s): **Col. Gregory Gadson, United States Army, Director, Wounded Warrior Program**

The American Legion Spirit of Service Award: Awarded annually by the Department of Defense and the five military departments that have identified the most outstanding men and women that have received press coverage in Armed Service News dispatches, the Pentagon Channel, their military base newspapers and their hometown publications.
RECIPIENT(s): **Army - Sergeant Stephen Alder**
Navy - Petty Officer 2nd Class Megan Donnell
Marine Corps - Sergeant Omar Caraballo Pietri
Coast Guard - Seaman Jacob Lowery
Air Force - Staff Sergeant Brandyn Walter

Arch M. Cantrall Trophy: Awarded annually to that American Legion Band winning first prize in competition with all other American Legion bands during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: **Band of the Tonawandas, Tonawanda, New York**

Emblem Sales Trophy: To be awarded annually to that Junior sponsored Color Guard winning first prize in competition with all other Junior sponsored Color Guards during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: **Last awarded 1983**

The Four Chaplains Trophy: Awarded annually to the winner of The American Legion Firing Squad competition at the National Convention.
RECIPIENT: **Last awarded 1984**

Glen R. Hillis Trophy: Awarded annually to that Color Guard winning first prize in competition with all other Color Guards during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: **Harrisburg Color Guard, Post 472, Houston, Texas**

The Lemuel Bolles Trophy: Awarded annually to that band winning first prize in competition with all other bands during the annual National Convention.
RECIPIENT: None awarded for 2011
National Adjutant's Trophy: Awarded annually to that American Legion Firing Squad winning first prize in competition with all other Firing Squads during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: Last awarded 1984

William F. Lenker National Service Trophy: Awarded annually to that State Department of The American Legion excelling in welfare work for war veterans, providing the membership of that Department shall be no less than 80% of the membership of the preceding year.
RECIPIENT: Department of Michigan

FOREWORD

The American Legion continued to have a strong year under the leadership of National Commander Jimmie L. Foster, Anchorage, Alaska. Membership was strong with 2.4 million veterans in more than 14,000 posts throughout the nation and overseas. We recorded another year of rewarding service to America, her veterans, and their families.

The American Legion National Headquarters is located in Indianapolis, Indiana. In addition to the Indianapolis facilities, offices are maintained in Washington, DC, to house those organizational functions requiring a close working relationship with the Congress and the appropriate agencies of the federal government. The editorial and advertising staffs of *The American Legion Magazine* are located at The American Legion's Indianapolis Headquarters.

The National Commander's report is published herein as a part of the National Convention proceedings. Reports of the other national officers, the national commissions, financial statement with accompanying data, and a report of the National President of the American Legion Auxiliary are included.

Throughout the year, the two organizations continued to provide vital leadership to the nation and, through our activities and programs, contributed significantly to the preservation of the American way of life. We are proud of our accomplishments and look forward to the challenges ahead in the coming year.

Daniel S. Wheeler
National Adjutant

EXCERPTS FROM CONSTITUTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION
ARTICLE II

Nature

Section 1. The American Legion is a civilian organization; membership therein does not affect nor increase liability for military or police service. Rank does not exist in the Legion; no member shall be addressed by his military or naval title in any convention or meeting of the Legion.

Section 2. The American Legion shall be absolutely nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles nor for the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment.

ARTICLE III

Section 1. The American Legion shall be organized in Departments and these in turn in Posts. There shall be one Department in each state, in the District of Columbia, and there may be one Department in each territory and insular possession of the United States. The National Executive Committee may establish Posts in the territorial and insular possessions of the United States and foreign countries, and shall designate the Department under whose jurisdiction they shall function, but this shall in no way affect the status of Departments already established.

ARTICLE IV

Eligibility

Section 1. Any person shall be eligible for membership in The American Legion who was a member of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard or Air Force of the

United States and assigned to active duty at some time during any of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918; December 7, 1941, to December 31, 1946; June 25, 1950, to January 31, 1955; February 28, 1961, to May 7, 1975; August 24, 1982, to July 31, 1984; December 20, 1989, to January 31, 1990; August 2, 1990 until a date established by Congress for ending the Desert Storm period; all dates inclusive, or who, being a citizen of the United States at the time of his entry therein, served on active duty in the armed forces of any of the governments associated with the United States during any said periods; provided however, that such service shall have been terminated by honorable discharge or honorable separation, or continued honorably after any of said periods; provided, further, that no person shall be entitled to membership who, being in such service during any of said periods, refused on conscientious, political or other grounds to subject himself to military discipline or unqualified service.

Section 2. There shall be no form or class of membership except an active membership, and dues shall be paid annually or for life.

Section 3. No person may be a member at any time of more than one Post.

Section 4. No person, who has been expelled by a Post shall be admitted to membership in another Post, without the consent of the expelling Post except that where such consent has been asked for and denied by such Post, he may then appeal to the Executive Committee of the Department of the expelling Post for permission to be admitted to membership in another Post, and shall be ineligible for membership until such permission is granted.

ARTICLE V

Section 1. The legislative body of The American Legion shall be the National Convention, except as otherwise provided in the Constitution and By-Laws.

Section 2. The time and place of the National Conventions shall be determined by the National Executive Committee, which shall have authority to change such time and place for sufficient reasons to it appearing.

Section 3. In the National Convention each Department shall be entitled to five delegates and one additional delegate for each one thousand members, or major fraction thereof, whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer 30 days prior to the meeting of said Convention and whose registration fees, as fixed by the National Executive Committee, for its total authorized delegate strength, have been paid, and to one alternate for each delegate. The delegates shall be chosen not less than 2 weeks before the National Convention at Department Conventions or in any other manner specified by the Department Constitution.

Section 4. Each duly registered delegate shall be entitled to one vote. The vote of any registered delegate absent and not represented by an alternate shall be cast by the majority of the registered delegates present from his Department. Alternates for registered delegates shall have all the privileges of registered delegates except that of voting. A registered delegate is one who has received his credentials after his registration fee has been paid.

Section 5. A quorum shall exist at a National Convention when 60 percent of the Departments are represented as provided above.

ARTICLE VI

Section 1. The National Convention shall elect a National Commander, and five National Vice Commanders, who shall serve without seniority. No two Vice Commanders shall be chosen from the same Department. No person shall be eligible for re-election to the Office of National Commander or National Vice Commander.

Section 2. Such officers shall serve until the adjournment of the succeeding National Convention following their election and thereafter until their successors are chosen. Vacancies in these offices occurring between National Conventions shall be filled by election by the National Executive Committee, and any member of The American Legion, in good standing, shall be eligible for election to such vacancy. Provided, however, that no Past National Commander or Past National Vice Commander shall be elected to fill any vacancy in these respective offices.

Section 3. The National Executive Committee at its first meeting following the National Convention shall appoint the National Adjutant, National Treasurer, National Judge Advocate, National Chaplain and National Historian, such officers to hold office at the pleasure of the appointing power. All persons having the custody of funds shall give adequate bonds, which shall be approved by the National Executive Committee.

Section 4. All Past National Commanders, while in good standing in their respective Posts, shall be members for life of the National Executive Committee, without vote, and shall also be life delegates to all National Conventions of The American Legion, with vote, to be exercised by them with their respective Departments.

ARTICLE VII

National Executive Committee

Section 1. Between National Conventions, the administrative power shall be vested in the National Executive Committee, which shall be composed of the National Commander, the National Vice-Commanders, and one National Executive Committeeman and one alternate from each Department to be elected as such Department shall determine, the alternate to vote only in the absence of the National Executive Committeeman.

Past National Commanders

William E. Galbraith, Nebraska
Michael J. Kogutek, New York
Keith Kreul, Wisconsin
Clarence M. Bacon, Maryland
John P. Comer, Massachusetts
Hon. H. F. Gierke, North Dakota
Miles S. Epling, West Virginia
Robert S. Turner, Georgia
Dominic D. DiFrancesco, Pennsylvania
Bruce Thiesen, California
William M. Detweiler, Louisiana
Daniel A. Ludwig, Minnesota
Joseph J. Frank, Missouri
Anthony G. Jordan, Maine
Butch L. Miller, Virginia
Hon. Alan G. Lance, Sr., Idaho
Ray G. Smith, North Carolina
Richard J. Santos, Maryland
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania
John A. Brieden, III, Texas
Thomas P. Cadmus, Michigan
Thomas L. Bock, Colorado
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts
Martin F. 'Marty' Conatser, Illinois
Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
David K. Rehbein, Iowa
Clarence E. Hill, Florida

National Executive Committeemen

F. Wayne Turner, Alabama
James E. Pisa, Alaska
Deodoro M. Aguilar, Arizona
Cleave B. Weiss, Arkansas
Edward C. Landis, California
Ralph P. Bozella, Colorado
Richard W. Anderson, Connecticut
Lyman R. Brener, Delaware
Theodore A. Webb, D.C.
Robert J. Proctor, Florida
Liam Kane, France
Charles F. Wessinger, Georgia
Andrew W. Johnson, Hawaii
Wayne D. Mitchell, Idaho
Eugene Thompson, Illinois
W. Darrell Hansel, Indiana
John J. Ross, Iowa
David O. Warnken, Kansas
Randall Coffman, Kentucky
Charles D. Aucoin, Louisiana
Robert A. Owen, Maine
Leroy E. Thornton, Maryland
Milton K. Lashus, Massachusetts
Jerry A. King, Mexico
Darwin Krieger, Michigan
Raymond DeZurik, Minnesota
Robert E. Gosa, Mississippi
Richard A. Heigert, Missouri
Sylvia A. Beals, Montana
Douglas Boldt, Nebraska
Ron Gutzman, Nevada
John E. Neylon, New Hampshire
William 'Billy' Mack, New Jersey
Taurino J. Trevino, New Mexico
Richard R. Keiser, New York
Jerry L. Hedrick, North Carolina
Curtis O. Twete, North Dakota
Henry S. Long, Ohio
Warren D. Wilson, Oklahoma
Charles E. Schmidt, Oregon
Richard A. Coccimiglio, Pennsylvania
Charles H. Cathey, Philippines
Alberto Rodriguez, Puerto Rico
Ronald P. LeVasseur, Rhode Island
Billy W. Bell, South Carolina
Paul A. Evenson, South Dakota
Rollen D. Bradshaw, Sr., Tennessee
James E. Prendergast, Texas
William E. Christoffersen, Utah
Barbara Bushaw, Vermont
George C. Lussier, Jr., Virginia
Michael L. Montaney, Washington
William W. Kile, West Virginia
David L. Gough, Wisconsin
Gerald L. Jacobs, Wyoming

Alternate National Executive Committeemen

Willis Frazier, Alabama
Harold Pawson, Alaska
S. Paul Griffin, Arizona
Gene McVay, Arkansas
David L. Eby, California
Neal L. Thomas, Colorado
D. Joseph Jackson, Connecticut
Larry J. Marcouillier, Delaware
Arturo Rivera, D.C.
Dennis R. Boland, Florida
John H. Miller, France
Charles E. French, Georgia
Leroy P. Pulawa, Hawaii
Thomas E. Mattice, Idaho
Luis V. Gonzalez, Illinois
Paul I. Steward, Indiana
Bruce C. Feuerbach, Iowa
Elgin Wahlborg, Kansas
Randall Fisher, Kentucky
Harold D. Burson, Louisiana
Paul A. L'Heureux, Maine
David E. Winpigler, Maryland
Michael E. Cassidy, Massachusetts
Melvin J. Goldberg, Mexico
Thomas G. Holzgen, Michigan
Marland A. Ronning, Minnesota
Steve Sweet, Mississippi
Charles W. Goodin, Missouri
Mervin G. Gunderson, Montana
Jerry Landkamer, Nebraska
Jack L. Ford, Nevada
Roland E. Patnode, Jr., New Hampshire
Daniel E. McCole, New Jersey
Prospero J. Sanchez New Mexico
Charles I. Herschlag, New York
Coley A. Hunsucker, North Carolina
Carroll E. Quam, North Dakota
William K. Balser, Ohio

William E. Lonkerd, Oklahoma
Richard Clark, Oregon
John J. Gasper, Pennsylvania
Herbert J. Scholten, Philippines
Monserrate Oquendo, Puerto Rico
Normand G. Vadnais, Rhode Island
John E. Palmer, Jr., South Carolina
Philip C. Anderson, South Dakota
Charles R. Dornan, Tennessee
Paul E. Dillard, Texas
Terry D. Schow, Utah
Richard H. Farmer, Vermont
Thomas E. Saunders, Virginia
William R. Bob Wallace, Washington
William E. Burkett, West Virginia
Steve Krueger, Wisconsin
William R. Wright, III, Wyoming

EXCERPTS FROM BY-LAWS OF THE
AMERICAN LEGION
ARTICLE I
National Executive Committee
Commission, Committee, and Employees

Section 6. The National Executive Committee, upon nomination by the National Commander, appoints the following standing commissions: National Americanism Commission, National Commission on Children and Youth, National Convention Commission, National Economic Commission, National Finance Commission, National Foreign Relations Commission, National Internal Affairs Commission, National Legislative Commission, The American Legion Magazine Commission, National Public Relations Commission, National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, and National Security Commission.

The National Executive Committee shall provide for the appointment and employment of such subordinate officers and employees as may be needed for the administration of The American Legion, and prescribe their duties and emoluments.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Russell J. Henry, Louisiana

Serving as one of the five National Vice Commanders has been truly a pleasure and an honor. I would like to say thank you to the Department of Louisiana for endorsing me and also the support of the Southern Bloc.

With all the floods, snow storms and tornadoes I was still able to visit all eight of the Departments I was assigned. I even got to walk on water in February in South Dakota. (Frozen Missouri River)

This has been truly a year I will never forget, especially with all the help from the National Headquarters Staff. Again, thank you.

The summary of my travels and activities for the year 2010-2011 are as follows:

September 2010
13-17 Orientation, and Training at Indianapolis Headquarters
17-23 Orientation, Training, and Tour at Washington Headquarters
22 National Commander's testimony before Congress

October 2010
3 Department of Louisiana, 7th District Meeting
10-14 Fall Meetings of National Executive Committee in Indianapolis
11-17 Department of Louisiana, 3rd District Meeting
23 Department of Louisiana, 1st and 2nd District Meetings

November 2010
4 Department of Louisiana, Ground breaking Ceremony Veterans Cemetery
6 Department of Louisiana, 4th District Meeting

7 Department of Louisiana, 5th District Meeting
11 Department of Louisiana, Attended Veterans Day Parade
13 Department of Louisiana, 6th District Meeting
14 Department of Louisiana, 8th District Meeting
18 Department of Louisiana Membership Party (Unofficial)
20-21 Arkansas Department Commander's Homecoming (Official)

December 2010
5 Department of Louisiana, Southwest Louisiana War Veterans Home Christmas Party

January 2011
14-16 Department of Louisiana, Mid-Winter Conference (Official)
20-23 Department of Texas, Mid-Winter Conference (Official)

February 2011
4-6 Department of North Dakota, Mid-Winter Conference (Official)
11-13 Department of South Dakota, Mid-Winter Conference (Official)

March 2011
14-17 Department of Kansas, Membership visit (Unofficial)
20-24 Washington National Legislative Conference

April 2011
3 Department of Louisiana, 7th District Spring Meeting
16-17 Department of Louisiana, 3rd District Spring Meeting
28-30 Department of Oklahoma, Department Tour (Official)

May 2011
1-5 National Executive Committee Meeting Indianapolis, Indiana
23 US Air Force Academy Award Presentation
30 Department of Louisiana Guest speaker at Memorial Day Service

June 2011
9-12 Department of Louisiana Department Convention
24-26 Department of Nebraska Department Convention (Official)

July 2011
8 Department of Louisiana, Installing officer at Post 27
9 Department of Louisiana, Installation of officers at Post 179
16 Department of Louisiana, Installation of officers at Post 360
17 Department of Louisiana, Installation of officers at Post 77

August 2011
5-6 Department of Louisiana, Department Executive Committee Meeting
26 – September 1 Department of Minnesota, National Convention

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
John M. Mella, Michigan

Serving as national vice commander for The American Legion has been a privilege and an honor, full of challenging and rewarding experiences. It has been a pleasure to serve this great organization as one of five national vice commanders.

Following my election as national vice commander during the 92nd National Convention in Milwaukee, I traveled to Indianapolis and Washington, D.C. for training. The intense and valuable training I received proved to be an asset in preparing me for my department visits. While in Washington, D.C., I attended the national commander's testimonial to the Joint House Committee on Veteran's Affairs.

October's only event was my participation in Michigan's 10th District tour, followed by November, when activities really started brewing up, beginning with assisting the national staff with forming a new post at Trout Lake, Michigan. On Veteran's Day, I was

honored to be the keynote speaker in Gladwin, Michigan. I then was included on the Iowa Membership Tour, with visits to several posts, a National Guard armory, a state veteran's home, several city and county memorials and a World War II P.O.W. camp. I thoroughly enjoyed the time spent with the Legion family in Iowa. From there, I went to Carbondale, Illinois, for the Egyptian Past Commanders Club and enjoyed some R&R at the department's Haven Resort. My last event of the month was a combined visit by the Department of Wisconsin and Department of Michigan at the VA Medical Center in Iron Mountain, Michigan.

December was a quieter month, with my only travel accompanying the Department of Michigan on their membership caravan from Battle Creek to Marquette.

In January, I went on an eleven day tour with the Department of Illinois Membership Caravan. We visited veteran's hospitals and clinics. While in Illinois, I had the distinct honor of attending the graveside services at Abraham National Cemetery of a great Legionnaire and legend, John H. Geiger. I then flew to Missouri to be included in their membership tour. Not only was this tour met with warmth of heart, but I also enjoyed 71 degrees warmth of weather.

February was an exciting month, which included my attendance at a legislative reception hosted by the Department of Michigan. I then went for another visit to Iowa to attend their mid-winter conference. This was well represented by the entire American Legion family. While there, I had the opportunity to have breakfast with Iowa's governor during a business meeting. I then spent two days at Michigan's mid-winter conference, which was attended by National Commander Jimmie L. Foster. My final February visit was to the Department of Ohio for their membership round-up, which was met with excitement and enthusiasm.

In March, one of my greatest honors this year was to represent National Commander, Jimmie L. Foster, at "The Passing of a Generation" program after the death of Frank Buckles, the last American WWI veteran. This was held at the National WWI Museum at Liberty Memorial in Kansas City, Missouri. What a memorable event! March also included assisting with the chartering of a new post in Ionia, Michigan, then on to Washington, D.C. for a conference and legislative visits. While there, I was able to visit Walter Reed Army Hospital and spent time visiting with some honored wounded warriors. Later in the month, I met with the National Convention Commission for an on-site visit to Detroit, Michigan.

In April, while back in my home state of Michigan, I visited the 12th District meeting in the Upper Peninsula, then back downstate for the Michigan state commander's testimonial at Post 16 in Lapeer.

May was a busy month, starting off the momentum with spring meetings at Indianapolis. From there, I traveled to the Truman Pilgrimage in Independence, Missouri, which was an official call to pay tribute to one of this country's greatest presidents. Two weeks later, I had the great privilege and honor to represent the national commander at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut, where I presented a graduating cadet a watch and monetary award for excelling in athletic standards. The commencement speech was given by President Obama. I ended the month as keynote speaker for Memorial Day ceremonies in Williamston, Michigan.

In June, I attended the Department of Michigan S.A.L. state convention, of which I am a member of this program. After speaking at the Michigan Boys State attendees at Northwood University in Midland, I then had the opportunity to experience the largest and best-run Boys State program in the country by attending the Ohio Buckeye American Legion Boys State at Bowling Green University. What a finely run program! Then, back to Grand Rapids, Michigan, for the Department of Michigan state convention, which was well attended by the entire American Legion Family.

July took me to the Department of Wisconsin state convention, held at Appleton. It was the scene of a great gathering by all delegates.

I had the opportunity to speak to the Legion, the Auxiliary and the S.A.L. Then, I was the keynote speaker at a Korean War reunion held in Frankenmuth, Michigan. I also enjoyed the opportunity to speak to two classes at The American Legion Student Trooper Academy in Lansing.

At the end of July and first part of August, I enjoyed attending both The American Legion Baseball Michigan state tournament and Great Lakes Regional tournament in Midland, Michigan. I was honored and pleased to present the trophy to the regional winners, Berryhill American Legion Post 165 out of Midland, Michigan. Later in August, I decided to participate in the Legacy Run for the first time and ride through my home state of Michigan, and then went on to the national convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to my home state of Michigan for their endorsement and sincere thank you to all the departments in the Central Region for their diligence and hospitality. I would like to especially thank my better half, Diana, for being supportive and patient throughout the year. I owe many thanks to the national staff for their guidance and assistance. To be successful, one needs to surround themselves with good people. Along with the four other national vice commanders, I feel we developed an effective and powerful team, led by a successful, hard-working national commander. Thank you, Commander Foster, for placing your trust in me. This has been a year full of memories that I will cherish and never forget.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Carlos Orria-Medina, Puerto Rico

It was a great honor to serve as National Vice-Commander for 2010-2011. A sincere appreciation to the

Department of Puerto Rico for their endorsement. The Southern Bloc Departments assigned to me were eleven. All of them did a great job to help Commander Jimmy Foster to accomplish his goals. The Department of North Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Georgia and West Virginia deserve my gratitude for their friendship and courtesies extended to me during my visits to their Departments.

My special gratitude to our National Staff for their support and guidance. I called a lot to them for assistant and their reply was "Yes we can".

It was a great experience that will be part of my life. Thanks for letting me serve you this year. For God and Country.

Summary of Activities for year 2010-2011:

2010

September 14 -18	Training in Indianapolis
September 20-24	Tour-orientation at Washington Office, National Commander's testimony before Congress
October 11-14	Fall meetings in Indianapolis
November 3-6	Department of North Carolina – Membership Round-Up

2011

January 13-16	Department of Mississippi – Mid Winter Conference
February 17-20	Department of North Carolina – Mid Winter Conference
March 21-24	Washington Conference
May 13-15	Department of Georgia – Legion College

June 17-20	U.S. Merchant Marine Academy – Award Presentation
June 23-27	Florida Department Convention
July 7-9	West Virginia Department Convention
August 26-September 1	National Convention – Minneapolis, Minnesota

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Eugene R. Pytka, Rhode Island

After attending National Convention, in Milwaukee, August 24 - Sept 1, 2010, I along with the other National Vice Commanders reported to Indianapolis for five days orientation and training beginning on September 14th. We then left for Washington, D.C. for the National Commanders testimony before the Joint Session of Veterans Affairs Committee. I returned home on September 23rd.

While in Washington, we visited Congressional members and also toured Arlington National Cemetery, Walter Reed Army Hospital, and our Washington based National Offices.

Below is a month by month description of events that I attended in 2010/ 2011:

2010		
September	27	Rhode Island, Department Executive Meeting
October	12 – 14	Fall Meeting of Nat. Exc. Committee, Indianapolis
	25	Rhode Island, Department Executive Committee Meeting
November	10 – 15	Delaware, Membership Round Up
	20	Massachusetts, Membership Rejuvenation
December	17	Rhode Island, Department Christmas Party
2011		
January	14 – 16	Maine, Membership Promotion and D.E.C. Meeting
	21 – 23	Connecticut, Mid-Winter Conference
February	4 – 6	New Jersey, Membership Visitation and D. E. C.
	25 – 27	New Hampshire, Membership Round-up
March	14 – 16	Represented The American Legion in Arlington at funeral of Frank Buckles, last WWI Veteran.
April	1 – 3	Pennsylvania, Department Executive Meeting
	8 - 10	New Jersey, Leadership College
May	2 – 5	Spring Meetings, Indianapolis IN
	26	Represented National Commander at US Naval Academy, Annapolis, for presentation of award to Midshipman Nicholas Remington Birger
June	1 – 4	Massachusetts, Department Convention
	5 – 6	Rhode Island, Department Convention

	18 – 19	Attended Baseball Hall of Fame Game, and presented award to Legion Player of the Year, Brandon Drozd, in Cooperstown, NY
	23 – 25	Vermont, Department Convention
July	7 – 11	Delaware, Department Convention
	13 – 16	New York, Department Convention
August 26 – Sept 1		National Convention, Minneapolis, MN

It has been a privilege and an honor to serve as the National Vice Commander of the Eastern Region in 2010, 2011. I would like to thank all those that extended their hospitality and friendship to me during my term of office.

To the Department Commanders, I expect to see you in other leadership roles in the coming years; you are a group of quality individuals. Department Officers, Adjutants, NEC men and Chairmen, thank you for spending time with me during my visitations, you made for a smooth road of travel.

I've been able to meet many legionnaires, gain knowledge and hopefully give a little back, I look forward to meeting with all of you again, break bread and share our American Legion way of life.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
William F. Schrier, Washington

Serving as the National Vice Commander for the western region has been both an honor and a privilege. Spending the year with the leadership of the departments in the west has given me the opportunity to watch as Legionaries work our Legion programs and lead their departments to a successful year and to watch as the Legion family members go about their assigned missions and seeing those missions accomplished in so many different ways.

Wherever I traveled I was met by the departments' Red-Hat teams and never needed to worry about being in the right place at the right time. The courtesies extended to me reminded me of the saying that no Legionnaire is ever alone when traveling. I can say with great certainty that The American Legion is alive and doing well in the western region and the family could not be stronger. I will always remember my two trips to Washington DC, the White House and my trips to Arlington for the wreath placement at the Tomb of the Unknown, as well as at the Vietnam Wall. The most outstanding visit of the year was a full day spent with troops who were at Walter Reed hospital. I was so proud of the wounded warriors that I met and the families who stay with these wonder soldiers throughout their surgeries and recovery.

The summary of my activities for the administrative year 2010-2011 is listed below:

2010	**Department**	**Event**	**Notes**
September:			
13-18	Indianapolis	Staff Briefing	
19-23	Washington D.C.	Staff briefing	
October:			
11-14	Indianapolis	Nat'l Fall Conference	
14-17	Idaho	N. Food Convoy	Unofficial
28-31	Montana	Fall Conference	Official
November:			

10-12	DC Veterans Day	Commander Chosen	
December:			
No visits			

2011

January:			
20-23	Wyoming	Mid-Winter Conf	Official
27-30	Colorado	Mid-Winter Conf	Official
February:			
3-6	Washington	Mid-Winter Conf.	Official
11-13	Nevada	DEC Meeting	Official
March:			
10-12	Alaska	W. Dist. Conv.	Official
April:			
15-17	Oregon	DEC Meeting	
May:			
18-21	WestPoint	Academy Presentation	
28-31	Arlington	Commander Chosen	
June:			
23-26	Arizona	Department Conv.	Official
July:			
12-17	Washington	Department Conv.	
August:			
11-14	California	DEC Meeting	Official
26 to September 1	Minnesota	National Convention	

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL CHAPLAIN
Rev. Daniel J. Seehafer, Wisconsin

On September 2, 2010, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, at the conclusion of the 92nd American Legion National Convention, I was sworn in as the National Chaplain and delivered opening and closing prayer for the post-convention NEC Meeting. I am deeply humbled to be given this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to serve in this capacity for one year. The Dept of WI has always been highly supportive of their Dept Chaplain and is extremely proud to see their own in this God-fearing position--not only representing them but the nation.

Throughout the entire year, Our National Commander, Jimmie L. Foster, has been undergirded with prayer from our chaplains across the country. All Dept Chaplains came together for the National Chaplains Conference in Indianapolis, IN on September 24-26, 2010. My selected theme for this conference was "Be Strong in the Lord", in which I embraced our National Commander's theme S.A.V.E.D.—Serving America's Veterans Every Day. The topics ranged from "What do our returning troops face when they return home?" by Captain Dave Meinzen, "Being an effective Department Chaplain" by Norris Keirn (IN), Department Chaplain, to "Why are you a chaplain?" by Rev. Marie Tombow (NV), and "Ask the Pros" by Gerald Theriot (LA) and Rev. Marie Tombow. On September 26, I conducted the Protestant Worship Service and performed a Memorial Service to conclude our conference.

Within two weeks, I was back in Indianapolis, IN as I attended our National Commander's Homecoming on October 9. The National Executive Committee (NEC) also met on October 11-12, in which I attended and delivered numerous prayers at

meetings and receptions. On October 11, a very special invitation was extended to me to give the Invocation, Memorial, and Benediction at the 85th Steivos Play Day Dinner.

On Veterans Day, I brought greetings and a brief message on behalf of our organization and my local Post (157) to our Horicon High School, Middle School, and St. Stephen Lutheran School as we gathered to celebrate and give thanks to and for our veterans.

From January 20-23, 2011, I attended Wisconsin's Mid-Winter Conference. I delivered numerous prayers at receptions and meetings and was a main speaker for our Chaplain's Workshop. On February 5, I attended and participated in our 2nd District's Annual Four Chaplain's Service and Dinner at Lake Mills, WI.

On March 21-23, at the Renaissance Downtown Washington, D.C., I attended the 51st Annual Washington Conference. It was a wonderful opportunity to lead our organization in prayer for the Commander's Call, our luncheons and receptions. Since the Senate and House of Representatives were not in session, Mr. Jeff Steele made arrangements for us to have a tour of the Capitol as well as having ample time to visit Walter Reed Medical Center in which I spent a generous amount of time with our wounded warriors. Other highlights from this conference were the opportunity to meet Mrs. Nesse Godin (The 2011 National Commander's Public Relations Award Recipient) and my initiation into the ANAVICUS—attending the Breakfast Meeting on Monday, March 21.

On April 14, I attended and participated at our Dodge County Youth Government Day, was the main speaker at the Vernon County Meeting on April 17, and on April 30, I was the main speaker for our Department Commander's (Robert Batty) Testimonial Dinner at Port Washington, WI.

On May 4-5, our NEC meetings took place in Indianapolis, IN and again my contribution was to attend the meetings and give invocations and benedictions. I also attended our Department's Spring Meetings on May 7, and welcomed James E. "Jim" Koutz to Wisconsin—candidate for National Commander 2012-2013. On May 30, Memorial Day (observed), I was the guest speaker at Fox Lake, WI for their Memorial Day Program.

On June 16, I participated in Wisconsin's 70th Badger Boys State with an opening prayer for their Inaugural Program (WI Governor Scott Walker and other distinguished guests were in attendance). On July 13-17, I attended our Department's Convention and had quality time to visit with National Vice-Commander John M. Mella (MI). On July 23-25, I attended and participated at Boy's Nation—performing the Memorial Service with a message entitled "It's Personal", in which I was deeply humbled to have these young men give me a standing ovation upon completion. Awesome! On Monday, we laid the American Legion wreath (Boy's Nation) at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Arlington National Cemetery with our National Commander.

At the 93rd National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota on Sunday August 28, I hosted our National Chaplains' Breakfast in which we honored our National Youth Champions. Our Religious Patriotic Service was awe-inspiring with the Minnesota Boy Choir, and the message was entitled "Service: God Empowered, America Strengthened". A DVD of this service is available to any person upon request. Prayers and words of encouragement were offered to the people I met along the way. I opened the convention with an Invocation and closed it with a Benediction. I also gave my blessing to the new National Chaplain for 2011-2012. Throughout the year, communication was not a problem. At my own expense, numerous coins, sympathy cards and prayer cards for strength and healing were given and sent to those in need.

In closing, it has truly been an honor and a very humbling experience to be called our National Chaplain of The American Legion. I want to thank God and the American Legion for this great honor. May God continue to bless us in all of our endeavors,

wherever we are serving. And let us always remember, it's "For God and Country"! And so it shall be!

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIAN
James Fratolillo, Massachusetts

Our National Commander, Jimmie L. Foster's theme for this year was *Serving American Veterans Every Day (S.A.V.E.D.).* The truly great leaders lead by example and Commander Foster has done just that. Commander Foster was on the road serving American veterans every day, 321 days out of the year. He visited fifty three (53) departments and seven (7) foreign countries. Whether addressing Congress, meeting with the President of the United States, visiting wounded servicemembers in Landstuhl, Germany, or just meeting with Legionnaires of local American Legion posts, the leader of the world's largest veterans' service organization had one top priority, serving the American veteran.

The four pillars of The American Legion are: a strong national defense, care of our veterans, the well being of our children and youth, and the promotion of Americanism. The annual reports submitted to Congress from the respective chairmen of our commissions clearly document the resources provided and numerous resolutions and activities, at the national level. The consolidated post reports submitted by our posts make available just some of the work our organization does every day to serve the community, state, and nation. The leadership and members of The American Legion *make* history every day. As the national historian it is my responsibility to encourage and promote the *recording* of history.

Each year the members of the National Association of Department Historians (NADHAL) assist the national historian in judging the history books submitted from the 55 departments of The American Legion. Only the first place book from each department is submitted for review. The contest is very competitive and each submission is critically reviewed.

The results of the One-Year Department Narrative History Contest are:
First Award, Plaque, Department of North Carolina
No other entries

The results of the One-Year Department Yearbook History Contest are:
First Award, Plaque, Department of Ohio
Second Award, Plaque, Department of North Carolina
Third Award, Plaque, Department of Vermont
Honorable Mention, Department of Washington

Certificates of Participation are awarded to Departments:
Department of Louisiana
Department of Georgia
Department of Nevada
Department of New Mexico
Department of Florida
Department of Michigan

The results of the One-Year Post Narrative History Contest are:
First Award, Plaque, Frank B. Bartlett Post 7, Buckhannon, WV
Second Award, Plaque, No-Vel Post 159, Venice, FL
Third Award, Plaque, Columbia County Post 192, Evans, GA
Honorable Mention: Dwight Cowles Post 370, Overland Park, KS

Certificates of Participation are awarded to Posts:
Missing Man Post 667, Universal City, TX
Stafford Post 290, Stafford, VA

The results of the One-Year Post Yearbook History Contest are:

First Award, Plaque, Matthews-Crawford Post 131, Warrensburg, MO
Second Award, Plaque, J.L. Shryer Post 430, Durant, IA
Third Award, Plaque, Hardin Post 113, Elizabethtown, KY
Honorable Mention, Columbia County Post 192, Evans, GA
Honorable Mention, Jastrzemski-Lelo Post 439, Saginaw, MI

Certificates of Participation are awarded to Posts:

Bourque Lanigan Post 5, Waterville, ME
Ontario Post 67, Ontario, OR
Paul Stewart Irwin Post 136, Mulvane, KS
Zoal Stringer Post 226, Coweta, OK
Saxton-Willis Post 64, Heber Springs, AR
Frank B. Bartlett Post 7, Buckhannon, WV
Knoxville Post 2, Knoxville, TN
Abbeville Post 2, Abbeville, SC
Gensi-Viola Post 36, Windsor Locks, CT
New London Post 40, Springfield, NH
Sullivan Post 139, Sullivan, IN
Dundalk Post 38, Dundalk, MD
Gahanna A.L. Post 797, Gahanna, OH
Stafford Post 290, Stafford, VA
Alois-Dreikosen Post 469, Marathon, WI
Bothell Post 127, Bothell, WA
Clark Post 328, Clark, NJ
A.L. Bryan Mudgett Post 7, Carlsbad, NM
Hickory Post 48, Newton, NC
Veterans Memorial Post 347, Lady Lake, FL
Klock-Smith Post 1788, La Fargeville, NY
William M. Randolph Post 593, Converse, TX

The judges for the contest were:
Duane Alexander, (IN); Virgil Arling (OH); Randy Bain, (ID); Delfo Barabani (MA); W. Frazier Brinley (CT); Fae Casper (GA); Thomas Conner, (WA); Nellie P. DeBaker (WI); Charemon Dunham (SD); Robert Gilmore Jr. (AZ); Joseph Johnston (KS); Johnny Keel, (LA); James A. Mariner (NM); Sue Mason, (FL); Denise Rohan (WI); Larry Rozier (NC); Raymond St. John (VT); Dan Watrous (OH); Carl Wipperman (WA); Chuck Zelinsky (IL)

I wish to thank National Commander Jimmie L. Foster for my appointment and all those who gave me the support and guidance throughout the year. I especially wish to give a special thank you to Howard C. Trace, Director, Library & Museum, and his staff for all they do. It has been an honor to serve as a national officer to the world's largest veterans' service organization, The American Legion.

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE
P. B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

Contracts

The following one hundred seventy-three (173) contracts have been reviewed or prepared:

(1) Articles of Agreement by and between The American Legion and The American Legion National Convention Corporation of North Carolina, covering the convocation of the 2014 Convention of The American Legion in the City of Charlotte, State of North Carolina, have been executed.

(2) A Memorandum of Agreement by and between The American Legion and National Veterans Legal Services Program, whereby National Veterans Legal Services will provide consultations, informal training of Department Service Officers, BVA staff and claims/representatives, case work review, briefings on proposed changes in law and regulations and assistance in methods for prompt adjudication of veterans' appeal cases.

(3) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and AdoptaPlatoon (AAP), whereby a link has been established to Operation Crayon referring to AAP which provides morale-lifting mail and care package support to service members deployed overseas.

(4) A Service agreement by and between The American Legion and Powerware Global Services, whereby Powerware Global Services replaces and services the battery in the computer room.

(5) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Data Processing Services, Inc., whereby Data Processing Services will add 15 disc drives to the computer system and create and add drives to the computer system storage capacity.

(6) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Neighborhood E-mail, whereby Neighborhood E-mail will assist in cleaning of in-house data base and E-mail files.

(7) A Service Agreement by and between The American Legion and Fuller Engineering Service Corporation, whereby Fuller Engineering will provide maintenance on the Liebert Equipment in the computer room.

(8) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Dell Marketing L.P., whereby The American Legion will market the Dell Federal Member Computer Discount Purchase Program to its various associations, employees, members and affiliates.

(9) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and KBM (KnowledgeBase Marketing-Mutual of Omaha) for marketing of insurance products for Legion members.

(10) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Norlight Telecommunications, Inc., whereby Norlight Telecommunications, Inc. will provide a dedicated internet port and service of same for The American Legion's computer system.

(11) Housing contract between The American Legion and Marymount University to provide for lodging and food service for American Legion Boys Nation held in July 2011.

(12) A Memorandum of Understanding by and between The American Legion and The United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC), whereby The American Legion will assist the United States Army Recruiting Command to improve the recruiting environment for Army recruiters and USAREC will provide information regarding American Legion activities and special community events to local units, bulletins and newsletters.

(13) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and the James G. Elliott Co., Inc. for integration into the JGECO M-PANEL Services software.

(14) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and ProSidian Consulting, LLC, for research services to assess perceptions of and satisfaction with Women Veterans health care.

(15) A contract by and between The American Legion and Office Max to provide office supplies, office furniture, technology and similar products.

(16) Two (2) List Protection Agreements by and between The American Legion and the following companies have been executed to cover the protection of magnetic tapes used for mass-mailings to the general membership of The American Legion:

Resource One

Association Group Insurance Administrators (AGIA)

(17) A Service Agreement by and between The American Legion and Sigma Micro Corporation for The American Legion's Technical Services Rate Retainer (TSRR) subscription for hardware, operating system and environment support.

(18) A Service Agreement by and between The American Legion and Budget Truck Rental, LLC for truck rental discount program.

(19) Maintenance Agreement by and between The American Legion and Comtech Group for the IBM Software subscription for the AS400 and RS6000 computer software.

(20) Maintenance Agreement by and between The American Legion and Quality Concepts for structural and environmental services (cleaning) at the Fort Ben location.

(21) A Contract by and between The American Legion and Communications Products, Inc. for software upgrade for the existing server running Windows 2000 Server.

(22) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Voice Data Systems, LLC, for Nortel CS1000 Telephone System.

(23) Maintenance and Sales Agreement by and between The American Legion and Ikon Office Solutions, Inc. for equipment maintenance.

(24) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Dydacomp Development Corporation for an updated version of mail order manager software used by Emblem Sales.

(25) A License Agreement by and between The American Legion and RLX Video, Inc. This is the vendor TN Marketing uses to provide their DVD's.

(26) Annual Maintenance agreement by and between The American Legion and Eaton Power Quality Corporation to provide maintenance and perform preventative maintenance checks on the Uninterruptible Power System (UPS) which regulates the power spikes to the AS400 and is the battery backup in case of a power outage.

(27) A License Agreement, by and between The American Legion and Lansa Inc. for software.

(28) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Caremark Pharmacy Discount Prescription for discount prescription program.

(29) A Purchase Agreement by and between The American Legion and Managing Editor, Inc. (MEI) for K4 Publishing System software to be used by the Magazine Division.

(30) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and The Seven Company, LLC, a consulting service to obtain and present sponsorships, marketing agreements and marketing loyalty program agreement for The American Legion.

(31) A Service Agreement by and between The American Legion and Koorsen Fire & Security for fire alarm and detection systems.

(32) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Sears Commercial to promote products provided by Sears Commercial as a discount benefit to Legion members and employees.

(33) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Pitney Bowes Software,Inc. for software products.
(34) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Vanguard Car Rental USA Inc. (Alamo and National), which offers car rental discount programs to Legion members.
(35) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and ASC Data Service which supplies data for four-year colleges for the *Need a Lift* brochure.
(36) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Fundamentals Company, Inc. to provide a fundraising opportunity through the sale of magazine subscriptions for Legion members and their families.
(37) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Bulkley Dunton Publishing Group for the purchase of paper to The American Legion.
(38) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and ProStaff for temporary help during the 2011 national convention.
(39) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Time Warner telephone and data lines services which includes firewall management, internet "pipe," main voice lines, data line to DC office and data line to Fort Ben office.
(40) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Swift Trip, LLC, Legion Family Travel. Discount travel services for Legion members and their families.
(41) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Mid America Marketing Cancer Care Plus Insurance Program, underwritten by Family Heritage Life available to Legion members.
(42) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and WebStream Productions to provide live video webcast streaming of the American Legion World Series Baseball games for 2011.
(43) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Reader's Digest Association to help utilize the DMS Program.
(44) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and AT&T to upgrade the internet services to the Fort Ben facility.
(45) A Service Agreement by and between The American Legion and Brinks for pick-up and delivery services.
(46) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and OfficeMax for discounted office supplies and print and document services for Legion and SAL members.
(47) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and RoadCare Plus for a discount, full-service roadside assistance program for Legion members.
(48) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Honeywell Building Solutions for integrator and/or digital video manager software products.
(49) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and USAA to provide financial products and services to members of the U.S. military and their families.
(50) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Bowe Bell and Howell, the service provider for the cutters in the Fort Ben letter shop.
(51) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Michael Peterson for his CD/DVD developed for The American Legion Family.
(52) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Ski Landscape Ground Maintenance Renewal which provides grounds maintenance and snow removal for the Fort Ben building.

(53) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Mapsys System & Solution to renew the IBM Maintenance Agreement for peripheral equipment attached to the AS400.
(54) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Anchor Software, LLC, software used for mass mailings.
(55) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Travel Leaders provides travel management services and travel reservation fulfillment.

One Hundred-seventeen (117) Subcontractor Standard List Protection Agreements by and between The American Legion and the following companies have been executed to cover the protection of magnetic tapes used for mass mailings to the general membership of The American Legion:

4 Warranty
Aberdeen American News-South Dakota
Able Card, LLC
Acxiom
AEGON Direct Marketing
Analytics IQ. Inc.
ASC (The College Board)
Audit Bureau of Circulations
Avis and Budget Car Rental
Bankers Life & Casualty Company
Beta Graphics
Brickmill Marketing Services
Business Mailing Center
Careington International
Caremark, LLC Confidentiality
CD-COM Systems Midwest, Inc.
CES Mail Communications, Inc.
Colonial Penn Life Insurance Company
Commander Printed Products
Commercial Letter, Inc.
Cooperative Print Solutions
Corporate Express Document & Print Mgmt.
Creative Marketing Concepts
Crell Mail Advertising
Daily Freeman Journal
Datagraphic
Data-Mail, Inc.
Dayton Technologies
DMRA
E H Direct
Edge Direct
Entiera
Epsilon
Equifax Direct Marketing Solutions, LLC
E-Target Media
Fahlgren Mortine
First National Bank of Omaha
Freedom Graphic Systems
Fulfillment Xcellence, Inc.

FXI
G E Financial Assurance
Gallagher Benefit Services
Global Card Services
GMAC
HNE Printers/Daily Reporter
Hutchinson Company
info USA, Inc.
Instant Web, Inc. DBA (IWCO)
International Data Management
Jano Graphics
JH Marketing Services
KDM
Knowledge Base Marketing, GP
Konik and Company
Kramers Mailing Service
Life Line Screening
Lighthouse List Company
Long Term Care Associates, Inc.
LTCR Analytics IQ, Inc.
Magnet Direct
Mail Computer Services Direct
Mail Manager
Mailing Services of Pittsburgh
Mainstreet Media-Kansas
MCS Direct
Media 1, LLC
Merkle, Inc.
Midwest Direct Mailers
Military Advantage
MMP Direct and Printing
Moore Wallace Response Marketing
Morgan Printing, Inc.
Name-Finders List
National General Insurance
Nfocus Consulting, Inc.
North Mail, Inc.
On line Insurance Services, LLC
PacifiCare
Peachtree Data, Inc.
PEP Direct, Inc.
Perma-Graphics, Inc.
PipMail
Print Communications, Inc.
Production Services Associates, LLC
Propco Marketing
PSA
Quadriga Art, Inc.
R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company
Richardson Sports
Ripon Printers
River's Edge Printing

SB MailWorks
SCI Management, LLP
Signature Offset
SIRVA Affinity Group Services
Specialty Print Communications
Stephens Direct
Strategic Marketing and Mailing
The Mailing House
The Heritage Company
The Hertz Corporation
The Willow Group
TN Marketing
Torrington Telegram-Wyoming
TransAmerica Affinity Services, Inc.
Transcom
TransContinental Direct
True North Companies
US Monitor
Valley Printworks
Ventura Printing
VERTIS
Veterans Online, LLC
Virtual DBS
Weider History Group
Wiland Direct
Wilson Sporting Goods Co.

Litigation

IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

LORI & LYNN BARNES-WALLACE; MITCHELL BARNES-WALLACE; MICHAEL & VALERIE BREEN; MAXWELL BREEN,

Plaintiffs-Appellants/ Cross-Appellees,

Record Nos. 04-55732, 04-56167 XAP

v.

CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Defendant,

and

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA AND BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA-DESERT PACIFIC COUNCIL,

Defendants-Appellees/
Cross-Appellants

This case arose when an agnostic couple and a gay couple sued the city of San Diego because of the Boy Scout's lease of Balboa Park for a campground and the swimming pool. The Plaintiffs claim the Boy Scouts are a religious organization because they require a belief in god and claim they were discriminatory because they did not allow gays to participate as leaders.

The Federal Court in San Diego essentially ruled in favor of the plaintiffs.

For an agnostic to claim religious discrimination against an organization that requires a belief in God does not make too much sense. An agnostic is an individual who doesn't "know" whether or not there is a God. This is different from an atheist who denies the existence of God. Hence, The American Legion believes that these plaintiffs should have been dismissed for lack of standing.

In addition, the gay couple never attempted to use the facilities or send their adopted child to use the facilities. They stated to the court that they "felt" that they would not be welcome. Feelings are not sufficient for Federal Jurisdiction.

After the courts ruling, the Boy Scouts appealed, as did the plaintiffs. Indeed, the plaintiffs got their appeal filed first.

Because the court totally misconstrues the case as a case about establishment of religion, when it is really a case about freedom of association and because it is a case about the basic values of this country, The American Legion has filed an amicus curiae in support of the Boy Scouts.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

THE REV. DR. MICHAEL A.
NEWDOW, et al.,
Plaintiff,

v. NO. CIV. S-05-17 LKK/DAD

THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA, et al.,
Defendants.

This case is a continuation of the earlier Newdow flag case which was resolved in the Supreme Court by a ruling that the plaintiff had no standing to bring the case.

Now, the plaintiff has had additional parties join him and has renewed his attack on the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The district court for the Eastern District of California on September 14, 2005 ruled that the California law requiring the saying of the Pledge of Allegiance in classrooms was unconstitutional, even though the usual accommodations were present in the statute for those who did not believe they could say the pledge. The court felt it was controlled by earlier Ninth Circuit opinions. The court further ruled that the saying of the pledge at the city counsel or in the U.S. Congress was constitutional.

American Legion intervened as an amicus curiae. It seems clear that now that Newdow has plaintiffs that don't have his standing problems, since they are the custodial

parents of the children for whom they are suing, the matter will again be heard by the Ninth Circuit and ultimately, hopefully, the Supreme Court.

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTY OF SCHUYLKILL

Daniel Jeffrey Steich

Plaintiff S-2371-2005

v.

THE AMERICAN LEGION
POST NO. 575, ET AL

Defendants

The case was filed in Pennsylvania by filing a Praecipe for Summons and Summons.

Under Pennsylvania law, a complaint need not be filed for several years unless the defendant insists. We see no reason to start spending the money. Accordingly, we are keeping an eye on the case. It cannot go forward until the plaintiff does file his complaint. The court has sent notice it intends to terminate this case unless a party fills out a Statement of Intention to Proceed before October 1, 2008. Despite this, the case is still pending.

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA AND FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

Philip K. Paulson,

Petitioner Case No. GC 849667

v.

Charles Abdelnour, in his
Official capacity as the City
Clerk of the City of San Diego;
Mikal Haas, In his Official
Capacity as Registrar
of Voters for the County
of San Diego;
And Does 1 to 10, Inclusive,

Respondents

This case involves the Mount Soledad War Memorial which contains a cross. Plaintiffs have sued in an attempt to have the cross removed and destroyed. A judge ordered the cross removed or the city would pay penalties of five thousand dollars ($5,000) per day. The matter is currently both in the Federal courts and in the California Supreme Court. American Legion was instrumental in obtaining a stay of the penalty order in the US Supreme Court. American Legion has filed its amicus brief in conjunction with the Department of California in the California Supreme Court. The

United States Congress has enacted and president signed a statute which would turn the memorial over to the federal government. Hopefully, this will put an end to the state litigation. Nonetheless, we will proceed until we know the veteran's memorial is secure. A Federal Judge ruled the cross did not violate the constitution. The plaintiffs have appealed. We are assisting in opposing the appeal.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI
EASTERN DIVISION

PAUL ASHBY, GERRY WHITEHEAD
AND JESSICA PIGG WHITEHEAD

VERSUS NO. 1:7CV248-M-D

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF MISSISSIPPI
AND AMERICAN LEGION POST 130

This is a discrimination case based upon the fact that the best man at a wedding reception, during or after the reception, walked into the Post bar of Post No. 130 in Mississippi to order a drink. He objects to waiting fifteen minutes to be served and to the fact that the barmaid would not put his change in his hand, but placed it on the counter.

Plaintiff's lawyer sent a demand to The American Legion requesting The American Legion to waive Service of Process. A response was returned refusing to waive Service of Process citing the cases that show The American Legion is not responsible and giving the plaintiff's attorney a Summary History of The American Legion's position on race relations. Despite the case law showing that The American Legion is not responsible, plaintiff's attorney elected to serve The American Legion.

The insurance company denied coverage and an attorney was obtained. We have filed numerous motions and will be filing a motion for Summary Judgment. The only claim against The American Legion is that it "condoned" discrimination. This makes no sense and is not a tort known to attorneys. Just before trial, the judge granted Summary Judgment for The American Legion. The case is over.

IN THE
SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

PLEASANT GROVE CITY,
Petitioner,

v.

SUMMUM,
Respondent.
On Writ of Certiorari To The United States
Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit

These cases involve the right of private parties to place memorials disparaging veterans on city property merely because there is a private memorial on city property honoring veterans. The 10th Circuit ruled that Sumum, the plaintiff, had the right to place his memorial on the property of the city of Pleasant Grove and Duchan City. This, of

course, would have a chilling effect on the placement on veteran's memorials. The American Legion agreed to become an amicus curiae and was joined by the VFW and The Military Order of the Purple Heart, Commissioned Officers Association of the US, The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc., Veterans Coalition and The Americans Ex Prisoners of War. The American Legion filed a brief as did the other amici. The Supreme Court reversed saying monuments on public property are government speech and not subject to scrutiny under the Free Speech Clause.

NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY OF THE ECUADORIAN INSTITUTE OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Opposer,

v.

CIGNAL INTERNATIONAL CORP.,
Applicant

Request no. 192064/07
Trademark: AMERICAN LEGION
Published in the Intellectual Property Gazette No. 514 of November 2007

This is a matter in Ecuador in which The American Legion is imposing the attempt of Cignal International Corp. to register the emblem of The American Legion as one of its trademarks. We believe that, should Cignal be successful, it will flood the US with a lot of cheap merchandise bearing the emblem of The American Legion. Accordingly, opposition to their application has been filed in Ecuador. The Cignal application was dismissed in Ecuador.

We are in the process of filing a similar opposition in Panama to get an approved registration in that country cancelled. The court ruled in favor of The American Legion.

SUPERIOR COURT OF NEW JERSEY
MERCER COUNTY-LAW DIVISION

DANIELLE M. ESTEVEZ AND
CARLOS ESTEVEZ
Plaintiff

vs.

Docket No. MER-L-000713-08

SANDRA I. STEWART-DAVIS,
CHARLES T. DAVIS, AMERICAN LEGION,
XYZ CORPORATION (a fictitious company),
John Does and Jane Does (a fictitious designation
representing one or more person)
Defendant

This is, apparently, a dram shop case. The complaint is so poorly drafted that we do not know for sure. It merely alleges that The American Legion is responsible for an unnamed Post who allowed one of the defendants to drink there. There are a number of allegations of carelessness, recklessness and negligence, but no facts.

The case was originally served against the American Legion National Auxiliary on July 9, 2008. Noting that The American Legion was also named, the National Organization of The American Legion waited for service. When it did not come, further investigation revealed that service had been made on the agent for the service of process on April 14, 2008. On learning of this detail, counsel was obtained and an answer filed to

avoid default. The matter has been referred to the insurance company, but we have no decision from them yet.

In any event, we have recommended that our attorney be used by the insurance company since he has an outstanding record of representation for The American Legion. He has won sixteen cases with no losses.

On his own motion, trial counsel suggested that he contact plaintiff's attorney to see if the complaint would be dismissed, based on the Urban case, since there is no liability in the National Organization and plaintiffs apparently do not even know if there was consumption of alcohol at a Legion Post or if there was, which post. This has been accomplished and the case is closed.

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
BUCKS COUNTY

EVEANN BURCOSKY And EVEANN BURCOSKY, Administratrix of the Estate of Michael Burcosky, Deceased And ADAM BURCOSKY, minor, by and through his parent and natural guardian, EVEANN BURCOSKY And JOHN BURCOSKY, minor, by and through his parent and natural guardian, EVEANN BURCOSKY And AMERICAN LEGION POST 834 And THE AMERICAN LEGION	COURT OF COMMON PLEAS BUCKS COUNTY NO. 0902835-34-2

This is a dram shop case filed in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. The plaintiff claims The American Legion served alcohol and is responsible for the actions of the Post club.

The insurance company is defending us and the case is being strongly opposed. The Post attorney filed an answer on behalf of National which had to be removed from the record before we could file our answer. This has been accomplished.

The National Organization has been dismissed without prejudice.

No. 08-472

In The
SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

KEN SALAZAR, Secretary of the Interior, *et al.,*

Petitioners,

v.

FRANK BUONO,

Respondent.

On Writ of Certiorari To The
United States Court of Appeals
For The Ninth Circuit

This case involves the Mojave Cross. The United States government sold the property to an American Legion Post to maintain this monument to World War I veterans. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and the district courts of the government could not transfer an acre of property if the cross had to be destroyed. The government has appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. The American Legion has joined as an amicus on the side of the government.

The plaintiff is a former forest service worker. The Mojave Cross is miles from a main artery and can only be found if one looks for it. Hence, the case is another one of those where the ACLU and its minions are seeking attorney's fees from the federal government for saving the country from the danger of a cross on private property. The court adopted our concepts and sent the case back, saying Congress could transfer the property. Then the cross was destroyed by "vandals." A reward has been offered.

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF MARYLAND

ALBERT SNYDER,
Plaintiff

Civil Action No. 06-CV-1389 RDB

v.

FRED W. PHELPS, SR.,
JOHN DOEs, JANE DOESs, and
WESTBORO BAPTIST CHURCH, INC.
Defendants

This case began when the father of a Marine sued Fred Phelps and the Westboro Baptist Church for picketing and doing their best to disrupt the funeral of his son, a United States Marine who was killed in action. The suit involved claims for intentional infliction of emotional distress.

The plaintiffs won in the district court, but the Fourth Circuit reversed and ordered the plaintiffs to pay $16,500.00 because of a "frivolous appeal?"

The American Legion immediately started an effort to raise the money to pay this outrageous charge and join the case as an amicus. A newscaster actually raised the money, so the over $18,000.00 raised by The American Legion has been set aside to cover the costs of going to the Supreme Court. The ACLU and a number of law schools are opposed saying the protest that attempted to disrupt the funeral was perfectly proper.

The Supreme Court ruled against Albert Snyder and upheld the Fourth Circuit.

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

DAVID L. HENDERSON
Petitioner,
No. 09-1036
v.

ERIC K. SHINSEKI,
Secretary of Veterans Affairs,
Respondent,

This case involves a veteran with 100% service connected disability rating who is challenging the Federal Circuit Court's decision that the deadline to seek judicial review of a VA denial of disability benefits is jurisdictional and may not be extended under the doctrine of equitable tolling. The plaintiff missed the deadline by 15 days because he was bedridden suffering from the very mental and physical disability for which he sought benefits. This decision has already led to the dismissal of hundreds of claims and thus is immensely important to veterans seeking benefits for disabilities resulting from their service to the country.

The American Legion filed a brief in support of Henderson to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court ruled in his favor

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF CLEVELAND COUNTY
STATE OF OKLAHOMA

PHILLIP BOATNER,
Plaintiff,

vs.

BOBBY J. LONGENBAUGH, Individually; DAVID KELLERMAN, Individually/ THE AMERICAN LEGION, a body corporate; and THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF OKLAHOMA, a distinct corporate department,
defendants,

Case No. CV-2010-371-L

This is a case in Oklahoma concerning an individual who allegedly double dipped on expense accounts. He was fired from his state job and expelled from the Legion by the Department Executive Committee since he was a past Department Commander and thus a member of the executive committee. The citation is Article I, Section 8 of the National By-laws, second sentence.

The complaint makes absolutely no charges against The American Legion. Accordingly, we have suggested strongly that plaintiffs counsel that The American Legion be dismissed. The plaintiff keeps trying to insist on conditions that go beyond the National Constitution and By-laws of The American Legion. Plaintiff's attorney has been told that if these conditions are desired he should put them in the court order on the Department, if and when he obtains same. As for the National Organization, we will only agree to comply with the National Constitution and By-laws and reinstate or otherwise

handle the membership of a former member when appropriately notified by the Department.

The National Organization has been dismissed without prejudice.

STATE OF MINNESOTA DISTRICT COURT

COUNTY OF RAMSEY SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT
Type of Case: Breach of Contract

Brian Tesar,

Plaintiff

vs.

The American Legion, and its
subdivisions, The American Legion,
Department of Minnesota, Tri City
American Legion Post 513

This is a claim for alleged unpaid wages by a former employee at Minnesota Post No. 513.

The plaintiff resigned and claimed that the post had not paid him for all hours worked.

Plaintiff's lawyer sent a demand letter, but did not file the complaint. After being advised of the law and still refusing to drop the demand against the national organization, The American Legion advised plaintiff's lawyer it would seek sanctions. Plaintiff still refused despite the clear law of the state that The American Legion was not responsible for posts.

Accordingly, The American Legion filed the documents and is proceeding with the sanctions process.

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
HOUSTON DIVISION

SCOTT RAINEY, THE VETERANS OF
FOREIGN WARS DISTRICT 4, THE
AMERICAN LEGION POST 586, and
THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL LADIES
Plaintiffs,

Civil Action No. 4:11-ev-01992
Jury Demanded

vs.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS and ARLEEN
OCASIO, in her individual capacity,

Defendants.

