113th Congress, 1st Session – – – – – – – – – – – – – House Document 113–10

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 94TH 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 94TH ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, HELD IN INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA FROM AUGUST 24–AUGUST 30, 2012, AND A REPORT ON THE ORGANIZATION'S ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR PRECEDING THE CONVENTION, PURSUANT TO 36 U.S.C. 49

FEBRUARY 15, 2013.—Referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and ordered to be printed

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

79–374 WASHINGTON : 2013

AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Washington, DC, February 13, 2013.

Hon. JOHN BOEHNER,
Speaker of the 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 94th annual National Convention held in Indianapolis, Indiana from August 24–30, 2012 and a report on our organization's activities for the year preceding the convention.

For God and Country,

LOUIS CELLI, JR.,
Director, National Legislative Commission.

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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-Fourth Annual National Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28 – 30, 2012.

The final report of the National Organization for the period ending December 31, 2011, and Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2011, and Surplus Analysis, January 1, 2011, to December 31, 2011, 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: Mervin G. Gunderson, Montana; James H. Hales, Jr., Pennsylvania; Milton G. Heifner, Iowa; Larry D. Sheets, Florida; David N. Voyles, Missouri.

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 Crimes*, 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, Jr., 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, Jr., 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, Jr., 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, Jr., 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, Jr., 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, Nebraska; 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, Jr., 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, Jr., 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, Jr., 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, Jr., Maryland

90th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Phoenix, Ariz., Aug. 26 – 28, 2008
Commander: Martin F. Conatser, Illinois
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, Jr., 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
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
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
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

94th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Indianapolis, In, Aug. 28 - 30, 2012
Commander: Fang A. Wong, New York
Richard M. Pedro, New York, Past National Commander
Vice Commanders: Mervin G. Gunderson, Montana; James H. Hales, Jr., Pennsylvania; Milton G. Heifner, Iowa; Larry D. Sheets, Florida; David N. Voyles, Missouri
Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Gerald Theriot, Louisiana
Historian: Robert B. Craig, Nebraska
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. Maryland

PROCEEDINGS

of the

94th Annual Convention

of

The American Legion

Tuesday, August 28, 2012

...At 8:30 o'clock a.m. the delegates assembled for the 94th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Ladies and gentlemen, as we begin our program please join me in a round of applause for Peter Ole. (*Applause)*

Call to Order
Fang A. Wong, New York, National Commander

The 94th National Convention will come to order. Ladies and gentlemen, please rise as the National Champion Color Guard from Post 472, Houston, Texas, presents the Colors, and please remain standing for the singing of the National Anthem by Nadine Asberry, of Powder Springs, Georgia.

... At this time the delegation rose and rendered a salute to the Colors, followed by the National Anthem, sung by Ms. Nadine Asberry.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Two! Color Guard, you may retire. Thank you. For the invocation I call on National Chaplain Gerald Theriot of Louisiana. Ladies and gentlemen, please uncover.

Invocation
Gerald Theriot, Louisiana, National Chaplain

Gracious God, we come today as humble servants, giving thanks for all of the many blessings that you give to us. We are grateful for last night's rest, and thankful that you have given us the strength to see another day, another day in which we seek to do your will. Give us the courage and the strength to carry out your commandments and to follow in all your ways. Your blessing on the members of this body have been many and mighty, as we strive to ensure that our nation keeps its promises to our veterans not only in word, but also in deed.

Heavenly Father, throughout this convention and thereafter we ask that you counsel and guide us through all of our activities. Let us always place our trust in you and seek strength through you for service to God and country. Amen.

Pledge of Allegiance

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you, Chaplain Theriot. Ladies and gentlemen, National Sergeant-at-Arms David Louie of New York will lead us in the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

...At this time 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 WONG: 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 continue to work for an accounting of all those missing. I now call on the chairman of the National Security Commission, G. 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
Fang A. Wong, New York, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Please cover. Legionnaires please join me in reaffirming our commitment to the principles and ideals on which our American Legion was founded by reciting the preamble to the Constitution.

...The delegation recited the preamble to The American Legion Constitution.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Please be seated.

Post Everlasting Ceremony

Since our last Convention The American Legion has lost two great past national commanders and veterans have lost some true friends. In its profile of National Commander Ray G. Smith, *The American Legion Magazine* said, "His diction is hush-puppy mild, palatable as grits, spicy as barbecue." In other words, much like the late Andy Griffith, Ray Smith was the epitome of a folksy North Carolina gentleman. Based on his demeanor, his hometown of Benson is probably not that different from Mayberry, USA.

"The membership slide is over," Commander Ray would frequently tell audiences. Rather than dictate fiats, he convinced members that recruiting can be fun. True to his word, The American Legion grew to more than 2.7 million members during his watch. We miss you, Ray.

Someone else that we miss very much is Past National Commander William E. Galbraith, who joined post everlasting on March 4. "A dedicated Legionnaire who always put the Legion up front and above everything else," is how Past National Commander Michael Kogutek described Commander Galbraith.

At age 41 he was a young national commander, elected on August 31, 1967. He visited South Vietnam and returned with a stern warning that politicians should not use our troops on the battlefield for political gain. As one of his final acts as commander he presented the Secretary of the Army with a $50,000 down payment for a perpetual lighting system over the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery. Membership grew under his tenure, during a very turbulent time in our nation's history. Again, let us remember Past National Commander William E. Galbraith of Nebraska.

Please join me in a moment of silence for these two great Americans and leaders of The American Legion. *...At this time the delegation paused for a moment of silence.*

Special Presentation
Certificate of Appreciation to Mr. Peter Ole

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Ladies and gentlemen, we have all been fortunate to be entertained now for many years by our talented and dedicated organist, Peter Ole. From show tunes to patriotic anthems, Peter has played it all. National Vice Commander Larry Sheets, please assume the lectern so I can make this special presentation.

ANNOUNCER: The commander is presenting a certificate of appreciation which reads, "Certificate of Appreciation, presented to Peter Ole for 35 years of faithful service, lifting the spirits of Legionnaires in Conventions assembled. Thank you for your loyalty and your friendship. Presented this 28th day of August, 2012 in Indianapolis, Indiana. Attested by Daniel S. Wheeler, National Adjutant, and Fang A. Wong, National Commander." (Applause)

MR. PETER OLE: Thank you all very much. Thirty-five years ago an opportunity came to me that I just couldn't pass up. It was the chance to join the greatest family in the world, and that was The American Legion family. For 35 years they have placed their hope, their trust and their confidence in me to be able to entertain you folks and to keep this convention going. I have been honored to be able to do that for 35 years, and I thank you all very, very much. God bless America and God bless the USA and the Legion. Thank you very, very much everybody. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Ladies and gentlemen, as we get our 94th National Convention underway, let us begin with a reminder of why we do what we do, year after year, in support of this great nation. Please turn your attention to the video screen. *...At this time the delegation viewed a video.*

Opening Ceremony

ANNOUNCER: Jose Rene Martinez was born in Shreveport, Louisiana, and grew up in Hope, Arkansas and Dalton, Georgia, a place he probably calls his hometown. After high school he joined the Army as a way to give something back to a country that had already given so much to him and his family. During service in Iraq a land mine explosion left him with severe burns to over 40 percent of his body. But during his nearly three years in recovery, including 33 different surgeries, J. R. used his remarkable motivational spirit to lift the moods of other wounded soldiers. He has since become an actor, spending three seasons on ABC's All My Children; an entertainer, winning ABC's Dancing With The Stars; a motivational speaker, author, and a new father. Please welcome to the stage J. R. Martinez. (Applause)

MR. J. R. MARTINEZ: Thank you. This is probably the only event that I've done this year that I was actually on time. Military; right? But then again, I flew in yesterday, which normally doesn't happen. Normally I would have flown in late last night, I would have been here just for a couple hours, and then had come up and speak and I leave right after. So I got comfortable, you know, that I had the evening off and I got to hang out in the hotel and enjoy the amenities, as I'm sure a lot of you have. And this morning I was supposed to be down here at 7:50. I'm embarrassed that I finally looked at the clock in the hotel room and it was 8:05, and I was like what the hell am I doing, I got to be downstairs. So I didn't set the right example of the training that I received in the military. I wasn't on time.

It's a pleasure to be here with every single one of you. It was a big surprise to me in the mix of walking around the hotel lobby yesterday and walking out in Indianapolis, running into a lot of you, that a lot of men actually came up to me more than a lot of the

women. This is probably the only place again where I have been where men will come up and say that they watched me on *Dancing With The Stars* and they voted for me.

The secret is out, guys. Sorry. Who would have thought that that many military guys would be watching *Dancing With The Stars*, a bunch of people wearing rhinestones and two inch Latin heels; right? That was my only reservation when I went on the show a year ago, was wearing the tight clothes and going from combat boots to now wearing two inch Latin ballroom shoes. I had a butt, you know, because the shoes gave me a little arch, but other than that I knew that I would get a hard time from a lot of my military guys.

But I have to say that, as I was mentioning to someone yesterday, that being on the show for three months — you know, every single day you're in a room, you're rehearsing. And then even when it's show nights you're still in a theater, you're still confined and not interacting with the public. So it wasn't until I actually got off the show, until the show finished and I was able to travel, that I was able to realize the amount of support that was given to me throughout the time on the show. And it was overwhelming for me. And I knew that I was going to have a military presence supporting me. However, when the show was over I was completely overwhelmed to see the amount of support that I received from military individuals that have served, that continue to serve, from the families -- from anybody that is anywhere near related to the military uniform supporting me on that show, and that's what I believe pushed me over the hump to beat that Kardashian kid. *(Laughter)* Who has an army of his sisters behind him. I have a different army behind me.

So thank you, guys, for that support. One of the biggest things that I had to get accustomed to and try to figure out how do I handle this is when people come up to me and say I voted for you, I voted for you ten times from my phone, and then I would grab my husband's phone and voted ten more times, and then I would grab my daughter's phone and ten more times, and then I created more email accounts to vote for you. And you look guilty. I feel bad, because I think that I should give them, you know, $20 for their data plan for going through all the trouble of voting for me. *(Laughter)* So I guess I can give 60 bucks to everybody I come across from this point on.

But it's a pleasure to be here with every single one of you because of the meaning of why we're all here. Why we are here, period, and the people we're here for. When I joined military in 2002, right out of high school, I was 19 years old. And the reason why I decided to join the military was for various reasons. It made complete sense to me at that time. 9/11 happened a few months before. Being raised by a single mother, her not having enough money to send me to college, I thought to myself it would be a great opportunity for me to go into the military to be able to get money for college, to be able to go to college. At the same time I would be able to travel, to be able to see the world, be independent, be on my own. I would be able to grow up a little bit. It was a great opportunity. And my mindset was only I was going to do three years. That was it. Three years and I would be out. So I would be close to 22 years old and I would be out of the United States Army.

But right before I joined in September of 2002 I met a Vietnam veteran from Dalton, Georgia and he told me his remarkable story, and it impacted me in a powerful way. And I remember saying to myself, and not a lot of people know this, but I remember saying to myself, I want to have that same story one day.

And so when it came time for me to join the military I picked 11 Bravo Infantry to be my MOS. And the reason why is because I wanted to have that same story as that Vietnam vet. I wanted to feel like I actually did it, I wanted to feel like I was a part of something. And I remember getting into basic training and actually having a reality check, because, you know, I never grew up with a father. My father left when I was nine months old, and so, you know, for me, when I played sports as a kid it was a great

opportunity to hang out with the guys and to be able to go do things that guys do, and it was a great opportunity for me to get away from my mother, who I love, but I just needed to get away, I needed a break. But I looked at basic training like it was going to be almost like a camping trip, that I was going to go away with a bunch of guys and we were going to have fun and learn how to do all these tactics and shoot weapons and do all these cool things. And to my surprise, I mean, it was not that. It was the complete opposite.

And as intimidating as it was, and as intimidating as that 4' 11" drill sergeant was — the biggest thing on him was that hat. As intimidating as he was, the things that he said to me kind of made me for a second, second-guess my decision to join the United States Army. Once I got into it, and once I understood what the military was about, once I understood what we were all part of, and what we would all be doing together, my mindset completely changed.

When I got out of basic training ,which I absolutely loved basic training, but when I got out I was assigned to my unit, which was the 101st out of Fort Campbell, Kentucky. I began at 19 years old, and one day I was doing my job and my platoon sergeant came up to me and he said, "Martinez, I just want you to know, be prepared, because we will be deploying." And I looked at him and I said, "I'm not going anywhere. I just got out of basic training. There is no way I'm going anywhere right now. Relax, Sergeant." And I turned around to do my job, as I thought I was going to. Instead I had to get down on the floor and do pushups because you don't tell your platoon sergeant to relax. *(Laughter)* That one month off out of basic training really messed with my head, and I forgot the chain of command and how you speak to your higher ranking individuals.

But here I was, less than two months after arriving at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and I was on a plane with the unit and heading over to the Middle East — 19 years old. How do you really prepare for combat, how do you prepare to be away from your friends, from your family, from freedom, for whether it's one hour or whether it's going to be one year? How do you prepare for that? What movie can you watch, what story can you hear from that Vietnam vet in Dalton, Georgia, what video game can you play that somehow tries to simulate what combat is about? What can really prepare you for what you're about to go through?

Well, what prepared me was all the training that I had received and the way I was mentored throughout basic training at the same time in the short amount of time that I was at Fort Campbell before deploying. And I remember being in Iraq at 19 years old, and it was before the war started, and looking to my friends and saying, you know, what are we doing again? Like just trying to catch up and just trying to understand what my job was every single day.

But two things that the military taught me to do, I say probably one of the most important things it taught me to do, is it taught me how to adapt and overcome. And it taught me how life will give you the tools that you need in order to be able to do those two things; that in the moments when the rest of the world is panicking, when your enemy is potentially panicking, that's the moment where you adapt and you overcome and you complete the mission. And it kept me focused, and it was something that I did every single day while I was in Iraq in 2003, was I just kept adapting and overcoming every single day.

And early on our job in Iraq was to patrol through the southern parts of Iraq to provide security for different jobs in the military. So for a lot of you, you know what I mean, but pretty much our unit would get the orders and we would have to escort somebody that was a medic or transportation or supplies to get from Point A to Point B safely. And I enjoyed doing that because I felt that I was a part of something bigger than myself. I was one of the minor parts, but I would help these individuals get from here to here safely, and they would go on about their mission and they would be able to provide whatever service they provided.

And I felt good at the end of the night when I was able to put my head down, whether it was on a cot, whether it was in our Humvees, whether it was leaned up against a pole somewhere and you try to close your eyes for a couple of minutes. I felt good about what I was doing. And my mindset all of a sudden changed, and I thought to myself three years? No, I think I want to make this a career. And it was something that I thought about, that I wanted to be like the platoon sergeant that had every single medal on his uniform, and graduated from every single school. And I wanted to have all those medals, I wanted to go to all those schools, I wanted to be the best soldier that I could possibly be.

But, unfortunately, on the 5th of April of 2003 that was cut short. Every goal, every plan, every ambition, every thought that I had was blown up into pieces. And what happened that day was we received orders that we had to escort a convoy from the southern part of Iraq up to a place called Karbala, which is just south of Baghdad. And no big deal, this was something routine for our unit. So we started to drive, and we got to Karbala safely and the unit was able to go on and do what they had to do. And when we thought we had to turn around and come back to our camp we received brand new orders that we were going to have to reroute and go meet up with another unit just north of the city and go secure an area.

Well, again, as I said, the military taught me even more about adapting and overcoming, and this was a small example of doing that. So we looked at a map and we figured out a way we're going to get to this new area, and we start to proceed. I was the driver of the Humvee. There were three other soldiers in the vehicle with me. And I remember I was the third vehicle in this convoy, and the first two Humvees turned onto the paved road, and then I turned onto the paved road.

I was 19 years old. And if you can actually see me in that setting you would think that I thought I was driving a Lamborghini down Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles. Because I had one hand on the steering wheel, I had the window halfway down, I had the Kevlar that you wear, I had it kicked up on my head a little bit. I was cool, I was — this Humvee was my Lamborghini, and this road was Sunset Boulevard for me. That's how invisible I thought I was at 19 years old.

And I remember having that one hand on the steering wheel and looking at my sergeant in the vehicle because he said a joke about something. Because as you guys know, when you're away from your friends, when you're away from your family, when you're around the guys, humor is a key component. Humor is something that allows you to be able to slowly go through the process and to kind of chip away at the tension at times.

And so I'm driving this Humvee, one hand on the steering wheel, I'm laughing at my sergeant, at the joke that he made, and then all of a sudden the rest of the guys started laughing, and I looked back at the road to look at where we were driving. And then I remember looking at my sergeant again and just smiling, having a little, you know, giggle to whatever joke he was saying at the time. And then I turned back to look at the road, and I drove from here maybe to the end of the stage, when all of a sudden, "boom." My world completely changed.

Now, individuals in this room, you're no strangers to what I mean. A lot of you either have been in that boom, been around that boom, or seen somebody go through that boom. And what happened was our Humvee ran over a bomb, and immediately it exploded and the other three guys were thrown out of the vehicle, but I was trapped inside. I was trapped inside this Humvee and it caught on fire. And at 19 years old I can actually feel the heat, I can actually see my hands right in front of me and see them change in a way that you only see in those high budget Hollywood films that we all pay $14 or $15 to go see. Or that one time a year when you and your friends or your family members or your grandkids or your kids get creative and they want to dress up like their

favorite scary character and they put on the makeup, they do all this work to look the best that they possibly can. But when the party is over they're able to wash their hands and their hands go back to normal.

Me, on the other hand, my hands weren't going back to normal. And I literally thought and felt that my life was going to end there. I had this feeling of where the energy and the life was being sucked out of me as every second passed — 19 years old. I mean, what in life has really prepared me for this moment? People come up to me all the time and they say there is no way I would have been able to go through the things that you've gone through in your life, and I say to them, "With all due respect, what makes you think that I was ready to go through what I went through at 19 years old?" I was a 19-year-old kid.

But I believe that every single one of us in this room, I believe every single one of us in this country, I believe every single one of us in this world, based on the things that we have already gone through in life, no matter how major or how minor they may be, they have given us something and prepared us to face the big explosion in our life, to be able to do those two things, adapt and overcome.

And here I was now, 19 years old, trapped inside this truck thinking that my life was going to completely end, thinking that they one day were going to give my mother a folded flag and thank her for my service. We all have that reserve tank, and that reserve tank for me kicked in and I wouldn't give up. I wouldn't give up and I wouldn't just give in to the fire, to the explosion, to the smoke. And I just thought to myself I have to hang on just long enough to possibly give the medics an opportunity to come and save my life. And that's what I did. I was able to hold on just long enough, and then my sergeant, the same sergeant that I told to relax once upon a time, came and risked his life and he pulled me out of the vehicle.

The biggest threat that I had was not the 34 percent burns that I had over my body; it was the inhalation damage, it was the organ damage, it was the broken ribs, it was all the other fractures that I had. That was the threat to my life. I immediately fell into this coma, and then the medics intubated me at a local medic station set up in Iraq, and then from there I went to Landstuhl like a lot of service members do. And then from there, once I was stable, they brought me down to Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas.

And three and a half weeks after I was injured I came out of this coma to a voice of a man that I had never heard before, and this man is saying, "Martinez, if you can hear me open your eyes." I slowly opened my eyes and I see a room full of men and women wearing green scrubs, doctors and nurses. And then I saw my mother standing at my side. He starts to ask me a simple question, "Do you know where you are?" And of course my answer is, "Iraq." And he says, "No," he says, "You're actually in San Antonio, Texas. Do you know what happened to you?" "Vaguely." "Well, let me explain. This is what happened to you." He repeated the same question, "Do you know where you are?" "I'm in San Antonio. You just told me that." "Do you know what happened to you?" I repeated, because, "You just told me that." Just to make sure that I was able to take in the information and withhold it.

The next day that same doctor comes into my room and he walks in to the foot of my bed, and it was around 7:30 in the morning, and he walks in and he starts to tell me what the new plan is going to be. He starts to tell me what the plan in my recovery is going to be. He's telling me that in a lot of ways I don't have necessarily control of the situation, that I have to trust him and his staff that they were going to do the best that they can to get me back on my feet. And he starts breaking it down for me how at 7:30 in the morning my nurse will come into my room and my nurse will feed me. Then after my nurse feeds me, then my nurse with the help of another nurse will put me on a shower bed and then take me to the shower and bathe me. After my nurse bathes me, then he's going

to bring me back to my intensive care room and continue to do my treatment and apply creams and dressings and all these things. And he kept going on and on and on about what the rest of the day is going to be like. And I blocked him out. I blocked him out because I thought to myself I'm 19 years old, and I remember just the other day being a young, strong, independent 19-year-old. And now I'm a 19-year-old baby because I couldn't dress myself, I couldn't get up and walk to the bathroom by myself, I couldn't pick up the remote and change the channel by myself, I couldn't feed myself, I couldn't bathe myself. I can do nothing. And now I have this doctor telling me that at 7:30 in the morning a nurse is going to feed me, and then right after that a nurse is going to bathe me. But I'm 19 years old, so I start to think this might not be so bad after all. *(Laughter)*

I'm just saying. Let's not forget that I'm 19 years old. It's a key number in this story. Because, you know, Hollywood, as much as I enjoy it and we're all entertained by it, and I know that I'm in it, a lot of times I don't like Hollywood. And I don't like Hollywood because of this reason: I was 19 years old and my mind went to this different place of creating this story line in my head while my doctor is preparing me for the rest of the day, and I'm thinking of this nurse. What is she going to look like, how tall is she going to be, how young is she going to be. Because in Hollywood when the nurse comes onto the screen and walks into the hospital room she's pretty gorgeous. And usually what happens in the story line is the patient and the nurse, all of a sudden they have this chemistry, and before you know it they fall in love. And then when the patient is released from the hospital she goes with him because now they're a couple. They later get married, they have kids, they have a great life. That's where my mind went. I'm thinking of this girl that one day is going to be my wife and the mother of my children. This might not be so bad after all, because at the end of the day — and guys, don't laugh, because if there is a woman sitting next to you, you will be in trouble, but what man does not want to be fed and bathed by a woman? Just saying. *(Laughter)*

I was 19 years old. And I went to this place. I completely blocked out what my doctor was saying and I went to this place. You know when you watch those animated films or cartoons and you see a thought bubble next to their head, and inside that thought bubble there is so much happening? There was so much happening inside my thought bubble. Is she going to kiss me between treatments, how is it going to work. *(Laughter)*

And in the midst of me going to this place, I was on cloud nine, there is always something that causes you to fall through the clouds and you end up right back on the ground and you're reminded of where you are. As I was thinking of what this girl would look like, all of a sudden this guy with this beard named Mike walks in and tells me he's my nurse. I jokingly tell people that's when the real depression and anger kicked in. *(Laughter)*

"What do you mean, you're my nurse?" "I'm your nurse." "You're not what I thought you were." "What did you think?" "Well, never mind, I've heard that before," he says. "I'm sorry." I mean, this guy was six foot something, had long hair under his gear. So as I jokingly tell people, Mike saw a side of me that a lot of people haven't. Depending on how many cups of coffee you are on this morning you will get that now. Some of you will get that later. It's okay. Just think about it.

But it was hard, it was difficult, because a week after I came out of my coma I pretty much made a request, and I said that I wanted to see my face, I wanted to see my body. And it was one of those things that it was difficult at 19 years old to be able to see the new me, the new me that was essentially on a plate and said here, you're going to have this. That's not what I ordered. Sorry, this is what you're going to have. And I had to implement those two things that the military even more emphasized. I had to adapt and overcome.

But before I even got to that stage I fell into this deep depression and anger, because I looked at myself and I said to myself there is no way I can live like this. And, finally,

one day I was asked to visit a patient about seven months after I was injured, and try to help him in some way, shape, or form. And I refused, I refused, because I thought to myself I'm not qualified, that's not my job, I'm a patient. "Just go in there and talk to him." And I finally accepted the challenge and I went into this gentleman's room and I spoke to him, and I spoke to him for about 40 minutes. And after that short conversation I was able to walk out of his room feeling like I did something, feeling like I had significance, I had purpose again. Because what the military did for me when I joined in September of 2002, it gave me something to be a part of.

When my injury happened on the 5th of April of 2003 that was taken away. I felt that I had no purpose. I had felt that I had no significance. I felt that I had something to be a part of, something to help, something to do. And visiting this young man gave me that opportunity again. And so that's what I did for the next two and-a-half years while I was recovering at the hospital. I visited patients every single day in the midst of my own recovery, just trying to essentially be a cheat sheet, a cheat book to the recovery of burn care, of trying to help them when it came to their mindset, their mentality, their attitude.

And by doing these things I found what I believe is my real purpose in life. I was able to start getting the idea that I wanted to be a motivational speaker, that this is what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. I wanted to be able to share, to be able to use my platform to be able to educate not only other servicemembers and their spouses, their family members, their friends, but people in the country, that other, as they say, less than one percent serves in our military? That other percentage, I wanted to educate them on who we are, what we're about, what we do every single day. And then by doing that all of a sudden I fell in love with this opportunity, and I knew that I was serving in a different capacity.

My three year term was up in 2006. But as I tell people, when I got out of the military in 2006 my captain came up to me and he said, "Martinez, don't leave, don't get out, stay in the Army." And I said to him, "Sir, with all due respect, just because I'm giving you my M-16 and just because I'm giving you my camouflage uniform, does not mean I cannot continue to serve." My new scars are my uniform. The words that come out of my mouth and my experiences, that's my new weapon, and I can be just as impactful outside of that uniform than I was in the uniform.

And that's what I've done. I've taken it upon myself to use my platform that I've worked hard to receive, but at the same time was given to me, to be able to use that to educate the world. It's great when I go to these speaking engagements, and everybody brings me in and they want me to talk about one aspect of my life or another, and the majority of it is *Dancing With The Stars*. I talk about dancing, but when I start telling people about facts and numbers and statistics, about when you talk about less than one percent serve in our military, when you talk about unfortunately the suicide rates of this year, when you talk about in the nation the big conversation is unemployment, and in the nation sometimes it reaches nine percent, and when you talk about our servicemembers it reaches 13 percent, when you talk about between the ages of 18 to 24 within a nation that it's 13 percent, within the servicemembers community it reaches 36 percent at times. The room gets really quiet after a while, and it's no longer about the two inch Latin heels and the rhinestones and the great dance you did on *Dancing With The Stars*. It becomes facts and it becomes life, of how me and everyone in this room and everyone in this country can do a lot more to take care of our men and women and their families. *(Applause)*

And how every single one of us should do a little bit more than what we have done. And that's why I'm excited to be here today with all of you, to be here with The American Legion. Because I remember when I came home for the first time after I was injured and I went back to Dalton, Georgia, The American Legion actually came up to me and my mother and said, you know, come over to the post and come hang out, and I had never been to The American Legion. I went over there and we played bingo with my mom. My

mom won. I didn't win anything, which I don't think is fair. That's my bone to pick with Dalton, Georgia, the post. I'm sorry, guys. Next time I come I want to win at bingo. *(Laughter)* You've got to figure this out. And instead of bingo I want it to be like my name or something, or a dancer or something like that. Bingo, dancer. That's only me.

But the presence that they had in my life, and how they allowed me to feel comfortable, and they educated me on the benefits and the resources, and they said whatever you want to do we're here for you, we've got your back. And I think that's an important thing for a lot of these young servicemembers that are now coming back home that feel like they're completely out of the loop and they don't belong, they're not worthy enough. Unfortunately there is this stigma when you talk about The American Legion or any other service group, that a lot of these young guys think that I'm fine by myself, I don't need that. But we do. We do need you. And you guys have had these programs in place for years, and the things that you've been doing for years, and fighting for your rights and your benefits. But what you've done in the process, and you might not even think about it, is you've cleared the way for me, for the young guy, to come through, and for this road to be smoother. And that's what I'm excited to do, is to be able to take the torch and to be able to help pave the road for the next set of servicemembers, for the young guys that are coming behind me, so their road can be a little bit easier than mine was.

You know, as I talked about how The American Legion had an impact on me coming home and that's actually one of the most important aspects of The American Legion, is mentoring and teaching the children of America about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, which as you know through your many youth programs and I want to stop now talking about me, and I would like to be able to introduce you to a group of young people who epitomize dedication and perseverance, just two of many things. Ladies and gentlemen, would you help me and put your hands together for your 2012 American Legion Youth Champions. *(Applause)*

The American Legion Youth Champions

ANNOUNCER: Tuscaloosa, Alabama, is home to the 2012 Boys Nation President. He hopes to attend the University of Alabama or Princeton University, and pursue a career in music or business. He's sponsored by Tuscaloosa Post 34. Please welcome your 2012 Boys Nation President, Jonathan Hess. (Applause)

2012 Boys Nation President
Jonathan Hess, Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Legionnaires, I stand before you as the representative of thousands of America's youth. However, these are no ordinary youth. These are young men who care about the leadership of this country and our country's place in the worlds of today and tomorrow. They are the participants of Boys State and Boys Nation. These youth who are with me today, they will tell you first about what they learned. The Boys State and Boys Nation programs show government through doing, not lecturing or teaching. In one week at Boys State hundreds of boys created staff and operating state governments, political parties, shaped their platform, presented their candidates. These candidates, once elected, wrote new laws in the legislature, created new policy in the executive branch, and ruled on cases in the courts. The Boys Nation program explained government even further, detailing the operations of the U.S. Senate, examining nationwide issues and teaching tolerance and compromise in a way our legislators on capital hill could only hope to achieve.

But the true benefit of Boys State and Boys Nation lies not in the information learned, but in the experiences and the friendships gained. Boys State participants who knew little about politics before the program now debate public policy to this day with their fellow Boys Staters. Participants in both programs made friendships that will last a lifetime. And perhaps most importantly, all those who attended Boys State and Boys Nation left with a sense of patriotism, citizenship and duty to our great nation.

I and all those whom I represent remain indebted to The American Legion. First for your service to our country even under fear of death, but also for your commitment to enriching us, America's youth. The Boys Nation program is often described as a week that shapes a lifetime. I say it is a week that moves the hearts of thousands, a week that inspires a generation, and through us a week that shapes our nation. Thank you for your service, and thank you for providing for the future of the United States of America. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The 2012 Eagle Scout of the Year earned his award by researching, planning and building a commemorative marker bed identifying the site of a fort built in Abington, Virginia, by Revolutionary War patriot Captain Joseph Black.

He plans to attend the University of Virginia, majoring in nano-medicine. Please welcome your Eagle Scout of the Year, Jason Dreyzehner. (Applause)

2012 Eagle Scout of the Year
Jason Dreyzehner, Abington, Virginia

I can only hope to speak as well as Mr. Martinez. That's a pretty incredible story. Thank you for honoring me with this award, and for all you do to support scouting in our nation. It is both an honor and a privilege to participate in The American Legion's Eagle Scout of Year Scholarship.

I have been very fortunate to have been brought up in a family where integrity, service, selflessness, commitment, compassion, learning and accomplishment were both valued and expected, not only by my parents, who have been excellent role models for me, but by my grandparents as well. I can thank my family for teaching me the value of liberty and justice, and I am humbled today to be in the presence of such an incredible group of people who have dedicated themselves and sacrificed so much in defense of those principles.

I'm an heir to a long family tradition of military service in defense of our Constitution. On my father's side, my grandfather was a Marine, an expert marksman and mortar man, and later an MP. He still volunteers in Marine service organizations. My father served as an Air Force flight surgeon for the 94th Fighter Squadron, the Hat In The Ring Gang. On my mother's side, my grandfather served as an Air Force biochemist, and was instrumental in developing micro-chemical analysis.

Scouting is truly an American treasure, and has given me such incredible opportunities and experiences during my youth. I feel it's my duty to pass on what I've gained from Scouting, and I recently discovered that part of that duty will include my involvement with University Scouts, a scouting organization for college-age students focused on giving back to our communities and serving the Scouting community. I am truly grateful for the Virginia Sons of The American Legion for sponsoring this new scouting organization throughout our country.

I believe scouting continues to be essential over 100 years after its birth in encouraging young people to live by the high standards of the Scout Law. A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent. And I'm always excited when I'm speaking with The American Legion because there is lots of people who are reciting it with me.

We take an oath to obey the Scout Law, to help other people at all times, and to keep ourselves physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight. And I don't believe those values will ever be outdated. Thank you very much for your service to our nation and to our communities. God Bless you and God bless your work. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: In competition in Colorado Springs a few weeks ago our next two Youth Champions took top prize in the 22nd Junior Air Rifle Championships. The Precision Champion, sponsored by the Jesse C. Lynch Memorial Post 71 in North Augusta, South Carolina, with a final score of 2457.5 out of 2509, is Colt Gross. (Applause)

2012 Junior Shooting Sports Precision Champion
Colt Gross, North Augusta, South Carolina

Good morning, American Legion. Three years ago, when I walked into my NG ROTC classroom in my freshman year in high school to begin my rifle team career, I never would have imagined it would have taken me this far. Not only has it taught me marksmanship; being in this program has taught me self-discipline, self control, and attention to detail. I'm so honored to be here speaking in front of you all this morning. I would like to thank The American Legion for sponsoring me, Post 71, my local post in South Carolina, and the Sons of The American Legion, for sponsoring my $2,500 scholarship. I love this sport, and I intend to keep on with it to hopefully help me get into a college and probably make a career out of something like this.

I would like to thank my parents, because I wouldn't be here if it weren't for them, especially my mom, for loving me and being here with me today. I would like to thank my high school NG ROTC, and my retired NG ROTC instructor, Captain Dave Meyers, and my rifle team coach for three years. He taught me everything I know about this sport. Last, I would like to thank God for allowing all of us to be here and get here safely. He is the reason that we are all here, and the reason that I continue to shoot on. I'll continue to make all of you proud the best that I can. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The Junior Shooting Sports Champion in the Sporter category is from Los Lunas, New Mexico, sponsored by John P. Elliot Post 85. Finishing with a final score of 2330.2 out of 2509 is your next Youth Champion, Cody Sanchez. (Applause)

2012 Junior Shooting Sports Sporter Champion
Cody Sanchez, Los Luna, New Mexico

Good morning. Everyone having a good time so far? My name is Cody Sanchez. I'm 16 years old. I'm home-schooled, I'm a junior, and I live in the small town of Los Lunas, New Mexico. First I would like to give thanks to God. Thank you, everyone, for being here and inviting me to this spectacular event. I would also like to thank The American Legion, Sons of The American Legion, and my hometown Post 85. Without them none of this would have been possible. So thank you.

The Legion Nationals held in Colorado at the Olympic Training Center was by far one of the best matches I've ever attended. From the Hilton Hotel that we stayed in, to the beautiful awards, to all the great friends that I made, everything was magnificent. I would also like to thank my dad, Kevin, for all the support he's given me, not complaining about having to stay home and work and take care of the farm, but he stays there and supports me so I can one day reach my goal of winning the Olympics. Dad, you're a great person. Again, thanks for all your support, and one day I'll be paying you back to fulfill your dreams.

I would also like to thank Joel Martin for getting me started and showing me the basics in shooting, as well as Toma Shaver. She first introduced me to shooting. One day while at our store she came by and asked if I would like to go shooting with her grandson, Devlin. I decided to give it a shot — no pun intended. *(Laughter)*

Well, it turns out I liked it and discovered I had a talent with the sport, and the rest is history. Today I'm ranked Number 1 Sporter Shooter in the nation, winning three national titles in the past three months: The NRA Nationals, the Three Position Junior Olympics, and The American Legion Nationals. *(Applause)*

I've won every match I've participated in in the past 14 months, setting many national records along the way. Last I would like to thank my mom, Victoria. She's been by my side from the beginning. She wears many hats. She's my mother, my teacher, my coach, and my best friend. Although she knew nothing about the sport and had only shot a rifle twice in her life, she knew I was excelling rapidly and needed a good coach fast. So she studied all the coaches' manuals, read all the rule books, and went to the Olympic Training Center to become a Level 2 coach. She was on a roll, talking to different coaches everywhere we went, and soaking up the advice like a sponge. She traveled thousands of miles with me to purchase a rifle, and thousands of miles across the country for all my competitions. Even though she has a very serious bout with her health, she stayed by my side, making sure I had what I needed, scheduling surgeries in between. What an amazing woman she is. Mom, I love you from the bottom of my heart, and I can't thank you enough. Mom and dad, can you please stand so you can be recognized? *(Applause)* Without God, my family, and those hardworking individuals putting on the matches, I wouldn't be where I am today. So thank you, and enjoy the rest of the conference, and God bless America. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Fifty-three young competitors gathered in Indianapolis for the 75th National Oratorical Scholarship Program this past April. The champion is a home-schooled incoming high school senior from Morgantown, Indiana. The title of her oration about the United States Constitution was "Maintaining Liberty, the People's Call." Please welcome Rebecca Frazer. (Applause)

2012 National Oratorical Contest First Place Winner
Rebecca Frazer, Morgantown, Indiana

After two wonderful years of competing in The American Legion Oratorical Contest, A Constitutional Speech Contest, I am convinced that whoever originally had the idea to form the contest 75 years ago must have been a genius. Through the incentive of much-needed scholarship money The American Legion has succeeded in inspiring a passion for the United States Constitution in thousands of teenagers all across America every single year. Instead of your stereotypical teenagers jamming to the latest hit songs or quoting lines from their favorite movies, at The American Legion Oratorical Contest you will find 53 passionate teenagers swapping favorite quotes from Patrick Henry and quoting amendments from the Constitution to each other. For weeks after the contest I would find myself absentmindedly quoting the 15th Amendment while I did chores around the house. Yes, many of us have become Constitution fans, but we have also become more enlightened, passionate citizens, better equipped as Americans. Now if only The American Legion could come up with a constitutional speech contest for congressmen, things might really start turning around. *(Laughter and applause)*

But in reality the Constitutional Speech Contest is turning our nation around today by changing my generation, a generation that will be in Congress 20 years from now. As an American I've always had a vague appreciation for all of our nation's veterans, but it

wasn't until I participated directly in The American Legion Oratorical Contest that I truly began to see just how generous of hearts all of you and your families have.

The amount of volunteer effort that goes into putting on the contest is absolutely tremendous. Especially Legion members from my post, district, zone and state, made an incredible impact on me by treating me as if I were their own daughter or granddaughter, supporting me, calling me, encouraging me, showing up at so many of my different competitions.

I would like to especially thank Mr. And Mrs. Langley, from my home state of Indiana, who encouraged me so many times along the way. And Mr. Larry Talon, from my district, who actually brought me roses at my competitions four different times. Thank you so much to the wonderful State of Indiana, who has been so supportive of me both years I participated in the contest. *(Applause)*

Not just on behalf of me, but as a representative for all the other students all across America who have benefitted from this wonderful contest, I would like to say thank you so much for investing in us and giving us the confidence, the skills, and the vital financial resources to be America's next leaders. Thank you.

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, your 2012 American Legion Youth Champions. (Applause)

Presentation of the Spirit of Service Awards
Fang A. Wong, New York, National Commander
Lieutenant General John F. Kelly, United States Marine Corps,
Senior Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense

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 Wong in presenting the award, is Lieutenant General John F. Kelly, the Senior Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense. Please welcome General Kelly to your convention. (Applause)

Our first Spirit of Service Award recipient contributes countless hours to a number of organizations in his community surrounding the Aberdeen Proving Ground where he is stationed. His support of bonus stage marathons has raised nearly $10,000 over five events for various charities. Many of his weekend hours are devoted to supporting the local League of Dreams program for special needs children; Special Olympics; Habitat For Humanity, and many other citizens and organizations. Please show your appreciation to Sergeant Joshua J. Boudreaux, United States Army. (Applause)

SERGEANT JOSHUA J. BOUDREAUX: Good morning Legionnaires. Thank you. When I first heard I would be receiving this prestigious award I was very surprised. Not surprised because I didn't know what the award was, not surprised because I wasn't sure what The American Legion did. I was just surprised of all the people in the Army that I would be selected. I've never felt that I did anything special when I was doing what I did. I just did what I felt was right or I did what I enjoy to do. Like I like to build, so I did Habitat For Humanity. I was also surprised that a boy from a small town in Louisiana was able to make it to this kind of level when, we're not really famous for anything, and I get here.

I do want to thank The American Legion as a whole, and the national committee for realizing what I did. I never thought I have done anything special, but it's always interesting to see how people see things in me that I never even imagined to see that they see the greatness or just my achievements where I just kind blow past them and say that I

just did what I did because I wanted to do it. So I want to thank The American Legion. I want to thank all the vets for paving the way with their sacrifice and everything they've been able to do for us as a country.

I want to thank my parents and my family for instilling the spirit of giving in me. They always did what they felt was right, and they always helped out whoever they could, and that was passed on to me. I would like to thank my friends in Maryland who gave me a chance to participate in those groups that helped me raise money for the many different organizations. Without them I'm almost positive I wouldn't be here right now.

I want to thank The American Legion Department of Louisiana who introduced me to The American Legion when I was in high school by presenting me with a Patriot Award. Once again something I was completely surprised to receive.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife. If she believes it or not, even though she's not here, if she ever sees this, she makes me a better person everyday just by being in my life. She pushes me to learn more than I ever thought that I could know.

So once again, I want to thank The American Legion, and I am very honored by this prestigious award. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our next recipient is a volunteer coordinator for many events with the Ronald McDonald House, and devotes many hours with Meals on Wheels; Habitat For Humanity; Adopt a Highway, and many cultural and charitable programs in and around his duty station at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. He is an active role model for young students at a nearby elementary school. Representing the United States Navy, please welcome Petty Officer Second Class Alvin Balthazar. (Applause)

PETTY OFFICER SECOND CLASS ALVIN BALTHAZAR: No words come into mind to describe this momentous occasion of being named the Spirit of Service Award winner for the United States Navy. Everyone here should know that I pride myself on strongly impacting my community and giving back to those in need.

At twenty-five I could have easily kept busy updating social media and the latest fashions, but my philosophy was that I could apply the same time and energy to positively affect the people and community. I know that one small act of random kindness can lead to a more loving world where selflessness will run in abundance. My heart is overjoyed whenever I'm feeding hungry children; driving nails into wood to build shelters; cleaning highways or playgrounds, and representing America's finest Navy doing so.

Growing up in Houston and the great state of Texas, I was molded and groomed by my mother, Vicky Jones, and grandmother Lorainne Victor. Memaw, thank you for the countless times that you took me to school and the late night homework assignments. You've given me your last, sometimes just to see me smile. From my broken ankle to my broken heart, you never turned your back on me, and I will always love you for that. Mom, I would like to thank you for teaching me humility. Allowing me to bump my head when I thought that I knew it all. The sweat, tears, time and money you invested in me, and at the time you saw something great in me, more than my teenage mind could imagine. Thank you for exposing me to a movie called *Men of Honor*, and calling me on frequent basis, saying, "Just hang in there, Cookie. I know you got it in you." You did a fine job raising me into a man, and I want to say thank you.

To my family, Ellen; Rhonda; René; Gregory; Brenda; J.C.; Lanau; Mary; Ray for always showing me unconditional love. Thank you. To my late grandfather, Eddie Balthazar, for taking me to the doughnut shop, bragging to all the elders about my accomplishments. Thank you. To Senior Chief James Hastings, George Banks, for taking the time out to submit me for this award. Thank you.

For those who have gone before me to defend freedom and democracy around the world. Thank you.

To my children A.J., Briana for giving me the strength to don that uniform on every day when I'm tired, sick, not driven or unmotivated, knowing that if I give a hundred percent they will always be taken care of. Thank you.

To my wife, Ashley, who always encourages me to aim for the top, regardless of what others might say or think. You're truly an inspiration to me and you embody what true love really means. Thank you for falling for a country boy from Houston, Texas. I love you, babe.

To my Lord and savior, Jesus Christ, all this wouldn't be possible without You. Thank you.

Lastly, to you, the audience, for listening. Remember that one small act of random kindness can lead to a more loving world where selflessness will run in abundance. I challenge not only you, you, you or you in the back, but all of you to make a difference. The world is counting on you. Thank you and "Hooyah Navy." *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our next award is given to a young man who moved to the United States in 2002 from his native Ecuador and enlisted in the United States Marine Corps two years later. In addition to serving his adopted country, he's selflessly serves his community in and around his duty station in Okinawa. He is active with the Boy Scouts; a children's orphanage and teaching tennis to children both on and off base. Please give a rousing Marine Corps welcome to Sergeant Juan Vallejomunoz. (Applause)

SERGEANT JUAN VALLEJOMUNOZ: Good morning, general. Good morning commander, Legionnaires, veterans, fellow servicemembers, ladies and gentlemen. I'm very humble as I receive this award. As a Marine we get taught to do things not for glamour, but because it's the right thing to do. While I took my time to volunteer in order to help others, I wasn't thinking what I was going to benefit from it, but what I could do serve others.

As humans, we have the capability to do great things, amazing things for the sake of someone or something other than ourselves. And smiles are worth more than a million things that you can think of.

I want to thank my beautiful wife, unfortunately she's not able to be here, she's back in Japan, for being very supportive of me; always being there; standing by my side.

I want to thank my mom, my dad, and my family, whose always been there to support me, to give me a hand. Been away from the country for eight years and they're still right next to me.

Lastly, not least, I want to thank the Marine Corps, especially those who shaped me into the man you see here today. Thank you very much for everything. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our next recipient is active as an organizer and mentor for the Drug Education for youth program, established at Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base in Kings Bay, Georgia, where he's stationed. He also volunteers to represent his service in local parades and events, and volunteers at local animal shelters; the YMCA and many causes in his community. Here representing the United States Coast Guard, is Petty Officer Second Class Tyler Arrowood. (Applause)

PETTY OFFICER SECOND CLASS TYLER ARROWOOD: Good morning everybody. Unfortunately I don't have a speech or anything like my comrades here. What they said was excellent.

When I first joined the military, I was told you never volunteer for anything. I think a lot of you could probably attest to that. Fortunately, I didn't get that call. If they asked

for a volunteer, I'm the one with my hand in the air. It's what my parents, my grandparents, my whole family has instilled in me my whole life, that there are people out there that need a hand. They need help. And that's all it is, everything I do is just people helping people, it's the way I think it should be.

I would like to thank everyone here today. Throughout my time the last few days I've had a lot of people come up to me and thank me for my service. And I'm here serving you. So I would like to thank everybody out here in the audience for your service and for what you do.

I would like to thank my family, and most especially my wife here in the front row who I have dragged to countless events, parties, anything that has to do with being a volunteer, and I always get the same look from her: "Oh, really again?" And the fact that I spring a lot of things on her short notice, "Hey, honey, you need to find a cocktail dress. We have a party to be at in two hours. I'm doing the color guard." That's not the thing to do. I've learned that being a newly married man.

So thank you very much for this award. Thank everybody out there, especially my great state of Iowa which I'm originally from. I would like to thank everybody here behind me. Semper Paratus. God bless. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: While stationed in the Washington D.C. area, our next recipient spent many hours honoring our fellow veterans, through volunteering to clean up and restore many of the memorials, including the Vietnam, Korea and World War II memorials. He has devoted his talents and time to conduct and participate in numerous fundraisers, and he is a mentor and role model through programs such as Ronald McDonald House, and the TAPS Program, and in youth sports programs. Please congratulate our Spirit of Service Award recipient representing the United States Air Force, Staff Sergeant Chris Pearson. (Applause)

STAFF SERGEANT CHRIS PEARSON: First of all I would like to say good morning. And I also would like to thank God for being here. Also I would like to thank Commander Wong for having me here, and I'm just humble and honored to be here representing the greatest fighting power, air power in the world, the United States Air Force. To all American Legion members, I just want to say thank you. This weekend has been great, and I've heard so many great stories from so many different services. It's just great to see that all services can come together and be proud; have a good time, and smile.

How would I rate this weekend? I would use the Air Force core value: Service before self. In which me and my comrades in the back here have all shown, and in this room, everyone has shown service before self. I feel if we continue to do that, we will continue to be the greatest country in the world, hands down.

I'm so honored and blessed to be standing here and I would like to thank so many people. First I would like to thank my supervisor, Sergeant Wheatly, who has taken the time, she could be doing anything, but she's here with me. I would like for her to stand so she could be recognized. *(Applause)*

I also would like to thank my wing man for being here. She could be at home helping her daughter for her first day of school but she chose to be here with me. So I would like her to stand and be recognized also. *(Applause)*

As my mind goes through so many thoughts right now, and I look out into the audience, I'm just honored and so blessed just to be a room full of our heroes, past, present and future. And that future stands with me to continue the legacy that you guys have set for us. And I promise and I pledge to The American Legion that as long as I have air in my body, I will carry on this great legacy that was started 95 years ago.

And I just want to say thank you for all you guys have done. You have thanked us, so now I'm thanking you. Thank you. Have a good one, and God bless America.

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, please show your appreciation to the 2012 American Legion Spirit of Service Award winners. (Standing applause)

MR. MARTINEZ: Give it up one more time for everybody that came up to the podium. Absolutely. *(Applause)* Yesterday we did a little rehearsal just so that way everybody knew where you were going to be, and once I became an actor, that's the only way I operate now, is you got to tell me where to go; tell me what to do.

But they told me that the stories that I was going to hear were possibly going to impact what I was going to say to conclude, and they were absolutely right. Such powerful stories from the Youth Champions, and let me congratulate every single one of you. I mean, it's in a world where sometimes you see our youth influenced by a lot of negative things and things that don't necessarily give them the tools to be a positive impact in this country and this society and for our future I leave here with hope that with the five of you representing the countless amount that are out there doing great things, that this country is definitely in a good place and our future is going to be in a great place.

And for everyone behind them, you know, representing all different branches, great job guys. And just to be able to teach people around you every single day, that even though you do serve in the military, you can also serve outside of it. It's just great to be able to see that. But those are the things that I love to do and love to witness in the midst of my travels. Travelling is hard but it's nice when you get an opportunity to be amongst these individuals and hear what they continue to do; what they have done, and what they inspire to do. It's one of the most touching and most moving, moving things.

When you see the caliber of people you've honored on this stage this morning, you have to be proud of everything that you have done. The American Legion, every single individual post, every single sponsor, every single supporter, whether it's a wife or a mother. Which, by the way, Cody, I'm afraid of your mother. I'm afraid of you. If you could teach him to shoot, I'm not going to mess with you. I'm not worried about your husband. I'm worried about you. I think I could take him. I don't know about you. I'm going to leave you alone. *(Laughter)*

It's like I never knew how to really describe my mother to people until I joined the military and it made complete sense. I was in basic training, and one day we went out to training and they put this little round thing in my right hand and my drill sergeant said, "Okay. Throw it, and when you throw it, you get back down. Put your head between your knees and don't get up and look and see what it's going to do. It's nothing special. Just get back down." I have to take this thing and what it was of course was a grenade. I pulled the pin and I throw it and as immediately as I throw it, I get down, but I have to get back up and see what it's going to do. And all of a sudden I see this big boom, and I think to myself, wow, that's it. That's my mother. My mom is four foot eleven. She's like a grenade. She's so small she can fit in my hand, but the minute you pull that pin, you have three seconds to get the hell away. And somehow she still makes an impact. So my hat is off to you. *(Laughter and applause)* That's my mom. A grenade.

Listen, it really was a pleasure for me to be here with every single one of you, to be able to share a part of your morning with you and to be able to witness these amazing stories of people who have done great things in their communities. And to be here with The American Legion and to continue to learn about what you guys do day in and day out, and how you guys all come together to say as one, "We will defeat the enemy." Whether the enemy is unemployment; whether the enemy is getting benefits or resources for our servicemembers; whether the enemy is suicide. Whatever the enemy may be, we can defeat that enemy.

And as you said, it's great to be able to see and with giving each other hard times of the Air Force does this; Navy does this; Army does this; Marines does this; Coast Guard. We all give each other a hard time but it's great to be able to see all the branches come together and be unified as one, and to fight this war that we fight here back home when guys come home. *(Applause)*

Now I want to thank you again for the opportunity and being a great audience and just seeing the magnificent group of individuals you have honored here is proof that what you are doing is relevant, and it's good, and it making an impact in a positive way. And sometimes in life we love to see reward, but reward is not necessarily seen immediately.

And I hope that with these examples on this stage and for the rest of the conference, you guys will continue to see the examples of all the work that you put in, and all the things that, you know, you try to implement into your community and into the youth programs. So continue to do those things.

And I would just like to stay on behalf of a grateful nation, I thank you all for your service to America both in the uniform, and of course in your communities. It was a pleasure to be here with every single one of you, and please know that whatever I do from this point on, I am one of your brothers and you are one of my brothers, and all of you out there are one of my sisters. So thank you again, and we'll fight this enemy together and we'll defeat it together. Thank you guys. Have a great conference. *(Standing applause)*

...At this time The American Legion watched a video and singing by Michael Peterson "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother." (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Ladies and gentlemen, Michael Peterson, singing, *He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother*.

Congratulations once again to our American Legion Youth Champions and to our Spirit of Service Award recipients. By the way, all of our Spirit of Service recipients are now members of The American Legion. Welcome. *(Applause)*

And to our brother, J.R., thank you for your words of inspiration. Please join me at the podium. Now that you have us all motivated, we want to make sure that you too do your part. Here is your paid membership to The American Legion Post 112 in your hometown of Dalton, Georgia; free tickets for a bingo game. *(Laughter)*

Welcome to The American Legion. Thank you for being with us today. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Born and raised in Boston, our next guest enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in 1970. After serving in an infantry company with the 2nd Marine Division at Camp Lajeune, he was discharged as a sergeant in 1972. He was commissioned as an officer four years later after graduating from the University of Massachusetts in 1976. A passionate spokesman for our troops service and sacrifice to end the Global War on Terrorism, Lieutenant General Kelly was previously the commanding general, ONE Marine Expeditionary Force Forward. The command deployed to Iraq in early 2008 for a year-long mission. He also commanded Marine Forces Reserve and Marine Force North from October 2009 to March 2011. He assumed his current position as the senior military assistant to the Secretary of Defense in March of 2011. Ladies and gentlemen, please extend a warm welcome to Lieutenant General John F. Kelly. *(Applause)*

Address: Lieutenant General John F. Kelly, United States Marine Corps
Senior Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense

Well, thanks very much, commander. I want to open by saying certainly how privileged I am to be here today and speak to The American Legion. Both of my boys, by

the way, were Boys State products from The American Legion. I can remember how proud they were of that. *(Applause)*

Virtually every time I speak or go to an event like this someone will come up and ask me if my father was a general. I don't know why they draw that conclusion. I tell them that my father worked two jobs all his life after World War II. He was a postman and he worked for the railroad. He was drafted in 1940 in the first peacetime draft, and was stationed in Massachusetts where he was from, and on a weekend in December he was nearing the end of his enlistment, went home to Boston for the weekend, and took the train back down from Boston to Cape Cod where he was stationed in the old Edwards Army Base, and by the time he got back to the barracks, all of his buddies were gathered around the radio and they were listening to the reports of the attack on Pearl Harbor. And like his buddies, and the rest of the country, I'm sure he was outraged and saddened by the loss; listened to the radio for a little while and then went in to his see his first sergeant who was apparently somewhere from the South. Now, if you're from Massachusetts, that could be Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York. *(Laughter)*

But he went to his first sergeant and he was about three months from his discharge having been drafted, and he said, "First Sergeant, this attack on Pearl Harbor doesn't get in the way of my discharge, does it?" And the first sergeant said, I guess in a southern accent, my father would always try to mimic, "Kelly, have you ever heard the word duration?" And off to the South Pacific he went for five years and never came home. I guess it did affect his discharge.

Again, I'm very privileged to be here today. Your commander asked me to cover a few topics, perhaps make some comments about the war certainly, about the threats against America, and certainly about the soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, coast guardsmen and their families that serve our country.

Everyone in this room of course knows how this war came to us about a decade ago when 19 terrorists flew airplanes into the Pentagon and two of the buildings, the trade towers up in New York, and killed 3,000 of our countrymen, all of them were innocent. All of them were undeserved of such a death.

Since then we have had many, many tangible successes against our enemies, due to the FBI, CIA and other intelligence agencies, and mostly the U.S. military. We've got him back on his heels. He's gone to ground. He's seeking other safe havens to include Somalia, Yemen, North Africa, Europe, and even the United States. He's become harder to detect because he's become decentralized, and consequently harder to kill. But he can't hide from us. Our problem is, we need to be 100 percent effective against him every day. He only has to occasionally be successful.

There's other threats against us of course. There's countries all over the globe that wish us ill. Many of them want to become nuclear capable and ballistic missile capable. Some of them already are. Finding either state and non-state actors who are desperately everyday trying to acquire nuclear and biological weapons, for God knows what purpose.

We didn't start this fight. It came to us motivated by a visceral loathing of everything we are. It will not end until our adversaries and their allies around the world, state and non-state alike, understand that we will never lose our faith or our courage as a people. Our enemy is savage; offers absolutely no quarter; has a single focus, and that is to either kill every one of us here at home or enslave us with the sick form of extremism that serves no God and no purpose that any decent man or woman could ever understand. I don't why they hate us and I don't care. But we are America and we must prevail. *(Applause)* We remain mankind's best hope for the future. Not them. To him, this is not about our friendship with Israel, or about oil or about empire or resources or jobs or economic opportunity in the Middle East. It's about us as a people. About our freedoms and the way we worship our God. It's about the value and dignity we place on human life and our intense belief in the inherent value of every man, every woman, every child, and

their equality in the eyes of God and under the law. It's about how we live our lives and raise our children in the privacy of our own homes. It's about life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness that all men are created equal and they're endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights. You know the words. As Americans, we hold these truths to be self-evident. We know them in our hearts and in our souls. Our enemies do not. We cherish what our ancestors worked for, fought for, and sometimes died to give us. He loathes who we are. These are irreconcilable positions. There is no compromise. Although we remain in a life and death struggle against an evil so intolerant, it's hard for you to imagine unless you've seen it as many of us have up close.

America as a whole today is certainly not at war. Not as a country, not as a people. Only a tiny fraction of American families fear all day and everyday a knock at the door that will shatter their lives. They bear this faith of sacrifice with grace and honor, and they carry it for the rest of the nation. It is their sons and their daughters who serve who continue to believe in this country enough to put their lives in harm's way without thought of personal gain, they willingly pay in full the bill that comes with being free, not only for themselves, but for our country and the entire world.

A friend of mine wrote me a couple years ago on the topic. He said, to quote him, "Service to and sacrifice for the nation has become a legacy affair for a relatively small number of families. This nation is blessed to have families who are willing to accept the responsibility, and endure the sacrifices that sustain a way of life cherished by many, but sustained by few."

While some think, however, that we've produced yet another generation of materialistic and self-absorbed young people, we can thankfully watch every day in wonderment of those who serve or have served, asking not what their country can do for them, but always, and with their lives, what they can do for America. *(Applause)*

And while fighting and dying for us they have learned what every American used to know. Used to hold in his or her heart, used to be taught in our schools, and at their mother's knee, that the real strength of America does not come from making a religion of diversity or emphasizing the differences among us. On the contrary, they have come to a profound understanding of what our founders, our forefathers and our foremothers understood as they built a nation that was once proudly referred to as a melting pot.

Our armed forces, the ultimate most successful institution of American diversity, servicemembers have come to understand the simple fact that America's strength was and should be again a people stitched together by a shared sense of history, values, customs, hopes and dreams that unite us.

There's great power in us as individuals, but even greater power in individuals who voluntarily work together and support each other. They also know that the opposite is true, that we're weakened and could lose what we have if we continue down a path identifying as hyphenated Americans or closed cultural groups focusing on what's in it for me.

In spite of the efforts of those who make their living and often fill their pockets driving wedges between Americans based on race or religion; ethnicity, our service men and women discover early and on their own while looking at their comrades standing with them in the ranks, that it's not about the color on the outside, but about the character on the inside. *(Applause)*

That it's not about where on earth you were born, but only why you came to America, and what you did when you got here. It's not about the god you worship, if you worship any god at all, but you will respect the right of your neighbor to honor any god that he or she damn well pleases. *(Applause)*

It's not about what you as an individual can achieve, but all about achieving together as a people, as friends and neighbors for the common good. There is an exceptionalism about America, and we should treasure who we are and why we are extraordinary. We

should not be embarrassed about who we are or give excuses about what we have. Those of us who serve in the armed forces, or who have served in the armed forces, understand to our DNA these truths. Unfortunately, so many of our countrymen and women lack an appreciation for them today.

All of us need to think of ourselves first and foremost as people who should be moving forward together, helping each other, willing to take up any challenge. And only then a far distant second is what's in it for me. Rich or poor, black, white, Asian or brown, Christians, Muslims, Sikh or Jew, we are Americans. We should be proud of that and we should act like it. *(Applause)*

Finally, I want to talk a little bit about the terrible price some American homes have paid in the defense of this country. Over 6,000 families have paid the fullest measure in the last 10 years. They have endured and experienced, the most often started with the knock on the door, or ring of the door bell in the very early morning hours by a casualty officer who had been sitting outside the house waiting anxiously for hours for the first lights to come on. He dreaded the mission he had been assigned that day. He was not glad to be there, but he's privileged to be there. It's a duty that is considered sacred. It is an honor to be called to do it.

The minute whoever answered the door that morning, saw him standing there, they knew before he uttered his first word they knew. After that it varies. The first who received the word typically would possibly go up and wake a wife up and break her heart. Others had to drive to their daughter's place of work and break her heart. Tell her about her brother now gone. Then calls had to be made to other children, siblings, uncles, the rest of the family. It's hard to get through it but they do somehow. They don't have a choice. Every experience is different, but at the end it's all exactly the same: A family is brought to its knees and a grief that is unexpectedly physical in its impact; unbearable to the mind, and agonizing to the heart. A grief that never ever goes away, not even with the passage of time.

Then you wait. You have to wait patiently, there's little else you can do, as the military with precision and reverence returns the cherished loved one home to the country they served, to rest in the good earth of the America they loved.

There are twenty-four million Americans living today. Forty-five million have served the Colors since the beginning of the republic. A million have died in its defense. All of them, but particularly the fallen, are part of the legend that God willing will never end our America.

The nine years that those lost in this war, come out of the America that no longer seems to value commitment, self-reliance and selfless dedication to a cause. But they did. Rather it seems many of our countrymen today are more interested in what America can do for them, than in serving the nation, protecting its people and the principles for which it stands. But they did.

Most of America's casualties today were only nine or ten years old on 9/11. A decade later, often to their entire family's surprise, they astonished everyone when after stirring up the courage they marched into the room and informed all they decided to join. To serve. Most parents I've spoken to asked themselves at that moment: "Where the hell did that come from? I never raised her to go into the service; never thought of it. Never wanted him to go to war. No parent would ever want that. Oh my God, what if she has to go overseas? What if he is injured, killed?" I know my wife and I asked that very question to ourselves twice.

In every case, you can be sure their families and friends never looked at him or her again in exactly the same way, particularly if the next thing out their mouth was, and I want to be a soldier or a Navy corpsman or a Marine. Aside from everything else these families have endured in the weeks and months and even years since their loss, they are proud of the decision their loved one made to serve this country, of their commitment or

their actions on the battlefield; proud they stepped forward when so many others never even considered it; proud that by this one very personal decision to serve a cause higher than themselves, regardless of the outcome to them personally. They gave meaning to two questions that have over centuries defined the dedication of free and righteous men and women in the fight against wickedness: If not me dad, who? If not now mom, when?

If you do not have citizens willing to not only ask these kind of questions but act on them, we would have lost in our struggle for independence against the oppression of the British Empire. Slavery might never have been eradicated from our shores and the rights of all Americans under the law, I think would still be just a dream. The Nazis would have triumphed; death camps never liberated or eliminated; untold millions never saved from the gas chambers, from the furnaces. Communism, the scourge that murdered over a hundred million human beings and sucked the spirit out of billions more in its 70 year life span would never have been thrown onto the dust bin of history where it always belonged.

And today, the high tide of Islamic intolerance and extremism, an empire of hate that Osama Bin Laden himself proclaimed would last forever, only lasted a few days after 9/11 once our country woke up and took the fight to them on their home turf. That is the kind of young people that come from the one percent of American families. As proud of their having stepped forward as they are forever sad of having lost them. The comforting news to our countrymen who decided to sit it out and watch in amazement from the sidelines of what their soldiers, sailors, coastguardsmen and Marines do every day for them in this war, is that they are as good, our service people, as any whoever came before them in our history. As good as what their fathers and grandfathers did in the wars they had to fight for America, and like those who came before them, they are not born killers. Rather, they are overwhelmingly good and descent kids, who without thought of self, perform remarkable and most often unsung acts of bravery, to a cause that they decided was bigger and more important than they are themselves.

Any one of them could have done something more self-serving, but they didn't. They chose to serve knowing full well a vicious war was in their future. They welcomed the most basic and esteemed responsibility of the citizen, the defense of country, men women of their spirit know no other way. They are the best of the best of their generation, and in their unselfishness put America with all its current divisiveness ahead of themselves, betting on the come and the wisdom and the greatness of the American people.

All of them are heroes for simply stepping forward, and our country owes a debt it can never repay, and the only reward they ask for ironically, the only legacy they hope for, is that the nation not forget what they did. That we appreciate the very country they defended and the freedoms they fought and died for.