The Veterans Administration Houston Cemetery has been following a November 1, 2007 memo from the undersecretary for memorial affairs, authorizing prior restraint over speech and religion in burial ceremonies.

An injunction was granted allowing the Memorial Day services. American Legion Post No. 586 among others has challenged this policy. The American Legion has filed an amicus brief in support of the post.

JAMES BROWN, SUPERIOR COURT OF
NEW JERSEY
Plaintiff, GLOUCESTER COUNTY
LAW DIVISION

vs.

DOCKET No. GLO-L-1070-10

AMERICAN LEGION THEODORE
ROOSEVELT POST #4; AMERICAN LEGION;
TANYA PARKER; JOHN DOES 1-5; MARY
DOES 1-5; ABC PARTNERSHIPS 1-5 and XYZ *COMPLAINT AND DEMAND*
CORPORATIONS 1-5, individually, jointly, *FOR JURY TRIAL*
severally and in the alternative,

Defendants.

This is a case arising from a shooting at a sweet sixteen party held at Post No. 4, New Jersey.

Plaintiff claims The American Legion did not have proper security or exercise proper care. Plaintiff's lawyer has ignored the law that The American Legion is not liable for actions of the post and did not serve The American Legion until a year had passed from the filing of the complaint.

The American Legion will seek Summary Judgment and, if possible sanctions.

OTHER LEGAL MATTERS

There are a number of other legal proceedings in which The American Legion has been contacted for discovery purposes, which are not part of or named in the particular cause and a number of cases are in the beginning stages but not yet filed.

The National Judge Advocate has rendered 1,188 written opinions on questions which have been submitted by the several Departments and/or Posts of The American Legion, National Officers, staff members and individual members of our organization. These opinions involved matters legal, such as contracts, probate matters, federal tax questions, torts, insurance matters, Articles of Incorporation, civil rights statutes, retirement benefits under the law and other matters of a legal nature; problems concerning the interpretation and construction of the National Constitution and By-Laws of The American Legion, policy matters, many of which matters required a great deal of legal research.

In each instance, when appropriate, a copy of the opinion rendered was furnished to each of the following so that they would be acquainted with the decision affecting their Department; National Executive Committeeman, Department Commander, Department Adjutant, and the Department Judge Advocate of the Department involved.

Many oral opinions were also rendered to the National Officers, National Commission Chairmen, to Department Officers, and to staff Directors of the national organization upon subjects involving matters legal, financial, administrative and policy.

There were 32 written opinions rendered during the year to the National Secretary of the American Legion Auxiliary, in response to queries submitted to her for determination by me.

The National Judge Advocate has also rendered oral advice on matters legal and administrative to the National Officers of the American Legion Auxiliary on many occasions during the past year.

THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE

The National Judge Advocate in accordance with established policy, has reviewed all manuscripts of articles destined for future publication in The American Legion Magazine and The Dispatch, for the purpose of expunging statements or materials questionable in character, contained therein which might subject The American Legion to a suit in libel. To date 167 manuscripts have been reviewed and appropriate comments in connection therewith were transmitted, when necessary, to the Publisher or Editor of The American Legion Magazine.

THE AMERICAN LEGION RETIREMENT PLAN FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS AND SUBORDINATE GROUPS THEREOF

In accordance with the requirements of law, The American Legion has filed all necessary returns, reports and allied documents for the calendar year 2010 with the Internal Revenue Service in connection with The American Legion Retirement Plan. The office of the National Judge Advocate also reviewed the Summary Annual Report for The American Legion Retirement Plan and arranged for the distribution thereof as required by law.

EMPLOYEES' SALARY SAVINGS (401(K)) PLAN

In accordance with the provisions of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) The American Legion has filed all of the necessary Annual Return

Reports and allied documents for the calendar year 2010 with the Internal Revenue Service in connection with the American Legion Employees' Salary Savings 401(k) Plan. The office of the National Judge Advocate also reviewed the Summary Annual Report for the Employees' Salary Savings Plan and arranged for the distribution thereof as required by law.

PARLIAMENTARY DUTIES

The National Judge Advocate attended the past National Convention of The American Legion and all meetings of the National Executive Committee and has served both bodies in the capacity of National Parliamentarian.

OTHER DUTIES

The National Judge Advocate also functions as counsel on matters involving labor issues, real estate law, postal regulations, corporate organizations and insurance.

In addition, the National Judge Advocate functions as counsel for and a director of The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. In that capacity, the National Judge Advocate attends board meetings. The Office of the National Judge Advocate files required charitable registrations and reports to allow the American Legion National Organization to solicit funds in the states with charitable solicitation registration laws. To date, 18 registrations and reports have been filed. Others will be filed as due. Some counties even attempt to require registrations and reports.

MEETINGS OF THE NATIONAL RETIREMENT COMMITTEE AND SALARY SAVINGS COMMITTEE

The National Judge Advocate, a member of The National Retirement Committee of National Headquarters, The American Legion, and Chairman of the Employee's Salary Savings Committee, has attended and participated in the meetings held by these committees during the past year.

I have also, in response to requests, drafted legal and other documents for the use of National Officers of the American Legion and Officers of the American Legion Auxiliary. During the past year I have met with and attended numerous conferences with officials of outside corporations and the government for the purpose of representation or for the rendering of advice and guidance for and on behalf of The American Legion on matters legal and administrative.

In conclusion, the National Judge Advocate wishes to thank all National Officers, Department Officials, and members of the National Executive Committee for the valuable assistance and cooperation extended to him during the past year.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
Marty Justis, Maryland, Executive Director

The major responsibilities assigned to the executive director of The American Legion National Headquarters in Indianapolis are:

Acting for the national adjutant during his absence from the National Headquarters. Performing duties assigned by the national adjutant.

Overseeing *The American Legion Magazine* and Administrative Services, which includes the following divisions: Human Resources, Maintenance, The American Legion Library, and the E. A. Blackmore Museum.

Serving on the Personnel Committee, the Corporate Relationships Committee, the IT Committee, and various other committees as assigned.

The Administrative Services Division provides all secretarial assistance to the executive offices of The American Legion. All division directors resident at the Indianapolis National Headquarters report to the executive director.

Mail
June 1, 2010 through May 31, 2011

Incoming Letters and parcels (distributed to Divisions for processing)	1,014,180
Incoming Parcels	3,353
Outgoing Letters/Parcels (Exclusive of National Emblem Sales)	9,675,527

Freight and Express
June 1, 2010 through May 31, 2011

Out — Cartons	3,156
Out — Pounds	128,141
UPS — In	2,058
UPS — Out	5,702

Library and Museum
Howard Trace, Director, Library and Museum

The mission of The American Legion Library is to provide an information storage and retrieval system for The American Legion. Indexing of documents continues, and internal and external materials are added to the collection regularly.

Work continues on the organization of digital materials, and staff testing of the digital archive has begun. Material to be included in the initial public launch of the digital archive will include 10 years of resolutions, five years of digests, three years of press releases, four years of the *Dispatch,* and five years of the VA&R Bulletin. Over 1,000 resolutions have been rescinded this year and the total number of active resolutions is down to approximately 4,500. The remaining resolutions will be reviewed in the coming year, with the goal to have the full text of all active resolution included in the digital archive.

During the summer of 2011 conservators from the Indianapolis Museum of Art conducted treatment on the painting *America*. The work was all conducted on-site at national headquarters. The treatment included removing the varnish layer from the surface of the painting; some inpainting was completed; the attachment of the painting to the stretcher was strengthened; and the painting was given a new varnish layer. This treatment did not only restore the painting to its original beauty, but will provide protection for twenty-five to fifty years. This work has been on display in the meeting room of the National Executive Committee for almost 90 years and will continue to represent the service and sacrifice of the first generation of Legionnaires.

A number of researchers made extensive visits to the Library. Areas of research involved Americanism education; un-American activities; immigration; the League of Nations; and war trophies.

Bulletins, Reports, etc. Received and Filed	5,346
Books, Pamphlets and *The American Legion Magazine* cataloged	405
Correspondence Written by National Historian	485
Correspondence Written by the Librarian	1,578
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Mailed	871
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Received	444
Follow-ups of Correspondence	45

Significant Gifts to the National Headquarters Library

Donated by Fredyson Seda: "Soldados del 5to de Caballeria entrando a San German, P.R. 1898" photo

Donated by Betty J. Otto-Kretzer: National Convention photographs from the Page T. Otto Collection

Donated by Ethan Anderson: *War Flags Into Peace Flags: The Return of Captured Mexican Battle Flags During the Truman Administration*

Donated by Stephen A. Banks: *Doing My Duty: Corporal Elmer Dewey — One National Guard Doughboy's Experiences During The Pancho Villa Punitive Campaign And World War I*

Donated by Byron Dickson: *The National D-Day memorial — Evolution of an Idea*

Donated by Paige Rudisill: *The Great Events of the Great War, Volume I: Causes*

Donated by Marshall Hesler: Souvenir book and slides from the 1927 Paris Convention

Donated by Leone Ernestine Hein Weller: 1932 Sheet music, "Come on You Legionnaires", three photos of Madame Ernestine Shumann-Heink, and two concert programs

Donated by Connie Lamm: *Touched By So Many*

Donated by Art Rawers: Articles from the *Chicago-Herald American*

Donated by William F. Harvey, Sr.: Daily Bulletin from the 1921 National Convention

Donated and written by William Koch, Jr.: *Casualties of War*

The following books were donated by The National Association of Department Historians of The American Legion (NADHAL): *An Inning at a Time: An American Legion Baseball National Championship Story; Nimitz; War Since 1900; Historical Dictionary of the Korean War*

Significant Gifts to the National Headquarters Museum

Donated by Charles J. Dickson: Operation Iraqi Freedom pants, blouse and PC cap

Donated by Vivienne Geiger Hildebrand: PNC John H. Geiger framed portraits

Donated by Betty J. Otto-Kretzer: Photographs taken during the National Conventions, 1992, 1994 and 2003 with convention badges

Donated by Emile Bouvet: Convention medals and buttons of Mr. Cliff Butler

Donated by John M. Mella: Japanese bayonet

Donated by Audrey E. Streedain: Twentieth National Convention registration coupon book – 1938

Donated by PNC Robert Spanogle: Replicas of the Four Pillars from the Department of Wisconsin

Donated by James Buchanan, NSB Ellis: Photo album and photo CD of the 500 Festival Memorial Service; Spirit of America Flag

Donated by Nick Del Calzo and the Department of Colorado: *In Honored Glory* Poster Series

Donated by Cheryl Young: World War I poster *"For the Love of Freedom"*, copyright 1917 by MA Stern, Chicago, artist, Ezio Anichini-Firenze

Donated by Thomas K. Kooreman: WWII artifacts, Japanese flags, armbands, shoulder sleeve insignia and belt buckles

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) DIVISION
Jeffrey O. Brown, Indiana, Executive Director

The Information Technology (IT) Division Staff play a key role in the selection of all software to be used by National Headquarters staff. IT also determines and procures the hardware to be used by employees of National Headquarters and is responsible for troubleshooting and maintaining the equipment. The IT Division maintains the telecommunications that inter-connect the two Indianapolis, Indiana offices with our facility in Washington, D.C.

IT is responsible for the computer system which houses The American Legion National Headquarters membership database as well as keeping this database updated with changes to the membership - whether it is adding new members, renewing existing members, changing addresses of members or changing any other membership information. Much of this work is accomplished using a high-speed optical scanner, capable of processing in excess of 100,000 responses a day.

In conjunction with the membership database capabilities, The American Legion has invested in sophisticated list processing software, which the IT Division administers. This

software ensures that all mailings are done at the lowest cost by complying with U.S. Postal Service guidelines.

A Post and Department membership tracking software (AIM) is also supported by the IT Division, along with the in-house developed MyLegion.org product, which allows Department and Post leaders to access the National Membership database and to perform certain maintenance functions. This also provides a social networking forum for members who choose to subscribe to this online product.

AMERICANISM COMMISSION
Joseph E. Caouette, New Hampshire, Chairman
Jill Druskis, Nebraska, Director

The Americanism Commission of The American Legion was created by a recommendation adopted by the National Convention of The American Legion held in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1919. It read: "We recommend the establishment of a National Americanism Commission of The American Legion whose duty it shall be to endeavor to realize in the United States the basic ideal of this Legion of 100 percent Americanism through the planning, establishment and conduct of a continuous, constructive educational system."

It is the objective of the Americanism Commission to translate Americanism precepts, principles and ideals in an understanding and practical manner to Legion posts and other groups and individuals, including young Americans.

While the Americanism program consists of a broad, objective, general plan that features wide-range community service, better citizenship, youth development and counter-subversive activities, the efforts of the Americanism Commission are educational in nature and embrace these specific objectives:

- Promote understanding of the principles of democratic governmental problems, and bringing more citizens to think seriously of the duties of citizenship;
- Give sound, practical service in our communities, working to make these communities better and safer places in which to live;
- Emphasize religion, encouraging its continuation in the life of every citizen;
- Encourage education in every possible manner, presenting school awards, sponsoring and conducting oratorical contests, cooperating with education and citizenship groups, promoting proper flag etiquette and display, and sponsoring objective youth development programs;
- Do important work for the youth of America, sponsoring American Legion Baseball, American Legion High School Oratorical Contest, American Legion Boys State, American Legion Boys Nation, American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program, American Legion Junior Law Cadet Program, Boy Scouts of America activities, and many other citizenship and objective training activities;
- Work for the assimilation of immigrants through schools of citizenship and other agencies and stand for the restriction of immigration so that this assimilation may approach perfection; and
- Combat subversive and terrorist activities, all un-American groups and activities which have for their aim the downfall of democracy in America.

Additionally, the Americanism Commission has continued to be actively involved in legislative matters affecting our way of life. Among our legislative priorities are illegal entry of aliens into this country, voluntary prayer in public buildings, bilingual education alternatives and English as the official language of the United States. Two current major legislative initiatives of The American Legion are 1) the continuing efforts to effect a constitutional amendment that would give Congress the authority to enact flag protection

laws, and 2) coordinating a nationwide effort to combat the secular cleansing of our American heritage through Establishment clause lawsuits.

This Commission has the responsibility for supervision and coordination of two standing committees: The Counter-Subversive Activities Committee and the National Committee on Education.

Following is a summary of several programs, which are the responsibility of the Americanism Commission and have been conducted during the 2010-2011 American Legion year.

American Legion Boys State/Boys Nation

The American Legion believes that if the United States is to maintain its form of government, it must have a citizenry that has a fundamental understanding and interest in its operation. This is what The American Legion Boys State program does for the young men of our nation. It teaches the fundamentals of American government through the state level.

It was 76 years ago that Legionnaires in the state of Illinois first recognized the need for a program that would help high school boys understand and appreciate the government they were learning about in the classroom. It was a time in the history of this nation when un-American ideas seriously threatened its future. Established in 1935, the whole idea of American Legion Boys State, then and now, is to show young people that beyond a doubt, our form of government is good; but its preservation depends upon intelligent, informed and loyal citizens in combination with an honest and impartial administration of government activities.

Ten years after the inception of Boys State as a program of The American Legion, the National Organization recognized the need for a similar program at the national level and in 1946, established American Legion Boys Nation. This year, it celebrated its 65th anniversary session.

Both Boys State and Boys Nation are unique programs of The American Legion that emphasize participation and personal experience in a respective model "state" and "nation" that is complete with its governing bodies and elected officials.

Each year nearly 20,000 young Americans take part in American Legion Boys State, and throughout its 76-year history, the program has graduated well over 1,800,000 young men.

Every year, each Boys State selects two outstanding graduates to represent them at American Legion Boys Nation. In 2011 the program was again held in Washington, D.C. during July, and it introduced delegates first-hand to the structure and function of the federal government.

The week of government training in the Nation's Capital combines lectures and forums with visitations to federal agencies and institutions, shrines and historical points in and about Washington, D.C. Actual participation in the political process is highlighted through the week to include the organization of party conventions and the nomination and election of an American Legion Boys Nation president and vice president. In addition to federal legislators and representatives of federal agencies, American Legion officials and other leaders of national distinction participate in American Legion Boys Nation. Michael Herbert of Arvada, Colorado was elected President and Benjamin Attia of Hockessin, Delaware was elected Vice President of the 65th anniversary session of American Legion Boys Nation.

High School Oratorical Contest

The American Legion has awarded over three million dollars in college scholarships since 1938 to high school students participating in its annual High School Oratorical Contest.

Each contestant must give a prepared oration on some phase of the United States Constitution, giving emphasis on the duties and obligations of a citizen to our government. The prepared oration must be the original effort of each contestant, taking not less than eight and not more than ten minutes for delivery. Each contestant must also give an assigned topic presentation on a constitutional topic (randomly selected during the contest from the four topics for the contest year) taking not less than three or more than five minutes for delivery.

Funds totaling $138,000 in college scholarships are available to the fifty-four national level contestants, with the winner receiving an $18,000 scholarship. Funds for these awards are provided by The American Legion. In addition to the scholarships awarded by the National Organization, there are scholarships awarded by intermediate organizations of The American Legion to participants in local levels of competition.

The 74th Annual National Oratorical Finals Contest was held at Indianapolis, Indiana, in April 2011. The three finalists were: First place – Anisha Gururaj, Chesterfield, Missouri; second place – Grace Pyo, Powell, Ohio; third place – Anastasia Kaiser, Orinda, California.

The American Legion entered into a relationship with the National Forensic League (NFL) of Rippon, Wisconsin to further publicize and promote the oratorical contest among the NFL's more than 3,500 member schools and its 112,000 student members.

Boy Scouts of America

The American Legion charters 2,659 Scout Units in communities across the country involving 69,490 young people. Its commitment to the principles of Scouting dates back to the Legion's first National Convention in 1919.

The American Legion continues to support the Boy Scouts of America because of its unique ability to provide opportunities to young people for leadership training, peer fellowship, life skills development, and community service.

The American Legion selected Robert Rasmussen of Hutchinson, Minnesota, as its 2011 Eagle Scout of the Year. Selection was based on his outstanding religious, school, community and scouting achievements. He will receive a $10,000 scholarship from The American Legion.

Three Eagle Scouts were named runners-up for the award and each will receive a $2,500 scholarship. They are Bradley Garr, Scottsdale, Arizona; John Caldwell, Thousand Oaks, California; and Baylor Dickerson, Ashland, Virginia.

In addition, an estimated 8,000 certificates honoring new Eagle Scout recipients are distributed annually.

Almost 470 American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion members have received The American Legion and Scouting Square Knot award to recognize their dedication and work to assist in furthering the Scouting programs of The American Legion.

Junior Shooting Sports Program

The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program is a national Americanism program administered through post-sponsored Junior Shooting Clubs. The purpose of the program is to provide gun safety and marksmanship training for young people and to offer a wholesome recreational activity through organized competition. The Junior Shooting Sports Program has 1,128 active clubs with almost 15,000 young people participating annually.

The 21st Annual Junior Air Rifle National Championship was conducted August 2-7, 2011 at the USA Shooting range facility on the campus of the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The tournament climaxed two rounds of postal matches which began shortly after the first of the year and involved 1,468 entrants.

The competition was divided into two categories: precision air rifle and sporter air rifle. Medals and plaques were awarded in both categories, as well as in each of the prone, kneeling and standing positions.

The 2011 winners were Daniel Lowe of Olympia, Washington (Precision) and Mitchell Van Patten from Meridian, Idaho (Sporter). Both received $2,500 scholarships provided by the Sons of The American Legion.

Eight and Forty National Lung and Respiratory Disease Nursing Scholarship Fund

The American Legion administers the Eight and Forty National Lung and Respiratory Disease Nursing Scholarship. This scholarship was created to assist Registered Nurses in securing advanced preparation for those positions in supervision, administration or teaching. These prospective positions must have a direct relationship in the areas of care and prevention as it relates to lung and respiratory diseases. The Eight and Forty, for 2011-2012, awarded ten $5,000 scholarships to recipients in ten states to assist in furthering their education. This brings their cumulative total for the past 51 years to 873 scholarships, totaling over $1.6 million to help eliminate personnel shortages in this important area of nursing. This scholarship program will again be offered for the 2012-2013 school year.

Flag Education

The American Legion is a nationally recognized authority on the proper display of the United States Flag. Each year, thousands of letters, phone calls, and electronic mail messages are routinely answered giving factual information on the display, use of and respect for the American Flag.

The American Legion continues distribution and sale of "For Which It Stands", a multimedia instructional resource about the history of the flag of the United States, the significance and meaning of our flag, and respecting and caring for our flag. It is intended primarily for use with students in the upper elementary and middle/junior high school grades. Over 17,000 copies of the DVD have been sold since its debut in early 2005.

Additionally, over 65,000 copies of the publication *Let's Be Right on Flag Etiquette* and more than 100,000 copies of the pamphlet, *Flag of the United States -- How to Display It, How to Respect It* are distributed annually to schools, organizations and individuals. This information is sent at little or no cost to all who request it.

The American Legion continues publication of *Our Country's Flag*, an educational comic book for use in elementary schools. Well over one million copies have been distributed since the booklet was introduced in 1988. The educational booklet, *I Pledge Allegiance*, published in May 1995, is also for use in elementary schools. *Our Country's Veterans* was added to The American Legion's list of educational publications in 2005.

The American Legion continues its campaign to protect the United States Flag from physical desecration. All 50 state legislatures have passed memorializing resolutions in support of a constitutional amendment to give Congress the authority to enact flag protection laws. Working with other organizations of The American Legion-founded Citizens Flag Alliance, The American Legion shepherded a flag protection Constitutional amendment through the House of Representatives six times in the past seven Congresses. In June of 2006, The American Legion spearheaded the drive for the amendment in the U.S. Senate, coming within one vote of passage there. The legislation has been introduced in the 112th Congress.

Service to God and Country

A program of fundamental Americanism, "Service to God and Country," seeks to prevent the spiritual decay of America by charging the electorate with a spirit of

unquestionable Americanism, respect for law, reverence for authority and awareness of our human rights and freedoms.

"Service to God" emphasizes regular public worship, daily family prayer and the religious education of children, while "Service to Country" attempts to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and Nation. These objectives are aimed at preparing young Americans to take up tomorrow's responsibilities by teaching them moral and spiritual values, renewed interest in our Country's history, self-discipline, self-reliance, ideals of loyalty and honesty.

Each year, a conference for the department chaplains of The American Legion is held under the direction of its National Chaplain. Program information is provided for further dissemination to district and post chaplains who coordinate the program at the local level.

American Legion Baseball

American Legion Baseball marks its 86th season in 2011. Almost 82,000 players on 4,544 teams participated in this American Legion Americanism youth activity during the past year. The 2010 George W. Rulon American Legion Baseball Player of the Year is Brandon Drozd, from Genoa, Nebraska. Brandon is attending the University of Nebraska-Kearney.

The inaugural permanent site of The American Legion Baseball World Series was held August 12-16, 2011 in Shelby, North Carolina, on Veterans Field at Keeter Stadium and was hosted by American Legion Post 82. All games were live webcast on ESPN3.com.

More than seven million dollars in sponsorship fees are spent on American Legion Baseball teams by the local posts. One million dollars is appropriated by The American Legion National Organization to conduct eight regional tournaments and the World Series of American Legion Baseball.

Many American Legion players have gone on to distinguish themselves in Major League Baseball and have been honored with election to the Hall of Fame. Fifty-five Hall of Fame members played American Legion Baseball, including Bert Blyleven and Sandy Alomar, who were elected to the Hall of Fame in 2011. Sadly this past year we lost four Baseball Hall of Famers who played American Legion Baseball and were wonderful supporters of our program: Sparky Andersen, Bob Feller, Dick Williams, and Harmon Killabrew. Other American Legion alumni inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame include Tony Gwynn, Tom Seaver, Johnny Bench, Stan Musial, Carl Yaztremski, Brooks Robinson, Frank Robinson, and Paul Molitor.

Over 50 percent of the Major League ballplayers and nearly 76 percent of college players competed in American Legion Baseball as teenagers. The lessons learned on the baseball diamond, such as leadership, teamwork and respect for the rules are lessons that are learned for a lifetime.

COUNTER-SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

Robert Bournival, New Hampshire, Chairman
Michael Buss, Iowa, Deputy Director

The Counter-Subversive Activities Committee, since its establishment by the National Executive Committee of The American Legion on November 17, 1950, has scrutinized and continues to monitor what is transpiring in the realm of subversion and terrorism. A program of the Americanism Commission, reports of activities may be made to the National Executive Committee at its Spring and Fall Meetings and at National Convention.

The Committee is responsible for furnishing background information on assigned resolutions that are considered by the National Americanism Commission for recommended action to the National Executive Committee or the National Convention.

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Rev. James T. Akers, Kansas, Chairman
Charles Graybiel, Indiana, Assistant Director

The National Committee on Education, established in 1976, is comprised of members from both The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary.

The purposes of the Committee are: (1) to inform itself and The American Legion/American Legion Auxiliary of developments, problems and potentials in the field of education; (2) to recommend appropriate policies and programs for The American Legion/American Legion Auxiliary; and (3) to maintain contact with the education community so that there may be an interchange of thinking between The American Legion/American Legion Auxiliary, educators, students and other organizations concerned with the well-being of education throughout the Nation.

Education was one of the first major concerns of The American Legion. In 1921, the organization committed itself to a constructive support of education. During the years that followed, The American Legion developed a formal Policy on Education.

The American Legion has always supported the principle that education is a necessary requirement to the successful functioning of a republic. While recognizing the right of private and religious groups to maintain schools, The American Legion vigorously subscribes to the necessity for a publicly supported education system to ensure that every American child has the opportunity for an adequate education. The American Legion believes that popular self-government, as set forth in the Constitution of the United States, cannot continue to exist without a continuing system of free public education. Not only does proper national defense require trained personnel, but every phase of life today demands that we have competent citizens who are qualified, willing and able to discharge their responsibilities.

The availability of educational opportunity for individuals to pursue their own development is a prerequisite to the achievement of all other social goals. Our education system must be designed to provide every person with the means to reach their potential which will provide our Country with the high level of responsible citizens and specialized workers that it requires. In turn, we will have greater assurance of economic growth, of sound decision-making, and the knowledge necessary to promote our national security.

The American education system should produce citizens who understand and are dedicated to principles of free enterprise; to democratic principles and processes; and whose devotion to freedom and human dignity goes beyond mere lip service.

The Education Program of The American Legion consists of four basic elements: (1) recognition of local systems through observance of American Education Week; (2) dissemination of scholarship and financial aid information through the financial aid guide *Need A Lift?;* (3) participation by American Legion posts and American Legion Auxiliary units in a community-wide effort to enhance the programs and policies of the local schools through the guidelines provided in the handbook PACT (Post, Auxiliary, Community Together); and (4) scholarship programs.

American Education Week is an annual event co-sponsored nationally by The American Legion. The observance was originally established by The American Legion with the help of the National Education Association in 1921. The major objective of the program is to focus public attention on the needs and achievements of the Nation's schools. This year's theme is "Great Public Schools: A Basic Right and Our Responsibility." The observance will be November 13-19, 2011.

The financial aid guide *Need A Lift?* is revised annually and contains over 150 pages of scholarship, grant and loan information, work-study cooperative programs and sources of career information for all students. The 2011 edition of *Need A Lift?* is available both online at The American Legion website and in a CD-ROM format which features several new interactive elements. A section is directed toward opportunities for veterans and their dependents. Another section lists scholarships and financial aid available from departments of The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary totaling more than $685,000. The American Legion annually mails free of charge over 31,000 copies of *Need A Lift?* in the CD-ROM format to high schools nationwide.

A companion to *Need A Lift?* is the pamphlet *A Guide for Parents and Students* which contains planning and financial aid information for high school students and their parents. Each year, distribution of more than 100,000 copies of each of these publications is done through American Legion posts, schools, counselors and librarians, by mail and through distribution at national education conventions. Copies of these publications can also be obtained by writing The American Legion National Emblem Sales Division, P.O. Box 36460, Indianapolis, Indiana, 46236. Individual copies of *Need A Lift?* are $1.95 plus shipping and handling, prepaid. *A Guide for Parents and Students* is available at a cost of 10 cents each or $3.95 per 100, plus shipping and handling, prepaid.

Following the terrorist attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, The American Legion established the September 11th Memorial Scholarship Fund to provide educational opportunities for the children of American service men and women who die while on active duty on or after September 11, 2001. The fund provides "American Legion Legacy Scholarships" to the children to attend college and will be in addition to their governmental entitlements. Fund raising activities are ongoing with an initial goal of 20 million dollars established to fund this scholarship. Other scholarship programs include The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program; Eagle Scout of the Year; American Legion Baseball Leadership Scholarship; and the Samsung American Legion Scholarship. Through these scholarship programs, The American Legion issues, on average, $450,000 annually to eligible students to further their education.

The *PACT Handbook* is the guide for American Legion Education chairmen. It contains information on the goals and objectives of the education program, ideas and suggestions for activities, coordinating concepts and a typical calendar for a successful program. Programs covered in the handbook include: Citizenship Education, Career Education activities such as career nights, community resource files, Adopt-A-School, how to promote American Education Week, and financial aid nights.

Over 21,000 students were recipients of The American Legion School Award Medal this past year. This award is designed to recognize a student for the qualities of courage, honor, leadership, patriotism, scholarship and service. The award is presented to a boy and a girl upon graduation from elementary school, junior high/middle school or high school.

Country-western recording artist Michael Peterson received the 2011 American Legion National Education Award for his "Tag! You're It!" a social-emotional learning program to help young adults think about their direction in life, as well as for his work as an official spokesperson supporting The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund.

The American Legion believes that the citizens of this country should be dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in the entire realm of intellectual endeavor; that our people should recognize those persons who have developed their intellectual abilities to the fullest extent; that teachers should enrich their knowledge, particularly in the field in which they teach and that scholarship assistance to deserving students should be expanded.

Such an educational program will fulfill the dreams of the past, the aspirations of the present and the needs of the future. The American Legion supports such a system of education and believes that the vitality of our democratic way of life is dependent upon such schools.

AMERICANISM COMMISSION
Executive Section

Joseph E. Caouette, Rollinsford, New Hampshire - Chairman
Larry L. Price, Redfield, South Dakota - Vice-Chairman
Roger L. Wild, Lincoln, Nebraska - Commander's Representative
Luis V. Gonzalez, Henry, Illinois – Consultant
Steve M. Tatro, Dunkirk, Maryland – Consultant

COMMISSION ON CHILDREN & YOUTH
Dennis R. Boland, Florida, Chairman
Jill K. Druskis, Nebraska, Director

The American Legion has been a staunch supporter for the children and youth of our nation since our founding in 1919. Our commitment to our nation's children continues to be a paramount concern for the National Commission on Children & Youth as it seeks to improve the well being of all children.

Through the decades that followed our founding, The American Legion became a strong advocate for children's rights and remained at the forefront of the child welfare movement. The early years were devoted to progressive childcare and protection programs. Through the efforts of The American Legion and its affiliated organizations – the American Legion Auxiliary, the Sons of The American Legion, and the Eight & Forty – many states and communities improved their own child welfare provisions.

The development of new and expanded public programs designed to provide economic security for children made it possible for our organization to turn its attention to other problems affecting young people. To date there is no area of child welfare that has gone untouched by the collective hand of The American Legion. The very program of Children & Youth itself is unique from any agency - private or governmental - in its ability to expand into every area of concern for child welfare and child health.

As stated in a 1924 resolution adopted by the National Executive Committee, The American Legion "has and will do everything possible to perpetuate 'A SQUARE DEAL FOR EVERY CHILD'." This remains our ultimate goal and the definitive challenge for the years ahead.

To attain this goal, The American Legion, in 1925, adopted the "Whole Child" plan, which states: "every child should have a home, health, education, character and opportunity." Its foundation is based on three guiding principles:

1. To strengthen the family unit against the forces of today's complex society, recognizing that the most normal environment for children is a home with their own parents.
2. To extend support to sound organizations and facilities that provide services for children and youth, always acting in a supplementary capacity, rather than duplicating the efforts of existing agencies.
3. To maintain a well-rounded program that meets the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs of today's young people. Stated certainly for future endeavors, this third principle has provided the flexibility to address all matters of child health and child welfare.

While these principles represent the heart of the "Whole Child" plan, the muscle depends on our four Guidelines for Action, working together:

1. PREVENTION – Finding solutions to obstacles before they become long-lasting problems.
2. EDUCATION – Providing information to our members and the general public on timely issues involving children and youth.
3. LEGISLATION – Maintaining knowledge of new and existing laws, needed amendments, and the administration of laws that affect young people at the national, state and local levels.
4. MATERIAL AID – Providing direct assistance in the form of cash, clothing, food and time.

During the past ninety-three years, The American Legion's Children & Youth Program has contributed to significant advancements in the area of child welfare. While our list of achievements is extensive, it is by no means complete. The American Legion has, and will maintain a deep community centered interest in children to find new, and perhaps presently unknown, approaches to child welfare problems. There is no way of knowing what issues will face our youth tomorrow. Our survival may well depend on the quality of care, education, and training which we, as parents and citizens, provide for all children today.

The American Legion is proud of the Legionnaires, and the members of its affiliated organizations, and their achievements on behalf of our nation's youth. Their efforts in the area of child welfare are a living testament to the ability of an organization of free men and women to adapt itself to evolving needs, while maintaining high principles and taking on increased responsibilities under those principles.

2010 – 2011 Program

In May of each year, The American Legion's National Commission on Children & Youth meets to consider what programs it wants to emphasize for the following program year. When a decision is made, the National Children & Youth staff is charged to research these areas of concern and produce materials to support our volunteers.

For the program year 2010 – 2011, the Commission voted to focus their efforts on the following quality of life issues, which directly impact our young people on the National level:

1. Child Health
2. Child Safety
3. Family Support

Child Health: Since our beginning, the Legion has worked to improve the quality of life for all young people. Our partnership with Children's Miracle Network (CMN) Hospitals underscores this mission. CMN Hospitals raise critically needed funds for 170 children's hospitals, which treat 17 million children annually in the United States and Canada. These hospitals treat children with all types of afflictions and injuries, rendering service based on need, not the ability to pay. They annually provide $2.5 billion in uncompensated charity care and are committed to turning no child away.

Children's Miracle Network Hospitals are dedicated to ensuring that 100 percent of local donations made stay in the community in which they were raised to benefit children treated at participating hospitals.

The Commission encourages American Legion departments and posts to work with and support their local CMN-affiliated children's hospitals to benefit the health and well being of our nation's children. Since our partnership with CMN began in 1998, The American Legion family has donated millions to this worthy endeavor. This achievement was possible only through the dedicated efforts of Legion family members throughout this nation who have embraced this program and are committed to assisting children.

The position of The American Legion is that all children should have quality health services to assure their physical, mental and emotional well-being. To obtain these services, families of seriously ill or injured children often must travel hundreds of miles to seek medical treatment at specialized children's hospitals, thus causing the family to spend days and even weeks away from home. The additional financial burden placed on the family coupled with overwhelming medical costs is difficult, and many times impossible for the family to afford.

Ronald McDonald Houses were created to serve these families by offering them a home-like atmosphere, regardless of the family's ability to pay, where they can get the rest and renewal they need to be most supportive of their sick or injured child. The Ronald McDonald House Charities Pop Tab Collection Program generates funds to help offset the costs associated with a family's stay while their child is receiving specialized treatment.

To assist these children and families, The American Legion has adopted the Ronald McDonald House Charities Pop Tab Collection Program as a national children and youth project designed to benefit participating Ronald McDonald Houses throughout the country. Through the collective efforts of The American Legion and Ronald McDonald House Charities, we help to provide a home-away-from-home environment for financially challenged families with seriously ill or injured children who must undergo medical treatment at a children's hospital.

Child Safety: The American Legion is very concerned about the welfare of our nation's youth and a major problem that threatens them. Suicide among adolescents, age 15 –24, continues to be the third largest cause of death among this age group. The suicide rate among adolescents has grown steadily over the last four decades and has quadrupled since 1960. Over 4,000 young people take their own lives every year. Suicide is a senseless tragedy, but is completely preventable. The National Commission on Children & Youth produces and distributes a brochure, entitled "Know the Warning Signs of Youth Suicide," designed to assist youth and adults in understanding some of the warning signs and facts about suicide.

As long as Halloween activities are sponsored and promoted in our various communities by duly appointed and elected officials, the National Commission on Children & Youth of The American Legion believes children and parents should know how to make this observance as safe as possible. To assist this effort, the National Commission on Children & Youth produces and distributes a brochure, entitled "Make Halloween a Fun and Safe Night," to educate children and parents about trick-or-treat safety.

The American Legion is very concerned about young people destroying their lives by using drugs. Alcohol, tobacco, inhalants, and marijuana are often readily available and considered to be the entryway to a life of drug dependency and delinquency. Gateway drugs are so-called because the use of these drugs often leads to drug abuse, addiction, and to the use of other drugs such as heroin, cocaine, and LSD.

Growing up today is hard and peer pressure to use drugs can be extremely intense; however, individuals are ultimately responsible for their own behavior. Decisions made today can have far-reaching effects on one's life for years to come. To help combat this problem and educate our nation's youth about the dangers of gateway drugs, the National Commission produces and distributes a brochure titled "Gateway Drugs…Choose not to use," to equip parents and children with the facts of gateway drugs and help children lead a healthy lifestyle.

Family Support Network: Since September 11, 2001, the nation has been on high alert and National Guard and Reserve units have been activated in record numbers. As a result, the families of these men and women often find themselves unable to meet normal monthly household obligations. Assistance is needed for a variety of everyday tasks and

expenses. These needs range from routine household chores, grocery shopping, and childcare, to ensuring that the grass is mowed for the expecting mother whose husband is serving abroad.

To actively address these issues, The American Legion created the Family Support Network. Military families can request assistance by calling a nationwide toll-free telephone number, 1-800-504-4098, for service personnel and their families to call for assistance. Families can also request assistance electronically through the Legion's web site at www.legion.org/familysupport. All requests are referred to The American Legion department, or state, in which the call originated. Departments relay the collected information to a local American Legion post. The post then contacts the service member or family to see how assistance can be provided locally. Since the creation of the Family Support Network in 1990, thousands of Posts have responded to meet these families' needs.

As our forces pursue the enemies of freedom around the globe, The American Legion supports our men and women in uniform and their families with the Family Support Network. Those of us in The American Legion, who served our nation in times of adversity, remember how it felt to be separated from those we love. The Family Support Network is successful as a direct result of Legionnaires, at the post level in communities, responding to the needs of our comrades and their families. As the nation's largest veteran's organization, our commitment to the men and women of our Armed Forces and their families is absolute. As a grateful nation, we must ensure that no family endures hardships caused by military service that protects American ideals and freedom.

Continuing with our tradition of supporting veterans and their families, The American Legion has partnered with Operation: Military Kids to support the children of activated and deployed members of the armed forces. Spearheaded by the United States Department of Agriculture and the Army Youth Development Project, Operation: Military Kids recognizes that when National Guard, Reserve, and other military parents living in civilian communities are mobilized, their children suddenly have unique needs and may lack the community support systems associated with active military installations.

Extensive media coverage of ongoing military operations and dependence on the Reserves and National Guard creates daily anxiety. These "new" military kids seek friends and adults who can empathize and can help them cope with their new world. The American Legion, as a core partner of Operation: Military Kids, will enable this program to harness the benefits of our well-established and successful children and youth programs at the national and local levels to support military youth.

The American Legion in cooperation with state and county cooperative extension staff seeks to reach out to military youth before, during, and after their parents deploy. This outreach effort seeks to:

1. Create a community support network for military youth.
2. Deliver recreation, social and educational programs for military youth.
3. Support military kids coping with the stress of having a parent deployed.
4. Collaborate with schools to ensure that staff is attuned to the unique needs of military students.
5. Educate the public on the impact of the deployment cycle on military personnel, families, kids and the community as a whole.

Continuing Programs

Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA): This is the landmark program of the Commission on Children & Youth. Begun in 1925 as a form of direct aid to veteran's children, the Temporary Financial Assistance program is still unique in the social work field today and remains a very active program. During the 2010 - 2011 program year, the

program aided 1,356 children with $523,637.21 in grants. From its beginning to present, this fund has assisted veterans' families with millions of dollars in non-repayable grants.

The fund, made possible by the American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation, is used to assist families in meeting the costs of shelter, food, utilities and medical needs when the parents are unable to do so; thereby helping to keep the child, or children, in a more stable home environment.

Through TFA, a post may call upon the Americanism and Children & Youth Division of The American Legion for cash assistance to help meet the basic needs of veterans' children. Funds can be granted over a temporary period to eligible children when it has been determined by investigation that the child is in need and that no other sources are available, or those that are available are inadequate. It is important to note that while the veteran must have served honorably on active duty during a designated war period, the veteran does not have to be a member of The American Legion to receive assistance.

As sure as The American Legion is the largest veterans' organization in the world, there are veterans' families who require assistance. Possibly the rent is overdue or the children are hungry because a parent is sick or disabled, deceased, or has deserted the family. Whatever the reason, these children become the concern of The American Legion and the Temporary Financial Assistance Program is the vital tool which is used to help meet the maintenance and health needs of veterans' children, thereby allowing the child to develop in the home.

Child safety: The American Legion has demonstrated a strong concern for the safety of this nation's young people since the early 1920's. In 1992, the National Commission on Children & Youth designated the Child Safety program as one of its annual or continuing programs.

Child safety is defined as any external event that may present a significant danger to a child or young person. It includes, but is not limited to:

1. Child Abuse and Neglect
2. Sexual Abuse
3. Indoor/Outdoor Safety
4. School Safety
5. Playground Safety
6. Childhood Communicable Diseases
7. Accidents (automobile, drowning, firearms)
8. Fire Safety
9. Substance Abuse
10. Youth Suicide

Accidents are the leading cause of death and disability among our nation's youth. Annually, nearly 16,000 children under the age of 21 die in automobile crashes, fires, through the improper use of firearms, and drowning. In homes, playgrounds and parks, the potential for serious injury is always present.

Legion volunteers regularly disseminate information to parents, children and community leaders regarding the issue of safety. Making children safety conscious, in the home and outside, is necessary to assure that they have an opportunity to play and grow into useful adults and citizens.

Legislative Efforts

The initiation and support of worthwhile Children & Youth legislation is one means by which the Commission on Children & Youth has attempted to accomplish its goals during the 2010 - 2011 program year. At National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 31 - September 2, 2010 the following resolutions, here summarized, were approved.

Admission of Children of United States Citizens: Res. 283-2010. United States citizens now have greater access to the nations of the world for work opportunities, both in the public and private sectors, and travel. In part, because of this, many children in foreign countries are progeny of United States citizens. Public Law 97-359 was enacted to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide preferential treatment in the admission of certain children of United States citizens, but addresses only alien children from Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea or Thailand born after 1950 and before October 22, 1982. As The American Legion believes that no child born of a United States citizen should be denied equal treatment under the laws of this country, we urge legislative action to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide equal treatment in admission of all children of United States citizens.

Support Funding for all Drug Trafficking Prevention Programs: Res. 288-2010. We realize that one of the best methods to attack the drug problem is from the demand side, but this resolution urges funding for all necessary areas and agencies that can help reduce the quantity of the substances that are being made available in this country. By working at both ends of the problem, we can make a difference in the number of users.

Strengthen Penalties to Eliminate the Production, Sale and Distribution of Materials that use Children in Sexually Explicit Scenes: Res. 284-2010. As there have been attempts to eliminate protective laws from the criminal code regarding the production, distribution and sale of pornographic and obscene literature, The American Legion is strongly opposed to any attempt to weaken existing laws.

Protect Children from the Unrestricted Media: Res. 277-2010. The producers of movies, television shows and news, and the Internet have become very explicit in describing and depicting various types of violence. Organizations, such as the American Civil Liberties Union, defend such actions as the author's constitutional right of free speech without regard for the potential consequences to minor children. The American Legion supports appropriate state and federal legislation to restrict the excessive use of violence, vulgarity, and other forms of moral depravation in movies, TV programs, TV news and on the Internet. In addition, we encourage Departments and Posts to conduct awareness campaigns to educate their members, their families and the general public about the potential dangers the Internet and other forms of electronic media pose to children and teenagers.

Urge Congress to Appropriate Sufficient Funds for School Nutrition Program: Res. 295-2010. The American Legion again reaffirms its position that the Congress of the United States and the various state legislatures be urged to appropriate sufficient funds for school nutrition programs. This is necessary to reflect the increased cost of food and to provide for needed facilities and trained personnel for the purpose of conducting an adequate school lunch program.

Financially Assist Families Faced by Catastrophic Illness of Their Children: Res. 278-2010. It has long been our position that all children should have adequate health services to assure their physical, mental and emotional well being. Unfortunately, many of our children are not receiving the necessary medical care due to the extreme requirements placed on the financial abilities of the average family. Consequently, children with severe catastrophic illnesses are not receiving the needed medical care. The rising cost of medical care in such cases is not covered by even the best medical policies. The American Legion believes that the state and federal governments should enact legislation to financially assist those families faced by catastrophic illness to the end that the family will not be financially devastated.

Support Funding Comprehensive Health Care for Children & Youth Programs: Res. 287-2010. Many of our children continue to face health needs that are not properly addressed due to the high cost of our health care delivery system. The American Legion continues to support and endorse the programs as outlined by the

Maternal and Child Health Bureau as authorized under Title V of the Social Security Act and urges the Congress of the United States to continue its support by adequately funding these programs, including the Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant, the Healthy Start Initiative, Emergency Medical Services for Children Program and the Abstinence Education Program.

Support Efforts to Immunize all Children: Res. 286-2010. The American Legion realizes that in today's society there is no place for communicable disease for which there is a vaccine. Despite available vaccination programs, several childhood diseases breakout annually. We believe that the state and federal governments should provide sufficient funding so that indigent families with children can receive the necessary immunizations against all communicable diseases.

Urge the President and Congress to Establish "National Family Week": Res. 296-2010. One of the basic principles of the children and youth program is to maintain the integrity of the family home. In today's fast paced society, it is critical that we seek to recognize the importance of strengthening the basic unit of our country...the family. No institution can take the place of the family in giving meaning to human life and stability to our society. We urge the President and the Congress to establish National Family Week on a permanent basis during the Thanksgiving holiday week.

These are the highlights of our 2010 - 2011 Children & Youth legislative program. The American Legion's Commission on Children & Youth has constantly urged Departments to support Children & Youth legislation as it relates to our National objectives. Local Posts are also encouraged to support city ordinances that deal with the community's efforts to improve conditions for children and youth. The Children & Youth legislative program is a never-ending struggle, which we eagerly accept for the sake of all children.

Children & Youth Expenditures

Annually, as it has for the past 88 years, the Commission on Children & Youth records activities from The American Legion Family, consisting of over 14,000 Posts of The American Legion, over 5,000 Squadrons of The Sons of The American Legion, 8,500 Units of the American Legion Auxiliary, and hundreds of Salons of the Eight and Forty. In addition, the expenditures of departments and of the National Organization are obtained for the 12-month period of June 1, 2010 through May 31, 2011 and combined with these reports.

During the reporting period, The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation recorded $722,638.82 in donations from members of The American Legion Family and individuals across the country. During the same period, our Temporary Financial Assistance program expended $523,637.21 in grants to 1,356 children of veterans. For the 2010 – 2011 Children & Youth programs year, including contributions to the Child Welfare Foundation, Posts, Squadrons, Units and Departments of The American Legion and affiliated organizations reported a grand total of $16,131,471 in expenditures and contributions to benefit the children of America.

Children & Youth Literature

During the 2010 - 2011 program year, 361,050 pieces of Children & Youth literature were distributed by the Americanism and Children & Youth Division in order to further the objectives of the total program.

As shown in Table #4, our most popular brochures are related to our major points of emphasis -- Child Health, Child Safety, and Family Support. It is of further interest to note that 1,428 citations were distributed to Departments in order to recognize Posts for their contributions to the overall Children & Youth Program.

Appreciation Acknowledged

The Commission on Children & Youth and its Chairman take this opportunity to thank all the dedicated volunteers of The American Legion family. Our members have contributed thousands of unpaid hours, tremendous amounts of energy and personal sacrifice to improve the lives of children and to complete another successful program year. The Commission would also like to thank National Commander Jimmie L. Foster and National Adjutant Daniel S. Wheeler for their continued dedication to serving our nation's youth. Special recognition and appreciation for continued support of Children & Youth programs is also extended to the American Legion Auxiliary, the Eight and Forty, and the Sons of The American Legion that ensure the continued success of our National Children & Youth Programs.

COMMISSION ON CHILDREN & YOUTH
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Table No. 1

Region and Department	Reporting Legion	Temporary Financial Assistance by National	Contributions to Child Welfare Foundation by Posts	Direct Aid from Posts and Departments	Contributions to Other Child Serving Agencies, by Legion	Other Expenditures for Children by Legion	Department Admininstrative Expense by Legion	Total Aid for Children from 8/40	Total Number of Children Served Nationally by Legion	Total Aid Legion Lines 3 thru 9
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
REGION 1										
Connecticut	58%	$6,121.14	$4,112.00	$17,072.00	$3,835.00	$12,925.00	$1,495.00	$52.00	294	$45,612
Maine	57%	$975.00	$1,574.73	$49,265.00	$38,302.00	$26,763.00	$5,350.00	$319.00	1,233	$122,549
Massachusetts	35%	$1,550.00	$6,221.26	$38,037.00	$65,654.00	$24,956.00	$2,180.00	$354.00	823	$138,952
New Hampshire	64%	$0.00	$4,028.42	$126,270.00	$44,163.00	$41,188.00	$11,750.00	$525.00	1,365	$227,924
Rhode Island	92%	$1,625.00	$75.00	$25,111.00	$24,528.00	$9,675.00	$5,975.00	$50.00	220	$67,039
Vermont	76%	$0.00	$365.00	$73,480.00	$41,082.00	$30,163.00	$5,873.00	$25.00	1,113	$150,988
TOTAL:	**33%**	**$10,271.14**	**$16,376.41**	**$329,235.00**	**$217,564.00**	**$145,670.00**	**$32,623.00**	**$1,325.00**	**5,048**	**$753,065**
REGION 2										
Delaware	55%	$0.00	$0.00	$29,324.00	$19,250.00	$0.00	$425.00	$0.00	750	$48,999
D.C.	43%	$500.00	$1,462.00	$1,895.00	$550.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	5	$4,407
Maryland	77%	$472.35	$7,675.00	$154,140.00	$199,842.00	$0.00	$18,942.00	$25.00	5,244	$381,096
New Jersey	31%	$3,470.17	$1,260.00	$80,289.00	$63,150.00	$43,103.00	$11,205.00	$231.00	2,466	$202,708
New York	79%	$5,188.17	$10,701.00	$472,564.00	$337,731.00	$1,056,632.00	$71,671.00	$231.00	2,669	$1,954,718
Pennsylvania	48%	$16,404.33	$738.00	$180,798.00	$162,195.00	$217,587.00	$66,125.00	$287.00	8,691	$644,134
Virginia	100%	$20,922.62	$635.00	$292,707.00	$114,065.00	$274,406.00	$34,326.00	$545.00	15,404	$737,607
West Virginia	86%	$5,386.81	$170.00	$65,581.00	$8,896.75	$40,979.00	$8,824.00	$0.00	6,124	$129,838
TOTAL:	**65%**	**$52,344.45**	**$22,641.00**	**$1,277,298.00**	**$905,679.75**	**$1,632,707.00**	**$211,518.00**	**$1,319.00**	**41,353**	**$4,103,507**
REGION 3										
Alabama	32%	$10,336.89	$4,399.00	$35,836.00	$56,852.00	$36,226.00	$21,507.00	$221.00	4,367	$165,378
Florida	98%	$44,763.08	$27,683.00	$207,943.00	$264,166.00	$231,006.00	$46,096.00	$932.00	8,251	$822,489
Georgia	73%	$4,963.92	$1,625.00	$221,125.00	$78,071.00	$96,185.00	$26,484.00	$0.00	7,641	$428,454
Kentucky	72%	$11,807.62	$3,244.00	$73,669.00	$38,529.00	$42,272.00	$8,100.00	$565.00	1,569	$178,187
North Carolina	39%	$14,249.53	$1,353.00	$51,409.00	$18,810.00	$28,142.00	$7,314.00	$0.00	1,048	$121,278
South Carolina	31%	$6,796.06	$1,189.00	$22,285.00	$11,587.00	$27,426.00	$4,770.00	$0.00	1,018	$74,053
Tennessee	52%	$2,159.16	$10.00	$17,657.00	$30,274.00	$18,782.00	$13,857.00	$0.00	607	$82,739
TOTAL:	**58%**	**$95,076.26**	**$39,503.00**	**$629,824.00**	**$498,289.00**	**$480,039.00**	**$128,128.00**	**$1,718.00**	**24,501**	**$1,872,577**
REGION 4										
Arkansas	23%	$2,770.35	$175.00	$27,068.00	$5,738.00	$10,545.00	$4,545.00	$65.00	448	$50,906
Louisiana	38%	$1,928.47	$2,563.00	$39,727.00	$27,594.00	$48,510.00	$19,034.00	$280.00	1,113	$139,636
Mississippi	22%	$9,931.11	$1,075.00	$8,620.00	$5,437.87	$17,900.00	$2,090.00	$50.00	2,531	$45,104
Oklahoma	29%	$15,643.14	$75.00	$40,834.00	$16,195.00	$28,130.00	$10,470.00	$60.00	2,682	$111,407
Texas	54%	$21,078.44	$2,369.00	$141,269.00	$109,602.00	$113,947.00	$32,236.00	$2,076.00	7,108	$422,577
TOTAL:	**37%**	**$51,351.51**	**$6,257.00**	**$257,518.00**	**$164,566.87**	**$219,032.00**	**$68,375.00**	**$2,531.00**	**13,882**	**$769,631**
REGION 5										
Illinois	40%	$24,039.45	$3,702.00	$73,002.00	$61,407.00	$64,943.00	$97,213.00	$2,160.00	2,068	$326,466
Indiana	49%	$20,121.08	$2,721.00	$122,886.00	$168,578.00	$352,567.00	$36,365.00	$1,000.00	1,108	$704,238
Michigan	55%	$2,770.10	$1,635.00	$110,732.00	$45,363.00	$128,673.00	$11,952.00	$2,546.00	4,332	$303,671
Missouri	67%	$15,364.84	$658.16	$93,174.00	$84,211.00	$49,856.00	$13,366.00	$291.00	2,170	$256,921
Ohio	82%	$8,020.81	$33,465.00	$286,611.00	$287,375.78	$467,399.00	$67,899.00	$3,272.00	14,123	$1,154,043
Wisconsin	96%	$15,793.79	$135.00	$137,640.00	$79,024.00	$112,147.00	$30,286.00	$50.00	5,182	$375,076
TOTAL:	**64%**	**$86,110.07**	**$42,316.16**	**$824,045.00**	**$725,958.78**	**$1,175,585.00**	**$257,081.00**	**$9,269.00**	**28,983**	**$3,120,415**
REGION 6										
Iowa	52%	$18,056.07	$831.00	$49,315.00	$77,445.40	$69,418.00	$15,255.00	$0.00	2,659	$230,320
Kansas	61%	$1,961.79	$3,578.00	$72,389.00	$30,838.34	$29,037.00	$5,728.00	$160.00	25,180	$143,692
Minnesota	53%	$3,998.00	$1,530.00	$141,990.00	$91,325.00	$99,035.00	$18,065.00	$450.00	4,789	$356,393
Nebraska	100%	$1,100.00	$918.00	$41,637.00	$27,025.00	$26,771.00	$13,205.00	$362.00	2,317	$111,018
North Dakota	60%	$0.00	$105.00	$42,144.00	$50,712.61	$13,785.00	$5,935.00	$0.00	1,017	$112,682
South Dakota	54%	$0.00	$0.00	$17,476.00	$12,119.00	$11,870.00	$1,770.00	$213.00	465	$43,448
TOTAL:	**62%**	**$25,115.86**	**$6,962.00**	**$364,951.00**	**$289,465.35**	**$249,916.00**	**$59,958.00**	**$1,185.00**	**36,427**	**$997,553**
REGION 7										
Arizona	60%	$34,795.50	$10.00	$140,519.00	$69,279.00	$50,481.00	$24,113.00	$1,578.00	7,791	$320,776
California	78%	$18,307.29	$535.00	$373,951.00	$145,482.00	$163,415.00	$40,407.00	$2,510.00	19,379	$744,607
Colorado	43%	$20,631.21	$1,538.14	$650.00	$20,175.00	$13,122.00	$5,066.00	$0.00	2,293	$61,182
Hawaii	73%	$0.00	$594.62	$275.00	$1,244.00	$50.00	$270.00	$0.00	12	$2,434
Nevada	69%	$3,370.63	$3,730.00	$31,567.00	$8,879.00	$6,029.00	$1,000.00	$95.00	389	$54,671
New Mexico	58%	$4,910.68	$3,975.00	$103,153.00	$26,558.00	$251,072.00	$32,015.00	$0.00	2,834	$421,684
Utah	27%	$2,744.54	$155.00	$3,250.00	$1,000.00	$2,220.00	$2,775.00	$0.00	209	$12,145
TOTAL:	**63%**	**$84,759.85**	**$10,537.76**	**$653,365.00**	**$272,617.00**	**$486,389.00**	**$105,646.00**	**$4,183.00**	**32,907**	**$1,617,498**
REGION 8										
Alaska	72%	$0.00	$257.00	$64,039.00	$4,750.00	$36,756.00	$12,389.00	$226.00	794	$118,417
Idaho	70%	$25,441.96	$1,300.00	$12,345.00	$19,781.00	$31,950.00	$831.00	$155.00	2,991	$91,804
Montana	99%	$7,715.92	$689.00	$12,710.00	$13,292.00	$20,313.00	$2,070.00	$90.00	88	$56,880
Oregon	99%	$29,691.55	$120.00	$27,481.00	$5,344.00	$17,772.00	$3,397.00	$66.00	1,051	$83,872
Washington	60%	$51,723.16	$505.00	$28,981.00	$10,343.00	$16,154.00	$1,329.00	$793.00	3,601	$109,828
Wyoming	98%	$4,035.48	$1,695.00	$10,115.00	$6,650.00	$3,962.00	$1,415.00	$0.00	71	$27,872
TOTAL:	**82%**	**$118,608.07**	**$4,566.00**	**$155,671.00**	**$60,160.00**	**$126,907.00**	**$21,431.00**	**$1,330.00**	**8,586**	**$488,673**
REGION TOTALS:	**60%**	**$523,637.21**	**$149,159.33**	**$4,491,907.00**	**$3,134,300.75**	**$4,516,245.00**	**$884,760.00**	**$22,860.00**	**191,687**	**$10,232,844**
FOREIGN										
France	35%	$0.00	$170.00	$1,516.00	$225.00	$0.00	$1,005.00	$0.00	603	$2,916
Mexico	87%	$0.00	$0.00	$25,827.00	$1,976.00	$0.00	$451.00	$0.00	409	$28,254
Philippines	0%	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$1,060.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	75	$1,060
Puerto Rico	1%	$0.00	$20.00	$0.00	$0.00	$2,008.00	$0.00	$0.00	25	$2,028
TOTAL:	**19%**	**$0.00**	**$0.00**	**$7,200.57**	**$2,425.00**	**$2,008.00**	**$1,456.00**	**$0.00**	**1,112**	**$13,090**
GRAND TOTALS:	**60%**	**$523,637.21**	**$149,349.33**	**$4,499,107.57**	**$3,136,725.75**	**$4,517,540.00**	**$886,216.00**	**$22,860.00**	**192,799**	**$13,735,436**

TABLE #1 REPORTING PERIOD: JUNE 1, 2010 - MAY 31, 2011

Children Served by Auxiliary Departments	1,137,834
Children Served by Legion Departments	192,799
GRAND TOTAL	**1,330,633**

Direct Aid reported by National Auxiliary	$667,404
Other Expenditures reported by National Auxiliary	$1,263,412
Child Welfare Foundation by National Auxiliary	$2,500
Children & Youth Division by National Auxiliary	$10,000
Child Welfare Foundation by National 8/40	$1,015
Child Welfare Foundation by individuals	$6,185
Bequests to Child Welfare Foundation	$21,296
C.W.F. by Sons of The American Legion	$391,470
Child Welfare Foundation by National Legion	$32,754
GRAND TOTAL	**$16,131,471**

TABLE NO. 2
EXPENDITURES FROM NATIONAL TEMPORARY AID FUNDS TO DEPARTMENTS ACCORDING TO YEARS

	1926-45	1946-65	1966-85	1986-95	1996-2005	2006-2010*	June 2010 - May 2011	Grand Total
Alabama	29,181.33	51,167.06	76,790.45	152,617.32	137,824.69	51,232.89	10,336.89	$498,813.74
Alaska	0.00	1,627.56	1,550.00	0.00	3,500.00	1,500.00	0.00	$8,177.56
Arizona	26,061.70	8,752.00	21,380.31	192,830.21	289,526.72	151,577.95	34,795.50	$690,128.89
Arkansas	33,873.20	25,962.22	2,881.07	55,004.98	16,181.61	10,161.31	2,770.35	$144,064.39
California	30,106.15	16,026.45	1,550.00	7,559.00	30,034.44	87,617.89	18,307.29	$172,893.93
Colorado	41,621.11	22,618.11	1,395.00	12,205.83	17,592.15	60,985.15	20,631.21	$156,417.35
Connecticut	1,854.00	440.00	450.00	1,192.00	7,971.56	10,123.61	6,121.14	$22,031.17
Delaware	2,035.00	1,000.00	475.00	2,635.00	8,497.64	521.00	0.00	$15,163.64
DC	2,570.00	1,203.50	600.00	26,136.75	2,319.00	1,510.51	500.00	$34,339.76
Florida	33,341.28	25,520.50	2,530.00	27,060.88	64,469.81	121,086.01	44,763.08	$274,008.48
Georgia	69,894.07	86,084.42	4,865.00	8,498.51	12,861.80	16,848.84	4,963.92	$199,052.64
Hawaii	870.00	0.00	900.00	0.00	6,168.40	2,767.97	0.00	$10,706.37
Idaho	7,593.50	5,771.85	7,366.39	20,228.20	195,485.15	121,577.47	25,441.96	$358,022.56
Illinois	30,220.79	4,343.53	10,525.73	92,128.56	276,545.19	45,289.90	24,039.45	$459,053.70
Indiana	31,850.08	9,066.40	2,920.00	126,545.18	173,400.66	77,705.54	20,121.08	$421,487.86
Iowa	17,493.08	597.00	3,928.45	13,782.47	227,865.82	77,698.51	18,056.07	$341,365.33
Kansas	20,766.80	42,064.35	8,923.00	9,241.54	16,291.60	3,689.20	1,961.79	$100,976.49
Kentucky	23,843.50	45,527.90	64,854.96	44,238.66	12,445.22	97,637.78	11,807.62	$288,548.02
Louisiana	23,400.50	38,454.30	3,395.00	7,340.45	33,897.24	627.39	1,928.47	$107,114.88
Maine	3,618.94	1,910.26	2,676.55	15,912.00	22,305.05	12,544.19	975.00	$58,966.99
Maryland	5,887.00	3,390.57	3,383.00	4,770.00	31,620.94	9,295.27	472.35	$58,346.78
Massachusetts	2,754.50	455.00	150.00	4,650.00	18,888.67	13,381.34	1,550.00	$40,279.51
Michigan	23,895.33	33,281.24	15,346.82	14,012.24	52,676.66	46,668.10	2,770.10	$185,880.39
Minnesota	8,610.77	23,322.79	11,840.33	137,579.21	89,538.19	26,608.38	3,998.00	$297,499.67
Mississippi	40,293.63	63,254.14	117,892.56	51,214.88	84,261.79	27,594.46	9,931.11	$384,511.46
Missouri	53,073.08	47,799.64	11,056.00	17,969.51	38,984.13	61,455.38	15,364.84	$230,337.74
Montana	5,414.25	1,668.85	1,575.30	36,571.40	57,913.91	48,172.96	7,715.92	$153,316.57
Nebraska	18,470.10	17,795.68	17,531.06	3,373.25	759.49	3,249.51	1,100.00	$61,179.09
Nevada	585.00	766.00	7,272.00	995.00	16,818.94	7,529.52	3,370.63	$33,966.46
New Hampshire	4,250.50	4,941.50	0.00	53,557.79	12,610.00	15,558.65	0.00	$90,918.44
New Jersey	8,995.53	1,946.00	4,478.00	55,576.20	53,194.60	17,078.31	3,470.17	$141,268.64
New Mexico	20,074.30	53,098.74	58,723.89	111,071.87	49,262.39	2,649.50	4,910.68	$294,880.69
New York	7,887.54	4,803.00	1,150.00	33,784.24	83,432.27	20,063.39	5,188.17	$151,120.44
North Carolina	46,597.50	81,019.60	9,740.00	20,750.18	68,774.55	102,946.05	14,249.53	$329,827.88
North Dakota	26,017.45	11,788.21	5,771.32	6,499.40	11,426.94	7,652.01	0.00	$69,155.33
Ohio	23,930.43	5,116.25	11,613.89	11,357.65	13,289.44	40,759.19	8,020.81	$106,066.85
Oklahoma	40,458.05	65,406.47	88,956.03	156,914.96	203,764.51	104,083.92	15,643.14	$659,583.94
Oregon	1,250.50	13,750.15	24,595.95	42,465.83	14,796.00	35,481.76	29,691.55	$132,340.19
Panama	675.00	534.00	600.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	$1,809.00
Pennsylvania	22,847.41	651.00	19,204.85	38,183.37	29,380.12	42,342.79	16,404.33	$152,609.54
Puerto Rico	17,057.00	57,754.00	55,499.50	43,420.00	11,100.00	8,640.43	0.00	$193,470.93
Rhode Island	1,562.00	1,641.00	1,060.00	18,499.38	16,182.72	3,424.90	1,625.00	$42,370.00
South Carolina	68,453.05	26,693.34	5,339.00	500.00	13,610.16	44,722.74	6,796.06	$159,318.29
South Dakota	42,430.27	16,362.05	725.00	30,686.38	5,358.30	0.00	0.00	$95,562.00
Tennessee	31,144.77	54,613.20	20,604.30	56,068.79	36,561.35	51,941.16	2,159.16	$250,933.57
Texas	35,373.50	47,392.43	26,714.50	7,864.74	31,484.75	91,749.70	21,078.44	$240,599.62
Utah	11,125.48	3,248.00	3,396.00	12,014.42	14,034.34	10,048.50	2,744.54	$53,866.74
Vermont	1,824.50	9,251.50	0.00	4,925.00	6,004.26	4,539.26	0.00	$26,544.52
Virginia	45,310.31	28,037.78	17,836.00	31,930.40	66,509.94	78,737.43	20,922.62	$268,361.86
Washington	3,378.00	427.50	625.00	66,884.89	511,131.69	320,038.73	51,723.16	$902,485.81
West Virginia	27,629.98	11,395.94	3,460.00	17,750.68	40,628.59	12,387.97	5,386.81	$113,253.16
Wisconsin	15,881.98	8,067.25	9,878.00	16,242.78	74,327.21	49,481.04	15,793.79	$173,878.26
Wyoming	8,180.00	1,993.00	1,350.00	979.00	13,746.91	14,555.23	4,035.48	$40,804.14
Other Depts	560.00	173.50						
Miscellaneous**	19,499.21							
TOTAL	**$1,121,572.95**	**$1,089,976.73**	**$777,325.21**	**$1,926,240.98**	**$3,327,257.51**	**$2,275,540.69**	**$523,637.21**	**$10,497,681.36**

*Includes January 2010 - May 2011

**For the year 1926--Department totals not available

Table 3

Comparison of Number of Children of WW II, Korea, Vietnam, Grenada/Lebanon, Panama, and Gulf War Veterans Receiving Aid from National Children and Youth Division

	World War II	Korea	Vietnam	Grenada/ Lebanon	Panama	Gulf War	Totals
June	0	0	5	6	2	111	124
July	0	0	5	7	11	76	99
August	0	0	15	4	4	140	163
September	0	0	64	9	0	150	223
October	0	0	4	16	0	122	142
November	0	0	2	7	4	89	102
December	0	0	7	0	4	146	157
January	0	0	2	3	0	100	105
February	0	0	4	4	0	41	49
March	0	0	11	8	3	46	68
April	0	0	5	9	1	55	70
May	0	0	2	6	1	45	54
Totals	0	0	126	79	30	1121	1356
Percentage	0.00%	0.00%	9.29%	5.83%	2.21%	82.67%	100.00%

TABLE #3 REPORTING PERIOD: JUNE 1, 2010 - MAY 31, 2011

Table No. 4

Printed Material Furnished Upon Request
During Period June 1, 2010 through May 31, 2011

	Total
8&40 Nursing Scholarship	4,535
American Legion & Children's Miracle Network - Brochure	1,905
American Legion Child Welfare Foundation	7,217
American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation	24,901
Annual Children & Youth Program Piece	13,429
Children & Youth Department Chairman's Guide	188
Family Support Network	47,247
Gateway Drugs	35,324
Make Halloween a Safe and Fun Night - Brochure	112,226
Nathan's Visit Comic Books	77
National Family Week	1,075
Play It Safe	19,543
Serving America	16,206
Serving Communities	17,735
Serving Veterans	16,802
TFA Applications	820
TFA Brochures	17,110
Warning Signs -- Suicide Prevention	22,976
Citations:	
Annual Children and Youth Citations	1,088
Certificate of Meritorious Service	52
National Achievement Award	9
Special Children & Youth Citation	279
Reporting:	
Unit Report Form	200
Department Report Forms	106
TOTAL	361,050

AMERICAN LEGION CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION, INC.
Dennis R. Boland, Florida, President
Robert K. Caudell, Indiana, Executive Secretary

In 1954 The American Legion endorsed the separate incorporation of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Since then, the Foundation has granted over eleven million dollars to other non-profit youth oriented organizations.

The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation's foremost philanthropic priority is to provide other nonprofit organizations with a means to educate the public about the needs of children across this nation. The Foundation accepts proposals from nonprofit organizations for projects that:

Contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children through the dissemination of knowledge about new and innovative organizations and/or their programs to benefit youth; and/or

Contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children through the dissemination of knowledge already possessed by well-established organizations, to the end that such information can be more adequately used by society.

In October of 2010, the Board of Directors approved grants to 21 non-profit organizations in the amount of $666,670 for projects to be completed in calendar year 2011. The organizations and amounts are as follows:

American Legion Child Welfare Foundation Grants

American Academy of Pediatrics	Elk Grove Village, Illinois	$14,725
American Legion Children's Home	Ponca City, Oklahoma	44,000
Child Find of America, Inc.	Highland, New York	45,000
Children's Organ Transplant Association	Bloomington, Indiana	46,500
Cornelia de Lange Syndrome Foundation	Avon, Connecticut	22,295
Father Flanagan's Boys Home dba Boys Town	Boys Town, Nebraska	62,000
Georgia State University Research Foundation, Inc.	Atlanta, Georgia	28,900
Kansas Braille Transcription Institute, Inc.	Wichita, Kansas	6,500
Make-A-Wish Foundation of America	Phoenix, Arizona	31,572
Mercy Flight Southeast, Inc.	Leesburg, Florida	10,000
National Autism Association	Nixa, Missouri	50,000
National Braille Press	Boston, Massachusetts	13,270
National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)	Seattle, Washington	49,000
National Marfan Foundation	Port Washington, New York	25,000
National Meningitis Association, Inc.	Atlanta, Georgia	40,000
National Organizations for Youth Safety	Gainesville, Virginia	25,000
Our Military Kids	McLean, Virginia	50,100
Songs of Love Foundation	Forest Hills, New York	25,000
The American Legion	Fultondale, Alabama	12,000
The National Children's Cancer Society (N.C.C.S.)	St. Louis, Missouri	25,000
Young Marines	Washington, DC	40,808

During the 2010 - 2011 contribution year, donations exceeded $722,638 with over $391,469 of that amount coming to the Foundation from the Sons of The American Legion. We receive most of our support from the members of The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, the Eight and Forty, and the Sons of The American Legion. Their posts, units, salons, and squadrons are the primary contributors to the success and growth of our Foundation.

We encourage each member and each local organization to make an annual contribution in support of their Foundation so it can continue to fund projects that will assist children by giving them a better chance at life. It is important to remember that every dollar given to the Foundation is put directly into the trust fund to be used for grants that assist our young people.

At the meeting of the Board of Directors of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation held in Indianapolis on May 1, 2011, the following officers were elected: Dennis R. Boland of Florida (President); Peggy Moon of Minnesota, (Vice President); Joseph J. Frank of Missouri, (Secretary); and Robert Turner of Georgia, (Treasurer). Administrative personnel that were appointed by the Board of Directors were George A. Buskirk, Jr. (Assistant Treasurer) and Robert K. Caudell (Executive Secretary).

Under the 1969 Tax Reform Act, the Foundation retains its tax-exempt status. Gifts, therefore, are deductible for federal income tax purposes to the extent permitted by law, and bequests to the Foundation are deductible for federal inheritance tax purposes to the extent permitted by the Federal Tax Act.

NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMISSION
Michael E. Walton, Illinois, Chairman
Richard D. Holmes, Indiana, Director

The 92nd annual National Convention of the American Legion convened in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 27 – September 2, 2010. National Commander Clarence E. Hill of Florida called the National Convention to order at 9:00AM on Tuesday, Aug. 31, welcoming Legionnaires to Milwaukee and thanking them for their continuing service to our Country and to our veterans. The Honorable Jim Doyle, Governor, State of Wisconsin, the Honorable Tom Barrett, Mayor of Milwaukee, Leo Endres, 2009 – 2010 Department Commander of Wisconsin and Wayne W. Jensen, President of the 2010 National Convention Committee welcomed legionnaires to the National Convention. Other guest speakers addressing the 92nd National Convention of the American Legion were the Honorable John Boehner, Office of the House Republican Leader, the Honorable Russell Feingold, US Senate, the Honorable Gwen Moore, US House of Representatives, the Honorable Bob Filner, Chairman, House Committee on Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Eric K. Shinseki, Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House, the Honorable Steve Buyer, as well as the Honorable Robert Gates, Secretary of Defense and the Honorable Michael Donley, Secretary of the Air Force.

There were many highlights during the 2010 National Convention, but four events conducted at the National Convention deserve special mention. The Patriotic Memorial Service and the annual parade, both held on Sunday, Aug. 29 were attended by nearly 4,000 and 8,000 American Legion Family members respectively. On Monday, Aug. 30, a free concert by the 4TROOPS was held for nearly 3000 attendees. On Tuesday, Aug. 31, the National Commander's Banquet for Distinguished Guests was held at the Frontier Airlines Center. This banquet, featuring country music star Aaron Tippin as the entertainment, was attended by 2,000 Legionnaires and guests.

CONVENTION COMMISSION ACTIVITIES

The National Convention Commission conducted three regular meetings during the year. Revisions of our request for proposal (RFP) continued in 2010. This process is extremely important as it provides an equal opportunity for all cities to be judged the same way during the initial review and site visit process. It is the commission's desire to continue to attract new cities that desire to host an American Legion national convention,

providing "blue cap" Legionnaires and their families with varied and enjoyable conventions on an annual basis.

For the 2016 National Convention, the National Convention Commission reviewed bids from Cincinnati, Ohio, Columbus, Ohio, Detroit, Michigan and Los Angeles, California. Following site visits and after listening to formal presentations from each of these fine cities, the National Convention Commission recommended to the National Executive Committee that Cincinnati, Ohio be awarded the 2016 National Convention for Aug. 26 – Sept. 1. The National Executive Committee later approved the recommendation.

Future conventions and dates:

Indianapolis, Indiana	Aug. 24 – 30, 2012
Houston, Texas	Aug. 23 – 29, 2013
Charlotte, North Carolina	Aug. 22 – 28, 2014
Baltimore, Maryland	Aug. 28 – Sept. 3, 2015
Cincinnati, Ohio	Aug. 26 – Sept. 1, 2016

We currently have six cities bidding on the 2017 National Convention. Those cities, supported by the appropriate resolution from their host Department, are Detroit, Michigan, Louisville, Kentucky, Nashville, Tennessee, Salt Lake City, Utah, San Juan, Puerto Rico and Reno, Nevada. A recommendation for the 2017 host city will be forwarded to the National Executive Committee in May of 2012.

DISTINGUISHED GUEST COMMITTEE
Donald R. Schroedl, Minnesota, Chairman

The Distinguished Guest Committee exists under the umbrella of the National Convention Commission. Responsibilities include the coordination of activities for all distinguished guests invited to attend the National Convention. The committee oversees the arrangements for each guest's arrival and departure at the national convention. Each distinguished guest is also assisted with credentials, agendas and other details of the National Convention.

ECONOMIC COMMISSION
Harold D. Barnett, Georgia, Chairman
Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr., District of Columbia, Director

This report covers the programs, activities and accomplishments of the National Economic Commission, its two standing committees (Employment and Veterans Preference), and the staff from July, 2010, through June 30, 2011. Since the commission and the committees always meet concurrently, all future references to the commission in this report will automatically indicate the inclusion of the committees.

The Economic Commission is chaired by Harold D. Barnett (GA). The division consists of Director Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr., Deputy Director Mark Walker, Assistant Director Robert Madden, Assistant Director Steve Gonzalez and Administrative Assistant Jasmine Davis.

National Economic Commission

- Employment Committee
- Veteran Preference Committee
- Awards Subcommittee
- Small Business Task Force Advisory Board
- Homeless Veteran Task Force Advisory Board

2010-2011 Meetings

During the period this report covers, the commission met for four regularly scheduled executive sessions. A list of those meetings follows:

1. Members and guests of the National Economic Commission met on Saturday, August 28, 2010, in the Hilton City Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in conjunction with the Ninety-second Annual National Convention. A report on that meeting was made to the National Executive Committee on Monday, August 30, 2010. The complete text of that report appears in the Proceedings of the National Executive Committee's Pre- and Post-Convention Meetings.
2. An executive session of the National Economic Commission was held in the headquarters of The American Legion in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 13-14, 2010. A complete report on that meeting appears in the Digest of Proceedings of the National Executive Committee, October 2010.
3. At the 51st Washington Conference, on Monday, March 21, and Wednesday, March 23, 2011 which were held in the Renaissance Hotel in Washington, DC; commission members and guests met to hear the latest on subjects of concern to them.
4. Members of the commission met May 3-4, 2011, in the headquarters of The American Legion, in Indianapolis, Indiana. A complete report on that meeting appears in the Digest of Proceedings of the National Executive Committee, May 5-6, 2011.

Legislative Appearances

A very important part of the work of the National Economic Commission is the preparation and presentation of congressional testimony on issues affecting the economic well-being of America's veterans. During the period covered by this report, the commission staff testified before Congress, and also participated in the preparation of testimony presented by other members of the Legion staff on several occasions.

The following is a synopsis of the Congressional hearings and correspondence held from August 1, 2010 to July 31, 2011, on matters pertaining to the National Economic Commission:

- On September 16, 2010, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans Affairs on "Status of the Post 9/11 GI Bill."
- On September 29, 2010, the Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans Affairs on "Federal Contractor Compliance."
- On March 3, 2011, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans Affairs on "Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 State Grant Program."
- On May 3, 2011, the Assistant Director testified before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs on various pieces of legislation regarding "training, credentialing and employment."
- On June 6, 2011, the Deputy Director submitted testimony to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans Affairs on "Veterans Employment and Training Service's (VETS) Transition Assistance Program (TAP)."
- On July 15, 2011, the Assistant Director testified before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs on various pieces of legislation regarding education, housing and small business."

Administrative Activities

The National Economic Commission and its two standing subcommittees on Employment and Veterans Preference are responsible for ensuring that America's veterans have the opportunity to provide, with honor and dignity, the economic necessities of life for themselves and their families. In order to achieve this goal, the commission and its committees work closely with governmental agencies and liaison to assist the organization's members.

A staff responsibility is answering the large volume of mail and electronic mail that is received annually from veterans seeking information or assistance on issues which come under the commission's jurisdiction. While the staff can neither place individual veterans in jobs nor represent them in labor disputes, the staff does provide information, guidance and, when appropriate, referral. Besides correspondence from individuals, the staff also receives and answers frequent requests and inquiries from government agencies, members of Congress, congressional committees, private organizations, and other groups regarding veterans' economic issues.

Employer of the Year Awards

One of the commission's major programs is its awards program, which is administered by the staff. Through this program The American Legion pays tribute to those employers across the country who has established outstanding records in the employment and retention of veterans, workers with disabilities and older workers, and to outstanding members of the state employment security agencies.

Each year since 1969, the Legion's National Economic Commission has sponsored an Employer of the Year Awards Program. This program seeks to honor those employers across the country that have established an outstanding record in the employment and retention of veterans. Prior to this year's Washington Conference, the chairman of the National Economic Commission, Harold D. Barnett (GA), appointed a seven-person subcommittee to review all of the nominations that had been received during 2010 in the Employer of Veterans Awards Program.

The Commission's Awards Subcommittee met to select the following National winners:

Large Employer: Eagles Systems and Services, Inc., (CIF) Georgia
Medium Size Employer: Millennium Security Services, LLC, Georgia
Small Employer: Georgia Vietnam Veterans Alliance, Georgia

Employment Service Awards

Beginning in 1993, three awards have been presented to the Local Veterans Employment Representative of the Year, the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year, and the Employment Service Office of the Year. These awards are given in cooperation with local Job Service offices across the country, to recognize truly outstanding veteran-dedicated staff members.

National winners are as follows:
LVER of the Year: Robert Shoeman, Idaho
DVOP of the Year: Johnny Moreno, Idaho
Employment Local Office: Gwinnett Career Center, Georgia Department of Labor, Georgia

Other Awards
Employer of the Disabled: Veterans Employment Development Center, The American Legion Post 155, Florida
Employer of Older Workers: Point Security Company, Inc., Pennsylvania

Homeless Veterans Outreach Award: The American Legion Department of Idaho

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE
Albert M. Robotti, New Jersey, Chairman
Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr., District of Columbia, Director

The mission of the committee is to promote employment and training opportunities for veterans. To accomplish this, the committee works at the national level with Congress and various Federal agencies. The committee does not place veterans in jobs, but rather, relies on its network of employment chairmen to assist individual veterans in finding employment. Their Posts and Departments appoint these employment chairmen. Occasionally, Departments also appoint them at the County and District levels.

VETERANS' PREFERENCE COMMITTEE
Wendall J. Sandell, Pennsylvania, Chairman
Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr., District of Columbia, Director

This committee is charged with the responsibility of promoting veterans' employment opportunities in Federal government and for ensuring that agencies continue to observe all veterans' preference laws.

Federal Veterans' Economic Programs

The following is a brief overview of the Commission's interactions with those Federal agencies, and their veterans' programs, with which the commission works regularly.

TRANSITION

Job Fairs

The American Legion has formal Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with RecruitMilitary and Military.com that will allow The American Legion to have a presence in all of their Job Fairs around the country. The main purpose of participation in these Job Fairs is to educate veterans of their benefits, provide veterans outlets for employment and promote The American Legion.

This is an extremely important opportunity that has incredible positive impact for veterans and our organization. Since the beginning of the calendar year, as of July 31, 2011, The American Legion has participated in 60 Job Fairs through our national partnerships. Another 42 Job Fairs are scheduled to occur over the remainder of the year. Additionally, each Department Employment Chairperson organizes participation in numerous local Job Fairs other than our 2 national partners. Job Fair duties and expectations, instructions and flyers accompany approximately 250 educational brochures from the national office for each Job Fair. Educational material is sent automatically to Departments associated with Military.com and RecruitMilitary and per individual request.

The Economic Division encourages Departments to urge members to volunteer for the upcoming events in their respective departments. We ask that volunteer staff include Service Officers, Employment and Homeless Chairperson, Children and Youth representatives, as well as members from The American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion.

Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS)

Veterans' employment and training programs are designed to help veterans -those who face employability barriers and those who are job ready. DOL-VETS gives priority

service to all veterans, with the highest priority afforded to disabled veterans. VETS also focuses on the special attention to military personnel preparing to separate from active duty.

DOL-VETS programs include the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) program, which VETS funds through state employment security agencies. The following are other programs administered by VETS:

- Homeless Veterans Reintegration Projects.
- Section 168 of the Workforce Investment Act to fund training of veterans in useful career skills.
- Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).
- Transition Assistance Program (TAP) for military service members, funded through states and contractors in partnership with the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense.
- Federal Contractor Job Listing Program.
- Federal Veterans' Preference monitoring

Unfortunately, many of the thousands of service members who are currently leaving the service are from combat arms and non-skilled military specialties. These military acquired skills are not readily transferable to the civilian labor market. However, these individuals do possess significant skills in the areas of leadership, strategic planning, risk assessment, and management. These are skills that any employer would find beneficial to accomplishing their organizational goals. Congress should emphasis these qualities to both the public and private sectors by providing a clear voice that hiring veterans is good for business and the nation.

The total number of unemployed veterans is roughly 1 million (260,000 of them are OIF/OEF). The American Legion understands that, with an overall unemployment rate at 13.3 percent for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, there is an immense need to ensure that veterans are getting trained and are afforded ample opportunities to succeed in this unstable job market. The American Legion believes that by strengthening American veterans, we in turn strengthen America. Annually, the Department of Defense (DOD) discharges approximately 160,000 service members. Recently separated service members will seek immediate employment but, increasingly, some have chosen self-employment. In order for the Department of Labor's, Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) program to assist these veterans to achieve their goals, it needs to:

- Revamp the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) so veterans can be better informed on education, employment and business opportunities once they transition into the civilian workforce;
- Expand outreach efforts with creative initiatives designed to improve employment and training services for veterans;
- Provide information on identifying military occupations that require licenses, certificates or other credentials at the local, state, or national levels;
- Eliminate employment barriers to recently separated service members and assist in the transition from military service to the civilian labor market;
- Sponsor Hiring Fairs: similar to a Career Fairs, but with the addition of pre-qualifying veterans so they can participate in interviews with the possibility of being hired at the event;
- Strive to be a proactive agent between the business and veterans communities to provide greater employment opportunities for veterans; and,
- Increase training opportunities, support, and options for veterans who seek self-employment and entrepreneurial careers.

The American Legion strongly believes that updating TAP is vital to transitioning service members finding success in the civilian workforce. TAP has not been updated in

17 years. There should be an urgency to revamp TAP, due to the ultra-competitive global marketplace. This program needs to become more appealing and pertinent to transitioning service members. TAP has to be able to adequately explain the labor market across the country, high-growth industries and veterans' benefits in order to get the positive results these transitioning service members warrant. The American Legion recommends that performance measures and follow-up surveys be developed to ensure that transitioning service members are receiving the appropriate information in order to successfully obtain meaningful employment once discharged.

Make Transitional Assistance Program (TAP)/Disabled Transitional Assistance Program (DTAP) a Mandatory Program

DOD estimates 80 percent of separating active-duty service members attend the full TAP seminars but only 35 percent of Reserve Components service members attend. The American Legion believes these attendance numbers are a disservice to all transitioning service members, especially Reserve Component service members. In addition, many National Guard and Reserve troops have returned from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan only to encounter difficulties with their Federal and civilian employers at home, and the number of destroyed and bankrupt businesses due to military deployment is still being realized.

In numerous cases brought to the attention of The American Legion by veterans and other sources, many returning service members have lost jobs, promotions, businesses, homes, and cars and, in some cases, become homeless. The American Legion strongly believes all service members would benefit greatly by having access to the resources and knowledge that TAP/DTAP provide. TAP/DTAP also needs to update their programs to recognize the large number of National Guard and Reserve business owners who now require training, information and assistance while they attempt to salvage or recover a business which they abandoned to serve their country.

The American Legion strongly recommends DOD require all separating, service members, including those from Reserve Components, participate in Transition Assistance Program and Disabled Transition Assistance Program training not more than 180 days prior to their separation or retirement from the Armed Forces.

TAP was designed to help smooth the transition of military personnel (and family members) leaving active duty. TAP is a partnership among DOD, DOL, and Veterans Affairs (VA). The program consists of four workshops:

1. DOD Pre-separation Counseling;
2. DOL Employment Workshops;
3. VA Benefits Briefing; and,
4. Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP).

Once a service member completes the four workshops above, they are eligible for one-on-one counseling and employment assistance training through their service. Pre-separation Counseling, Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) Briefing, VA Benefits Briefing, and VA DTAP Briefing are also provided to demobilizing Guard and Reserve service members on major military installations by the Transition Assistance Offices.

Transition Assistance Program Employment Workshops provided to transitioning service members at most military installations in the United States as well as in eight overseas locations consist of two and one-half day employment workshops. The training helps service members prepare a plan for obtaining meaningful civilian employment when they leave the military. The workshop focuses on skills assessment, resume writing, job counseling and assistance, interviewing and networking skills, labor market information, and familiarization with America's workforce investment system.

Studies show service members who participate in TAP employment workshops find their first civilian job three weeks earlier than veterans who do not participate in TAP. VETS ensures every TAP participant leaves the program with a draft resume, a practice interview session, and a visit to their state job board.

Transition assistance, education, and employment are each a pillar of financial stability. They will prevent homelessness; assist the veteran to compete in the private sector, and allow our nation's veterans to contribute their military skills and education to the civilian sector. By placing veterans in suitable employment quickly, the country benefits from increased income tax revenue and reduced unemployment compensation payments, thus greatly offsetting the cost of TAP training. The American Legion recommends $404.2 million to DOL-VETS for FY 2012.

DVOPs provide outreach services and intensive employment services to meet the employment needs of eligible veterans, with priority to disabled veterans and special emphasis placed on those veterans most in need. LVERs conduct outreach to local employers to develop employment opportunities for veterans, and facilitate employment, training and placement services to veterans. In particular, many LVERs are the facilitators for the Transition Assistance Program employment workshops.

There are inadequate appropriations to several states because of policies and practices that cause these states to receive fewer positions and/or less funding. This procedure caused a deterioration of the available services provided to veterans in those states, and adversely impacts the level of services provided.

Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP)

The American Legion notes that there are approximately 136,000 homeless veterans on the street on any given night. This number, compounded with 160,000 service members entering the private sector each year with at least a third of them potentially suffering from mental illness, requires that intensive and numerous programs to prevent and assist homeless veterans are available.

Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) is a competitive grant program. Grants are awarded to states or other public entities and non-profits, including faith-based organizations, to operate employment programs that reach out to homeless veterans and help them become gainfully employed. The purpose of the HVRP is to provide services to assist in reintegrating homeless veterans into meaningful employment within the labor force and to stimulate the development of effective service delivery systems that will address the complex problems facing veterans. HVRP is the only nationwide program focused on assisting homeless veterans to reintegrate into the workforce. The American Legion recommends $50 million for this highly successful grant program in FY 2012.

National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI)

The National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI) was established to ensure a high level of proficiency and training for staff that provide veterans' employment services. NVTI provides training to Federal and state government employment service providers in competency based training courses. Current law requires all DVOPs and LVERs to be trained within 3 years of hiring. We believe that these personnel should be trained within 1 year. The American Legion recommends $6 million of funding for NVTI in FY 2012.

Veterans Workforce Investment Program (VWIP)

Veterans need proper training and tools to begin new careers after they leave military service. The Veterans Workforce Investment Program (VWIP) has received $9.6 million in funding, which allows the program to operate in only 15 states. There are thousands of veterans available for work, but they lack marketable, technological skills, especially for jobs that exist in the Information Age economy. The problem is clearly a lack of adequate funding. Veterans are the only participants in this program. The budget baseline needs to be increased to allow VETS to train eligible veterans in all 50 states in FY 2011.

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)

For almost 70 years, Federal law has accorded the right to reemployment to those who have left civilian jobs for voluntary or involuntary service in the uniformed services. In 1940, Congress enacted the Selective Training and Service Act (STSA), which provided for drafting millions of young men for World War II. A provision in the STSA gave those drafted the right to reemployment in their civilian jobs. A year later, as part of the Service Extension Act, Congress expanded the reemployment provision to make it apply to voluntary enlistees as well as draftees. In 1994, Congress enacted USERRA, a long-overdue rewrite of the reemployment statute. USERRA is codified in title 38, United States Code, sections 4301-4335 (38 U.S.C. 4301-4335).

The reemployment statute applies to essentially all employers in this country, including the Federal government, state and local governments, and private employers, regardless of size. This law applies to persons who leave civilian jobs to serve in the regular military, as well as the National Guard and Reserve. To have the right to reemployment under USERRA, an individual must meet five simple conditions:

- Must have left a position of employment for the purpose of performing service in the uniformed services. A period of service can be anything from five hours to five years, and in some cases longer.
- Must have given the employer prior oral or written notice.
- The individual's cumulative period or periods of uniformed service, relating to the employer relationship for which the person seeks reemployment, must not have exceeded five years. All involuntary service and some voluntary service are excluded from the computation of the five-year limit.
- Must have been released from the period of service without having received a punitive or other-than-honorable discharge.
- Must have made a timely application for reemployment with the pre-service employer after release from the period of service.

If the individual meets these conditions, the employer has the legal obligation to reemploy the individual in the position of employment that he or she would have attained if he or she had remained continuously employed, or in another position for which the individual is qualified that is of like seniority, status, and pay. The fact that the job is filled is not a defense to the employer's obligation to reemploy. In some cases, it is necessary for the employer to displace another employee to make room for the returning veteran. The reemployed veteran must be treated *as if he or she had been continuously employed* by the civilian employer, during the time the individual was away from work for service, for seniority and pension purposes. Section 4311 of USERRA makes it unlawful for an employer to deny an individual initial employment, retention in employment, promotion, or a benefit of employment because of the individual's membership in a uniformed service, application to join a uniformed service, performance of uniformed service, or application or obligation to perform future service.

The American Legion favors vigorous and effective enforcement of USERRA with respect to all employers, and especially with respect to the Federal government. USERRA's very first section expresses the "sense of Congress that the Federal Government should be a model employer in carrying out the provisions of this chapter." 38 U.S.C. 4301(b). Congress needs to provide adequate funding for ESGR, DOL-VETS, DOJ, and OSC, with respect to USERRA enforcement.

The American Legion recommends funding of $61 million for Program Management that encompasses USERRA and VEOA in FY 2012.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Service

Administration of VR&E and its programs is a responsibility of the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). Providing effective employment programs through

VR&E must become a priority. Until recently, VR&E's primary focus has been providing veterans with skills training, rather than providing assistance in obtaining meaningful employment. Clearly, any employability plan that does not achieve the ultimate objective – a job where the veteran succeeds despite his or her disabilities – is falling short of actually helping those veterans seeking assistance in transitioning into the civilian workforce and of VR&E's mission. Eligible veterans who are enrolled into the education and training programs receive a monthly allowance to offset living costs associated with attending training while not working. Yet, those veterans enrolled in VR&E for direct employment assistance do not receive a monthly living stipend.

However, they attend workshops to learn how to write resumes, work on interview skills and attend Job Fairs, all of which take time – 372 days on average, according to VA data; 54 days to enroll, 118 days to develop a rehabilitation plan and 200 days to find a job after the plan has been executed. Anyone who started a new career knows looking for a job can be a full-time job in itself. Not providing a living stipend for veterans seeking direct employment services through VR&E could lead those veterans to a different track and they may miss out on meaningful employment. The American Legion strongly urges Congress and VA leadership to approve a living stipend to all who are enrolled in VR&E regardless of whether their rehabilitation plan calls for training or direct employment.

Another problem hindering the effectiveness of the VR&E program, as cited in reports by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), is exceptionally high workloads for the limited number of staff. This hinders the staff's ability to effectively assist individual veterans with identifying employment opportunities. A recent GAO report noted that 54 percent of all 57 regional offices stated they have fewer counselors than they need and 40 percent said they have fewer employment coordinators than they need. As in the past, achieving ample staffing in VR&E is a major concern, especially with recent numbers stating that each VA counselor maintains a case load of 145 veterans. With 145 cases to manage, counselors simply do not have the time it takes to teach veterans how to apply to Federal jobs or to build the community connections to help veterans find jobs.

Without sufficient staffing, the success of VR&E programs becomes extremely challenging, particularly due to the returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan and their more complex cases. Hiring more staff to meet the demands of these veterans is simply a must. The American Legion completely supports fully staffing VR&E with more vocational rehabilitation counselors and employment coordinators to lower case loads so these counselors/coordinators can provide more individualized attention to veterans throughout training and assist them in finding suitable employment.

No VA mission is more important at this time in our history -- given the nation's involvement in two wars and the uncertain economic situation -- than enabling America's veterans to have a seamless transition from military service to the civilian workforce. The success of the VR&E program will significantly be measured by these veterans' ability to obtain gainful employment and achieve a high quality of life. To meet America's obligation to these service-connected veterans, VA leadership must continue to focus on marked improvements in case management, vocational counseling, and most importantly, job placement.

Interagency Cooperation Between DOL-VETS and VA

It is our experience that the interagency collaboration and communication between the VR&E program, and the Department of Labor (DOL) Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) has been lacking in the past; however, there has been steady improvement.

In recent years, many states did not refer veterans from the VR&E program to VETS for assistance in obtaining employment. Veterans with high-tech skills and advanced

education were referred to expensive commercial placement agencies that do not specialize in employment assistance for veterans, and difficult to place veterans were sent to VETS. Therefore, to assist in the correction of these deficiencies a Memorandum of Understanding between VA and DOL was developed and signed in October, 2005 stating that each agency would work for the smooth transition of veterans to the civilian work force. This agreement is authorized in accordance with Section 4102A (b) (3), title 38, U.S.C.

In discussions with numerous VETS representatives across the country, The American Legion is hearing a variety of opinions on the current implementation process and progress of the MOU. Some states report a total lack of communication and information sharing while other states already enjoy a strong relationship between the local VETS and VR&E Offices. A majority of VETS representatives contacted spoke of a markedly improved level of communication between the two agencies, along with other positive developments such as improvement in local data sharing and combined training on the local and national levels. In addition, national representatives from the two agencies are currently reporting a close and cooperative relationship, and the expectation is that this relationship will continue to improve over time.

In some states, however, it has been reported that the signing of the MOU has not led to an improvement in cooperation between the two agencies. Some problems cited were a difference in the perceptions of the primary mission, differing education levels of VA case managers and the DVOPs and LVERs, and the unenforceable mandate for the two agencies to communicate and cooperate on a local level. The DVOPs and LVERs are controlled by each individual state and have their own requirements, making a state and federal program difficult to synchronize. While poor coordination between VR&E counselors and their VETS counterparts have contributed to the shortfalls of the VR&E program, a number of states have begun to improve communications. A majority of VETS representatives have commended their VR&E counterparts for their willingness to ensure the successful implementation of the MOU that is designed to improve rehabilitation, training and employment outcomes for disabled veterans.

The American Legion recommends exploring possible training programs geared specifically for VR&E Counselors through the National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI). Contracting for standardized or specialized training for VR&E employees could very well strengthen and improve overall program performance. NVTI serves as a valuable resource for VETS employment specialists and has contributed to a marked improvement in VETS performance.

Provide Military Occupational Skills and Experience Translation for Civilian Employment Counseling (Licenses and Certifications)

The American Legion notes that due to the current demands of the military, greater emphasis on the Reserve component of the Armed Forces created employment hardships for many Reservists. The American Legion supports amending Section 4101(5), title 38, U.S.C., to add Subsection (D) to the list of "Eligible Persons" for Job Counseling, Training, and Placement Service for Veterans, to include members in good standing of Active Reserve and Guard Units of the Armed Forces of the United States who have completed basic and advanced Duty for Training (ACDUTRA) and have been awarded a Military Occupation Specialty.

DOD provides some of the best vocational training in the nation for its military personnel. DOD establishes measures and evaluates performance standards for every occupation with the Armed Forces. There are many occupational career fields in the Armed Forces that can easily translate to a civilian counterpart many occupations in the civilian workforce that require a license or certification. In the Armed Forces, these unique occupations are performed to approve military standards that may meet or exceed

the civilian license or certification criteria. Upon separation, many former military personnel, certified as proficient in their military occupational career, are not licensed or certified to perform the comparable job in the civilian workforce, thus hindering chances for immediate civilian employment and delaying career advancement. This situation creates an artificial barrier to employment upon separation from military service.

A study by the Presidential Commission on Service members' and Veterans' Transition Assistance identified a total of 105 military professions where civilian credentialing is required. The most easily identifiable job is that of a Commercial Truck Driver in which there is a drastic shortage of qualified drivers. Thousands of veterans must venture through each state's laws instead of a single national test or transfer of credentials from the military. We have testified alongside members of the trucking industry to the U.S. House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity for the need for accelerated MGIB payments for these courses and other matters.

The American Legion support efforts to eliminate employment barriers that impede the transfer of military job skills to the civilian labor market. Our organization also supports efforts by the DOD to take appropriate steps to ensure that service members be trained, tested, evaluated and issued any licensure or certification that may be required in the civilian workforce. The American Legion support efforts to increase the civilian labor market's acceptance of the occupational training provided by the military.

Heroes to Hometowns (H2H) Program

The Heroes to Hometowns (H2H) program was designed to assist severely injured, ill or wounded service members reintegrate back into their communities through a team of assistance utilizing the local community (Posts) of The American Legion. The American Legion saw the immediate influx of those who were injured while serving in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as they returned home to their communities; often receiving minimal assistance. In accordance with the motto of "Veterans Serving Veterans," The American Legion initiated The Heroes to Hometowns Program to help guide severely ill, injured or wounded warriors readjust within each of their communities.

The H2H program has hosted several Job Fair events at Walter Reed Army Medical Center for active-duty, Guardsmen, Reservists, and their families. The H2H program has hosted an 8 week course for those service members and families interested in starting their own business. In collaboration with The Wounded Warriors program, H2H has helped donate and mail over $20,000 in checks to veterans and their families in need across the United States, these checks have ranged from $60 to $500.

Additionally, the H2H program has hosted and co-hosted several fundraisers and donating the proceeds in excess of $10,000 dollars to assist with the adaptations of homes for wounded veterans across the United States. On American Legion Day, the H2H program brought out 55 wounded warriors, their family members, and caregivers to Tropicana Field, home to the Tampa Bay Devil Rays, for a therapeutic exercise for veterans with post-traumatic stress, as well as portions of the proceeds going towards the purchase of a foreclosed home to be renovated into a H2H home for transitioning veterans and their families.

Since 2006, thousands of veterans have received assistance either directly or indirectly under the banner of the Heroes to Hometowns program. We continue to find ways to improve the program for the Departments and Posts. Furthermore, The American Legion's H2H program was the first of any Veteran Service Organization (VSO) to organize, address the service members needs, and the first to ever host a Job Fair for those veterans (active-duty, Guardsmen, Reservists, and their families) transitioning out of the military into the civilian world. The H2H program, along with its partnerships with several other organizations will continue to host Job Fairs throughout the United States to impact and decrease the unemployment rate and underemployed veteran population.

During the 93rd National Convention, the H2H program co-hosted with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and local Minnesota Chambers one-of-two annually large Job Fairs in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Veterans' Preference

The American Legion is deeply concerned with the protection of the veteran and the prevention of illegal hiring practices. Currently, veterans are filing claims after the non-compliance employment event occurred and may become financially disadvantaged while waiting of results of the claim. Proactive measures and continuous oversight must be exercised to protect veterans from unfair hiring practices, not just reactionary investigations.

The following steps taken by the Federal government to protect veterans' employment and demonstrates reactionary measures to assist veterans which may take months to resolve. Many veterans give up or do not file complaints because they must seek employment elsewhere or face serious financial difficulties. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) administers entitlement to *veterans' preference* in employment. DOL, through VETS, provides assistance to all persons having claims under USERRA. DOL is the enforcement authority for USERRA, and it processes all formal complaints of violations of the law. The veteran may then request that the Department of Justice (DOJ) litigate on their behalf but only after a certain period has passed.

Veterans' Preference is authorized by the Veterans' Preference Act (VPA) of 1944; it only applies to Federal government employment. It provides that most veterans are to receive an extra five points (ten points for disabled veterans) in receiving and keeping Federal jobs. The Veterans' Employment Opportunity Act (VEOA) of 1998 extended certain rights and remedies to recently separated veterans. VETS was given the responsibility to investigate complaints filed by veterans who believe their veterans' preference rights have been violated and to conduct an extensive compliance assistance program. Veterans' Preference is being ignored by numerous agencies. Figures show a decline in claims by newer veterans compared to Gulf War I. In reality employment opportunities are not being broadcast. Federal agencies as well as subcontractors are required by law to notify OPM of job opportunities but these vacancies are rarely made available to the public.

The American Legion reiterates its position that protection of veterans' employment rights should be proactive and continuous oversight must be emplaced to protect veterans from unfair hiring practices. Reactionary investigations and lawsuits are not sufficient. We further believe that the veteran must be protected at the onset of the hiring process, corrective actions to remedy the veteran's situation in the veteran's favor are not guaranteed. We recommend that DOJ provide a detailed description of their veterans' employment activities.

A grateful nation created veterans' preference to ensure fair treatment for those citizens who served this country in the Armed Forces. Veterans' Preference should play a large role in employing veterans and their spouses. Federal agencies need to make sure that their Human Resource personnel are properly trained to effectively implement veterans' preference. The Federal government has scores of employment opportunities that educated, well-trained, and motivated veterans can fill given a fair and equitable chance to compete. Working together, all Federal agencies should identify those vocational fields, especially those with high turnover rates, for transitioning veterans who are trying to continue their service within the Federal government.

Small Business

Public Law (PL) 109-461, the Veterans Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006, established participation goals and other requirements to

increase VA contracting opportunities for veteran-owned small businesses. VA implemented these requirements by establishing the Veterans First Contracting program. The program placed preferences and required businesses to register in VA's hierarchy of socioeconomic contracting preferences and required businesses to register in VA's VetBiz Vendor Information Pages (VIP) to be eligible for contract awards.

VA is the only agency within the Federal government that verifies the status of veteran-owned businesses participating in this Veteran-Owned Small Business (VOSB) and Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) programs. The growth in the VOSB and SDVOSB programs has also spurred growing concerns that veteran-owned businesses may not be receiving the full benefit of these contracting programs. The Office of Inspector General (OIG) initiated an audit of the VOSB and SDVOSB programs and began investigating an increasing number of referrals alleging that businesses have misrepresented themselves as veteran-owned businesses to obtain VA contracts. An audit of the VOSB and SDVOSB found that 76 percent of the businesses reviewed were ineligible for either the program and /or the specific VOSB or SDVOSB contract award.

In FY 2010, the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) reported that VA procurements totaled $15.4 billion, of which $3.5 billion went to VOSBs and of that $3.5 billion, $3 billion went to SDVOSBs. The audit results indicated that VA awarded somewhere between $500 million to $2.6 billion in VOSB and SDVOSB contracts to ineligible businesses during a 12-month period. The American Legion agrees with the OIG that to fix the problem, VA must ensure that legitimate veteran-owned businesses are receiving the contracts intended for them. VA is currently the only Federal agency that verifies the status of veteran-owned businesses, yet many contracts are still going to companies that are ineligible for the program or do not meet the specific contract requirements.

Small Business Development Workshops (Milwaukee and Mid-Winter Conference)

The National Economic Commission hosted an extremely successful Business Development Workshop in which 100 participants attended. *The* American Legion's Business Task Force assembled top experts from the private and Federal sectors. Margot Dorfman, Founder/CEO of the Women's Chamber of Commerce talked about the challenges of small business ownership – especially for women – and the potential for success. Ms. Dorfman also discusses two programs created to help women entrepreneurs; the Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB) federal contract program, and the Economically Disadvantaged, Women-Owned Small Business (EDWOSB) program.

Attendees also heard about four veteran-employment programs developed by Dr. Michael Haynie, Assistant Professor of Entrepreneurship at Syracuse University. Dr. Haynie's first program, Entrepreneurship Boot Camp for Veterans (EBV) with Disabilities, began in 2007 and was joined three years later by EBV families, a training program for family members who have become caregivers for wounded veterans. In addition, Teresa Lewis from Department of Treasury provided tips and tricks when it comes to marketing to the government. Other topics included subcontracting opportunities for small businesses bonding and access to capital, registering with the government start a business, purchase an existing business, and how to begin a franchise.

Home Loan Guaranty Program

The Home Loan Guaranty program has been in effect since 1944 and has afforded approximately 18.6 million veterans the opportunity to purchase homes. The Home Loan programs offer veterans a centralized, affordable and accessible method of purchasing homes in return for their service to this nation. The program has been so successful over past years that not only has the program paid for itself, but has also shown a profit in

recent years. Administrative costs constitute a relatively small portion—less than 10 percent—of the total capital and operating costs. The predominant costs are claims costs and other costs associated with foreclosure and alternatives taken to avoid foreclosure. Each claim costs the Federal government about $20,000. However, revenues that VA collects from different sources, including the funding fee that borrowers pay, property sales, and proceeds from acquired loans and vendee loans, offset this cost.

In 1982, PL 97-253 was enacted and imposed a ½ % funding fee (1/2% of the loan amount) on all veterans using the loan program, with the exception of those veterans in receipt of compensation for a service connected disability. This was considered to be a temporary measure to help reduce the national debt. Unfortunately, this fee has become a fixture of the home loan program and, even more unfortunately, it has been raised numerous times by Congress since 1982. Presently, veterans using the program for the first time pay 2.15% of the loan amount and those using it for a second or subsequent time pay 3.3%.

Although veterans are permitted to include the fee in the loan amount, it constitutes an added financial burden. For example, a veteran using the program for the first time obtaining a $200,000 loan will pay $4,300. For a second time user the fee on this loan amount would be $6,600. While this is substantial in and of itself, it is even more significant when you consider the amount of interest the veteran will pay on these amounts as a 30 year mortgage is amortized.

The following persons are exempt from paying the funding fee:

- Veterans receiving VA compensation for service-connected disabilities.
- Veterans who would be entitled to receive compensation for service-connected disabilities if they did not receive retirement pay.
- Surviving spouses of veterans who died in service or from service-connected disabilities (whether or not such surviving spouses are veterans with their own entitlement and whether or not they are using their own entitlement on the loan).

The American Legion strongly urges Congress to consider either eliminating this fee or significantly reducing it. Veterans should not have to make such a significant financial sacrifice in order to use a benefit that they have earned as a result of their service to America.

Specially Adaptive Housing

The American Legion is pleased to support the VA Secretary's efforts to improve the housing arrangements to better suit disabled veterans' needs, with specific emphasis on severe burn injuries, and to accommodate those veterans with severe burns. The American Legion additionally applauds efforts to assist disabled veterans to receive adaptive equipment for automobiles. The American Legion conveys that specially adaptive housing should also include those veterans suffering from Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and other debilitating injuries. We are also concerned with the ambiguity of the term "severe" in that there are many different levels of injury where a severe injury to one individual may not be as severe to another.

Veteran Homelessness

The American Legion supports the efforts of public and private sector agencies and organizations with the resources necessary to aid homeless veterans and their families. The American Legion supports proposals that will provide medical, rehabilitative and employment assistance to homeless veterans and their families. Homeless veteran programs should be granted full appropriations to provide supportive services such as, but not limited to, outreach, health care, habilitation and rehabilitation, case management, daily living, personal financial planning, transportation, vocational counseling, employment and training, and education.

Veterans need a sustained, coordinated effort that provides: secure housing and nutritious meals; essential physical health care; substance abuse aftercare and mental health counseling; and personal development and empowerment. Veterans also need job assessment, training and placement assistance. The American Legion believes all programs to assist homeless veterans must focus on helping veterans reach their highest level of self-management.

Homeless Veterans Statistics

The 2009 Veteran Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) stated that on a single night in January 2009, 75, 609 veterans were homeless; 57 percent were staying in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program; and the remaining 43 percent were living on the street, in an abandoned building, or another place not meant for human habitation (i.e., unsheltered). Additionally, an estimated 136,334 veterans spent at least one night in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program between October 1, 2008 and September 30, 2009. This accounts for 1 of every 168 veterans in the United States or 1 out of every 10 veterans living in poverty.

In addition to the complex set of factors affecting all homelessness (the extreme shortage of affordable housing, livable income, and access to health care), a large number of displaced and at-risk veterans live with lingering effects of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, and a lack of family and social support networks. Many times these veterans have mental health disorders related to their honorable service to their country, and are unable to compensate for their condition. They unfortunately deteriorate to unrecognizable individuals compared to their pre-military experience.

Potential Homeless Veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF)

Some OIF/OEF veterans are at high risk of becoming homeless. Combat veterans of OIF/OEF and the Global War on Terror who need help – from mental health programs to housing, employment training and job placement assistance – are beginning to flow into the nation's community-based homeless veterans' service organizations. Currently, more than 10,000 OIF/OEF veterans are homeless or in programs aimed at keeping them off the streets. Already stressed by an increasing need for assistance by post-Vietnam Era veterans and strained budgets, homeless services providers are deeply concerned about the inevitable rising tide of combat veterans who will soon be requesting their support.

Since 9/11, nearly 2 million American men and women have served or are serving in a war zone. Rotations of troops returning home from Iraq are now a common occurrence. Military analysts and government sources say the deployments and repatriation of combat veterans is unlike anything the nation has experienced since the end of the Vietnam War. VA reports that nearly 65 percent of these homeless veterans experienced combat. Now receiving combat veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan daily, the VA is reporting that a high percentage of those casualties need treatment for mental health problems. That is consistent with studies conducted by VA and other agencies that conclude anywhere from 15 to more than 35 percent of combat veterans will experience some clinical issues related to PTSD, depression or other psychosocial problems.

Homeless Women Veterans and Children

Homeless veterans' service providers' clients have historically been almost exclusively male. That is changing as more women veterans and women veterans with young children have sought help. Additionally, the approximately 200,000 female Iraq veterans are isolated during and after deployment making it difficult to find gender-specific peer-based support. Over the last decade, the number of homeless women veterans have almost doubled. Women veterans represented 7.5 percent of the 136,334

homeless veterans who were sheltered sometime between October 1, 2008, and September 30, 2009. Access to gender-appropriate care for these veterans is essential.

More women are engaging in combat roles in Iraq where there are no traditional front lines. In 2002, the VA began a study of women and PTSD. The study includes subjects whose PTSD resulted from stressors that were both military and non-military in nature. Preliminary research shows that women currently serving have much higher exposure to traumatic experiences, rape and assault prior to joining the military. Other reports show extremely high rates of sexual trauma while women are in the service (20-40 percent). Repeated exposure to traumatic stressors increases the likelihood of PTSD. Researchers also suspect that many women join the military, at least in part, to get away from abusive environments. Like the young veterans, these women may have no safe supportive environment to return to, adding yet more risk of homeless outcomes.

Homeless veteran service providers recognize that they will have to accommodate the needs of the changing homeless veteran population, including increasing numbers of women and veterans with dependents. Access to family housing through the distribution of the thousands of new Section 8 vouchers that will be made available through the HUD-VASH program will offer an important new resource allowing VA staff to assist the veteran and her family. Consequently, The American Legion supports funding for more vouchers so homeless veterans can re-establish their lives and productivity through supportive services in safe and affordable housing.

The American Legion supports the creation of a fund/grant that would assist homeless veterans with security deposits and other essential needs/expenses that occur when moving into housing. The American Legion has also recognized a need for housing specialists to assist those homeless veterans who receive a HUD-VASH voucher with finding housing as well as being a liaison between the housing authorities and property owners. Furthermore, The American Legion recommends: more collaboration and civic engagement; access to stable and affordable housing; and economic security to prevent and end homelessness. The American Legion understands that veterans need a sustained coordinated effort that provides secure housing, nutritious meals, essential physical health care, substance abuse aftercare and mental health counseling, as well as personal development and empowerment. Veterans also need job assessment, training and placement assistance. The American Legion believes all programs to assist homeless veterans must focus on helping veterans reach their highest level of self-management.

Finally, The American Legion supports the VA's Five-Year Plan to assist homeless veterans in retaining or acquiring: safe housing; needed treatment services; opportunities to retain or return to employment; and benefits assistance. We also commend the VA's launching of a new prevention initiative to serve approximately 22,000 homeless and at-risk veteran families through the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program. This initial $60 million award will serve veteran families at 85 non-profit community agencies in 40 states and the District of Columbia. Supportive services include outreach, case management, assistance in obtaining VA benefits, and assistance in obtaining and coordinating other public benefits. Grantees will also have the ability to make time-limited temporary financial assistance payments on behalf of veterans for purposes such as rent payments, utility payments, security deposits and moving costs.

FINANCE COMMISSION

Kenneth D. Danilson, Iowa, Chairman
George A. Buskirk, Jr., Indiana, National Treasurer
Shawn T. Long, CPA, Indiana, Director

The primary obligation of the National Finance Commission is to prepare a yearly budget for the National Executive Committee, handle funds under that budget, and

exercise reasonable oversight to see that the various divisions and departments of the national organization operate within appropriations. The National Finance Commission includes seven members, with the National Adjutant as ex-officio secretary and the National Commander and National Treasurer as ex-officio members. Also attending these meetings are the Executive Directors of the Washington and Indianapolis offices and the Finance Director and liaison observers from the National Executive Committee.

The national organization had an operating surplus of $1,168,058 for 2010. We received $13.50 dues per member, allocating $10.50 to the General Fund and $3 to The American Legion Magazine. Income of the national organization derives from annual membership dues, interest on investments, magazine advertisements, Emblem Sales, contributions and other approved activities.

A full financial statement is incorporated in the auditor's report. Your attention is also directed to the Reports of Committees and Trusts, which can be found in this publication.

These entities include:

American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Inc.
American Legion Endowment Fund Corp.
American Legion Life Insurance and Trust Committee
American Legion Emblem Committee
American Legion Overseas Graves Decoration Trust

Emblem Sales Committee
Alvan T. Fuller, Massachusetts, Chairman
Richard B. Keith, Indiana, Director

The American Legion emblem is the exclusive property of the National Headquarters. The sale of the emblem, emblem pins, merchandise carrying the emblem and other items of organizational equipment is the responsibility of the National Headquarters in Indianapolis. The following tables show gross sales, net earnings, etc., for the entire calendar year 2010 and for the first three months of 2011.

January 1 to December 31, 2010
(12 months)

Gross Sales	*$11,136,911*
Cost of Goods Sold	*6,117,014*
Overhead	*3,451,356*
Operating Profit	*1,568,541*

Total number of 2010 orders processed was *101,090*

January 1 to March 31, 2011
(3 months)

Gross Sales	*$ 2,361,119*
Cost of Goods Sold	*1,190,407*
Overhead	*823,614*
Operating Profit	*347,098*

Total orders processed for first 3 months of 2011 was *22,484*

The American Legion Insurance Committee
Kenneth L. Powell, Sr., Florida, Chairman
William A. Pease, Indiana, Director

Assigned to the National Finance Commission, The American Legion Insurance Committee provides oversight for the several insurance plans previously and currently offered by the Legion. Funds generated from the sale of insurance products help support the Legion's national programs: veterans' affairs and rehabilitation, Americanism and children & youth.