I've known a few of them personally but I can say without hesitation and in many ways I knew them all very, very well. I certainly did not share in the joy of their birth. I also was not at church when they were baptized, or years later when they received first holy communion, confirmation or were married. I wasn't there for the first day of school or their first job or their first date or prom, or the graduation from high school or college. In some respects, however, I knew them better than their families, because in ten thousand conversations over the years as both an officer and an NCO, in peacetime and war, I was privileged and touched when they talked to me about their parents and their families they loved and missed so much. About their favorite uncle who kicked them in the ass when they needed it; or the respected grandparent who lived with them; about the older brother that took care of them and showed them how to use a pocket knife, or a kid sister they worshipped and looked out for every day on the way home from school; about the hometowns they could not wait to get back to someday; about the girl they wanted to

marry or already had; and how they wanted a family of their own and kids that would look up to them as they did their folks.

The biggest difference however in the way I knew them was I was with them in combat. I've seen them literally turn the intangibles of commitment, bravery and selfless devotion into real and meaningful action. On my three tours in this war I never saw one hesitate or do anything other than lean into the fire with no apparent fear of death or injury; take the fight to those who would do you harm. Day after day I witnessed them without hesitation climb into the trucks or helicopters and depart the wire on foot patrol. And do it as if they were born to it: Were indestructible, were without fear.

They learned early, however, as anyone who has truly experienced combat does, is that fear is always with you. They also know firsthand how random combat is; how you have absolutely no control over whether you live or die; what can happen to you or your best friend, or one of your men, could be your squad leader or lieutenant, what can happen in an instant. But they still go. Many see it up close and are very personal every day. It's frightening. It's horrible. But still they go. Their fear is at times all consuming, but that's what courage is, I think. Pushing through the dread and going to do ones duty regardless of the danger.

Their parents likely never saw that side of them growing up. But I saw it every day. Their families likely did not know them as one of the bravest, most courageous and committed young people our society produces. But I can attest to it personally.

As terrifying as combat is when it starts, and explosions and traces are everywhere and there's no rational reason on this earth for a man or woman to do anything but run away in horror, or find a hole to hide in and pray to God to make it stop, they don't. When no one would call them coward for cowering behind a wall or shivering in panic in a bunker slaved to the most basic to all the instincts, survival, none of them do. When the calls for the corpsmen and medic are shouted from the mouths of young kids who know they will soon be with their God. When seconds seem like hours and it all becomes slow motion and fast forwarded at the same time, and the only sensible act is to stop, get down and save yourself, they never did. It doesn't matter if it's a gun fight, an IED, a suicide bomber, mortar or rocket attack, or all of it, all at once. They are simply magnificent.

And the parents and loved ones of those who never come home, can take comfort in the fact that when they fell they were not alone. When they went, they were surrounded by the finest men and women on this earth, their buddies, who desperately tried to save their lives while holding their hands and staring into their eyes; praying with them; listening to their little stories about their hometowns or their families until they were gone. They were not alone.

And when the spirit left them in God and in His infinite wisdom took them to His bosom, the military family lovingly wrapped him in whatever passed for a shroud and took them home. And on this their last journey they were never alone. At every stop along the way they were treated with the greatest respect in reverence to a fallen hero until members of the service they proudly joined, brought them back to whatever corner of America they came from.

Well over six thousand now have died, two thousand in Afghanistan. Their families have been sentenced to a life of dealing with their loss for the rest of their own lives. Thousands more have suffered wounds since it all started, but like anyone who loses life or limb while serving others, they are not victims. As young as they are, they knew exactly what they are about, and were doing exactly what they wanted to do. Those with a less sense of service to the nation will never understand it when men and women of integrity step forward and look danger and adversity straight in the eye, refusing to blink, or give ground even to their own deaths.

The protected can't begin to understand the price paid so they and their families can sleep safe at night. What they are missing, however, was the protected will never

understand is the sense of commitment; the sense of joy; the sense of honor serving ones country in uniform gives.

In my hundreds of trips to military hospitals around the country since 2003 and since the start of the war, I visited with many hundreds of grievously wounded American kids and their families. No matter how battered they were, no matter how many arms or legs they'd lost, their families thanked God they'd come home to them alive. But they also very quietly asked, "Was it worth it?" I have never tried to answer that question. I couldn't. It wasn't one of my boys laying there. I couldn't begin to fathom the innermost thoughts of a parent who stood and watched throughout the night at the bedside of someone that they loved so much, now so terribly wounded. Who was I to offer an opinion?

In my dozens of conversations with families of the fallen at Dover or at gravesides at Arlington or at other gatherings, I've been similarly asked, "Was is it worth it?" Worth the life of someone so dear, that they brought into the world, raised and nurtured so lovingly and so much to look forward to seeing grow up, find a wonderful husband or wife, and give them grandchildren to spoil. Again, I had no right to reply, because as hard as I tried to understand what the immensity of their loss must be, and the depth of the sorrow in their heart, I knew it was impossible. My sense then was, it was inconceivable for anyone to understand that has not had his own heart pierced with such sadness. I learned I was right.

Before I go, I just want to relate a quick story to you. To me it summarizes what our soldiers, sailors, airmen, coastguardsmen and Marines are all about. It happens to be about a Marine battalion, but it could be any ship at sea, any air force squadron, any army unit in the fight, certainly any Marine unit.

I just started to work for Secretary Bob Gates, he's gone now, but I just started working for him. My first day with him we flew to Kabul; got on a Marine C-130; flew down to Camp Leatherneck and got on a Marine V-22 and flew down to a very, very small forward operating base that happened to be the headquarters position of the Third Battalion Fifth Marines. My son had served in Three-Five only a few months before. In September, the Marines in 2010 had just relieved the British. By intercepts and intelligence, the Taliban immediately understood there was a new bunch of crazy men in town as they put it. They complained to their commanders in Pakistan that they were being hunted relentlessly by these Marines, and they were losing and needed help. The Marines and the Taliban from the day they met decided they didn't like each other very much, and fought for months like two wild animals locked in a cage. The Islamists fought and offered no quarter. The Marines fought better, and since in their 236 year history, they have never learned the definition of surrender, that wasn't on the table. *(Applause)*

Three-Five took it on the chin on some days, but they kept their honor clean and fought and won. We travelled down to Three-Five, Secretary Gates and I, to say thanks to that battalion, that by then had lost more men, killed and wounded than any other battalion in the war. By our arrival, however, they were masters of the valley. As I was the one who brought Mr. Gates on subsequent visits, we always liked to address a large group, about a hundred, hundred fifty Marines were brought together, many of them from the outlying patrol bases and FOBS, everyone of which in the Sangin River Valley was under siege at that time, these guys were in continuous contact. No amenities whatsoever. No one in that connection, no telephones, no air conditioners, no showers, no laundry. From a distance it smelled almost like barnyards animals. But you weren't sure until you got close to them and then you realized it was them that actually smelled that bad. When you got close to them you realized however that their shaves were close and their weapons were immaculate. These were tough men mostly in their late teens and very early twenties, but all of them nearing old age for the time they'd spent in Sangin,

Afghanistan. They only needed ammunition, something to eat and comradeship, all of which they were rich in.

In any event, the secretary then asked, after he had talked to the larger group as he always did, to sit down with eight or ten, junior Marines in this case, and he'd always asked them what's on their minds. And of course at that point they are all looking in every direction but towards him. But he picked one out that made a mistake of taking a peek and making eye contact with the Secretary of Defense, he said, "What do you do here, Marine?" After a few awkward moments, he said, "Sir, we fight the Taliban." Another awkward looking directly at me, "And sometimes they get us, sir. But most of the time we get them." And another added, "That's all right, sir, because that's what Marines do."

A few more questions and Mr. Gates asked, "Okay, you guys, you've got the Secretary of Defense here sitting with you. This is your chance. What can I do for you?" Silence. "Come on fellows, what can I do for you," the secretary said. One answered, he was maybe nineteen, he said, "Sir, don't let them forget what we did here. Don't let them ever forget what we did here, and the friends that will never get home."

God bless America, ladies and gentlemen, and to our fallen, may they rest in peace, and may all of us who loved them find peace and understanding in their sacrifice, that the America they so loved and protected and gave they lives for, is forever worthy of their sacrifice, of this I pray. Semper Fidelis. Thank you. *(Standing applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The man who has led the Sons of The American Legion over the past 12 months is an honorary life member of Squadron 4 in Lakeland, Florida. Eligible for membership through his grandfather's World War II service and father's Vietnam service, he has served in the Sons for 34 years. In 2004, during 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 20 years and have two teenage daughters. He is a dedicated advocate for veterans' issues and American Legion programs. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Past National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion James K. Roberts, III. (*Applause)*

Greetings: James K. Roberts, III, Florida
Past National Commander, Sons of The American Legion

Wow. Mr. Commander, if I may take a point of personal privilege, it's been a year ago this week that I lost my father due to complications from a stroke that he had suffered last year, and as such I made my dad a distinguished guest at our Minneapolis National Convention. I've carried his distinguished guest badge with me everywhere I go, and I would like to leave that here as I give my remarks.

Delegates, commander, officers, my fellow members of The American Legion family, good morning. I've got to tell you that I am so honored and privileged to have served this past year as the national commander for the Sons of The American Legion, and I want to thank you all for your service, all of our veterans in the audience. It's because of the work that you did during your service to our country, the sacrifices that your family made during that service, that's given me and members of the Sons of The American Legion throughout the country to be able to do what we do here this week in Indianapolis, and what we do across this great nation every day.

Early on I will tell you that we didn't have a great opportunity to meet starting out, Commander Fang and I and President Kris as candidates. We had an opportunity to travel and get to see each other every so often. But those couple of times that we did have an

opportunity to meet, we understood that the great thing was in listening to each other's messages they were different but the same. Different, but the same.

This year we all serve with pride, because in the spirit of God and country we serve our veterans, our militaries and their families. And for the Sons this year our mission was to get back to blue, honoring all of those who currently serve and those who have served.

And it's been a great year traveling with our American Legion family, walking the walk and talking the talk, because we have had a lot of fun talking about all of the good things and seeing all of the good things that we do as a Legion family together, The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary, the Sons of The American Legion and The American Legion Riders. And for this year I'm grateful.

But I got to tell you some of the really cool things that the Sons of The American Legion have done this year, because your Sons have been working really hard, and we have had a banner year. We are doing something this year to get back to blue, which is the level where we wear blue hats and blue name tags, and all we needed to do was three things: Communicate, be committed, and recognize those folks who are doing good things. Communication was easy. All we got to do is talk to one another and we'll accomplish a lot. And we did. We used YouTube, we used Facebook, we used Twitter, and a lot of other things. We even got an application, an Android and iPhone app. Imagine that, the Sons of The American Legion, there is an app for that.

But our commitment to our American Legion family and our programs to the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Program, your Sons have given over 412,000 volunteer hours. That's 14,000 visits, and over $5,000,000 in cash and gifts to the VA&R programs. *(Applause)*

For our Americanism programs this year the Sons of The American Legion have contributed over $41,000 to the National Emergency Fund, and a total over $2.2 million with 602,000 hours in support of our Americanism programs, Boys State, Boys Nation, the whole nine yards. *(Applause)*

Membership was great this year. We actually obtained our 100 percent in membership before we got to the convention. I was really happy about that. 348,000 members is what we've got so far this year, and we're only trying to get to 350,000. I know we're going to get there before that last report. But what is most important to the Sons of The American Legion is all of our programs, but we do a lot for our children and youth. And the Sons of The American Legion this year maintained our status as the largest contributor to the Child Welfare Foundation with 26,814 hours of service, and over $506,000 to The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. *(Applause)*

And our totals for The American Legion Children and Youth programs this year were to the tune of $9.7 million, and over 160,000 hours of service in our Children and Youth programs. *(Applause)*

So that is our commitment to you, The American Legion, your programs, because we too are a program of the Legion, and I thank you for allowing us to be able to do that. However, I do have to just recognize a couple of groups. First I would like to thank Post 4, my Legion family back home in Lakeland, Florida, for giving me the opportunity and understanding when I've been away for the last couple of years. My Department of Florida American Legion family, it's good to see you down in front. *(Cheers)*

Thank you for giving me all those lessons growing up. I have been a member for 35 years, and I can tell you that one of the two things they told me is the higher you go, the more people you work for. That's true. And always remember where you came from. And I do. Because guess what, I'm coming home. And I want to thank each and every one of you. But to our SAL members, how many dual members are SAL members in the audience? Please stand. *(Applause)* For you dual members I'll steal something from Past Commander Jimmy Foster. "If you're not dual, you're not cool." So thanks for being cool.

And thank you for everything that you've done to help support the Sons of The American Legion this year. We've had a great year, and I'm looking forward to the future, because now as a past commander that's what I get to focus on, the work with our kids, our mentoring, and looking for the next guy that is going to come and take my place later on. Thank you all very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Our nation's 44th Commander-in-Chief has said that, and I quote, "We have a sacred trust with those who wear the uniform of the United States of America." The American Legion wholeheartedly agrees. As president he is challenging American businesses to hire 100,000 new veterans and their spouses by 2013. His plan offers up to a $5,600 tax credit to businesses that hire unemployed veterans. It also includes a $9,600 wounded warrior tax credit for businesses that hire disabled veterans. President Obama recently took time to personally greet all of our participants at The American Legion Boys Nation and The American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation. Due to his demanding schedule, the President of the United States could not join us today. So please turn your attention to the video monitors for his message.

Greetings: The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States

Hello Legionnaires. I was honored to join you last year in Minneapolis. I was proud to welcome Commander Wong to the Oval Office earlier this year. And although I can't be with you in Indianapolis, I wanted to take this opportunity to say to all of you, and to the Women's Auxiliary, thank you for your service to our nation, and congratulations on your 94th Annual Convention. And on this 50th anniversary of the war I want to give a special salute to all of our proud Vietnam vets.

Today the United States is turning the page on a decade war. Thanks to the extraordinary service of our men and women in uniform we've ended the war in Iraq, we've begun the transition in Afghanistan, we delivered justice to Osama Bin Laden, and put al-Qaeda on the path of defeat.

We've strengthened our alliances and we've defended our values. Today every American can be proud that the United States is safer, stronger, and more respected in the world. Even as we end today's wars we need to keep upholding that sacred trust to take care of you, our veterans, as well as you've taken care of us.

Legionnaires, I'm proud of what we've achieved together. Historic increases in the VA budget, advance appropriations to protect veterans health care, new support for our wounded warriors and their caregivers, new commitments to tackle the claims backlog, confront the epidemic of suicide among our troops and veterans, and end the tragedy of homelessness among veterans. And for all you Vietnam veterans we've secured billions of dollars in disability pay for your exposure to Agent Orange.

Now, as our newest veterans come home we have an obligation to help them realize the American dream they fought to protect, and so we're giving our departing servicemembers more help as they prepare for their new civilian careers. We've made the Post 9/11 GI Bill a priority, and we're pulling out all the stops to help our veterans find jobs, including more than 125,000 jobs for veterans and military spouses, announced this week through our Joining Forces Initiative. Because no one who has fought for America should have to fight to find a job in America. So thank you, Legionnaires, for your service to our nation, and for your commitment to each other.

Today we're doing more for our veterans than ever before, and I'm confident that working together we can continue to uphold our solemn obligations to all who have worn America's uniform. That's my promise to you. God bless you, God bless our veterans, and God bless the United States of America. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Later this morning we will be honoring this state's senior senator during an award presentation. Right now I would like to read a letter from Indiana's other U. S. Senator, the Honorable Dan Coats.

"Dear Legionnaires, I want to extend a Hoosier welcome to veterans, delegates and guests in Indianapolis for The American Legion's 94th Annual National Convention. In 1919 The American Legion was chartered by Congress to aid veterans returning from Europe after World War I. Today The American Legion is nearly two and-a-half million members strong, serving veterans who have defended our nation during times of crisis. I regret not being able to be in attendance with you. However, I would like to wish all of you the best of luck in having a productive convention. Thank you for your service to the United States. Sincerely, Dan Coats, United States Senator."

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Our next speaker has represented Indiana's Seventh Congressional District since winning a special election to the seat to succeed his grandmother, the late Representative Julia Carson. A former member of the Indianapolis City Council, he is a graduate of Wisconsin's Concordia University, and has a master's degree from Indiana Wesleyan University. Representative Andre Carson could not be with us today, but he does bring us his video greetings.

Greetings: The Honorable Andre Carson
United States House of Representatives

On behalf of all of the Hoosiers I represent, I am glad to welcome you to Indianapolis. I want to offer a special thank you to The American Legion. I am so proud that you call our great city home, and that you have once again brought so many dedicated people together for this convention.

While many of you live outside of our congressional district, I know that we share a common purpose. We all recognize that the brave men and women who have served our great nation in uniform need our help. We know that too many veterans are struggling to find work, despite world class skills and leadership abilities learned in the military. We recognize that the best way to put these veterans back to work is to send them to college, vocational training or other higher education. That is why we fight, and will continue to fight, for federal and state programs to encourage and support hiring vets.

We have met far too many veterans, new and old, who are suffering from depression and mental health issues, so we fight for increased funding for critical veterans' housing programs, counseling, job training, and job placement. Whether you're currently serving in our military, have served in the past, or just dedicated to our nation's veterans, your presence at this convention means that you are a part of the common fight. Whether they're just returning from Afghanistan or served in World War II, Korea, or Vietnam, our vets have served and sacrificed for our great nation. They deserve our help.

So thank you again for visiting Indiana, and remember that you have a partner in Congress. Take care, enjoy the convention, and God bless America. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Next we will hear from a veteran of the Gulf War and a retired Marine Corps lieutenant colonel. On November 6, 2007, he was elected as the 44th Mayor of Indianapolis. After leaving the Marine Corps, Mayor Ballard successfully transitioned to the corporate world. He worked for several years as North American Operations Manager for Bayer in Indianapolis. He is also author of the book *The Ballard Rules: Small Unit Leadership*. The mayor is a member of The American Legion Eli Lilly Post 374 in Greenwood, Indiana. He is currently attending the Republican National Convention, but he has sent a video greeting.

Greetings: The Honorable Greg Ballard
Mayor, City of Indianapolis

Hi, I'm Mayor Greg Ballard. Welcome, Legionnaires, to Indianapolis. Unfortunately, I'm not able to join you live for your National Convention, but I am with you in spirit. Thank you for 94 years of commitment to our American veterans.

Almost 30 years ago exactly, on August 26th, 1982, The American Legion became the single largest contributor to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, with a $1,000,000 check. That was instrumental in constructing the Wall in Washington, D. C. That project went a long way towards rectifying the way many of our war heroes have been treated, in reprioritizing an appreciation of their sacrifices with the American public. As a retired Marine I can't tell you how much this means to me personally. So, thank you.

Thank you also for coming to Indianapolis for your National Convention. We are honored to have you. I'm sure you've heard about and will soon witness for yourself the multitude of veteran and service related memorials and dedications spanning this city. There is Military Park, the Indiana War Memorial, the Medal of Honor Memorial, and the *USS Indianapolis* Memorial along Museum Row on the downtown canal. And just last fall we dedicated the Indianapolis Medal of Honor Bridge, spanning the White River and leading past Roudebush VA Medical Center.

Please, take the time to visit. Pay respect to these great tributes. Also make sure to take in the other wonderful sites and activities Indianapolis offers. Thank you for coming here, thank you for your service, and thank you for protecting our legacy. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: A Vietnam veteran of the United States Air Force, our next guest was elected Commander of the Department of Indiana on July 16, 2011. His son, Bryan, is also a Legionnaire and a member of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve. Please welcome the 2011-2012 Past Department Commander of Indiana Michael J. Miller. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Michael J. Miller, Indiana
Past Department Commander

Thank you very much, Commander Wong, Adjutant Wheeler, distinguished guests and fellow Legionnaires. It's my distinct pleasure and high honor to officially welcome you to Indianapolis, the only permanent home The American Legion has ever known; a city that boasts more monuments and memorials to our nation's armed forces than any other city except for Washington, D.C. While you're out and about you'll not be able to avoid them. Whether you're strolling the scenic water company canal, visiting the historic American Legion Mall, relaxing in the parks and the greenways of the central city, no matter where you look you'll find evidence of Hoosiers' enduring respect and appreciation for your service and sacrifices.

Indianapolis is the 12th largest city in the nation, and one of the best kept secrets in the country. Friendly people, world class sports and entertainment venues, and a surprisingly diverse range of dining experiences makes this city one of the most popular and in demand convention cities in the country. You'll find your stay here to be relaxing, comfortable and pleasant, and I can assure you that the National Convention Corporation of Indiana and its hundreds of volunteers have done everything necessary to make the 94th Annual National Convention one to remember. All of us from the great Department of Indiana stand ready to help and assist you during your stay. All you need to do is ask.

Finally, I believe that the Hoosier state has presented to you a candidate of unequalled talent, ability, and commitment to veterans for the high office of national commander. He represents the best of Hoosier Legionnaires, and we're grateful for your

support. We're happy to have you here this week. Enjoy unequalled Hoosier hospitality, because as we learned from Michael Peterson, it is who we are. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Our next guest is a Vietnam War veteran of the United States Army, and a proud member of American Legion Post 41 in Boonville, Indiana. He has served The American Legion at every level. Please welcome the President of The American Legion Convention Corporation of Indiana James E. Koutz.

Greetings: James E. Koutz, President
National Convention Corporation of Indiana

Thank you very much, commander. Mr. Adjutant, past national commanders, delegates, alternates and guests to this 94th National Convention, welcome to Indianapolis. I just want to say a few words about some of the things that have happened while we've been here, especially the National Convention parade. I hope you all had a good time. We think it was a wonderful parade.*(Applause)* And I want to thank the Indiana National Guard and Major General Umbarger and his staff, and the many Indiana volunteers that put this on. It was a great parade, and it was a great post-parade party.

As you heard from several of the speakers, and I think it's worth repeating again, Indianapolis is a city that is dedicated to veterans. You can't hardly walk anywhere without looking at some kind of memorial dedicated to veterans, and I hope that each and every one of you go visit those memorials while you're here. If you need any help, you be sure to ask anybody from Indiana. We'll try to help you any way we can to make this convention the greatest.

Last, I want to thank all the volunteers that have helped us do this and put this on. It's not just me. I have a wonderful staff, a wonderful chairman of all the commissions, and I want to thank them personally for making this a great convention. So with that I want to say thank you very much, have a great convention, and welcome to Indianapolis. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The woman elected to lead The American Legion Auxiliary has worked many years for veterans and their families, and has held numerous offices at every level of her organization. She is a member of the Auxiliary's Department of Minnesota, and is dedicated to increasing volunteerism among the younger generation. She is eligible for Auxiliary membership through the military service of her husband, Terry; stepfather Arthur Tarnowski; and brother, Rick Tarnowski. She is a true veterans advocate and a great American.

Please welcome the leader of the nation's largest patriotic women's organization, my dear friend, National President Kris Nelson. *(Standing applause)*

Greetings: Mrs. Kris Nelson
National President, American Legion Auxiliary

Good morning. Please be seated. Thank you for giving me a few moments of your time. On behalf of The American Legion Auxiliary members I would like to thank all the veterans in this room for your service and your sacrifices that you and your families gave to assure that we are a free country. We are an auxiliary to The American Legion, and all of our members remember that. The reason we exist is to honor the service of the veterans in our lives. And this year I've seen firsthand what that service is, and I would like to thank you for the hospitality shown to me and to The American Legion members who traveled with me, oftentimes my husband, and for your hospitality, your friendship, and your support meant the world to me, and it was a year that I'll never forget.

We started our year in September. On September 11th Commander Wong and his wife, Barbara, met me and took me around New York City and Chinatown, and I participated with the commander in a wreath laying at Chinatown in commemoration of September 11th. From there we went to the commander's testimony, where your commander invited me to go with him to visit Congress and participate as an American Legion family. We traveled together to the Far East, and it was an honor to be able to represent The American Legion family at military bases of our military and our allies, to be briefed by heads of state, and to represent every one of you and what you do.

We were also able to join the commander and his wife when we went to Europe just a couple of months ago. We were able to in Germany go to Landstuhl, which was one of the highlights of my year. We met two veterans that had just gotten back from Afghanistan. They were flown in that morning, they hadn't even seen their doctors yet. And they told us that what they were worried about was their families back home. And the commander and I assured them that our members would be there for their families. It was a moment that brought us all to tears, and it was a moment where we were able to see firsthand the dedication of our military, and how what we do at home makes a difference, because their first thought wasn't of themselves, it was about those people back home, and it was just a life-changing moment for me.

From there we went to France, where we were able to lay wreaths in commemoration of the 67th anniversary. And on that trip the commander tried to kill me. *(Laughter)*He put me in a car, he shared this with the Auxiliary, so I can share it with you. He put me in a car where we were going over 120 miles an hour, and when I got out I was shaking. But we left there and went on a train, which was a very nice way to get back.

So it was a wonderful year. Your commander and his wife, where is New York? *(Cheers)* I can't thank you enough for the wonderful commander that you let me share this year with. He and Barbara have been great friends; hospitable, generous, gracious. There is not enough that I can say, and I'm sure New York is waiting for him to come back.

I would like to take a moment of personal privilege to introduce you to my husband, Terry, the veteran I am eligible under. Our daughter Sarah. One of my mentors from Minnesota, who has helped me every step of the way, Past National Commander Dan Ludwig. One of my closest friends for the past 38 years, who backed me with everything that I've done, Jan Fenstrom. *(Applause)*

And where is Minnesota? *(Cheers)* Minnesota, I can't thank you enough. For 30 years you've been there for me. Without your support and your friendship, your time, talent and treasure, I wouldn't be where I am today. Every day I remember what you did for me. God bless you all.

Thank you very much for this opportunity. It's been a year we will never forget. God bless you, God bless our military, God bless our veterans, and may God continue to bless America. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: We now have a presentation from Mr. Robert McGee, of McGee and Company Fine Jewelers of Greenwood, Indiana. He's been in the jewelry business for 36 years. He is currently president of the Indiana Jewelers Association. He has also served on the board of the IJA and the Jewelers of America, all the time promoting ethics in the jewelry business since 1990. Please welcome Robert McGee. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Robert McGee
McGee and Company Fine Jewelers

Thank you, Commander Wong, national officers, American Legionnaires and distinguished guests. I am deeply moved and greatly honored to be in the presence of so many of my heroes and to have this opportunity to present to The American Legion a token of my appreciation for all that you do and have done for America, America's veterans, and their families.

On behalf of McGee and Company Fine Jewelers, and my 18 employees and their families, I wish to donate this one-of-a-kind hand carved amethyst bald eagle. The world renowned sculptor and gemstone artist Peter Mueller created this iconic American symbol from natural amethyst and calcite. It's pure silver talons rest on a spectacular natural citrine crystal growing from its calcite and tourmaline base.

Commander Wong, I hope you will see fit to display this fine American Eagle in your museum as a constant reminder of what you do, and to know that it is appreciated by those for whom you do it.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: I most certainly will, sir.

MR. MCGEE: Thank you, Commander Wong, thank you American Legion, and God Bless you for all you do for our nation, our veterans and their families. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Appointed as adjutant general of Indiana on March 11, 2004, our next guest previously served as the deputy commanding general, Reserve Component, of the U.S. Forces Command. He holds a business degree from the University of Evansville, and is a graduate of the U.S. Command and General Staff College, and the U.S. Army War College. Please extend a welcome to Major General R. Martin Umbarger. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Major General R. Martin Umbarger
Adjutant General, Military Department of Indiana

Well, thank you, Commander Wong, distinguished guests, my good friend National Adjutant Dan Wheeler, fellow Legionnaires. Thank you for this invitation and for the opportunity to be with you this morning, and welcome to Indiana and to Indianapolis. I will tell you that my wife and I really enjoyed and were honored to be a part of your Legion's parade on Sunday afternoon. It was great to see the camaraderie and the state rivalries as you passed by the reviewing stand. And also I would like to thank you for permitting our Hoosier Youth Challenge Academy cadets to march in your parade. As you saw, those of you that were there, they were standing tall and they were looking good. Hard to believe that just six weeks ago they were walking the streets and cities and towns of Indiana being high school dropouts, not knowing which way to turn in their life. They surely didn't know how to say "yes, sir" and "yes, ma'am," and most certainly they didn't know how to march in cadence. But after six weeks in this wonderful program that is part of 28 states, as in many of your states that has programs like this, this is our 11th class, our largest class, and we're very, very proud of it.

We're also proud of our Legion state, Legion office that has been a huge sponsor of our program. It's out at the Soldiers and Sailors home out in Knightstown, Indiana, and I want to give my thanks to the state association and Commander Miller for all his support.

We in the Indiana National Guard were pleased also to host the Legion Riders as they rolled in from New York. With over 300 motorcycles they rolled into our headquarters and they conducted their muster out there, and that's where they kind of headquartered as they made their ride later on that day. Very proud to host that out at my

headquarters on the west side of Indianapolis. And, quite frankly, speaking of the Legion Riders, I would just like to also send my thanks from all my soldiers, airmen and their families for the loyal support that you give to them, at our departure ceremonies, at our welcome home ceremonies, at our yellow ribbon events. When we bring home our fallen in a dignified transfer, when their remains come home, we can always count on the Legion Riders to be there at our funeral services. I don't care if it's 105 degrees or ten below, they're always standing there with their flag welcoming them home and showing the respect to the families. I've met many of you, and I know many of you are of the Vietnam/Korean War era. I say to you, you did not get a welcome home when you came home. Nobody was there to welcome you home, but you've always been there for those currently serving today. So all our veterans, all our Legionnaires in the room that are of that era, thank you so much and God bless you. And our nation thanks you. *(Applause)*

I'm also very proud of the long history and proud relationship the Indiana National Guard has with The American Legion. I know many of you probably know, but I've done my homework a little bit, but November the 11th of 1919, the war to end all wars, Armistice Day, the first Legion conference was held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and a very, very distinguished Hoosier, a very distinguished Indiana National Guardsman by the name of Colonel Robert Moorehead, who served in World War I as the Commander of the 2nd of the 150th Field Artillery, along with his personal staff officer, then Lieutenant Colonel Robert Moorehead, Sr., I think many of you know of that name, they were in attendance at that National Convention in Minnesota. And I think 16 states made a presentation on where the National Headquarters of The American Legion ought to reside. And Colonel Tyndall, very distinguished in World War I, became the mayor of Indianapolis and ultimately a major general, the commanding general of the 38th Division, the longest serving commanding general of the 38th Division, from 1921 to 1943, when the 38th Headquarters here in Indiana was called back to war in World War II. They made that presentation, and they said to the Legionnaires if you come to Indiana we will dedicate 24 acres in downtown Indianapolis to veterans. And our beautiful War Memorial began to be built, and that's how this headquarters, your headquarters, came here to Indianapolis. We're very proud of it. Right across the street from the National Headquarters is what was called the Indianapolis Armory, built in the 1920s. The Indiana National Guard renamed that in the 1960 time period on behalf of Major General Tyndall. We've called it the Tyndall Armory for years, and we're very proud of his heritage, we're very proud of his lineage.

I also say to you I'm proud of Indiana, and just share with you a little bit about the Indiana National Guard. Do you know Indiana is the 15th largest in population of our nation as far as a state, but we're the fourth largest Army Guard state. I'm very proud of the tradition, I'm very proud of the patriotism of our great citizens here as they are willing to join and serve. Since 9/11 we have sent close to 20,000 soldiers and airmen to the fight all over the world. Many of our soldiers and airmen have been deployed for the second and third time like there is in all your states. Everyone has contributed.

Two hundred-two Hoosiers have given the ultimate sacrifice, Twenty-five of those are my fellow National Guard soldiers, twenty-one during my watch as adjutant general. And I would just like to thank my governor, who is going to follow me, that 20 of those 21 services he attended with me. The one, he was overseas when it happened. And as I hand the American flag to the mother or to the spouse, he has always been there and handed the flag of our State of Indiana, and I thank him for that.

I would also like to recognize Senator Richard Lugar, our senior senator that I know you're going to recognize very, very soon after me, but a Navy veteran intelligence officer. For thirty-six years he's been a senator for us. He's been very supportive of all the military, particularly us here in the National Guard.

I want to leave you with two things that sticks out to me. There is all the accomplishments of Senator Lugar, but this has to do with my home. Thirty-six years ago when he became a brand new junior senator, then General Robert Moorehead, Jr., who served in World War II, and you all know him as a great Legionnaire, was a division commander here, and Tony Hulman, the owner of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, went to him and said it's 1976, an all volunteer military had happened. The Vietnam War had come down and it was tough to recruit. It was tough to get those to join the rank and wear the uniform of our nation. But they created the Lugar Breakfast, where Senator Lugar would enlist at the start/stop line at the Indianapolis 500. On the last day of qualifications they would stop the practice, we would hold a ceremony, and we would enlist and thank those with their families for joining the military and thank them for their service to their country. Thirty-six years, he's done it each and every year. He's never missed a day. *(Applause)*

And this last year when we did it we had over 80 soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen join the United States military. He's been a great supporter, and he's served our country and our state well.

Well, thank you all for the honor to address you. My grandfather, a Legionnaire; my father is a Legionnaire, and I'm proud to be a Legionnaire. God bless you, have a wonderful, wonderful conference. Thank you so much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Our next guest was born in Monongahela, Pennsylvania. He lived in Pennsylvania, Georgia and Tennessee before moving to Indiana in 1959. His paternal grandfather was a Syrian Christian immigrant to the United States who arrived in the 1920s. Our guest served as chief of staff to Senator Richard Lugar, a senior advisor to President Reagan, and president of Eli Lilly's North American Pharmaceutical Operations. He is the author of a book titled, *Keeping the Republic, Saving America by Trusting Americans*. He has performed his civic and public duties in the finest traditions of our country, and is a strong supporter of our nation's military, veterans, and their families. He is a graduate of American Legion Boys State and Boys Nation. In his nearly eight years as governor of Indiana he has returned the state to fiscal health with a balanced budget and a $2 billion surplus. I present to this convention the governor of Indiana, the Honorable Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Hon. Mitch Daniels
Governor of the State of Indiana

Commander Wong, Legion friends. When school children come to my office, which I arrange as often as possible, there is a little game I play. Once they are assembled in there I always tell them thank you for letting me use your office. And eventually I take them around to the point that I'm just passing through, I'm an employee of the citizens of this state, including them, and that in a government of and by the people that building and that office belongs to them, and they should never forget it or let those who sit there and serve there forget it.

In much the same way I just want to say to you, welcome to your town. We believe that Indianapolis is the Legion's town. It is obviously your national home, and has proudly been, proud on our part now, for getting close to a century. But for other reasons I don't believe there is a place you could choose for this convention which is more literally your kind of place.

I want to express not for the first time my own strong sense of personal gratitude, deep admiration for this organization. It has meant a lot in my life and in the lives of so many of my family members.

As the commander just noted, my first exposure to public life or politics by any name came at Hoosier Boys State, and then fortunately for me on to Boys Nation in Washington, D.C. I don't know if I would ever have made the choices I made or spent the years I did spend in public service if not for The American Legion, but I doubt it. Some citizens of our state might thank you for that, but I certainly do. *(Laughter)*

Likewise with my family. On Memorial Days and the dates that they passed on and other notable occasions I've carefully saved the military records of the men in our family who served. All of them were Legionnaires. Private Russell Wilkes, Marne, Belleau Wood, Legion member, left the Army his papers say with $119 and the thanks of a grateful nation. It was The American Legion, he must have been one of the very first members in the aftermath of World War I.

My late uncle, PFC Donald McCann, June '42-October '45. His papers read like a history of the European theater. Naples and Rome and the south of France and the Rhineland and the Ardennes. He left the military with $500 and an American Legion membership.

The Legion was there to help them and so many others in our family every step of the way, and was there faithfully when we said goodbye to them.

I want to tell you one more thing about your hometown, and General Umbarger just made reference. If you can't already tell it, and I bet you can, you have come to a state of patriots. I think Americans in general are deeply grateful for the privilege of living in this country and this society, but you will not go anywhere, you will not take this meeting anywhere, where our military is more deeply respected and revered than here in Indiana. We do have one of the nation's largest National Guards, vastly out of proportion to the size of our state. We have sent, in every conflict from The Civil War forward, per capita as many or more soldiers as any state. Legion halls are still a fixture and a deep part of the fabric of our communities. I have been in dozens of them, and I can only tell you that you represent the very finest people in those communities, and the finest ethic of service and community spirit everywhere you operate.

So on behalf of six and-a-half million citizens of Indiana I want to say to you welcome home, make yourself at home. I make those statements literally. Thank you for bringing this great meeting to our state. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: *The award reads: "The American Legion Certificate of Appreciation presented to Governor Mitch Daniels in grateful appreciation for your extraordinary contributions to the American way of life, your unwavering support of America's military, veterans and their families, and your lifetime of public service, presented this 28th day of August, 2012, at the 94th National Convention, Indianapolis, Indiana, attested by Daniel S. Wheeler, National Adjutant, and Fang A. Wong, National Commander." (Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The man we are about to honor is an unwavering advocate of U.S. leadership in the world, strong national security, free trade and economic growth. He's a fifth generation Hoosier, the Senate's most senior Republican, and the longest serving member of Congress in Indiana history. A former two-term mayor of Indianapolis, he also served as president of the National League of Cities. But what we are most grateful for is his work as a leader in reducing the threat of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. In 1991, he forged a bipartisan partnership with then Senate Armed Services Chairman Sam Nunn of Georgia to destroy these weapons of mass destruction in the former Soviet Union. To date, the Nunn-Lugar program has deactivated more than 7,500 warheads that were once aimed at the United States. During his 1996 presidential campaign, Senator Lugar was one of the only candidates warning against the threat of international terrorism, a threat that became

painfully obvious just five years later during 9/11. In 1957 he volunteered for the United States Navy. He's been a true friend for veterans and the military ever since. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to present the highest honor that The American Legion can bestow on an individual, The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal to the Honorable United States Senator from Indiana Richard G. Lugar. *(Standing applause)*

Presentation: The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal
The Honorable Richard G. Lugar, United States Senate, Indiana

I thank Commander Wong for his very, very generous introduction. It's great to be here in Indianapolis with so many dear friends, and a special pleasure to be with Governor Daniels, a very dear friend, a great leader who has provided tremendous leadership to our state for the last eight years.

I'm very honored to receive the Distinguished Service Medal from The American Legion today because I have appreciated the opportunity to work with this great organization for many years, both in Washington and here in Indianapolis. Your advocacy on behalf of American veterans, American service men and women and their families, is enormously influential in our nation's capitol and in state capitols around our country. Veterans and active duty members owe a great deal to the efforts of The American Legion each day.

I also join in congratulating The American Legion Youth Champions, and members of our armed services who received Spirit of Service Awards earlier in this program.

Finally, let me also pay tribute to the members of the Legion for their deep interest in our country's national security policies. Those who have worn the uniform in wartime know better than anyone how important it is that America remains strong, militarily, diplomatically, economically. This makes armed conflict much less likely. And it insures that if it's necessary to fight, the United States will go to war with the military that is second to none. *(Applause)*

My own service as a Navy lieutenant instilled in me a life-long appreciation for many challenges we face around the globe. And over the years I have benefited from the advice and counsel of leaders of The American Legion. We gather at a time now when our country's list of challenges seems exceptionally long. We have an unfinished war in Afghanistan; a violent peace in Iraq; rising tensions with Iran; a civil war in Syria; the still potent threat from global terrorism; assertiveness by China in regional affairs; and a financial crisis in Europe that threatens our own sluggish economic recovery, just to name a few.

We also gather during a presidential campaign that has witnessed unusually harsh rhetoric, which is having the effect of making our problems seem sometimes even greater than they are. All this has led to talk that America is in decline; that we have lost our leadership role in the world. Or that others no longer look to us for inspiration. But I would assert today that such pessimistic attitudes greatly underestimate the strength of American character. The United States remains the world's most successful demonstration of transformative power, of human liberty and economic freedom. In the last century, the role of the United States played in overcoming forces of despotism and economic stagnation stands unrivaled in the annals of world leadership. Despite some missteps, I believe this is indisputable from any objective point of view.

During World War II the United States was the deciding force in defeating Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. After the war, we helped to rehabilitate our enemies, and they quickly established strong economies and vibrant democracy. Through our assistance and protection, we also helped countries such as South Korea and Taiwan move from extreme poverty to impressive prosperity. And during the Cold War, we stared down the Soviet Union at great risk and expense, while functioning as the driver of

world economic growth at the same time. Before the century was over, the results of our global leadership were causing changes that had once been unthinkable. The Soviet Union fell. Germany was united. China adopted a market-driven economic philosophy. And many countries in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa became more democratic.

American institutions and political and social freedoms have served as models for the world as we have helped to nurture democratic transformations. And furthermore, the United States has continued to perform a little appreciated global security function during the post Cold war era. Our armed forces by their mere presence have deterred major wars and minor conflicts. Our Navy has been the principal force for maintaining order on the high seas, and the alliance structures we have built for our stability and prosperity in previously volatile regions in Europe and Asia.

Americans have led the world's fight against disease and hunger. Beyond our own multi-billion dollar programs, the programs of other nations and many non-governmental groups depend on the United States for direction and support. The United States is also the undisputed leader in disaster assistance because we've been willing to apply both our financial strength and our logistics capabilities to humanitarian relief in catastrophic situations such as the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, and Japan's last earthquake. We even helped the former Soviet Union protect and destroy the very nuclear arsenal that was once pointed at us.

But in the 21st century, as I mentioned, it's become increasingly popular to question America's future. We frequently see stories on the theme that our days as an economic superpower are numbered. Commentators focus on the maturity of our economy, the rise of China and many other reasons why American power will be eclipsed. But much of what is identified as declined, is actually a sign of how successful the United States has been in exporting our political ideals and our economic system. The United States has been the main author of a gradual global transformation that is miraculous and unprecedented, but also uncertain and sometimes messy. One of the manifestations of this success is that nations that used to be on the periphery, continue to join the world system as full partners, just as Germany, Japan and South Korea helped to invigorate the Cold War global economy, now we're seeing the rise of China, India, Brazil. And this dynamic is also reflected in the democracy movements in the Middle East where populations have risen up to challenge repressive governments. The advancement of other nations may affect some measure of our relative power, but it need not reduce our security, our standard of living or our philosophical influence.

The United States is still the nation with the best hand to play, and the one most capable of adapting to changing conditions. And our competitive advantage is heightened by the resilience and creativity of our people. No other nation enjoys the quality and variety of post secondary education options that exist in the United States. And no other country has a deeper tradition of individual achievement, freedom and entrepreneurial spirit, and these attributes have helped us to have the broadest scientific and technological base. The most advanced agricultural system, and the most influential culture in the contemporary world.

The current climate of international economic dynamism rewards education above all other commodities. It rewards those with multiple skills who dedicate themselves to a lifetime of learning. The United States will flourish in the global marketplace if education remains a top priority and we nurture the competitive genius of the American people that has allowed us time and time again to reinvent our economy.

We have unmatched intellectual capital and sophisticated investors who are willing to take risks. We also have the advantage of a younger and more mobile population than exists in most other industrialized nations. Talented people want to learn, invest, and live in the United States. And many of them recognize that the American experiment in

liberty is unique in its ambitions and values. And our freedom to profit from new ideas has few limits.

These American freedoms are defended by its strongest military in the world. Our military prowess is undergirded by the extraordinary young people who continue to volunteer to serve in the armed forces of our country. To be short, in order for us to take full advantage of these strengths, our political and business leaders must make wise decisions to overcome problems that have been accumulating. But Americans have never been afraid of change, and I'm confident that not too long from now we will look back on the current time of anxiety as a prelude to the next golden era in the American story.

I thank you all, each one of you for your distinguished service to our country, and I thank you very much for the great honor you have accorded me. Thank you. *(Standing applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Before we begin our next presentation, I ask that the Legion Riders that are presenting checks for the Legacy Fund, please gather back stage on the left in order to expedite the presentations a little bit later on. Today we're going to meet a few gentlemen who made history in 1975 in what has been called the "last battle" of the Vietnam war. Here to tell the story is a former Marine and co-founder of the Koh-Tang Beach Club, Dan Hoffman. *(Applause)*

Address: The Last Battle of Vietnam
Dan Hoffman, Co-founder, Koh-Tang Beach Club

I wish to personally thank Commander Wong and National Adjutant Wheeler for the opportunity to be here. It is an honor and a privilege. Fellow Legionnaires and distinguished guests; In the spring of 1975 the Vietnam War was supposedly over, but on May 12, 1975, just two weeks after the dramatic evacuation of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, elements of the Cambodian Khmer Rouge Navy captured the *S.S. Mayaguez*, a U.S. flagged unarmed merchant ship. The *Mayaguez* was in international waters with a crew of forty when it came under fire. She was captured and taken to a tiny little island 37 miles off the border between Cambodia and Vietnam called Koh-Tang.

Fearing the possibility of another Pueblo Incident, President Ford ordered immediate action. There was great concern that the crew members of the *Mayaguez* would be taken to the mainland and then their rescue would be difficult.

As a result, a hastily thrown together operation was rushed into action with totally incorrect intelligence. This ill-conceived battle plan which, unfortunately required joint operations between units that had never trained together, resulted in the deaths of 41 U.S. servicemen who hold the dubious honor of being the last 41 names on the Vietnam Memorial Wall.

The only U.S. troops in the area were Marines on Okinawa. I was a very junior second lieutenant with the 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines when our unit was quickly called into action. Within a few hours we were flown an Air Force base in Thailand where our where our helicopter assault on Koh-Tang Island would be launched.

We were quickly formed up on the tarmac and issued live ammunition, including hand-grenades, which were suddenly being passed out like candy. We knew then that we were going to go into something very serious.

The intelligence reports had the crew on Koh-Tang Island with the *Mayaguez* being anchored just off shore. There were no maps available to the island, and officers quickly put together a battle plan. Koh-Tang Island is mostly very dense jungle. The only place helicopters could land were on two very small strips of beach sand on the northern end of the island.

The assault would require a two hour trip from U-Tapao, Thailand to Koh-Tang utilizing the only large helicopter availability in South East Asia, U.S. Air Force HH-53s, called the Jolly Green Giants. These helicopters and their crews were from Special Operations and Search and Rescue squadrons, and had had no experience even transporting Marines, let alone inserting into an assault operation, but they were the only helicopters available that could fly the distances involved.

We were told not to worry as the intelligence report had the island lightly defended by 15 to 20 local fishermen that might have automatic weapons. The plan was to assault the island with nine helicopters carrying my rifle company, Gulf Company, along with the battalion command staff, and initially two tubes of 81 millimeter mortars which would be our heaviest support weapons.

Two helicopters each containing about 20 Marines would land on the west beach, and the remaining seven helicopters with two full rifle platoons and the command element would simultaneously land on the east beach, then spread out and sweep through the island rescuing the *Mayaguez* crew in the process.

The helicopter that dropped us off would then fly back the 218 miles to Thailand; refuel and load up Echo Company and then fly back to Koh-Tang for the second wave to reinforce us on the island. That was more than a four hour trip. The helicopters then would again fly back to Thailand, and our remaining rifle companies would be shuttled to Koh-Tang late in the afternoon and evening. It was a grandiose plan. It was unfortunately doomed from the start.

With the exception of our senior officers and staff NCOs, our battalion had no combat experience. The CIA intelligence reports were inaccurate to say the least. Instead of less than 20 lightly armed fishermen, the island was defended by a reinforced battalion of over 400 specialized troops who had years of combat experience and were armed with very heavy machine guns and mortars.

The helicopter assault was supposed to arrive at dawn, but was held up and came in after sunrise. The Khmer Rouge could hear and see us coming, and unfortunately they were ready for us. It was an immediate disaster. Using their heavy machine guns from their well-dug in positions, the Cambodians literally blasted the first two helicopters in on east beach, out of the sky. The first one exploded in a gigantic fireball that blew off the front end of the chopper. It crashed in about five feet of water, resulting in 13 killed and 13 more swimming out sea to avoid the heavy fire.

The second chopper on the east beach had its tail rotor blown off, and 20 Marines and an Air Force crew of five, several of whom were wounded, ran to the beach where they huddled in some rocks. They would remain isolated there for most of the day. They could have been easily overrun, but the experienced Khmer Rouge utilized superior fire discipline and let them stay there, surrounded and used them for bait where they were able to severely damage several more helicopters throughout the day who attempted to rescue those Marines on the east beach.

Things weren't much better on the west beach landing zone. The first helicopter in was able to off-load 20 Marines under heavy fire and then lift off. But he was so severely damaged that the chopper crashed in the water just after taking off, resulting in further loss of life. The second chopper in on west beach received so much damage going in, that he couldn't even land. He was able to limp back to Thailand where he crash-landed. Twenty Marines aboard including our company commander were subsequently picked up by another chopper and then taken back to Thailand. In the first five minutes of action, all four helicopters of the first wave were shot down, and things were only getting worse.

The first helicopter on west beach contained two of my best friends later in life, and I'm proud to see that you're here today. Al Bailey of Maryland and Fred Morris from Iowa, both whom were wounded that day. They thought they were part of a major assault force of several helicopters. Instead were part of only 20 Marines, one who had been

killed and several more wounded. And they were in a tight defensive perimeter under very heavy fire.

At seven o'clock the helicopter I was on was the next one in on west beach. I was one of the first out of the chopper, and immediately the Marine next to me was shot and severely wounded. We were in tall grass with the water of the Gulf of Thailand to our backs and dense jungle to our front. There was a lot of enemy fire coming our way, and at that point we did good just to set up a defensive perimeter.

By the way, the helicopter that put us in also received so much damage that it barely made it back to Thailand, and would not fly again that day. The American helicopter assets in South East Asia were quickly being put out of action, and this would have severe consequences that night.

The last two helicopters of the initial assault tried to get their Marines in. The first attempted to land several times but the ground fire was too intense. And in a move that would complicate our situation even more, he was able to off-load 29 Marines about 1,500 yards south of our position. That helicopter contained our battalion commander, several staff officers, all of the radio operators, the battalion doctor and several corpsmen, and our two tubes of 81 millimeter mortars. They should have landed with everybody else but were now separated and stuck in their own defensive perimeter. Their situation was perilous as most of them were armed with only 45 caliber pistols. They had only three marines with them who had M-16 rifles. It is very hard to fire and maneuver with only three rifles, poor air support, and a large enemy force separating you from the rest of your assault force.

The last chopper attempted to land on west beach at least five times. Each time he received intense enemy fire and couldn't get in. He was very persistent though, and after refueling, finally got his Marines off-loaded about 9:30 a.m., and actually took some of the wounded off the island.

So three and a half hours after the first helicopter went in, we were separated into three groups. The 20 Marines and five Air Force crew tied down on east beach, being used as bait for the helicopters trying to get them out. The isolated command element pinned down with only three rifles, 1,500 yards south of our position and less than 80 effective Marines, several of whom were wounded, in a horseshoe shaped defensive perimeter outgunned and pinned down with a vastly superior enemy force to our front, and the water with no place to go to our rear. We would not receive any more reinforcements for two and a half hours. All that morning we were dealing with major problems with communications, command and control issues, as well as the lack of effective air support. All of these problems would later be studied and the lessons learned would benefit future joint operations. But they just compounded our problems as we remained pinned down under heavy fire.

Our most pressing problem was getting the isolated command element into our position. They had been slowly moving north, and I volunteered to lead an assault on the bunkers between our two positions, and started grabbing ten guys to take with me. We left the perimeter heading south. I started leading this squad single file hugging the shore and tree line. We came around a point and in front of us a large log-covered bunker. I signaled to my men that we would crawl along the sand to get closer and that I would throw a grenade. We would then charge the bunker. I crawled as close as I could, stood up, threw the grenade right into the bunker, and emptied the magazine of my M-16. Everybody immediately charged through and set up around the bunker. Inside were three enemy bodies, and a 90 millimeter recoilless rifle, which is a very large anti-tank gun, to show you the kind of weapons that they had. This ended up being the last enemy position between us and the command element, and in a few minutes our battalion commander passed through, and shortly after that we all proceeded back down to the beach to our main position, taking our large recoilless rifle and KIAs with us.

While this was happening, three helicopters came in and off-loaded a portion of Echo Company, our second wave. It was supposed to be nine helicopters bringing in the whole company, but there were only three helicopters left able to fly. I then learned that the crew of the *Mayaguez* had been rescued. They were released by the Cambodians when we started the attack. They were held on a large fishing boat, and had never even been on Koh-Tang Island.

Now the problem was to get us off the island. The decision was made to go, but it had to be all or nothing. Once the withdrawal started we couldn't stop and leave a smaller number of Marines behind. The biggest problem was the number of helicopters available. The aircraft carrier *Coral Sea* had been steaming towards Koh-Tang all day, and was about a half hour away. So the Air Force helicopters could drop us off on the carrier instead of the four hour round trip to Thailand and back. Of course we couldn't afford for anymore of those Jolly Green Giants to get shot up and put out of action. The situation had been improving and now we had slow moving air traffic controllers flying above us, and they were accurately directing air and naval gunfire on the enemy.

It was starting to get dark. Echo Company would be pulled out first. The first two helicopters came in and immediately the enemy fire increased dramatically. Under very heavy fire the two helicopters were overloaded with Marines and they took off. We now dug in to wait for those choppers to return. My CO said, "Dan, you get out on this next one." It was now very dark and the tide had come in, and the beach we had landed on was now mostly under water. There was no room for the helicopter to land, so the pilot just hovered on top of the waves and we ran through the waist-deep water to climb up the back ramp, all the while under heavy fire. Several more guys got wounded, but the helicopter was able to pull out. There were thirty-five of us aboard that HH-53; twenty-five is officially the maximum safe load, so we were definitely overloaded.

As we pulled out, I looked back and saw several lines of machine gun tracer bullets coming towards us, but there was also a significant amount of fire going back at them, including machine gun fire from a small boat from the destroyer *Wilson*, that had been lead by a former Swift Boat sailor named Tom Noble from right here in Indiana, and he will also be us here on stage at the end.

We pulled out and away from the island. I was in the rear of the helicopter looking out. It was very dark, overcast with no moon, no starlight. We settled down for what should have been a 20 minute ride to the *Coral Sea*, but suddenly the helicopter I was on was shaking and moving violently. I could see waves in the ocean as we were losing altitude, and I thought we were going to crash in the water. I was pushed towards the front of the chopper to a small exit door behind the pilot, and I jumped out expecting to hit water, but instead landed on the deck of the destroyer escort *U.S.S. Harold E. Holt*. That pilot had miraculously squeezed his very large helicopter onto this very small helipad. I later learned that it's almost impossible to do so.

While the ship was underway in near total darkness, the pilot had inched his overloaded helicopter in a 45 degree angle and just touched down his nose wheel on one quarter of the helipad and his two side rails on the opposite corners. The helicopter was so much bigger than the landing pad that the rear ramp was hanging out over the water, and I had never even seen the ship.

This heroic pilot only had about six inches of clearance for his rotors, and that HH-53 was so heavy he had to keep 50 percent power on his wheels. He was literally just touching down on the moving ship, while flying forward at a 45 degree angle in the dark. It was an amazing feat of flying.

And after he dropped us off, he immediately went right back into the heavy fire on the beach extracted 37 more Marines. If it were not for his heroic actions, there would have been many more names on the wall. He personally saved my life and the lives of 71

other Marines. His name is Bob Blough from Tennessee and I am proud to have him as one of my best friends, and yes, he is here today also. *(Applause)*

My hero. Bob Blough extracted a second load at 7:30 p.m. There were now only 29 Marines left in the shrinking perimeter. As they slowly pulled back, the enemy moved forward into the fighting positions our guys had worked so hard to build. It was very tense for that last group waiting for the helicopter to come back in for them.

Finally, at 9:10 that night they were pulled out. In the chaos and heavy fire of the last extraction, somehow three Marines from Echo Company were left behind. It was assumed they had been killed during the extraction, but reports surfaced years later that the three had been captured, tortured and killed.

When I learned of this, it started me on a downward spiral with post-traumatic stress disorder that almost took my life. Like most of the guys in Two-Nine, I got out when my enlistment was up and went back into civilian life to a wife and a family. And during the late 70s and 80s had almost no contact with any fellow veterans. The mood of the country back then was anti-military and we just didn't talk about our experiences very much, if at all. In the late 90s I started to have a few problems. I couldn't sleep well; I was drinking too much; had issues with anger and stress at work, and in my marriage. And I became depressed and withdrawn and gained a lot of weight. I was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, and at that time we didn't even know what it was.

I was very lucky to belong to this veterans organization. It was there that I felt more at home with guys who had gone through things similar to me. We had a common bond, and even if we didn't we talk about it much, we understood each other. But my situation was slowly getting worse.

One of the things that kept me going when I couldn't sleep at night, I would stare at the ceiling and imagine that I could meet that Air Force pilot that saved my life on Koh-Tang and buy him a beer. I spent many hours imagining that, and over the years it changed from a drink, to a whole bottle of Crown Royal, and we could sit and share that together. But it was only a dream as I didn't even know his name, or how to find him.

In 1995 a new book about the *Mayaguez* operation was published. I read it and learned much about the operation that I didn't know. But the author presented detailed information, albeit from questionable sources, that three Marines had actually been left alive on Koh-Tang. Learning this for the first time, my issues with PTSD became significantly worse. I was missing work; arguing and fighting; drinking too much. At my worst point I couldn't even get out of bed. I was suicidal and dangerous to myself and others. And it eventually cost me my first marriage, but for years I struggled on.

I lost both of my parents in a very short period of time. Since I was so bad off, I couldn't even take care of them in their final days. Then my lovely second wife, Betty, was diagnosed with breast cancer. Many things were weighing very heavily on me. Finally, it was with the help of a fellow Marine who convinced me to get my veterans disability benefits so that I could then be in a position to go out and help others. I checked myself into a veterans hospital, and over the next two years with the love and support of my second wife, Betty, excellent doctors and therapy at the VA, and most importantly, the love and support of my fellow veterans, I was able to turn my life around to the point I'm now a national advocate for helping veterans get their VA benefits, and especially for those with PTSD. *(Applause)*

Thank you. Thank you. In 2003, through the Internet, I met Larry Barnett from Ohio who was starting a Koh-Tang veterans website. He had been one of the Marines shot down on east beach. We finally got face-to-face at a reunion in Florida of the Jolly Green Giants. That first night together, we were out on the beach tracing lines in the sand in an attempt to possibly figure out how our three comrades could have been left behind. That's a question that has weighed heavily on our minds. But the best thing to come out of that reunion, was that I finally got to meet Bob Blough, the helicopter pilot who rescued us

off the island. I had a plaque made up and got permission from the Jolly's president to surprise Bob with the presentation at their formal banquet. You've got to understand this room was filled with heroes with decades of search and rescue operations, dozens of personal decorations and awards, and hundreds of lives saved.

I learned it was very rare for them to actually be thanked by any of those that they had saved. I went up to the microphone with Larry at my side. I quickly related the events of the *Mayaguez* Operation and how we owed our lives to the heroic Air Force pilots. I spoke of my quick ride to the *U.S.S. Holt*, and how we were placed down on that tiny helipad, and the amazing actions of that pilot that saved so many lives that night. I also related my years of staring at the ceiling wishing I could somehow thank that pilot. And I turned that into thanking all of them on behalf of all the other guys out there staring at their ceilings, wishing that they could personally thank their heroes. I then called Bob Blough up to the podium and gave him the plaque that I had made, and big bottle of Crown Royal, from which we both took a swig. It was a very moving experience, one of the highlights of my life, and the start of our great friendship.

We started getting together a few times a year, and as Larry's website grew, so did our circle of friends and fellow Koh-Tang veterans. In 2005 we were contacted by a television production company to be interviewed for a one-hour documentary on the History Channel. The series was called *Heroes Under Fire*, and our episode was entitled *Deadly Reckoning*. It was another life-changing event for me. Our story was being publicized and the Battle of Koh-Tang was being presented to the public, and was soon to change and event that nobody remembered or even heard of, to something that we could be proud of.

Around this time I was also given a Papillon puppy to take care of. These special little dogs are very smart and loving. They can sense when you are down, and will do all they can to lift your spirits. Soon I was using mine as a PTSD therapy dog which greatly improved my situation.

Soon our numbers had grown large enough that we formed the Koh-Tang *Mayaguez* Veterans Organization, and started scheduling our own reunions. Our goal was to help each other and to seek out answers about those we left behind. My involvement with my comrades completely turned my life around. I cannot stress strongly enough how beneficial getting together with each other has become to us. Instead of being withdrawn and not speaking of our experiences, guys were coming from all the over the country to be with us. The therapeutic benefits of sharing this together are immeasurable. And if anybody is sitting out there, has held back becoming involved with a veterans group such as the American Legion, or actually going to a reunion or seeking out help, I say just do it, you will be so glad that you did.

At this point I would like to bring on stage five fellow veterans and five of my very best friends in the world, who all were on Koh-Tang with us. The first one is Tom Noble from Odon, Indiana, which was the Swift Boat Commander with an M-60 machine gun; drew a lot of fire. Bronze Star that day. Al Bailey from Maryland. The first one to open fire that day. First one out of the first helicopter. Won a Navy Achievement Medal, and a Purple Heart. Larry Barnett, the founder of our organization who was down on east beach. Navy Achievement Medal. Fred Morris was only 18 years old in May of '75. We believe he is the youngest Vietnam veteran to see combat action, and he was awarded the Purple Heart that day. And last but not least, my hero, Retired Lieutenant Colonel Bob Blough, awarded the Silver Star and saved our lives. *(Standing applause)*

These five guys here are my very best friends in the world. We went through a traumatic combat experience together and suffered from the effects of that for decades before we got back together. It is organizations such as our American Legion that have allowed us to be together here today. Legionnaires, I strongly urge you to continue to do all you can for yourself and your fellow veterans. Seek out your brothers and continue

your support of the Legion and its goals. We must continue to be the strongest advocates for proper health care and veterans benefits for all veterans, and to insist on the complete accounting of our POWs and MIAs. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you very much. And to all of you here for sharing your story of courage, sacrifice and distinguished service. We thank you for your service. However, it seems to me that some of you are out of uniform. So, please let me fix the situation. Let me give you your Legion cap, and wear them with pride. You're with family now today and forever. *(Applause)*

MR. HOFFMAN: Commander, on behalf of the Koh-Tang *Mayaguez* Veterans Organization, we would like to present you with this coin. And thank you for inviting us, sir. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you. Thank you very much. I now call on National Adjutant Daniel S. Wheeler from the Department of Virginia, to issue the Call For Convention.

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

Call for the 94th Annual National Convention of The American Legion.

By the authority of the National Executive Committee, the 94th National Convention of The American Legion is hereby called to meet in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28 through 30, 2012.

The Convention business sessions will be held in the Indiana Convention Center, Hall D and E, street 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 transaction of such other business as may be brought before it.

On Thursday, August 30 at 12:00 o'clock noon of the final session, or at the conclusion of all other business of the National Convention, which ever 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, July 30, 2012, 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 5, National Constitution. The rights of departments to make and accredit substitutes for absentee delegates or alternate

delegates shall be recognized by the National Adjutant, provided that such substitution shall be officially certified by the Delegation Chairman and 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

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. Legislation 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, Fang A. Wong, National Commander. Attested, Daniel S. Wheeler, National Adjutant. Mr. Commander, that completes the Call for the 94th Annual National Convention of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you very much Mr. Adjutant. I now declare the 94th Annual National Convention of The American Legion to be regularly convened. Next, I would like to call Terry Woodburn, 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 off-stage. While the photographs being taken, I ask National Vice Commander James H. Hales, Jr., of Pennsylvania to assume duties at the lectern. ...*At this time National Vice Commander Hales assumed the Chair.*

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

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT WOODBURN (IL): Thank you, commander. Past National Commanders, distinguished guests, National Adjutant Dan, it's a pleasure to appear before you here once again. I was very much looking forward to this ride this year, because it was unique, it's number seven and it was going to not start in

Indianapolis, it was going to start in the commander's home state of New York and bring him into the Convention.

I had a challenge though, a choice, if you will. I could either get my wife over here for the birth of our seventh grandchild during that same week, or I could, as a biker, a rider since 1967 BM, which is "Before Marriage," and the head of my household. I didn't make the ride this year. *(Laughter)*

Trust me when I say when you telegram mother you're not going to be able to get her over here in time for the birth of a grandchild, it brings a whole new definition to the word "battle." And you cannot win it. Now I give my wife credit, she did say, "Well, you can go ahead and make the ride. You like to do that. And I'll just go over a couple days later and see the new baby." Uh-huh. *(Laughter)*

That's like when your wife tells you before your anniversary, "It's okay dear, I don't need a gift. Just get me a card." When do that, you have written an IOU to your wife you'll never pay back for the rest of your life. *(Laughter)*

This was the seventh run. And before I get too far into this, I would like to thank the Adjutant General, Major General Umbarger from the state of Indiana for all of his hospitalities out at Stout Field, allowing three hundred plus bikes to invade his headquarters area, go through safety courses, as well as take challenges of riding with cones, something totally different from any other run we've had this year.

The highlight of which though was getting to meet two young people that are beneficiaries of what we do. And that was a young man and a young lady who have been recipients of the scholarships that we've been able to provide so far, which is 99 scholarships for just under $300,000 thus far. Our goal is $20 million. We're in the neighborhood right now of about six million in the trust fund, right at three million of which has been raised by these Legacy Runs and by these riders around the country.

Two hundred and ninety thousand basically this year so far by the Riders. Right now we're looking in the neighborhood of $300,000 this run that will be presented here, and I'm quite sure by the time the presentations you're about to hear are finished, that will exceed another very large number.

At this time I would like to share a video, and I'll enjoy this video with you. I've been able to enjoy the other ones because I've been part of them. This particular video, however, was when I wasn't, that's why I get to watch it too.