United Services Automobile Association (USAA)

In November of 2010, The American Legion launched a relationship with United Services Automobile Association (USAA). USAA provides insurance products to Legion family members to include Home, Auto, Life, Long-Term Care and Medicare Supplement. USAA also provides a complete array of financial products including: Checking, Money Market, Investment and Credit Card Options. For assistance with any of these products contact USAA at 1-877-699-2654.

Mutual of Omaha

Mutual of Omaha became a contracted insurance carrier for The American Legion in May 2010. Mutual of Omaha offers guaranteed-issue life insurance to Legionnaires ages 45-85. Requests for information should be directed to Mutual of Omaha at 1-800-780-0319.

Marsh

Insurance products (with the exception of Mutual of Omaha and Union Fidelity) purchased prior to November, 29 2010 are being administered by Marsh. Any questions regarding these products should be directed to Marsh by calling 1-800-542-5547.

Birthday Life-Whole Life Insurance

The Birthday Life-Whole life plan is unavailable for new coverage. Union Fidelity terminated their agreement with The American Legion as of December 31, 2005. Policyholder requests for Birthday Life information should be directed to the Administrator, Union Fidelity Life Insurance Co., 500 Virginia Dr., Fort Washington PA 19034; 1-800-621-0393.

FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMISSION
Randall A. Fisher, Kentucky, Chairman
Barry A. Searle, Pennsylvania, Director

The following report covers the activities of the Foreign Relations Commission and its staff during the program year ending June 30, 2011.

The Ninety Second Annual National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and the Fall and Spring Meetings of the National Executive Committee approved certain positions expressed in resolutions submitted to those bodies through the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations and the Foreign Relations Commission, respectively. The approved resolutions are set forth as follows:

National Convention, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
August 31, September 1, 2, 2010

Resolution No. 2	Republic of China
Resolution No. 61	Support for New JPAC Headquarters Facility and a Second

	Laboratory
Resolution No. 69	Policy Regarding Support of Republic of Korea
Resolution No. 71	Unilateral Action for Vietnam POW/MIA
Resolution No. 72	Middle East/Gulf States Foreign Policies
Resolution No. 73	POW/MIA Policies
Resolution No. 75	Vietnam Human Rights
Resolution No. 76	Support for Foreign Exchange Education Programs
Resolution No. 77	The American Legion Global Trade Policies
Resolution No. 78	Policy on Africa
Resolution No. 79	The American Legion Foreign Policy Objectives
Resolution No. 80	Taiwan Defense Arms Sales
Resolution No. 81	Central America's Democracy Promotion
Resolution No. 207	Support for the Increased Personnel and Funding
Resolution No. 225	The American Legion's Policy on the United Nations
Resolution No. 226	The American Legion's Policy on Veterans Mail at Overseas Embassies
Resolution No. 227	Save the Montagnards
Resolution No. 345	Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) Funding and Support
Resolution No. 346	The American Legion's Support for World Press Freedom
Resolution No. 347	Enhanced Funding for USAID
Resolution No. 348	Expand Foreign Service Officer Corps.
Resolution No. 349	Interagency Policy Coordination & Cooperation
Resolution No. 350	Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command Funding
Resolution No. 351	Renew Korean War POW/MIA Discussions
Resolution No. 352	Support Secure Borders and War Against Drugs
Resolution No. 353	The American Legion's Cuban Policy
Resolution No. 354	Defense POW/MIA Accounting Office (DPMO) Funding
Resolution No. 355	Social Security Survivor Benefits for Non-resident Alien Spouses and Dependents

National Executive Committee Meetings
May 4-5, 2011

Resolution No. 18	POW/MIA Accounting Policies
Resolution No. 19	Rescinding Obsolete Resolutions Dealing with Foreign Relations

National Executive Committee Meetings, Fall 2010

An executive session of the Foreign Relations Commission met on October 11, 2010 in the Circle Suite of the Sheraton Hotel to discuss current foreign policy issues pertaining to the vital interests of the United States and to review two resolutions.

Doc Simon, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Commission, opened the business session and welcomed attending members of the commission, members of the sub-commission, and past national commanders.

The commission proceeded by evaluating the following two resolutions: 1) The American Flex Fuel Resolution; 2) Urge the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) to Utilize the Knowledge of WWII Veterans in Accounting Activities (Register Resolution Number 2640).

After the commission conducted a thorough analysis of each proposed resolution and engaged in lively discussions on the issues at hand, the commission reached a consensus and made unanimous recommendations to the National Executive Committee (NEC) to reject one of the resolutions and to receive and record the other.

The commission's recommendation to receive and record the JPAC-related resolution was based on the most current annual report from JPAC, which states that they are already performing these interviews as part of their process of obtaining leads for determined future investigation missions.

In regards to the rejection of the resolution pertaining to America's transition to flex fuel, the commission recommended the rejection of this resolution because the already in place Resolution No. 224 is all encompassing of this issue and the aforementioned resolution would be redundant.

The business meeting also included a foreign relations report by Freddy Gessner. His presentation began with a side by side comparison of the American Legion's and the White House's 2011 fiscal year budget recommendations for the U.S. Department of State, International Aid and Programs. The 2010 fiscal year recommendations were also presented and reviewed for comparison.

Additionally, the presentation included a recount and recent history regarding significant events of foreign nations that are of interest to the American Legion. Highlights include: the recent announcement of the planned successor of leadership in North Korea, China's economic policy and their passing Japan as the second largest economy in the world, Iran's planned January activation of its Bushehr nuclear plant, the gun violence and immigration policy of Mexico, the catastrophic flooding in Pakistan, the role of our troops with Iraqi security forces and the planned withdrawal by the end of 2011, and the actions in Afghanistan involving our troop surge, visit from President Karzai, and the planned withdrawal of our remaining troops by the end of 2011.

Mr. Gessner wrapped up his presentation by covering the most recent annual POW/MIA report released by JPAC. The report noted that JPAC conducted 69 missions over the past year and their efforts identified 98 individuals. The location and number of individuals indentified were: 53 from WWII, 26 from Korea, and 19 from Vietnam. The USS Heezen conducted underwater investigations off the coast of Vietnam that resulted in the identification of five individuals.

The report provided an update from the above mentioned three wars since their investigations began. The updates stated: since 1978 JPAC has identified 453 personnel from WWII, with approximately 74,000 still unaccounted for; since 1982 JPAC has identified 123 personnel from Korea with approximately 8,500 unaccounted for (4,573 of whom are known to be missing within North Korea); since 1973 JPAC has identified 918 personnel from Vietnam with approximately 1,727 still unaccounted for.

In other POW/MIA-related matters, the remembrance ceremony held at Hickam Air Force Base nine years after the date of the crash that occurred was discussed. The ceremony was held in remembrance of the death of the seven JPAC personnel and the nine Vietnamese officials who perished in the crash of an M-17 helicopter during an investigation mission in the Quang Binh Province on April 7, 2001.

On Tuesday, October 12 the National Security and Foreign Relations Commissions met in joint session. The main focus of the joint session was the effects that the recent wars have had on today's troops. To highlight this topic, members of both commissions watched the independent film titled "This is War: Memories of Iraq" which was directed by Gary Mortensen. The film followed troops from the Oregon National Guard and provided their personal accounts of events that occurred during filming. The bravery of our soldiers was depicted by one soldier in particular, who lost his lower leg during combat but continued to man his machine gun on top of his vehicle in order to put the safety and survivability of his fellow soldiers ahead of his own life threatening wound. The joint session found the film to be a compelling testament to the bravery and selflessness of our troops currently serving overseas.

The Foreign Relations Commission looks forward to working with National Commander Foster and the distinguished members of the National Executive Committee in preparation for the National Convention. We thank you for your support.

Washington Conference

Afternoon Joint Session / POW/MIA Update, March 1st

The expert panel on the POW/MIA issues was comprised of Johnie Webb, Deputy to the Commander for Public Relations and Legislative Affairs, Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and Ruben Caudle, Stoney Beach Program Manager, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). The discussion revolved around the construction of a new $100 million headquarters and lab for identification of American dead from past wars was expected to begin in fiscal year 2011 at Hickam Air Force Base as the nation speeds up accounting efforts by passing the National Defense Authorization Act 2010, which states that JPAC will increase the number of remains account for to 200 persons per year by 2015. However, this goal is currently unattainable due to Congress not passing a 2011 budget or passing a continuing resolution for 2012. The Defense Authorization Act calls for increased funding, increasing the number for JPAC personnel, and consolidating all JPAC operations into a single all-encompassing facility located at Hickam AFB.

The remains of more than 80,000 American soldiers are unaccounted for worldwide with the majority of over 74,000 missing throughout Europe. In order to increase the number of accounted for personnel each year JPAC will use their 2012 budget to increase accounting efforts in Europe. Another reason for increased efforts in Europe are the difficulties in accounting in Southeast Asia to include the harsh terrain and weather conditions in jungles and mountains in Vietnam which allow only a 90-day window to conduct accounting operations as well as the ending of diplomatic relations with North Korea.

Members of the audience were very interested to hear about Stoney Beach's efforts in Southeastern Asian countries bordering Vietnam. These countries such as Cambodia allow unrestricted accounting through surveying and interviewing villagers along the border of Vietnam. This unrestricted accounting allows researchers to gain experience in anthropology that cannot be gained through classroom training alone.

In the past retention of scientist at JPAC has been affected by the high cost of living in Hawaii and the distance living there places between the employees and their families living stateside. The solution JPAC came up with is JPAC Forensic Science Academy. The academy is a program that graduate level students can attend for real world training that also grants one graduate level college credit. The benefit to the program for JPAC is the program includes a six-week recovery operation in Laos and Vietnam. This allows JPAC to get to know the students and watch how they perform in the field. This year JPAC received 26 applications from students who attended the program for six open positions. This means JPAC is now receiving the best and brightest graduates who are now joining with a full understanding of what employment with JPAC means.

Wednesday Session (Business Meeting) March 3rd

Foreign Relations Commission Chairman Randall Fisher led the business session in three sections: 1) the proposed combing of several resolutions with legislative intent; 2) the proposed resolution to rescind 48 non-legislative resolutions, reducing the total number down from 65 to 17; and 3) a power point presentation and discussion on U.S. Federal Budget and U.S. Foreign Aid led by Freddy Gessner, Assistant Director, National Security / Foreign Relations Division.

The Foreign Relations commission reviewed a proposal to reduce the number of resolutions with legislative intent by combing several with similar purpose and language reducing the total number from 33 to 25. The commission passed the proposal and agreed that future resolutions should be all encompassing of issues to prevent redundancy of resolutions. They should also be clear but allow broad interpretation that will allow staff the ability to perform their duties more effectively.

The proposed resolution to rescind 48 non-legislative resolutions, reducing the total number from 65 to 17 is the result of an effort by National Headquarters to reduce The American Legion's total number of non-legislative resolutions. The commission agreed that the listed resolutions should be rescinded due to their purpose being outdated no longer needed. The commission agreed to look forward to creating fewer resolutions that will provide the commission with a clearer focus.

Mr. Gessner proceeded by giving a presentation encompassing the FY 2012 Foreign Relations Budget Recommendations. The presentation included figures from the FY 2011 estimated figures from the continuing resolution bill that was passed from the FY 2010 budget. Serious efforts to improving critical world situation through vigorous and through diplomacy are vital to the peace and security of the United States and the world. Given the current state of the world, America needs to take actions that emphasize its wish to build new and meaningful international relationships which promote peace, justice, and democracy. This is the mission of the Department of State (DoS). The government's long arm for peace deserves adequate funding by congress passing a FY 2012 budget that provides the DoS the means to maintain stability and promote the interest of America in countries that have been altered by our military actions. Following military operations the DoS becomes this nation's initial deterrent to international threats. The DoS also creates markets in foreign countries that will create jobs in America by opening trade. It is on this basis that The American Legion will continue to support the full funding of DoS programs such as USAID who provide solutions in foreign countries that enhance America's national security.

Fiscal Year 2012 Federal Budget
Foreign Relations Views and Estimates

State and Other International Programs

The American Legion believes the following objectives should be incorporated into US foreign policy in order to maintain peace with freedom while preserving and promoting democracy:

- Recognition that the United States has great and multiple responsibilities as a leader of the Free World.
- Dedication to achievement of world peace with freedom, secured by a peace through strength posture.
- Support for a global fight on multiple fronts to end the scourge of terrorism.
- Support for democracy and human rights in other countries when such is consistent with US national interests and national power.
- Participation in essential collective security alliances provided our allies contribute their fair share.
- Negotiation of equitable, verifiable arms control agreements, which improve US national security.
- Opposition to the spread of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons or long-range ballistic missiles which may be used by terrorists, terrorist organizations, communists or aggressor nations.
- Determined opposition to international terrorism and drug trafficking.

- Support for responsible international organizations that are consistent with US sovereignty and serve US national interests.
- Participation in an increasingly interdependent Free World trading system based on fair and equitable trading practices.
- Recognition that the President must be the chief architect of US foreign policy as envisioned in the US Constitution, while Congress performs important functions of advice, oversight, and funding.
- Support for the appropriate resources to promote and protect US vital national interests world-wide.

The American Legion supports policies and legislation that enhances funding for the US Agency for International Development (USAID) within the Department of State (DoS) and seeks use of that funding towards targeted states whose failure to provide for its people could result in the expansion of international terrorism. The American Legion believes that because of its technical knowledge and expertise, USAID should be given a greater role in the decision making process for the disbursement and usage of funds targeted for reconstruction in nations where our military presence has resulted in the need for infrastructure redevelopment.

POW/MIA

In addition, a sacred value of The American Legion is the full accounting and repatriation of fallen U.S. service personnel. The American Legion supports Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command activities to locate, rescue and return all those POW/MIA who may still survive and to repatriate all recoverable remains of U.S. military personnel who have fallen in foreign battle zones. The American Legion calls upon Congress to support personnel increases and full funding for the efforts of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command and the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office.

FY 2011 State, Foreign Operations, & International Assistance Budget Recommendation

Between 2009 and 2010, the total discretionary budget authority for the Department of State and other International Programs increased just 1 percent from $48.8 billion to $49.3 billion. The American Legion recommended an increase equal or more than 1.5 percent for the following year. However, because of legislative impasse, the department instead has been operating at 2010 level funding.

History has demonstrated repeatedly that successful military campaigns need to be preceded and followed by extensive and exhaustive diplomacy or dire consequences most often result. Serious efforts to improving critical world situations through vigorous and thorough diplomacy are vital to the peace and security of the United States and the world. The American Legion is looking forward to a continuing trend reflecting this improved direction in regards to adequately funding DoS and other international programs.

The total discretionary budget for FY 2012 indicates a 1 percent increase compared to FY 2010 funding from 49.3 billion to 50.9 billion. This is an estimated 1 percent decrease from total FY 2011 funding. In recent years the State Department's responsibilities have expanded enormously to include combating threats from terrorism, international crime, and narcotics trafficking, and that development programs through USAID are in the frontline to offer solutions and alternatives for emerging states to prevent their economic and democratic failure. Therefore, this leaner and more efficient budget represents responsibility by the department by responding to the public outcry for federal budget cuts.

The American Legion strongly supports the Department of State and the many vital functions it performs for the American public around the world. The DoS one of the

primary lines of defense of the nation in combating the myriad security threats that face America from abroad. On the basis of these statements and current economic conditions, the Legion recommends a 1.6 percent increase from $51.4 billion to $52.2 billion. (See chart below)

State, Foreign Operations, and International Assistance **FY 2011**	The American Legion's **FY 2012** Recommendations:
State and Foreign Ops & Intl Combined $51.4 billion	$52.2 billion Increase reflects continuing rising costs for global health programs and economic and education assistance programs for developing nations.
Department of State & Foreign Ops $47.4 billion	$48.2 billion Increase reflects anticipated cost for overseas building and security needs and increased Diplomatic Corp re-configuration costs and new personnel requirements.
Other International Assistance $4 billion	$4 billion Increase to reflect changing climatic, political, and economic factors surrounding current agriculture and farming programs, especially in Africa and Sub-Sahara States.

In conclusion, The American Legion vigorously supports funding for the Department of State in order that it can maintain a credible initial deterrent to international threats to the United States and effectively promote American interests abroad.

National Executive Committee Meetings, Spring 2011

An executive session of the Foreign Relations Commission met on May 2, 2011 in the Circle West Suite of the Sheraton Hotel to discuss current foreign policy issues pertaining to the vital interests of the United States and to review two resolutions.

Randall Fisher, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Commission, opened the business session and welcomed attending members of the commission, members of the committee, and past national commanders.

The commission proceeded by evaluating the following three resolutions: 1) Rescinding Obsolete Resolutions Dealing with Foreign Relations; 2) POW/MIA Accounting Policies; and 3) Women's Rights in Africa.

After the commission conducted a thorough analysis of each proposed resolution and engaged in lively discussion on the issues at hand, the commission reached a consensus and made unanimous recommendations to the National Executive Committee (NEC) to recommend all three of the resolutions.

The business meeting also included a foreign relations report by Mr. Freddy Gessner. His presentation began with a review of resolutions with legislative intent that have similar intent. The commission decided that the course of action to be taken regarding these resolutions would be to rescind the current resolutions and produce a superseding resolution that would be voted on during the 2011 National Convention.

Additionally, the presentation included a recount of the meeting that took place on Friday April 30, 2011 with the foreign relations division and the White House's National Security Staff regarding reopening talks with North Korea regarding reinvigorating accounting efforts of the more than 8,000 American troops who remain missing in action north of the Korean DMZ.

Mr. Gessner wrapped up his presentation with a recount of the current state of the U.S. dollar in comparison to the rising value of China's economy. The commission discussed the recent prediction of China passing the U.S. with the strongest economy by the end of 2016. A lively discussion of what changes in our economy are causing this to occur and what can be done to reverse the trend of the declining value of the dollar.

On Tuesday, May 3rd the Foreign Relations and National Security Commissions together participated in a joint trip to Camp Atterbury at the invitation of Major General R. Martin Umbarger, Joint Forces Headquarters. Camp Atterbury is a force protection post that certifies and trains National Guard units from 18 states in partnership with 1st Army. The visit featured National Guard briefings on the mobilizations (training and certification) of National Guard units who are being deployed to combat zones.

The Foreign Relations Commission looks forward to working with National Commander Foster and the distinguished members of the National Executive Committee in preparation for the National Convention. We thank you for your support.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION
Larry J. Besson, Illinois, Chairman
John W. Querfeld, Illinois, Director

The National Internal Affairs Commission was established by resolution of the National Executive Committee in 1947. The original charge for this constitutional commission still remains: to formulate and recommend policies, and to oversee the implementation of adopted policies relating to activities conducted for organizational purposes.

Among those purposes are all those not properly the responsibility of any other national commission, as well as membership strategies, post formation, clerical and records administration for posts and individual members, and special projects. The commission provides guidance and assistance to the National Adjutant on necessary administrative operations.

Under the broad interpretation of those purposes not properly the responsibility of other commissions, Internal Affairs oversees awards, constitutional discipline and commemorative activities. The commission also monitors legislative and other regulatory activities that potentially affect American Legion posts and departments, recommending appropriate courses of action.

The commission has four standing committees assigned to it for supervision and coordination: Trophies, Awards and Ceremonials; Resolutions Assignment, Constitution and By-Laws; and Membership & Post Activities. The latter has separate reporting responsibilities to the National Convention and the National Executive Committee.

Internal Affairs is responsible for overseeing and reviewing the activities of Sons of The American Legion, which is a major program and not a separate organization. The commission also oversees long-term programs and activities such as Paid-Up-For-Life and the National Emergency Fund.

The American Legion Riders is our fastest growing newer program. This is a great venue for us to reach out to veterans who are not yet members of our ranks. The Legion Riders have raised $2,775,099 over the last six years for the Legacy Scholarship which supports children of military members who have died since September 11, 2001, which includes $660,000 that was raised on the August 2011 Legacy Run from Indianapolis,

Indiana (home city of the National Headquarters) to Minneapolis, Minnesota (2011 Convention city).

The National American Legion College

Each October, The National American Legion College hosts many talented young Legionnaires at the National Headquarters in Indianapolis for a week of intensive training. These students return to their departments with enhanced knowledge and appreciation for The American Legion. They are taught the core values and contributions of the organization and are challenged to think critically and creatively about issues confronting The American Legion.

Candidates for the National American Legion College must be veterans who served during the Lebanon/Grenada era or later with demonstrated potential for higher leadership roles. Student candidates are nominated by the departments and selected by the National Vice Commander Selection Committee. In October 2010, we had 54 students attend the National American Legion College. Graduates are making a difference in leadership roles and membership teams across the country. Many have already been appointed to department and national level positions while others are used in various leadership and teaching roles within their respective departments.

Since the National Legion College was reinstated in 1998, we have graduated 501 Legionnaires ready to assume leadership at various levels.

Sons of The American Legion

The Sons of The American Legion (S.A.L.) conducted its 40th National Convention at the Minneapolis Convention Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota in August 2011.

For the 37th consecutive year, the Sons of The American Legion are at an "All Time High" in membership. The SAL closed its membership at the end of 2010 with a record 343,060 members. This number represents a 2.1 percent increase over the previous year. A total of 36 Detachments achieved 100% membership.

The S.A.L., as a major program, continues its support of The American Legion programs and is heavily involved with support to our nation's veterans in the Veterans Affairs Volunteer Services (VAVS) program. In 2010, the S.A.L. provided over 298,133 volunteer hours in VA homes and hospitals. Donations in cash and goods to these veterans exceeded $2,473,706, nationwide. Other projects include Americanism programs of which $2,175,118 was donated along with 558,806 hours of service. This was remarkable considering only than 20% of the Squadron's submitted reports. The S.A.L. also raised over $468,607 in the year 2010 for the Child Welfare Foundation surpassing all previous years. The Sons also provided several grants through The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. The Sons of The American Legion have contributed over four million dollars to The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation.

The Sons continue to support to Legion programs with major emphasis on VAVS, National Emergency Fund, Fisher House, and the Children's Miracle Network as well as other vital programs. As an integral part of The American Legion family, the Sons continue to serve and provide assistance to posts and their communities.

National Emergency Fund

From January 1, 2011 through August 1, 2011, $194,422 in grants were awarded to American Legion family members. During the same period a total of $128,935 in donations were received. Our total grant monies awarded since the NEF was reinstated in 1989 is almost $7 million with annual grant average of approximately $375,000 to our members and American Legion Posts who incur devastation from a declared natural disaster (i.e., wind, rain, fire and earthquakes). The grants are used for immediate needs – lodging, food and clothing – and not as a substitute for insurance.

Our NEF program is unique that our members know they can turn to The American Legion for immediate financial assistance without the red tape or repayment requirements normally associated with other agencies. With the help of all the American Legion members, the National Emergency Fund will continue to meet the needs of our American Legion family after local, state and national disasters.

Consolidated Post Reports

The Consolidated Post Report – one of The American Legion's most valuable documents – is our annual report card of the posts located in 14,000 communities across the country. It provides a summary of the collective assistance provided to the nation from our Legion posts. Sixty-one (61) percent of American Legion posts reported some activity to National Headquarters from June 1, 2010 to May 31, 2011.

Throughout the reporting year American Legion post members volunteered one million hours in various aspect in their communities; they donated $2,344,495 in emergency aid; 45,457 Legionnaires gave over 80,000 pints of blood; events covered by different media outlets totaled over 135,000; they performed 121,000 funeral honors at a cost of $2.8 million; they sponsored 2,400 American Legion baseball teams at a cost of $7.3 million; Legion posts sponsored 2,148 Boy Scout units with over 47,000 Scouts for a cost of $2 million; through various school assisted programs they spend $6.8 million; they presented 40,000 American flags; performed 4 million community service hours while spending $7 million in support of those activities; and all other donations to Red Cross, Cancer Research, United Way, Legion Endowment Fund, Children's Hospitals, National Emergency Fund and other various activities totaled $12 million.

Trophies, Awards and Ceremonials
Randall W. Busch, Nebraska, Chairman

This committee oversees the awarding of over sixty official national awards and recommends recipients to the National Executive Committee for The American Legion's highest honor, the Distinguished Service Medal. Some of those awarded over the years have been: General John J. Pershing, Ignace Jan Paderewski of Poland, Henry Ford, Ernie Pyle, Bob Hope, Babe Ruth, Dr. Jonas E. Salk, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, the dead & missing of the Vietnam War, 10 men who have served as President of The United States, plus many other citizens of renown who have made lasting and significant contributions. The recipient for the 2009 Distinguished Service Medal (DSM) was General David H. Petraeus, then Commander of the United States Central Command. The recipient for the 2010 DSM was the Boy Scouts of America in honor of the service they have provided to this great nation for 100 years. For 2011 at our National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the recipient was the Honorable Thomas Chester "Chet" Edwards a former US Congressman from the state of Texas for his 30 years of public service and known accomplishments in support of our Nation's veterans and military.

Resolutions Assignment
C. Wayne Schrader, Illinois, Chairman

The Resolutions Assignment Committee meets at least three days before the convening of the annual National Convention. This committee has the responsibility to receive, consider, and transmit all resolutions - with or without recommendation - to the appropriate convention committee for a report to the convention. During an average year, several hundred resolutions will be assigned.

Constitution and By-Laws
Vincent Gaughan, Illinois, Chairman

The National Constitution and By-Laws of The American Legion can only be amended by the duly elected delegates at a National Convention.

However, the Constitution and By-Laws Committee, established by the authority of the National Executive Committee in 1939, authorizes this committee to study and make proper recommendations concerning all of the matters that pertain to the Constitution and By-Laws, as well as matters relating to the Uniform Code of Procedure, which provides rules and regulations for the Revocation, Cancellation, or Suspension of Department and Post Charters of The American Legion.

Membership & Post Activities Committee
Denise Rohan, Wisconsin, Chairman
Billy R. Johnson, Georgia, Membership Director

Membership and programs go hand in hand to make The American Legion an organization able to provide people and resources to serve the needs of veterans and their families. Membership & Post Activities is pleased to report a continuing membership of over 2.4 million members worldwide.

Membership

Final 2009 membership 2,352,250
Final 2010 membership 2,405,207
2011 membership as of Aug. 1, 2011 2,397,831

48th Annual National Membership Workshop

The 48th Annual National Membership Workshop convened in Indianapolis on July 28-29, 2011, with more than 300 department and district officers from nearly all 55 departments in attendance.

Many who attended already had a good understanding of The American Legion's membership program, especially as it pertains to their departments and districts. But when the workshop concluded, they are prepared to face day-to-day membership challenges with a better understanding of the Legion as it relates to potential members.

The goal of the workshop is to provide these essential membership workers with the tools, knowledge and desire to serve The American Legion's membership. Whether they are involved in membership recruitment or program implementation, the workshop teaches veterans to help veterans and provide communities the essential programs to maintain a quality of life for which all veterans fought and served to preserve.

New Post Development/Revitalization

The Membership & Post Activities Committee developed a training program in January 1996 designed to assist posts, districts and departments in developing and revitalizing posts. The program provides training workshops to interested volunteers, along with practical field application.

The success of the program is evident, based on the revitalization and development of more than 1,300 American Legion posts in the past 15 years. Many departments have succeeded in revitalizing posts without any direct assistance from National Headquarters staff. Whether departments requests field assistance or just send members to the training workshop, positive results follow if they adhere to guidelines.

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION
Daniel M. Dellinger, Virginia, Chairman
Tim Tetz, Nevada, Director

This report covers activities of the National Legislative Commission from August 14, 2010 through August 12, 2011. During this period, the Commission met four (4) times to review the legislative program and to make recommendations to the National Executive Committee. Reports of these meetings are contained in the published proceedings of the National Executive Committee.

Purpose, Personnel and Organization

The National Legislative Commission represents The American Legion before the Congress of the United States on all legislative matters in which The American Legion is officially interested. The Commission also assists the National Executive Committee in formulating an appropriate legislative program for each session of Congress. The Commission consists of 33 members and five (5) National Executive Committee liaisons.

To further assist the Commission in its work, the National Executive Committee in 1975 created the National Legislative Council, composed of Legionnaires whose judgment and advice are respected by their elected Members of Congress. There is one council member for each Member of Congress. A Council Chairman heads the Council, and is assisted by a Vice Chairman in each Department. The Chairman, Vice Chairmen and general membership of the Council are appointed by the National Commander upon recommendation by the Departments.

The professional staff of the Commission (the Legislative Division) concentrates on implementing the legislative mandates of The American Legion; these mandates are expressed in resolutions adopted at the annual National Convention and by the National Executive Committee at each of its regularly scheduled meetings. The Legislative Division is located in Washington, DC and consists of the director, two deputy directors, an assistant director, an assistant director/grassroots coordinator, one secretary, and a research analyst. The director and deputy directors are registered lobbyists and submit quarterly lobbying reports to Congress. Because The American Legion is a federally chartered organization, an annual report is also prepared and submitted to Congress.

111th Congress, 2nd Session

With congressional elections looming in November, both chambers could not agree on the passage of the normal 12 appropriations bills which fund federal government operations. As Congress sought to complete business before the beginning of the 112th Congress, a lame-duck session was convened on November 15. One of the primary reasons for the extra session was to complete action on the FY 2011 appropriations process. As the first continuing resolution – Public Law 111-242 – was due to expire on December 3, Congress passed a second stop-gap continuing resolution (P.L. 111-290). This measure extended federal government funding until December 18. By the time the 111th Congress finally adjourned, two further CRs were needed to keep the government running, with no final spending measures yet in sight.

Congressional elections occurred in November of 2010, with all 435 seats in the House of Representatives and 37 Senate seats in play. When the 112th Congress convened, the House was under control of the Republicans, with 242 seats compared to the Democrats' 193 seats. Though the Democrats still controlled the Senate, their margin slipped from 56 seats (with 2 "Independents") to 51 seats; the number of Senate Republican seats crept upwards from 42 to 47.

Economic

On October 12, 2010 the President signed P.L. 111-269, the "Indian Veterans Housing Opportunity Act," legislation that will ensure that disabled Native American veterans, their families and their survivors are not denied support due to their military service through the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act (P.L. 104-330).

When that law was enacted in 1996, it sought to allow tribal communities to more easily access housing grants by providing support to families who make less than 80 percent of the median income of their area. While the law has helped many Native American veterans, due to an oversight it counts veterans' disability compensation or survivor benefits payments as income. As a result, some former service members who receive those benefits are made ineligible for badly-needed housing assistance.

P.L. 111-269 fixes this flaw by specifically excluding veterans' benefits from the definition of income, finally correcting a problem that has disadvantaged thousands of Native American veterans and their families.

Internal Affairs

On September 16, Senate Resolution (S. Res.) 627 was introduced in the Senate by Sen. Olympia Snowe (ME). This resolution designates September 16 – which is the anniversary of The American Legion receiving its Federal charter in 1919 – as "The American Legion Day." The resolution recognizes a national day of observance of The American Legion's goals and ideals in which the country may celebrate, with appropriate programs and activities, the long history of our organization and its steadfast and patriotic service to the community, state and nation. The resolution passed the Senate by unanimous consent the same day as it was introduced.

National Security

On August 10, the House passed by a voice vote H.R. 6080, a measure to enhance U.S.-Mexico border security. The Senate had passed a similar bill just before recessing August 6. Because of constitutional considerations, the Senate held a 30-minute session on Thursday, August 12 to pass H.R. 6080 by unanimous consent, with only two senators in the chamber. The measure was signed by the President the next day, becoming P.L. 111-230.

The law provides $600 million to increase the number of Border Patrol agents by 1000, and Customs and Border Protection officers by 250, as well as deploy unmanned surveillance drones along the U.S. southern border. It also provides supplemental funding to various federal law enforcement agencies to increase federal law enforcement officials on the U.S.-Mexico border for the remainder of fiscal year 2010, specifically:

- $38 million for the U.S. Marshals Service;
- $38 million for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives;
- $34 million for the Drug Enforcement Administration; and,
- $24 million for the F.B.I.

On January 4, 2011 President Obama signed P.L. 111-377, the "Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010." The bill makes changes to education benefits for veterans who served after Sept. 11, 2001, including setting the amount of financial aid for individuals enrolled at a public university or college to meet in-state tuition and fees. The Senate passed the bill on December 13, while the House passed the measure on December 16 by vote of 409-3.

The measure, sponsored by Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Daniel Akaka (HI), expands the post-Sept. 11 GI Bill (P.L. 110-252) to include tuition reimbursements for vocational and trade schools. The current benefits only apply to four-

year institutions of higher learning; the expansion provides opportunities for veterans who seek careers in skilled trades following their discharge from the armed forces.

In addition, P.L. 111-377 expands eligibility for the Post 9-11 GI Bill to include full-time service in the National Guard or, when authorized by the President or DOD Secretary, for responding to a national emergency declared by the President and supported by federal funds. The law makes this change retroactive to August 1, 2009.

The final bill contained an amendment that requires that certain benefits not be paid out before Oct. 1, 2011 — the beginning of fiscal year 2012. Similarly, a provision that would allow payment for textbooks and similar incidental educational expenses would not take effect until FY 2012. The bill also reduced some benefit levels. The maximum amount allowable for tuition and fees, for instance, would decrease to $17,500 from $20,000.

The Congressional Budget Office estimated that Chairman Akaka's original measure, as approved by the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, would have added more than $2 billion to the deficit over 10 years. The amended version passed by Congress would decrease the deficit by $734 million over the same period.

Congress passes annual legislation authorizing spending levels for DOD programs, and usually includes a number of policy statements. On January 7, 2011 the President signed into law P.L. 111-383, the FY 2011 National Defense Authorization Act. Overall, the measure authorizes $725 billion for DOD programs for the fiscal year. Some of the major provisions include:

- $158.7 billion for overseas contingency operations in Afghanistan;
- Strengthening current law to keep dangerous detainees in Guantanamo from being released;
- A 1.4 percent pay raise for service members;
- Allowing service members to provide TRICARE benefits to their adult children up to age 26;
- Funding to help train security forces in Afghanistan and Yemen, the latter nation plays a strategic role in the fight against terrorists;
- Creating additional positions for mental health care providers to treat service members with PTSD and TBI;
- Extends a number of special pays and bonuses for service members;
- Continuing increased end strengths for the Army and Navy to meet the demands of current combat operations;
- Providing $50 million in impact aid funding to modernize schools for our service members' children;
- Funding to repair military equipment used in Afghanistan;
- Funding to clean up high-risk contaminated sites at former military bases;
- Funding to build military hospitals and housing for service members and their families, which will also provide an economic boost in areas where the construction occurs;
- Funding for critical military initiatives, including suicide prevention, sexual harassment and sexual assault prevention, and soldier and family support programs;
- Creating a counter-improvised explosive device (IED) database and enhances efforts to develop new, lightweight body armor;
- Authorizing $3.4 billion for Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles, as well as $3.5 billion for the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO);
- Continuing efforts to reverse the decline of the Navy, setting the course for a 300-plus ship Navy;

- Authorizing $7.2 billion for restoring and replacing National Guard and Reserve military equipment;
- Strengthening the development of the Aegis ballistic missile defense.

On December 22, President Obama signed P.L. 111-321, the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010." This measure provides for repeal of the current DOD policy concerning homosexuality in the Armed Forces, a policy in effect since December of 1993. The repeal of the policy will become effective 60 days after the Secretary of Defense has received DOD's comprehensive review on the implementation of such repeal, and the President, DOD Secretary, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff certify to the congressional defense committees that they have considered the report and proposed plan of action, that DOD has prepared the necessary policies and regulations to exercise the discretion provided by such repeal, and that implementation of such policies and regulations is consistent with the standards of military readiness and effectiveness, unit cohesion, and military recruiting and retention. The law further provides that, until such time as the above conditions are met, the current policy would remain in effect.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

On September 30, President Obama signed into law P.L. 111-246, legislation which allows State veterans' homes to provide nursing home care to parents whose child or children died while serving in the military. Although admission to a State veterans' home is determined by each individual state, each home is required to maintain a residency of at least 75 percent veterans. Non-veterans may be admitted if they meet certain criteria. Formerly, eligible non-veterans were limited to veterans' spouses, widows, and Gold Star parents who lost all of their children in military service.

The President on September 30 signed into law P.L. 111-247, legislation that provides a cost-of-living adjustment for service disabled veterans. The measure would increase the amounts paid to veterans for disability compensation and to their survivors for dependency and indemnity compensation. The increase would be the same cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) payable to Social Security recipients and would take effect Dec. 1, 2010. VA estimates that it will provide disability compensation to just over 3 million veterans with service-connected disabilities in the current fiscal year. However, due to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) lagging behind inflation, the COLA was not activated.

On October 13 President Obama signed into law P.L. 111-275, the "Veterans Benefits Act of 2010." The House passed the bill on September 29 by a voice vote, after the Senate passed an amended version of the original House bill. This measure is an omnibus veterans' benefits bill, addressing several areas. They include:

- Reauthorizing appropriations for Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program;
- Making grants to programs and facilities to provide dedicated services for homeless women veterans and homeless veterans with children;
- Providing an 18-month period for training of new disabled veterans' outreach program specialists (DVOPs) and local veterans' employment representatives (LVERs) by National Veterans' Employment and Training Services Institute (NVTI);
- Clarifying responsibility of the VA Secretary to verify veteran small business ownership;
- Making permanent the extension of Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) coverage for totally disabled veterans until two years after the member's separation or release from active duty or active duty for training. Makes such amendment retroactive to those separated or released on or after June 15, 2005;

- Allowing veterans under age 60 to increase coverage under Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) in increments of up to $25,000 during each five-year period, to a maximum amount of $400,000;
- Eliminating a reduction by the VA Secretary in the amount of an accelerated death benefit for terminally ill persons insured under SGLI and VGLI;
- Increasing, effective October 1, 2011, the burial and funeral expenses for veterans who died in a VA facility from $300 to $700, and increasing the plot allowance for any deceased veteran who died as a result of a service-connected disability and is not buried in a national cemetery from $300 to $700. It also requires VA to make annual increases in both these amounts;
- Establishing eligibility of veterans with severe burn injuries for automobiles and adaptive equipment;
- Increasing the automobile assistance allowance from $11,000 to $18,900 to allow certain disabled veterans to purchase automobiles. It also requires VA to make annual increases in this allowance;
- Prohibiting a VA housing loan fee from being collected from a veteran with a service-connected disability receiving active service pay after being called to active-duty service.
- Extending and modifying National Academy of Sciences reviews and evaluations regarding illness and service in Persian Gulf War and Post 9/11 Global Operations Theaters;
- Clarifying that the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) prohibits wage discrimination against members of the Armed Forces; and,
- Increasing the dollar amounts authorized for construction of the replacement VAMC in New Orleans, LA and for seismic corrections at the VAMC in Long Beach, CA.

After the November election, Congress returned to Capitol Hill on November 15 to tackle several pieces of unfinished business. Funding for VA discretionary programs essentially followed the outlines of the Senate-passed spending bill, which cleared the Senate Appropriations Committee this past July. Unable to come to final agreement on FY 2011 funding, Congress continued federal government spending at FY 2010 levels through March 4, 2011. There was one exception for an important VA program. The current rate of operations for the Veterans Benefits Administration was adjusted to $2.1 billion, an increase of $460 million over the FY 2010 appropriation. This action was taken to prevent layoffs of claims processers and to support efforts in reducing the processing times of disability claims.

On December 22 President Obama signed P.L. 111-338, the "Formerly Owned Resources for Veterans to Express Thanks for Service Act" (or "FOR VETS Act"). This measure will add veterans' groups to the list of organizations eligible to apply to receive surplus goods from the Federal Surplus Personal Property Donation Program. These materials include such things as computers, trucks, and home appliances. The General Services Administration (GSA) currently oversees the distribution of surplus federal property to eligible organizations, such as medical institutions, organizations that support the homeless, universities, and childcare facilities. Enactment of this legislation is the result of a bipartisan effort, based on a bipartisan recognition of the sacrifices that members of our armed forces make every day for our country. P.L. 111-338 was supported by The American Legion and other VSOs.

112th Congress, 1st Session

The First Session of the 112th Congress convened on January 3, 2011. Major issues on the agenda for both chambers include the Global War on Terrorism, the economic

recession and finishing up the Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 federal appropriations. To date, The American Legion has participated in four congressional hearings during the First Session, with several more scheduled to occur during the NEC meetings.

On February 14, the Obama Administration released its budget request for the fiscal year (FY) 2012 Federal budget, including VA. The President's overall VA budget request would provide $124.3 billion for health care, benefits, and memorial service to this nation's veterans, $16 billion above the FY 2010 enacted level. This proposal includes $58.8 billion in discretionary funding to include medical programs to provide high-quality health care for veterans and research for conditions and diseases that affect these veterans. It further provides $65.6 billion for mandatory programs, including benefits for veterans and their beneficiaries.

There are four major areas of emphasis in this new budget that the President has made an integral part of VA's FY 2012 budget:

Prioritizes Specialized Care for Veterans with Psychological and Cognitive Health Needs – The President's Budget includes $6 billion to enhance the VA's ability to provide the best possible specialized care for post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, and other mental health needs. The Budget makes possible collaborative programs between the Department of Defense and VA that target psychological health, research new evidence-based approaches, and increase outreach to veterans. Those programs will increase our ability to care for the psychological and cognitive conditions that will continue to impact our veteran population for many years to come.

Effectively Utilizes Estimated Savings and Multi-Year Funding to Manage VA Medical Care – The Administration proposes $52.5 billion in advance appropriations for the VA medical care program in 2013, which enables timely and predictable funding for VA's medical care to prevent our Nation's veterans from being adversely affected by budget delays. Advance appropriations require a multi-year approach to budget planning whereby one year builds off the previous year. For example, estimated savings from management improvements in 2011 and 2012 will be carried forward into the following years to reduce the new appropriations needed in 2012 and 2013. Without the carryover of those resources from 2011 and 2012 – currently estimated at $1.1 billion — VA would need a higher level of appropriations in 2012 and 2013.

Combats Veteran Homelessness – The President's Budget invests $939 million to continue the expansion of VA services for homeless and at-risk veterans. These funds will combat veteran homelessness through collaborative partnerships with local governments, non-profit organizations, and the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Justice, and Labor.

Begins Implementation of a New Paperless Claims System and Other Initiatives to Boost Efficiency and Responsiveness – The President's Budget provides $183 million for the implementation of a new paperless claims processing system. These funds will allow the VA to move away from its reliance on paper records, thereby improving the speed and efficiency of claims processing while simultaneously enhancing the security of veterans' personal information. Furthermore, the President's Budget reduces spending for construction to focus resources on providing timely, high-quality care and benefits to veterans.

The charts below show VA's discretionary funding programs, with current year (FY 2011) funding totals, the President's proposed FY 2012 budget, and The American Legion's proposed appropriations totals as presented to Congress last September by National Commander Foster. It is also divided into two parts, showing the advance appropriations for the medical care accounts, which are separated from the other non-medical care accounts.

VA Medical Discretionary Programs	P.L. 111-322 FY 2011 VA Funding	President's FY 2012 VA Budget Proposal	2013 Proposed Advance Appropriations	American Legion's FY 2013 Request
Medical Services	$37.1 billion	$39.6 billion	$41.3 billion	$38.1 billion
Medical Support & Compliance	$5.3 billion	$5.5 billion	$5.7 billion	$5.3 billion
Medical Facilities	$5.7 billion	$5.4 billion	$5.4 billion	$6.2 billion
Medical/Prosthetic Research	$581 million	$581 million	$509 million	$600 million
Total Medical Care	***$48.6 billion***	***$51.0 billion***	***$52.9 billion***	***$50.2 billion***

VA Non-Medical Discretionary Programs	P.L. 112-10 FY 2011 VA Funding	President's FY 2012 VA Budget Proposal	American Legion's FY 2012 Request
Major Construction	$1.1 billion	$590 million	$1.2 billion
Minor Construction	$468 million	$550 million	$800 million
State Veterans' Homes Grants	$85 million	$85 million	$100 million
State Veterans' Cemeteries Grants	$46 million	$46 million	$60 million
General Operating Expenses	$2.5 billion	$2.5 billion	$2.6 billion
Information Technology	$3.0 billion	$3.2 billion	$3.5 billion
National Cemetery System	$251 million	$251 million	$260 million

On February 17 and March 2, The American Legion testified before the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs committees respectively, giving its views on VA's FY 2012 budget request. The testimony re-emphasized the VA budget request presented by National Commander Foster last September. The American Legion will continue to monitor the FY 2012 budget process.

Americanism

On January 7, 2011 Representative Emerson (MO) introduced House Joint Resolution (H.J. Res.) 13, a flag protection constitutional amendment for the 112th Congress. It has been assigned to the House Judiciary Committee. The measure now has 54 cosponsors. On June 14, Sen. Orrin Hatch (UT) introduced Senate Joint Resolution (S.J. Res.) 19. That measure now has 24 cosponsors. The American Legion will continue to seek passage of a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag because it is the right thing to do. Let "We the People" decide.

Children & Youth

On July 13 the House Appropriations Committee approved a draft measure to fund important Department of Justice (DOJ) programs which have been supported by The American Legion for many years. DOJ funding for FY 2012 totals $26 billion, $2.4

billion less than the President's budget request. Proposed funding for DOJ programs supported by our organization include:

- $8.1 billion for the FBI, an increase of $149 million over FY 2011 funding;
- $2.3 billion for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), $30 million over last year's level;
- $1.7 billion for various state and local law enforcement and crime prevention grant programs, including those aimed at combating juvenile delinquency and youth crime prevention. These programs include many formerly assigned to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). The OJJDP program has been enthusiastically supported The American Legion since its creation in 1974;
- $1.1 billion for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), a level similar to last year's amount; and,
- $1.1 billion for the U.S. Marshals Service, the same funding amount as last year.

These figures are, by no means, final. The FY 2012 budget/appropriations process continues.

Economics

The Obama Administration's budget plan for FY 2012 also contains funding for the Department of Labor (DOL). The measure funds veterans' programs under the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans Employment and Training (ASVET). Funding for ASVET programs has become even more critical in recent years. In addition to the large numbers of former service members leaving the armed forces, the current economic situation has contributed to unacceptably high levels of unemployment for veterans of the Gulf War period.

The chart below outlines funding for ASVET accounts appropriated for FY 2011 and proposed funding levels for FY 2012. Again, it should be stressed that these are only preliminary figures, not the final funding for next fiscal year. At press time, the House Appropriations Committee had not approved a draft spending bill for DOL-ASVET programs for the upcoming fiscal year.

VETS Programs	*P.L. 112-8 FY 2011*	*President's Budget, FY 2012*
State Administration Grants	$165.4 million	$165.7 million
Transition Assistance Program	$7 million	$8.7 million
Federal Administration	$35.3 million	$35.3 million
National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI)	$2.4 million	$2.4 million
Homeless Veterans Programs	$36.3 million	$39.3 million
Veterans' Workforce Investment Programs	$9.6 million	$9.6 million
Totals	**$256 million**	**$261 million**

Foreign Relations

Appropriations for the Department of State and Foreign Operations programs for FY 2011 were contained in a succession of seven continuing resolutions (CRs) passed by Congress between September of last year and April of this year. These measures provided $51.4 billion in total funding.

The House Appropriations Committee is still developing a spending measure to address this area of the federal budget for FY 2012.

Internal Affairs

On June 24, Rep. Jason Altmire (PA) introduced H.R. 2369, a bill to amend title 36, United States Code, to provide for an additional power for the American Legion under its Federal charter. This measure would amend the charter of The American Legion to clarify statutorily the autonomous, independent nature of our posts and departments. It would also facilitate credit card processing of online membership renewals. The bill is awaiting action in the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives. It currently has 196 cosponsors. Further action on H.R. 2369 is expected later this fall.

National Security

On June 2, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 2017, a spending measure to fund the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for FY 2012. The vote for passage was 231-188. This is the first of 12 appropriations bills to be presented to either the House or Senate this year.

This measure would provide $40.6 billion for the operations of DHS programs, a $1.1 billion reduction from current year spending and $3 billion less than the President's spending request. Some of the specific program totals in the bill which are of interest to The American Legion include:

- $11.8 billion for the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, an increase of $431 million over last year's amount;
- $10 billion for the U.S. Coast Guard, $196 million below last year's spending total;
- $7.8 billion for the Transportation Security Administration, $125 million more than last year's funding total;
- $5.8 billion for the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, an increase of $35 million over last year's funding;
- $1.7 billion for the U.S. Secret Service, an increase of $155 million over last year's level;
- $1 billion for the state and local "first responders" grant program; and,
- $961 million for the Federal Air Marshals, an increase of $40 million over the previous year's funding amount.

The measure now goes to the Senate for further consideration.

On June 16, the Senate Armed Services Committee unanimously approved S. 1253, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY 2012. This bill authorizes funding for the Department of Defense (DOD) and the national security programs of the Department of Energy (DOE). The measure now goes before the full Senate for consideration.

The President's request for national defense discretionary programs for FY 2012 was $688.9 billion and was in three parts: $553 billion for the base budget of DOD; $117.8 billion for overseas contingency operations (OCO), which funds the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; and $18.1 billion for national security programs in the DOE.

The Senate bill authorizes $682.5 billion for national defense. The bill authorizes $5.9 billion less than was requested for the base budget of DOD and $537 million less for OCO. The bill authorizes the requested level of funding for DOE.

Major highlights of interest to the Legion include:

- $142.4 billion for military personnel, including pay, allowances, bonuses, death benefits, and permanent change of station moves;
- A 1.6 percent pay raise for members of the uniformed services;
- No prohibition against pharmacy copayment changes;
- No prohibition for TRICARE Prime enrollment fee increases in FY 2012 and limits annual increases of the fee to the amount equal to the percentage increase in retired pay beginning on October 1, 2012;

- Amends the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) section relating to the offenses of rape, sexual assault, and other sexual misconduct, to create three separate articles of the UCMJ to correct deficiencies in existing law, and also repeals the UCMJ article relating to the offense of sodomy;
- $25 million to local educational agencies with military children and $5 million for schools with military children with severe disabilities;
- Requires hostile fire and imminent danger pay be prorated according to the number of days spent in a qualifying area rather than be paid on a monthly basis;
- $12.8 billion for training and equipping Afghan security forces;
- $322 million to upgrade M1A2 tanks and preserve minimum industrial capability through FY 2012;
- Cuts of more than $1 billion from the President's budget for military construction and family housing projects; and,
- Cuts of $1.1 billion from operation and maintenance accounts for the acquisition of contract services;

Other provisions of note are:

- FY 2012 active-duty end strengths for the Army of 562,000; the Navy, 325,700; the Marine Corps, 202,100; and the Air Force, 332,800;
- Authorizes the Secretary of Defense to authorize the issuance of a Cold War Service Medal;
- Reauthorizes over 30 types of bonuses and special pays aimed at encouraging enlistment, reenlistment, and continued service by active-duty and reserve component military personnel; and,
- Excludes TRICARE institutional, professional, and pharmacy network providers from being considered subcontractors for the purposes of Federal Acquisition Regulation or any other law, in order to maintain adequate TRICARE provider networks.

Once this measure is passed by the full Senate, It will then be necessary for a conference committee to reconcile difference between this bill and the House-passed version, H.R. 1540, which was approved by the House in late May.

On July 8 the House by a vote of 336-87 passed H.R. 2219 the Department of Defense (DOD) spending measure for FY 2012. Discretionary programs would be funded at $519.8 billion, an increase of $17.4 billion over the FY 2011 enacted amounts. An additional $118.5 billion would be assigned to the Overseas Contingency Operations account – the military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Some of the major funding proposals include:

- $132.1 billion for Military Personnel, which includes pay and allowance, training, bonuses and incentive pays, and health and retirement benefits;
- $170 billion for Operations and Maintenance, which provides for operating and maintaining the armed forces;
- $107.6 billion for Procurement accounts, allowing DOD to provide the troops with the best weapons possible; and,
- $73 billion for Research, Development, Testing and Evaluation (RDTE), which aims to keep U.S. armed forces as up-to-date and modernized as is practicable.

Specific programs which interest The American Legion include:

- $32.3 billion for Defense Health Programs;
- $8.1 billion for procurement of 26 F-35 Lightnings (the Joint Strike Fighter) for the Navy and Air Force. This total includes $2.7 billion for further RDTE for the F-35 program;

- $6 billion for procurement of 2 more *Virginia*-class attack submarines, as well as further RDTE;
- $2.6 billion for 35 MV-22s and CV-22 Ospreys for the Air Force and Marines;
- $2.6 billion for 71 Blackhawk and 47 Chinook helicopters;
- $2.4 billion for 28 F/A-18E/F Super Hornet aircraft for the Navy;
- $2.1 billion for one additional *Arleigh Burke*-class guided missile destroyer;
- $1.5 billion for the chemical agents and munitions destruction account;
- $1.2 billion for the drug interdiction and counter-drug activities account;
- $633 million for procurement of 100 more Stryker vehicles;
- $508 million for the Cooperative Threat Reduction program, the purpose of which is to secure and dismantle weapons of mass destruction and their associated infrastructure in states of the former Soviet Union.
- $453 million for 54 M1A2 SEP Abrams tanks; and,
- $40 million for impact aid for local school districts which contain large numbers of DOD dependent students.

The President's FY 2012 budget request also contains a proposal to raise fees for TRICARE, the medical program used by former service members, their dependents, and some members of the Reserve component. DOD Secretary Robert Gates has said that the burgeoning costs of TRICARE will soon become unsustainable. The President's budget proposal seeks to raise annual enrollment fees in FY 2012; then, beginning in 2013, TRICARE fees would increase at a rate equal to the rate of medical inflation, currently estimated at about 6 percent per year.

Selective Service System funding is included in draft legislation to fund various federal programs under the term "Financial Services." The Selective Service would receive $23.6 million for salaries and expenses. The American Legion continues to support funding for the Selective Service System in case of national emergency.

Both House and Senate have passed H.R. 2055, the FY 2012 spending measure for Military Construction and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The House version funds military construction programs at $14 billion, while the Senate's bill funds the same programs at $13.7 billion. Within the total, H.R. 2055 fully funds the President's request for Military Family Housing Construction at $376 million, which provides for a total of 48 new family housing construction projects, 80 replacement projects, and improvements to 216 family housing units. In addition, the legislation contains $1.1 billion for construction and alterations for new or existing military medical facilities. Included in that amount is funding for the first phase of construction on the replacement hospital in Landstuhl, Germany. In addition, $483 million was included for 15 Department of Defense (DOD) Education facilities located in the U.S. and overseas. The Senate bill funds family housing construction and privatization projects at $1.69 billion.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

FY 2011 funding for VA, military construction programs and related agencies was included in P.L. 112-10, the omnibus appropriations bill signed by the President on April 15. With the enactment of this measure, funding for the remainder of this fiscal year was completed.

The chart below presents the major discretionary funding categories of VA's budget, showing the final FY 2011 funding totals for P.L. 112-10, the President's proposed budget for FY 2012, and The American Legion's FY 2012 budget proposal as presented in testimony before the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs committees by National Commander Foster in September, 2010.

VA Discretionary Programs	P. L. 112-10 FY 2011 Final VA Funding	President's Proposed FY 2012 VA Budget	American Legion's FY 2012 Request
Medical Services	$37.1 billion	$39.6 billion	$38.1 billion
Medical Support and Compliance	$5.3 billion	$5.5 billion	$5.3 billion
Medical Facilities	$5.7 billion	$5.4 billion	$6.2 billion
Medical and Prosthetic Research	$581 million	$509 million	$600 million
Total Medical Care	*$48.6 billion*	*$51.0 billion*	*$50.2 billion*
Information Technology	$3.0 billion	$3.2 billion	$3.5 billion
General Operating Expenses	$2.5 billion	$2.5 billion	$2.6 billion
Natl. Cemetery Administration	$250 million	$251 million	$260 million
Major Construction	$1.1 billion	$590 million	$1.2 billion
Minor Construction	$468 million	$550 million	$800 million
State Homes Construction Grants	$85 million	$85 million	$100 million
State Cemeteries Construction Grants	$46 million	$46 million	$60 million

Funding in P.L. 112-10 for related agencies monitored by The American Legion include:

- $64 million for the American Battle Monuments Commission;
- $27.6 million for the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans' Claims;
- $45 million for operations and maintenance at Arlington National Cemetery; and,
- $71 million for operations, maintenance and construction at the Armed Forces Retirement Home.

The President on August 3 signed P.L. 112-26, the "Restoring GI Bill Fairness Act of 2011." The Senate on July 21 passed an amended version of the House-approved bill by unanimous consent. The amended bill was then passed by the House by a 424-0 vote on July 26.

A 2010 law (P.L. 111-377) made a series of corrections to the Post-9/11 GI Bill. While that measure enhanced benefits for many veterans, it included a provision that capped benefits for students attending private institutions at $17,500 in the next academic year, amounting to a potentially drastic cut in benefits for some veterans.

This measure – introduced by House Veterans' Affairs Committee chairman Jeff Miller (FL) – would modify the Post-9/11 GI Bill to temporarily preserve higher reimbursement rates for tuition and fees for veterans who were enrolled in education programs at private higher education institutions on or before April 1, 2011. It would set the payable amount of benefits for such students at $17,500 or at the established charges payable level determined using the maximums published in October 2010 – whichever is greater – through July 31, 2014.

Next, the House approved H.R. 1627, passed by a vote of 380-0, which would establish a new process for the placement of monuments at Arlington National Cemetery. It would also enforce the reservation process at Arlington. Finally, the bill contains a "sense of Congress" provision supporting the placement in Arlington of a monument to Jewish chaplains who have died while on active duty. A Senate bill addressing just the Jewish chaplains monument, Senate Concurrent Resolution 4, was passed by that body by unanimous consent on May 27.

H.R. 1657, which passed the House by a near-unanimous 382-1 tally, would impose penalties for small businesses claiming veteran-owned status. It would direct that any business determined by the VA Secretary to have misrepresented its status as a small business owned and controlled by veterans or service-disabled veterans in order to increase its contracting opportunities shall be debarred from contracting with the VA for not less than five years.

Finally, H.R. 1407, approved by a voice vote, is the annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for veterans and survivors. If passed by the Senate and signed by the President, H.R. 1407 would institute a COLA for veterans who receive disability compensation and for survivors who receive dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) payments. This COLA would be effective for FY 2012, beginning December 1, 2011. The COLA would be tied to the same COLA given to Social Security benefits recipients. Because of the economic downturn, these recipients have received no COLA for the past two years. A report issued earlier this month by the Medicare and Social Security Trustees projected that Social Security recipients would receive a 0.7 percent cost-of-living increase in 2012.

On Tuesday, May 31 the House of Representatives passed H.R. 1484, the "Veterans Appeals Improvement Act of 2011" by a vote of 418-1. This bill would help cut down on the bureaucracy experienced by veterans with pending claims by eliminating unwanted duplication of review of claims. Specifically, the bill provides that if a veteran claimant submits evidence in support of a claim for which a substantive appeal has been filed to the Board of Veterans' Appeals, such evidence shall be submitted directly to the Board and not to a regional office of the VA, unless the claimant requests that the evidence first be reviewed by the regional office. The measure also establishes the Veterans Judicial Review Commission, which would evaluate and make specific decisions to improve the administrative and judicial appellate review processes of veterans' and survivors' benefits determinations.

The House on June 1 passed H.R. 802, legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct VA to establish a VetStar Award Program. The bill passed by a recorded vote of 408-11. The measure would implement a recognition program to highlight businesses that hire veterans. The VA shall establish a process for the administration of the award program, including criteria for categories and sectors of businesses eligible for recognition each year, as well as objective measures to be used in selecting businesses to receive the award. These measures now head to the Senate for consideration.

On June 14, the House passed H.R. 2055, a spending bill to fund Military Construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Related Agencies for fiscal year (FY) 2012. The vote for passage was 411-5. On July 20, the Senate voted 97-2 to pass their version of H.R. 2055. This measure becomes the first of 12 appropriations measures that have passed both chambers for FY 2012.

VA discretionary funding would be set at $58.5 billion in the House measure. It also includes $52.5 billion in advance appropriations for the major VA medical accounts for FY 2013. The Senate bill would set VA discretionary spending at $58.6 billion,

The first chart below outlines: the President's proposed advance funding for VA medical accounts for FY 2012; President Obama's budget proposal for FY 2013; preliminary changes made by the House – contained in H.R. 2055 – to the advance VA medical accounts funding for FY 2013; the Senate version; and The American Legion's proposed funding in National Commander Foster's testimony in September of last year. The second chart shows: other VA discretionary accounts for FY 2011 (the current year); the President's FY 2012 proposal for those accounts; House changes for FY 2012 contained in H.R. 2055; the Senate totals; and, the Legion's proposals for the non-medical accounts for FY 2012.

VA Discretionary Medical Programs	President's FY 2012 VA Advance Appropriations	President's FY 2013 VA Advance Appropriations	H.R. 2055 FY 2013 Proposed Advance Appropriations	H.R. 2055 Senate Version FY 2013 Advance Appropriations	American Legion's FY 2012 Request
Medical Services	$39.9 billion@	$41.3 billion	$41.3 billion	$41.3 billion	$38.1 billion
Medical Support & Compliance	$5.5 billion	$5.7 billion	$5.7 billion	$5.7 billion	$5.3 billion
Medical Facilities	$5.4 billion	$5.4 billion	$5.4 billion	$5.4 billion	$6.2 billion
Medical/Prosthetic Research	$509 million	$509 million	$531million	$581 million	$600 million
Total Medical Care	***$51.3 billion***	***$52.9 billion***	***$52.9 billion***	***$53.0 billion***	***$50.2 billion***

@ As part of President Obama's FY 2012 VA budget proposal, he requested $240 million be added to the Medical Services account for the upcoming fiscal year.

VA Discretionary Non-Medical Programs	P.L. 111-322 FY 2011 VA Funding	President's FY 2012 VA Budget Proposal	H.R. 2055 FY 2012 VA Budget Proposal	H.R. 2055 Senate Version FY 2012 VA Budget Proposal	Legion's FY 2012 VA Budget Request
National Cemetery Administration	$250 million	$251 million	$251 million	$251 million	$260 million
General Operating Expenses – VBA	$2.5 billion	$2.5 billion	$2.0 billion	$2.0 billion	$2.6 billion
Information Technology	$3.3 billion	$3.2 billion	$3.0 billion	$3.2 billion	$3.5 billion
Major Construction	$1.2 billion	$590 million	$590 million	$590 million	$1.2 billion
Minor Construction	$468 million	550 million	$475 million	$550 million	$800 million
State Veterans' Homes Grants	$100 million	$85 million	$85 million	$85 million	$100 million
State Veterans' Cemeteries Grants	$46 million	$46 million	$46 million	$46 million	$60 million

A conference committee will now need to reconcile differences in the two measures before it can be signed into law by the President. The House leadership hopes to have all of the FY 2012 spending bills passed by that chamber before the beginning of the August recess.

On June 29 the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee held a mark-up hearing to approve a number of bills which affect this country's veterans. One of the more significant measures was S. 894, the annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for veterans and survivors, which passed by a voice vote. This bill would institute a COLA for veterans who receive disability compensation and for survivors who receive dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) payments. This COLA would be effective for FY 2012, beginning December 1, 2011. The COLA would be tied to the same COLA given to Social Security benefits recipients.

Because of the economic downturn, these recipients have received no COLA for the past two years. A report issued earlier this month by the Medicare and Social Security Trustees projected that Social Security recipients would receive a 0.7 percent cost-of-living increase in 2012. The House passed a companion measure, H.R. 1407, on May 23 by a voice vote.

Another measure approved by the committee was S. 277, the "Caring for Camp Lejeune Veterans Act of 2011," which passed by a voice vote. This measure would provide hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care for any illness acquired by veterans and family members who were stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, while the water there was contaminated by volatile organic compounds, including known human carcinogens and probable human carcinogens.

Another bill passed was S. 572. This bill would repeal the prohibition on collective bargaining with respect to matters and questions regarding compensation of employees of

the Department of Veterans Affairs other than rates of basic pay, and for other purposes. The bill passed the committee by an 8-7 recorded vote.

Next, the committee gave voice vote approval to S. 745. This measure would protect certain veterans who would otherwise be subject to a reduction in educational assistance benefits. It would also make the amount payable for programs of education at nonpublic institutions of higher education pursued by individuals enrolled in VA's post-9/11 educational assistance program during the period beginning on August 1, 2011, and ending on December 31, 2014, the lesser of: a) the established charges for that program; b) the established charges payable under a VA maximum payments table published on October 27, 2010; or, c) the amount for the previous academic year, increased by the authorized annual percentage increase. This measure is a companion to H.R. 1383, a similar bill which passed the House on May 23 by a vote of 389-0.

The Senate panel also passed S. 914, the "Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2011." This omnibus bill includes provisions related to health, homeless veterans, housing, compensation, burial and construction. For example, the bill takes another stab at preventing military and veterans' funerals from being disrupted by protesters by expanding the zone, in terms of both time and space, when disruption or disturbance is illegal. This effort resulted from a Supreme Court ruling that held funeral protests are constitutionally protected, even if they are offensive to the family of the deceased.

One provision of the bill would authorize VA to provide an extra year of disability compensation for veterans who submit a fully developed claim rather than a claim that needs more work. Extra pay would result from backdating the effective day to one year before it was submitted.

Health care provisions include waiving co-payments for veterans using telehealth and telemedicine programs, prohibiting VA from preventing the use of service dogs at any VA or VA-funded facility, and expanding chiropractic services so there are at least two locations in every region offering the treatment.

Part of the bill is aimed at punishing businesses who fraudulently claim they are veteran-owned in order to get government contracts. A small business found to have misrepresented itself would be barred for no less than five years from contracting with VA, and debarment action must happen within 90 days if the misrepresentation was deliberate.

On housing, S. 914 would offer extended protections under the Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act against foreclosure or seizure of property. It would extend these protections to 12 months after leaving active duty, three months longer than now provided.

Finally, the committee passed by a voice vote S. 951, the "Hiring Heroes Act of 2011." The bill would fine-tune current programs, order that military transition assistance programs (TAP) be mandatory for everyone leaving service, and require follow-up after service members leave the military to see if they have landed jobs or need more help.

One of the key features of the bill is follow-up. For people receiving transition help in the military, or from VA or the Labor Department after getting out of the military, the bill requires follow-up six months to a year afterward. For those who do not have jobs – especially disabled veterans who have used vocational rehabilitation programs – S. 951 would allow them to attend the TAP sessions again.

Other provisions of S. 951 would:

- Amend the Wounded Warriors Act to extend until January 1, 2015, the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide the same rehabilitation and vocational benefits to members of the Armed Forces with severe injuries or illnesses as are provided to veterans.

- Expand VA authority to make payments to employers to provide on-job training to veterans to include veterans who have not been rehabilitated to the point of employability.
- Entitle certain veterans with service-connected disabilities who have exhausted their rights to unemployment benefits to participation in an additional VA rehabilitation program. It would also limit the duration of such a program to 24 months, and make the 12-year period of eligibility for a VA rehabilitation program inapplicable under such an additional program.
- Direct VA to award grants to up to three nonprofit organizations under a collaborative veterans' training, mentoring, and placement program for eligible veterans seeking employment.
- Require participants in the TAP to receive individualized assessments of civilian positions for which they may be qualified based on a joint DOD, VA, and Department of Labor study of the equivalencies between military skills and civilian employment requirements.
- Authorize the appointment of an honorably discharged member of the uniformed services to a position in the civil service, without regard to specified civil service examination, certification, and appointment provisions, if otherwise qualified.
- Authorize a pilot program to assess the feasibility of providing work experience to certain members of the Armed Forces who are on terminal leave.
- Require a VA demonstration project on the credentialing and licensing of veterans.

These measures now go to the full Senate for further consideration.

NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION
G. Michael Schlee, Maryland, Chairman
Philip D. Riley, Virginia, Director

The following report covers the activities of the National Security Commission and its staff during the program year ending June 30, 2011.

The Ninety Second Annual National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and the Fall and Spring Meetings of the National Executive Committee approved certain positions expressed in resolutions submitted to those bodies through the Convention Committee on National Security and the National Security Commission, respectively. The approved resolutions are set forth as follows:

National Convention, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
August 31, September 1, 2, 2010

Resolution No. 8	Include Holistic Medical Practices In Tricare Coverage
Resolution No. 32	Maintaining Military Air Supremacy
Resolution No. 33	Protect Against Long Range Strike Threats
Resolution No. 36	Repeal DOD Policy Prohibiting Women From Combat
Resolution No. 39	Prosecute Alleged Terrorists As Enemy Combatants
Resolution No. 41	Fully Enforce Immigration Laws
Resolution No. 42	Support For Armed Forces Blood Donor Program And Blood Drives
Resolution No. 51	Support Domestic Energy Production
Resolution No. 52	Support Research And Funding For Alternative Energy Resources
Resolution No. 115	Support For The Global War On Terrorism
Resolution No. 116	Conduct Hearings On Nuclear Warhead Modernization

Resolution No. 118	Extend Stop Loss Bonus payments
Resolution No. 119	Buy American
Resolution No. 120	Support Fight Against Cyberspace Threats
Resolution No. 121	Prohibit Foreign Investments In U.S. Defense Industry
Resolution No. 122	Support For National Missile Defense System
Resolution No. 124	Rebuild America's Defense Industrial Base
Resolution No. 125	Support For The American Battle Monuments Commission
Resolution No. 126	Support For Armed Forces Retirement Homes
Resolution No. 127	Transform America's Armed Forces
Resolution No. 128	Support For Uniformed Services University Of The Health Sciences
Resolution No. 129	Support For Financial Anti-Terrorism Law Enforcement
Resolution No. 130	Support For Homeland Security And The War On Terror
Resolution No. 131	Support For Anti Terrorism Law Enforcement
Resolution No. 132	Support For The Non Federal Roles Of The National Guard
Resolution No. 133	Support For The U.S. Coast Guard In Homeland Security
Resolution No. 134	The American Legion Role In Homeland Security
Resolution No. 135	Support For Citizen Corps
Resolution No. 136	Codify Burial Eligibility For Arlington National Cemetery
Resolution No.137	Authorize And Fund Tricare For Reserve Components And Dependents
Resolution No. 138	Support For DOD Force Health Protection Program
Resolution No. 139	Support Full Funding For The Department Of Army Budget
Resolution No. 140	Support For The Selective Service Registration Program
Resolution No. 141	Grant Access To All U.S. Military Facilities For Military Retirees And Dependents
Resolution No. 142	Support For The Reformation Of The Military Voting System
Resolution No. 143	Support For Awarding The Purple Heart For Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
Resolution No. 144	Oppose Tricare Fee Increases
Resolution No. 145	Support For Military Quality Of Life Standards
Resolution No. 146	Reference Veterans' Service Organizations At Discharge
Resolution No. 147	Support For Concurrent Receipt Of Military Retirement And VA Disability Compensation
Resolution No. 149	Support Full Funding And Resourcing For The U.S. Navy And Marine Corps
Resolution No. 150	Support For Pain Management Research, Treatment And Therapies At DOD, VA, And NIH
Resolution No. 151	Support For Full Funding Of The United States Military
Resolution No. 152	Develop Defense Against Electromagnetic Pulse Attack
Resolution No. 170	Commission The USS American Legion
Resolution No. 178	Support Funding For NASA Budgets
Resolution No. 179	Support For Research And Development Of Air Breathing Scramjet Powered Vehicle
Resolution No. 180	Support For The United States Air Force
Resolution No. 181	Support For The National Space Program
Resolution No. 182	Support For One Manager To Preside Over The U.S. Military Air And Space Programs
Resolution No. 184	Support For Aeronautical And Space Exploration
Resolution No. 223	Support For U.S. Blood Banks
Resolution No. 224	Support For Domestic Control Of Energy Resources
Resolution No. 232	Employ Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

Resolution No. 270	Support For Bugles Across America To Provide Live Taps For Military Honors
Resolution No. 343	Commercial Shipbuilding For Defense
Resolution No. 344	Support For The Jones Maritime Act And Related Cabotage Laws

National Executive Committee Meetings
October 13-14, 2010

Resolution No. 23	Immigration Reform To Enhance National Security
Resolution No. 25	Extend Selective Service Program To Women Ages 18-25
Resolution No. 26	National Security Principles
Resolution No. 27	Establish A Strategic Plan For Internal Security Within The United States

National Executive Committee Meetings
May 4-5, 2011

Resolution No. 20	Flexible Savings Accounts
Resolution No. 21	Uniform Standards for Combat Military Occupational Specialties
Resolution No. 22	Oppose Widow's Tax
Resolution No. 23	Military Readiness
Resolution No. 24	The American Legion's Position on Tricare
Resolution No. 25	Rare Earth Elements
Resolution No. 26	Reserves and National Guard Retirement Benefit Fairness
Resolution No. 27	Rescinding Obsolete Resolutions Dealing with National Security

National Executive Committee Meetings, Fall 2010

An executive session of the National Security Commission met on October 11, 2010 in the Circle Center Conference Room of the Sheraton Hotel, 31 W Ohio St, Indianapolis, Indiana, to discuss current national security issues facing the United States along with reviewing 11 resolutions before the commission. Eight of the resolutions were referred to the National Security Commission by the 92nd National Convention. The three remaining resolutions were not addressed at the National Convention; therefore they were addressed at this meeting.

Dan Dellinger, Chairman, National Security Commission opened the meeting and welcomed Past National Commander Clarence Bacon of Maryland and Past National Commander Tony Jordan of Maine. The National Security Commission was honored by their attendance and very appreciative of their participation in the in the commission's business discussions.

The commission proceeded by evaluating the following 11 resolutions: 1) The American Legion Position on Military Chaplains and Physicians; 2) Immigration Reform to Enhance National Security; 3) Establish a Cold War Victory Medal; 4) Establish a Strategic Plan for Internal Security Within the United States; 5) Abolish the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965; 6) National Security Principles; 7) Establish Separate Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Award; 8) Grant Full Access to Military Facilities for Service Connected Veterans and Dependents; 9) Lower the Retirement Age of Service Members in the National Guard and Reserve Components; 10) Extend Selective Service Program to Include Registration of Women Ages 18-25; and 11) Oppose Amnesty and Legal Residency for Illegal Immigrants.

After the commission conducted a thorough analysis of each proposed resolution and held debates on the issues at hand, the commission reached a consensus and made recommendations to approve five of the aforementioned resolutions. The National Security Commission recommended the following resolutions for approval: 1)

Immigration Reform to Enhance National Security; 2) Establish a Cold War Victory Medal; 3) Establish a Strategic Plan for Internal Security Within the United States; 4) National Security Principles; and 5) Extend Selective Service Program to Include Registration of Women Ages 18-25.

The National Security Commission recommended rejecting the following four resolutions: 1) The American Legion Position on Military Chaplains and Physicians; 2) Establish Separate Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Award; 3) Grant Full Access to Military Facilities for Service Connected Veterans and Dependents; 4) Lower the Retirement Age of Service Members in the National Guard and Reserve Components.

The National Security Commission recommended the following two resolutions to be received and recorded: Abolish the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 and Oppose Amnesty and Legal Residency for Illegal Immigrants.

The business meeting also included a national security report by Joseph Grassi, Deputy Director, National Security and Foreign Relations, Division. His presentation focused on the current issues surrounding the nuclear posture of the United States. Also, the discussion covered the recent installation of Patriot missiles and U.S. military personnel in Poland; only 39 miles from the Russian border.

Although this increase of U.S. military presence in Poland has caused the Russian Government to protest, they have not backed away from the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (also known as New START) which was signed by President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev on April 8, 2010. Mr. Grassi gave an update on the accompanying Protocol, including the verification measures contained in the treaty. The treaty was approved by a vote of 14-4 by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relation on September 14, 2010. The treaty remains yet to be ratified by the Senate. Ratification needs 67 votes.

In addition, Mr. Grassi continued his presentation by discussing the difficult subject of suicide among military members, particularly soldiers who have deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. This problem is not new as some have suggested. However, The American Legion must do everything possible to help service members who may be prone to these types of tragedies. We must reach out to these troubled servicemen and women to avoid what has been called "the permanent solution to a temporary problem."

The National Security Commission looks forward to working in cooperation with the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission on the issue of suicide prevention in the military. It is generally known, that this problem is not excusive to the military. Similar percentages of suicide exist in civilian life. However, because the military is an easily identifiable group; and because there is a segment of society who wish to paint combat veterans with a broad brush; and also because this is a national security issue, we must support the Department of Defense's programs which have shown to be effective in suicide prevention. Service members and veterans who find themselves in despair and isolation need a helping hand.

As a practical matter, the commission was reminded that all Departments should submit their candidates for Law Officer of the Year and Firefighter of the Year Awards to Joseph Grassi in the Washington, D.C. Office no later than February 1, 2011. Also, everyone was encouraged to contact Mr. Grassi if they were interested or know someone who may be interested in becoming a member of their local Selective Service Board; otherwise known as the draft board.

On Tuesday, October 12, the National Security and Foreign Relations Commissions met in joint session at the Circle Center Conference Room of the Sheraton Hotel in Indianapolis.

The main topics of the joint session focused on the experiences of today's fighting men and women in terms of their recent deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan along with the issues that are associated with this group, such as traumatic brain injury (TBI), post

traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), women in combat, multiple deployments, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and asymmetrical warfare.

In the context of these topics, members of both commissions intently watched the independent film entitled "This is War: Memories of Iraq," directed by Gary Mortensen. The film begins in the spring of 2004, when the 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment (2/162) of the Oregon National Guard deployed to Iraq. Several of them carried video cameras and digital cameras to record their experiences. The documentary draws on their film footage and photographs to demonstrate an in-depth look into their deployment. This program provided the National Security and Foreign Relations Commissions with insight into the perspective of the current-day soldier.

Washington Conference

The National Security Commission met in a joint session along with the Foreign Relations Commission on March 21st and convened for its business session on March 23rd during the 51st annual Washington Conference at the Renaissance Hotel, Washington, D.C. The following is a summary of those sessions:

Morning Joint Session, March 1st:

The National Security Commission, met in a joint session with the Foreign Relations Commission. The commissions were honored to welcome National Commander Jimmie Foster, Past National Commander (PNC) Clarence Bacon, and PNC David Rehbein, and PNC Clarence Hill. The Joint Session included presentations by eight guest speakers: Dan Larsen, Deputy Director of the Office of Korean Affairs, U.S. Department of State; Kathryn Condon, Executive Director, Arlington National Cemetery; Dr. Ken Gabriel, Deputy Director, Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA); Colonel Geoffrey Ling, Defense Sciences Office Program Manager; and including the members of the Joint Military Panel: Technical Sergeant Danekia L. Wells, U.S. Air Force; Sergeant First Class Paul Hertig; HM1 Tyron Hodges, U.S. Navy; and Gunnery Sergeant Samantha Vann, U.S. Marine Corps.

Mr. Larsen began the session by taking a moment to honor the sacrifice of the fallen men and women of the United States, the Republic of Korea as well as those of the United Nations during and since the Korean War. He said, "Those standing watch today are part of a long and proud line of people who have worked for the last 6 decades to help protect the Republic of Korea."

Mr. Larsen gave an overview of the economic and political landscapes of the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). He explained how South Korea ranks as the 14th-largest economy in the world and is the US's 7th largest trading partner as a result of the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. However, he reported, that the North Korean economic system remains closed and troubled.

In terms of the political realms on the peninsula, the U.S. State Department views South Korea as positive force. The country's democratic government is place and thriving. Mr. Larsen said, "The ROK has arrived on the World Stage."

Mr. Larsen continued by reminding the Joint Session of the regional threat that is still being perpetuated by DPRK. North Korea continues to pose a conventional threat to Seoul and continues its nuclear program and remains a proliferation threat. The Taepo-dong 2 launches triggered United Nations Resolutions. North Korea conducted two announced nuclear Tests: in October 2006 and May 2009. Furthermore, he discussed how the North Koreans sunk a South Korean Navy Ship "the Cheonan" on March 26, 2010 which killed 46 sailors and lastly the Nov. 23, 2010 Yong P'yong Do bombing in which two South Korean Marines and two civilians were killed.

Mr. Larsen said that the U.S. is maintaining targeted financial sanctions aimed at leadership assets and illicit activities and that these sanctions are working. A U.S. Military exercise in the region continues to add strength to the U.S. diplomacy strategy.

He concluded by stating that the complete and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, ending human rights abuses by North Korea, and supporting North-South dialogue and cooperation remain important challenges that need to be met.

Ms. Condon took the stage and told the commission members that a new system is in place to ensure Arlington National Cemetery is a venue fitting to provide eternal rest for our nation's veterans. Ms. Condon discussed the past mismanagement of Arlington and how it has caused great distress. But now, changes have been made.

Ms. Condon stated that there is no longer any doubt about who is in charge because the Secretary of the Army John McHugh created the executive director position and this has made Ms. Condon a "direct report" to him personally. The secretary also named a new superintendent, Pat Hallinan. In the last 10 months, she said, we have resolved most of the issues. In that process, however, she has also uncovered additional problems at Arlington but promises that she'll address them, fix them and move forward. Moving forward includes increasing the number of cemetery employees, adding comprehensive training programs for employees, implementing the cemetery's consolidated call center with a toll free number (877-907-8585); and upcoming plans to implement total digital GPS-mapping of Arlington.

Dr. Gabriel and Colonel Ling presented the DARPA presentation. Dr. Gabriel began by giving a brief overview of DARPA's history. The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) was established in 1958 to prevent strategic surprise from negatively impacting U.S. national security and create strategic surprise for U.S. adversaries by maintaining the technological superiority of the U.S. military. To fulfill its mission, the Agency relies on diverse performers to apply multi-disciplinary approaches to both advance knowledge through basic research and create innovative technologies that address current practical problems through applied research. DARPA's scientific investigations span the gamut from laboratory efforts to the creation of full-scale technology demonstrations in the fields of biology, medicine, computer science, chemistry, physics, engineering, mathematics, material sciences, social sciences, neurosciences, and more. As the DOD's primary innovation engine, DARPA undertakes projects that are finite in duration but that create lasting revolutionary change. Colonel Ling concluded the DARPA segment of the program by describing DARPA's newly developed Blast Dosimeter System technology, known as "BDI." The wound most characteristic of soldiers who have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan is traumatic brain injury (TBI). Sudden attacks from weapons such as improvised explosive devices (IEDs), grenades and roadside bombs have been frequent occurrences during the war and have caused much damage to the brains of soldiers. Many affected by these types of explosions are unaware of the severity of the trauma, and it is possible for TBI to go undiagnosed long after they return home.

Under one of its programs, Colonel Ling explained, DARPA has devised a way to record the intensity of an explosion that a soldier will experience during an attack by applying a small, rectangular blast dosimeter to his/her helmet. The objective of this technology is to produce an inexpensive, disposable, very lightweight blast dosimeter to measure the phenomenology associated with repeated exposure to blast events. The diagnosis and treatment of TBI can be greatly improved by the implementation of this technology.

The Joint Session was brought to a close with the Military Joint Panel. All of the members of the Military Joint Panel have, at one time or another, deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan or both. Barry Searle, National Security / Foreign Relations Division Director served as the panel moderator. Mr. Searle began the discussion by asking the

panel if women in the military should be permitted to train and serve in combat-arms military occupational specialties (MOSs). The panel expressed a consensus that in the current theater, women are already performing combat roles due to the requirements of mission dictated by the need to respect local cultures' sensitivity to male/female interactions. In other words, having a male soldier search a local female civilian for explosives after a raid would not improve fragile relations between the U.S. military and local civilian leaders and elders; an integral part in the strategy to win hearts and minds.

The panel also addressed the controversial decision to repeal the Defense Department policy known as "Don't ask, don't tell" thereby allowing homosexuals to serve openly. The panel acknowledged that each of them know that they already serve alongside homosexuals and do not foresee any real difference when the change takes effect. One member explained that the word "openly" needs to be better defined in terms of military service because fellow military members, she explained, do not expect any change in military standards due to the new policy. However, there were concerns among the military panel after some discussion. One member discussed concerns over individuals joining the service and deliberately violating the uniform code of military justice to make a political statement. The service member was also concerned about senior leadership not supporting company-level officers if legitimate concerns over violations to the Uniform Code of Military Justice—having nothing to do with sexual orientation—are outweighed by political considerations.

The panel wrapped up the session by communicating their biggest challenges: balancing service and family time; threats of government shutdowns impacting military pay; the smooth transfer of family TRICARE benefits and care during duty station changes; spouse employment; adequate child care; waiting periods for on-post housing; shortfalls in military clothing supply; and the successful programs helping troops vote for political candidates during deployments overseas. The panelists agreed that they did not have any problem casting their votes from Iraq or Afghanistan. However, they concurred, that the real issue is trying to convince the junior NCOs and lower enlisted to take time to vote in the first place.

PNC Bacon contributed to the discussion by describing the Operation Comfort Warrior Program, Heroes to Hometown Program, and The American Legion's regular visits to Walter Reed Army Medical Center. He told the members on the panel that, "all sorts of support is available from The American Legion. Be sure to take this message back to all of your units."

Afternoon Joint Session / POW/MIA Update, March 21st

The expert panel on the POW/MIA issues was comprised of Johnie Webb, Deputy to the Commander for Public Relations and Legislative Affairs, Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and Ruben Caudle, Stony Beach Program Manager, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). The discussion revolved around the construction of a new $100 million headquarters and lab for identification of American dead from past wars. The National Defense Authorization Act states that JPAC will increase the number of remains account for to 200 persons per year by 2015. However, this goal is currently unattainable due to Congress not passing a 2011 budget or passing a continuing resolution for 2012. The Defense Authorization Act calls for increased funding, increasing the number for JPAC personnel, and consolidating all JPAC operations into a single all-encompassing facility located at Hickam Air Force Base.

The remains of more than 80,000 American soldiers are unaccounted for worldwide with the majority of over 74,000 missing throughout Europe. In order to increase the number of accounted for personnel each year JPAC will use their 2012 budget to increase accounting efforts in Europe. Another reason for increased efforts in Europe are the difficulties in accounting in Southeast Asia to include the harsh terrain and weather conditions in jungles and mountains in Vietnam which allow only a 90-day window to

conduct accounting operations as well as the ending of diplomatic relations with North Korea.

Members of the audience were very interested to hear about Stony Beach's efforts in Southeastern Asian countries bordering Vietnam. These countries such as Cambodia allow unrestricted accounting through surveying and interviewing villagers along the border of Vietnam. This unrestricted accounting allows researchers to gain experience in anthropology that cannot be gained through classroom training alone.

In the past, the retention of scientists at JPAC has been negatively affected by the high cost of living in Hawaii and the distance living there places between the employees and their families living stateside. The solution JPAC came up with is the JPAC Forensic Science Academy. The academy is a program in which graduate level students can attend for real world training that also grants one graduate level college credit. The benefit to the program for JPAC is the program includes a six-week recovery operation in Laos and Vietnam. This allows JPAC to get to know the students and watch how they perform in the field. This year JPAC received 26 applications from students who attended the program for six open positions. This means JPAC is now receiving some of the best and brightest graduates who are now joining with a full understanding of what employment with JPAC means.

Wednesday Session (Business Meeting) March 23rd:

Newly named National Security Commission Chairman G. Michael Schlee opened the business session to conduct its conference business but charged Vice Chairman E.C. Toppin with directing the meeting due to him being called to a special meeting on Iraq and Afghanistan. Joseph Grassi, Deputy Director organized the meeting in four sections: 1) committee and resolution reorganization plan proposals (including both resolutions with legislative intent and policy resolutions); 2) The American Legion's Department of Defense Budget recommendation for the Federal Budget of Fiscal year 2012; a white paper discussion on the topics of War Widows' Tax, Strategic U.S. Raw Materials, and status update on: DADT Repeal; and a brief discussion on the trip to Camp Atterbury being planned for the Spring meetings along with a review of the pre-convention trip to visit the Minnesota National Guard and Air National Guard.

Mr. Grassi began his discussion by offering some proposals involving the potential updating of the names of the standing committees; the way to reducing the number of legislative resolutions in the National Security portfolio; and the potential reduction in the number of over 500 non-legislative resolutions. Mr. Grassi explained that if these changes were to take place, they would happen gradually over a considerable period of time due to convention protocol.

Mr. Grassi continued his discussion by addressing the segment of the federal budget affecting military support and readiness. In fiscal year 2011, total defense spending: amounted to $708 billion. President Barack Obama's fiscal year 2012 Defense Budget recommendation is $671 billion. The American Legion, by resolution, maintains that in the best interests of the United States the Defense Budget should be funded to at least four percent of Gross Domestic product (GDP) during time of peace, and five percent during a time of war.

On the basis that a transitional force of approximately 50,000 U.S. troops will remain in Iraq assisting Iraq's Security Forces, supporting Iraqi troops in targeted counterterrorism missions, and protecting U.S. civilians along with the fact that more than 90,000 troops continue to be deployed to Afghanistan to target the insurgency and secure key population centers, we continue to be a country at war.

The projected Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for 2011, according to the Congressional Budget Office, is $15.2 trillion. In accordance with The American Legion's official position, five percent of the projected GDP is $760 billion. In light of

these figures, The American Legion recommends a 7.3 percent increase in total defense spending for fiscal year 2012.

Mr. Grassi concluded the meeting discussing the planning processes underway for the 2011 Spring Meeting Trip to Camp Atterbury and the pre-convention trip to visit the Minnesota National Guard and Air National Guard.

The American Legion Views and Estimates

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Current Defense Funding for FY 2011 (*estimate*)		**The American Legion's FY 2012 Recommendations**
Total Defense Spending	*$708.3 billion*	**$760 billion** (Based on 5 percent of projected GDP. Source - CBO's Economic Projections for Calendar Years 2009 to 2019)
Military Personnel	*$138.5 billion*	**$149.9 billion**
Operation and maintenance	*$200.2 billion*	**$214.8 billion**
Procurement	*$112.8 billion*	**$121 billion**
Research, Development, Test and Evaluation	*$76.1 billion*	**$81.6 billion**
Family Housing	*$1.8 billion*	**$1.93 billion**
Revolving and Management Funds	*$2.4 billion*	**$2.58 billion**
Military Construction	*$16.9 billion*	**$18.1 billion**
Overseas Contingency Operations	*$159.3 billion*	**$170.9 billion**

National Security Principles

The American Legion upholds the following national security principles as fundamental to the best interests of the United States:

1. The National Security Strategy needs to be reassessed so that missions and resources are more closely aligned;

2. The credibility of the United States in an unstable world needs to be maintained by retaining the requisite military capabilities to deal with actual and potential threats; Such a strategy requires that the Armed Forces be more fully structured, equipped and budgeted to achieve this strategy; Active and reserve military end strengths should be increased to an absolute minimum of 2.1 million for the foreseeable future; At least 18 full-strength Army Divisions or 72 Brigade Combat Team equivalents, an enlarged Special Operations Force, 11 deployable Navy aircraft carrier battle groups, 3 or more Marine Corps Expeditionary Forces with sufficient organic air support, and 13 or more active Air Force fighter wing equivalents should be retained as the minimum needed baseline foundation;

3. Defense budgets should be funded to at least 4 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during time of peace, 5 percent during time of war;

4. The National Guard and Reserves must be realistically manned, structured, equipped, trained, fully deployable and maintained at high readiness levels and not over-utilized in order to accomplish their increasing and indispensable missions and roles in our national defense;

5. Peacetime Selective Service registration should be retained so as to maintain our capability to rapidly reconstitute forces in the event of emergencies or war;

6. Force modernization for the Services needs to be realistically funded, and not further delayed, or the United States is likely to unnecessarily risk American lives in the years ahead; Production of airlift and sealift assets needs to be expedited;

7. The American people expect that whenever U.S. forces are committed, that they will be committed only when America's vital national interests are threatened and only as a last resort after all reasonable alternatives have been explored and tried;

8. The support of peacekeeping, peace enforcement, peace-making and humanitarian operations as they are becoming more frequent and necessary in waging the sustained war on terrorism;

9. The honorable nature of military service should be upheld as it not only represents fulfillment of American patriotic obligation but is also a privilege and responsibility that embodies the highest form of service to the nation;

10. The United States Government must honor its obligations to all service members, veterans, military retirees and their families, and lasting compensations and incentives should be equitable;

11. Major incentives for military service should include an enhanced GI Bill for education and training, improved quality of life features, and a reduced operational tempo in order to recruit and retain a quality and fully-manned force which is professionally-led;

12. Urge the United States Government to retain the necessary deployed forces worldwide to accomplish both short-term as well as long-term commitments and contingencies.

Funding

The American Legion continues to urge Congress to fully fund our Armed Forces and to resist any peace dividend proposals to divert essential funds from defense programs to meet other needs or any initiative aimed at reducing essential manpower growth, or essential weapons programs or upgrades.

Army

The American Legion urges Congress to fully fund the Army's budget and wartime demands including any funding required for combat and contingency operations along with the purposes of resetting and replacing battle losses of equipment. The American

Legion urges the Congress to ensure the Army is fully manned, trained, and equipped to achieve victory in the War on Terrorism.

Navy and Marine Corps

Our national security depends to a large extent on the ability of the United States to maintain sea superiority as well as strategic Naval combat capabilities. The Navy and Marine Corps have continually shown the ability of the United States to maintain a forward posture, projecting US power overseas, when and where needed around the world to uphold our national security. To maintain force readiness, the Navy and Marine Corps must balance priorities of manpower, current and future readiness, quality of service and alignment.

Balancing critical combat readiness with future navy requirements is essential to US Naval superiority. A 21st century Navy requires rapid technological advancements in the areas of command and control, which will require judicious upgrades of its systems. The programs that will be the core of Navy and Marine Corps forces in the 21st century require substantial investments. The American Legion urges Congress to fully fund the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps to provide credible combat power from the sea.

Air Force

To meet the challenges of adversaries at home and abroad, Air Force strategy calls for a capabilities–based approach to defense planning: This enables the Service to answer a broad range of challenges posed by potential adversaries, while also developing the capabilities it needs for the future. In assessing existing and potential adversaries' capabilities against our own, the Air Force is developing Task Forces for a variety of mission requirements, from strategic response to homeland security. Continued investment in the core competencies of aerospace power–aerospace superiority, global attack, precision engagement, information superiority, rapid global mobility, and agile combat support–will continue to be the key to preserving the Air Force's ability to respond to threats to America's national security whenever and wherever they occur.

The American Legion urges Congress to support the Air Force's commitment to attract, retain, and train quality people and to mold them into an expeditionary aerospace force capable of flexibly responding to threats to America's national security; to enhance readiness through its continued focus on total force integration and the integration of air and space systems; and to build and implement a transformation and modernization program that will maintain America's dominance in air, space, and cyberspace.

Quality-of-Life

The American Legion has always supported quality of life features for members of the Armed Forces and their dependents as well as military retirees, as people are the foundation of our Nation's fighting forces. Without highly qualified, dedicated men and women, even the most sophisticated weaponry will not provide the deterrent force necessary for this Nation to remain at peace.

Military compensation is only one factor in the quality of life equation as to whether a good service member and his family remain in the service: other major factors include fair treatment, career stability and regular promotions, adequate quarters, adequate health care and commissaries, and day care facilities, all of which ease the numerous sacrifices that are demanded of service members and their families.

Over 300,000 Reservists have been activated for homeland security and the war on terrorism and with Reservists performing active duty missions for longer periods of time, their benefits need to be significantly expanded and improved.

Our military retirees and their dependents and military survivors are deserving and rightfully entitled to adequate health care treatment, concurrent receipt and regular cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to military retirement pay and survivor benefit plans.

The American Legion urges Congress to support and fund such quality of life features including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Military pay comparability for the Armed Forces; regular increases in the Basic Allowances for Quarters; renovation and construction of military quarters; and increased funding for child day care centers. Pay raises must be competitive with the private sector;

2. Adequate medical, mental and dental health services; morale, welfare and recreational facilities; and non-privatized exchanges and commissary facilities. The Defense Commissary Agency (DECA) and its functions should be retained and not relegated to the military services;

3. Preserve an attractive retirement system for the active and reserve components with annual cost of living adjustments (COLAs) paid at the same rate and concurrently with other Federal retiree COLAs; oppose any changes to the military retirement system, whether prospective or retroactive, that would violate contracts made with military retirees and would undermine morale and readiness;

4. Require the Services perform mandatory physical examinations, without waivers, for all separating veterans;

5. Fully funding the concurrent receipt of military retirement pay, military separation pays, and VA disability compensation as well as Special Compensation pays for disabled military retirees;

6. SBP/DIC offset be eliminated;

7. TRICARE for Life and the TRICARE Senior Pharmacy program for Medicare-eligible military retirees, their dependents and military survivors, should be adequately funded; and regular cost-of-living adjustments to military retirement deployment pay, capital gains tax exclusions, tax-free and increased death gratuity payments, and combat zone tax exclusions for service in South Korea;

8. Reinstitute Impact Aid to fund the local public school education of military dependents;

9. Adequately protecting the American public and the Armed Forces from the actual or potentially harmful effects of friendly and hostile chemical, biological and nuclear agents or munitions;

10. Congress to extend and improve additional quality of life benefits, allowances and privileges to the National Guard and Reserves involved in Homeland Security and other missions so as to more closely approximate those of the active force. Military retirement pay and TRICARE healthcare for members of the Reserve Components should be authorized before age 11. Hazardous duty and incentive pays for Reservists should be the same as active duty; tax credits to private businesses that pay the difference between military and civilian salaries to mobilized Reservists and restore travel exemptions for Reserve and Guard members for expenses associated with attending drills;

11. Military health care should be provided to members of the Reserve Components and their dependents, who become injured while on active duty regardless of the number of days served on active duty, to the same degree as active duty members under the same circumstances;

12. Whenever a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) is conducted, The American Legion urges that certain base facilities such as base medical facilities, commissaries, exchanges and other facilities be preserved for use by active duty and Reservist personnel and military retired veterans and their families;

13. Walter Reed Army Medical Center should not be closed until the Global War on Terrorism has ended;

14. The numerous, recurring and serious pay problems experienced by the Active and Reserve Components be immediately resolved;

15. Traumatic Brain Injury and Combat Stress Disorders be diagnosed and effectively treated in the military

Concurrent Receipt

Title 38, United States Code, Sections 5304 and 5305, prohibit the concurrent receipt of both military retirement pay for longevity from the Department of Defense and disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Disabled military retirees have been entitled to receive disability compensation only by "waiving that portion of retired pay as is equal in amount to such compensation," so that disabled military retirees essentially fund their own disability compensation which is not subject to taxation.

This policy is unfavorable because Federal civil service employees, as well as other Federal government workers, concurrently receive retirement pay for longevity and disability payments. The American Legion believes that it is inequitable to authorize one group to receive federal retirement pay and disability payments while prohibiting disabled military retirees from receiving both. According to the Department of Defense, the rationale for this disparity is that "VA disability compensation is (meant) for disabled veterans who have left the service before completing a career and before qualifying for retired pay...disabled military retirees did not experience a reduction in earning potential during their military career."

Such rationale, which continues to this day, defies both logic and the facts: There are approximately 640,000 disabled active duty and reservist military retirees (rated 0% - 100%), who were retired for longevity and who qualified for military retirement yet, during their military careers, sustained non-career-ending injuries, combat wounds and other ailments. There are also over 100,000 non-careerist military disability retirees who were retired for severely disabling injuries, wounds or ailments who are awarded military retirement disability pay as a percentage of their base pay (30% and above) and who are not authorized to concurrently draw VA disability compensation. In order to draw VA disability compensation, they must waive their military retirement disability pay, which is inequitable for those disabled warriors who were unable to complete military careers.

The Fiscal Year 2003 National Defense Authorization Act authorized a Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) for those disabled military retirees for longevity whose VA-rated disabilities totaled 60 percent and higher due to combat, combat-related training, hazardous duty or the instrumentalities of war.

The Fiscal Year 2004 National Defense Authorization Act authorized the concurrent receipt of taxable military retirement pay and VA disability compensation for disabled retirees rated at 50 percent or higher, to include disabled retired Reservists with at least 20 years of service who were drawing retirement pay, as well as veterans who retired under Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA).

The FY 2004 NDAA also expanded CRSC for disabled retirees with 20 years of qualifying service who have a combined, combat-related disability of 10 percent or more; and

Eligible retirees may not receive both concurrent receipt and CRSC but may choose between the two options during an annual "open season."

The American Legion expresses its gratitude to Congress for the authorization of both Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) and partial concurrent receipt for over 200,000 disabled military retirees but urges Congress to authorize and fund full concurrent receipt for all disabled military retirees to include those rated at 40 percent and below; to authorize the CRSC payment of military disability retiree pay and VA disability compensation for those disabled military retirees.

Additionally, The American Legion urges Congress to eliminate the phase-in of provisions in PL 108-136 so as to accelerate restored retired pay in fewer than 10 years and The American Legion also urges Congress to authorize the concurrent receipt of military severance pay for less than 30 percent disabled service members and VA disability compensation.

Tricare

The American Legion recognizes the debt owed to the entire military retirement community for their sacrifices and hardships endured in honorable military service to this nation.

Administration and DOD leaders are seeking to impose very large health care fee increases on military retirees and their families. The proposed fee increases are inappropriate and out of line with career service members' unique sacrifices. Military medical and retirement benefits must be markedly better than civilian benefits because they are the primary offsets for enduring decades of extraordinarily arduous service conditions.

Military retirees' careers have entailed unique and arduous service conditions few other Americans are willing to endure for 20 or 30 years including hazardous duty, service in foreign countries often in hostile environments, and extended family separations, just to mention a few.

These proposed increases in premiums are targeted to a select group of military medical care beneficiaries – those military retirees and their families under age 65. The American Legion opposes these increases and sees this proposal as an erosion of quality of life benefits from a grateful nation for honorable military service.

The American Legion shall prevail upon this Administration and the Department of Defense to reconsider any proposals to implement any increases in the military retirees' TRICARE enrollment fees, deductibles, or premiums.

Also, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has recognized that Chiropractic Care for our veterans is an extremely important part of their overall health. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs provides chiropractic care and services. Not all retired veterans have reasonable access to the VA medical centers near them due to the travel distance, age, and service-connected disabilities that make it very difficult to travel the long distances to the nearest VA medical center. Many retired veterans have TRICARE as their health care program. TRICARE, is not an insurance plan, but rather a health care entitlement earned by our nation's military members for their service to this country; and TRICARE currently does not cover chiropractic care. The American Legion supports an effort to encourage the TRICARE Management Authority, a department within The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), to include Chiropractic care for veterans in the TRICARE health care package.

The Department of Defense (DOD) created TRICARE to augment its Military Medical System and TRICARE largely consists of regional Federally-contracted, for-profit health care providers. DOD's utilization of Reserve Components in the performance of traditionally active duty missions continues globally. Many members of the Reserve Components, when activated to perform full-time duties can no longer afford their civilian health care coverage for themselves and their dependents. Also, numerous activated Reservists have been non-deployable due to health or dental problems. Many members of the Reserve Components are among the 40 million Americans with no health care coverage for themselves and their dependents. The Reserve Components continue to experience recruiting and retention challenges. The American Legion urges the Congress to authorize and fund the Department of Defense (DOD) in providing permanent TRICARE healthcare for members of the Reserve Components and their dependents.

General Defense Department Issues

Armed Forces Retirement Homes

The American Legion urges Congress to support and fund those measures which will provide for the long-term solvency and viability of the United States Soldiers' and Airmen's Home and the reconstruction of the United States Naval Home.

Support For The Selective Service Registration Program

The American Legion supports retention of the Selective Service Registration Program as being in the best interests of all Americans, and its maintenance is a proven cost-effective, essential, and rapid means of reconstituting the required forces to protect our national security interests.

Status Of Forces Agreement

It is The American Legion's position that all future Status of Forces Agreements negotiated, renegotiated, or revised with host countries allow for the unimpeded use of all U.S. military facilities by retired U.S. military members and their dependents, and that U.S. military personnel are fairly treated in the court systems in the Republic of Korea and Okinawa.

Reforming The Military Absentee Voting System

The American Legion urges Congress to ensure that satisfactorily drafted uniform acts and/or regulations pertaining to the Military Voting Absentee System, are made available to all appropriate state and local election entities. Also, The American Legion urges that appropriate laws and guidelines be developed at Federal, state and local levels with the intent that all military absentee voters and their families will have their votes counted in every election. Furthermore, the sending and receiving of blank and completed military absentee ballots should be accomplished electronically as much as possible.

Uniformed Services University Of The Health Sciences (USU)

The American Legion urges Congress to: continue its demonstrated commitment to USU, as a national asset, for the continued provision of uniquely educated and trained uniformed physicians, advanced-practice nurses, and scientists dedicated to careers of service in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the United States Public Health Service; support timely construction at the USU campus; continue funding the University's collaborative effort for sharing its expertise and training; support development of the USU Immersive, Wide Area Virtual Environment (WAVE) Simulation for Medical Readiness Training; support funding for the Graduate School of Nursing Teaching/Educational Programs and, encourage continued close collaboration and progress towards the Office of the Secretary of Defense proposed Joint Medical Command and Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) with USU as the core academic health center.

Aeronautical and Space Exploration

The American Legion deems it imperative that the United States, in the face of increasing global competition, maintain its hard won status as the world leader in aeronautics and aircraft production and in space exploration and research; to realize this goal, The American Legion urges Congress to provide:

1. Adequate funding for the nation's civilian and military aerospace research and development programs to maintain U.S. technological leadership
2. Adequate funding to build, upgrade and enhance the nation's civilian and military aerospace research facilities and wind tunnels

3. A renewed national commitment to education involving academia in aeronautical and aerospace engineering research and technologies insuring a state of the art educated work force

4. Overwatch and investigating functions and related activities with respect to the transfer of American aerospace technology abroad

5. Provide that all of our military aircrafts are design, manufactured and assembled within the borders of the United States. The Nation must sustain its commitment to aerospace engineering research and development if it is to maintain its role as the world leader as we move into the next century.

Combating Cyberspace Threats

The American Legion urges Congress to provide funding to combat the continuing cyberspace and other threats to the United States in the 21st Century.

National Missile Defense System

The American Legion urges Congress to develop and continue to deploy a national missile defense system which is in the national interest of the United States and the American people and an essential ingredient of our Homeland Security.

The American Legion is requesting an adequately funded and prioritized program to define the nature of a long range strike capability to the point in the acquisition cycle where a concept including performance is established, systems engineering plans are ready, a request of proposal is on-hand ready to commence the development test and production of a new long range strike capability should the need be recognized. In addition, The American Legion requests that Congress budget the limited funds needed to proceed with relatively inexpensive initial steps leading to capability of rapidly beginning acquisition should risk assessment determine it necessary circa 2015.

Air Supremacy

The American Legion is requesting an adequately funded and prioritized program to define the nature of a generation 6 air supremacy fighter to the point in the acquisition cycle where a concept including performance is established, systems engineering plans are ready, a request for proposal is on-hand to commence the development, test and production of a new 6th generation fighter should the need be recognized. Furthermore, The American Legion requests that Congress budget the limited funds needed to proceed with the relatively inexpensive initial steps leading to capability of rapidly beginning acquisition should risk assessment determine it necessary circa 2015.

Non-Federal Roles of the National Guard

The American Legion urges Congress to retain National Guard units at reasonable readiness levels so that in addition to their active duty missions they may continue to provide civil disturbance and natural and man-made disaster assistance; perform civil defense and drug interdictions functions as well as other essential state or federal roles as required to include border security.

Rebuilding America's Defense Industrial Base

The American Legion urges Congress to rebuild America's industrial base by continuing to adequately fund research, development and acquisition budgets to assure that our military production can meet national requirements especially when U. S. military power is committed; and Congress encourage the rebuilding of America's defense industrial base by having a proper balance of policies that:

1. Increase and then sustain domestic production at levels that maintain a robust and internationally competitive defense industry

2. Keep the arms industry internationally competitive

3. Ensure that the U.S. is not putting itself at risk by having our armaments produced offshore.

Buy American

The American Legion urges Congress to require government contractors to utilize American-made components and subsystems in construction of their equipment rather than those made by foreign subcontractors for use by the United States military services to ensure the defense of the country as well as the continued employment of Americans and veterans at subcontractor facilities.

Foreign Investments In The American Defense Industry

The American Legion urges Congress to ensure foreign entities are not permitted to own critical industries, especially those involved in producing defense items. The American Legion opposes the transfer and sales of sensitive technologies which may endanger our national security and economic interests. The American Legion urges Congress to thoroughly investigate the sales of aerospace and satellite technology to the People's Republic of China, or any actual or potential adversary of the United States, which could seriously jeopardize national security interests of the U. S. and her allies.

Commercial Shipbuilding For Defense

The American Legion urges Congress to vigorously act to stop the further erosion of our vital maritime capability and urges Congress to boost naval budgets, promote commercial shipbuilding, expand the use of U.S. flagships in world commerce, and resist foreign actions that would further damage America's defense industrial base.

In conclusion, The American Legion urges the Congress as we contend with the difficult challenges of the war on terrorism, to continue to proceed on the path of transforming America's armed forces into a modern force capable of providing for the security of all Americans, strengthening and expanding military capabilities, and in honoring America's commitments worldwide as well as on the home front.

Homeland Security

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on American soil have made Americans painfully aware of their vulnerability to violence from international terrorism. These terrorists were able to carry out their attacks because previous emphasis by the U.S. Government on homeland security and intelligence collection, while improving over recent years, had been inadequate and incapable of preventing such attacks.

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2003 established the Department of Homeland Security as well as a cabinet position designed to be the single source of authority, at the highest levels, for all homeland defense programs and policies. Although Congress has appropriated funding for the Department of Homeland Security and its numerous agencies and functions, appropriations continue to be required to fund homeland security tasks and functions at regional, state and local levels across the Nation. The American Legion urges Congress to fully fund the Department of Homeland Security so as to harmonize the many agencies and offices with Homeland Security responsibilities into a viable and credible deterrent to those who seek to inflict violence on the United States and the American people and that the Congress also fully fund those homeland security tasks and functions being performed at regional, state and local levels.

Budget Proposals for Homeland Security for Fiscal Year 2012

Current Defense Funding for FY 2011		**The American Legion's FY 2012 Recommendations**
Total Homeland Security Spending	$43.6 billion	**$46.8 billion**
Immigration, Customs, Customs Enforcement, and Border protection	$18.6 billion	**$19.95 billion**

Establish A Strategic Plan For Internal Security Within The United States

The American Legion has always recognized the importance of investigations that expose the truth about subversive activities that may harm or seek to destroy our constitutional government. The Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, both security agencies of this nation, perform functions essential to the maintenance of our national security. The American Legion supports the thorough background investigation of all applicants for federal employment to expose possible links to subversive activities or membership in subversive organizations that contribute to the weakening of the internal security of the United States.

Immigration Reform to Enhance National Security

The American Legion urges Congress to immediately take such action as may be appropriate and necessary to effectively fund and staff federal intelligence and security agencies at a level that will protect the United States from foreign espionage, organized crime, terrorism and subversive activities and urges Congress to approve legislation to deny subversive individuals or groups the ability to infiltrate and subsequently destroy our government agencies and institutions through federal employment. The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to provide agencies of the federal government with the necessary resources to track the arrival and departure of foreign visitors to the United States.

In addition, The American Legion, on behalf of all Americans and future generations of Americans, urges Congress to authorize and fund the following strategy in addressing the issue of illegal aliens in the United States:

Secure the borders and other points of entry in the United States:

(a) Construct physical barriers, as appropriate,
(b) Acquire and utilize latest technology to monitor border activity,
(c) Employ and train a sufficient number of U.S. Border Patrol Agents to effectively patrol border regions with employment preference given to former members of the Armed Forces,
(d) Utilize National Guard troops to assist in providing border security only if authorized to use deadly force,
(e) Insure all vessels and their cargo arriving at our seaports are thoroughly searched;

Enforce existing laws and pass new laws to reduce U.S. illegal alien population:

(a) Reject amnesty programs for illegal aliens,

(b) Enforce immigration laws and promote cooperation between federal, state and local law enforcement officials, with emphasis on enforcement,
(c) Establish parameters for non-criminal deportations

U.S. Coast Guard

By law the United States Coast Guard is at all times one of the Armed Forces of the United States. The Coast Guard was able to respond to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and within hours its homeland security missions doubled. Included in the numerous peacetime and wartime missions of the Coast Guard are law enforcement in its many facets to include drug interdiction and interception of illegal aliens; environment protection, maritime safety including search and rescue responsibilities and inspecting and licensing Merchant Marine ships; and National Security to include port security and serving as an essential wartime and peacetime partner of the U.S. Navy.

The American Legion urges Congress to fully fund Coast Guard to achieve its numerous vital missions including homeland security, law enforcement environmental protection, maritime safety and other missions as assigned as well as the funding of its "Deepwater" initiatives and also urges the annual Congressional passage of the Coast Guard Authorization. In conclusion, The American Legion urges Congress to support pay and benefits equity for Coast Guard men and women as well as the same quality of life features as authorized for the other Armed Forces of the United States.

National Executive Committee Meetings, Spring 2011

An executive session of the National Security Commission met on May 1, 2011 in the Circle Center of the Sheraton Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana, to discuss current national security issues facing the United States along with reviewing nine resolutions before the National Security Commission.

G. Michael Schlee, Chairman, National Security Commission opened the meeting and welcomed Past National Commander (PNC) Clarence Bacon of Maryland, PNC Tony Jordan of Maine, PNC Bob Spanogle of Indiana, and PNC Clarence Hill of Florida. The National Security Commission was honored by their attendance and very appreciative of their participation in the commission's business discussions.

The resolutions entitled Increase Army End Strength and Reserves and National Guard Retirement Benefit Fairness were referred to the National Security Commission by the Pennsylvania Department Executive Committee. The remaining seven resolutions originated with the National Security Commission and are entitled as follows: Rare Earth Elements, Rescinding Obsolete Resolutions Dealing with National Security, Flexible Savings Accounts, Oppose Widow's Tax, The American Legion's Position on Tricare, Uniform Standards for Military Occupational Specialties, and Military Readiness.

After the commission conducted a thorough analysis of each proposed resolution and held discussions on each resolution, the commission reached a consensus and recommends approval of eight resolutions. The National Security Commission made a recommendation to receive and record the resolution entitled Increase Army's End Strength.

The business meeting also included a national security update by Joseph Grassi, Deputy Director, National Security and Foreign Relations, Division. His presentation focused on the current issues surrounding the latest comments made by Defense Secretary Robert Gates in connection with Libyan military command centers being legitimate targets for U.S. and NATO. Mr. Grassi concluded his briefing by analyzing the FY 2011 Total Defense Spending of $708 billion; President Obama's FY 2012 Defense Budget Recommendation of $671 billion; and The American Legion's FY 2012 Defense Budget Recommendation of $760 billion with Congressman Paul Ryan's budget recommendation for defense.

In the afternoon, George Werhli, Chairman, National Security Law and Order Committee, lead a group to review and choose the finalists of the Law Officer and Firefighter of the Year Awards in room 315 of The American Legion National Headquarters.

At the invitation of Major General R. Martin Umbarger, Commander, Joint Forces Headquarters, members of the National Security Commission and Foreign Relations Commission and guests attended briefings on the mobilization of National Guard units who are being deployed to combat zones on Tuesday, May 3rd. The visit included briefings on the training and equipping of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) by 1st Army, demobilization, the services provided to these guard personnel and their families. PNC Bob Spanogle, Mr. Barry Searle, Mr. Dick Holmes, Mr. Joseph Grassi, Mr. Freddy Gessner, and Mr. Dave Shorter have been instrumental in the coordination of this visit to Camp Atterbury.

National Security—Foreign Relations Division

Responsibility for the daily conduct of the extensive work of The American Legion in defense and foreign policy is assigned to the National Security-Foreign Relations Division located in the Washington, D.C. office. The staff of the Division consists of: Barry A. Searle, Director; Joseph Grassi, Deputy Director; Freddy Gessner, Assistant Director; Lori Perkio, Transition Assistance Representative at Walter Reed Army Medical Center; Brian Buckler, PEB/MEB Service Officer; Charles "Jon" Dickson, PEB/MEB Service Officer; and Roshawn Hyde, National Security and Foreign Relations Division Administrative Assistant.

During the year, the combined Division has endeavored to not only fulfill its responsibility to implement the mandates and policies of The American Legion relating to national defense and foreign affairs, but to constantly expand and improve the ways and means of projecting our interest in these two important areas. The duties have consisted of maintaining liaison with the Departments of Defense, State, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Homeland Security and Coast Guard; the Selective Service System, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and others. These contacts related to a variety of matters, some of which involved members of the armed forces.

Liaison also is maintained with a host of military and quasi-military organizations with whom common goals are shared. Among these are: Reserve Officers Association; Air Force Association; Military Officers Association of America; Association of the U.S. Army; and the National Guard Association of the United States. Most importantly, the National Security-Foreign Relations Division provides a steady flow of information on defense matters to members of both commissions and the leadership at all levels of our organization.

Writing and delivering speeches; writing letters to Congress, the President and the Department of Defense; preparing reports; preparing and delivering Congressional testimony; coordinating foreign travel; and answering correspondence and telephone inquiries are all part of the duty of the staff. Additionally, promotional material is prepared and distributed to support the national programs in the national security field.

Continual use is made of all American Legion national publications, such as The Dispatch, The American Legion Magazine and The American Legion News Service, the principal means for distribution of factual information and program support in the fields of national defense and foreign affairs. The organization's website www.legion.org is increasingly becoming the primary mode of communicating information both within and outside The American Legion.

Committee Reports

The following reports, received with grateful appreciation, were prepared under the leadership and guidance of the following Committee and Council Chairmen: Michael E. Harris (VA)—Aerospace; Charles E. Kruger (MN)—Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness; George W. Wehrli (FL)—Law and Order; Charles F. Moreland (FL)—Merchant Marine; H. Warren Post (FL)—Military Affairs; Douglas C. Haggan (FR)—National and Homeland Security Council; William B. Goede (MN)—Naval Affairs.

AEROSPACE COMMITTEE
Robert C. Weyenberg, Wisconsin, Chairman

During the past year, the Aerospace Committee continued its efforts to ensure that the United States does not become a second-rate power in modern air power or advanced aerospace technology. The authority for the Committee's efforts are the resolutions adopted at the 92nd National Convention. The effort to implement these positions required both administrative and legislative activities.

The Aerospace Committee's current resolutions clearly state The American Legion's full support for a fully funded Air Force and National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The Committee also emphasizes the importance of funding research. Research and development are what keeps the United States second-to-none in the air and in space. To be anything less than number one in these areas is a grave threat to our national security.

HOMELAND SECURITY AND CIVIL PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE
Charles E. Kruger, Minnesota, Chairman

The Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness Committee supports full funding of the Department of Homeland Security and all associated agencies (to include the intelligence agencies). It also urges Congress to streamline the way in which all the agencies work together. The Committee also supports the roles of the National Guard and the Coast Guard in homeland security.

Our resolution on *Citizen Corps*, urges Congress to fully fund Citizen Corps of which The America Legion urges its Departments and Posts to become active members in the Citizen Corps program.

Blood Donor Activities: The American Legion and The American Legion Auxiliary continue to be principal sources of blood donors in the United States. Through our vast network of Posts and Units organized into Department programs, Legionnaires and Auxiliary members continue to supply the blood needs of their own members, hospitalized veterans and through cooperative agreements, to patients in civilian hospitals. During August 2010 through June 2011, a total of approximately 95,000 pints of blood were donated by tens of thousands of American Legion donors.