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

DELEGATE BESSON (IL): Mr. Commander, it's my pleasure to be able to lead this off with a check from my home post in Stonington, Illinois, a membership of 125 members, with a check of $500.

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT WOODBURN: Part of that video you got to see the Riders this time when they came in, they got to take a lap around the track. I wasn't able to do that with them this year, but I have done that before and I assure you it's an absolutely awesome feeling to take that two-and-a-half mile oval on two wheels as you go around banking those turns.

Riders love to raise money, and that's what we're here to do now. The national commander had gotten some contributions. He asked me to run through those. Before we start that off, American Legion Post 18, Lockport, Illinois, seven fifty. These are checks from individuals that had to leave early. James and Charlene Wade, $65. ALR out of Smithville, Virginia, $4,500. And ALR Hawaii Post 17, $4,300. They were handed in early and those folks had to leave.

At this time I would call on Immediate Past Department Commander from the state of Illinois, Dave Hicks for the purpose of a presentation.

DELEGATE HICKS (IL): Thank you, Terry. Earlier this year the Department of Illinois had given $7,456.32. Here in my hand is an additional $8,435, a grand total so far from the Department Illinois, $15,891.32. And while sitting up here on the stage as

you've seen, we're still taking donations in, so we don't have a complete total at this time. Thank you. *(Applause)*

DELEGATE DAVIS: Hello. My name is John Davis. We are a little bit different. I'm President of the National Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms Club. A lot of you probably didn't know there was such a thing. There is. If you look around the wall you'll see men and women with the blue arm bands. Four of us have the red arm bands. We have George behind the stage. We have Sherry on stage. We have Leroy on the floor, and of course I'm on the front doors. We are the ones that assist the commander and the national sergeant-at-arms with whatever they need done. As president of the club, this is our first time, we would like to present not a check, it's a money order, for $300 to the Legacy Fund. Thank you.

DELEGATE HAMILTON (IN): Good afternoon. My name is Jim Hamilton, I'm a Past Indiana State Director, and we have donated thousands of dollars to this Legacy Run, and the Legion Riders, thirty-four hundred of them strong in the great state of Indiana, would like to welcome all the delegates and alternates and their guests to this Convention, and we hope you have a good time while you're here. Most all of our checks have been turned in, and I'm here with the stragglers that come in, so I have three checks for $700 that I would like to turn in today. Thank you.

DELEGATE FUELLING (FR): I'm Bob Fuelling from Paris Post 1. I have two checks here, one from China Post No. 1 for $250. The second check is from FODPAL, the Foreign and Outlying Departments and Posts of The American Legion. I was a check for $300 from FODPAL. And at our breakfast meeting Monday morning we collected another $200. So this check is for $500 for the Legacy Fund.

DELEGATE TAYLOR (SC): Good afternoon. I bring you greetings from the great state of South Carolina, I'm Mickey Taylor, immediate past department commander, and on behalf of the Legion Riders of South Carolina and on behalf of the Department of South Carolina, I would like to present this check in the amount of $37,967.85.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: In addition to the money they already sent in, the great Department of Pennsylvania would like to present a check for $3,200. Thank you.

DELEGATE GOTH (MO): I am Kenny Goth from the great state of Missouri, and our department and all of our American Legion Rider chapters would like to present a check for $21,282.

DELEGATE HELD (AL): With the Department of Alabama Director, Harold Cioncio, I'm Lee Held, the ALR Liaison, Alabama, "Roll Tide," we want to present $6,923. Roll Tide.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER STEPHEN (ID): Department of Idaho, Department Commander William Stephen, World War II veteran, going to donate $1,618, the very first one from Idaho.

DELEGATE MILLER (SD): Gary Miller, commander, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Post 15, $1,000.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KLOSTERMEIER (OH): Mr. Commander, Bob Klostermeier, Department Delegation Chairman from Ohio. I went to present our first check from Post 646, for $1,200.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Mr. Commander, the Director of Allen Chapter 700, a check for $3,200. One from Post 540 of Cortland for $540, for $3740 total. And for the dynamic 9th District $9,177.

DELEGATE ZINK (OH): From the Department of Ohio, Jerry D. Zink, a check for $10,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WI): Mr. Commander, from the great Department of Wisconsin, not only American Legion Riders, but the entire American Legion family. Wisconsin has a check for $11,880.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AK): Mr. Commander, from the great state of Alaska, where the summers are long, the riding days are short and the rides are cold and wet, we would like to present this check for $3,500.

NEC MEMBER KANE (FR): Liam Kane, NECman from the Department of France. I would like to present this check on behalf of the department for $500.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER MOORE (FR): And I'm Ron Moore, Commander, from the Department of France, and I'm following along right behind. I was told not to have a sermon up here, but I do have a couple other checks. ALR GR7, $600; GR14, $190; GR5, $150; Armor, $100; 1982, $460; an unknown $20; another unknown one dollar. And I got 25 cents from somebody too. Robert Healy gave me three hundred, so we got another additional check from the Department of France, $1,840.24

DELEGATE GILLIS (CO): I'm Jim Gillis from the state of Colorado, past department commander. I have checks here for a total of $890.

DELEGATE CUSHING (AZ): Mr. Commander, George Cushing from the grand state of Arizona, I have a check from the department for $6,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AZ): I also have checks from the following Legion Rider Chapters in Arizona, ALR 52, Sierra Vista, $1,000; ALR 4 in Globe, $1,500; ALR 79 in Yarnell, $500; ALR 138 in Tempe, $1,250; ALR Chapters and District 12, which is the greater Phoenix area, $1,328.22; ALR 29 in Glendale, $2,500; ALR 58 in Fountain Hills, $4,000, and ALR 86 in Overgaard presented the Commander with a $3,200 check during the Legacy Run, bringing Arizona up to $21,278.22. We also have 47 Chapters in Arizona with over 2,200 riders, and more checks from Arizona, commander, will be coming in the next few days.

DELEGATE FURCO (CA): Dennis Furco representing Chapter 741, Camarillo, California for $1,500. Thank you.

DELEGATE ALLEN (KS): I'm Dale Allen, the outgoing commander from Kansas. In addition to the $20,000 we have already sent in, I have checks and cash for $7,212.

DELEGATE WEBER (CA): Steve Weber representing Oxnard, California Chapter 48, we had our 4th Annual Legacy Scholarship Run, and we have a check for $850.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (KY): Mr. Commander, from the great state of Kentucky has a check here for $500. Thank you.

DELEGATE DALTON (KY): Scott Dalton, Area 8 Vice Commander from the great state of Kentucky, two checks to present, one, $500 from Post 31, Paducah, Kentucky. Another for $750 from our ALR group for a total of $1,250.

DELEGATE ROSS (KY): Mr. Commander, Terry Ross, past department commander. Great seeing you again. Last time I seen you we escorted you around and you wanted to know why the Riders had to show up, we kind of scared you a little bit, so, we have four checks from the Department of Kentucky for a total of $4,752.09. Thank you.

DELEGATE ALLEN (VT): Mr. Commander, Keith Allen from the Green Mountain State, Department of Vermont, representing Riders from Brandon Post 55; Colchester Post 91 and donations from the Rollins City middle school teachers and cash from our supporters.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (VA): Mr. Commander, from Chapter 28, Department of Virginia, proud to present this check for $2,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (DE): Mr. Commander, the Department of Delaware has already donated $11,061. We were adding to that from Oak Orchard Riverdale Post No. 28, a check for $7,000; and a check from Walter L. Fox Post No. 2 of Dover, Delaware, a check for $2,000. So from the small Department of Delaware, that's a total of $20,061.

DELEGATE MAYNARD (NH): Mr. Commander, my name is Ken Maynard from the great state of New Hampshire. On behalf of the whole American Legion family from New Hampshire, I have multiple checks totaling $10,420.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER SCHAFFER (IA): Mr. Commander, Lyle Schaffer, Department Commander from the state of Iowa. I have a check here for $945 from the 9th District in Northwest Iowa.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IA): Mr. Commander, representing American Legion Riders Washington, Iowa Post 29, I have a check for $500, and a second check for $500, my own personal check. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IA): Mr. Commander, the Detachment of Iowa SAL presents you with a check for a thousand dollars.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NY): Mr. Commander from the great Department of New York, home of National Commander Fang A. Wong, we are proud to present a check for $12,000 for the Legacy Scholarship Fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MI): Mr. Commander on behalf of the great state of Michigan, Department of Michigan, we have a donation of $2,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MI): Mr. Commander, also we have an additional check from the 8th District of Michigan for $219.52.

DELEGATE PROVOST (OR): Commander, Michael Provost, finance officer from the Department of Oregon; state treasure of American Legion Riders. From the Oregon American Legion Riders and American Legion family of Oregon, we have $3,400.

DELEGATE RILEY (IN): Mr. Commander, Adjutant Post 79, Tony Riley. On behalf of The American Legion Riders Post 79 in Zionsville, Indiana, $500.

DELEGATE EVONSION (CT): Mr. Commander, from the great state of Connecticut, I'm Jackie Evonsion, American Legion Rider director. We have several checks. We are just going to grand total them to $7,249. Thank you.

DELEGATE PUETZ (ND): Commander, North Dakota Past Commander Bob, Commander Dave, my name is Gerald Puetz, director of the Chapter of the Legion Riders, present to you a check for $8,625.

DELEGATE ROLLI (NE): Mr. Commander, Mike Rolli, Department of Nebraska sergeant-at-arms. We have checks from Morris Bluff Post 340, $100; Dan and Donna Anderson from St. Edwards $100; Legion Riders Chapter 84 out of Columbus, $300; Legion Riders Chapter 355 out of Denton, $1,020; South Central Chapter 52 out of Kearney, $1,000; Chapter 32 out of Papillion, $2,500; Legion Chapter 1, Omaha, $3,262; American Legion Riders Chapter 3 out of Lincoln, $11,200. Bringing a total of new contributions $19,482, and with previous contributions, $25,232 from the Department of Nebraska.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NM): Commander, from the Department of New Mexico, we have two checks here from The American Legion Post 7 in Carlsbad, $2,000; from Post 69, Alameda, New Mexico a check for $1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (GA): Commander, from the great state of Georgia I have three checks totaling the amount of $27,802.28 from the Legion family.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (FL): Mr. Commander from the great state of Florida, I have checks totaling $33,046.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MN): Mr. Commander, Department of Minnesota American Legion family, we have cash of $100, and a check for $40,550.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER SILVESTRI (MA): Commander, Steve Silvestri, commander, Department of Massachusetts where it all began. Post 224, a check for $2,000; Post 338, a check for $6,224, for a Massachusetts total of $8,224.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NJ): Mr. Commander, from the great state of New Jersey, and your home state, I want to present you a check for $500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (TX): Mr. Commander, from the great state of Texas, Post 491 family, presents $2,200.

DELEGATE HAYNES (TX): Mr. Commander, my name is Tom T.J. Haynes with the 593 Riders in Converse, Texas, since we have donated over $150,000 the last few years, nobody asked us where Converse is anymore. The Riders have honored me with bringing this check to Headquarters. They're back in Converse doing some of the many hundreds of events that they do every year representing The American Legion family. They seldom get to get together, but when they do, things like this happen. Commander, I have a check here for you for $25,051.85.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NY): Well, I don't have that much, but our post is one of the larger posts in Monroe County, New York , it's Cottreall-Warner Post 942, and our Legion Rider unit is about 19 members right now. What we would like to do is, we have a couple of runs we did, we're in the process of doing some more. Future monies will be a lot larger. I have two checks here, one for the Emergency Relief Fund for $250, and I have one for the Legacy Fund for $600. Thank you very much.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Fellow comrades, National Commander Wong, Jimmie Foster representing the great state of Alaska, but I am going to present a check from the state where I was born and raised, in Oklahoma. American Legion Riders Post 1, due to circumstances beyond their control had to leave and they asked me if I would in their honor, being a fellow Okie, present this check to The American Legion Scholarship Fund in the amount of $500, and I do so with pride. Thank you. *(Applause) ... At this time National Commander Wong resumed the Chair.*

...At this time a musical interlude was played.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: 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 U.S. 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 Veteran Affairs on January 21, 2009. As secretary he has promised to end homelessness among veterans, a very difficult but important goal. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm welcome to the Honorable Eric Shinseki. *(Applause)*

Address: The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Good afternoon, Legionnaires. I'm honored to be here. It's great to be here with you in Indianapolis. Commander Wong, I'm appreciative of that very generous introduction. And let me quickly add that all of us, to all of The American Legion, our gratitude for its unwavering devotion to all veterans, not just its members, through your many civic initiatives and community projects that make things better for veterans, make things better for veterans' families and make things better for our communities as well.

Let me just further acknowledge General Kelly and General Kicklighter, who I believe are here. Good to see both of you again. Your national adjutant, Dan Wheeler; Peter Gaytan, your executive director; Kris Nelson, your Auxiliary president; Jim Roberts, commander of the Sons of The American Legion, other members of the Legion leadership, your families, other distinguished guests, especially Neil McKinnon and Gordon Moore from Canada, and General Chin from the Republic of China.

Fellow veterans, VA colleagues, ladies and gentlemen: For 93 years now The American Legion has been the strong and consistent voice advocating for veterans health and benefits, especially for veterans education, which is your legacy to millions of veteran students as a result of the original GI Bill of Rights.

You have been the voice for generations of Americans who have come home from war. Nothing speaks as eloquently as your commitment, your commitment to them, all veterans, as your Heroes To Hometowns Initiative, supporting the most severely wounded soldiers and helping them and their families in the aftermath of battle. From Boys State to Boys Nation, The American Legion Baseball, which I remember well, the Scouting and volunteer projects, all of your community support initiatives have nurtured our best hopes and ideals as a nation.

That nation has been at war for much of the last decade. And the repeated deployments of the men and women in our formations have created issues that don't show up right away. More are surviving catastrophic injuries, but higher survival rates also mean complex casualties; the compounding effects of post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, multiple amputations. Five quadruple amputees at this point, with the added complications of blindness, deafness and genito-urinary injuries.

You know, bottom line, it takes a superb, disciplined fighting force to handle this kind of strain for this long. Our men and women who wear our nation's uniforms today are simply magnificent, and the Legion's support of them has been equally magnificent.

The president is unable to be here today, but has asked me to report to you on the state of your VA. I know he spoke to you earlier today, but I have been asked to bring you up-to-date on the state of the VA, how things looked three and-a-half years ago, what changes we have made to take care of this current generation of veterans and every generation that preceded it, and where VA is headed in the future.

In 2009, of the over 23 million living veterans in this country, only 7.4 million of them were enrolled in VA health care, and only three million were receiving compensation and pension benefits. We had an outreach problem. Many didn't know about the VA and its programs. We had an access problem. Even amongst those who knew, some had difficulty getting in. And even then we had been carrying a backlog and compensation claims for decades.

Over the past three and-a-half years VA has decided 2.9 million veterans' claims over that three and-a-half year period. 900,000 in '09. One million claims going out the door in '10. One million claims going out the door in '11. One million claims decisions likely again this year for the third year in a row. What that will mean is that we will have processed nearly four million claims by the end of this year. So when people talk about the 580,000 compensation claims which are backlogged today, they're not talking about claims that were here three and-a-half years ago. Probably not two years ago, and for the most part not even a year ago. The backlog is real, but no one is standing at parade rest. This is a dynamic process. When you push 2.9 million claims out the door and 3.5 million come in, this is a big numbers operation, and we have to find ways to dominate those numbers.

Three and-a-half years ago we were also still grappling with some unresolved issues from past wars; the Gulf War, over 20 years ago, the Vietnam War nearly 50 years ago now. I think in both cases we didn't take care of business when we should have decades ago, and some veterans were dying without benefits.

Three and-a-half years ago an estimated 107,000 veterans were homeless in this rich and powerful country. The president has said we won't be satisfied until every veteran who has fought for America has a home in America. Homelessness has been a veterans issue for decades. The economic downturn of 2008 threatened to send it spiraling out of control. And in spite of all of this the president was clear, resolute, unwavering. It is immoral for anyone who has defended this country to be homeless in America, and we're going to fix that. *(Applause.)*

So what I've just described for you is that landscape in 2009 which we have gone to work on to try to change. After consulting key stakeholders, including The American Legion, we settled on three key priorities back then in 2009 which remain unchanged

today. The first, a commitment to increase veterans access to VA and benefits, whatever that takes. It's outreach, it's improving access. And when they're in it's how do we get more people the care they need so they don't have to drive long distances to get it. And how do we make sure the programs that we have meet the requirements of all of our veterans, to include our women veterans whose numbers are growing.

The second commitment was to eliminate this thing called the backlog. For many years we talked about reducing the backlog. We said we're going to eliminate it. That's the only way to get control here, and we would do it in 2015, and that's the mark we've put on the wall.

The third commitment was to end veterans homelessness. Again, not manage it, not reduce it, but end veterans homelessness in 2015.

Now, delivering on these priorities required a closer, more collaborative working relationship with the Department of Defense, DoD. As I've said on a number of occasions, very little of what we do in VA originates in VA. Much of what we work in VA begins in DoD, and therefore this collaborative working relationship with VA is a top priority. The seamless transition of servicemembers departing the military and joining VA is crucial. If we do that right it's crucial to increasing access, eliminating the backlog and ending this thing called the shame of veterans homelessness. We need warm handoffs between our departments. That's what will help reduce those priorities, or achieve those priorities. But warm handoffs of transitioning servicemembers requires the synergy of both departments.

So Secretaries of Defense Bob Gates and Leon Panetta and I have personally met nine times in the last 18 months. Both Secretary Gates and Secretary Panetta are dedicated public servants, they're good friends of mine and they're good friends to veterans. Secretary Panetta and I will meet a tenth time in mid-September, which is unheralded between cabinet leadership. A month ago he and I testified for the first time together before a joint hearing of the House Armed Services Committee and the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. Among our accomplishments we have committed both of our departments to a single common, joint, integrated electronic health record. Now, the fact that we put all those words in there, it's code. Each of those words means something. Single, joint, common, integrated. This electronic health record is designed to be open in architecture and non-proprietary in design. We expect initial operating capability in 2014, and full operating capability in 2017. *(Applause)*

You can't have seamless transition where servicemembers come to VA and all of their records are intact unless you have this electronic health record that we share in common. So that's a big step. We intend the transition from DoD to VA to be seamless and productive, helpful to all veterans. So DoD/VA collaboration was priority one.

Priority two was fixing VA's budget process. Creating change requires stable predictable budgets. The fact that we have an advance appropriations, thanks to The American Legion and other VSOs, is a huge step in creating stable and predictable budgets. If we want to go faster, budgets have to be robust. In 2009 the VA budget totaled $99.8 billion. Congressionally enhanced, it was a good budget. In 2010 the president increased that budget from $99.8 billion to $127.2 billion, a near 30 percent increase in a single year. Importantly, the president's 2013 budget request, which is currently before the Congress, and one that I have testified to, is for $140.3 billion, a 40 percent increase since 2009. *(Applause)*

I was once asked, "Mr. Secretary, what do you value?" It was one of those shoot from the hip impromptu questions that I was asked as I stood up after a long briefing. And before I could respond the questioner said to me, "Don't answer that question. Show me your budget and I'll tell you what you value." By that standard this 40 percent increase in VA's budget tells you what the president values. He understands our obligation to veterans, and he has provided the robust funding needed to better care for

them today, and simultaneously to transform this department for its 21st Century responsibilities. You have to do both at the same time. Fix the issues today, and build a stronger, more responsive organization for the long-term.

So what have we put into motion in VA in the past three and-a-half years? Well, let me just tick off some things that are easy to track. First, to increase access we have added 57 new community based out-patient clinics, and that will continue. Twenty more mobile health clinics on wheels to get to the most rural, most remote areas in this country. A fifth polytrauma center in San Antonio, Texas. We have three new hospitals under construction: Denver, Orlando and New Orleans. We just opened a spectacular state-of-the-art VA Medical Center in Las Vegas just three weeks ago. The first new VA hospital in 17 years. This is about promise making and promise keeping. And as the president remarked recently, we keep our promises.

We've also invested heavily in new telehealth, telemedicine initiatives to overcome the tyranny of distance. Enhanced IT technologies also make it easier for veterans to make appointments, to access medical specialists that aren't available to them locally, retrieve their medical records and find out about available benefits and services, all without having to drive long distances. Again, battling with the tyranny of distance.

Now, besides these initiatives we've also made some key decisions to take care of some longstanding issues and literally to clean up the battlefield. For Vietnam veterans we granted presumption of service connection for three new Agent Orange-related conditions. You've heard about them. Parkinson's, hairy cell and other chronic b-cell leukemias, and ischemic heart disease. It had been 45 years. It was time. For Gulf War veterans we granted presumption of service connection for nine diseases associated with Gulf War illness. For them it had been over 20 years. It was time. And, finally, PTSD for all combat veterans with verifiable PTSD. World War II, Korea, Dominican Republic, Vietnam, Granada, Panama, Somalia, Operation Desert Storm, Iraq, Afghanistan, among others. We granted the presumption of service connection. PTSD is as old as warfare itself. And here again, it was time.

Now, these three decisions alone have dramatically expanded access to VA for nearly one million veterans. Making these decisions is step one. Step two is dealing with the increase in compensation claims that are sure to result. Growth in the number of claims and the backlog was predictable, and we indicated when we made these decisions that we were going to take them on. It was the right thing to do for Vietnam veterans, for Gulf War veterans and for combat veterans of all wars. And we will do it again whenever the opportunity to better serve veterans presents itself. Let's not back away from such decisions because we're either afraid of or don't want the backlog to grow. Let it grow. We'll work on it. We'll get it down. But let's keep our priorities straight here. It is about taking care of veterans. *(Applause)*

VA has spent the past two years developing a new automation tool called VBMS: Veterans Benefits Management System. It's been piloted at two regional offices for over a year now. We'll have VBMS up and running at 16 regional offices by the end of this year, and at all 56 regional offices by the end of 2013. VBMS is key, key to automating this massive numbers claims process I described to you that saw us put 2.9 million claims decisions out the door and receive 3.5 million claims to go to work on.

We're still receiving paper from DoD, and this will begin to change. VBMS is here, it's about to be fielded. In 2014 we will work with DoD to ensure that all transition documentation comes in electrons. And that's how you dominate these large numbers of claims. The president's budgets provided us the resources we need to end the backlog in 2015. That is our target, and we're on track.

In 2009, I observed that veterans lead the nation in homelessness, depression, substance abuse, suicides, and they rank up there in joblessness as well. So we've had a full-court press on to rescue veterans from the streets. As I indicated earlier, the estimated

number of homeless veterans in this country in 2009 was 107,000. By 2011, in spite of the extended economic downturn, that estimate had dropped to 67,500. When HUD, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, announces its 2012 estimate sometime shortly here, we expect that number will be below 60,000, keeping us on track to break 35,000 in 2013, and ending the rescue phase of veterans' homelessness in 2015. We always talk about this war on homelessness in two phases. One is rescue, getting the folks who are on the streets today off the streets and into safe housing, and then go to work with them on their issues.

The second phase is prevention. You're not going to end homelessness unless you're doing both rescue and prevention. The prevention phase of veterans' homelessness will be ongoing, and is probably going to continue indefinitely. It will require VA to focus its significant capabilities on keeping at-risk veterans, veterans who are one paycheck away, one more missed utility payment away, one mortgage payment away, from being foreclosed. Those are the folks that we want to keep from slipping into this downward spiral that ends in homelessness. For example, we have roughly 800,000 veterans and eligible family members today in training and education, university, college, community college, tech schools, in the trades. They must graduate. Anyone who flunks out in this economy is at high risk of homelessness. Prevention. Keep them in school, help them complete their studies. And my thanks to The American Legion for taking up the standard on this and helping us this past year.

So my one-word speech to student veterans whenever I have a chance to gather with them, as I did last month in Boise State: Graduate. One word. Graduate. If I sound like your dad, I am. I'm paying most of your bills. *(Laughter)* If I work this right you might get a new car on graduation day. Bottom line, graduate.

Another example of prevention. Last year roughly 86,000 of our 1.3 million veteran mortgage holders, 86,000 of 1.3 million, defaulted on their home loans. They are on their way to foreclosure. VA intervened, working with financial institutions, working with those veterans, lowering payments, extending payment periods. We were able to keep 73,000 of those veterans and their families in their homes. Prevention.

We could say the same thing about what we must do in dealing with depression, substance abuse, suicide ideation. In VA's large healthcare system we deal with all those issues. We do well. You can't roll your sleeves up and wring your hands at the same time I'm told in central Texas. You have to do one or the other. You can't wring your hands and roll your sleeves up at the same time. We've rolled our sleeves up. We've gone to work on homelessness, and we expect to have the rescue phase of this ended in 2015.

Mental health. In 2005, at the height of operations in Iraq we had 13,000 mental health professionals handling the health care needs of our veterans. Today that number is over 20,000, and we've just recently decided to hire another 1,600 clinical staff to address the growth and mental health requirements spawned by a decade of tough, high risk, high stress repetitive combat deployments. We know that when we diagnose and treat, people get better. Among the 8.6 million veterans enrolled in VA health care, mental health treatment is up, which is a good sign. It means we're dealing with the stigma issues. At the same time, for veterans receiving VA mental health treatment our suicide rates are trending down. Again another good sign, indicating that treatment works.

However, too many veterans still leave the military with mental health issues we never find out about. Most veterans who commit suicide, perhaps as many as two out of three, were never enrolled in VA. So as good as we might think we are, we can't help those we don't treat, which is another reason for increasing access to get more folks in the door, and developing with DoD this seamless transition between the two departments, DoD and VA. Warm handoffs work. These are magnificent young people, we're not going to let them down.

One of our most successful outreach efforts is our Veterans' Crisis Line. DoD knows it as the Military Crisis Line. Same number, same trained VA mental health professionals answering the phone. Not 911 operators, but mental health professionals online. No cost to DoD. I don't know how you put a price tag on helping people in crisis. Since 2007 over 640,000 people have called in, including over 8,000 active duty servicemembers. We've made over 99,000 referrals for care, and rescued over 23,000 from potential suicides, suicides in progress in which we intervened. Younger veterans are more comfortable with chatting and texting, so in 2009 we added online chat, and in 2011 a texting service. We will always find ways to outreach to our veterans in need of help.

Good jobs are essential for veterans, and my congratulations to The American Legion for your hiring effort that you've conducted here as part of this Convention. We are proud to have partnered with the First Lady's Joining Forces Initiative, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Hiring Our Heroes campaign.

The president challenged private companies to hire or train 100,000 veterans or active duty spouses by the end of 2013. 2,100 companies responded. They have committed to over 175,000 jobs. And, frankly, here recently they achieved 125,000 veterans and spouses already being hired. VA has held its own hiring fairs in Washington, D.C. and Detroit in the first six months of this year. Over 12,000 veterans showed up, and over 8,000 interviews conducted. 1,700 job offers were made on the spot, and the job offers continue to flow.

We've also conducted two veteran-owned small business training expositions within the last 12 months. Our opportunity to educate veteran small business owners on our procurement requirements, so they understand what it is we're looking for in their proposals, and then allow the 3,500 small business folks who showed up to demonstrate their capabilities and improve their preparation of competitive proposals for government contracts, which is what they need. Bottom line, veterans hire veterans. Veterans hire veterans because they are comfortable with them and they know each other. And the more successful veteran entrepreneurs we cultivate, the better the opportunities for veterans' employment. And that's why we put that initiative where it is.

So where are we headed? Next summer here is what VA will report to this Convention: It will report that between 2009 and 2013 we will have increased spinal cord injury funding by 28 percent, and by the following year, 2014, that increase will likely be 36 percent.

Between 2009 and '13 we will have increased TBI funding — traumatic brain injury funding — by 38 percent. By 2014 that increase will likely be 51 percent.

We will have increased mental health funding by 39 percent. By 2014 that increase will likely be 45 percent. We will have increased long-term care funding by 39 percent; by 2014 that increase will likely be 50 percent. We will have increased prosthetics funding by 58 percent, and by 2014 that increase will likely be 75 percent.

"Will likely be" means it will be in our budget subject to approval by the Congress.

We will have increased women veterans funding by 123 percent, and by 2014 that increase will likely be 158 percent. *(Applause)*

We will have increased OEF, OIF, OND funding by 124 percent, and by 2014 that increase will likely be 161 percent.

Our Veterans Benefit Management System will be fully operational at most regional offices, and just 40 percent of claims will be older than 125 days, and will be after ending the backlog. *(Applause)*

Again I go back to the tagline I used earlier: Show me your budget. I was told, show me your budget and I'll tell you what you value. You don't have to tell me what you value, your budget will speak to you. And so the reason I share this detail with you, so you have a sense of where we're headed, is the fact that the president's budgets value veterans, their families and our survivors, and what they've meant to this country.

Now, in closing, a little bit of personal history. As a young battalion commander serving in Cold War Germany, I heard one of our senior generals in a Memorial Day speech make a statement, and it's one that's stuck with me all these years. And what he said was, "I know that when I die I'll die a free man, on my feet, not on my knees, with my head up, not bowed." A simple statement. I know that when I die I will die a free man. And then he pointed east. It was still the Cold War. He pointed east and said, "Not far from here there are people, in fact an entire nation, who cannot say that and probably wouldn't understand the fundamental importance of those words." And as I say, those words have stuck with me, and I've used it on occasion publicly. You see, because I realized as I listened to him that I had been a career military officer, I had been taking the privilege of my American citizenship a bit for granted. You see, those words are my legacy as well. I can utter the very same words, "I know that when I die I'll die a free man, on my feet, not on my knees, with my head up, not bowed to anyone."

And those words are your legacy also. And because we share that legacy our children and grandchildren will inherit it from us. They are able to make the same unequivocal statement. You see, only the free who cherish freedom and love liberty enough to fight for it can bequeath such a legacy to anyone else. The oppressed? The oppressed cannot. And the free who are not willing to fight and die for it, cannot. Only the free who cherish freedom and love liberty enough to fight for it can bequeath the gift of freedom to others, as our young men and women are doing today, as our ancestors did for us, and as members of the Legion have for 93 years.

So my thanks to all of you who have served for your service, preserving that legacy for me and for all Americans. God bless those who serve and have served our nation in uniform, God bless our president, and may God continue to bless this wonderful country of ours. Thank you all very much. Good luck on your convention. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: I would like to make an announcement. Legacy scholarship money collected at this convention, including on-stage and the Ride, total $668,421.12. Keep it coming. Thank you to The American Legion family. Thank you to The American Legion Riders. Keep it coming. *(Applause)*

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 VAC's integrated plan all veterans are assured that the able-bodied will be employed, the well-educated fully utilized, the ill hospitalized, and the children, orphans, widows, the elderly and disabled, cared for. We are fortunate to have with us today a man who has dedicated his life to veterans and their families. Please welcome from the Republic of China Veterans Affairs Commission, Director Hans Song. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Hans Song
Veterans Affairs Commission, Republic of China

Thank you, national commander, for your kind introduction about the Veterans Affairs Commission in the Republic of China, Taiwan. I just came over from greeting the Auxiliary of The American Legion, and my colleague down there taking pictures was encountered by one question, the difference between Republic of China and People's Republic. I believe many of you can answer the question. Well, to most of you, now, the People's Republic of China is called China, and Republic of China is now enjoying the 101st anniversary this coming October. And that is also referred to as China, but then Taiwan; okay?

Taiwan is a small island. It used to be called Formosa, and Formosa is from the Portuguese language, which means "a beautiful island." Well, on behalf of all the people, as well as the veterans in Taiwan, I extend to you our most sincere welcome to all of our American Legion friends. Whenever you get the chance to visit southeast Asia, please consider Taiwan as one of your stops. We always extend our most sincere welcome and hospitality to all our good friends from The American Legion.

Today I'm very honored to greet your floor on behalf of Minister Tseng Jing-ling, who is the equivalent to the gentleman who just spoke to you, the Secretary of VA. He planned to come here in person. However, a very important and unexpected event asked him to stay in the country for the necessary management. Therefore, I'm assigned to speak to you on his behalf

I have been with the Veterans Affairs for, this is the 25th year, and I did not used to have the need to wear reading glasses, but today now I need it. *(Laughter)*

The American Legion and Veterans Affairs Commission in Taiwan have built a very strong relationship for nearly 50 years. And in the past 30 some years we have maintained exchanging top level visits. This past year we were very pleased to receive National Commander Fang Wong, National President Nelson and their party, when they visited Taiwan. I don't know if they had enjoyed the stay with us in Taipei, but please check on the website of The American Legion, and especially with the photo gallery of the national commander. You will find at least 617 photos in it. *(Laughter)*

Almost every year The American Legion has passed a resolution in support of the Republic of China during your annual conventions. We truly appreciate this friendship, and as I know, this friendship of friendly gestures will go on in the years to come. Thank you.