National Commander Awards: To stimulate activities on the part of Departments and Posts, annual awards are made by the National Commander. During the period from July 1, 2010 through June 15, 2011, many Departments of The American Legion actively participated in the Blood Donor program. The winning Departments included Florida, Ohio, Wisconsin, Georgia, Washington, Montana, Hawaii, and Alaska.

LAW AND ORDER COMMITTEE
George W. Wehrli, Florida, Chairman

The Law and Order Committee has established The American Legion's position on how to best deal with and lower the crime rates in America. Its comprehensive focus includes holding parents responsible for fines imposed on youthful offenders, as appropriate.

Its position on the second amendment is that the Constitution guarantees the right of every law-abiding American citizen the right to keep and bear arms.

The Law and Order Committee continued this year to emphasize crime prevention by promoting the distribution of the Crime Prevention booklet across the nation. Liaison was maintained with the National Crime Prevention Coalition in order to keep the committee up-to-date on the latest developments in the field of crime prevention.

American Legion Departments, Posts and individual citizens have been overwhelmingly responsive to the Legion's Crime Prevention program. Requests for this booklet have come from state and local law enforcement officials; from senior citizen groups; from libraries; and from school children. This program is viable, ongoing and important to our National interest. The Law and Order Committee have continued to promote its goals in this area.

Fire Protection/Prevention: The National Executive Committee authorized the American Legion Fire Protection and Prevention programs. An information booklet on this subject was published in the spring of 1986, and was the basis of a slide show production.

Junior Law Cadet Program: The American Legion, in its efforts to better educate our young people in regard to laws which govern our society, and the agencies which enforce those laws, has developed several programs which feature law enforcement training. Many Departments, in cooperation with state law enforcement agencies, sponsored youth programs designed to acquaint the participants with methods of basic law enforcement.

National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Program: Based on its published criteria, the Law and Order Committee annually selects Regional winners who contend for the prestigious honor of being selected as the National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. Capt. Michael J. Levine was named as the 2010 National Law Officer of the Year and was presented with the honor at the 92nd National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

National Firefighter of the Year: Based on its published criteria, the Law and Order Committee annually selects Regional winners who contend for the prestigious honor of being selected as the Firefighter of the Year. Firefighter Marcus Haynes was named as the 2010 National firefighter of the Year and was presented with the first National Law Firefighter of the Year Award at the 92nd National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

MERCHANT MARINE COMMITTEE
Charles F. Moreland, Florida, Chairman

Since its founding, The American Legion has realized the importance of a strong American merchant marine and the indispensable role of this "fifth arm of defense." Today, the ever increasing dependence of the U.S. economy on raw materials from Third World countries and overseas areas demand renewed efforts to build up our merchant fleet.

Retaining American merchant marine independence in supplying our economy and the added demands of military sealift, spurred this Committee's support for expanding the Merchant Marine during the past year. The effort to inform its membership, the general public and the Congress of our views were guided by resolutions which were unanimously adopted by the 92nd National Convention.

Maritime Power: Throughout our history, maritime power has been a key element in the growth and strength of America. Moreover, the new sealift demands of the United States make the Merchant Marine even more imperative in our strategic planning. We must rebuild the merchant marine if we are to maintain free use of the seas in the face of potential challenges presented by regional conflicts.

MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Leo F. Malloy, Massachusetts, Chairman

During the year, the Military Affairs Committee has directed its major efforts toward maintaining a strong and modern United States armed forces that is second to none in the world. Our activities have been guided by the resolutions adopted by the 92nd National Convention and subsequent National Executive Committee actions. Those resolutions were widely disseminated to Congressional, government, military and industry leaders to inform them of our positions for supporting strong and modern military forces to include the Reserve Components. Bound volumes of the resolutions were presented to the President, Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The National Commander designated "Maintaining a Strong National Defense" and "Support for the War on Terrorism" as a legislative priority.

NATIONAL AND HOMELAND SECURITY COUNCIL
Douglas C. Haggan, France, Chairman

The Council continues to focus on our General Security issues to ensure a strong national and homeland defense. The Council is also looking at the issues of Conservation and Natural Resources. Energy Independence will continue to grow as a national security concern.

Selective Service System: The American Legion, over the past year, has continued to support the Selective Service System by strongly advocating the maintenance of the Selective Service Registration Program as a viable preparedness measure.

Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy: Criterion for judging the winners of the Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy is based on Departments giving the greatest degree of support to ROTC programs to include the number of medals presented and Legion participation in award ceremonies this year. Among the winners of the Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy are the Departments of Florida, Minnesota, Michigan, Montana, and Hawaii. The American Legion presented over several thousand ROTC Medals to ROTC students in 2010.

NAVAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
William B. Goede, Minnesota, Chairman

Guided by resolutions adopted at the 92nd National Convention, the Naval Affairs Committee has worked to strengthen the Navy and Marine Corps during the past year. It begins with the premise that sea lanes are the lifelines of America, both in peacetime and war. The United States is no longer hesitant about sending powerful signals to aggressors that it will not stand idly by and watch while they conduct violent takeovers of legitimate governments, particularly when those takeovers are contrary to the national interests of the United States. This new diplomacy requires a mobile, flexible and capable and deployable United States Navy and Marine Corps.

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMISSION
Robert L. Morrill, New York, Chairman
Joseph H. March, Maryland, Director

The Public Relations Commission communicates the organizational image, goals, programs and legislative positions of The American Legion to national, regional and specialized media, corporate America, and the public.

A national information campaign, "A Powerful Force for Our Nation," was launched with distribution to over 500 major cable television systems throughout the United States. As part of the Goodwill Communications fall-winter CablePak, the public service announcements were made available for use on every channel of each system. Concurrently, the campaign DVD was made available to posts for direct marketing to

media in their area. Each DVD contained the 3:55 minute "Pledge to Service" video, six television spots, 10 radio spots, 5 website ads, six print ads/posters/handbills and a marketing support guide containing suggestions on getting the materials placed in a variety of media. The print materials could be localized with contact information. During the first six months of the campaign, the television spots received almost 18,000 air plays in 28 states and 48 cities with a value of $2,154,836.

Following the record-setting outbreak of tornadoes and floods across the country earlier this year, Public Relations staff, working with Internal Affairs staff, produced a 60-second PSA and wrote a 60-second PSA text for use by local announcers promoting the National Emergency Fund availability to storm victims of the Legion family. The spots were distributed directly by email to 1,478 radio stations in Tennessee, Louisiana, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Virginia, Alabama, Kansas, and Mississippi.

The new PR System Tool Kit was completed and distributed this year to public relations officers. It offers a wide array of new media tools, information, templates for press releases, advisories, letters, as well as electronic PSAs, videos, website media ads, and PR presentations. The new kit provides insight into new media technologies, references, websites and tips on using social media to the benefit of post public relations efforts. Copies will be forwarded to each department and individual kits will be available free on request to Legion public relations officers by calling, writing or emailing the national PR office at pr@legion.org.

The American Legion's Newscenter for Media on Twitter continued to grow steadily at http://twitter.com/AmLegionNewsCtr. Designed for veterans affairs and national security beat reporters, producers, columnists and writers, staff sends out information about breaking stories the Legion is following and offers background information and interview opportunities.

Media Relations

The commission's media marketing staff in Washington continued promotion of American Legion programs and expertise to external national media. Solid working relationships were enhanced with Fox News, CNN, C-SPAN, Associated Press, Bloomberg News, Washington Post, Washington Times, Congressional Quarterly, Military Times and Stars & Stripes. Washington office Executive Director Peter Gaytan appeared on national cable television eight times during the year – including a 40-minute slot on C-SPAN's Washington Journal. These appearances informed millions of viewers about The American Legion and its work on behalf of veterans, servicemembers and military families. Issues ranged from the impact of reform on VA health care to private insurance companies profiting from the death benefits of those who died on active duty.

In March, a press conference was held at the National Press Club announced the results of The American Legion Women Veterans Survey conducted by ProSidian Consulting of Charlotte, N.C. The event was broadcast on C-SPAN and also covered by the Washington Times, Christian Broadcast Network, Stars & Stripes, the White House and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Awards

At the 51st Washington Conference, The National Commander's Public Relations Award was presented to Nesse Godin, a Lithuanian survivor of the Holocaust. Godin was selected for her outstanding work in ensuring that Americans never forget the Holocaust and the sacrifices made by so many during the darkest days of the 20th century. Her outreach in print, broadcast and personal appearances continues to remind all of us that freedom is a precious gift that must be guarded with vigilance and resolve. Additionally,

she inspired countless young people with her personal accounts during American Legion Boys Nation and American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation.

The American Legion Fourth Estate Award was presented at the 93nd National Convention in Minneapolis, Minn., to the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, the Indianapolis Star, and NewsChannel 5 of Nashville, Tenn. This marked the first time that the award was given in three distinct categories: broadcast, print, and Internet (new media).

The American Legion 2011 Patriot Award winner is Col. Greg Gadson, Director of the U.S. Army's Wounded Warrior Program. Col. Gadson lost his legs and suffered severe nerve damage to his right arm as a result of an IED attack in Iraq. A short video by ESPN about Col. Gadson and the inspiration he provided to the 2008/2009 Superbowl Champion N.Y. Giants was shown to convention delegates prior to presentation at the 93rd National Convention.

The Future

The National Public Relations Commission will continue to engage emerging communication technologies to provide the most accurate, timely information to veterans and their families. In so doing, The American Legion will continue to be the preeminent voice of, and for, the American veteran in our nation.

THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE COMMISSION

Dennis J. Henkemeyer, Minnesota, Chairman
Jeff Stoffer, Indiana, Director

The American Legion Magazine Division continues to grow its electronic media audience while at the same time stably continuing to produce the top-read veterans publication in the United States. *The American Legion Magazine*, with a circulation of nearly 2.4 million, is the flagship of the division. Other media channels managed in the division, and their audience sizes, include:

- Legion.org, the organization's website, has grown its monthly visitation to between 300,000 and 600,000.
- The American Legion Online Update, the organization's primary e-newsletter, has a weekly circulation of approximately 330,000 subscribers and an open rate of about 24 percent.
- The Dugout e-newsletter, in support of American Legion Baseball, has a subscriber list of more than 31,000.
- The American Legion 2011 Annual Report, a snapshot of the year's events and financial statements, was produced by the division in 2011, both in print and dynamic digital formats.
- The American Legion *Dispatch*, a monthly leadership newspaper for organization officers, has a circulation of nearly 20,000.
- The social media presence that includes Facebook, Twitter and YouTube with a fan base of more than 25,000 and growing.
- The American Legion National Convention Program is distributed to more than 10,000 each year at the national convention.
- The American Legion Flag Alert e-newsletter, which informs subscribers when and why the U.S. flag is lowered to half-staff, among other alerts, has more than 11,000 subscribers.
- The division is now developing a family of apps for mobile electronic devices, including a veterans claims coach.

The division is monetized by a $3 per-member allocation each year, along with paid advertising and circulation revenue. The division runs on a budget of approximately $17 million a year. Of that, about $9.5 million is paid print and electronic advertising.

The American Legion Magazine Division strives to produce media that matches the organization's mission, as expressed through its resolutions, constitution and values. Among the editorial highlights of 2011 was a three-part series on post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury among returning veterans, along with a prescription for better treatment, as recommended by the Legion's PTS/TBI ad hoc committee. A number of veterans issues – relief for caregivers of wounded veterans, GI Bill improvements, military retirement and claims backlog reduction – dominated the magazine's pages through the past year. The magazine also analyzed a number of national-security and international issues, including the role Pakistan played in the protection of Osama bin Laden and the ramifications of China's cornering of the rare-earth minerals market. The division also created several new electronic-media modules to enhance the member experience, including "In Your Words," which accepts creative and expressive submissions from veterans and their families, as well as an online survey to gauge veteran satisfaction with the work of VA regional offices.

The American Legion Magazine, Legion.org and other media programs produced in the division strive daily to increase awareness of the organization and its services through a variety of channels, from real-time streaming, social media sharing, website fulfillment, leadership information, a monthly magazine and two annual reports. Using these information tools, The American Legion has never been better poised to fulfill the duties of its federal charter.

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION

Michael D. Helm, Kansas, Chairman
Verna L. Jones, North Carolina, Director

The following report covers the activities of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and its staff during the program year ending June 30, 2011.

The Twentieth Annual National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and the Fall and Spring Meetings of the National Executive Committee approved certain positions expressed in resolutions submitted to those bodies through the Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation and the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, respectively. The approved resolutions are set forth as follows:

2010 National Convention, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Resolution No. 13 (WY)
State Veteran Homes' Extended Care Facilities Grant Program

Resolution No. 15 (WY)
The American Legion Policy on State Veterans Homes Inspections

Resolution No. 16 (FL)
The American Legion Policy on Pension Protection

Resolution No. 17 (MI)
Oppose Increased Co-Payments and an Enrollment Fee for Priority Group 7 & 8 Veterans to Receive Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Health Care

Resolution No. 18 (MI)
The American Legion Policy on Tobacco-Related Disabilities

Resolution No. 19 (MI)
Exempt Certain Income From Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Pension Rate Determination

Resolution No. 20 (MI)
The American Legion Policy on Agent Orange

Resolution No. 21 (MI)
Exempt Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Benefits and Services From Pay-Go Provisions

Resolution No. 22 (MI)
Oppose Lump Sum Payments of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Disability Compensation

Resolution No. 23 (MI)
Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Involvement in the Department of Homeland Security

Resolution No. 24 (MI)
Restore and Increase Burial Plot allowance

Resolution No. 25 (MI)
Indiana-Ohio Center for Traumatic Amputation Rehabilitation Research

Resolution No. 26 (MI)
Support Legislation to Institute Mandatory Psychological Screening for all Returning Global War on Terror, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) Reserve and Guard Troops

Resolution No. 27 (MI)
Support Legislation that the Department of Veterans Affairs Include and Treat Family Members of Veterans with Illnesses and Injuries

Resolution No. 28 (MI)
The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Grant WWII Veterans Same Hospital and Medical Entitlements as Previously Granted to WWI and Spanish American War Veterans

Resolution No. 29 (MI)
The American Legion Position on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Means Test

Resolution No. 30 (MI)
Amend Title 38, United States Code, to Establish a Marker for Cremation Urns Provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs

Resolution No. 35 (LA)
Request Supplemental Information From the Department of Defense in Connection with Agent Orange Claims for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

Resolution No. 59 (UT)
The American Legion Petition the Census Bureau to Include Veteran Information on Future Censuses

Resolution No. 87 (MD)
Oppose Legislation Authorizing Legion-Accredited Representatives to Develop Claims

Resolution No. 88 (MD)
Clarification of "Service in the Republic of Vietnam" for the Purpose of Agent Orange Presumption

Resolution No. 89 (MD)
The American Legion Policy Regarding Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCS)

Resolution No. 90 (MD)
The American Legion Policy on the Correction of Military Records

Resolution No. 91 (MD)
Exempt Purple Heart Recipients from VA Prescription Co-Payment

Resolution No. 92 (MD)
The American Legion Policy on Gulf War Illnesses

Resolution No. 93 (MD)
Support Presumption of Service Connection for Hepatitis C

Resolution No. 94 (MD)
Improve the Disability and Death Pension Program

Resolution No. 95 (MD)
Recognize Operations in Lebanon (1958), Grenada (1983), Panama (1989-1990) as Periods of War for Department of Veterans Affairs Pension Purposes

Resolution No. 96 (MD)
Request Congress Provide the Department of Veterans Affairs Adequate Funding for Medical and Prosthetic Research

Resolution No. 97 (MD)
The American Legion Policy on Department of Veterans Affairs Mental Health Services

Resolution No. 98 (MD)
The American Legion Policy on Department of Veterans Affairs National Life Insurance

Resolution No. 99 (MD)
Extend the Presumptive Period for Service Connection for Gulf War Veterans with Undiagnosed Illnesses

Resolution No. 100 (MD)
Oppose Any Reduction of Eligibility Criteria for Department of Veterans Affairs Per Diem Payments to State Veterans Homes

Resolution No. 101 (MD)
Provide Full Funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs Construction Program

Resolution No. 102 (MD)
Amend the Eligibility Requirements and Extend the Eligibility Time Period for Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance

Resolution No. 103 (MD)
Support Medicare Reimbursement for Department of Veterans Affairs

Resolution No. 104 (MD)
The American Legion Policy on Radiation

Resolution No. 105 (MD)
The American Legion Policy on Department of Veterans Affairs Pharmacy Benefits

Resolution No. 106 (MD)
Extend VA Protection Life Insurance to Service-Connected Veterans who are Permanently and Totally Disabled

Resolution No. 107 (MD)
Support the Automatic Waiver of Veterans Benefits Administration Debts of $250 or Less

Resolution No. 108 (MD)
All Veterans Receive "Wartime" Benefits for Active Military Service Between February 28, 1961 and August 5, 1964

Resolution No. 109 (MD)
Revision of Work-Rate Standards for Department of Veterans

Resolution No. 110 (MD)
Include World War II Veterans in Priority Group 6 for Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care

Resolution No. 111 (MD)
The American Legion Policy on Department of Veterans Affairs Nursing Home Capacity

Resolution No. 112 (MD)
The American Legion Policy on Prostate Cancer Research and Treatment

Resolution No. 113 (MD)
Increase the Maximum Coverage Under the Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance Program

Resolution No. 114 (MD)
Support Legislation to Place Mariner Medal Recipients in Priority Group 3 for Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care

Resolution No. 156 (GA)
Remove the Specific Date to Award Dependency and Indemnity Compensation Benefits to Surviving Spouses of Former Prisoners of War

Resolution No. 157 (GA)
Allow Beneficiaries to Retain $90 of their Benefits while in Medicaid-Covered Nursing Homes

Resolution No. 158 (GA)
Extend the Filing Period of an Appeal Notice to the Court of Veterans Appeals for Veterans Claims

Resolution No. 159 (GA)
The American Legion Policy on the National Cemetery Administration

Resolution No. 160 (GA)
The American Legion Policy on State Veterans Home Per Diem Reimbursement

Resolution No. 162 (GA)
Reinstate Vietnam Veterans with Agent Orange Exposure in the Department of Veterans Affairs Priority Group 6

Resolution No. 163 (GA)
Reduce the Number of Years of One-Hundred Percent Service Connection Required for Dependency

Resolution No. 164 (GA)
The American Legion Policy on Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Disability Compensation

Resolution No. 165 (GA)
Special Monthly Compensation (K) Award

Resolution No. 166 (GA)
The American Legion Policy on Assured Funding for VA Medical Care

Resolution No. 167 (GA)
Department of Veterans Affairs Dental Care

Resolution No. 168 (GA)
The American Legion Policy on Former Prisoners of War

Resolution No. 169 (GA)
Department of Veterans Affairs' Role in National Emergency Preparedness

Resolution No. 172 (VA)
GI Bill of Health

Resolution No. 173 (VA)
Support of Admission to State Veterans Homes for Any Parent Whose Child Perished While Serving on Active Duty in the Armed Forces of the United States

Resolution No. 174 (VA)
The American Legion Policy on Opening the Federal Supply Schedule for Pharmaceuticals to Medicare and Medicaid

Resolution No. 175 (VA)
The American Legion Policy on State Veterans Home Per Diem Reimbursement

Resolution No. 186 (NY)
Expand Responsibility of The American Legion's Ad Hoc Committee on Claims to Streamline the Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) Processes to Address the Backlog of Appeals

Resolution No. 187 (NY)
Support Legislation for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to Receive Private Hospital Bills and Documentation to One-Year

Resolution No. 188 (NY)
Amend Title 38, United States Code, To Eliminate The Requirement That A Veteran Had To Serve In Vietnam To Be Eligible For Wartime Benefits

Resolution No. 241 (MN)
Support Department of Veterans Affairs' Vet Centers Expansion to Rural Communities

Resolution No. 252 (IL)
Exempt Income from Jury Duty for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Claims Purposes

Resolution No. 262 (IL)
Special Monthly Compensation for Female Veterans

Resolution No. 299 (VA&R)
Increase Beneficiary Travel Pay for Eligible Veterans

Resolution No. 300 (VA&R)
Reorganization of Arlington National Cemetery

Resolution No. 301 (VA&R)
Veterans Receive Same Level of Benefits

National Executive Committee Meeting
October 13-14, 2010

Resolution No. 11 (VA&R)
Rescind Resolution 26, NEC October 2009 - Service On Veterans Of Valor's Board of Directors

Resolution No. 12 (Register Resolution No. 2649 (NY) Department Convention)
Support Legislation To Increase The Income Threshold Of A Veteran Married To Another Veteran To Two Times The Financial Means Test For Enrollment Into The VA Health Care System

Resolution No. 13 (VA&R)
Creation Of Ad Hoc Committee On Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

National Executive Committee Meeting
May 4-5, 2011

Resolution No. 35 (VA&R)
The American Legion Position on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Strategic Capital Investment Planning (SCIP) Program

Resolution No. 36 (VA&R)
Improvements Needed for the Department of Veterans Affairs' Benefits for Veterans Who Have Served in a Combat Theater

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission Meetings

Members of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission held four meetings during the period August 31, 2010, through May 5, 2011.

The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission met on August 31, 2010, during the National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and a report was subsequently made to the National Executive Committee relative to the Commission's meeting.

A Subcommittee of the Executive Section of the VA&R Commission met at National Headquarters, October 13-14, 2010, for the purpose of considering those matters, which had previously been referred for study, and to discuss a broad range of other veteran related matters. A report of that meeting was presented to the National Executive Committee on October 15, 2010.

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission met for the 88th consecutive year in Washington, DC, on March 21-23, 2011, in conjunction with the 51th Annual Washington Conference.

Annual National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference

The 88th Annual Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Conference was held at the Renaissance Hotel in Washington, D.C. on March 21, 2011.

National Commander Jimmie L. Foster (AK) presented The American Legion Volunteer of the Year Award to Ms. Crucelina F. Grabel (AK). Conferees were addressed by the Robert L. Jesse, M.D., PhD, Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Health, Department of Veterans Affairs; Danny Pummill, Deputy Director for Policy and Procedures, Compensation and Pension Service, Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs and Jack O'Connor, Coordinator, Veteran Mentors, Buffalo Treatment Court.

A Women Veterans Panel discussed the evolving role of women veterans today and was moderated by Brigadier General Peter C. Hinz, Assistant Adjutant General Army, Maryland Army National Guard. Other panelists included:

Brigadier General Wilma L. Vaught, USAF (Ret.), President, Women's Memorial Foundation; Command Sergeant Major Frances Rivera, Northern Regional Medical Command, Walter Reed Army Medical Center and L. Tammy Duckworth, Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, Department of Veterans Affairs.

In the afternoon, presentations included: Philip Matkovsky, Deputy Chief Business Office for Member Services, Department of Veterans Affairs; Steve L. Muro, Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, Department of Veterans Affairs; Ms. Dana Stirk, Deputy Project Manager of Real Warriors Campaign; Dr. Janet Kemp, VA National Suicide Prevention Coordinator; Lucille Beck, PhD., Chief Consultant for Rehabilitation Services, Department of Veterans Affairs and Mary Jo Munnelly, Lead Staff Assistant, VA Voluntary Service Office, Department of Veterans Affairs.

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Legislative Activities

During the past year the staff of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission worked with the National Legislative Commission on legislative issues affecting the programs and services administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Activities included drafting legislation pursuant to the mandates adopted by the National Convention and National Executive Committee and presentation of such testimony at hearings scheduled before various Congressional Committees. Active liaison is maintained with the staff of The American Legion Legislative Commission, officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Congressional Committee staff and with elected Congressional officials.

The following is a synopsis of the Congressional hearings held from January 1, 2011 to June 30, 2011, on matters pertaining to the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission.

On June 13, 2011, Verna Jones, Director of VA&R, testified before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health on "Preventing Sexual Assaults and Safety Incidents at U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Facilities"

Informational Services/Distribution of VA&R Releases

The American Legion has several pamphlets and brochures available upon request to further strengthen the Department of Veterans Affairs' Health Care information system. Highest in demand are the newest revised publications, *"The American Legion Guide: Women Veterans- Identifying Risks, Services, and Prevention.", and* the *"The*

American Legion Guide to: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder- What is it? Who gets it? What can be done?" Still under revision is *"The Sourcebook for Military Personnel and Veterans".*

The following brochures are also informatively helpful for every veteran in need and can be requested from The Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation Division:

- "What to do Before a Veteran Dies: A guide to pre-planning."
- "Veterans Serving Veterans-A summary on The American Legion Volunteer Program in the Community"
- "Agent Orange Benefits & Programs: A Guide for Vietnam Veterans and Their Families."
- "Gulf War Era Benefits & Programs: A Guide for Veterans and Their Families."
- "Welcome Home: Operation Iraqi Freedom & Operation Enduring Freedom Veterans. Know Your Benefits."
- "The American Legion. Post Service Officers Guide." (Updated every year)

The Heroes to Hometown program is still available yet is now an Economic brochure. These handbooks and pamphlets, as well as those in regards to the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program are also used as handouts at seminars, conferences, and Department Conventions. Supplies of these and other VA&R pamphlets are maintained at The American Legion Headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana and distributed upon request through The American Legion Washington Headquarters at 1608 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006. Shipping is complimentary and requests can be made by calling Headquarters directly at 202-861-2700 or by email at jgeorge@legion.org.

2011 Report on the National Cemetery Administration

Members of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission (VA&R) Cemetery Committee met with Steve L. Muro., Undersecretary for Memorial Affairs, on Monday, March 21, 2011, in Congressional Halls A&B, Renaissance Washington, DC Hotel.

Currently, the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) maintains 131 National Cemeteries, 3.1 million gravesites, and approximately 19,000 total acres. The NCA is organized into five Memorial Service Networks (MSNs) that are located in Philadelphia, PA; Atlanta, GA; Denver, CO; Indianapolis, IN; and Oakland, CA. NCA also has a national office in VA Central Office and a national scheduling and employee training center in St. Louis, MO.

Currently, the NCA has a total of 1,700 full time equivalent employees (FTEEs), with 70.4 percent of their employees that are veterans. This is the highest veteran hiring ranking among any federal agency. Since 2009, NCA has hired 190 Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) veterans.

In 2010, the NCA performed 111,807 total burials and issued 640 headstones and markers, 4,500 Medallions and 803,675 Presidential Memorial Certificates. Five new state veterans' cemeteries were also opened in 2010 to serve veterans in Spokane, WA; Alliance, NE; Ft. Leonard, MO; Greenup, KY; and Springvale, ME.

In 2011, 90 percent of all National and State Cemeteries were established in areas of populations of veterans exceeding 170,000, which is the threshold VA has established for new national cemeteries. Future national cemetery sites include: Northwestern NY; East Central, FL; Western, FL; South Central, CO; and Eastern, NE. Future state cemetery construction sites slated to be open in 2011 include: Corpus Christi, TX; Birdeye, AR; Newton, MS; and Dublin, VA. In 2012, State Cemeteries will be opened in Leesville, LA and Charleston, WV.

In 2011, NCA released results from its American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) survey which found a customer satisfaction index rating of 94 out of 100 points. This is the fourth time that the survey was conducted with past surveys taken in 2001, 2004, 2007. The survey measures customer satisfaction, customer service and user trust.

The Cemetery Committee discussed several programs and initiatives, which included: the Burial plot allowance, Arlington National Cemetery, Corey Shea Act and Missing in America Project. The American Legion approved a national resolution in 2010 supporting increases to the burial plot allowance. The Committee also discussed Arlington National Cemetery and how NCA was assisting with training and operations. The Committee then discussed the Corey Shea Act, which authorized VA to extend burial eligibility in VA national cemeteries to parents of certain deceased service members in the same grave with their deceased service member child.

The requested overall budget for 2011 is $242 million. Interments in FY 2013 are expected to be about 109,000, a 6 percent increase from FY 2008. The total number of graves maintained is also expected to increase during the planning time frame from almost 2.9 million in FY 2008 to over 3.3 million in FY 2013.

National Shrine Commitment

Maintaining cemeteries as national shrines is one of NCA's top priorities. This commitment involves raising, realigning and cleaning headstones and markers to renovate gravesites. Adequate funding is the key to maintaining this very important commitment. The American Legion supported NCA's goal of completing the National Shrine Commitment within five years. VA assessed burial sections, roadways, buildings, and historic structures and identified 928 potential improvement projects at an estimated cost of $280 million. With the addition of six new national cemeteries, between late 2008 and mid 2009, resources have been strained. The American Legion recommends that $60 million be put toward the National Shrine Commitment in order to fulfill this commitment in FY 2011.

Burial Benefit Increase

As with any other aspect of an economy, rising costs affect funeral expenses, yet VA has long lagged behind the curve in providing an adequate benefit to families to cope with these rising funeral costs. In 2001, the plot allowance was increased for the first time in more than 28 years, to $300 from $150, which covers approximately 6 percent of funeral costs for a non-service related death, and to $2,000 for a service connected death. These numbers are far below what could be construed as an equitable benefit. The original benefit was scaled to represent 22 percent of these expenses, so clearly this has fallen well behind. The time has long since passed for Congress to approve an increase to these funds, commensurate with an equitable contribution in line with the present economy. Furthermore, a mechanism must be put in place for more frequent adjustments to these amounts so they will not be allowed to lag behind as they have done in the past. The American Legion believes that waiting another 28 years for another adjustment does not do justice to the families of these service members.

The American Legion recommends that the burial allowances for families of service-members be increased to amounts more commensurate with the present economy. The American Legion further recommends that a mechanism for regular review and adjustment be put in place to address this in perpetuity.

Annual Report of the Medical Consultant

Dr. Ann Marie Gordon joined the Staff as the Senior Medical Consultant on September 18, 2000. She is a practicing physician with experience in internal medicine and occupational and environmental medicine.

The Medical Consultant acts as a source of medical and technical knowledge to the Appeals Representatives at the Appeals and Special Claims Unit at the Board of Veterans' Appeals and the Claims Representatives at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Regional Office, Washington, D.C. These representatives discuss cases during case development and submit inquiries to the Medical Consultant with the VA claims folder for review and evaluation as to the appropriate course of action in presenting the case either to the Board of Veterans Appeals, the VA Regional Office, or the Director, Compensation and Pension Service. The Medical Consultant after reviewing and evaluating the case may (1) discuss the case with the representative and / or (2) prepare a statement explaining the case including providing medical references and a medical opinion relative to the issues.

The American Legion Service Officers in the field also submit difficult cases for review and evaluation to the Medical Consultant. This is accomplished by requesting that the case be called-in for an administrative review or by submitting copies of appropriate portions of the VA claims folder. The Medical Consultant responds directly to the Service Officers.

The Medical Consultant is an advisor to the Director, National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission on Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical matters, as well as, the attorneys at NVSLP. Each consultation is usually on an informal basis and discussed among several key VA&R staff members. In the past year, the medical consultant has been working more closely with the attorneys at NVLSP providing key information and medical opinions on numerous cases.

A laptop personal computer has been purchased for the Medical Consultant's use to enable her to keep in touch with daily operations and to present lectures at various schools of training.

During the past year, the Medical Consultant has discussed medical questions with individual Appeals Representatives and Claims Representatives for about 242 cases. She has reviewed 96 cases and submitted written reports on 41 of these cases. The research and medical opinions provided by the Medical Consultant have resulted in numerous grants and remands for additional development.

Additionally, the Medical Consultant has conducted numerous one-on-one medical training sessions for the Appeals and Special Claims Unit staff this year and has also conducted presentations at the Indianapolis Department Service Officer School, the Washington DC Service Officer training, as well as, the New York State Service Officer Training.

Government Life Insurance, Pension & Debt Management Activities

The United States Government, acting through the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), directly administers four life insurance programs for veterans of the World War I, World War II and Korean War periods, as well as two special on-going programs for veterans in certain service-connected disabled categories. These programs are administered under the titles of United States Government Life Insurance (USGLI) for World War I era veterans, National Service Life Insurance (NSLI) for World War II era, Korean War era and Service-Disabled veterans (SDVI - Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance), and Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI) for totally disabled veterans who are approved grants for specially adapted housing purposes by the DVA. The USGLI and NSLI programs currently have some 1.18 million policies in force as of May 31, 2011, with a-combined life insurance coverage of some $13.2 billion dollars. Dividend distributions for participating policies in these programs amount to approximately $300 million dollars annually. NSLI processes some 100,000-120,000 claims annually in addition to a very high number of other policy transactions as the

program's policies are individual in nature and are composed of diverse plans of insurance. The VMLI program insures some 2393 veterans with approximately $178.1 million dollars of coverage in force. Currently these programs are operated out of the VA Insurance Center in Philadelphia, PA. The National Association of Insurance Commissioners approved the use of the 2001 Commissioners Standard Mortality Table as the new mortality standard for life insurance. Since the law allows the VA Secretary to set the mortality table for the VMLI program, VA began using the 2001 table, rather than the previous 1958 table, effective October 1, 2006. This reduced premiums for the program an average of 37 percent.

In addition to the life insurance programs directly operated by the DVA, the Department also has supervisory authority and responsibility over two other major government life insurance program issues. These are the Servicemember's Group Life Insurance (SGLI) and Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI) programs. These programs have provided insurance protection, since 1965 and 1970 respectively, to active duty and reserve military personnel (SGLI), spouses and dependents and to separated veterans and to retired and separated reservists (VGLI). The SGLI and VGLI programs are administered by the Prudential Insurance Company at a center in Roseland, NJ (the Office of Servicemembers Group Life Insurance – OSGLI), with all administration and other program expenses being paid by the policyholders from a portion of their insurance premiums, save for the extra hazard mortality experience of wartime periods when general tax revenues take over. These insurance issues are solely group Term insurance without dividends, disability benefits, or diverse types of permanent plans with equity values such as the individual policy contracts contained in the DVA's directly administered program. On May 31, 2011 SGLI provided some 5.7 million active duty and reserve personnel, spouses and dependents with more than $1.23 trillion dollars of life insurance coverage, while VGLI covered some 427,529 veterans with insurance in excess of $ 59.9 billion dollars. Of these policy accounts the OSGLI center in Roseland, NJ maintains only VGLI, with the various military service departments maintaining the rest. The OSGLI center processes between 2500-3500 death claims annually with minimal other transactions due to the very limited nature of the coverage as group term insurance only. Currently, claims arising from military operations in the Middle East and Central Asia are processed in less than two business days from the time the last required document is received at OSGLI. In 1992 VGLI became lifetime renewable instead of the single five year term previously in effect. The amount of VGLI a veteran can hold cannot be in excess of the amount of SGLI he or she held in service. In 1997 Retired Reservists, instead of being insured under the SGLI program until age 60 or the receipt of their first retired pay check, were merged into the VGLI program to allow them the option of retaining their coverage as long as desired. Reservists leaving reserve service without the amount of time needed for full retirement may be covered under VGLI if desired. In addition, veterans are now permitted to convert their SGLI/VGLI insurance, in partial amounts at different times or in whole, to a private plan of insurance with a participating commercial insurance carrier as they leave service, or at any time they are in the VGLI program, without having to wait a stipulated period as was previously the case. Effective April 1, 2001 those entering active duty were automatically covered for a full $250,000 under SGLI as authorized by Public Law 106-419, and members of the Individual Ready Reserve who have volunteered for assignment to a mobilization category were also made eligible for SGLI coverage under that law. . In addition, Public Law 107-14 authorized other program enhancements to the SGLI program, effective November 1, 2001, which allows up to $100,000 in spousal coverage on a paid premium basis, and provides $10,000 free life insurance coverage for a member's children. These dependent coverages still cannot, at present, be carried over into the VGLI program and cannot be doubled in the case of both parents being in service. However, while the member's SGLI is in force,

spousal coverage can be converted to a private plan of insurance with a participating commercial company upon written application in the same manner as a VGLI policy may be so converted. The American Legion insurance unit presented supporting testimony at that time on these legislative changes as they improved greatly the range of financial options available to veterans in these programs, not only at the time of their separation from service, but in later years as their life situation changed as well, and as they permit the SGLI and VGLI programs to more effectively compete with private insurers who have the privilege of excluding applicants as desired and who may, in the case of certain military associations, be co-located on military bases.

New SGLI legislation was enacted in May 2005. Public Law (PL) 109-13, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Tsunami Relief of 2005, was signed into law May 11, 2005 and contained provisions for increases in the Dept. of Defense (DOD) Death Gratuity, for increases in the amount of maximum coverage under the Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program, and for a new SGLI group policy rider for Traumatic Injury Protection. The SGLI Traumatic Injury Protection Rider became effective December 1, 2005 and currently provides over $233.3 billion dollars in traumatic injury coverage as per a published schedule of losses caused by such physical injuries. On November 26, 2008 VA issued new regulations as a result of extensive reviews to expand the TSGLI schedule of losses and the time period involved. Additions to the TSGLI schedule included expansion of definitions for total and permanent loss of sight, hearing, speech, and various types of paralysis. Other additions included certain types of amputation, limb salvage, facial reconstruction, burns, injuries resulting from authorized use of controlled substances and traumatic brain injury effects. Effective September 1, 2005 regular SGLI coverage was automatically increased to $400,000 from the previous $250,000, and is the current maximum amount of SGLI coverage permitted. Servicemembers electing lesser amounts must do so in $50,000 increments. Spousal and dependent coverage was not impacted by the legislation. The Act specified certain spousal and beneficiary notification requirements for members changing beneficiary designations or electing lesser amounts of coverage. The Act also provided for the group traumatic injury insurance rider to be attached to the group coverage provided under SGLI, the premium cost of which to the insured was to be $1.00 per month. This injury protection ranges from $25,000 to $100,000 in accordance with a disability schedule which has been published and which is composed of a list of physical traumatic injuries involving significant loss of use of physical or mental abilities caused by such injury. Coverage under this rider began December 1, 2005. A retroactive provision for qualifying injuries (Iraq and Afghanistan service) from October 7, 2001 to the effective date was also provided for. The Secretary of Defense certifies to the SGLI center the individuals qualifying for retroactive payments. Public Law 111-275, enacted October 13, 2010, expanded this provision to include TSGLI coverage for all covered losses incurred on active duty regardless of location to be effective October 1, 2011. Servicemembers must be covered by SGLI to have this rider, and for members insured under SGLI the rider is mandatory. Rider coverage ceases on midnight on the date the member separates from the uniformed service. No retroactive period was contained in the legislation for the $150,000 SGLI increase, but this was addressed through the Dept. of Defense's Death Gratuity benefit instead, as insurance underwriting requirements did not permit new coverage increases to be applied retroactively.

On September 30, 2005 the SGLI enhancement Act of 2005 (PL 109-80) was enacted which made permanent the increase in the maximum allowable SGLI regular coverage from $250,000 to $400,000, and which included various spousal notification requirements for beneficiary changes. This last requirement, for an insured married at the time of making a beneficiary election, that the Secretary of Defense notify the insured's

spouse should the insured at any time take action to either reduce the amount of coverage or to name a beneficiary other than the insured's spouse, did not meet with the support of The American Legion. It has historically been the belief of The American Legion that this type of fundamental insurance benefit is a special contract between the service member (or veteran in the case of veteran's coverage) and the federal government, and is a matter personal and sacrosanct to those who serve (or have served) the nation in uniform, and that an insured's beneficiary information should not be released to third parties without the consent of the insured. Such spousal notification, however, does not affect a member's right to elect or change his/her beneficiary designation or amount of SGLI coverage at any time.

Further legislative changes in the SGLI program included PL 109-163, enacted January 6, 2006, which authorized the payment of an allowance to service members serving in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom for an amount equal to the premium of $150,000 of SGLI coverage, affording them $150,000 of free SGLI coverage provided they did not decline such coverage, and PL 109-233 enacted June 15, 2006. PL 109-233 extends the duration of SGLI coverage from one to two years for service members who are totally disabled upon the date of their separation from active duty or reserve status, effective upon the date of enactment for members released before October 1, 2011. Service members who were released within one year of the enactment date were also eligible for this extended coverage period. Public Law 111-275, enacted October 1, 2010, makes this extension permanent. This legislation also provided the Secretary of Veterans Affairs the sole authority to determine the period of time between the date of a traumatic event and the date a member suffers a qualifying loss for all losses under the Traumatic SGLI (TSGLI) program. The law also removed the previously existing statutory requirement that quadriplegia, paraplegia, or hemiplegia occur within one year of the traumatic injury. For all losses this period has now been extended to two years.

The American Legion's National VA&R insurance unit at the Philadelphia, PA center had initiated and worked with the DVA insurance management staff to provide added protection to those veterans leaving service in a totally disabled and life threatening status, to attempt to ensure these veterans do not lose coverage (as happens periodically) due to misunderstanding certain requirements of the SGLI to VGLI transfer system stemming from inconsistencies in the manner these are explained to them as they out process from various military facilities, or failing to respond in a timely manner to initial insurance invitations and premium billings, etc. Recommended safeguards included such items as automatic coverage and premium deduction start-ups from military retired pay or DVA disability compensation, policy liens for past due premiums, and closer contacts between the SGLI/VGLI administering office and veterans in this category. DVA insurance management completed a staff study through the military service departments, the Defense Manpower Data Center, DPC Austin and OSGLI on the methods such individuals can be identified, and has created an Outreach program to contact by telephone and with additional letters veterans in this class, and advise them of their VGLI options as needed. Currently, separating service members who have been discharged on disability retirement at a rating of 50% to 100% by their branch of service are contacted. Of those contacted by phone, over 80% apply for either the SGLI Disability Extension (free coverage for two years) or VGLI coverages. In June 2011 the VA Insurance Center opened a formal, fully staffed Outreach Center in Philadelphia to expand these operations. An on-line SGLI/VGLI manual is available to all military out processing centers and veterans to ensure these have immediate access to correct information concerning the requirements for veterans being separated to convert their in-service SGLI coverage to VGLI coverage, and in February 2004 a detailed Insurance Needs Calculator was added to the VA Insurance website, for veterans to use to assess

their life insurance needs and compare VGLI coverage to other insurance options. The Calculator includes VA, Social Security and military benefits in the final assessment. VGLI policyholders also have the ability now to access their policy information through the VA website as well, using passwords and policy information. In 2002-2003 both VGLI and SGLI premiums were reduced; VGLI an overall 40% from 1998 levels, and a 19% reduction for SGLI premiums effective July 1, 2003 with a simultaneous reduction in SGLI spousal rates as well. Effective July 1, 2006, however, a slight increase in SGLI basic premium rates from the previous rate of 6.5 cents per month per $1,000 of coverage to one of 7 cents per month per $1,000 took place due to program costs. Also effective July 1, 2006 premium rates for dependent SGLI coverage were reduced for all age groups by an average of 10%, reflecting a better than forecasted claims experience in the Family SGLI program portion. A further premium rate decrease took effect on July 1, 2008 for both the SGLI (to $26 monthly for full coverage from $28 monthly) and VGLI programs (for veterans aged 30 to 64). In addition, a premium rate decrease for Family SGLI coverage of 8% for all age groups will take place effective July 1, 2010. For all programs the Department of Veterans Affairs administers and/or supervises some 7.23 million insurance policies for military personnel, spouses, dependents and veterans, with a total in-force coverage of over $ 1.35 trillion dollars.

In the SDVI program many disabled veterans annually continue to take advantage of the new supplemental Service-Disabled insurance provided in the legislative changes of 1992, whereby an additional Supplemental $20,000 of coverage may be purchased by those veterans having a basic Service-Disabled policy and who become totally disabled before age 65. This option has a limited time period of one year from a grant of premium waiver and if application is made before age 65. The American Legion VA&R insurance office continues to maintain a special notification system for those veterans who choose The American Legion as their representative and who are applying for Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (SDVI) coverage to ensure they are informed as early as possible of these additional benefits. The notification system has been expanded to include compilation of a database of those qualifying for Supplemental coverage and the release of additional reminder notifications to them prior to expiration of their Supplemental insurance option. This is particularly needful as the current DVA system may, in certain areas such as during the time period while a disability compensation claim is awaiting adjudication in a VA Regional Office, be faulty in communicating information on benefits such as disability premium waivers and supplemental coverage to veterans who may qualify for it and who may very well be in life threatening (and therefore time constrained) conditions. A special activity was initiated in this benefit area in 2004 and continued into 2005 by the VA Compensation and Pension Service to address concerns that many service-connected disabled veterans were not being informed enough on the program. A mailing on SDVI notification was included with the annual cost-of-living increase letters, reaching approximately 2.3 million veterans, resulting in many thousands of new applications being received, and continuing to be received, from both veterans directly and through DSO/VSO offices nationwide. To assist in this project, SDVI applications have also been made available on the VA's Insurance website through an Autoform program whereby applications can be made, saved, printed for mailing or submitted electronically as desired. This new tool became active March 5, 2004.

The DVA Insurance Center continues their on-going effort to provide better service and program enhancements to their veteran policyholders by periodically updating their computer and communication systems, both as part of the overall DVA area networks and through the Internet, and placing ever more records and transaction activities, previously done on paper, into their on-line computer systems. Beginning in Summer 2001, the DVA Insurance Center accelerated a planned program of transforming their insurance operation into a wholly computerized system no longer utilizing paper

insurance files, but using imaging technology instead to replace paper files with electronic ones. The impetus for this was to create space in the Philadelphia Regional Office and Insurance Center for one of the three regional Pension Centers which have been organized to assist in the reduction of the national backlog in compensation and pension cases. The insurance system, known as VICTARS (Veterans Insurance Claims Tracking and Response System) permits on-screen display of all file documents that would previously have been maintained in a paper insurance folder, and gives VA insurance specialists the ability to input and process claims, transactions and responses to inquiries with far greater speed than any earlier system used to date, and to maintain a full history of such in the policyholder's new electronic file. In connection with this new software package, VA employees have been provided with dual screen display monitors and updated capacity high speed computers required by the new programming. Currently, over 6 million images are available to insurance specialists via their desktop computers. All previous paper insurance folders (over 2.5 million) have been retired to a nearby Federal Records Center, but are still available for recall as may be needed on certain cases. This accomplishment has resulted in savings of some $1 million annually. Insurance services are further augmented by automated assistance and call routing facilities added to a toll free number (an expansion of the VA's Insurance Center telephone unit has been completed to handle an increasing work load), by acceptance of faxed correspondence, claims, and transaction requests, through responding to inquiries and transaction requests received at the VA insurance Internet address (http://www.insurance.va.gov/), and by providing comprehensive insurance information through links to the VA's Home Page and VA's insurance Home Page. Additionally, in accordance with the federal initiative to have all or most government disbursements done by Direct Deposit (Electronic Transfer of Funds) the VA Insurance Center has completed actions for the direct deposit of monthly insurance installment awards to beneficiaries and those policyholders receiving monthly annuities. All monthly insurance award/annuity payments are by electronic transfer of funds to these insurance payees unless otherwise requested by the payee. In this vein, all policy loan, dividend refund and cash surrender payments are also sent to an insured's bank account if VA benefits are or were on direct deposit, or if an insured is paying premiums by automatic deduction from a checking account, unless requested otherwise. New settlement claim forms for death settlements contain blocks for beneficiaries to include bank information should they wish insurance settlement checks transferred to them electronically. As with the VGLI program, NSLI policyholders may now also access their account information through the VA's insurance website with a PIN number, and perform certain transactions such as policy loan applications. For VMLI there is now also an on-line Insurance Needs Calculator, similar to that for VGLI, available as well.

Several insurance initiatives previously pending in Congress for 2010 have now been enacted into law as Public Law 111-275.

Public Law 111-275, the Veterans Benefits Act of 2010, has made the following changes in government insurance programs for veterans and active duty personnel.

Effective October 1, 2011, the maximum amount of life insurance coverage permitted under the Supplemental Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance program (SDVI) will be increased from the present limit of $20,000 to a new maximum of $30,000. Supplemental SDVI is available to veterans who are approved for a basic SDVI policy ($10,000 maximum), who qualify for a disability waiver of premiums on the basic policy, and who make an application for Supplemental insurance before age 65 and within one year of the date of notification by the VA of the disability premium waiver. Totally disabled veterans who meet the qualifying criteria will therefore be able to have a maximum of $40,000 coverage in force.

Also effective October 1, 2011, the Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI) program will increase in coverage from its current $90,000 limit to a new maximum of $150,000. After January 1, 2012 this will increase further to $200,000 in the amount of coverage permitted.

Additionally, six months from the date of enactment of PL 111-275, those veterans under age 60 who are insured under the Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI) program will have an opportunity once every five years, beginning on the one year anniversary of the date of entry into the program, to purchase further VGLI coverage in the amount of $25,000; the overall amount of coverage held, however, cannot exceed $400,000; the maximum allowed by law for Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI).

Lastly, as mentioned earlier, the legislation also provides for an expansion of Traumatic Injury SGLI (TSGLI) coverage for the retroactive period of October 7, 2001 to November 30, 2005 provided by Public Law 109-233 for servicemembers incurring covered losses in Operations Iraqi Freedom and/or Enduring Freedom. Public Law 111-275 expands TSGLI coverage for covered losses for the retroactive period for all such losses incurred on active duty, regardless of location. The effective date of this expansion will also be October 1, 2011.

Additionally, the loss of a dominant hand is added to the TSGLI schedule of covered losses by this legislation.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Service Units:
DVA Insurance Center at Philadelphia, PA and St. Paul, MN DMC Center

The American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission Staff at Philadelphia consists of a Chief of Insurance Activities/Insurance Representative and a Pension Benefits Representative. An associated office at the St. Paul center has one Supervisor/VA&R Representative and a Pension Benefits Representative, plus a National Staff Pension Representative has also been added at the VA Regional Office in Milwaukee, WI, which also has a VA Pension Center as well as Philadelphia and St. Paul.

The Chief of Insurance Activities/Insurance Representative must have a thorough knowledge of government life insurance laws, regulations, and transaction and adjudication procedures, and be able to analyze them correctly in order to properly represent insured veterans and their beneficiaries. The Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Director and other interested personnel are kept informed on policy matters, changes in DVA administrative procedures and all related areas to include new legislative initiatives. NSLI re-open periods for service-disabled and non-service disabled veterans with increased face value coverages continues to be an American Legion legislative effort. Coordination has also been effected with the DVA Pension Center management in both Philadelphia, St. Paul and Milwaukee for the creation of a system whereby the national VA&R staff personnel can process pension inquiries from Department and Veterans Service Officers as they may require.

Daily operations involve a full range of insurance services to include the representation of insured veterans and their beneficiaries, the review of insurance case files and supporting evidence and Claims files as required, the furnishing of status reports and account assistance to insureds, beneficiaries, accredited field representatives and DVA adjudicative and accounts personnel, close liaison with Department Service Officers and other field personnel to ensure prompt and complete service, and the input to, review of, and where necessary the correction of DVA actions and records both on cases involving disability and death claims, and on those involving any of a wide variety of insurance accounting and financial transactions that occur on active and matured accounts. General insurance information and guidance is provided to field service officers across the United States, along with assistance in the preparation of insurance appeals and

claims submittals. An insurance guidebook for Veterans Service Officers was composed by the Philadelphia insurance unit in 2007 to assist DSO/VSO personnel in identifying insurance needs and processing insurance applications and claims for their clients, and this has been distributed, beginning in April 2007, to hundreds of American Legion and affiliated veterans service offices nationwide. Coordination with DVA executive and program management personnel is conducted on both individual cases and broad policy/administrative matters. A telephone fax capability added to the Philadelphia office has greatly expedited claims processing by enabling rapid receipt of documents needed to complete transactions and claims that would otherwise be significantly delayed due to mailing times, particularly in emergency cases. The Philadelphia office remains heavily involved in the large increase in SDVI applications and related appeals cases beginning in 2004 and 2005, occasioned by the mass mailing of SDVI notifications to virtually all service-connected veterans mentioned earlier. Information, staff analysis, and testimony/comments for the recent major legislative insurance benefit increases, described above, was provided to the Director, National VA&R Commission for presentation to Congress on these issues.

The Philadelphia office is provided with newer computer systems for both internal operations and to interface with the DVA networks and the Internet. These are operational and have Internet and VA Benefits Delivery Network, SHARE and Virtual VA access. The St. Paul office provides similar operations, staff representation and nationwide veteran's service in the field of DVA Debt Management operations (The DVA's Debt Management Center is located at the VA St. Paul center), which now comprise its main mission as transfer of all insurance accounts to Philadelphia has been completed, and in casework involving the VA Pension Maintenance Center (PMC) also located at the St. Paul facility.

A major new addition to the Philadelphia National VA&R unit occurred effective January 2010 with the acquisition of an experienced service officer for the new role of Pension Benefits Representative, to include all necessary computer and high capacity Fax equipment. A new National Staff representative was also added to the VA Regional office and PMC in Milwaukee as well. The mission of the PMC representatives is to assist in all VA pension, DIC, accrued benefits, burial and dual entitlement claims where The American Legion holds power of attorney.

For the period July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011 the following activities of The American Legion's Philadelphia and St. Paul offices were reported:

Insurance, Pension & Debt Management:
(DMC = Debt Management Center)

Letters Received:	26,441
Letters Sent:	24,486
Disability Insurance Claims:	2,584
Death Insurance Claims:	1,122
Insurance Folders Reviewed:	4,723
In-Force Insurance Policy Accounts Reviewed:	7,509
New Insurance Accounts – SDVI:	6,097
Telephone Contacts:	10,427
Personal Contacts:	7,494
Submittal Memorandums & Reports:	7,276
DVA Case Responses Processed: Insurance, Pension and Debt Management Cases:	35, 818
*Live Claims, Evidence and Other Submittals Presented: *Excludes death claims and includes policy transactions such as dividend,	52,372

loan and premium actions, plan conversions, cash surrenders, refunds, beneficiary changes, disability claims with related medical and legal evidence, Wills, estate documents, master record data changes, general inquiries, Debt Management and Pension case claims and supporting documents.	
DMC Original Claims:	3,862
DMC & Pension Case Audits:	17,204
DMC Debt Waiver Cases:	2,467
Pension Claims, Inquiries/Transactions:	16,354

Claims Services

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission provides assistance and representation to all veterans and their survivors in claims and appeals before the Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as, appeals for upgrade of military and naval discharges and the correction of military and naval records through a staff of twenty-five Appeals Representatives.

Within the Table of Organization, the Deputy Director for Claims Service is responsible for the activities of the Board of Veterans' Appeals and Special Claims Unit, the Appeals Management Center.

Cases at the Board of Veterans' Appeals Unit are reviewed and written briefs are submitted on the appellant's behalf or a personal hearing is conducted before a Veterans Law Judge of the Board of Veterans' Appeals with the appellant. The Board of Veterans' Appeals Unit consists of an Office Manager, a Senior Medical Consultant, three secretaries, and thirteen Appeals Representatives. The staff has been augmented by accredited American Legion service officers from across the country participating in The American Legion/National Veterans Legal Services Program Veterans Law Internship Program. This intense veteran's law training program provides hands-on education for interested service officers.

One Appeals Representative and one secretary who work exclusively on remands that are processed at the Appeals Management Center located at the WRO.

The Military Review Boards Units, supervised by the Director of VA&R, review, record, prepare written briefs and also appear at personal hearings with an applicant before the Discharge Review Board and the Board for the Correction of Military or Naval Records of the various armed services. One Supervisor and two Appeal Representatives are assigned to this unit.

Board of Veterans Appeals

This report reflects the activities of The American Legion's Board of Appeals and Special Claims Unit (Appeals Unit) during the period of July 1, 2010, through June 31, 2011. The Office Manager of the Appeals and Special Claims Unit was Geoffrey Carson from June 21, 2010 – September 1, 2010 and Rebecca Jollionis from October 25, 2010 – July 12, 2011.

During the past twelve months, our Appeals Representatives reviewed a total of 7,669 cases. Included in this total were 144 (American Legion represented) personal hearings conducted at the Board of Veterans' Appeals Central Office (CO) in Washington, DC.

During this reporting period, the Board of Veterans' Appeals rendered a total of 49,218 decisions, which 9,903 (20%) had American Legion representation. These decisions consisted of 2,679 (27.1%) approvals, 4,590 (46.4%) remands, 2,266 (22.8%) denials, and 369 (3%) others. The last category includes administrative withdrawals, vacated cases, deaths, and dismissals. These figures represent a 8% decrease in appeal

approvals, a 4.7% increase in remands and a 5% increase in denials over the previous 12-month period.

The Special Claims Service of the Unit reviewed and disposed of 2 cases involving requests by Department Service Officers of The American Legion in obtaining Administrative Review by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Central Office, Compensation and Pension Service.

As recorded in last year's report, the two most significant challenges for Fiscal Year 2010 and 2011 were to continue to eliminate avoidable remands and to reduce the backlog of pending appeals, this continues to be a challenge, and however, the Board continues to focus on methods to increase decision output and the quality of the decisions rendered. The Board also focused on efforts to reduce the backlog which included a project with HP wherein HP's lawyers and paralegals provided screening services by reviewing and summarizing essential appeals information to offer a quick view of claims issues which allowed the appeal representatives. to move quickly review and produce quality briefs on behalf of the veteran.

As of July 1, 2010 there were 4,112 American Legion represented cases in the Appeals Management Center (AMC) system, inclusive of brokered cases to Nashville, TN, Huntington, WVA and Seattle, WA.

These cases are given expeditious treatment, in accordance with Code of Federal Regulations. Due to the backlog the Board is currently adjudicating appeals with docket dates on or before August 2009. The American Legion has custody of approximately 4,975 pre- August 2009 original appeals. Quality remains our first priority. However, due to the increase in productivity by the BVA, The American Legion Appeals and Special Claims unit is faced with the challenge of meeting the demands of the Board's increase in productivity. Currently each American Legion appeals representative at the Board of Veterans' Appeals is required to review and complete four (4) appeals per day. The BVA unit is a part of a Board-wide initiative to identify all appeals in our possession belonging to appellants 75 years and older and advance them on the Boards docket so that these appeals can be adjudicated most expeditiously (per CFR). During this reporting period, The American Legion BVA Unit has identified and returned and completed over 7,669 appeals to the Board for review and final decision. This is an on-going project that will continue until such time the BVA determines that this special project is no longer necessary.

Military Review Boards Unit

Title 10, United States Code, sections 1552 and 1553 provide statutory authority for the existence and operation of the Military Discharge Review Boards and the Boards for Correction of Military Records. The American Legion was instrumental in the creation of these boards shortly after World War II and has represented former service members petitioning them for relief since.

During the period 1 July 2010 through 30 June 2011 the three staff members of the Military Review Boards Unit provided counsel, guidance and representation to former service members seeking correction of their service record by the Army, Air Force, Navy / Marine Corps and Coast Guard discharge review and correction boards. These requests involved a wide variety issues including character of service upgrades, reason for discharge changes, entitlement or amendment of physical disability severance or retirement, issuance or reissuance of military awards and decorations, requests for military personnel files and service medical records, and administrative corrections to official military records.

The following breaks down the individual administrative actions taken by the staff of the Military Review Board Unit in assisting former service members prepare their cases for review by the respective boards.

CASE DEVELOPMENT / OFFICE TASKS

	Volume
COMMUNICATIONS	
Phone Calls	2280
Emails	1691
Mail/Fax	676
Appointments	398
CONSULTATIONS	
Applicant	2917
Petitioner	1054
VSO/Agency	719
Veteran/Other	360
ADMINISTRATION	
Correspondence	1408
Tracking Actions	1590
Research/Training	1027
Clerical Tasks	2020

The following classifies the types of reviews that were presented to the respective service boards.

Military Discharge Review Boards

	Record Reviews	Hearing Reviews	Reconsiderations
AIR FORCE	10	12	00
ARMY	22	18	01
NAVY	38	24	01
MARINE CORPS	29	19	00
COAST GUARD	00	00	00

Boards for Correction of Military Records

	Record Reviews	Hearing Reviews	Reconsiderations
AIR FORCE	14	00	02
ARMY	56	00	07
NAVY	18	00	06
MARINE CORPS	11	00	03
COAST GUARD	01	00	00

This final breakdown provides the total number of cases received back from the boards, the number of favorable decisions and the percentage of petitions that were corrected.