We in Taiwan, the Republic of China, have been pursuing a life of peace, democracy and freedom just like the Americans since May 20th, 2008, when our President Ma Ying-jeou came into his presidency. He has been trying very hard to promote peaceful development and a win-win policy for his international cross-trade relationship. The first four years of his first term has proven the popularity of his aforesaid policy. This year President Ma won the presidential election for his second term, and he vows to continue his policy toward mainland China and the United States, to bring an even better economy and security for our people, as well as for East Asia in the coming four years.

We appreciate it very much that the United States has been so friendly to sell resources and help make what we are in Taiwan today. But security is always the top concern to every country. We, Taiwan soldiers, don't like to wage wars, and nobody should. However, we in Taiwan bear in mind one old Chinese proverb that goes, "Though the world may be at peace, being unprepared to fight invites danger."

So, good friends in The American Legion, we shall continue to purchase the defensive weapons that we cannot manufacture by ourselves, and we need to continue making friends like the United States. So, dear good friends, we need your continuous support by urging your federal government for the sale in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act, and we also need your support to help us, the Republic of China in Taiwan, to join in more international organizations so that we can be good enough to defend ourselves on the one hand, and help in stabilizing the western Pacific on the other.

Dear friends, we are lucky to have the comradeship you have been offering us in the past years, and we shall cherish it always. Thank you again for allowing me to speak at your opening session, and I wish you all a successful convention, and good health to all of you.

Now, before leaving the podium I would take the honor to present on behalf of the President of my country, Mr. Ma Ying-jeou, a matter of Order of Resplendent Banner to

National Commander Fang Wong, to express our gratitude to him for his great efforts in strengthening our mutual relations. And I will read the citation.

"Citation. Mr. Fang Wong, national commander of The American Legion has distinguished himself by his significant contribution to the promotion of veterans affairs and support to military cooperation between the Republic of China and the United States of America. In appreciation of his meritorious assistance, National Commander Fang Wong is presented the Medal of Order of Resplendent Banner with Cravat, numbered 3686, by the government of the Republic of China, in accordance with Article 11 of the Armed Forces Decorations Regulations. Signed by President Ma Ying-jeou, Premier Chen Chun, and Minister of National Defense, Kao Hua-chu." (Applause)

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

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HEIFNER: 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.A. 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 of Canada. *(Applause)*

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

Good afternoon. National Commander Wong, and ANAVICUS President Comer, National Adjutant Wheeler, honored guests, comrades, it is an honor for me to have been invited to address you today at the National 94th 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 to you greetings, and to be able to express our appreciation to the friendship that exists between our two nations.

It was not only so 200 years ago, the War of 1812. As Canada's oldest veterans organization, we were formed in 1840, only 25 years after the end of that war. So while some of our founding members fought against your ancestors, it was the British that burned down the White House, not Canada. *(Laughter)*

But since that time our troops have served together on many battlefields from western fronts in France in 1917, through to Kandahar Province in Afghanistan. Now as friends and allies we continue to serve together not only on the battlefield, but in all walks of life, military and civilian, to make the world a better place. I am honored to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with you here today to reaffirm the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada's solemn oath to support our troops and our veterans by all means available to us. Thank for you inviting me, and I wish you all a very successful convention. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HEIFNER: 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's Elmira, Ontario Branch 469 in 1985. He previously served in the 2nd Battalion of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Royal Canadian Legion Dominion President Gordon Moore. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Gordon Moore, Dominion President
The Royal Canadian Legion

Good afternoon, everyone. On Sunday morning I was at breakfast with the Army, Navy, Air Force Veterans Association, and your past commander, Jake Comer, had a number of stories that morning, and I would just like to share one with Jake and all of you that I received just a little while ago. A priest was invited to attend a host party, and naturally he was properly dressed, wearing his priest's collar. A little boy kept staring at him the entire evening. Finally the priest asked the little boy what he was staring at, and the little boy pointed to the priest's neck. When the priest finally realized what the boy was pointing at he asked the boy, "Do you know what I'm wearing, or why I'm wearing that?" The boy nodded his head yes, and replied, "It kills fleas and ticks for up to three months." *(Laughter)*

Commander Wong, Adjutant Wheeler, distinguished guests and my Legionnaires, I bring you greetings on behalf of the elected officers of the Royal Canadian Legion Dominion Command, and the 342,000 members of the Royal Canadian Legion. From coast-to-coast and Europe and Mexico we just presented a charter to Chapala Lake, Mexico, and I welcome them as well, and also to the branches within the United States of America. I wish you all success as you deliberate your business here in the home of the Headquarters of The American Legion, Indianapolis, Indiana. We know that it's also the home of the Pacers of the NBA and the Colts of the NFL. But did you know that Indiana is well-known to the Canadian military? Some time ago you used to have a Fort Benjamin Harrison here, and that is where our public affairs officers used to train before it was taken over by The American Legion and a few others when the Fort closed its doors. But Indiana is also known as the place where basketball, and by the way a Canadian invention, reigned supreme, and its people are still known as Hoosiers. I need to get the true definition of what that means.

We in Canada are not known for our exploits on the court as they are here, but we are known for veterans programs. About year ago Patricia Varga, our then dominion president, stood on this podium and spoke to you about how we have the best programs in the world. Despite the recent government cutbacks we still do, but they are a little tougher to access. That is why we've taken up some of the slack in the way we care for our veterans. We announced at our Dominion Convention in June the "Leave The Streets Behind" program. It's a national program which will help our veterans who are homeless get the help that they need.

We are also looking to the future, and which way we can recruit and manage our members, because without them we could not bring to bear the pressure we do on the government of the day. There is no greater calling than to serve your country and its military. Those who have served make a commitment that can result in their untimely demise or serious injury. We know they'll be ready to give up their lives if need be. But those who return from foreign wars have also made many sacrifices, both physical and mental. This is where the people of our two great countries need to react in a meaningful way. This means making a commitment in a different way. We have to make the commitment to the living as well as those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. We have to ensure that no one suffers because he or she went to serve his or her country. We as a people in our two nations owe it to them because they made the commitment to freedom and a commitment to our way of life. I know I'm preaching to the converted, because you wouldn't be here if you didn't care. But I want to make it abundantly clear that we have to care for the families as well.

In Canada there is a groundswell of compassion for those who stay behind when the service person goes away. Gone are the days when wives and kids rank below the furniture. They are now a part of the whole picture, and we deal with the whole picture as

presented to us. The service person reigns supreme in Canada, but his or her family is not forgotten. The federal government has reintroduced some education benefits taken away from the families. It should and it must grant them, because we will always have someone deployed somewhere. But we are there to make sure it happens, and we will because we care.

To end my preaching for today, I would like to tell you a small story. When Fort Benjamin Harrison was still here, a couple of enterprising young Canadian officers noticed that there were signs posted at the officers' club which controlled the parking, so they had a sign made up that would guarantee their parking at the club, and its abbreviation form said "SCOOP." And every time they pulled in at the front of the officers' club there was a parking spot with their sign on it. One day someone asked what the abbreviation stood for. One young officer answered "Senior Canadian Officer On Post, sir." They were left alone until they departed the area for good. Now, that's what I call Canadian ingenuity and American friendliness.

One item that I would like to just speak on just for a moment, and I believe that the delegates from the State of Michigan will know what I'm talking about, I hope. The government of Canada announced three months ago, finally, that they are going to spend $550 million to build the new bridge between Windsor, Ontario, Canada, across the Detroit River to Detroit, Michigan. This is going to mean thousands of jobs on both sides of the border. I also have sent a letter to the prime minister and five of his departments to ask them to form a committee, including delegates on that particular committee, from the United States of America. Because if you recall, and this is one name that has come up through myself, during the Second World War we had a Special Forces unit put together, Canadian and American soldiers, better known as the Devil's Brigade. Maybe that's not a proper name for that bridge, but somewhere along the line over the next five years while this bridge is under construction I hope that we as two nations side-by-side can agree on a name that is going to represent all veterans who have served. *(Applause)*

Two people that I would really like to thank for the week that we've been here, and that is a good friend and a comrade, Dan and Mary Ludwig. Your hospitality has been exceptional, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart and my wife's heart. Also our Dominion Secretary, Brad and Therese White. Thank you so much for everything that you've done. *(Applause)*

At this time I would like to present a small token of my appreciation, and it's my new medallion, or coin, to Commander Wong. Thank you, God bless, and as it's been said many times before today, God bless America. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HEIFNER: On behalf of Commander Wong I would like to present this coin to Mr. Gordon Moore for the services that he has provided to us. *(Applause)*

The National American Legion Press Association is an association of editors, writers and professional communicators who are 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 us greetings today is the president of NALPA, Brett Reistad. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Brett Reistad, President
National American Legion Press Association

Commander Wong, Adjutant Wheeler, delegates, distinguished guests and fellow Legionnaires. Good afternoon. On behalf the membership of the National American

Legion Press Association, I am honored to welcome you to the 94th Annual Convention of The American Legion.

On the heels of the founding of The American Legion then National Adjutant Lemuel Bolles had a vision to create a press association for our organization of growing influence. Next year, 2013, NALPA will celebrate 90 years of facilitating communication of the aims, achievements, news and events of The American Legion, and now all levels of The American Legion family through newsletter publications, websites, and social media.

We are comprised of editors, contributors, webmasters, site administrators, bloggers, public relations officers, historians and supporters who encourage the exchange of ideas, share expertise, promote communication and annually recognize those who achieve excellence in doing so.

Our many sanctioned department press associations provide local outlets for communicators to meet, share ideas, provide guidance and promote the programs and the ideals of The American Legion to our members in our communities.

On behalf of our executive director, Mike Duggan, and our newly elected president, John Thompson of Nebraska, I cordially invite you and your American Legion family communicators to join our ranks. The NALPA desk is conveniently located in the National Headquarters office of the Convention Center beside the National Public Relations Commission office. We welcome you to stop by. We can also be found on the Internet and on Facebook. Thank you very much for your attention and have a great convention. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HEIFNER: 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 Delaware Society since 1999. He was elected president general of the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution in July. Please welcome President General Stephen A. Leishman. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Stephen A. Leishman, President General
National Society, Son of the American Revolution

Good afternoon. Commander Wong, distinguished guests, fellow Legionnaires, members of the ladies Auxiliary and the Sons of the American Legion. It is my distinct honor to address you here this afternoon as a retired Air Force navigator that included a tour in Southeast Asia I'm proud to be a member of American Legion Post 18 from Claymont, Delaware. *(Applause)*

But I stand before you today as the president general of the National Society Sons of the American Revolution representing 30,000 members of our society, a lineage society who can trace their ancestries back to the American Revolution. Our ancestors were the first veterans, and we have been commemorating their accomplishments since 1889 when we were chartered. I am sure if they were here today, they would proudly wear The American Legion cap.

Let me tell about our organization. We have many patriotic programs that celebrate the American Revolution and the founding of our nation. And such programs as the National Historic Essay and oration contests for our youth; Outstanding Eagle Scout; JROTC and ROTC recognition, and the national poster contest for the grade school children. Our color guard in Colonial uniform participates in history commemorations

and celebrations, and in patriotic parades, and you probably have seen them at sporting events as they present the Colors just before the game.

In recent years we have joined with The American Legion in partnership with common goals such as promoting the Flag Amendment. Actually, one of our first actions of our society in 1890 was to promote the national observance of Flag Day. Since the early years, the Sons of the American Revolution has promoted the display of the Stars and Stripes on all public buildings, on post offices and in court rooms. The Sons of the American Revolution has been a force in the enactment of laws prohibiting the desecration of the American flag in most states. We have programs that recognize the public display for people and businesses of our flag. And we offer instruction for the proper retirement of unserviceable flags.

We, like you, also have programs that publicly recognize teachers, firemen, law enforcement officers and emergency medical personnel. We have joined with The American Legion in the Blue Star Salute, and we support the veterans homes and VA hospitals with volunteers. We participate in grave decoration programs, and we also search out and mark the grave sites of Revolutionary War veterans so they too are not forgotten.

Our American Revolution ancestors valued freedom above all, and when the war was over and they had won their freedom, they formed a government that has lasted 225 years. The National Society of the American Revolution looks forward to continuing its partnership with The American Legion to protect the freedoms that were earned by our forefathers, and to hand to our children and their children. We know that The American Legion stands with us in the quest for patriotic education throughout our nation. And now it is my pleasure to make a presentation to National Commander Fang Wong.

Commander Wong, in recognition of your accomplishments as a patriotic leader in this nation, it is an honor for me to present to you on behalf of the National Society Sons of the American Revolution, the Distinguished Patriot Award. This award is only presented once during the tenure of a president general. It is presented to a citizen for outstanding service and patriotism to our country. Commander Wong, thank you, sir, for your leadership. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you. The Chair recognizes Larry J. 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 I of Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs)
Larry J. Besson, Illinois, Chairman

Commander Wong, delegates to the 94th Annual National Convention of The American Legion, Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012.

The section on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs met at 9:00 a.m., August 26, 2012, in the Indiana Convention Center, Room 124, Street Level.

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 (July 30, 2012); 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 2,720 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 July 30, 2012, and in accordance with Article V of the National Constitution, the voting strength of the 55 Departments is 2,720 allocated as follows:

Alabama	31	Montana	20
Alaska	14	Nebraska	45
Arizona	55	Nevada	17
Arkansas	24	New Hampshire	27
California	125	New Jersey	66
Colorado	33	New Mexico	20
Connecticut	30	New York	148
Delaware	18	North Carolina	56
District of Columbia	8	North Dakota	24
Florida	144	Ohio	127
France	9	Oklahoma	31
Georgia	59	Oregon	30
Idaho	18	Pennsylvania	204
Philippines	7	Illinois	113
Puerto Rico	11	Indiana	106
Rhode Island	12	Iowa	66
South Carolina	33	Kansas	45
South Dakota	28	Kentucky	36
Tennessee	38	Louisiana	35
Texas	95	Maine	31
Utah	16	Maryland	72
Vermont	21	Massachusetts	55
Virginia	64	Mexico	7
Washington	42	Michigan	92
West Virginia	29	Minnesota	100
Wisconsin	74	Mississippi	25
Wyoming	14		

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed. The report of Credentials and Internal Affairs, Section I is adopted. The Chair recognizes Ken Governor of New York, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules
Kenneth Governor, New York, Chairman

Mr. Commander, National Officers, Reverend clergy, distinguished guests, my fellow Legionnaires. The National Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules met on Sunday, August 26, 2012 in the Indianapolis Marriott Downtown in Indianapolis, Indiana. There were 38 delegates to the Committee present and 12 guests in attendance. Following the preliminary activities to officially organize the Committee, the Permanent Chairman and Secretary were duly elected. I, Kenneth Governor, a delegate from the Department of New York, 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 received Resolution No. 233 from Illinois entitled "Add Veteran Coding on State Driver's Licenses" for consideration. After debate a motion to reject Resolution No. 233 was unanimously passed by the Committee. The Legislation and Rules Committee also received Resolution No. 244 from New Jersey entitled "National Song of Remembrance" for consideration. After debate a motion to refer Resolution No. 244 to the Standing Commission for Americanism was approved by majority vote of the Committee. On October 3, 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. Members of The American Legion family attending this event should have an opportunity for face-to-face meetings with their elected officials. The Committee meeting closed with an exhortation to the members about the important role we in The American Legion play in educating the electorate and the elected officials as this country moves towards the election season. For the first time since 1932 no major party candidate for either the Presidency or Vice Presidency will have served in the military. There are dwindling numbers of veterans in the Judicial and Legislative branches of government as well. The people who will write, implement and interpret the laws and government of this nation will not understand the notion of service and sacrifice inherent in our military unless we, the veterans, educate them. It is our responsibility to inculcate these people with an understanding of what it means to be a veteran and a patriotic American.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN GOVERNOR: National Commander Wong, as a duly authorized delegate to this convention from the Department of New York, 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 Procedure for the organization of National Conventions of The American Legion. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: I have a motion and a second. Any discussion? All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed? The report of Legislation and Rules is adopted. The Chair recognizes Larry J. 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 Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs)
Larry J. Besson, Illinois, Chairman

Forty-six members of the Credentials and Internal Affairs Committee, Section II, elected Larry J. Besson of Illinois as Chairman, and George West of New Hampshire as Secretary, and considered eighteen resolutions, seventeen of which originated with Departments of The American Legion and one which was created by the committee. Of these, three were approved; one was approved as amended; four were referred; six were received and recorded and four were rejected.

Mr. Commander, I would like to have Resolution No. 1 considered separately after my report has been adopted.

Approved

Resolution No. 158: Battle of Camden Site and Historic Camden Revolutionary War Site be Placed Under the National Park Service
Origin: South Carolina
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Internal Matters (Section II)

WHEREAS**,** At the Battle of Camden site, 9 miles north of Camden, South Carolina, in August 1780 occurred one of the largest land battles and the greatest colonial defeat of the American Revolution; and

WHEREAS**,** Lord Cornwallis and the Army of King George III defeated the Continental Army under General Horatio Gates, it proved a watershed battle in the 1780-81 Southern Campaign and helped set in motion events that led to the inevitable confrontation at Yorktown and Lord Cornwallis' surrender; and

WHEREAS**,** Perhaps as many as 800 American soldiers from eight of the original thirteen colonies died and are buried in unmarked graves on this, the only major Revolutionary War Battlefield without protection by the Federal Government; and

WHEREAS**,** The battlefield is listed as National register of Historic Places property and 1300 acres is designated a National Historic Landmark, plus a National Park Service (NPS) report reinforces the significance of the battlefield and the British garrison at Camden (now Historic Camden Revolutionary War Site, an affiliate of the NPS), and the NPS National Historic Landmark 2007 report to Congress placed this Landmark on the "watch list", later as "endangered" because of land use activities in the area around the site; and

WHEREAS, A nonpartisan coalition of 25 Federal, State, and private agencies have secured 476 acres of the core battlefield and have recommended the creation and implementation of a strategic plan for the creation of a Battle of Camden National Battlefield to include the British garrison at Camden, where Lord Cornwallis commandeered patriot Joseph Kershaw's home as headquarters; and

WHEREAS, James Leroy Belk American Legion Post #17 is the largest veterans organization in Kershaw County, and has an interest in honoring this hallowed ground and those 800 veterans whose sacrifices helped establish our great nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That the designation of the Battle of Camden site and Historic Camden Revolutionary War Site be placed under the protection of the National Park Service.

Resolution No. 215: Increase Income Tax Deduction for Volunteer Mileage
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime era veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a firm supporter of the VA Voluntary Service Program which is the largest volunteer program in the federal government; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion statistics have shown for the last several years that over 7,000 volunteers have contributed over 850,000 volunteer hours annually, and the rising cost of gasoline is one of the barriers to new and current volunteer recruitment and retention; and

WHEREAS, As the federal budget is tightened due to the current economic crisis, the reliance upon volunteers will continue to expand; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, being one of the nation's largest and most active community service organizations, recognizes the need to create an environment which would attract and retain volunteers; and

WHEREAS, One of the best ways to promote volunteerism is to help defray out-of-pocket expenses incurred by volunteers; and

WHEREAS, For tax year 2011 the standard mileage rate for business use of a vehicle was 55.5 cents per mile, medical rate was 23.5 cents per mile; and

WHEREAS, The optional standard mileage rate for volunteers providing service to a government or charitable organization is still 14 cents per mile and has not changed since 1997; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge Congress to approve legislation to increase the volunteer mileage income tax deduction rate from 14 cents per mile to 23.5 cents per mile and to adjust this rate yearly based on regular CPI-based adjustments.

Resolution No. 249: 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 94th National Convention has been held in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012; and

WHEREAS, There has been a spirit of cooperation and friendship along with mutual helpfulness evidenced by the Legionnaires of Indiana, the officers of the Convention Corporation and the Department, and by the officials and the people of Indianapolis, Indiana; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That we express our deep appreciation to the Department of Indiana, Governor of Indiana Mitch Daniels; Mayor Gregory A. Ballard; the city of Indianapolis, Indiana, including the fire department, police department, and other public safety officials, and to the 2012 American Legion National Convention Corporation of Indiana, James E. Koutz, President; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That 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. 46: Man in the Sea Memorial Monument
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs and Other Internal Matters (Section II)
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The acts of Navy, Army, Marines, Air Force, and Coast Guard divers have served the United States through a long history of actions including: Beach and harbor clearances and recoveries in all United States wars since WWI; Crucial salvage of Naval assets following the attacks at Pearl Harbor in WWII, Clearance of underwater munitions at ports and harbors in WWII; Clandestine infiltration missions in the European and Pacific Theaters of WWII; Maintenance and repair of vessels and aircraft recovery during the Vietnam War; Significant contributions to the winning of the Cold War by diving on Soviet communications cables at extreme depths; Recoveries of Space Shuttles *Challenger* and *Columbia*; A range of humanitarian relief efforts to clear international ports and harbors after natural disasters; Conducting hundreds of missions to maintain the dams, locks and waterways of the United States; Maintaining a security posture throughout the homeland during ports, waterways, and coastal security inspections following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001; Support for a range of missions during Operation Iraqi Freedom; and A host of lesser known acts protecting U.S. interests at home and abroad; and

WHEREAS, The awareness of current of future generations of the contributions of military divers to the security of the United States is threatened by a lack of a national focus on the service of the men and women who have served beneath the sea; and

WHEREAS, A national memorial to military diving would be best located in our nation's Capital, at the site of the historic Navy Dive School on the grounds of the Washington Navy Yard, along the edge of the Anacostia River, where the services' divers can draw a common history and where public visibility of the memorial to military diving would receive appropriate visitation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges the President of the United States and the U.S. Congress to designate the site of the former Navy Dive School at the Washington Navy Yard as the location of a memorial to military diving; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion endorses the proposal that such a memorial be named the "Man in the Sea Memorial Monument"; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion endorses, without any financial obligation to the National Organization, The Homeland Security Policy Institute Group's calls for private contributions to support the final design and construction of the Man in the Sea Memorial Monument; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Legion calls for the final design be conducted in consultation with the current diving commands in the Navy, Army, Marines, Air Force and Coast Guard to ensure that the history of all services be captured in the design of the monument and the messaging at the memorial site; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports this resolution and urges our members of Congress to pass legislation to support this memorial.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Internal Affairs

Resolution No. 3 (FR): **Department of France Representative on the 100th Anniversary Observance Committee**

Resolution No. 6 (AZ): **Additional Names to be Added to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial**

Referred to the Standing Commission on Public Relations

Resolution No. 238 (NE): **Convention Internet Radio Program**

Referred to the Standing Committee on Trophies, Awards and Ceremonials

Resolution No. 239 (NE): **Convention Revise Funeral Ceremony**

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 7 (FL): **Endorsement of Susan B. Mason for National Historian**
Resolution No. 35 (OH): **Endorsement of Virgil Arling for National Historian**
Resolution No. 44 (CO): **Endorsement of Douglas W. Wooddell for National Vice Commander**
Resolution No. 171 (WI): **Endorsement of Denise H. Rohan for National Commander**
Resolution No. 190 (VA): **Endorsement of William R. 'Bill' Bryant for National Vice Commander**
Resolution No. 241 (NE): **Tribute to Past National Commander Galbraith**

Rejected

Resolution No. 186 (MS): **Organ Donation**
Resolution No. 205 (CA): **The American Legionnaires Cruising Association**
Resolution No. 208 (CA): **Zero Tolerance Policy**
Resolution No. 209 (CA): **Mojave Cross**

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 registered delegate from the Department of Illinois, I move for the adoption of the report. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed. The report of Credentials and Internal Affairs, Section II, is adopted. Again I recognize Chairman Larry J. Besson of Illinois for the reading of Resolution No. 1.

Presentation: Resolution No. 1: Bestow Upon Richard M. Pedro the Title of 'Past National Commander'

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BESSON: Mr. Commander, I would like you to recognize Past National Commander John P. 'Jake' Comer of Massachusetts for the reading of Resolution No. 1.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The Chair recognizes Past National Commander Jake Comer. *(Applause)*

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Thank you, Mr. Commander. The resolution reads:

Resolution No. 1: Bestow Upon Richard M. Pedro the Title of 'Past National Commander' with all Privileges and Rights Pertaining to Such Office

Origin: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)

WHEREAS, Richard M. Pedro of Owego, New York, has earned the deep and abiding respect, and sustained admiration of all who know of his dedicated efforts on behalf of The American Legion and America's veterans and their families; and

WHEREAS, He has been an active member of The American Legion Post 401, Tioga, New York, for 67 years, serving in a multitude of elected and appointed positions at the post, department and national levels; and

WHEREAS, He has consistently and continually promoted the principles and goals of The American Legion at all levels and promoted all the programs of The American Legion; and

WHEREAS, For 46 years at the national level of The American Legion, his profound and dynamic leadership and sound advice have been well known and greatly appreciated by all Legionnaires; and

WHEREAS, He has served on the Advisory Committee to the National Commander for 35 years; and

WHEREAS, National Commanders have consistently recognized and sought his unique administrative talents and organizational skills; have sought and heeded his excellent advice and counsel in fulfilling the principles and programs of The American Legion; and have recognized and appreciated his passion and dedication to The American Legion and its mission; and

WHEREAS, Precedent is established to confer this high honor upon distinguished Americans who have given exemplary service to their God and Country and The American Legion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That the title of "Past National Commander of The American Legion," with all rights and privileges pertaining to such office, be and is hereby bestowed upon Richard M. Pedro in recognition of his extraordinary and unwavering service to The American Legion; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the appropriate ceremonies shall be observed, and that this honor be conferred upon Richard M. Pedro during the 94th Annual National Convention of The American Legion.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: As a delegate from Massachusetts to this convention, I move for the adoption of Resolution No. 1.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The Chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

DELEGATE MORRILL (NY): Commander Wong, National Chaplain Theriot, all past national commanders. My name is Robert L. Morrill and I'm a duly registered delegate to this 94th Annual National Convention of The American Legion from the great Department of New York, and I rise to support this resolution and to second that resolution.

Mr. Commander, over the course of the 93 year history of The American Legion, Legionnaires of great stature, integrity, fortitude and ability have stepped forward to lead our great organization, and because of their willingness to give one year of their life to travel the world promoting the goals, ideals, concerns and vision of The American

Legion, all based on our Four Pillars, The American Legion today is without question the preeminent wartime veterans organization in the world. Because of their willingness to serve and make great personal sacrifice we honor them. And we praise them for their service and we bestow upon them the title of past national commander.

They served with distinction for many years before becoming national commander, and they continue to serve, mentor and inspire others for which we will be eternally grateful. And yet, Mr. Commander, there is a small group of men, only ten in number, that have never sought the office of national commander, yet hold the prestigious title of past national commander. They hold this title because of the service and contributions they have rendered over a lifetime, and because the impact of their contributions and commitment have been so significant and vital to the success and enrichment of The American Legion.

Today, Mr. Commander, we honor Richard M. 'Dick' Pedro, and add his name to those that have never sought the title of national commander, yet whose lifetime of service to The American Legion deems it fitting that we venerate him in such a manner as to bestow the title of past national commander upon him.

I have known Dick for over 34 years and have had the honor of working with him in our department headquarters for the past eight years. He has been my mentor, my benefactor, my guiding light, a close and dear personal friend, and a father figure to me for many years. A person I try to emulate in all aspects of my daily life. But I am not alone in my affection for this great man. Many in this hall can tell you how Dick Pedro has touched their lives, given them sage advice and advanced their careers in The American Legion.

During his long, active and tireless association with The American Legion, which spans 67 years, Richard M. Pedro has been sought out on both the state and national levels of our organization for his wise counsel, advice and wisdom by many past, current and future leaders of our organization, as well as the average blue cap Legionnaire. Because all that come to him know that his advice will always be what he considers to be the best for The American Legion and his fellow veterans.

His integrity, leadership, administrative abilities, professionalism and his concern for all veterans, is renowned throughout our ranks. 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." Certainly Dick Pedro is a leader among leaders.

And so Mr. Commander and fellow Legionnaires, it is only fitting and appropriate that at this time in our stellar history of The American Legion, that we recognize Dick in a manner that reflects dignity and honor on a man that has contributed so much of his life to The American Legion as well as his community, state and nation, and bestow the title of past national commander upon a proud son of New York, Richard M. Pedro.

Mr. Commander, I am honored and proud for this opportunity and privilege to second the motion on the floor at this time.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The Chair recognizes microphone No. 2.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER SPANOGLE: Mr. Commander, my name is Robert W. Spanogle, past national commander of The American Legion and a delegate from the great Department of Michigan, and the purpose for which I rise is to provide a second, second for this Resolution No. 1 bestowing upon Richard M. Pedro the title of past national commander.

The good Lord has provided me with some longevity. Much of my age and time and years have been spent with The American Legion. I first met Richard Pedro at the 1970 Annual National Convention of The American Legion in Portland, Oregon. I was sitting as a brand new, pretty close to being new blue cap Legionnaire in the Michigan delegation. A resolution came to the floor at that particular convention, and quite frankly

since I've got a little age, I can't remember the subject of the resolution, but basically there was a debate on the floor, and from the New York delegation, the delegation chairman, the immediate past department commander of New York rose to the microphone. He offered a great oration in favor or against the resolution. It was reasoned, and it was with passion that he offered that. I made it a point that day to go meet that delegation chairman, and that delegation chairman was Richard M. Pedro. And from that point on, he's been a mentor to me and all of those in this hall.

To me he exhibits every syllable and word in the Preamble of The American Legion which starts with "For God and country we associate ourselves together," and the Four Pillars that we stand for.

But beyond that, his advice and counsel are worth more money than The American Legion has in the bank. It's worth more than the buildings and the furniture. And let me tell you my reason: Because of trust. People trust Dick Pedro. He is a man of his word. He knows what this organization stands for and the rock that we stand upon for this country. And I appreciate his taking this young veteran and many in this room under his wing and giving us his knowledge.

So with that, Mr. Commander, I rise to second this resolution, and may God bless Dick and his family, and may God bless every delegate in this room. Thank you, sir.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you. We have a motion and a second. Is there any discussion? Hearing none. All those in favor of Resolution 1 say 'aye.' Opposed. Ayes have it.

Sergeant-at-Arms please locate Rick Pedro, who will escort his father, Richard Pedro, to the stage. *(Standing applause)*

...At this time Mr. Pedro received his national commander's cap and pin.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Now we want to make it official. I have the honor to administer the oath of office. Would you please raise your hand. Please repeat after me. I, Richard M. Pedro, do solemnly pledge myself to perform faithfully and impartially the duties of the office of Past National Commander of The American Legion. I further pledge that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America, and the National Constitution and Bylaws of The American Legion. I do not subscribe to the principles of any group opposed to our form of government, so help me God. Congratulations, Past National Commander Pedro. *(Standing applause)*

Now 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. Pedro on behalf of all the past first ladies of The American Legion.

MRS. LUDWIG: Jeanne, it is my privilege on behalf of all of us former first ladies, it is with extreme pleasure to welcome you as our newest first lady.

MRS. PEDRO: Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you, Mary and the first ladies. I now recognize NECman Jerry Hedrick of North Carolina.

NEC MEMBER HEDRICK (NC): Thank you, commander. Commander Pedro, these plaques are usually given to men who are about to do great things, but you have already done those great things, a lifetime of good things for your fellow veterans, your country and The American Legion. We know that you will continue to serve The American Legion and all of us will continue to be far better because of it. Now for the reading of the plaque.

ANNOUNCER: Past National Commander Richard M. Pedro, appointed by National Convention to the high office of Past National Commander of The American Legion. In appreciation of his dedicated leadership, in recognition of his devoted service to God and country, and in token of the high esteem of his fellow Legionnaires, this

citation is presented to him by authority of the National Convention. Given on the 28th day of August 2012 before the National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: I now call on Past National Commander Ron Conley of Pennsylvania to present the Colors to our new past national commander.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER CONLEY: Thank you, Mr. Commander. Legionnaires and distinguished guests. This truly is a great a honor bestowed upon me. Please rise for the presentation of our National Colors, by the Color Guard of Houston Post 472 of Texas to Past National Commander Pedro. Color Guard, present Colors.

... At this time the delegation stood and rendered a salute to the Colors.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER CONLEY: Please be seated. Past National Commander Pedro you stand before this convention having received the unanimous vote of confidence in your ability to represent not only Legionnaires, but also American veterans as Past National Commander of The American Legion.

As a past national commander myself, I know that you are prepared for the challenge and will not fail. You have been a friend and more importantly a mentor, a leader, an example for me and countless other national commanders. You have served The American Legion in numerous capacities over so many years. I know and the delegates here know that that this is a rare and well-deserved honor. May the Colors that we present to you be a source of inspiration and pride. Past National Commander, God bless you and our American Legion as you continue to provide your exceptional leadership.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Past National Commander Pedro, I have for you Resolution No. 1 in brass. And now ladies and gentlemen, I present to you Past National Commander Richard M. Pedro of New York. *(Standing applause)*

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER PEDRO: Thank you. Thank you. I had no idea in the world that this honor would be bestowed upon me. And I wonder how in the hell did you do it. *(Laughter)*

I never had inkling of anything, and I was wondering why you were trying to keep me in that room for quite awhile. But I just can't express my deep sincere thanks to each and everyone for this great honor being Past National Commander of The American Legion. This is a wonderful organization. I joined this organization the day I got home from the Navy in 1947. Walked in The American Legion post and paid three and a half dollars for my dues, and have been a continuous member ever since. And the many people I've met across this world, this country, and how wonderful you have been. I just can't express now deeply I feel at this point. This has got to be the greatest honor ever to be bestowed on me, a Legionnaire. And this organization is the greatest organization in the world because you'll find the people that you love every today, you see these people; we work arm in arm; we have our differences now and then but still work it out as one big family.

I can't tell you how pleased and happy and honored I am that you would take this time to honor me, the little country boy from upstate New York with this great honor. I am absolutely floored, believe me. I can't understand now in hell you got it through without me knowing it. I don't try to miss too much you know. *(Laughter)*

But John Geiger, I hope you're looking. I got my coat buttoned. *(Laughter and applause)* God bless him. And I just can't thank you all enough for this great honor. Thank you so much. I just can't express myself the way I really should.

So thank you. God bless. Thank you to each and every one of you and your families. Thank you so much. *(Standing applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: I now call on Past National Commander Conley.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER CONLEY: Please stand. Color guard retire the Colors of Past National Commander Pedro of The American Legion to post. Hand salute.

...At this time the delegation rendered a salute to the Colors.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER CONLEY: Please be seated.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The Chair recognizes Ken Danilson of Iowa, chairman of National Convention Committee on Finance for the purpose of making a report.

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

Thank you, Mr. Commander. Before I start my report I just want to say hi to my wife, Jan, who is home. Today is our 41st wedding anniversary. Hi Jan. Mr. Chairman, delegates to this convention and guests. This is the report of the Convention Committee on Finance.

Forty-two members met at the Indianapolis Indiana Convention Center room 123 at 9 a.m. on Sunday, August 26, 2012 in Indianapolis, Indiana. 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: Our economy will have to adjust to a weaker trading partner as Europe suffers through its own recession over the next two years. U.S. banks have taken steps to reduce their exposure to the Greek debt situation but still have investments with many European banks. During this turmoil, the U.S. dollar will grow stronger as world-wide investors will seek a safe haven including countries such as Canada, Australia, and Japan. But the adverse effect of money pouring into our country will be lower commodity prices in the United States for such goods as oil, copper, tin and coal, and a slower demand for U.S. exports both to Europe and in other countries around the world where European goods and services will cost less than those made in the U.S.A. The U.S. housing market has had its strongest spring in five years and will continue to improve modestly for the balance of 2012 with housing starts increasing 19% this year to 725,000. Home construction will make up 3% of the GDP but still remains ½ of the 2 million homes produced in 2008 before the recession began. Prices are trending higher, with the exception of states hit hardest with foreclosures such as Michigan, Florida, Nevada, and California.

With the economy growing and demand for manufactured goods rising, U.S. factories are getting busier, but will not have a major impact on manufacturing jobs. Unemployment will continue to dampen wage increases with paychecks rising about 2% overall in 2012. American business is concerned about locating adequate numbers of skilled workers and several companies are planning to collaborate with trade schools to assist in training and education to operate high-tech machine tools, computer-aided design equipment and sensitive technical equipment. There are many other indications of improvement in the U.S. economy. Businesses will spend more on research and development this year, plowing $285 billion into the development of new materials and products, a 4% increase. Leading the way is computer software, hardware and service companies. Automakers will increase 5 to 10% in research for electric and hybrid cars. Energy firms are currently enjoying a boom with an estimated 20% increase. Oil and gas businesses are expected to invest $7 billion into fracking and other innovations. GDP has

grown by more than 2% because consumers are starting to spend more. Cars and trucks are selling as fast as we can produce them and chain store sales have increased by 6.7% following a respectable Christmas holiday sales month. Consumer confidence will help feed the upward trend for economic recovery. Since October 2011 consumer sentiment is up by 30% with the biggest four-month increase in business activity in thirty years. Borrowing is also increasing with credit cards and auto loans leading the way, suggesting that consumers are optimistic about their future. The United States will not be dramatically hurt by the current events taking place in Europe but we cannot deny that it will create a slower than hoped for economic recovery. We should see a increase of 2% in GDP this year with the second half of 2012 showing definite improvement. It is expected that 2 million more employees will be added to our payrolls over the next 18 months. While the economy will not bounce back as quickly as we have experienced in the past, we do believe that by 2014 we will see robust economic growth and unemployment drop below 7%. Treasurer Buskirk then recommended that the national dues be set at $13.50. A motion from Robert Wilson (Pennsylvania) was made that the 2012 per capita dues remain at $13.50. Gaither Keener (North Carolina) 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: Through the first three quarters of 2012 in print media and through July in electronic media, The American Legion Magazine Division is running well ahead of budget for advertising sales, a remarkable phenomenon in today's volatile communications industry. All of the division's advertising streams are ahead of budget, led by the printed magazine itself, with $7,111,866 in sales through the October issue, which represented the eighth above-budget issue out of the nine so far booked in 2012. Magazine production sales for cards, forms and inserts stood at $164,834 compared to budgeted sales of $76,050 through the October issue, with November, December and January issues yet to sell in order to complete the budget year. All electronic media channels are above budget for ad sales, led by The American Legion Online Update e-newsletter with $165,542 in sales through July compared to $87,500 budgeted. The Legion website, Dispatch and national convention program were also ahead of budget heading into the second half of the year. Total ad sales for all the division's media products now stand at $7,569,200, or $532,320 ahead of budget. Costs for printing, paper and distribution are stable and expected to remain so for the remainder of 2012. In recent weeks, the division successfully completed a mobile conversion of the national website, thanks to funds authorized by the Finance Commission in Spring 2012, along with the new Legion Claims Coach app, which has gained national attention in the media industry, support from the department service officer corps and led to a visit by White House staff to national headquarters and an offer to help promote the new app as a way to help fight the backlog of undecided VA claims. The American Legion is now reaching audiences in all the relevant information markets and ranks No. 1 among veterans service organizations for magazine circulation and readership, as well as website visitation, e-newsletter circulation and open rates. The division is now leading efforts to harmonize the organization's Facebook presence and to make more efficient its portfolio of brochures, documents and other information tools, by offering digital options that are more convenient to the user and less costly to produce and deliver. Plans are now under way to convert the Dispatch into a more timely and less costly digital product by January 2013. (A full report of the division's status and strategic plan for 2013 and beyond, including the Dispatch conversion, will be presented during the Fall Meetings.) As it now stands, with expenses booked through June, electronic media sales through July, and print sales through the first nine months of 2012, the division has a $378,500 budget surplus that is expected to grow before the end of the year.

The American Legion Magazine Commission is cautiously optimistic about the financial outlook of the division heading into 2013 and confident that the organization's message is reaching more members, potential members and others than ever before, using all available forms of communication, thanks largely to support from the Finance Commission.

Chairman Danilson reported that the 2011 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 2011 total assets increased $1.4 million to $137 million. Membership and DMS revenue increased 5% during 2011 but fell to 50% of our total revenue. Down 1% from 2010. Total revenue for 2011 increased approximately $6.2 million and total expenses increased approximately $4.7 million.

Alan Lennox (California) moved to empower the Chairman and Secretary to write and/or amend the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Finance. Richard Heigert (Missouri) 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. Chairman, as a duly registered delegate to the convention from the great Tall Corn State of Iowa, I move for the adoption of this report. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: I have a motion and a second. Any discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed. Ayes have it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The Chair recognizes Director Lawrence G. Romo of the U.S. Selective Service System for the purpose of presentation. Mr. Director.

Presentation: Lawrence G. Romo, Director
Selective Service System

Thank you Commander. First off real quickly, I want to thank you all for your continued service and what you do to support our military veterans and their family members. I salute you.

I've been a proud Legion member for 14 years, and I've been in this position of Selective Service System for about three years now, and I'm very, very happy with the relationship, the strong relationship and friendship we have between The American Legion and the Selective Service System.

That's why I'm here today because I'm going to award the Honored Patriot Award to Commander Wong. In grateful appreciation for your proactive service as The American Legion's chief executive officer and official spokesman, your voluntary work with youth, with veterans, with elected officials and with the Selective Services System, all witness publicly to your patriotic values. That's signed by me. So thank you very much American Legion, and thank you very much, commander. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you, Mr. Director.

I hope you have a chance to visit The American Legion Magazine Division's booth in the Exhibit Hall. If you did, you caught a glimpse of all the new developments in electronic media. Perhaps you picked up one of the booklets that show how you make most of our online media. And perhaps you put your name in for the iPad giveaway. If you did put your name in for the iPad giveaway now is the time to listen closely. I will ask *The American Legion Magazine* Commission Chairman Dennis Henkemeyer of

Minnesota to join me on stage as two names are drawn. If you hear your name, please come to the stage to receive your iPad. We will contact the winner if they are not present.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN HENKEMEYER: The first winner is C.K. Niles from Pacific Palisades, California. C.K. Niles. And the second winner is Mr. John Derner from Granger, Iowa. Mr. John Derner. If you're here, please come up. We have the iPads available here. If you are not, they will be mailed to you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: 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. I now call on the national adjutant for announcements.

Announcements

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Thank you, Mr. Commander. The doors to this convention center will open at 5:45 a.m. tomorrow, and there will be magnetometers on each door. You may only enter through the doors at the back of the auditorium. This is security in preparation of Governor Romney's arrival here at approximately 3:00 o'clock. The stage will be restricted to those who have received invitations. I recommend that all others be in their seats by 2:30 in the afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you. Legionnaires, please join me in a salute to the flag of the United States of America. Hand salute.

...The delegate rose and rendered a salute to the Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The time is now 3:02 p.m. The convention will stand in recess until 7:45 a.m. tomorrow morning, with prelude beginning at 7:15. Have a great day. Thank you.

...At 3:02 p.m., the Convention was recessed to reconvene the following day, August 29, 2012, at 7:45 a.m.

PROCEEDINGS
SECOND DAY

Wednesday, August 29, 2012

Call to Order
Mervin G. Gunderson, Montana, National Vice Commander

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER GUNDERSON: Ladies and gentleman, as we begin our program please join me in a round of applause for Peter Ole. *(Applause)* The Convention will now come to order. Sergeant-at-Arms.

...*At this time the sergeant-at-arms lead the delegation in the Pledge of Allegiance.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER GUNDERSON: For the invocation I call on National Chaplain Gerald Theriot of Louisiana. Ladies and gentlemen, please remain uncovered.

Invocation
Gerald Theriot, Louisiana, National Chaplain

O God our Father, in the glory of this today we give thanks for this gathering of America's heroes. We bow our heads in thankfulness for the victories that You have granted to us, and to those who have united with us to stamp out the evils of aggression, intolerance and greed. We beseech You to bring the blessings of understanding to the families and friends in this and other lands of those who have given their lives so that men may be free. Touch the souls of men with enduring light of wisdom, so that they may form a brotherhood of people which will strive to further the arts of peace blessed by Your love. May Your light guide us through today's activities as we continue to work for God and country. Amen.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER GUNDERSON: Thank you Chaplain Theriot. Would you please cover and if the Sergeant-at-Arms would lead us in a salute to our Colors. ...*At this time the delegation rendered a salute to the Colors.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER GUNDERSON: The Convention is now in session. 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

Commander Wong, fellow delegates.

Eighty-two (82) members of your Committees on Employment and Veterans Preference and on Other Economic Matters met at 9:00 am on August 26, 2012, in the Indiana Convention Center, Rooms 101-102, Street Level, Indianapolis, Indiana, 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. Steve Gonzalez (DC), Assistant Director for Economic Commission, 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 William Christoffersen (UT), as Committee Secretary; Wendall Sandell (PA), Chairman of the Employment and Veterans Preference Committee and Charles Goodin (MO), Secretary; Dennis Tipsword (IL), Chairman of the Other Economic Matters Committee and James Fratolillo (MA), 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:

Dennis Tipsword (IL)
William Christoffersen (UT)
Wendall Sandell (PA)
Albert Robotti (NJ) Absent

The 56 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..... 51
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved..... 0
Referred to the Standing Commission 3
Received and Recorded 2
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 56 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. 37: Support for the Strengthening and Adequate Funding of the National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI)
Origin: Ohio
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Since February 2001, the United States has been involved in operations in Iraq and Afghanistan where America's best Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines have been sent to this region to serve their country in this time of need; and

WHEREAS, The Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPs) and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs) assigned to all fifty states and the Territories of the United States of America utilize a centralized training center in Denver, Colorado, on the site of the University of Colorado, for training from one uniform format; and

WHEREAS, Congress is scrutinizing the National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI) due to budget constraints and NVTI has served many of the country's most professional DVOPs and LVERs for several years; and

WHEREAS, NVTI continues to be a source of information and additional training for the DVOPs and LVERs of this great nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support legislation to continue funding the National Veterans' Training Institute, and its continuation of uniform training for these veteran employment professionals as provided by this institution.

Resolution No. 47: Support Improvements in the Reporting Programs Available to and Administered by Veterans' Employment and Training Service
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) is an agency within the Department of Labor (DOL) dedicated to providing America's veterans with quality employment and training services; and

WHEREAS, The Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training (ASVET) is responsible for ensuring that the agency continues to meet its mission; and

WHEREAS, The ASVET is committed to taking aggressive actions to improve the quality, timeliness, and accessibility to veterans' employment and training services within every state; and

WHEREAS, VETS' programs must meet the needs of veterans facing employment barriers; and

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion continue to work closely with LVERs and DVOPs in local communities across the country; and

WHEREAS, Although Title 38, United States Code, identifies duties and responsibilities of LVERs and DVOPs, the ASVET cannot accurately capture necessary local, state and national data to adequately assess performance outcomes or hold the various states accountable for providing priority services to veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion strongly support improvements in the reporting programs available to and administered by Veterans' Employment and Training Service; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion petition Congress to enact legislation that will require the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans' Employment and Training to initiate and implement a real-time data collection system, which would allow Veterans' Employment Training Service to properly measure performance at the local, state, and national level.

Resolution No. 48: Support the Restoration of the Duties and Responsibilities of the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER)
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, Throughout the nearly two hundred and twenty-year history of the United States, the men and women of this nation have served in the armed forces in the interest of the collective body of states, united under a central federal government, "to provide for the common defense"; and

WHEREAS, These men and women served the United States under the constitutional authority vested in, and by direction of the President of the United States; and

WHEREAS, In Section 4301, Title 38, United States Code (USC), Congress expressed its purpose in enacting the Uniformed Service Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA), "to encourage non-career service in the uniformed services by eliminating or minimizing the disadvantage to civilian careers and employment which can result from such service"; and

WHEREAS, It has been the finding of numerous surveys and studies that, for a variety of reasons, the vast majority of veterans of the armed forces are disadvantaged in pursuing civilian employment and careers; and

WHEREAS, A recent Department of Labor Office of the Inspector General report has recommended that VETS increase its' oversight of this program, which confirms that services for veterans be provided by direction of, and subject to oversight by Congress to ensure that all veterans/disabled veterans are afforded such services in a uniform manner following completion of their service and return to the several states; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 107-288 has eliminated the requirement that DOL/VETS review all workforce centers annually and this has minimized Federal oversight of the programs since the ASVET has drastically cut funds allocated for this activity and established a policy that only 10 percent of the centers operated under Title 38 will be reviewed; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 107-288 has removed the job descriptions of the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs) from Title 38, USC, and given the States the ability to establish the duties and responsibilities, thus weakening the VETS programs across the country by eliminating the language that required these staff positions provide services only to veterans; and

WHEREAS, The passage of Public Law 107-288 also removed the Federally mandated manning formulas for assigning DVOPs and LVERs and this has allowed each State to determine the number of veterans' employment personnel in each State, and the assignment of more than one half time DVOP and/or LVER to one office, while eliminating positions in offices that need veterans' staff by virtue of veteran intake; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support legislation that will restore language to Chapter 41, Title 38 that will require that veteran staff serve only veterans, require that half-time Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists/Local Veterans' Employment Representatives positions be assigned only after approval of the Director for Veterans' Employment and Training, and that the Secretary of Labor be required to monitor all career centers that have veteran staff assigned; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion also support legislation that restores the duties and responsibilities of the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist and Local Veterans' Employment Representative; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports Department of Labor's Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training being required to review all Department of Labor employment and training programs in order to insure that all programs provide priority services to veterans.

Resolution No. 50: Support Legislation that Bolsters the Hiring of Veterans in the Public and Private Sectors
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, Congress enacted laws to help veterans find suitable employment; and

WHEREAS, Federal contractors receive taxpayer money from the federal government to conduct business; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Labor has failed to provide any oversight to ensure that federal contractors are abiding by the laws required of them in regards to veterans, particularly Title 38 USC 4212; and

WHEREAS, Many governmental departments have done a poor job in hiring veterans, particularly disabled veterans; and many veterans do not know how to appeal employment decisions when they believe their eligibility for preference was not properly considered; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges Congress to modify Title 38 USC 4212 to require that any information collected through the VETS-100, a required annual filing for federal contractors receiving over $100,000 that lists the number of veterans they employ, be made available to the public and in a user friendly format for both veterans and those who assist veterans in locating employment; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation that will require that all governmental agencies clearly supply information to veterans, at the time of their application for employment, which clearly identifies the proper procedure for filing complaints should any veteran believe his or her rights have been violated under any law or regulation related to veterans preference; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to hold regular hearings with governmental departments that have a poor record in hiring veterans, particularly disabled veterans, to highlight the issue and take necessary actions to discontinue such actions.

Resolution No. 52: Support Legislation that Would Return Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) Funding to a Staffing Grant
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Veterans Preference and Priority of Service for veterans have been earned by the sacrifices of men and women who have served in the military and protected our inalienable rights and nation; and

WHEREAS, Title 38 U.S. Code changed the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) Grants from staffing grants to performance grants; and

WHEREAS, Many States have decreased the actual staff to provide services to veterans and provide veterans' preference by 50% or more; and

WHEREAS, Legislation currently before Congress seeks to overhaul how all Department of Labor one-stops and veterans' priority programs, including DVOPS/LVERS, are financed; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support

legislation that would return Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) funding to a staffing grant; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That we support action that would require the Congress through the Secretary of Labor to ensure that each workforce center in the various states offering labor exchange services have sufficient funding to provide at least one DVOP/LVER staff to provide services to all veterans requiring employment and training assistance residing within the state; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion petition Congress to enact legislation that prevents any efforts or attempts by the Department of Labor to make any changes in allocations that could potentially cut or divert funding for veterans' employment programs and services, instituted by the Department of Labor and mandate that the Department of Labor request full funding for these programs.

Resolution No. 53: Support Legislation that Ensures that all Agencies that Receive Funding from the U.S. Department of Labor or the Workforce Investment Act Meet the Mandatory Compliance Standards for Veterans Preference

Origin: Texas

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and the Veterans' Employment and Training Service Centers must meet mandatory compliance standards for veterans preference; and

WHEREAS, The Job Service Centers for each State and Territory receive funding under the Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933; and, are eligible for special grants to provide services to veterans; and

WHEREAS, The January 2009 mandate, authorized by changes in law stating, "any Department of Labor workforce development, job training, or placement programs must provide priority to veterans," is not being met at all career one-stop locations; and

WHEREAS, The president instituted a veterans' "Gold Card" initiative to further reinforce priority service for veterans at DOL career one-stops; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge Congress to ensure that all agencies that are provided funds from the U.S. Department of Labor, or that receive funding under the Wagner-Peyser Act or Workforce Investment Act meet the same compliance standards as the state workforce agencies relative to veterans preference, as mandated by current law; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That these same agencies be required to provide compliance reports to the office of the Assistant Secretary of Veterans Employment and Training or their designee to ensure this mandate is carried out.

Resolution No. 54: Support Legislation that Would Change the 12-Year-Delimiting Date for Eligibility to Chapter 31 Benefits (VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program)

Origin: Texas

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

(As amended)

WHEREAS, The period of eligibility for VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) benefits is 12 years from the date of separation from the military or the date the veteran was first notified by VA of a service-connected disability rating; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans do not understand their eligibility to VR&E services and the benefits of the program until later in life when they become so disabled that their disabilities create an employment barrier; and

WHEREAS, VR&E lacks quality performance measures that measure rehabilitation based on the long-term effects of disability and the likelihood that a disability may require further rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, VR&E can take more than 90 days from enrollment to the start of services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge Congress to change the eligibility delimiting date for VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program by eliminating the 12-year-delimiting date for eligibility to Chapter 31 benefits and allow all veterans with employment impediments or problems with independent living to qualify for VR&E services for life; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the VA must restructure performance measures to emphasize long-term rehabilitation versus the current short-term indicators of success. Furthermore, VR&E should continually follow up with veterans considered to be rehabilitated to ensure that the rehabilitation and employment placement plans have been successful; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That VA streamlines eligibility and entitlement to VR&E programs to provide more timely intervention and assistance to all disabled veterans.

Resolution No. 297: Support Legislation to Amend Title 38 United States Code, to Prohibit Discrimination and Acts of Reprisals by Employers Against Veterans that Seek Treatment for their Service-Connected Disabilities

Origin: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, This great organization was based upon comradeship born of wartime service and dedicated to fair and equitable treatment of all veterans; and

WHEREAS, Many of this Nation's men and women have answered the call to serve in the United States Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, Congress, through the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), provides protection from employment discrimination for men and women who perform military duty; and

WHEREAS, USERRA requires that employers release any employees to perform military duty; and

WHEREAS, Many of the men and women serving in the United States Armed Forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard as well as activated National Guard and Reserves) sustained service-connected disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Under USERRA, employers are required to "make reasonable efforts to accommodate a person's disability so that the person can perform the position that would have held if the person had remained continuously employed"; and

WHEREAS, The employers, however, are not specifically required by law to allow veterans with service-connected disabilities to be absent from the workplace to receive the necessary medical treatment for these disabilities; and

WHEREAS, The necessary medical care can be provided through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) at the VA medical centers as well as a private provider for service-connected veterans; and

WHEREAS, Legislation has been introduced that would amend Title 38, United States Code, (USC) to prohibit discrimination and acts of reprisal against persons who receive treatment for illnesses, injuries, and disabilities incurred in or aggravated by service in the uniformed services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion supports legislation to amend Title 38, USC, to prohibit discrimination and acts of reprisals by employers against veterans that seek treatment for their service-connected disabilities.

Resolution No. 298: Transition Assistance Program Employment Workshops for National Guard and Reserve Members

Origin: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, Public Law 101-510, codified in sections 1141-1150 of Title 10, United State Code, authorized comprehensive transition assistance benefits and services for separating service members and their spouses and required that Transition Assistance Program (TAP) employment workshops be established and maintained; and

WHEREAS, TAP employment workshops are mandatory for all service members prior to separating from active duty; and

WHEREAS, The new and improved TAP curriculum includes additional career-specific capstone courses in (1) an Education track, (2) a Technical and Skills Training track; and (3) an Entrepreneurship track; and

WHEREAS, Many of the forces engaged in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation New Dawn are members of the National Guard and Reserves; and

WHEREAS, Members of the National Guard and Reserves are not afforded the opportunity to attend a TAP employment workshop prior to separation from active duty; and

WHEREAS, Members of the National Guard and Reserves must take time away from their civilian jobs and travel to an active-duty site at their own expense to attend a TAP employment workshop on a space-available basis; and

WHEREAS, It is altogether fitting and proper that such programs of employment assistance for National Guard and Reserves members be provided at no expense to them; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion supports legislation that will provide every member of the Armed Services (including those in the National Guard and Reserves) who are activated for 12 months or longer, an adequate amount of time to attend the Transition Assistance Program workshop in entirety, within ninety days of separation.

Resolution No. 299: Authorize Small Business Administration to Re-Establish a Direct Loan Program for Veteran Entrepreneurs

Origin: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

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 have always included assistance in creating and operating veteran-owned small businesses; and

WHEREAS, A core mission of the U.S. Small Business Administration is to assist eligible small business entrepreneurs who are the backbone and engine of the American economy, to gain access to the financial resources needed to either start or expand their small business through either a guaranty or direct loan, or both; and

WHEREAS, During military service, many veterans may not accrue necessary or adequate capital or collateral requirements necessary to privately finance their small business, especially if it is home based; and

WHEREAS, These prospective veteran entrepreneurs, may need from $25,000 to $250,000 (or more or less) to finance their small business; and

WHEREAS, Regardless of the particular amount, access to capital and credit is critical and extremely difficult in the current and future economic recessions; and

WHEREAS, Commercial credit sources are "risk adverse" and look for applicants with near perfect credit, which can be more difficult for veterans, Reservists and National Guard members/families who risk all during their service to this country, their credit is often impaired and accumulation of collateral diminished; and

WHEREAS, The current and historical high unemployment rate of returning veterans also presents a career challenge for military personnel whose skills can be difficult to transition to civilian life, resulting in unemployment; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion supports the efforts of the U. S. Small Business Administration to improve access to capital for veterans, active-duty service members eligible for the military's Transition Assistance Program, Reserve and Guard members; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion sees great value in a significant expansion of the existing Microloan and 7a Loan Programs as another financial resource for veterans in need of small and reasonable amounts of capital for their small business creation or purchase, and who may otherwise be adversely impacted by lack of credit and capital as they return to diminished civilian employment opportunities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion encourages Congress to require the U.S. Small Business Administration, whose core responsibility as an alternative lender to American small businesses, to provide capital and credit under reasonable terms to veterans who are entrepreneurs, that is not otherwise available from the commercial credit markets; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation which would direct and authorize funds to the U.S. Small Business Administration to re-establish a direct loan program for eligible veterans, National Guard and Reservists to either establish, purchase or expand a small business.

Resolution No. 300: Supporting the U.S. Economy and Increased U.S. Energy Security Through a Canadian-American Oil Pipeline

Origin: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

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 United States armed services and all other citizens; and

WHEREAS, The proposed pipeline will increase our nation's energy security by delivering 700,000 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 American upper Midwest to the American refineries in the Gulf Coast will strengthen the economy and make the Unites States the second largest oil producer in the world; and

WHEREAS, This added stability will stimulate annual gains in American business activity including the immediate creation of 20,000 jobs and an expected additional 118,000 jobs in adjacent industries; and

WHEREAS, The pipeline will reduce the United States' dependency on foreign oil and prevent the future need to deploy American citizens to respond to potential disruption involving foreign conflicts, piracy or other unforeseen risks; and

WHEREAS, The Canadian oversupply of oil has been severely discounted as result of the current Administration's rejection of the permit for the XL Pipeline; and

WHEREAS, Canada resorted to courting China to invest in their oil reserve thereby giving China a large stake in North American oil supply; 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 Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion, in order to increase American energy self-sufficiency, promote the creation of 20,000 jobs, and improve the stability of the American economy, strongly recommend the permitting, construction and operation of the pipeline; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges all segments of the U.S. government pursue and grant all required permits necessary for the construction of the proposed pipeline without further delay.

Resolution No. 304: Support Full Funding and Staffing for the Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS)

Origin: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, Within the Department of Labor's annual discretionary appropriations, the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training Services (VETS) receives funding for the administration of various employment programs; and

WHEREAS, VETS provides such programs as the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOPs) Specialists, the Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs), Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP), and the National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI); and

WHEREAS, VETS programs provide quality employment services to enrolled veterans and potential employers; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code (USC), provides a federally mandated staffing formula for both DVOPs and LVERs; and

WHEREAS, Historically, Congress has failed to fully staff all DVOP and LVER positions in each state; and

WHEREAS, Meaningful employment is a proven strategy in assisting homeless veterans in their reintegration back into mainstream society; and

WHEREAS, The goal of VETS is to assist all eligible veterans in obtaining meaningful employment through proactive support and aggressive training; and

WHEREAS, NVTI provides VETS with standardized training for veterans' employment professionals; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion continues to advocate full funding and staffing for the Veterans' Employment and Training Service and its effective programs.

Resolution No. 310: Support an Investigation of Hiring Practices in the Federal Government

Origin: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, It is incumbent upon the government of the United States to not only provide for the rehabilitation of disabled veterans, but to also make every effort to aid all veterans in their return to a normal and productive life; and

WHEREAS, Federal law gives preference to employers to hire veterans and their widows; and

WHEREAS, Fewer than half of the employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Labor are veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion encourages Congress to conduct an investigation into the employment of veterans by the various agencies of the federal government and enact such remedial legislation as may be needed to increase the percentage of all agencies; specifically, the Department of Veterans Affairs from 35 percent to 50 percent by fiscal year 2013.

Resolution No. 312: Allow Military Retirees to Apply for Position in Federal Law Enforcement After Age 37

Origin: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, Public Law 101-509 makes it mandatory for all federal law enforcement position personnel to retire by age 57 requiring an applicant to be no older that 37 when applying, thus allowing them to complete 20 years of service before age 57; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense spends in excess of $15 billion annually to train men and women of the Armed Services with thousands of career personnel who complete their initial 20 years for retirement of which a large number have reached the age of 38 – 40 at time of separation; and

WHEREAS, Under existing law it is impossible for a 20 year military retiree to obtain a career in federal law enforcement because of age restriction even though they are more than qualified for federal employment with their job expertise, security clearance credentials, allegiance to their country, etc.; and

WHEREAS, Providing opportunities for transitional career military personnel is a reinvestment in defense training that would help preserve scarce recruiting and training funds while providing a stable source of manpower to help fulfill the federal government's 188,000 law enforcement personnel requirements; and

WHEREAS, Removing the age restriction or at least providing a waiver based on military service would complement the American taxpayer who has fully funded the training and experience of our career military by utilizing their expertise for federal law enforcement position; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion petition the Congress to amend Public Law 101-509 that makes it impossible for our retiring military men and women to pursue post-military careers in federal law enforcement based solely on age; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That age waivers or other means are adopted to accommodate those who have served honorably allowing them to continue to serve in a profession that would be enhanced by their previous experiences.

Resolution No. 313: Support for the Military Transition Program
Origin: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, In 1992, Congress enacted the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA) which became Public Law 102-484; and

WHEREAS, SMOCTA is a transition tool designed to provide job training and employment to certain veterans discharged from the military after August 1, 1990; and

WHEREAS, The SMOCTA program provides financial incentives to employers who hire and provide training to eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, To be eligible for participation in the SMOCTA program, the veteran must meet at least one of the following criteria: (1) have a primary or secondary military occupational specialty that the Department of Defense has determined is not readily transferable to the civilian work force; or (2) be entitled to compensation (or would be entitled to compensation but for the receipt of military retired pay) for a VA service-connected disability rating of 30 percent or more; or (3) be unemployed and have been unemployed for at least eight (8) of the last 15 work weeks before filing an application; and

WHEREAS, The veterans eligible for job training under SMOCTA are precisely those individuals who need the most assistance in making a successful transition to the civilian work force; and

WHEREAS, The Departments of Defense (DOD), Veterans Affairs (VA), and Labor (DOL) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in March of 1993, which defined their roles and responsibilities in the implementation of SMOCTA; and

WHEREAS, DOD provided funding for SMOCTA while the VA and DOL were responsible for administering the program; and

WHEREAS, Under the terms of the MOU, the SMOCTA program will terminate when all the funds provided by DOD are expended or at such time as agreed upon by all parties; and

WHEREAS, This country's unemployment problem is being exacerbated by the drastic downsizing of the military; and

WHEREAS, The Military Transition Program can help to alleviate the employment problems faced by many veterans who are being separated from the military; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion seek continuation of the Military Transition Program until the employment picture improves and the downsizing of the military is completed; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek adequate funding for the Military Transition Program so that it can achieve what it is designed to do.

Resolution No. 315: Oppose Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Services of Hiring Non-Veterans

Origin: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, The Department of Labor, Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) administers employment assistance and employment protection programs serving veterans, members of Armed Forces Reserve Components and eligible persons as defined in and pursuant to Chapters 41, 42 and 43 of Title 38, United States Code (USC); and

WHEREAS, Public Law 107-288 amended 38 USC, Chapter 41 to allow for the appointment of non-veterans to positions of regional administrators, directors in the states assistant directors in the states and "other professional staff assigned to the states;" and

WHEREAS, VETS staff located in regional offices and those serving in the state routinely and extensively interact with state workforce agencies' staffs, members of Active and Reserve military components and veterans service organizations, all of whom are veteran or military affiliated; and

WHEREAS, VETS staff would be unable to fully participate in, nor have the full confidence and credibility with the veterans service organizations; and

WHEREAS, VETS staff would not have the credibility of the shared active military service or transition experience from active duty, for which VETS has the responsibility for program delivery leadership; and

WHEREAS, For more than 25 years, the VETS staff have, by Title 38, USC, Chapter 41, been required to be veterans; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion finds it inconceivable that Congress would not find "Veterans Serving Veterans" to be the most appropriate manner of delivering these critical services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion seek and support legislation to amend Title 38, United States Code, to require Veterans' Employment and Training Service regional administrators, state directors and assistant state directors and "other professional staff" under VETS to be veterans of the Armed Forces.