Military Discharge Review Boards

	Total Decided	Total Corrected	Relief Percentage
AIR FORCE	12	02	16
ARMY	26	07	27
NAVY	32	16	50
MARINE CORPS	22	13	59
COAST GUARD	00	00	00

Boards for Correction of Military Records

	Total Decided	Total Corrected	Relief Percentage
AIR FORCE	11	01	09
ARMY	46	05	11
NAVY	20	02	10
MARINE CORPS	12	01	08
COAST GUARD	00	00	00

Each of the discharge review and correction boards is under a congressional mandate to adjudicate cases within one year from the date of acceptance. Currently all are meeting or exceeding their requirements with timeframes ranging from 8 to 12 months.

The Military Review Board Unit also provides training material to our Department Service Officers, instructional guides for our applicants and counsel, on an as needed basis, to veterans petitioning the Combat Related Special Compensation Boards, Physical Disability Board of Review, Awards and Decorations Boards.

Staff Workload
Department Service Officers School

The National Organization continues to authorize the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commission to conduct twice yearly training schools for the Department Service Officers and other accredited representatives of The American Legion. It represents the organization's ongoing commitment to developing a network of highly trained and experience service officers who can carry out the VA&R program at the department level.

The purpose of these sessions is to provide current information about changes in veterans' law and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) adjudication policies and help accredited American Legion service officers to improve their advocacy skills. The program of instruction includes basic training for new service officers, and advanced training on issues relating to claims processing, disability ratings, personal hearings, development of appeals, and the interpretation and application of precedent decisions by the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit. Instructors included members of the National Association of Department Service Officers; Mr. Ron Abrams, Esq., Joint Executive Director, National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP)and his staff; and staff of the VA&R Division. Guest speakers from the Department of Defense, VA and other agencies are also invited to brief participants on relevant and timely issues.

The primary goal of this training program, which began in 1985, is to enhance the skills and effectiveness of accredited American Legion service officers. A secondary goal

is to provide the school participants with the latest information on veterans' benefits, which they can, then, share with other service officers in their respective departments.

The Departments' participation in and support for the program remains very high. The first session of the 2010 school was held March 16 – 19, 2011 at the Renaissance Hotel in Washington, DC. There were more than 125 service officers in attendance. The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Washington Conference took place the following week. The second session of 2010 was held July 27 - July 29, 2011 at the Sheraton City Center Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana. There were 140 service officers in attendance.

Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service

The VAVS National Deputy Representative attended the sixty-fifth meeting of the VAVS National Advisory Committee (NAC) that was held in Cincinnati, OH during April 27th-29th. The American Legion's Deputy National Representative, Brian Bertges, also served a member of the NAC Executive Committee and was further appointed on the recruitment subcommittee and the Partners Incorporation. The meeting also included several volunteer business sessions and educational workshops, and presentations of NAC Volunteer of the Year Awards and the James H. Parke Scholarship Award. The Parke Memorial Scholarship Award was established in honor of the first Director of VA Voluntary Service, who is also the founding father of the VAVS National Advisory Committee and is awarded annually to an exceptional VAVS student volunteer.

Brian Bertges was also invited by the VA Central Office in order to attend the VAVS Academy in order to evaluate and observe the program. The trainings focused on the development of the VAVS staff and was highly interactive and informative. Upon completion of the academy, the VA Central Office decided that it was imperative to continue to have Veteran Service Organization participation and involvement in the future.

During FY 2010, The American Legion had 8,744 members that volunteered 943,829 hours of service to hospitalized veterans and those in their communities. Based on an independent sector volunteer rate of $21.36 per volunteer hour in 2010, this is a total cost savings of almost $20.2 million to VA. The American Legion also had an additional 2,437 new volunteers added in 2010 and an increase of 27,231 hours.

VA&R Health Care Policy Unit

The National Field Service unit was renamed this year by the VA&R division as the VA&R Health Care Policy Unit. The national staff includes: Jacob B. Gadd, Deputy Director for Health Care, Denise Williams, Assistant Director for Health Policy, Denise Bullock, Senior Field Service Representative, James Woodson, Field Service Representative and Warren Goldstein, Field Service Representative, and Jillian George, Administrative Assistant.

From November 2010 to June 2011, the Field Service Unit conducted 46 site visits throughout the VA Medical Center system with the System Worth Saving Taskforce members to collect data for the 2011 System Worth Saving Report. This year's report will focus on: service members' transition from the Department of Defense to the Department of Veterans Affairs, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

The Health Care Policy continues to assist veterans with questions about the following health care policy areas: enrollment, third-party billing, TBI, PTSD, Suicide Prevention, Caregiver Program and other health care matters as received.

The VA&R Health Care Policy Unit provided the design and Magazine Division since November 2010 to establish a Veterans Health Center and System Worth Saving

Center on The American Legion's National Website. Both sites can be found at: http://legion.org/veteranshealthcare http://legion.org/systemworthsaving.

The VA&R Health Policy Unit continues to assist service members and veterans with understanding and accessing their earned VA health care benefits. This assistance includes providing information on VA health care programs and advocacy to assist them with any questions or concerns.

Accredited Representatives

In completing VA Form 21-22, "Power of Attorney", the claimant appoints The American Legion as accredited representative in a claim for benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. It is the duty of the organization to provide assistance, advice, and counsel to veterans, survivors and dependents so as to ensure their rights are protected and they receive all benefits to which they may be entitled under the law. The American Legion, as a Congressionally chartered organization, conducts this service program through the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission. Accredited Representatives of The American Legion provide formal representation in claims before VA regional offices or the Board of Veterans Appeals. Their respective Departments have recommended these representatives for accreditation because of their knowledge, experience, and expertise in the field of federal benefit programs, especially those provided through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

To become an Accredited Representative of The American Legion, a formal application (VA Form 2-21) must be submitted to the Director of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, 1608 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006, with an accompanying endorsement signed by the Department Commander or Department Adjutant. The Director, as the National Certifying Officer, or the Deputy Director for Claims Service, as Assistant National Certifying Officer, will review and forward the request to the General Counsel of VA for action. This form is never sent directly to the General Counsel, as accreditation will not be granted unless the request has been certified by the organization. Upon approval of the application, the individual is recognized by VA as an Accredited Representative of The American Legion and will receive official notification of this action from VA. The accreditation will remain in effect until such time as the Director, National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission receive a written request from the Department Commander or Department Adjutant to cancel the individual's accreditation due to death, retirement, or resignation. The Director will then notify the General Counsel that the accreditation should be canceled.

New accreditations and cancellations are reported monthly on VA's General List of Accredited Representatives - VA Information Bulletin IB 2-51. During the reporting period 309 requests for accreditation and 362 requests for cancellation were received from the Departments and submitted to VA for necessary action. As of June 30, 2011, there were 2,550 Accredited Representatives of The American Legion with 5 pending accreditation. Any questions concerning the proper procedure or regulations pertaining to accreditation of individuals or their activities should be submitted to the Director of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission in the Washington office.

Personnel and Organization

The following changes occurred in the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division at the Washington office from July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011.

The most current table of organization of the National

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission as of June 30, 2010, is as follows:

Director.....1

Administrative Assistant.....1

Deputy Director for Health Care.....1
Assistant Director for Health Policy.....1
Field Service Representatives.....4
Secretary.....1

Deputy Director for Claims Services.....1
Administrative Assistant.....1

Supervisor, Review and Correction Boards.....1
Review Board Representative.....2

Office Manager, Board of Vets. Appeals Unit.....1
Appeals Representatives.....13
Secretaries.....3
Medical Consultant.....1

Assistant Director for Policy and Research 1

Appeals Representatives..... 1
Secretary..... 1

Total Personnel - Washington office.....35

Insurance Field Office: Philadelphia, PA
Chief of Insurance Activities.....1
Pension Management Center: Philadelphia 1

Debt Management Center/PMC St. Paul, MN
Assistant Director 1
PMC Representative 1

Pension Management Center Milwaukee 1
Benefits Delivery at Discharge Winston Salem.....1
Benefits Delivery at Discharge Salt Lake City 1

VA&R TOTAL 42

Staff Field Assignments

The staff of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, including the director, deputy director and assistant directors attended various Legion functions around the country, such as the National Convention, Department Conventions, Department Seminars and Service Officers Schools, the Conferences and fact-finding trips. The Field Service staff visited 46 hospitals along with The System Worth Saving Task Force. Select VA&R staff attended the Annual Mid-Winter Conference in Washington, DC.

Certificates of Appreciation

Under authority of May 1958 NEC Resolution, we have continued the program of awarding a Certificate of Appreciation to officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs, upon their retirement or resignation, For Services Rendered and Cooperation Extended in

Connection with The American Legion's Rehabilitation Program. Under criteria established in line with the enabling resolution, nominations for the award are submitted by Department or National officials of The American Legion twice a year. The nominations are considered by a committee of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission at meetings preceding the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference, and the National Convention. The Committee recommends to the Commission the names of those considered deserving of the Certificate.

One Certificates of Appreciation have been awarded during the period July 1, 2010, through June 30, 2011, for an overall total of 1,322 since the program was initiated

Citations for Meritorious Service

This Citation, authorized by the National Executive Committee in May 1956, seeks to recognize the long and faithful service of Post Service Officers and others. Nominations for the Citation are submitted by Department officials to the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Director at any time; the Director, acting for the Chairman and members of the Commission, issues the award.

Thirteen Citations For Meritorious Service And Loyal Cooperation In The American Legion's Veterans Affairs And Rehabilitation Program Were Presented During The Period July 1, 2010 To June 30, 2011. Since This Type Of Recognition And Appreciation Began, 5,072 Citations For Meritorious Service Have Been Presented.

The American Legion Auxiliary

It's been my privilege to travel this year as the national president and to have the terrific opportunity to see firsthand the incredible work being done by members of the American Legion Auxiliary in our almost 10,000 communities nationwide. The work done by our volunteers in their communities, in veterans hospitals and homes, and children's hospitals and homes is very impressive.

I was uniquely privileged to travel to the Far East and Europe where the national commander and I were honored to lay wreaths at memorials and cemeteries to pay tribute to our fallen service members from previous wars. I was truly amazed at the reverence and respect shown to our heroes by the people of these foreign countries as we participated in these ceremonies. We were always among military honor guards, village officials, even bands on some occasions, as we paid homage to those who previously protected our freedoms and the freedom of those nations.

We celebrated Pearl Harbor Day in Hawaii and D-Day in Normandy and enjoyed the hospitality of the French people in Sainte Mere Eglise and dedicated a World War II museum in honor of our military.

We had the opportunity to spend some time with members of both The American Legion and the Auxiliary from the Department of France and to be hosted at several of their fine Legion posts. We were charmed by their friendship and dedication to our organizations.

We were able to visit both our military hospitals in Ramstein and Landstuhl and to see a storage area full of comfort items sent by our members to help the recovery process of our wounded and hundreds of coupons sent to augment the family resources. Additionally our members welcomed the troops home, sent hundreds of pocket flags and continued to help the military families while the service member is deployed. The need is great and our members are there to help in a myriad of ways.

Children have been a major focus of this year's activities starting with our special endowment fund "Educating Children of Warriors," to our understanding the need to include our Junior members in our many programs and projects, to our Girls State programs offered to high school Juniors to attend our premier program teaching of all levels of government and then the ultimate Girls Nation program in Washington, D.C.

How proud we are of all these young women as they embrace the opportunity to learn more about lobbying, how to write a bill and pass legislation and to run for office. Unquestionably it's a challenging opportunity that helps to equip them for their future.

We were privileged that the four recipients of our Public Spirit award this year at our Awareness Assembly luncheon were all Auxiliary members contributing to making a better life for our military. I doubt there was a dry eye in the audience as these members related their true life stories of their four organizations and how they help every day to bring comfort and caring to our service members.

Our many hospital volunteers bring that same comfort and caring to our hospitalized veterans and those in nursing homes. They bring a bit of home with them as they make their visits and talk to these individuals. Day in, day out, like postmen making their rounds, our volunteers serve in these institutions to make each day a bit better for those who gave so much in service to our country.

We continue to support the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, the Auxiliary Emergency Fund and the Spirit of Youth Fund for scholarships. At unit levels, much is done and accomplished to support the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary.

This year, we were granted approval of our application to become a 501c3 organization which permits us to seek corporate grants. Our organization worked under the theme "Power of One" knowing that some of the work that was started during this administrative year would not be finished, but that it would be ongoing under the new leadership. Our work doesn't start and stop with the national president who is serving, but rather it continues to evolve and becomes a better year - each year.

Our goal of service is to improve each year, to provide inspiration so that others will want to join and to celebrate our successes.

We need to strengthen our organization each year, follow our motto of "Service, not Self" and move forward each year into a brighter future for the American Legion Auxiliary.

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
National President Carlene Ashworth, Texas

It has been an honor to serve as your American Legion Auxiliary national president for 2010-2011. It has been an amazing year filled with experiences and people I will never forget.

For a year I have been talking about the Power of One and the impact each one of us can have on the lives of others. When you think about how you can make a difference and then act on it, you don't realize the long and lasting impact those individuals will have on you. The servicemembers, veterans, and dedicated military families I have met this year will stay in my heart forever.

I won't forget the face of a wounded warrior riding in a Ride 2 Recovery event as he received high fives from cheering schoolchildren when he passed by on a hand cycle, custom-made and purchased for him through donations from ALA members. Or the proud look of a National Veterans Creative Arts Festival gold medalist with post-traumatic stress who says the program our Auxiliary co-sponsors saved his life. Or the homeless veteran who wouldn't stop saying "thank you" as we helped him move into a new home that is safe, warm, and dry, when all the while we were trying to convince him that we can never repay him for his service. Each and every one of these individuals is inspiring and unforgettable. But just as important as the Power of One was our ability as an organization to work as one. This year I saw a more unified Auxiliary, both in the way we carried out our work and how we cared for one another. I saw our commitment and results increase exponentially as we united behind one single mission, working together as one to better serve our veterans.

It is in that spirit that we introduce a new award this year, the National President's Service Not Self Award, to recognize those units that work together as one to promote harmony in their units, to welcome new members, and to better engage current members. We are always so good to our veterans and military families, but we need to remember to be good to each other, too.

This year I am proud to say that I visited every Auxiliary department at least once. In these travels, I visited numerous military bases and veterans' facilities from VA hospitals to domiciliaries to homeless veteran facilities. Each visit made me more steadfast about the Auxiliary mission — and grateful that our organization has seen a recommitment to our core mission of serving our veterans and military families.

I also had the honor of accompanying American Legion National Commander Jimmie Foster on many overseas visits, including a visit to the Far East where we helped serve Thanksgiving dinner to our troops in South Korea. In addition, we traveled to Normandy, France, for the 67th anniversary of D-Day; a wreath-laying ceremony on June 6 at the Normandy American Cemetery made it a day I will never forget. More than 9,000 American soldiers are laid to rest there.

It has been a privilege to serve this year alongside National Commander Foster and Sons of The American Legion National Commander David Dew. Their dedication to our veterans and our country is inspiring, and they are truly both at work every single day helping to improve life for our military and our veterans.

On a national level, we achieved some important milestones necessary for the future growth of the Auxiliary. We continued to enact our strategic plan, making efforts to enhance our leadership development and ensure the future growth of our organization. The implementation of ALAMIS was a significant undertaking and is already paying off by allowing us to manage our membership more efficiently. The new website www.ALAforVeterans.org is a tremendous resource for members, prospective members, and the media. And the continued improvements in *Auxiliary* magazine help remind us about what we accomplish at the grassroots level, as well as the support we receive from our national organization. We also have a dedicated, loyal staff at National Headquarters who believe in what we do and work hard every day to help us better serve our veterans and military families.

National Vice President
Kris Nelson, Baxter, Minnesota

The role of the national vice president is one of support, education, and planning. It was my honor and privilege to support National President Carlene Ashworth this year as a "Power of One Member" serving our veterans.

In September, the Auxiliary supported the national commander by attending his testimony to the Joint Hearing of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees of Congress.

A most memorable experience was the week spent volunteering at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in La Crosse, Wis. where, everyday, I updated our NVCAF webpage allowing families, friends of participants and members across the country to share the experience with us. We celebrated the talents of our veterans, culminating with the art exhibit and stage show on Sunday. Following the festival, we enjoyed the Texas hospitality of President Carlene's homecoming.

Interaction with our members at the Presidents & Secretaries Conference and Awareness Assembly renewed our enthusiasm as we heard the accomplishments of units across the country and innovative ways our members are working on mission-related activities.

In May, my husband Terry and I were invited to attend the U.S. Naval Academy Awards Ceremony where I represented the Auxiliary and presented an award to one of the midshipmen. What an honor to share this experience.

My education included attending National Finance Committee meetings, Long Range Strategic Planning meetings, and ALA Foundation meetings, and interacting with our National Headquarters staff. Our members can rest assured that volunteers and staff members fully embrace our mission, and it is at the core of everything they do.

Following Awareness Assembly, we attended D.C. Briefing sand learned more about the VA system, The American Legion D.C. office, and programs that support veterans and national security as well as the Legion's legislative priorities. Attending The American Legion Membership Workshop and their fall and spring meetings allowed me to interact with the Legion's leadership team and learn more about its commissions and programs.

Planning for my administrative year took the majority of my time. In November, I spent a week in Indianapolis working with National staff, attending finance and long-range planning meetings and attending Veterans Day ceremonies. In January, we met at headquarters for a three-year financial forecasting meeting and membership planning meeting. Through February, the majority of my time was spent on conference calls with National VA&R Chairman Peggy Thomas, reviewing all applications for national appointments and assigning members across the country to serve on our committees.

In April, members across the country joined us at our Honor Their Service Membership Workshop. Plans for next year's membership program were discussed, promises made, and ideas shared, motivating attendees to increase their membership through mission-related activities. The national chairmen appointees met in May to make plans for next year. Several weeks were then spent on the 2011-2012 Plan of Action that will include "How-To" resource sheets.

This year of support, education, and planning has shown me that, at all levels of our organization, our members are driven by their passion to support veterans and their families. It has also shown me that we must continue to look for innovative ways to allow members to serve with us. It has warmed my heart to see President Carlene's passion as she traveled the world, sharing our values and motivating our members to be The Power of One to serve our veterans and their families.

Thank you all for your support and dedication. God bless.

National Secretary
Mary "Dubbie" Buckler, Indianapolis, Indiana

In my two years with the leadership team of the American Legion Auxiliary, we have met significant, longstanding challenges in an environment of increased public and regulatory scrutiny of nonprofits and decreased revenue. Now more than two years into the post-world economy downfall, we have gone the distance to do more with less, delivering some stellar accomplishments with strategic focus on our vision: an ALA harmoniously poised to advance its international mission with sufficient resources to achieve its strategic goals.

At your National Headquarters, we have been operating at a 20-30 percent staffing vacancy. With a national dues structure unchanged in more than 16 years, operating revenues continued to decline. Our talented staff working as teams curtailed expenditures that saved the organization some 15 percent in budgeted Headquarters expenses on top on the nearly 20 percent cut at the end of FY09. In these lean times, we have competitively lost some excellent staff members to better paying opportunities. Replacing talent is very costly. So is updated technology which is critical to organizational effectiveness. We launched the American Legion Auxiliary Management Information System – a really big

multi-year project – and at the one-year mark of implementation have worked through the transition bugs within budget.

My priorities remain to build organizational capacity and to improve branding, awareness, and communications. With creativity, teamwork, and exceptional dedication, it's been a stellar year of achievements.

During a time when national grant-making declined 8% and donations dropped 10%, we're doing well! Corporate donors will not fund membership organizations' operating expenses. With the ALA Call to Service Corps Consortium and VISTA project, the Corporation for National and Community Service is now the ALA's largest external funder, investing over $1 million in our capacity building efforts. Our unprecedented direct mail fundraising efforts have generated more than $ half-million to the ALA and nearly 10,000 new non-ALA member donors, another huge accomplishment, and part of a 3-year fundraising plan generating unprecedented results. And we are thrilled with our celebrity PSAs featuring Pat Sajak and singer Michael Peterson.

We have reshaped *Auxiliary* magazine, updated eNews, and launched the dramatically improved www.ALAforVeterans.org website this year to better inform and inspire our most important customer –YOU – our member. These were really big projects! The website is awesome, with new content posting weekly. We appreciate your accolades! We developed a marketing brand that enhances the ALA's "first glance" image and have many improved marketing materials – including a professional membership video provided to every department that can be locally tailored. DO check out the website often!

Many thanks to our NHQ staff teams in finance, HR/administration, communications, IT systems, programs/events, and membership working with our volunteer leaders as one big leadership team to showcase the value of this great organization.

National Treasurer
Marta Hedding, Indianapolis, Indiana

As your national treasurer for 17 years, I have seen the Auxiliary through many changes. One of the best was the promotion of Tim Bresnahan, CPA, to controller of the national organization nearly two years ago, allowing me to more appropriately fulfill the proper role of a national treasurer, reviewing and overseeing the mass amount of work done by our Accounting Division, which results in more efficient internal checks and balances. In this new era of the revolutionary IRS Form 990 — the ALA's 46-page annual report to the IRS, part of the 100-plus page public report to the federal and state government — we also added a much-needed compliance accountant. I am pleased to report that your National Headquarters has excellent accounting practices in place and again received praise from our external auditor for the completeness and accuracy of our national financial records. We received another clean audit, as has been the case each year since I have been with the national organization.

Membership and finance - they go hand in hand. The declining number of members and correlating decline in revenue remain my biggest concerns about the future of the ALA, as this directly impacts our ability to deliver our core programs and services.

In 2001, we bemoaned that membership was at a 30-year low. We talked then about the gloomy financial picture due to the loss in membership. In 2011, we're at a 40-year low. Same concerns - but they are now even greater. Based on feedback from the 2010 Focus Sessions, along with last year's Member Survey conducted by our VISTAs, we learned that the big reasons members don't renew are lack of being included, mistreatment, and discord. Membership teams are becoming proactive, and the newly established Service Not Self Award will recognize units that promote harmony, are

inclusive and welcoming to all members, accept/adapt to change, and engage new and current members.

We are doing good things to improve, but we lack the resources to invest in ourselves and recover to a more healthy state. The 1995 National Convention voted to increase national dues from $3 to $5; there has been no increase in national dues since. National dues have been $5 for the last 15 years. This is not good, and our external auditors have put that in writing to us.

For the past three years, our external national audit has strongly recommended that the Auxiliary consider increasing its membership dues significantly as soon as practical. The 2010 audit now states, "This is an alarming trend that, if not remedied in the near future, will result in serious doubts about the ALA's ability to continue to operate as a going concern." The ALA needs to accept its fiduciary responsibility to keep pace with inflation and sustain itself.

For 16 years our expenses have continued to rise, just like the rest of the country's. In 16 years inflation has eaten away at what that $5-per-member annual national dues income can support.

For the last five years, national dues revenue has fallen short of covering the cost of program services by an average of more than $2 million each year; in four of the last six years, dues have not even covered the cost of member services. The lack of dues income and contributions over the last six years caused a shortfall in net operating income of nearly $4,300,000, putting a strain on reserves. Investments that once carried us have fallen in value and won't be able to make up the difference now or in the foreseeable future. Over the last five years, the ALA national budgets have been reduced 20 percent. Over the last three years, ALA National Headquarters has cut expenses 23 percent. The national organization is currently operating below 2002 spending levels.

As national treasurer, I urge you to address the problem straight on. We've cut and cut. It's time to act and adopt a dues structure that supports the organization.

National Chaplain
Vickie Thrower, Union Grove, Alabama

My goal was to instill "For God and Country" in the hearts of others by publicizing what we do as American Legion Auxiliary and American Legion Family members. We have accomplished this goal as our chaplains have worked the memorial programs this year. I enjoyed communicating with the department chaplains and collecting prayers for our National President's Prayer Book; I have received 312 prayers to date. units, districts, and departments made prayer books to present to their own presidents as well.

We had a chaplains' Facebook page which helped us communicate with each other about those who needed prayer. Department chaplains took the full advantage of the Power of One, sharing prayers one by one to make a difference in the lives of others.

Many states were affected by the tragic tornadoes that hit our nation in April and May 2011. Our members gathered in various communities to assist their neighbors by making donations, praying, and sharing hugs.

Departments participated in Memorial Day and Veterans Day services. They laid wreaths and draped charters for Gold Star and regular members. units sent all kinds of cards to our troops, shut-ins, veterans, and their families. On special holidays, countless hours were spent honoring our veterans by placing flags on their graves. Our chaplains participated in POW-MIA ceremonies and Legion birthday activities; visited funeral homes, hospitals, and shut-ins; fed the troops; and hosted healing fields, fields of honor flag raisings and disposals, 9/11 remembrances, and cemetery dedication ceremonies.

Members made memorial donations of more than $28,000 to a variety of organizations and causes, including the Cavalcade of Memories, Auxiliary Emergency

Fund, Spirit of Youth Scholarship Fund, Child Welfare Foundation, Chapel of the Four Chaplains, Fisher House Foundation, Wounded Warrior Fund, Educating Children of Warriors, and Ride 2 Recovery, as well as others.

I received 12 narrative reports from our departments, with the best one coming from the Department of North Carolina, where Rachel Ervin is chaplain. That department selected a Chaplain of the Year.

I am very proud to have worked with all of our department chaplains this year. Thanks to all of you who reported and sent prayers for the National President's Prayer Book. It was a blessing to write the reflection prayers for our national magazine and to provide prayers to our chaplains across the country. This was a very humbling experience that I will always treasure. May God bless each of you.

National Historian
Gwenda Schroeder-Zulch, Jerry City, Ohio

History is change and change is history. Historians reflected on the many accomplishments of their members, units, districts, and departments. "Writing the story" remained my objective this year, and I encouraged all of the departments to do just that. Thirty-eight departments submitting the history of their departments for the 2010-2011 administrative year. Units, districts, and departments showed the Power of One through installations, birthday parties at VA hospitals, packages sent to the troops overseas, and volunteering. This is history in the making and will long be remembered.

The Department of Wisconsin submitted an entry for "Where are They Now?" It featured Grace Mach, a member of the Luxemburg, Wis. American Legion Auxiliary whose military service gave her the opportunity to serve her interest in the veterans as an Army surgical nurse. Her last tour of duty while in the Army was a year in Germany from 1953-1954. While in the service, she traveled the countryside of Japan, making observations of the Japanese people, observing farmers and noting that many of the people lived in filthy conditions and there was much homelessness and petty crimes.

As a veteran, Grace traveled across Europe, including Germany, Austria, Holland, England, Wales, Scotland, Brussels, Belgium, and Italy. She wrote of her travels often and reported them to her local newspaper. In my opinion, Grace exemplified the Power of One as she cared for those in need.

Recording President Carlene Ashworth's travels to the departments and overseas showed her caring and love for the veterans. In Ohio she toured the Columbus VA Outpatient Clinic and met "Joe," a veteran who was there for rehabilitation. Carlene and Joe exchanged greetings, and he told her of his injuries. While visiting other departments, she laid wreaths at VA cemeteries, greeted troops, visited battlefields, and toured VA facilities, all while lending her caring support to the veterans.

My one goal was to have at least one department submit an entry for the Veterans History Project, and this goal was met. Ride 2 Recovery and Wounded Warriors were major projects this year as we reflected on those who suffered injuries due to their service. Members also volunteered at events to benefit the veterans and wrote the stories of their military careers.

It has been an extreme honor and pleasure to serve as your national historian. I am very proud to represent the ALA and write the history of this great organization.

Americanism Committee
Ann Rehbein, Ames, Iowa

Americanism is one of those great programs where you can be as active as you want or just be supportive in a quiet way. You can be in charge of an event or just fly your flag

every day. The Power One — one person, unit, or department — each has shown its patriotic pride through the Americanism program. At the center of it all is the American flag. Programs and events on flag etiquette, history, and proper disposal were held. Coloring books, comic books, patriotic bookmarks, and 2,044 flags were distributed to schools, along parade routes, and during holiday events.

Wearing flag pins and buying flag stamps are two ways many members show their patriotism. Local companies were honored for flying the flag and presented with certificates of appreciation. About 66,000 pocket flags were folded and presented to deploying troops or sent in care packages so servicemembers everywhere would have a personal reminder of home.

The flag amendment to protect "Old Glory" was introduced in the 112th Congress and is supported by members who contact their congressional representatives. Sadly, many members reported lowering their flags to half-staff to honor a fallen soldier. From birth to death, the American flag is with us, our symbol of freedom and democracy.

Over 33,000 students participated in the Americanism Essay Contest. This year's topic was "How Can I Encourage My Friends to Show Pride in Being an American?" The contest is divided into five classes by grade and is first judged in the departments and then in the divisions. What would your answer be? The achievement of which I am most proud is the end result of the committee's ability to communicate about the Americanism Essay Contest: thousands of young people were encouraged to take part.

Many members participated in a "Get Out the Vote" campaign, encouraging others to vote, giving voters rides to the polls, and holding forums for candidates. Students were introduced to voting through Kids Voting USA and other age-appropriate programs.

Support for The American Legion's Americanism program is still strong, with Auxiliary members participating in The Legion's Oratorical Program as escorts, timers, and judges. The Junior Shooting Program has Auxiliary members as coaches and scorekeepers, while American Legion Baseball benefits from members being fundraisers, team drivers, sponsors, and record-keepers. All of the programs benefitted from our all-time favorite volunteer activity, helping in the concession stand or providing refreshments.

Auxiliary Emergency Fund
Tammy Ryberg, Bowbells, North Dakota

All departments took this to heart and worked the program, but three departments went the extra mile for the Auxiliary Emergency Fund (AEF). Minnesota held a silent auction at its Fall Conference. Units, districts, and individuals donated 60 baskets full of goodies, plus many other items, for the auction. The thrill of hiking up the bid of your friend or foe made the excitement roll to the very end. It was a simple way to raise funds for AEF.

Rhode Island held a "Murder Mystery dinner Theater" on May 6. dinner was served and then the play began. The suspense of the play had all in a trance, trying to figure out who was the murderer. After the event, goodie-filled baskets were raffled off, topping off a wonderful evening. All the funds went to AEF.

Delaware's Oak Orchard/Riverdale Unit 28 hosted "An Evening in Black and White with Bryan Clark" on April 3.

Clark is a singer who impersonates legendary performers and is well known throughout the Central and northeast regions of the country. The evening included dinner and the show. All guests were encouraged to dress in black and white, and the ballroom was elegantly decorated. It was a fun event attended by many, and another great AEF fundraiser.

Other fundraising projects included a memorial board quilt, car washes, tea-less tea parties, book fairs, style show, purse sale, cake sale/walk, meat sales, and many, many more.

The AEF Committee works to raise awareness and funds which are granted to members in need by the ALA National AEF Grants Committee managed at national Headquarters. Last year, AEF awarded 140 grants totaling $140,511, according to AEF Case Manager and Auxiliary member and veteran Jeri Mutchler. In the year following Hurricane Katrina, the AEF received a record $320,134 in donations and distributed more than $550,000 in AEF grants, primarily to members in Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi. Recent tornadoes and flooding have had even wider geographic impact, affecting members across a swath encompassing half of the continental United States. The nation's extreme weather disasters this past year have strained the Auxiliary Emergency Fund.

The American Legion Auxiliary recently received a most generous gift to the AEF. Grace S. Schulz was a Paid Up For Life member of Illinois' Unit 232. She enjoyed 74 years of continuous membership until her passing on July 21, 2010. Grace was dedicated to the Auxiliary mission and gave selflessly to honor and serve veterans and military families. In addition to many volunteer hours, Grace also gave generously financially throughout her membership. Though no longer with us, she continued her legacy of giving through a charitable gift in her will, bequeathing $61,000 to the national Auxiliary Emergency Fund.

The money for the Auxiliary Emergency Fund comes directly from you, the Auxiliary member. Administrative costs for the program are paid by national Headquarters, meaning donations to AEF go toward helping your fellow Auxiliary member. Your generous contributions make it possible for members in need to care for their families and begin rebuilding their homes and lives. ALA members can donate or download a grant application at www.ALAforVeterans.org or make a donation to the AEF via the website.

Cavalcade of Memories
Kenya Ostermeier, Greenfield, Indiana

It has been another busy year on this committee. Perusing 90 years of our national magazines to find interesting covers typical of each decade was a fascinating activity. it was tempting to read the magazines cover to cover, which we didn't have time to do. Committee member Janet Barnaby assisted in the process. The selected covers will be framed and displayed on a wall in the national Headquarters office. This project was the idea of Tabitha Rhoda, a member of the National staff, and it will be completed in the near future.

Working on the creation of an acrylic display case for Mrs. Edith Hobart's restored dress has involved much research and has been a learning experience. With assistance from Gabby Kienitz, the curator at the Indiana State Museum, I am learning how to preserve the dress. This project is now in the production phase.

Florida Chairman Tina Kirchoff had great ideas to give her department members. Since almost all departments have storage limitations, she suggests digitally saving items and inventories so that future generations can enjoy these treasures. She encourages units to have a copy of their charter, along with their original members' names, a complete list of past presidents, oral interviews with a special member of the unit or a veteran, and displays where and when possible. She gave awards for units that reached these goals. She also suggested having Junior members assist with the technology aspects of these virtual museums.

Department cavalcades continue to improve as they rearrange their cabinets and shelves to show off their memorabilia to members and guests in a better light. New Jersey Chairman Laura Frappolli and members have spruced up their past department presidents' artifacts and added new identification and explanatory signs.

Please continue your great work to preserve those important memories. There will probably be some overlapping of purpose and goals between the Cavalcade chairman and your historian; each can help the other record events and accomplishments in your unit, district, and department. We can unleash the Power of One by encouraging at least one person to start these important projects so future generations will know about the sacrifices of our military, veterans, and members.

Invite the public to view your important artifacts. Put your digitized documents and pictures of artifacts into a PowerPoint presentation that could be shown at meetings of the Auxiliary and other organizations to which you may belong.

Liaison to Child Welfare Foundation
Katherine Morris, Houston, Texas

At its annual meeting in October 2010, the Board of directors of the Child Welfare Foundation approved $666,670 in grants to 21 nonprofit organizations for projects to be completed in calendar year 2011. These grants were awarded to support worthwhile projects and disseminate information about them to the general public and specific target groups. The following is a brief summary of the grants awarded this year: American Academy of Pediatrics of Elk Grove Village, Ill., was awarded $14,725 for the project, "Pediatrics Journal-Military Supplement."

American Legion Children's Home of Ponca City, Okla., was awarded $44,000 for the project, "American Legion Children's Home national Awareness Initiative Phase III."

Child Find of America, Inc. of Highland, N.Y., was awarded $45,000 for the project, "Parent Help for Military Families Information and Outreach Project."

Children's Organ Transplant Association of Bloomington, Ind., was awarded $46,500 for the project, "One Million Miracles Initiative."

Cornelia de Lange Syndrome Foundation of Avon, Conn., was awarded $22,295 for the project, Cornelia de Lange Syndrome Information Clearinghouse."

Father Flanagan's Boys Home and Boys Town of Boys Town, Neb., was awarded $62,000 for the project, Boys Town national Hotline Public Service Announcement."

Georgia State University Research Foundation, Inc. of Atlanta, Ga., was awarded $28,900 for the project, "Home Safety at your Fingertips: the iSafety Program."

Kansas Braille Transcription Institute, Inc. of Wichita, Kan., was awarded $6,500 for the project, "Red, Sight and Blue, I Can "See" Her Too."

Make-A-Wish Foundation of America of Phoenix, Ariz., was awarded $31,572 for the project, "Branding the Adopt-A-Wish Program."

Mercy Flight Southeast, Inc. of Leesburg, Fla., was awarded $10,000 for the project, "Project Outreach USA." National Autism Association of Nixa, Mo. was awarded $50,000 for the project, "Autism Safety Toolkit."

National Braille Press of Boston, Mass., was awarded $13,270 for the project, "Literacy Guides for Sighted Parents of Blind Children."

National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) of Seattle, Wash., was awarded $49,000 for the project, "Flex Training – A Blended Approach to Pre Service CASA/GAL Volunteer Training."

National Marfan Foundation of Port Washington, N.Y., was awarded $25,000 for the project, "'The Marfan Question' Web-Based Video Series for Children and Teens." National Meningitis Association, Inc. of Atlanta, Ga., was awarded $40,000 for the project, "They Think They're Invincible; you Know They're not."

National Organizations for Youth Safety of Gainesville, Va., was awarded $25,000 for the project, "youth Empowered Community Engagement to Prevent distracted driving."

Our Military Kids of McLean, Va., was awarded $50,100 for the project, "Informational Video and Brochures."

Songs of Love Foundation of Forest Hills, N.Y., was awarded $25,000 for the project, "Songs of Love Outreach Project."

The American Legion of Fultondale, Ala., was awarded $12,000 for the project, "The Crippled Lamb Program."

The National Children's Cancer Society (NCCS) of St. Louis, Mo., was awarded $25,000 for the project, "Beyond the Cure (BTC)."

Young Marines of Washington, D.C., was awarded $40,808 for the project, "'Red Ribbon' Project."

During 2010, donations exceeded $727,654, with more than $478,246 coming from the Sons of The American Legion.

Members of The American Legion Family are the primary contributors to the success and growth of the Child Welfare Foundation. Each member and local organization is encouraged to make an annual contribution in support of the foundation.

At a Board of directors meeting in Indianapolis on May 1, the following officers were elected: Dennis R. Boland of Florida, president; Peggy Moon of Minnesota, vice president; Joseph J. Frank of Missouri, secretary; and Robert S. Turner of Georgia, treasurer. Administrative personnel appointed by the board were George A. Buskirk Jr., assistant treasurer, and Robert K. Caudell, executive secretary.

Under the 1969 Tax reform Act, the Child Welfare Foundation retains its tax-exempt status. Gifts, therefore, are deductible for federal income tax purposes to the extent permitted by law, and bequests are deductible for federal inheritance tax purposes to the extent permitted by the Federal Tax Act.

Children & Youth
Nancy Brown-Park, Novato, California

The enthusiasm and dedication of our members make a difference in the lives of the children of our veterans and military. One child at a time, members across America are enhancing the mental and emotional health and wellness of these special children. The department of California used ALA KIDDS (Kids in Danger of Depression and Suicide) to host an anti-bullying workshop at a local school. Research indicates that military families are at higher risk for problems because their support system is sometimes lacking. Units created new relationships with Big Brothers Big sisters, hosting exciting and informative events and taking on the responsibility to help children in need of extra support.

Parties at local Boys & Girls Clubs became the rallying call of unit members. They hosted events to give military children a place to gather with their peers.

One by one, units across the South made a difference for military youth by packing 1,278 Hero Packs for children who had at least one parent deployed. In the state of Florida, 13 units started a support network for military families.

The Department of Massachusetts worked with The American Legion Family to hand out the Legion's Halloween safety pamphlet and held a breakfast with Santa for military children, making sure every child received a gift.

Units nationwide collaborated with Operation: Military Kids to host "packing parties" where tons of items from units, districts, departments, and Girl State programs were sorted and delivered to the children of deployed parents.

In Texas, a 6-year-old girl saved the life of a toddler who was drowning; she received a Youth Hero Award. To date, 28 Youth Hero Awards and 409 Good Deed Awards have been given to young people across the country.

In the future, the Children & Youth program will focus on greater outreach to returning veterans and military families, in addition to the newly deployed servicemembers, and their families.

Community Service
Diane Duscheck, Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin

Units and departments combined forces with The American Legion Family and their communities to provide aid to veterans, active-duty servicemembers, and their families. "days of Service" were particularly popular. We changed the tires on cars, replaced windows in houses, installed insulation, shoveled snow, built a deck, and did yard work. Veterans were driven to the store so they could buy groceries. Some received aid to offset their medical costs.

Many community service activities promoted the economic security of veterans and servicemembers. The American Legion Family and communities raised money for stand downs. One stand down received a donation of 100 boxes of new clothing from a wholesaler that was going out of business. Homeless veterans received personal hygiene bags which contained soap, a comb, toothbrush, toothpaste, a razor, and other toiletries. numerous units prepared, donated, or served food to veterans at homeless shelters and veteran rehabilitation centers.

To enable veterans to set up housekeeping after their discharge from VA Medical Centers, fleece blankets, quilts, and cleaning items were distributed. Parkas were purchased to keep residents of a veterans' home comfortable. Auxiliary members in one unit attended a class to learn how to prevent domestic violence.

Homeless veterans in one department were housed in a converted nursing home. Besides providing toiletry items, clothing, household items, and friendship, Auxiliary members used donations to furnish apartments for the veterans and to purchase 12 televisions so each veteran would have his/her own.

A major step in alleviating homelessness in the veteran population is preventing joblessness. Job fairs were organized to connect veterans and servicemembers with employers and employment opportunities. some veterans were able to leave the fairs with a job or an interview appointment. Equally important job fair activities included help with writing résumés, filling out employment applications, and preparing taxes.

Needy veterans and servicemembers' families were adopted by units and were the recipients of food baskets, phone cards, and gift certificates. Families of enlisted servicemembers had happy holidays when Auxiliary units provided cards, gifts, holiday parties, and financial assistance. Beyond the monetary and material items donated for veterans, the military, and their families, they also received the friendship and fellowship of The American Legion Family.

One group of Juniors hit upon a unique idea to bring smiles to veterans' faces. Twenty-eight of them painted more than 100 birdhouses that were distributed to veterans in their local communities.

Constitution & Bylaws
Mary Davis, Lacey, Washington

The Auxiliary's national Constitution & Bylaws create the foundation for all that we do as an organization. They serve as our guide when we have questions on governance.

I am most proud of the great work department chairmen perform to help units with their governing documents and the sharing of information which took place because of those actions. Some units' Constitution & Bylaws date back to 1949. When governing documents are old and likely outdated, it becomes important to help those units update them. In the absence of current documents, disagreements, questions, and the potential for chaos can occur. If documents are reviewed regularly and revised as questions arise, the chance for misinterpretation diminishes.

Some examples include the great work of Kentucky Chairman Eula Fox. "The department Constitution & Bylaws committee serves as a resource to all units throughout the year for assistance and advice in updating their units' constitution and bylaws, for assistance on parliamentary problems, and assistance to all officers, chairmen, and members," she reported.

California Chairman Odette Cuccaro successfully promoted rediscovering the American Legion Auxiliary by reading and understanding governing documents. She also taught the units the importance of having sound governing documents.

Units across the nation responded to their chairmen's requests to send copies of their updated Constitutions & Bylaws. Department of Nebraska Chairman Bonnie Dumler instructed the units to submit an updated signature page if there were no changes; department records then would confirm that the documents had been reviewed by the units.

Maine Chairman April Kirkland reported that she assisted units not only with their constitutions and bylaws but also with officers' duties, election procedures, and meeting protocol. She responded to districts that needed help with their governing documents as well. Minnesota Chairman Beverly Otterness and Illinois Chairman Carollee Junge also were helpful in answering many unit questions.

Education
Sharon Conatser, Champaign, Illinois

Education is a priority for our members and their families. Forty-one departments participated in the national scholarship program. departments reported giving over 1,300 scholarships totaling $420,000 this year. In Colorado, two units with fewer than 35 members each raised $19,300 and awarded 24 scholarships. That one organization makes a difference in the lives of so many young people through scholarships is evidence of the Power of One.

The Department of Texas sponsors a one-of-a-kind cancer research program. Fellowships are provided to the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at the University of Texas at Houston for students who pursue doctoral degrees in cancer research. Scholarships of $5,000 each are awarded annually, with 13 students receiving scholarships this year. Over $1,215,000 has been contributed to this effort since 1971.

"Give 10 to Education" was supported across the nation, with Auxiliary members donating 157,465 items to schools, from crayons to books, representing a dollar value of $105,753. In West Virginia, one unit donated books and other school supplies to Golden Gal, a group home for 24 adolescent girls.

More than 1,700 veterans participated in the Veterans in the Classroom program, speaking about their service to more than 25,000 students. One speaker noted, "We have to teach our children the history of America, as the history books sometimes only have three pages about an important event in the history of America." Fifteen members of the "greatest generation," our World War II veterans, went into the schools in West Virginia and shared their stories with 925 children.

"United Through reading" is a new program we supported this year. More than a million American children are separated from one or both parents due to military

deployment, and many more are separated from their loved ones due to incarceration, drug treatment, or other unfortunate situations. United Through reading provides opportunities for emotional bonding that relieve the stress of separation and instill a love of reading by allowing family members to read aloud to children on DVDs, bringing faraway family members back home for a little while each day. Our members put in more than 10,000 volunteer hours with United Through reading and served 3,143 servicemembers.

Finance Committee
Desireé Stoy, Perrysville, Ohio

Your national Finance Committee for fiscal year 2011 met once each quarter in compliance with the bylaws of the American Legion Auxiliary. This report reflects a year at a glance in our efforts to perform our primary roles and responsibilities (planning, monitoring, safeguarding, policy making, and National Executive Committee communication).

Audit reviews for both the ALA and the ALA Foundation were conducted by our auditing firm. Once again the ALA performed well within key financial benchmarks. Investment reviews were presented by our financial advisors to maintain our conservative investment strategy and provide moderate growth for our FY11 investment portfolio. Committee evaluation of our member benefit programs resulted in renewed efforts for improvement.

As with any committee, the FY11 national Finance Committee set goals. Our first goal was to maintain mission delivery. As one might imagine, the current economic climate presented this committee with challenges. It was during the post-convention national executive committee meeting in Milwaukee, Wis., that the FY11 Finance Committee proposed a six-figure deficit budget, setting the stage for another year of unhealthy reliance on investment income and reserves. A bit of good news: As of this writing, FY11 revenue projections are on target to exceed the budget, due in large measure to the huge success of our direct mail appeals. We anticipate expenses to be slightly less than budgeted as well, thereby reducing our deficit.

As has been the trend from previous committees, continuing financial education was a goal of ours. Educational materials were presented to department presidents and secretaries in the fall to explore and improve department finance committee models and expectations, and we included an interactive segment to discuss a possible dues increase. Another opportunity for education took place during the Learning & Listening Conference in the spring.

Ensuring the economic stability of the ALA was our second goal. In the spring, the committee met for two and a half days to develop the first phase of an economic recovery plan. Intense review of historical data (financials and membership) indicated the need for a dues increase and periodic incremental increases for long-range sustainability. A resolution will be presented at our convention for action. On behalf of the committee, we send a huge "thank you" to each and every member who, by your membership and additional financial generosity, supported our mission to assist veterans and their families. Please know that your continued support is vital and greatly appreciated.

ALA Girls State/Girls Nation
Vickie Koutz, Boonville, Indiana

Delegates converged on college campuses throughout the nation this summer for their ALA Girls State sessions. At the end of a Girls State week, most staff members go

home sleep-deprived but with smiles on their faces because of the wonderful experiences they shared with the brightest young ladies across the nation.

Chairmen and directors chose a wide variety of activities and speakers. Moot courts and mock trials were held. One department had a real-life oral argument by the state court of Appeals in front of the delegates, with a question-and-answer session following. Another department selected delegates to write a story for the Veterans History Project; each had the opportunity to interview a veteran and write his/her story.

There were a variety of guest speakers at ALA Girls State programs, including National President Carlene Ashworth; World War II, Korean, Vietnam, and Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans; Honor Flight representatives; and an Army recruiter. An Army National Guard public affairs officer presented a briefing on Afghanistan. Government officials participated, including U.S. congressmen and senators, governors, state first ladies, and a Supreme Court judge. delegates also heard from a country music singer, an astronaut, and a railroad commissioner, among others.

Girls State service projects this year included collecting monetary donations for wounded warriors and their families; making Hero Packs; and donating socks for veterans' hospitals and other facilities. Donations for food banks were solicited, and school supplies were collected for the children of military families. "Hero Letters" were written by delegates and sent to servicemembers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. A total of $165,321 was raised for veterans and their families.

Auxiliary programs were also promoted in many ways. Banners were made with a poppy theme and delivered to hospitalized veterans. Materials were made available to construct poppies, and poppy wreaths were made. The poem "In Flanders Fields" and the story of the poppy were read. Membership applications were made available for The American Legion, Auxiliary, and Sons of the American Legion. CERT training on tornado and flood preparations was presented. Pocket flags were folded. A flag raising and retreat were held each day, the proper way to fold a flag was taught, and there was a flag disposal ceremony.

Several different contributors helped fund the delegates' attendance at Girls State. These included the West Point Society, Sons of The American Legion, American Legion posts and Auxiliary units, Parent Clubs, sororities, Tri-Kappa, Lions Club, Kiwanis, banks, schools, etc.

Junior Activities
Lisa Williamson, Fairbanks, Alaska

Each day I become more convinced that our Juniors will become inspiring leaders to help move our organization forward. In some respects, they are our leaders now. Working as a cohesive team, side by side, the possibilities are limitless.

The implementation of the new consolidated report confused many, irritated some, and delighted others. However, we were able to compile data from 33 departments this year, up from 22 last year. There must be some benefit in the new report!

The three objectives for the Junior Activities Program were participating in service projects; promoting the Children of Warriors national Presidents' Scholarship; and assisting others in the use of technology.

When it comes to enhancing the lives of our military, veterans, and their families, our Junior members step up. They participated in 1,589 service projects, helping at least 15,302 individuals at a cost of $47,518 while putting in 48,400 volunteer hours.

Juniors helped pack care packages for the troops with cards, pocket flags, phone cards, and Bibles. They helped with welcome-home events and participated in Operation: Military Kids programs. The girls attended local stand downs and Wounded Warriors events, and held clothing and food drives for homeless veterans. They volunteered at VA

centers and veterans' homes and assisted in numerous American Legion Family functions.

Honorary National Junior President Sabrina Cobb selected the Children of Warriors national Presidents' Scholarship as her special emphasis of the year. Her own district, Ohio district 14, sold bracelets for the scholarship fund and raised over $900.

As technology advances, there is always something new to learn, and it seems to come naturally to our youth. Our Juniors enjoyed helping others learn to use technology. Hours and hours were spent teaching the basics of email, the internet, social networking, and even texting. The implementation of the Technology Patch in the Junior Patch Program brought a double benefit— both Junior and senior members better understand all of the Auxiliary's programs while learning something from each other.

An example of the Power of One was demonstrated perfectly by department of Nebraska Honorary Junior President Amanda Washburn. Her goal was to raise enough money to purchase at least one wheelchair glider for the Norfolk Veterans' Home. The Juniors in her department raised nearly $1,500, which will buy several gliders and other important items for the home. It took one idea, one person to lead, and one group of Juniors to follow through, and now many will benefit.

Leadership
Melanie Taylor, Cloverdale, California

Leadership is about the commitment we make to your unit, district, council, area, and department. As a leader you should be a positive role model, be open to new ideas and ways of thinking, accept change, and be willing to think outside the box. Leaders also allow members to share their experiences, special skills, and ideas for they may become our leaders of tomorrow.

Leadership chairmen across the country reported holding leadership workshops within their departments. Thirty-four departments reported new leadership activities during their workshops, using clever ideas and prizes to encourage members to open up for discussions and share their experiences. They used PowerPoint presentations and played games like "As the Table Turns," "The Auxiliary by the Cups," and "Scavenger Hunt." By making it fun, they found that everyone participated and felt like a contributor to the workshop.

One small unit was struggling to stay alive. A past department president decided to transfer into this unit to see if it could be revitalized. With help from other Legion Family members, they met with this unit over six months, going over a couple of Auxiliary programs each month. This enabled the new members to understand the Auxiliary's programs and mission so they could make more informed decisions about the programs in which they would participate. This unit has increased its membership, and the future looks bright.

A total of 519 units established a mentoring program within their units where seasoned members worked one-on-one with the new chairmen to guide them through their program. Some units adopted the big sister/little sister type of mentoring program; a member who has been in the unit for a while becomes the "big sister" and the new member her "little sister." These units reported that this helped the new member better understand our acronyms, programs, and mission statement.

The Power of one ... was at work in one small unit that was struggling to stay alive. One Past Department President decided to transfer into this unit in order to see if this unit could be revitalized. With help from family members and a friend, they spent six months educating the unit on one Auxiliary program each month, like mini-workshops. This enabled the new members to understand the Auxiliary's programs and mission so they could make better informed decisions about the programs they wanted to start

participating in. This unit has increased its membership, and the future looks bright ahead.

Legislative
Kathy Dungan, Wesson, Mississippi

National President Carlene Ashworth's theme, the Power of One, rang true with the Legislative program this year. One voice and one vote on a veterans' issue or one letter to a congressman can make a difference for our veterans and active military. Working as one, the Legislative Committee disseminated important information regarding veterans' legislative issues and provided members with the opportunity to advocate for our veterans. Units and departments were faithful in contacting their senators and congressmen by emails, letters, phone calls, and in person.

The American Legion's legislative priorities are always the Auxiliary's priorities. We worked together to advocate for veterans, active military, and their families. Some of the legislative issues promoted by The Legion and supported by the Auxiliary were the Caregiver Act, which passed in May 2010; the DREAM Act; and the Flag Protection Amendment. Our members were encouraged to enroll in The American Legion's Legislative Action Center. Weekly emails from The Legion's Legislative department contain valuable and timely information regarding legislative matters.

This year, we reestablished the Auxiliary's national Legislative Council. This was a huge task and will be an ongoing project requiring updates from year to year and dedication from our members. It is extremely important that each department have a contact person who is willing, on a moment's notice, to contact the legislators in her district on an urgent legislative matter. Letter writing is an excellent way to get your message to your elected officials, but in some instances, time is of the essence, and action is needed immediately. That is why our Legislative council is so important.

We had 41 departments reporting on their Legislative programs. The departments of Alaska and Washington used Facebook to encourage support of the Flag Amendment. The departments of Mississippi, Oklahoma, Arizona, Delaware, Texas, and Missouri also supported the Flag Amendment, as did many others. Many distributed The American Legion's emails to their units, asking them to take action by using the direct link provided.

California and Ohio submitted the achievements of two members for inclusion in the Congressional record. Members of the departments of Florida, Minnesota, New York, and Virginia subscribed to The Dispatch. Town hall meetings, meet-the-candidate nights, and legislative forums were held by Colorado, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Oregon, Idaho, and many other departments. Georgia worked with Legion posts on a project to eliminate homelessness among veterans.

Membership
Krisann Owens, North Bend, Oregon

We as an organization truly lived up to the Power of One and Service Not Self this year. Our members took the challenge of reaching their membership objectives seriously, and all but a few departments have met over 90 percent of their objectives, a very big accomplishment.

Units realized that the Power of One member can make an impact not only on membership but on our programs as well, and Service Not Self can be a driving force for any one member. Membership themes popped up everywhere; from the movies to medics, we had it all. The themes encouraged fun and promoted excitement. Units encouraged harmony among members as well as with post members.

Members reached out to their communities and established relationships with local governments, community leaders, and their neighbors. The nature of communication in our society is changing, and the Auxiliary is changing with the times. Units are taking advantage of the many modes of communication available to us today to stay connected and to reconnect with their members. Many units are on Facebook and send messages to members through that vehicle, but we also have begun to utilize phone committees again. new members are finding that they enjoy the consistent communication, which allows them to choose the programs or projects for which they wish to volunteer. Member retention has helped our units remain strong, and good communication, along with detailed promotion of events and programs, are why we are succeeding.

One idea to stay connected is to put a webcam in your unit room so that members who may not have time or who live farther away can attend meetings via the internet. many units are offering members rides to meetings, which helps bring back some experienced members who may not drive any longer.

Experienced members are mentoring others and creating a friendly and fun atmosphere. Units are encouraging members to volunteer on their terms, as many members work or have young families but still want to participate.

Members have been inspired to work on mission-based projects in their communities, realizing that the exposure within the community can help recruit new members and maybe encourage inactive members to get involved. Membership drives at festivals, craft shows, car shows, farmers markets, and county fairs have all become recruitment tools while bringing awareness of our programs to local communities.

National Security
Janet Jefford, Manchester, Connecticut

The National Security program can be summed up in a few words: It is one member, one unit, and one community, working together to support and care for our troops and their families and to keep this nation safe and secure. I am proud to report that members in every department have taken the theme of the Power of One to heart as they have worked to fulfill the mission of the national Security Program.

The most popular project reported is sending care packages to our troops overseas. Units spent countless hours collecting needed items, packing boxes, and raising money to cover the cost of shipping. Members made neck coolers, helmet liners, pillow cases, and pocket flags to include in the boxes. Letters and cards accompanied the packages, along with candy and toys to be distributed to the children in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many units have received letters of thanks from the troops, showing how much they appreciate "a little piece of home."

Many units are establishing partnerships with other local organizations. The Alley-White Unit 52 in Mountain Homes, Ariz., is working with a local Elks Lodge and Girls Scout troop and has been able to increase their monthly shipments of care packages from two to 10 boxes, thanks to the increased funding and support. Kettering Unit 598 in Ohio partners with Blue Star Mothers of American and a local CVS store. For the past four years, CVS has had a display set up to collect items for the Auxiliary and our troops. This year the unit honored the store manager with a certificate of appreciation.

Units have adopted national Guard units, worked with the USO, supported Family readiness Groups, worked with the yellow ribbon reintegration program, been present at troop deployments, and, best of all, hosted welcome-home events. Units continue to clip coupons by the tons and spent over $10,000 to ship them to commissaries.

Units reported unique programs to support our wounded warriors. A unit in new Mexico arranged for these veterans to have a day at the local shooting range. The assistant manager at the range was inspired to become a member of the Sons of The

American Legion. He now helps the Auxiliary with its flag programs and renamed the roads leading to the range "Freedom Way" and "Veteran's Boulevard."

Although not the main focus of the national security program this year, units continue to participate in CERT training, disaster preparedness, CPR classes, and blood drives.

Past Presidents Parley
Rita Navarreté, Albuquerque, New Mexico

This purpose of this year's plan was to encourage and continue the active service of the Auxiliary women who have served as past presidents. The future of strong and effective leadership throughout the nation largely depends on the full support of past leaders.

The Power of One theme allowed members to focus on that one thought, one word, one smile, one attitude, one action, and one idea that made a difference in their service as an American Legion Auxiliary member. There is no doubt that thousands of hours were spent in reaching out to those we serve to ensure the organization's mission was carried out. The collective Power of One changed the world in the lives of veterans, the military, and their families.

Forty-four departments embraced the activity of the Unit Member of the year by submitting their nominations for outstanding members. The increase this year reflects unit participation recognizing the value of members who are women of action, women who see a need and step into it, and women who recognize a large project may require collaboration with other members or with others outside of the organization.

Departments that continue to support fundraising for nurses' scholarships are commended. Hospitals are increasingly looking for nurses with at least a baccalaureate degree, and enrollment in baccalaureate programs is on the decline. The awarding of these scholarships makes a difference in the lives of the recipients who are wanting to meet the need for quality health care with a skilled and specialized nursing education. Collectively, the 13 departments reporting awarded 89 scholarships in the amount of $82,854. Those departments are Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin, Maine, New York, Minnesota, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Texas, Virginia, California, and new Mexico.

Once again the Salute to Active duty Servicewomen will be made during the national Convention. This year, all services will be represented and each ALA division is represented. The convention proceedings will reflect the names of all award recipients. All nominees are worthy of recognition as their essays reflect their views on the role of today's women in the military service. They serve with pride, fully understanding their duties as a soldier and ready to defend this great country.

Poppy
Martha Corriher, China Grove, North Carolina

One red paper poppy made by one proud veteran, then distributed by one member from one unit to one American citizen in the hope of reminding that person of the one great sacrifice made by not just one American servicemember but by all servicemembers — the Power of One has been the force behind the Poppy Program this year.

Departments found new and creative ways to share the history of the poppy with the public. The poppy was part of not only the traditional corsage, table arrangements, wreaths, and door hangings, but also the more unusual "snow families," paper weights, dolls, Flanders Field, and poppy trees. We even had ducks dressed in poppies!

Ninety-seven photos were submitted in the Poppy Usage Contest at Awareness Assembly and showed a wide range of creative ideas. The five divisions noted that a total

of 29 departments were eager to report what they had accomplished. Many departments said that they had new poppy makers, while others have lost past poppy makers to death or for health issues.

The number of poppies ordered by the units throughout the nation continues to grow. They report using poppies not only for distribution but also for educational purposes with schools, churches, civic groups, and government officials. After hearing about the program, many have asked to help with the next year's distribution and requested history lessons.

Departments gave recognition to units that reported an increase in the number of units ordering poppies and also to businesses that supported their local American Legion Auxiliary Poppy days distribution.

Questions regarding the usage of the poppy funds were again the main issue for this program. The creation of the Poppy Fund Fact Sheet was a great help to many units to make it easier to use the funds correctly. Others units went straight to the Unit Handbook and followed the written guidelines when they were in doubt.

I am so proud of those departments that have been hit the hardest by the severe weather this year, because they haven't faltered in their dedication to the Poppy Program. Even when those members had devastation of their own, they did not sit back and wait on others to help them. They rallied their troops and set out to provide goods and money to other veterans in their states who needed aide. Reports of over 15,000 miles, 10,000 hours and over $10,000 in monetary goods were given to those veterans in need. This indeed represents the Power of One.

Public Relations
Coral May Grout, Winchendon, Massachusetts

The Public Relations Committee worked throughout the year to provide useful information to our units and departments. We provided speeches and press releases for numerous patriotic holidays and themes so that members could collect them for present and future use. We used the telephone as well as the internet to contact departments and respond to questions raised by our members. Many units and departments moved ahead with new or improved websites and used Facebook and Twitter to communicate with members and nonmembers.

The Power of One was truly evident as we collected reports from all departments to reach our goal of 100 percent reporting. Some of the highlights of the year are noted.

Kentucky: Governor Steve Beshear proclaimed Memorial day as "Healing Field day," recognizing the nation's only permanent Healing Field in Lawrenceburg, an Auxiliary project started in 2007. The memorial includes 102 black marble stones engraved with the names of the state's 102 fallen heroes and 102 American flags. It has been featured in the media and given the Auxiliary great publicity.

California: A golf tournament raised $2,500 toward the VA Medical Center's needs and received media coverage.

Puerto Rico: Unit 18 in Ponce worked with its post and mayor on a project to provide transportation for veterans to and from the VA hospital, and it received much publicity.

Pennsylvania: Shamoken Unit 73 received publicity for treating a group of disabled veterans from Walter reed Army Medical Center to a day at an amusement park.

Minnesota: Units included information in local church bulletins and on marquees.

Oklahoma: The department had 365 days of advertisements on cable television.

Maine: The number of unit websites increased by 25 percent and published news articles increased by 50 percent.

The Department of New Mexico, along with many others, sent out monthly newsletters. They included columns from department chairmen as well as information on activities and unit donations to various projects. Hundreds of individual members across our land began spreading the name of the Auxiliary on their own Facebook pages.

Most departments reported that units used various tools for public relations, including flyers, newsletters, posters, and brochures. They placed the ALA emblem on apparel, brought applications to craft shows, and wore ALA hats and pins to community activities.

Every department report showed support for promoting public relations. However, the reports from New York, Delaware, Maine, Ohio, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Virginia, Oregon, Arizona, and California were particularly comprehensive. Thank you, one and all, for your commitment to public relations this year. Our communities know us a little better, thanks to your efforts.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
Peggy Thomas, Richmond, Virginia

President Abraham Lincoln spoke these unforgettable words at the close of the Civil War: "Let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and orphan." Ensuring that our veterans have access to quality care is just one pillar of a collective vision for our veterans. As a country, it is our privilege to renew our commitment to "care for him who has borne the battle" with the care, services, and support they have been promised.

The VA&R program emphasized four main areas this year: homeless veterans, VA Medical Centers, the national Veterans Creative Arts Festival, and Ride 2 Recovery.

Units across this nation have responded to the ever-increasing numbers and plight of homeless veterans. many of the homeless are female veterans with children who will not seek help out of fear that they will have their children taken from them. This puts them at extremely high risk living on the streets, but they choose this over living in a homeless shelter.

Dedicated members continue to volunteer in VA Medical Centers in record numbers, but we are still losing volunteers, mostly due to age. Recruitment and retention of both regular and occasional volunteers has remained a priority. Our younger volunteers, or "VolunTeens," play an important role in the hospital setting and continue to enrich the lives of the patients.

I have had two outstanding experiences this year – working with the veterans at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in La Crosse, Wis., and riding in a Ride 2 Recovery support vehicle for the memorial challenge in Virginia. At these events one gets to see firsthand what war does to the body and the soul.

The Auxiliary has partnered with the VA as a cosponsor of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival and has pledged to give at least $100,000 annually. As of this writing, $84,000 has been contributed toward our goal. Our organization is incredibly proud to support the rehabilitation of our veterans through the arts.

The Auxiliary works with Ride 2 Recovery to help heal veterans returning home from battlefields with severe problems, both physical and psychological. These participants ride bicycles, many of which have to be adapted to accommodate those with missing limbs, back injuries, or other problems. Bikes adapted for riders with severe injuries can cost $5,000 or more.

Crowe Horwath.

Crowe Horwath LLP
Independent Member Crowe Horwath International

REPORT OF INDEPENDENT AUDITORS

Members of the National Finance Commission
The American Legion National Headquarters
Indianapolis, Indiana

We have audited the accompanying consolidated statements of financial position of The American Legion National Headquarters ("Legion") as of December 31, 2010 and 2009 and the related consolidated statements of activities and cash flows for the years then ended. These consolidated financial statements are the responsibility of the Legion's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these consolidated financial statements based on our audits.

We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audits provide a reasonable basis for our opinion.

In our opinion, the consolidated financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of The American Legion National Headquarters as of December 31, 2010 and 2009, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Our audits were made for the purpose of forming an opinion on the consolidated financial statements taken as a whole. The consolidating information is presented for purposes of additional analysis of the consolidated financial statements rather than to present the financial position, results of operations, and cash flows of the individual organizations. The consolidating information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audits of the consolidated financial statements and, in our opinion, is fairly stated in all material respects in relation to the consolidated financial statements taken as a whole.

Crowe Horwath LLP
Crowe Horwath LLP

Indianapolis, Indiana
March 21, 2011

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statements of Financial Position *December 31, 2010 and 2009*

	2010	2009
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 2,686,749	$ 1,692,062
Accounts receivable	3,110,763	2,775,669
Interest receivable	741,462	667,196
Prepaid expenses and deposits	579,425	1,138,606
Deferred membership expense	8,692,559	8,425,988
Inventory	2,500,115	2,208,297
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	50,922	46,652
Beneficial interest in trust	336,597	351,492
Prepaid pension expense	1,542,507	144,950
	20,241,099	17,450,912
Investments		
General	25,860,863	27,229,732
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved Funds	28,121,944	26,800,403
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership fund	23,197,380	26,736,355
Samsung scholarship fund	7,843,214	7,462,725
Building funds	4,377,546	3,953,799
Sept. 11 Memorial scholarship fund	4,812,835	4,206,114
Special account – Endowment Fund	2,255,689	2,190,560
General account – Endowment Fund	6,724,930	6,429,456
National Emergency Fund	2,789,006	2,537,369
Other	2,747,336	2,976,051
	108,730,743	110,522,564
Property, plant and equipment, net	6,692,041	7,116,479
	$ 135,663,883	$ 135,089,955
LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable	$ 1,668,774	$ 1,745,507
Scholarships payable	1,205,583	1,208,547
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	187,005	157,669
Deferred income	1,060,185	214,704
Deferred dues income	24,110,482	27,841,215
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	7,153,516	2,336,883
Accrued vacation benefits	829,557	708,696
Other liabilities	360,144	253,092
Notes payable	1,885,963	2,082,865
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life membership	19,990,712	23,591,073
Life memberships due to state and local posts	20,118,073	24,084,511
	78,569,994	84,224,762
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	32,682,582	28,532,396
Temporarily restricted	12,002,212	10,195,241
Permanently restricted	12,409,095	12,137,556
Total net assets	57,093,889	50,865,193
	$ 135,663,883	$ 135,089,955

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statement of Activities *Year ended December 31, 2010*

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
Revenue, gains and other support				
National member dues	$ 29,645,796	$ -	$ -	$ 29,645,796
Direct membership solicitations	5,536,132	-	-	5,536,132
Member service fees income	1,288,596	-	-	1,288,596
Affinity income	363,312	-	-	363,312
Sales of emblem items	11,105,405	-	-	11,105,405
Advertising	9,167,804	-	-	9,167,804
Fundraising	1,416,188	25,356	-	1,441,544
Contributions	412,548	1,791,728	83,902	2,288,178
Label and printing fees	1,254,591	-	-	1,254,591
Interest and dividends, net of trustee fees of $342,886	2,283,259	826,406	-	3,109,665
Net realized gains	334,195	56,048	6,725	396,968
Other	1,945,942	-	-	1,945,942
	64,753,768	2,699,538	90,627	67,543,933
Net assets released from restriction	1,115,212	(1,115,212)	-	-
Total revenues, gains, and other support	65,868,980	1,584,326	90,627	67,543,933
Expenses				
Salaries	14,656,208	-	-	14,656,208
Employee benefits	2,685,809	-	-	2,685,809
Fundraising	600,954			600,954
Cost of sales – Legion	7,579,204	-	-	7,579,204
Direct publication	11,901,572	-	-	11,901,572
Executive and staff travel	1,469,732	-	-	1,469,732
Commission and committee	1,633,066	-	-	1,633,066
Printing and postage	5,948,035	-	-	5,948,035
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,485,907	-	-	1,485,907
Office and other operating	13,024,017	-	-	13,024,017
Occupancy and usage	1,921,778	-	-	1,921,778
Special projects and programs	3,044,974	-	-	3,044,974
	65,951,256	-	-	65,951,256
Change in net assets from operations	(82,276)	1,584,326	90,627	1,592,677
Net unrealized gains - investments	366,984	222,645	180,912	770,541
Net change in PUFL	3,285,143	-	-	3,285,143
Amortization of pension loss	(783,605)	-	-	(783,605)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	1,363,940	-	-	1,363,940
Change in net assets	4,150,186	1,806,971	271,539	6,228,696
Net assets, beginning of year	28,532,396	10,195,241	12,137,556	50,865,193
Net assets, end of year	$ 32,682,582	$ 12,002,212	$ 12,409,095	$ 57,093,889

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statement of Activities *Year ended December 31, 2009*

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
Revenue, gains and other support				
National member dues	$ 31,571,415	$ -	$ -	$ 31,571,415
Direct membership solicitations	366,876	-	-	366,876
Member service fees income	1,208,786	-	-	1,208,786
Affinity income	309,293	-	-	309,293
Sales of emblem items	11,030,222	-	-	11,030,222
Advertising	9,545,830	-	-	9,545,830
Contributions	539,991	1,791,641	45,692	2,377,324
Label and printing fees	1,502,560	-	-	1,502,560
Sales – HPC	293,927	-	-	293,927
Interest and dividends, net of trustee fees of $261,674	2,027,566	837,933	-	2,865,499
Net realized gains (losses)	(538,350)	9,386	91,451	(437,513)
Other	2,054,315	-	-	2,054,315
	59,912,431	2,638,960	137,143	62,688,534
Net assets released from restriction	1,036,823	(1,036,823)	-	-
Total revenues, gains, and other support	60,949,254	1,602,137	137,143	62,688,534
Expenses				
Salaries	13,162,728	-	-	13,162,728
Employee benefits	2,404,942	-	-	2,404,942
Cost of sales – Legion	8,033,171	-	-	8,033,171
Cost of sales – HPC	264,414	-	-	264,414
Direct publication	11,970,525	-	-	11,970,525
Executive and staff travel	880,681	-	-	880,681
Commission and committee	1,626,714	-	-	1,626,714
Printing and postage	1,770,499	-	-	1,770,499
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,268,324	-	-	1,268,324
Office and other operating	8,395,160	-	-	8,395,160
Occupancy and usage	1,677,562	-	-	1,677,562
Special projects and programs	3,198,013	-	-	3,198,013
	54,652,733	-	-	54,652,733
Change in net assets from operations	6,296,521	1,602,137	137,143	8,035,801
Net unrealized gains - investments	777,385	61,179	16,248	854,812
Net change in PUFL	(1,983,770)	-	-	(1,983,770)
Amortization of pension loss	(880,835)	-	-	(880,835)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	25,821	-	-	25,821
Change in net assets	4,235,122	1,663,316	153,391	6,051,829
Reclassification (Note 1)	657,309	(657,309)	-	-
Net assets, beginning of year	23,606,131	9,223,068	11,984,165	44,813,364
Change in accounting principle (Note 1)	801,376	(801,376)	-	-
Net assets, beginning of year, restated	23,639,965	9,189,234	11,984,165	44,813,364
Net assets, end of year	$ 28,532,396	$ 10,195,241	$ 12,137,556	$ 50,865,193

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows *Years ended December 31, 2010 and 2009*

	2010	2009
Cash flows from operating activities		
Change in net assets	$ 6,228,696	$ 6,051,829
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash from operating activities		
Depreciation expense	1,072,930	878,735
Loss on disposal of property and equipment	5,232	1,924
Realized (gain) loss on sale of investments	(396,968)	437,513
Unrealized gain on investments	(770,541)	(854,812)
Net change in Paid-Up-For-Life annuity	(3,285,143)	1,983,770
Amortization of pension loss	783,605	880,835
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	(1,363,940)	(25,821)
Contributions restricted for long-term purposes	(83,902)	(45,692)
Accounts receivable	(460,969)	(624,657)
Interest receivable	(74,266)	223,881
Prepaid expenses and deposits	(258,041)	(1,088,749)
Deferred membership expense	(266,571)	(6,119,222)
Inventories	(291,818)	402,465
Beneficial interest in trust	14,895	37,508
Accounts and scholarships payable	(79,697)	(2,343)
Deferred income	(2,320,939)	131,388
Other accrued liabilities	353,788	(219,264)
Net cash from operating activities	(1,193,649)	1,825,407
Cash flows from investing activities		
Purchase of property and equipment	(653,724)	(1,135,460)
Sales of property and equipment	-	2,800
Purchase of investments	(160,521,453)	(124,780,181)
Sales and maturities of investments	163,480,783	123,894,509
Investments in affiliate (CFA)	(4,270)	(23,307)
Net cash from investing activities	2,301,336	(2,041,639)
Cash flows from financing activities		
Contributions restricted for long-term purposes	83,902	45,692
Payments on loan	(196,902)	(186,760)
Net cash from financing activities	(113,000)	(141,068)
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	994,687	(357,300)
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	1,692,062	2,049,362
Cash and cash equivalents, end of year	$ 2,686,749	$ 1,692,062
Supplemental cash flows information		
Income taxes paid, net of refunds received	(274,046)	(69,605)
Interest paid	105,654	115,797

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

NOTE 1 – NATURE OF OPERATIONS AND SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Nature of Organization: The American Legion National Headquarters (the Legion) is a national veterans organization, declared a corporate body by an act of the U.S. Congress on Sept. 16, 1919.

According to the original act and subsequent amendments, the purpose of the Legion is "to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to promote peace and goodwill among the peoples of the United States and all the nations of the earth; to preserve the memories and incidents of the two World Wars and the other great hostilities fought to uphold democracy; to cement the ties and comradeship born of service; and to consecrate the efforts of its members to mutual helpfulness and service to their country."

Approximately 50 percent of the Legion's income is derived from membership dues (including amounts allocated for magazine subscriptions). An additional 15 percent is generated through advertising for *The American Legion Magazine*. Another significant source of income is Emblem Sales, which includes the sale of apparel, jewelry, and other items bearing the American Legion emblem. Income is expended by the Legion on several different programs, including *The American Legion Magazine*, Emblem Sales, veterans assistance and rehabilitation, youth programs and others. The Legion's youth programs include American Legion Baseball, the National Oratorical Contest and Boys Nation.

Principles of Consolidation: The consolidated financial statements include the accounts of The American Legion National Headquarters and its wholly owned subsidiaries, Haynes & Partners Communications, Inc. (HPC); the American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation (ALEF); and the National Emergency Fund (NEF) (collectively, the Legion). All material interorganizational accounts and transactions have been eliminated in consolidation. Haynes & Partners Communications, Inc., an Indiana corporation, was a full-service direct-marketing and advertising agency. Its services included innovative marketing and creative automated mailing. The majority of its sales were to the Legion; the remaining sales were made primarily within the state of Indiana. Effective after the close of business on Dec. 31, 2009, HPC was merged into the Legion and the corporation dissolved. The amounts are reflected in the financial statements as a wholly-owned subsidiary through Dec. 31, 2009. Effective Jan. 1, 2010, the activities and balances of the former entity are reported as a division in the Legion's operations. The American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation, a tax-exempt Indiana corporation, was created to provide permanent funding for the rehabilitation of U.S. veterans and assistance to orphans of veterans. The National Emergency Fund is a tax-exempt trust established to provide gifts and grants to relieve suffering and ameliorate financial hardship incurred by American Legion members, families and posts.

Basis of Accounting: The financial statements have been prepared on the accrual basis of accounting, in accordance with accounting standards generally accepted in the United States of America.

Use of Estimates in Preparation of Financial Statements: The preparation of financial statements in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements, and the reported amounts of revenues, expenses, gains, losses and other changes in net assets during the reported period. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

Financial Statement Presentation: The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with generally-accepted accounting principles (GAAP) for financial statements of not-for-profit organizations. GAAP require, among other things, that financial statements report the changes in and total of each of the net asset classes based upon donor restrictions, as applicable. Net assets are to be classified as unrestricted, temporarily restricted or permanently restricted.

The following classes of net assets are maintained:

Unrestricted Net Assets – The "unrestricted net asset" class includes general assets and liabilities of the Legion, as well as assets and liabilities designated by the National Executive Committee, the governing body of the Legion. The unrestricted net assets of the Legion may be used at the discretion of management to support the Legion's purposes and operations.

Temporarily Restricted Net Assets – The "temporarily restricted net asset" class includes assets of the Legion related to gifts with explicit donor-imposed restrictions that have not been met as to specified purpose, to later periods of time, or after specified dates. Unconditional promises to give that are due in future periods and are not permanently restricted are classified as temporarily restricted net assets. As the restrictions are met, the net assets are released from restrictions and included in unrestricted net assets. Contributions for which the restrictions are met in the same period in which the contribution is received are also recorded as temporarily restricted net assets.

Permanently Restricted Net Assets – The "permanently restricted net asset" class includes assets of the Legion for which the donor has stipulated that the contribution be maintained in perpetuity. Donor-imposed restrictions limiting the use of the assets or its economic benefit neither expire with the passage of time nor can be removed by satisfying a specific purpose.

Cash and Cash Equivalents: Cash and cash equivalents consist of bank deposits in accounts that are federally insured for up to $250,000 per financial institution. Additionally, the Legion holds funds at financial institutions that are participating in the FDIC's transaction-account-guarantee program. Under this program, non interest-bearing and certain low-interest accounts are FDIC-insured in full through 2012, in addition to and separate from the coverage available under FDIC's general deposit-insurance rules.

For purposes of the consolidated statement of cash flows, the Legion considers all highly-liquid investments purchased with an original maturity of three months or less to be cash equivalents.

Inventory: Inventory consists of Emblem items held for sale, magazine paper, and publication rights, and is stated at the lower of cost or market using the first-in, first-out (FIFO) method. Supplies not intended for sale are expensed when purchased.

Investments: Investments are carried at fair value. The fair values of investments are based on quoted market prices, where available. If quoted market prices are not available, fair values are based on quoted market prices of comparable instruments. Realized and unrealized gains and losses are reflected in the consolidated statements of activities. Premiums or discounts on investments are generally recognized at the time of disposal or maturity.

Property and Equipment: Expenditures for property and equipment, and items which substantially increase the useful lives of existing assets and are

greater than $1,500, are capitalized at cost. The Legion records depreciation on the straight-line method at rates designated to depreciate the costs of assets over their estimated useful lives. Buildings are depreciated on the straight-line method using a 30-year life. All other capital assets are depreciated over lives ranging from three to seven years.

Impairment of long-lived assets: In accordance with GAAP, the Legion reviews its property and equipment for impairment whenever events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying value of an asset may not be recoverable. If the fair value is less than the carrying amount of the asset, an impairment loss is recognized for the difference. No impairment loss has been recognized during the years ended Dec. 31, 2010 and 2009.

Collections: The Legion owns many collectible military-related items and historical documents that were not recorded as they were acquired. It is often impracticable to determine a value for collections and, accordingly, the Legion has concluded that they need not be capitalized. Some of these items have been appraised for insurance purposes.

Support and Revenue: The Legion reports gifts of cash and other assets as restricted support if they are received with donor stipulations that limit the use of the donated assets. When a donor restriction expires – that is, when a stipulated time restriction ends or a purpose restriction is accomplished – temporarily restricted net assets are reclassified to unrestricted net assets and reported in the statement of activities as net assets released from restrictions.

Dues Income and Expense: Dues are recognized as income over the applicable membership period, which is on a calendar-year basis. In addition to other methods of obtaining new members, the Legion uses direct mail and other direct-marketing approaches. The income generated from direct membership solicitation is recognized over the applicable membership period (calendar year). The direct-response expenses incurred in obtaining new members are deferred and recognized in the subsequent membership year.

Income Taxes: The Legion is exempt from federal income taxes under section 501(c)(19) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. The ALEF and the NEF are exempt from federal income taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. None of these organizations is considered a private foundation. The Legion is subject to income tax on unrelated business income. The Legion incurred $75,958 of tax expense and received $69,605 of refunds (including estimated payments, net of refunds) in 2009. In 2010, the Legion incurred no tax expense and received $274,046 of refunds (net of payments).

HPC recorded income-tax expense based on the amount of taxes due on its tax return plus deferred taxes, computed based on the expected future tax consequences of temporary differences between the carrying amounts and tax bases of assets and liabilities, using enacted tax rates. Federal and state income-tax expense was recorded for HPC, a for-profit corporation, as incurred, and is disclosed in Note 16.

Current accounting standards require the Legion to disclose the amount of potential benefit or obligation to be realized as a result of an examination performed by a taxing authority. For the years ended Dec. 31, 2010 and 2009, management has determined that the Legion does not have any tax positions that result in any uncertainties regarding a possible impact on the Legion's financial statements. The Legion is no longer subject to examination by taxing authorities for the years before 2007. The Legion does not expect the total amount of unrecognized tax benefits to significantly change in the next 12 months. The Legion recognizes interest and/or penalties related to income-tax matters in income-tax expense. The Legion did not have any amounts accrued for interest and penalties at Dec. 31, 2010 and 2009.

Fair Value of Financial Instruments: The carrying amount of all financial instruments of the Legion, which include cash and cash equivalents, accounts receivable, beneficial interest in trust, investments, and notes payable, approximate fair value.

Expense Allocation: Expenses have been classified as program services, management and general, member development and fundraising, based on actual direct expenditures. Additionally, some expenses are allocated among departments based upon estimates of the amount of time spent by Legion employees performing services for these departments.

Changes in Accounting Principles: In 2010, the Legion changed its accounting policy on when a temporarily restricted net asset is released. Previously, a restriction was released when it was paid out of the restricted fund. Under the new policy, a restriction is released at the time the expense is incurred, without regard to whether it has been paid yet. Management has determined that this change in accounting policy allows it to more accurately reflect when the donor restriction has been met, and follows the accrual basis of accounting. This change was applied retrospectively, and increased unrestricted net assets and decreased temporarily restricted net assets as of Jan. 1, 2009, by $801,376. The change also increased unrestricted net assets and decreased temporarily restricted net assets as of Dec. 31, 2009, by $104,356, which was reflected in releases from restriction on the statement of activities. Under the previous accounting policy, releases from restriction for the year ended Dec. 31, 2010, would have increased by $14,305. There was no effect on change in net assets for either 2010 or 2009.

Subsequent Events: Management has performed an analysis of the activities and transactions subsequent to Dec. 31, 2010, to determine the need for any adjustments or disclosures to the audited financial statements for the year ended Dec. 31, 2010. Management has performed its analysis through March 21, 2011, the date the financial statements were available to be issued.

Reclassifications: Certain reclassifications have been made to present last year's financial statements on a basis comparable to the current year's financial statements. These reclassifications had no effect on the change in net assets or total net assets.

Net assets in the amount of $657,309 were reclassified from temporarily restricted net assets to unrestricted net assets as of Dec. 31, 2009, based on the clarification of the original contribution. This reclassification had no effect on the change in net assets or total net assets.

There was a reclassification to change the statement of activities for the year-ended Dec. 31, 2009 presentation of the investment activity from the PUFL trust. A reclassification of $90,844 was made to present the investment activity from the Legion's portion of the PUFL investments as part of the change in net assets from operations. This reclassification had no effect on the change in net assets or total net assets.

NOTE 2 – COLLECTIONS

The Legion owns many collectible military-related items and historical documents that were not recorded as they were acquired. It is often im-

practicable to determine a value for collections and accordingly, the Legion has concluded that they need not be capitalized. These items have been appraised, or are in the process of being appraised, for insurance purposes and are as follows:

	Appraisal date	Replacement value
World War I Posters	2/10/2005	$ 461,769
World War II Posters	3/11/2005	472,919
Military Unit Histories	3/18/2005	112,410
Fine-Art Collection	10/14/2005	695,600
Firearms and Uniforms Collection	3/24/2006	99,950
Original GI Bill	not applicable	-
Other collections	not applicable	-

NOTE 3 – INVESTMENT IN AFFILIATE

The Legion, in conjunction with approximately 120 other organizations, has created a nonprofit corporation known as Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. (CFA), for the purpose of aiding in the campaign to secure a constitutional amendment empowering Congress and the states to enact legislation to protect the flag of the United States of America from physical desecration.

CFA recognized an increase in net assets of $4,270 and $23,307 in 2010 and 2009, respectively. Accordingly, the Legion's investment in CFA has been changed by these amounts and corresponding adjustments have been reflected in unrestricted designated net assets for 2010 and 2009.

NOTE 4 – BENEFICIAL INTEREST IN CHARITABLE LEAD TRUST

The ALEF has been named a beneficiary of a charitable lead trust. Under the charitable trust, the ALEF is to receive quarterly distributions in the amount of $9,919 until December 2020, or until the funds of the trust are exhausted. Based on the terms of the trust, and a 3.31-percent discount rate in 2010 and a 4.01-percent discount rate in 2009, the present value of future benefits expected to be received by the ALEF was estimated to be $336,597 and $351,492 at Dec. 31, 2010 and 2009, respectively.

NOTE 5 – FAIR VALUE OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

Fair value is defined as the price that would be received for an asset, or paid to transfer a liability (an exit price), in the Legion's principal or most advantageous market for the asset or liability in an orderly transaction between market participants on the measurement date. GAAP establishes a fair-value hierarchy that requires an entity to maximize the use of observable inputs, and minimize the use of unobservable inputs, when measuring fair value. GAAP describes three levels of inputs that may be used to measure fair value:

Level 1: Quoted prices for identical assets or liabilities in active markets that the entity has the ability to access as of the measurement date.

Level 2: Significant other observable inputs other than Level 1 prices, such as quoted prices for similar assets or liabilities, quoted prices in markets that are not active, or other inputs that are observable or can be corroborated by observable market data.

Level 3: Significant unobservable inputs that reflect a reporting entity's own assumptions about the assumptions that market participants would use in pricing an asset or liability.

In many cases, a valuation technique used to measure fair value includes inputs from multiple levels of the fair-value hierarchy. The lowest level of significant input determines the placement of the entire fair-value measurement in the hierarchy. The fair value of money markets, U.S. government obligations and common stock are based on quoted prices in active markets (Level 1 inputs). The fair value of asset-backed securities, corporate and state bonds, and municipal bonds are based on quoted market prices of similar securities with similar due dates (Level 2 inputs). Common stock and asset-backed securities are not held by the Legion, but are held in the defined-benefit-plan assets, which are disclosed in Note 17.

The fair value of beneficial interest in trust assets is based on a valuation model that calculates the present value of estimated distributed income. The valuation model incorporates assumptions that market participants would use in estimating future distributed income. The Legion is able to compare the valuation-model inputs and results to widely available published industry data for reasonableness; however, it is unable to redeem the assets of the trust and only receives distributions (Level 3 inputs).

The FASB issued Accounting Standards Update (ASU) 2009-12, which provides additional guidance on how companies should estimate the fair value of certain alternative investments. The fair value of such investments can now be determined using Net Asset Value (NAV), unless it is probable that the asset will be sold at something other than NAV. In addition, ASU 2009-12 has been interpreted to include other assets that use NAV, such as the beneficial interest in assets or trusts. ASU 2009-12 requires disclosure of certain attributes of all investments within its scope, regardless of whether NAV is used to measure the fair value of these investments, and indicates that liquidity of the assets should be an input in determining the level classification.

Assets and Liabilities Measured on a Recurring Basis:
Assets and liabilities measured at fair value on a recurring basis are summarized below:

	Fair-Value Measurements at Dec. 31,2010, using		
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
Assets:			
Beneficial interest in trust	$ -	$ -	$ 336,597
Money market accounts	5,719,553	-	-
U.S. government obligations	82,557,253	-	-
Mutual funds	59,641	-	-
State and municipal bonds	-	5,856,333	-
Corporate bonds	-	14,537,963	-
	$ 88,336,447	**$ 20,394,296**	**$ 336,597**

	Fair-Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2009, using		
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
Assets:			
Beneficial interest in trust	$ -	$ -	$ 351,492
Money market accounts	26,225,691	-	-
U.S. government obligations	67,813,468	-	-
State and municipal bonds	-	735,415	-
Corporate bonds	-	15,747,990	-
	$ 94,039,159	**$ 16,483,405**	**$ 351,492**

The table below presents a reconciliation and statement-of-activities classification of gains and losses for all assets measured at fair value on a recurring basis using significant unobservable inputs (Level 3) for the years ended Dec. 31, 2010 and 2009:

	Beneficial Interest in Trust
Beginning balance, Jan. 1, 2010	$ 351,492
Change in value of split-interest agreements	(14,895)
Ending balance, Dec. 31, 2010	$ 336,597

	Beneficial Interest in Trust
Beginning balance, Jan. 1, 2009	$ -
Reclassification due to ASU 2009-12	351,492
Ending balance, Dec. 31, 2010	$ 351,492

NOTE 6 – PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT

The Legion's property and equipment, and the related accumulated depreciation at Dec. 31, 2010 and 2009, are as follows:

	2010	2009
Washington, D.C., real estate		
Land	$ 80,000	$ 80,000
Building	5,232,998	4,913,577
Construction in progress	-	290,905
Indianapolis real estate		
Land	389,264	389,264
Building	3,704,941	3,661,494
Construction in progress	-	314,570
Furniture, fixtures and equipment		
National Headquarters, Indianapolis	6,304,981	5,659,156
Washington, D.C.	830,922	859,089
Haynes & Partners Communications, Inc.	-	904,588
	16,543,106	17,072,643
Less accumulated depreciation	(9,851,065)	(9,956,164)
	$ 6,692,041	**$ 7,116,479**

Depreciation expense for the years ended Dec. 31, 2010 and 2009, was $1,072,930 and $878,735, respectively.

NOTE 7 – LONG-TERM DEBT

In 2003, the Legion refinanced its long-term debt on its facility for Emblem Sales, Information Technology, Member Benefits and HPC. This debt is payable in monthly installments of $25,213, including interest, beginning July 30, 2003, with a stated rate of 5.3 percent and final payment due Aug. 1, 2018. The outstanding balance on long-term debt is $1,885,963 and $2,082,865 for 2010 and 2009.

The future maturities of the long-term debt are as follows:

2011	$ 206,682
2012	217,907
2013	229,740
2014	242,217
2015	255,371
Thereafter	734,046
Total	**$ 1,885,963**

Interest expense was $105,654 and $115,797 for the years ended Dec. 31, 2010 and 2009, respectively.

NOTE 8 – LEASES

The Legion has several noncancelable operating leases, primarily for facilities, computer equipment, and copiers, that expire at various dates through the year 2013. Rent expense under these leases for the years ended Dec. 31, 2010 and 2009, was $480,469 and $487,433, respectively.

Minimum lease commitments are as follows:

2011	$ 474,961
2012	387,345
2013	346,918
Total	**$ 1,209,224**

In addition, the Legion had a lease with the State of Indiana for rental of the National Headquarters building in Indianapolis that expired on June 30, 2010, and has not yet been renewed; however, the Legion has maintained occupancy and is expected to renew. The lease can be renewed at the option of the Legion for eight additional four-year periods. According to the terms of the lease, the Legion is required to maintain the interior of the building and provide adequate insurance on the building, in lieu of lease payments. The cost of maintenance for 2010 and 2009 was approximately $612,000 and $589,000, respectively. Insurance coverage is included in the Legion's general insurance policy.

NOTE 9 – PAID-UP-FOR-LIFE MEMBERSHIP FUND

The National Executive Committee approved the establishment of a life-membership plan available to any member of a participating department. In accordance with the plan, the assets of the Paid-Up-For-Life (PUFL)

Membership Fund are included in unrestricted, board-designated net assets and segregated in a trust account, from which funds equal to the annual dues of life members are withdrawn for current operations each year. The trust agreement provides that the Legion has the right to withdraw part or all of the assets of the trust account, and to modify or terminate the trust agreement at its discretion.

Under the terms of the PUFL program, a participating member's national, state and local dues are paid by the Legion for the remainder of the individual's life. Management has estimated and recognized a liability for the future payments to state and local Legion organizations. Likewise, management has deferred recognition of the national-dues portion of the member's payment. Deferred PUFL dues are recognized in annual amounts equal to the national dues in effect each year. The liability and deferred-revenue amounts are estimated by the Legion's actuaries using PUFL membership summaries and discount rates comparable to the Legion's recent investment performance.

NOTE 10 – RESTRICTED AND RESERVE DESIGNATED FUNDS

The restricted fund is designated for use by the Legion's National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee, and reported as unrestricted, board-designated net assets. Earnings of the restricted fund, along with the principal, can be expended only upon recommendation of the National Finance Commission and a two-thirds affirmative vote of the National Executive Committee at two successive meetings. It is the policy of the Legion to transfer 10 percent of the prior year's defined net income from operations to the restricted fund. The Legion made no transfers to the restricted fund in 2010 and 2009.

The reserve fund is also designated for use by the National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee, and reported as unrestricted, board-designated net assets. However, earnings of the reserve fund may be used for the general operations of the Legion. The principal can be expended only by action of the Legion at its national convention, or by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the National Executive Committee in two successive meetings not less than 60 days apart.

NOTE 11 – LIFE INSURANCE PLAN

During October 1992, the National Executive Committee approved a resolution to terminate the Legion's Life Insurance Trust. Upon its dissolution in April 1993, funds remaining in the trust, totaling $4,285,984, were transferred to a segregated bank trust account (named The American Legion Life Insurance Plan) under control of the Legion, for use in youth programs. At Dec. 31, 2009, approximately $1.1 million in funds remaining had been approved for use in designated programs during 2010. At Dec. 31, 2010, all funds had been expended.

NOTE 12 – TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

Temporarily restricted net assets are donor-restricted for specific purposes. At Dec. 31, 2010 and 2009, the restricted purposes are as follows:

	2010	2009
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	$ 1,074,023	$ 1,046,268
Samsung Scholarships	1,821,311	1,716,524
Legacy Scholarship Fund	5,272,950	4,227,657
National Emergency Fund	2,905,160	2,555,482
Boy Scouts	467,899	467,899
Operation Comfort Warriors	268,723	101,556
Others	192,146	79,855
	$ 12,002,212	**$ 10,195,241**

NOTE 13 – NET ASSETS RELEASED FROM RESTRICTION

Net assets were released from donor restrictions by incurring expenses satisfying the restricted purposes, or by the occurrence of other events specified by donors.

	2010	2009
Purpose restrictions accomplished		
Overseas graves decoration	$ 24,300	$ 5,600
Scholarships and grants (including relief aid)	833,278	741,591
Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation and Children & Youth programs	257,634	289,632
	$ 1,115,212	**$ 1,036,823**

NOTE 14 – PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

Permanently restricted net assets represent donor-restricted gifts that have been invested and are to be maintained in perpetuity. Income from the Samsung Scholarship Fund is to be used to fund undergraduate scholarships for descendents of Korean War veterans and other wars in which U.S. servicemembers participated. Income from the American Legion Endowment Fund is to be used to support the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation and Children & Youth activities.

At Dec. 31, 2010 and 2009, the permanently restricted net assets are as follows:

	2010	2009
Samsung Scholarships	$ 5,000,000	$ 5,000,000
American Legion Endowment Fund	7,409,095	7,137,556
	$ 12,409,095	**$ 12,137,556**

NOTE 15 – ENDOWMENT COMPOSITION

The Legion's endowments include donor-restricted endowment funds, and comprise two separate funds: the American Legion Endowment Fund and the Samsung Scholarship Fund. In accordance with GAAP, net assets associated with endowment funds, including funds designated by the National Executive Committee to function as endowments, are classified and reported based on the existence or absence of donor-imposed restrictions.

Interpretation of Relevant Law: The National Executive Committee has interpreted the Uniform Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act (UPMIFA) as requiring the preservation of the fair value of the original gift as of the gift date of the donor-restricted endowment funds, absent explicit donor stipulations to the contrary. As a result of this interpretation, the Legion classifies as permanently restricted net assets (a) the original value of gifts donated to the permanent endowment, (b) the original value of subsequent gifts to the permanent endowment, and (c) accumulations to the permanent

endowment made in accordance with the governing documents of the Legion. The remaining portion of the donor-restricted endowment fund not classified in permanently restricted net assets is classified as temporarily restricted net assets until those amounts are appropriated for expenditure by the Legion in a manner consistent with the standard of prudence prescribed by UPMIFA. In accordance with UPMIFA, the Legion considers the following factors in making a determination to appropriate or accumulate donor-restricted endowment funds:

(1) The duration and preservation of the fund

(2) The purposes of the Legion and the donor-restricted endowment fund

(3) General economic conditions

(4) The possible effects of inflation and deflation

(5) The expected total return from income and the appreciation of investments

(6) Other resources of the Legion

(7) The investment policies of the Legion

Endowment net asset composition by type of fund as of Dec. 31, 2010:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Donor-restricted endowment funds	$ -	$ 1,821,311	$ 12,409,095	$ 14,230,406
Total funds	**$ -**	**$ 1,821,311**	**$12,409,095**	**$14,230,406**

Endowment net asset composition by type of fund as of Dec. 31, 2009:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Donor-restricted endowment funds	$ (53,401)	$ 1,716,524	$ 12,137,556	$ 13,800,679
Total funds	**$ (53,401)**	**$ 1,716,524**	**$12,137,556**	**$13,800,679**

Changes in endowment net assets for the year ended Dec. 31, 2010:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Net assets, beginning of year	$ (53,401)	$ 1,716,524	$ 12,137,556	$ 13,800,679
Investment return				
Investment income, net of fees	84,801	531,756	-	616,557
Net appreciation (realized and unrealized)	46,160	115,034	187,639	348,833
Total investment return	**$ 130,961**	**$ 646,790**	**$ 187,639**	**$ 965,390**
New gifts	-	-	83,900	83,900
Appropriation of endowment assets for expenditure	(77,560)	(542,003)	-	(619,563)
Net assets, end of year	**$ -**	**$1,821,311**	**$12,409,095**	**$14,230,406**

Changes in endowment net assets for the year ended Dec. 31, 2009:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Net assets, beginning of year	$ (97,200)	$ 1,729,336	$ 11,984,165	$ 13,616,301
Investment return				
Investment income, net of fees	94,736	587,162	-	681,898
Net appreciation (realized and unrealized)	38,885	(1,490)	107,699	145,094
Total investment return	**$ 133,621**	**$ 585,672**	**$ 107,699**	**$ 826,992**
New gifts	-	-	45,692	45,692
Appropriation of endowment assets for expenditure	(89,822)	(598,484)	-	(688,306)
Net assets, end of year	**$ (53,401)**	**$ 1,716,524**	**$12,137,556**	**$13,800,679**

Funds with Deficiencies: From time to time, the fair value of assets associated with individual donor-restricted endowment funds may fall below the level that the donor or UPMIFA requires the Legion to retain as a fund of perpetual duration. In accordance with GAAP, deficiencies of this nature reported in unrestricted net assets were $0 and $53,401 as of Dec. 31, 2010 and 2009, respectively.

Return Objectives and Risk Parameters: The Legion has adopted investment and spending policies for endowment assets that attempt to provide a predictable stream of funding to programs supported by its endowment, while seeking to maintain the purchasing power of the endowment assets. Endowment assets include those assets of donor-restricted funds that the Legion must hold in perpetuity or for a donor-specified period(s). Under this policy, as approved by the National Executive Committee, the endowment assets are invested in a manner that is intended to produce income while assuming a low level of investment risk.

Strategies Employed for Achieving Objectives: To satisfy its long-term rate-of-return objectives, the Legion relies on a total return strategy in which investment returns are achieved through both capital appreciation (realized and unrealized) and current yield (interest and dividends). The Legion targets fixed-income securities to achieve its long-term return objectives within prudent risk constraints.

Spending Policy and How the Investment Objectives Relate to Spending Policy: Distributions will be limited to interest, net of fees. Capital appreciation (realized and unrealized) is added to the principal of the American Legion Endowment Fund; however, capital appreciation from the Samsung Scholarship Fund is temporarily restricted and can be spent according to the spending policy. Endowment-fund principal, unless otherwise directed by the donor, shall not be disbursed except for emergency situations. To make a principal disbursement, a majority vote by the National Executive Committee will be required.

NOTE 16 – INCOME TAXES

The provision (benefit) for income taxes of HPC consists of the following:

	2009
Income-tax expense	
Current	
Federal	$ (4,406)
State	(174,010)
Deferred	
Federal	-
State	-
	$ (178,416)

There is no tax expense for the year ending Dec. 31, 2010, as HPC was merged into the Legion. A total of $280,916 of tax refunds was received from the carryback of net operating losses in 2009.

NOTE 17 – EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

The Legion has a defined-benefit pension plan covering substantially all of its employees, as well as those of certain affiliated and subordinated groups. The plan was established in 1944 by vote of the Legion's national convention. Contributions to the plan are made by the Legion and other participating groups on the basis of annual actuarial valuations.

In May 2008, the Legion voted to freeze the plan effective June 30, 2008, and adopt a 401(k) savings plan with a qualified automatic-contribution arrangement effective July 1, 2008. The result of the freeze is that current employees will still receive the benefits they had earned as of June 30, 2008, but no future benefits will be earned and no new employees will be added. The 401(k) savings plan calls for a 100-percent match of the first 1 percent contributed by the employee, and a 50-percent match of the net 5 percent contributed by the employee. Thus, the maximum matching percentage an employee will receive is 3.5 percent. The Legion made contributions of $336,809 and $304,444 in 2010 and 2009, respectively.

The following table sets forth the Legion's portion of the plan's funded status and amounts recognized in the Legion's consolidated statement of financial position at Dec. 31, 2010 and 2009:

	2010	2009
Benefit obligation	$ (47,056,871)	$ (46,800,137)
Fair value of plan assets	48,599,378	46,945,087
Funded status	**$ 1,542,507**	**$ 144,950**
Service cost	$ -	$ -
Interest cost	2,707,448	2,671,209
Actual return on assets	(4,433,441)	(3,470,842)
Amortization of prior service costs	121,085	121,085
Amortization of loss	783,605	880,835
Difference between expected and actual return on assets	787,687	(100,003)
Net periodic pension cost	**$ (33,616)**	**$ 102,284**
Net loss	$ (1,242,856)	$ 95,264
Prior service cost	(121,085)	(121,085)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	**$ (1,363,941)**	**$ (25,821)**
Prepaid benefit cost	$ 14,246,466	$ 14,212,848
Accumulated benefit obligation	47,056,871	46,800,137
Vested benefit obligation	46,768,704	46,352,307
Net periodic pension cost	(33,616)	102,284
Benefits paid	2,779,150	2,533,777
Measurement date	**12/31/2010**	**12/31/2009**

Estimated future benefit payments:

2011	$ 3,065,251
2012	3,141,624
2013	3,202,368
2014	3,253,704
2015	3,313,033
Years 2016-2020	16,891,941

The asset-investment policy is a lower-risk strategy. The fair value of the Legion's defined-benefit-plan assets at Dec. 31, 2010 and 2009, are as follows. See Note 5 for descriptions of inputs for each type of asset.

	Fair-Value Measurements at Dec. 31,2010, using		
	Quoted Prices in Active markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
Money market accounts	$ 971,186	$ -	$ -
U.S. government and agency obligations	14,511,592	-	-
Asset-backed securities	-	5,709,254	-
Municipal bonds	-	1,592,447	-
Corporate bonds	-	11,715,032	-
Common stock			
Materials	866,634	-	-
Industrials	1,961,076	-	-
Consumer discretionary	1,424,067		
Consumer staples	776,992	-	-
Energy	1,445,041		
Health care	1,492,950	-	-
Financials	2,764,561		
Telecommunication	559,618	-	-
Technology	1,852,958		
Utilities	428,548	-	-
Other	226,694		
Accrued interest	300,728	-	-
	$ 29,582,645	**$ 19,016,733**	**$ -**

	Fair-Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2009, using		
	Quoted Prices in Active markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
Money market accounts	$ 884,944	$ -	$ -
U.S. government and agency obligations	13,574,717	-	-
Asset-backed securities	-	6,813,718	-
Municipal bonds	-	687,819	-
Corporate bonds	-	13,142,847	-
Common stock			
Materials	769,466	-	-
Industrials	1,478,597	-	-
Consumer discretionary	1,135,973		
Consumer staples	677,412	-	-
Energy	1,515,032		
Health care	1,334,862	-	-
Financials	1,533,788		
Telecommunication	322,302	-	-
Technology	1,555,324		
Utilities	578,111	-	-
Other	550,350		
Accrued interest	389,825	-	-
	$ 26,300,703	**$ 20,644,384**	**$ -**

Historical returns of multiple asset classes were analyzed to develop a risk-free real rate of return and risk premium for each asset class. The overall rate for each asset class was developed by combining a long-term inflation component, the risk-free real rate of return, and the associated risk premium. A weighted average rate was developed based on those overall rates and the target asset allocation of the plan.

Weighted-average assumptions	2010	2009
Discount rate	5.96%	5.96%
Expected return on plan assets	8.00%	8.00%
Rate of compensation increase	0.00%	0.00%

The amounts of net loss and net prior-service cost expected to be recognized as components of net periodic-benefit cost for the year ending Dec. 31, 2011, are $666,288 and $121,085, respectively.

HPC maintained a defined-contribution plan under Section 401(k) of the Internal Revenue Code. Former HPC employees who transferred to the Legion are eligible to participate in the Legion 401(k) savings plan.

NOTE 18 – FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

The following represents a functional breakdown of the Legion's expenses by program and supporting services.

	2010	2009
Program services		
Veterans programs and services	$ 35,108,669	$ 34,528,071
Americanism, Children & Youth activities	2,806,143	3,881,481
	$ 37,914,812	$ 38,409,552
Supporting services		
Management and general	12,929,185	11,616,671
Member development	10,945,144	4,469,488
Fundraising	4,162,115	157,022
	$ 28,036,444	$ 16,243,181
	$ 65,951,256	**$ 54,652,733**

Member development includes direct-response advertising expense of $8,970,472 and $768,462 for the years ended Dec. 31, 2010 and 2009.

NOTE 19 – LITIGATION

The Legion is currently involved in and/or has been mentioned as a defendant or co-defendant in several legal actions. It is the opinion of the national judge advocate that these claims are without merit, and that any ultimate liability of the Legion with respect to these actions will not materially affect the financial statements of the Legion.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidating Statement of Financial Position *December 31, 2010*

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Eliminations	Total
ASSETS					
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 2,563,611	23,850	99,288	-	2,686,749
Accounts receivable	3,118,892	4,669	1,778	(14,576)	3,110,763
Interest Receivable	650,411	75,963	15,088	-	741,462
Prepaid expenses and deposits	577,614	1,811	-	-	579,425
Deferred membership expense	8,692,559	-	-	-	8,692,559
Due from American Legion Endowment Fund	2,000,000	-	-	(2,000,000)	-
Inventory	2,500,115	-	-	-	2,500,115
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	50,922	-	-	-	50,922
Beneficial interest in trust	-	336,597	-	-	336,597
Prepaid pension expense	1,542,507	-	-	-	1,542,507
	21,696,631	442,890	116,154	(2,014,576)	20,241,099
Investments					
General	25,860,863	-	-	-	25,860,863
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved funds	28,121,944	-	-	-	28,121,944
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership fund	23,197,380	-	-	-	23,197,380
Samsung scholarship fund	7,843,214	-	-	-	7,843,214
Building funds	4,377,546	-	-	-	4,377,546
Sept. 11 Memorial scholarship fund	4,812,835	-	-	-	4,812,835
Special account – Endowment Fund	-	2,255,689	-	-	2,255,689
General account – Endowment Fund	-	6,724,930	-	-	6,724,930
National Emergency Fund	-	-	2,789,006	-	2,789,006
Other	2,747,336	-	-	-	2,747,336
	96,961,118	8,980,619	2,789,006	-	108,730,743
Property, plant and equipment, net	6,692,041	-			6,692,041
Total assets	$ 125,349,790	$ 9,423,509	$ 2,905,160	$ (2,014,576)	$ 135,663,883
LIABILITIES					
Accounts payable	$ 1,682,476	$ 874	$ -	$ (14,576)	$ 1,668,774
Scholarships payable	1,205,583	-	-	-	1,205,583
Accounts payable – Legion	-	2,000,000	-	(2,000,000)	-
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	187,005	-	-	-	187,005
Deferred income	1,060,185	-	-	-	1,060,185
Deferred dues income	24,110,482	-	-	-	24,110,482
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	7,153,516	-	-	-	7,153,516
Accrued vacation benefits	829,557	-	-	-	829,557
Other liabilities	360,144	-	-	-	360,144
Notes payable	1,885,963	-	-	-	1,885,963
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life Membership	19,990,712	-	-	-	19,990,712
Life memberships due to state and local posts	20,118,073	-	-	-	20,118,073
	78,583,696	2,000,874	-	(2,014,576)	78,569,994
NET ASSETS					
Unrestricted	32,669,042	13,540	-	-	32,682,582
Temporarily restricted	9,097,052	-	2,905,160	-	12,002,212
Permanently restricted	5,000,000	7,409,095	-	-	12,409,095
Total net assets	46,766,094	7,422,635	2,905,160	-	57,093,889
	$ 125,349,790	$ 9,423,509	$ 2,905,160	$ (2,014,576)	$ 135,663,883

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidating Statement of Financial Position *December 31, 2009*

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
ASSETS						
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 1,652,940	$ 11,945	$ 4,500	$ 22,677	$ -	$ 1,692,062
Accounts receivable	2,644,110	1,533	-	560,663	(430,637)	2,775,669
Interest receivable	556,071	97,512	13,613	-	-	667,196
Prepaid expenses and deposits	897,939	1,657	-	239,010	-	1,138,606
Deferred membership expense	8,425,988	-	-	-	-	8,425,988
Due from American Legion Endowment Fund	2,000,000	-	-	-	(2,000,000)	-
Inventory	2,208,297	-	-	-	-	2,208,297
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	46,652	-	-	-	-	46,652
Beneficial interest in trust	-	351,492	-	-	-	351,492
Prepaid pension expense	144,950	-	-	-	-	144,950
	18,576,947	464,139	18,113	822,350	(2,430,637)	17,450,912
Investments						
General	27,229,732	-	-	-	-	27,229,732
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved funds	26,800,403	-	-	-	-	26,800,403
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership fund	26,736,355	-	-	-	-	26,736,355
Samsung scholarship fund	7,462,725	-	-	-	-	7,462,725
Building funds	3,953,799	-	-	-	-	3,953,799
Sept. 11 Memorial scholarship fund	4,206,114	-	-	-	-	4,206,114
Special account – Endowment Fund	-	2,190,560	-	-	-	2,190,560
General account – Endowment Fund	-	6,429,456	-	-	-	6,429,456
National Emergency Fund	-	-	2,537,369	-	-	2,537,369
Investment in HPC	949,698	-	-	-	(949,698)	-
Other	2,976,050	-	-	-	-	2,976,051
	100,314,877	8,620,016	2,537,369	-	(949,698)	110,522,564
Property, plant and equipment, net	6,912,515	-	-	203,964	-	7,116,479
Total assets	$ 125,804,339	$ 9,084,155	$ 2,555,482	$ 1,026,314	$ (3,380,335)	$ 135,089,955
LIABILITIES						
Accounts payable	$ 1,740,397	$ -	$ -	$ 44,252	$ (39,142)	$ 1,745,507
Scholarships payable	1,208,547	-	-	-		1,208,547
Accounts payable – Legion	-	2,000,000	-	-	(2,000,000)	-
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	157,669	-	-	-	-	157,669
Deferred income	214,704	-	-	-	-	214,704
Deferred dues income	27,841,215	-	-	-	-	27,841,215
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	2,336,883	-	-	-	-	2,336,883
Accrued vacation benefits	676,332	-	-	32,364	-	708,696
Other liabilities	644,587	-	-	-	(391,495)	253,092
Notes payable	2,082,865	-	-	-	-	2,082,865
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life Membership	23,591,073	-	-	-	-	23,591,073
Life memberships due to state and local posts	24,084,511	-	-	-	-	24,084,511
	84,578,783	2,000,000		76,616	(2,430,637)	84,224,762
NET ASSETS						
Unrestricted	28,585,797	(53,401)	-	-		28,532,396
Temporarily restricted	7,639,759	-	2,555,482	-	-	10,195,241
Permanently restricted	5,000,000	7,137,556	-	-	-	12,137,556
Shareholders' Equity	-	-	-	949,698	(949,698)	-
Total net assets	41,225,556	7,084,155	2,555,482	949,698	(949,698)	50,865,193
	$ 125,804,339	$ 9,084,155	$ 2,555,482	$ 1,026,314	$ (3,380,335)	$ 135,089,955

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidating Statement of Activities *Year ended December 31, 2010*

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	$ 29,645,796	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ 29,645,796
Direct membership solicitation	5,536,132	-	-	-	-	5,536,132
Member service fees income	1,288,596	-	-	-	-	1,288,596
Affinity income	363,312	-	-	-	-	363,312
Sales of emblem items	11,105,405	-	-	-	-	11,105,405
Advertising	9,167,804	-	-	-	-	9,167,804
Fundraising	1,441,544	-	-	-	-	1,441,544
Contributions	1,908,006	83,902	296,270	-	-	2,288,178
Label and printing fees	1,254,591	-	-	-	-	1,254,591
Interest and dividends, net of fees	2,685,195	342,432	82,038	-	-	3,109,665
Net realized gains	370,006	25,487	1,475	-	-	396,968
American Legion Endowment Fund income	309,192	-	-	-	(309,192)	-
Other	1,945,942	-	-	-	-	1,945,942
	67,021,521	451,821	379,783	-	(309,192)	67,543,933
Expenses						
Salaries	14,656,208	-	-	-	-	14,656,208
Employee benefits	2,685,809	-	-	-	-	2,685,809
Fundraising	600,954	-	-	-	-	600,954
Cost of sales	7,579,204	-	-	-	-	7,579,204
Direct publications	11,901,572	-	-	-	-	11,901,572
Executive and staff travel	1,466,215	3,517	-	-	-	1,469,732
Commission and committee	1,633,066	-	-	-	-	1,633,066
Printing and postage	5,948,035	-	-	-	-	5,948,035
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,418,917	309,192	66,990	-	(309,192)	1,485,907
Office and other operating	12,996,731	22,484	4,802	-	-	13,024,017
Occupancy and usage	1,921,778	-	-	-	-	1,921,778
Special projects and programs	3,044,974	-	-	-	-	3,044,974
	65,853,463	335,193	71,792	-	(309,192)	65,951,256
Change in net assets from operations	1,168,058	116,628	307,991	-	-	1,592,677
Net unrealized gains - investments	507,002	221,852	41,687	-	-	770,541
Net change in PUFL	3,285,143	-	-	-	-	3,285,143
Amortization of pension loss	(783,605)	-	-	-	-	(783,605)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	1,363,940	-	-	-	-	1,363,940
Merger of HPC	-	-	-	(949,698)	949,698	-
Change in net assets	5,540,538	338,480	349,678	(949,698)	949,698	6,228,696
Net assets, beginning of year	41,225,556	7,084,155	2,555,482	949,698	(949,698)	50,865,193
Net assets, end of year	$ 46,766,094	$ 7,422,635	$ 2,905,160	$ -	$ -	$ 57,093,889

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidating Statement of Activities *Year ended December 31, 2009*

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	$ 31,571,415	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ 31,571,415
Direct membership solicitation	366,876	-	-	-	-	366,876
Member service fees income	1,208,786	-	-	-	-	1,208,786
Affinity income	309,293	-	-	-	-	309,293
Sales of emblem items	11,030,222	-	-	-	-	11,030,222
Advertising	9,545,830	-	-	-	-	9,545,830
Contributions	2,012,115	45,692	319,517	-	-	2,377,324
Label and printing fees	1,740,118	-	-	-	(237,558)	1,502,560
Sales – HPC	-	-	-	7,164,063	(6,870,136)	293,927
Interest and dividends, net of fees	2,413,741	384,368	61,707	5,683	-	2,865,499
Net realized gains (losses)	(573,850)	127,492	8,845	-	-	(437,573)
American Legion Endowment Fund income	347,596	-	-	-	(347,596)	-
Net loss in subsidiary	(396,910)	-	-	-	396,910	-
Other	2,250,806	-	-	20,154	(216,705)	2,054,315
	61,826,098	557,552	390,069	7,189,900	(7,275,085)	62,688,534
Expenses						
Salaries	13,162,728	-	-	-	-	13,162,728
Employee benefits	2,404,942	-	-	-	-	2,404,942
Cost of sales	8,270,729	-	-	-	(237,558)	8,033,171
Cost of sales – HPC	-	-	-	6,444,713	(6,180,299)	264,414
Direct publications	11,970,525	-	-	-	-	11,970,525
Executive and staff travel	880,681	-	-	-	-	880,681
Commission and committee	1,626,714	-	-	-	-	1,626,714
Printing and postage	1,770,499	-	-	-	-	1,770,499
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,224,558	347,596	43,766	-	(347,596)	1,268,324
Office and other operating	8,188,328	31,857	-	864,812	(689,837)	8,395,160
Occupancy and usage	1,616,982	-	-	277,285	(216,705)	1,677,562
Special projects and programs	3,198,013	-	-	-	-	3,198,013
	54,314,699	379,453	43,766	7,586,810	(7,671,995)	54,652,733
Change in net assets from operations	7,511,399	178,099	346,303	(396,910)	396,910	8,035,801
Net unrealized gains (losses) - investments	885,976	19,091	(50,255)	-	-	854,812
Net change in PUFL	(1,983,770)	-	-	-	-	(1,983,770)
Amortization of pension loss	(880,835)	-	-	-	-	(880,835)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	25,821	-	-	-	-	25,821
Change in net assets	5,558,591	197,190	296,048	(396,910)	396,910	6,051,829
Net assets, beginning of year	35,666,965	6,886,965	2,259,434	1,346,608	(1,346,608)	44,813,364
Net assets, end of year	$ 41,225,556	$ 7,084,155	$ 2,555,482	$ 949,698	$ (949,698)	$ 50,865,193