Resolution No. 316: Oppose the Transfer of Veterans' Employment and Training Service to 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, Throughout the nearly two hundred and twenty-year history of The United States, the men and women of this nation have served in the Armed Forces in the interest of the collective body of states, united under a central Federal Government, "to provide for the common defense"; and

WHEREAS, The men and women served The United States under the constitutional authority vested in, and by direction of, the President of The United States; and

WHEREAS, In Section 3401, Title 38, United States Code (USC), Congress expressed its purpose in enacting the Uniformed Service Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA), "to encourage non-career service in the uniformed services by eliminating or minimizing the disadvantage to civilian careers and employment which can result from such service"; and

WHEREAS, It has been the finding of numerous surveys and studies that, for a variety of reasons, the vast majority of disabled veterans of the Armed Forces of The United States are disadvantaged in pursuing civilian employment and careers; and

WHEREAS, It is altogether fitting and proper that such programs of employment assistance for veterans be provided by direction of, and subject to oversight by, Congress to ensure that all veterans/disabled veterans are afforded such services in a uniform manner following completion of their service and return to the several states; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 107-288 has eliminated the requirement that the Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) review all workforce centers annually and this has minimized Federal oversight of the programs since the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training has drastically cut funds allocated for this activity and established a policy that only 10 percent of the centers operated under Title 38 will be reviewed; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 107-288 has removed the job description of the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) from Title 38, USC, and given the states the ability to establish the duties and responsibilities, thus weakening the VETS programs across the country by eliminating the language that required these staff positions provide services only to veterans; and

WHEREAS, VETS works closely with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation Program to assist enrolled veterans in job search efforts throughout their rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, The present administration continues to recommend transferring VETS from DOL to VA; and

WHEREAS, DOL has expertise in job placement, job development, vocational counseling, vocational testing, job search training, and any other area of employment services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion opposes all legislative or administrative efforts to transfer Veterans' Employment and Training Service from Department of Labor to Department of Veterans Affairs.

Resolution No. 317: Oppose any Weakening of the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program and Local Veterans' Employment Representative
Origin: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, Throughout the nearly two hundred and twenty three-year history of the United States, the men and women of this nation have served in the Armed Forces in the interest of the collective body of states, united under a central federal government, "to provide for the common defense"; and

WHEREAS, These men and women served the United States under the constitutional authority vested in, and by direction of, the President of the United States; and

WHEREAS, It has been the finding of numerous surveys and studies that, for a variety of reasons, the vast majority of veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States are disadvantaged in pursuing civilian employment and careers, and that veterans helping veterans has proven to be extremely effective; and

WHEREAS, It is altogether fitting and proper that such programs of employment assistance for veterans be provided by direction of, and subject to oversight by, the Congress of the United States to ensure that all veterans who served the United States in uniform in time of war and peace are afforded such services in a uniform manner following completion of their service and return to the several states; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 107-288 has revised Title 38 to eliminate the requirement that Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (DVOP/LVER) staff be veterans and serve only veterans and to reduce the direction and control of such employment assistance programs while relinquishing the direction of veterans services to the discretion of the governors of the several States and/or contracting of such services to for-profit organizations; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 107-288 also eliminates the requirement that DVOP/LVER staff be assigned based on veteran intake and veteran population, and creates half time DVOP positions, thereby eliminating positions available to serve veterans or allowing positions to be assigned at the discretion of the individual state workforce agency, which may or may not adequately assign positions; and

WHEREAS, Such devolution of program responsibility will then be based on each state's elected officials' perspective and may result in either limited services or such variations in employment assistance provided to disabled veterans, while possibly making a mockery of the Congress intent found in Title 38 USC; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion will support legislation that will require Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) serve only veterans, and that the assignment of these positions to local one-stop centers be based on veteran populations; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion will support legislation that federalizes DVOP and LVER staff member positions.

Resolution No. 318: Support Recognition of Military and Pay when Calculating Starting Federal Civilian Salaries
Origin: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, The Office of Personnel Management's interpretation of Section 531.203 of Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations does not allow the use of military pay rates to determine the rate of basic pay that may be paid to an individual upon appointment to a civil service position; and

WHEREAS, The interpretation of this law places an undue financial hardship on a former member of the Armed Forces and penalizes the individual for serving in the military defending our country and provides an advantage to non veterans seeking higher starting salary when entering into federal employment; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support legislation that requires federal agencies to take an employee's military experience and military pay history into consideration when computing that employee's starting civilian salary.

Resolution No. 321: Support Reasonable Set-Aside of Federal Procurement and Contracts for Business Owned and Operated by Veterans
Origin: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, Government small business assistance for all honorably discharged veterans dates back to the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944; and

WHEREAS, Veterans have provided selfless military service to America and previous generations of veterans have achieved significant self-employed small business success in America; and

WHEREAS, Present policies and legislation ensure that not all veterans receive the same opportunity to prosper as small business owners, undermining their opportunity to succeed as part of the Department of Defense or government's supplier base that is central to ensuring America's success in the War on Terror, and America's success in the international economic systems; now, therefore, be it;

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion will support development and passage of federal, state and local veteran business development legislation to provide assistance to all veterans, including disabled veterans and members of Reserve Components of the United States military to ensure equal opportunity for veterans to start or grow a small business, including establishing numerical goals for all veterans to compete in government procurement; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to ensure equal parity for all veterans in all small business government contracting programs, thus ensuring no veteran procurement program is at a disadvantage in competing with any other government procurement program established by law.

Resolution No. 322: Oppose Efforts to Change the Residency and Requirements for State Directors of the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS)
Origin: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, The United States Government has recognized that the employment of veterans is a national priority and responsibility; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Labor, Veterans' Employment & Training Service has done a satisfactory job of promoting the employment of veterans and protecting the right of veterans to employment across the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, It is essential that each state director have a comprehensive knowledge of the state economy, veterans service organizations, including The American Legion, local service providers, and each state's workforce agency; and

WHEREAS, Each state director must have a strong cohesive relationship with state workforce agency; therefore, in most cases the state directors are hired from the state workforce agency; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code 4103 (s) (2) requires each director for Veterans' Employment and Training for a state shall, at the time of appointment, have been a bona fide resident of the state for at least two years; and

WHEREAS, The residency requirement as stated in Title 38, United States Code as served this nation well and has enhanced the success of all programs administered by the Veterans' Employment and Training Services; and

WHEREAS, For many years The American Legion has been a strong supporter of keeping the residency requirement part of federal law; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion vigorously oppose any effort to change the current law that requires the residency requirement for State Directors, Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service.

Resolution No. 329: Support for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program Hiring More Counselors and Employment Coordinators
Origin: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of war veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, The intent of the Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program is to retrain and educate service-disabled veterans so they may find productive jobs compatible with their disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Currently, the caseload for the VR&E Program is one employment coordinator per 141 cases; and

WHEREAS, The average veteran is enrolled in VR&E for approximately 700 days, in part due to large case loads of vocational rehabilitation counselors and lack of individualized care; and

WHEREAS, Veterans, especially those of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, continue to have higher unemployment rates than non-veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion supports

an increase in funding that would allow the VR&E Program to hire more vocational rehabilitation counselors and employment coordinators, to minimize the caseload so veterans have more individualized counseling as well as ensure them of ample employment opportunities once they complete the program.

Resolution No. 330: Support Veterans' Preference in Public Employment
Origin: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, Our federal government specially selected as mentally, morally, and physically fit, certain members from its society, specially trained this group, subjected them to stringent rules and regulations, removed them from home, family and employment, asked of them a special sacrifice, required some of them to suffer wounds they will live with forever; and

WHEREAS, A grateful nation through its representative in the Congress of the United States and state legislatures has in recognition of that special service and loss of employment opportunity while defending the country in time of need, extended a long history of employing the returning veterans by enacting the Veterans' Preference Act; and

WHEREAS, The term "veteran" includes every category of socioeconomics, gender, age, religion, ethnic group, race, and creed; and

WHEREAS, Absence from the highly competitive job market due to military service creates an unfair and unequal burden on veterans in competing for employment with non-veteran peers upon completion of military service; and

WHEREAS, The veterans' preference law accomplished the legislative purpose of honoring veterans and provides a small advantage in competing for federal and state government jobs; and

WHEREAS, Veterans' preference requires a veteran must be fully qualified for the position sought; and

WHEREAS, There are reported incidents of hiring officials in both the federal and state government agencies who have ignored veterans' preference in selecting new employees; and

WHEREAS, There have been federal and state legislative efforts to repeal or avoid application of veterans' preference in hiring practices; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion deplores each and every attempt to degrade, dilute, or modify the historical precedence of giving job eligibility preference to those who are taken from their communities to serve their country in time of war; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That all law makers at every level of government are urged to oppose any and all efforts to repeal or circumvent veterans' preference in government hiring practices; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That all executives at every level of government are urged to enforce veterans' preference in their respective government agencies.

Resolution No. 332: Support Tax Credit for Certain Employers
Origin: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, More than 265,300 members of the Armed Forces Reserves and National Guard served on active duty during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm (1990-1991); and

WHEREAS, According to Defense Manpower Data Systems, since 1991, an additional 63,938 members of the reserve components served on active duty during the military operations known as Southern Watch, Joint Forge and Uphold Democracy; and

WHEREAS, Currently, another 71,000 Reserve Components are supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation New Dawn; and

WHEREAS, The vast majority of those men and women left jobs and careers in the civilian community to answer the call of their country; and

WHEREAS, Many of those veterans and their families suffered economic hardship as the result of that service because the military salaries they received while on active duty were often much lower than the salaries paid by their civilian employers; and

WHEREAS, While some employers were able to make up the difference between their employee's military pay and their regular civilian salary, most employers could not, or would not, make up the difference between the two; and

WHEREAS, There is no incentive for employers to make up the difference between an employee's military pay and their regular salary; and

WHEREAS, The financial disadvantages suffered by many members of the Armed Forces Reserves and National Guard who are called to active duty could very possibly serve as a major impediment to the recruitment and retention of a competent Reserve component of the military total force; and

WHEREAS, The recent downsizing of armed forces resulted in increased reliance on Reserves and National Guard units for military operation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion sponsor and support legislation providing tax credits to any employer who either pays an employee who is called to active duty their regular salary or who makes up the difference between that person's military pay and their regular civilian salary.

Resolution No. 333: Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program
Origin: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, The United States Government has recognized that employment of veterans is a national responsibility and that alleviating unemployment or underemployment of honorably discharged veterans is a national priority; and

WHEREAS, Unemployment rates of individuals recently separated from military service is unacceptable because America's employers have been lax in hiring those ex-service members; and

WHEREAS, The Work Opportunity Tax Credit program created by Congress encourages employees to hire targeted applicants but present program language is too restrictive and fails to include many veterans who are receiving food stamps, welfare or seeking job vocational rehabilitation when requesting employment; and

WHEREAS, Expansion of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit program to include those and other categories of separated members of the uniformed services will in the

long run promote recruitment and retention of members in all branches of the military services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion request Congress for changes in legislation relating to the Work Opportunity Tax Credit program to include:

1. All members of the military who have served active duty and/or still on active duty for training who have served more than 180 days since September of 2001

2. That this benefit will be extended beyond September 1.

Resolution No. 335: Veterans Employment Initiative
Origin: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, Significant hurdles to veterans employment in the federal government exist despite veterans preference laws, including deficiencies in federal agency human resource departments and a lack of adequate information on the part of veterans about how to obtain federal employment; and

WHEREAS, Executive Order 13518 created a Veterans Employment Initiative in response to these hurdles but provides only general guidance to covered agencies as to how the initiative is to be implemented; and

WHEREAS, The government-wide Veterans' Recruitment and Employment Strategic Plan for FY 2010–FY 2012, published as part of the Veterans Employment Initiative, also sets out general goals; and

WHEREAS, Many of the goals described in the three-year strategic plan have been met less than a year after the plan was published, leading to the impression that the strategic plan has set the bar too low; and

WHEREAS, Because each agency or department named in Executive Order 13518 is required to develop its own operational plan and standards, there is no efficient way for the government, the individual veteran, or the public at large to track these plans and their outcomes; and

WHEREAS, Some agencies are absent from the list of agencies participating in the Veterans Employment Initiative; and

WHEREAS, Neither Executive Order 13518, nor the strategic plan establish metrics to assess whether the Veterans Employment Initiative is successful; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That Executive Order 13518 and the strategic plan be supplemented to include measurable, specific goals and specific metrics to better assess the effects and successes of the Veterans Employment Initiative; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Executive Order 13518 and the Veterans Employment Initiative include all federal agencies and departments; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That there be further development of the Veterans Employment Initiative to provide enforcement and oversight mechanisms and rights or benefits enforceable by law to any veteran.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Economic

Resolution No. 137 (IA)**: Support for Legislation that would Enhance and Reinforce Veterans' Preference for Government Jobs**

Committee on Other Economic Matters
Approved Resolutions or Approved with Amendment

Resolution No. 204: Support Building a Veterans Small Business Resource Community of Private Volunteers
Origin: Missouri
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Of approximately 12 million American veterans participating in the U.S. labor market 3.6 million are self-employed small business owners or co-owners of their small business; and

WHEREAS, According to the census Bureau, self-employed veterans generate $1.65 trillion annually in the American economy and employ more than 10 million Americans, more than the total economic output of Canada or Mexico; and

WHEREAS, Historically veterans are self-employed at a rate almost 50 percent higher than non-veterans; and

WHEREAS, Small Business Administration research found that 23 percent of veterans are either starting a small business or are seriously considering doing so; and

WHEREAS, Government programs and services for veteran entrepreneurs are funded at approximately $1 per veteran entrepreneur; and

WHEREAS, Government programs are limited in that small business success for most veterans is achieved in the American private sector, not the public sector; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion was responsible for the largest veteran small business program in history as the 1944 GI Bill provided more than 280,000 small business and small farm loan guarantees between 1944 and 1954; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, as the nation's largest veterans service organization, should play a central role in helping young and returning veterans and servicemembers start and succeed as self-employed small business owners; and

WHEREAS, Thousands of members of The American Legion are successful entrepreneurs in the private sector, which includes financial services, law, construction, transportation, healthcare, information technology, energy, etc.; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion Business owners could be a part of a proud, powerful volunteer community of veteran business advisors who could share their experience, expertise and network with returning and start-up veteran entrepreneurs at no cost and minimal involvement from the government; and

WHEREAS, If private sector Legionnaires and other patriotic Americans offered and provided free advice and assistance to new veterans entrepreneurs, these new veteran entrepreneurs could accelerate their success in the American economy; and

WHEREAS, This effort would benefit veterans, their families, and the country, while continuing the legacy of The American Legion assisting veterans as they return home; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion undertake, participate in and support building a veterans small business resource community of private volunteers to assist and support new veteran entrepreneurs in order to help facilitate the successful assimilation of thousands of veterans through self-employment success.

Resolution No. 220: Surviving Spouse Mortgage Eligibility
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Veterans who meet certain criteria are eligible for the VA home loan program for as long as they live and in certain circumstances may use this benefit several times; and

WHEREAS, Once the veteran expires this benefit does not pass onto the surviving spouse except in those situations where the veteran died of a service-related condition or died in service; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are usually the primary income provider for the household and contribute the majority of payments to mortgages for the family; and

WHEREAS, Once the veteran dies the mortgage payments must continue to be paid and the burden falls on the surviving spouse; and

WHEREAS, The surviving spouse may have to downsize and/or move to a different area to obtain a more affordable dwelling; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to allow the surviving spouse of a veteran who was determined to be eligible for the VA loan program to use this same entitlement for a one-time guarantee of a new mortgage and that this eligibility be good for up to fifteen years after the veteran dies or the surviving spouse remarries.

Resolution No. 296: Amending the Eligibility for the Transfer of the Post-9/11 GI Bill Educational Benefits
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, Eligible service members can share the Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits with their immediate families only if they were on active-duty on August 1, 2009; had completed six years of active-duty military service; and committed to serve four more years; and

WHEREAS, When Congress passed the new GI Bill, a provision was included to allow the transfer of education benefits to immediate family members; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense wanted to entice troops to reenlist, so the transferability benefit only applies to service members with 10 years of active-duty service or a commitment to serve 10 years; and

WHEREAS, A spouse can begin using transferred benefits before the additional four years are served, but children may not use benefits until a service member has completed at least 10 years of service; and

WHEREAS, Service members with 10 years of active-duty service or more; who are eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill educational benefits; who were not on active-duty on August 1, 2009; and who were prevented from committing to another four years by the Department of Defense; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion supports legislation that would authorize all service members with 10 years or more of active-duty service, who are eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill educational benefits, but left the Armed Forces before August 1, 2009, be able to use the transferability entitlement to give to their immediate family members.

Resolution No. 301: Eliminate Delimiting Dates for the Montgomery GI Bill and Post-9/11 GI Bill
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 – the original GI Bill; and

WHEREAS, This GI Bill helped our veterans to pursue a higher education; and

WHEREAS, The Montgomery GI Bill is now in place; and

WHEREAS, The Post-9/11 GI Bill is now in place; and

WHEREAS, The benefit of a higher education is still viewed as a vehicle to economic security; and

WHEREAS, The present ten year delimiting date for the Montgomery GI Bill and fifteen years delimiting date for the Post-9/11 GI Bill to utilize this benefit should not exist; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That there be no time constraint with regards to the Montgomery GI Bill and Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Resolution No. 302: Elimination of the VA Home Loan Funding Fee
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Home Loan Guaranty program has been in effect since 1944; and

WHEREAS, The VA Home Loan Guaranty program has afforded approximately 18 million veterans the opportunity to purchase and refinance homes; and

WHEREAS, The VA Home Loan Guaranty program offers veterans an affordable and easy to use method of purchasing homes in return for their service to this nation; and

WHEREAS, Currently the loan guaranty limit is $417,000 in most areas; and

WHEREAS, The VA funding fee charged to veterans was enacted into law to defray the costs of the VA guaranteed home loan program; and

WHEREAS, Funding fees collected each year virtually always exceed the costs of operating the program; and

WHEREAS, The current fee of 1.40 percent for first-time users amounts to a principal payment of nearly $3,000 by the veteran on the current average loan of $209,000. This is the equivalent of requiring the veteran to "purchase" a benefit that historically could be used cost free; and

WHEREAS, The VA funding fee that is collected goes to a Department of the Treasury account that sustains that VA Home Loan program, with excess monies used to pay for other Federal Government programs and expenses; and

WHEREAS, Congress is required to fund the operation of the home loan program because the program has "permanent and indefinite budget authority"; and

WHEREAS, The funding fee paid to VA has had a negative effect on many veterans by adding significantly to the cost of a VA loan, or by deterring other veterans from using an earned benefit; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion supports the elimination of the VA Home Loan funding fee; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion petition Congress to appropriate funding to sustain the VA Home Loan program.

Resolution No. 303: Support Regulation of For-Profit Schools and State Approving Agencies
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The American Legion is concerned over the education of America's veterans and their ability to acquire gainful employment after earning degrees from some for-profit institutions; and

WHEREAS, Some for-profit institutions have engaged in fraudulent and improper recruiting activities; and

WHEREAS, In 2009, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee found 18 for-profit institutions were spending $55.3 million in military recruiting and in 2010 (first full year of Post-9/11 GI Bill) over $285 million was spent; and

WHEREAS, A total of $1.6 billion dollars in Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits were paid to for-profit schools from August 2009-July 2011; and

WHEREAS, Student veterans at certain for-profit schools are defaulting at higher rates than other sectors (22.3% default rate); and

WHEREAS, The role of State Approving Agencies is to approve certain educational programs for veterans at institutions of higher learning; and

WHEREAS, The State Approving Agencies have been tasked with changing their role from proactive oversight of all schools to performing the Department of Veterans Affairs compliance surveys on benefits already paid; and

WHEREAS, The State Approving Agencies are ill-equipped to undertake such a task due to the lack of manpower and funds to adequately perform both Veterans Affairs Compliance Surveys and proper proactive oversight of for-profit schools and their programs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support oversight and legislation evaluating post-secondary education institutions on quality factors such as accreditation, transferability, cost, graduation rates, acceptance in the job market; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion pursue opportunities to educate veterans and military members on selection and attendance at post-secondary education institutions; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion expresses its strong support for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regulations requiring for-profit institutions be held to the same standards and criteria as non-profit institutions for the purpose of approval for use of VA education benefits; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to provide additional resources and increased funding for the State Approving Agencies, assuring continuation of its primary responsibility and focus to review, evaluate and approval of quality programs of education and training, and oversight of for-profit institutions are aligned with state and federal criteria on behalf of student veterans.

Resolution No. 305: Support Funding for Additional Housing for Homeless Veterans with Families
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 Department of Veterans Affairs Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Groups (CHALENG) report estimates that approximately 77,000 veterans are homeless at any point in time; and

WHEREAS, CHALENG sites continue to report increases in the number of homeless veterans with families (i.e., dependent children) being served at their programs; It reports that 140 sites (100 percent of all sites) reported a total of 4,383 homeless veteran families seen; This was an 86 percent increase over the 2,368 homeless veteran families seen and FY 2009; and

WHEREAS, 14 percent of the veterans placed in the Department of Housing and Urban Development and Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program, have children; and

WHEREAS, Homeless veterans with dependents present a challenge to VA homeless programs, because most VA transitional housing programs accept only veterans; and

WHEREAS, Homeless Veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan are more likely to have family or children that also require assistance; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion supports legislation or administrative proposals that provide additional transitional and permanent housing for homeless veterans with families.

Resolution No. 306: Funding for Homeless Veterans
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The Congress of the United States has passed legislation to fund the United States Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care for Homeless Veterans program, the Homeless Domiciliary Care Program and the Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) rehabilitation program; and

WHEREAS, Some of these programs have been in partnership with veterans service organizations and other non-profit organizations; and

WHEREAS, VA estimates that 67,500 veterans are currently homeless; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has been an active partner with the Department of Veterans Affairs with the Health Care for Homeless Veterans and CWT programs; and

WHEREAS, These programs have proved to be successful in rehabilitation of the veteran in helping him/her to become a productive citizen again; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion renew its commitment to assisting homeless veterans and their families; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue to support the efforts of public and private sector agencies and organizations with the resources necessary to aid homeless veterans and their families; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek and support any legislative or administrative proposal that will provide medical, rehabilitative and employment assistance to homeless veterans and their families.

Resolution No. 307: Home Loan Guaranty Program
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (P. L.346, 78th Congress) established, among other things, a home loan guaranty program that was to be administered by the Veterans Administration, which later became the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, The two purposes of the original program were to help returning World War II veterans in their readjustment to civilian life and to stimulate the economy by assisting those veterans in obtaining mortgage financing from the private sector; and

WHEREAS, Because of the popularity and success of the VA Loan Guaranty Program, and because it benefited the American economy as well as eligible veterans, Congress decided to make that five-year pilot program permanent; and

WHEREAS, To date the VA has guaranteed over 18 million loans to eligible veterans and has, for the most part, maintained a default rate that compares very favorably with the default rate on private sector mortgages; and

WHEREAS, While some of the veterans who have participated in this program could have obtained private sector financing that required a down payment, many others could not have qualified for such financing; and

WHEREAS, Congress has made numerous changes over the years in attempts to improve this VA program, including authorizing certain pilot programs; and

WHEREAS, Congress has provided with authority to guarantee both traditional Adjustable Rate Mortgages (ARMS) and Hybrid Adjustable Rate Mortgages (HARMS), this authority expires after September 30, 2012; and

WHEREAS, VA's ARMS and HARMS have become very popular, comprising approximately 22 percent of VA's guaranteed loans in some years; and

WHEREAS, One of the attractive features of an ARM is that it allows the borrower to obtain a home loan with a beginning interest rate below that of a normal fixed rate loan, thus allowing that person to select the financing option that best suits their needs; and

WHEREAS, Because the loans in VA's ARM and HARM programs were underwritten much more conservatively than those available in the conventional market, few loans went into default; and

WHEREAS, Although the VA and Congress were in favor of making the program permanent, the Congressional Budget Office blocked a permanent extension because it believed that the cost would be $36 million per year, even though the VA had proven that it could run that program at a lower cost; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion reaffirm its strong support for the Department of Veterans Affairs' Loan Guaranty Service and its programs; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to extend the Department of Veterans Affairs' Adjustable Rate Mortgage and Hybrid Adjustable Rate Mortgage programs beyond their September 30, 2012 expiration date; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support any administrative and/or legislative efforts that will improve and strengthen the Loan Guaranty Service's ability to serve America's veterans.

Resolution No. 308: Homeless Veterans Assistance
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, To properly assist homeless veterans in their reintegration into the civilian workforce and self-sufficiency, there needs to be more funding available; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge Congress to establish a fund in the Treasury of the United States to be known as the "Homeless Veterans Assistance Fund," to provide assistance to homeless veterans as a supplement to, but not a replacement for, existing funds for such assistance; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to amend the Internal Revenue Code to allow taxpayers with income tax liability of $3.00 or more to designate $3.00 of said liability for transfer to the Homeless Veterans Assistance Fund.

Resolution No. 309: Support Expanding the Departments of Housing and Urban Development and Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Voucher Program
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes the nation has a responsibility to ease the difficulties experienced by military veterans returning to civilian life; and

WHEREAS, In the most severe cases, veterans transitioning home and their families have found themselves homeless; and

WHEREAS, In 2012 VA estimates there are nearly 67,500 homeless veterans on any given night and nearly twice as many veterans experience homelessness at some point during the year; and

WHEREAS, President Obama and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Shinseki are committed to eliminating homelessness for the nation's veterans; and

WHEREAS, VA has developed a comprehensive Five Year-Plan to achieve this goal; and

WHEREAS, The HUD-VASH program is a collaboration between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program to help homeless veterans and their immediate families by providing permanent housing with case management and supportive and clinical services provided by VA at its medical centers (VAMCs) and in the community that promote and maintain recovery and housing stability; and

WHEREAS, The HUD-VASH is a prominent element of the Five-Year Plan; and

WHEREAS, VA identified 217 VAMCs and Community Based Outpatient Clinics that will participate with the program; and

WHEREAS, In doing so, the VA took into account the population of homeless veterans needing services in the area, the number of homeless veterans served by the homeless programs at each VAMC, geographic distribution and VA case management resources; and

WHEREAS, There will be at least one site in each of the 50 states and in the District of Columbia, Guam and Puerto Rico; and

WHEREAS, To be eligible for this program, veterans must be VA Health Care eligible, homeless and willing to participate in case management services in order to obtain and sustain permanent independent community housing in VA Healthcare; and

WHEREAS, This program was designed to address the needs of the most vulnerable homeless veterans; and

WHEREAS, The program is designed to improve each veteran's health and mental health, and to enhance each veteran's ability to remain stable, housed, and integrated in their local community; and

WHEREAS, This is done using HUD Section 8 "Housing Choice" rental assistance vouchers and VA's case management services; and

WHEREAS, A voucher may be either "project-based" (where its use is limited to a specific apartment complex) or "tenant-based" (where the tenant is free to choose a unit in the private sector with a Section 8 program); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion supports

expanding the HUD-VASH voucher program, to include the funding of 12,000 additional housing vouchers; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages a higher allocation of project-based HUD-VASH voucher units.

Resolution No. 311: Support Major Enhancements For The Montgomery GI Bill
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The American Legion first drafted the GI Bill of Rights, which was enacted by Congress in 1944; and

WHEREAS, The nation now has a Total Force military policy that requires the operational integration and deployment of active-duty, National Guard and Reserve forces; and

WHEREAS, All members of the Total Force endure the same hardships and sacrifices, including National Guard and Reserve personnel who contribute to every operational mission and deployment; and

WHEREAS, The original purposes of the GI bill are sound and supportable; and

WHEREAS, Many Selective Reserve members have significant readjustment challenges upon discharge from active-duty service; and

WHEREAS, The current structure and management of the MGIB by the Departments of Defense and Veterans' Affairs causes administrative confusion and inequitable allocation of benefits; and

WHEREAS, A grateful nation should honor the service of all members of the Total Force GI Bill that is compatible with the nation's Total Force military policy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That Congress should move the Montgomery GI Bill – Selected Reserve from Title 10, the United States Code (USC) to Title 38 USC; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the annual appropriations for the MGIB and the MGIB-SR become an annual appropriation within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That VA has administrative authority for both the MGIB and the MGIB-SR Bill.

Resolution No. 314: Support Extended Time for Mortgage Payments for Servicemembers
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, Currently, servicemembers are forced to sell their homes at a loss when they move on government orders; and

WHEREAS, Current law requires homes had to be bought by July 1, 2006, and applications for partial reimbursement benefits for financial loss to pay off the mortgage, or assistance if they are forced to default on the mortgage were due by September 30, 2010; and

WHEREAS, Many believe this time period is too restrictive and many members of the Armed Forces fail to qualify for this program; and

WHEREAS, Legislation has been introduced to allow the Department of Defense to change the eligibility dates for a specific military installation when circumstances require; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support

the enactment of legislation that will provide assistance to servicemen and women who incur a financial loss through no fault of their own when they move due to government orders.

Resolution No. 319: Support Increase in Reporting Fees for Educational Institutions
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, A certifying official is responsible for certifying the enrollment and changes in enrollment of eligible students to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, The certifying official's primary function is to let VA know if a student is registered for classes, showing the beginning and ending dates, number of credit hours or clock hours per week in attendance, and indicating the status of the student as an undergraduate or graduate student; and

WHEREAS, VA pays an annual reporting fee to schools; and

WHEREAS, The reporting fee is intended to help defray the cost of processing VA certifications; and

WHEREAS, The annual reporting fee is based on the number of VA students, including Chapter 31 (Vocational Rehabilitation), certified by the school during the calendar year; and

WHEREAS, Colleges and universities are always relying on reporting fees from VA to pay for veteran-related activities; and

WHEREAS, Currently, the reporting fees to colleges and universities is $7.00 per student-veteran enrolled; and

WHEREAS, Colleges and universities use certifying officials as the first liaison for a veteran using veterans' educational benefits; and

WHEREAS, Certifying officials need continuing training in order to properly inform veterans about their education benefits; and

WHEREAS, Veterans enrolled in institutions are in need of a place/location to meet other enrolled veterans to confer and find information for veteran-related assistance; and

WHEREAS, The increase in reporting fees would allow certifying officials to receive initial and recurring training, buy and/or upgrade equipment (i.e., computers) and provide office space for student-veterans to meet; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is dedicated to assuring proper education and information for those who are assisting veterans and their families; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion supports increasing the amount of the reporting fees payable to educational institutions for certifying officials who assist/enroll veterans receiving educational benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs and for other purposes.

Resolution No. 320: Support Efforts of the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Office of Veterans Business Development
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, Assistance to veterans who have honorably served our country is a veterans benefit that dates back to the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944; and

WHEREAS, Benefits to veterans have always included assistance in creating and operating veteran-owned small businesses; and

WHEREAS, The military is currently in the process of downsizing, which will mean that thousands of former military personnel who have honorably served their country will be unemployed; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion supports increased funding for the efforts of the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Office of Veteran Business Development, in its initiatives to provide enhanced outreach and specific community-based assistance to veterans and self-employed members of the Reserve and National Guard; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation that would permit the SBA's Office of Veteran Business Development to enter into contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements to further its outreach goals and develop a nationwide community-based service delivery system specifically for veterans and members of Reserve Components of the United States Military.

Resolution No. 323: The Status of Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business after the Death of the Veteran Owner
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, Public Law No. 109-461 passed in December 2006 created additional benefits for surviving spouses who inherit service-disabled veteran-owned businesses; and

WHEREAS, The intent of the law was to ensure that a business owned by a veteran that received contracts based on the service-disabled veteran-owned business status did not suffer because the veteran died; and

WHEREAS, Spouses are able to retain the service-disabled veteran-owned business status for up to 10 years if the veteran owned at least 51 percent of the company before their death; and

WHEREAS, The law passed in December 2006 only took into account the veteran who returned disabled; consequently, it left a large gap in those servicemembers who owned businesses who were killed in the line of duty; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 109-461, in its treatment of businesses after death of veteran-owner, neglected to take into account Reservists and National Guard members who owned businesses before their activation; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 109-461 only transfers service-disabled veteran-owned business status to the surviving spouse of a veteran who acquires ownership rights in a small business if the death of a veteran causes a small business to be less that 51 percent-owned by one or more veterans; and

WHEREAS, The transfer of status in the period beginning on the date on which the veteran dies, only applies to a surviving spouse of a veteran with a service-connected disability rated as 100 percent disabling or a surviving spouse of a veteran who dies as a result of a service-connected disability; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support amending Public Law 109-461 to read that if any disabled veteran who owns a certified service-disabled veteran-owned business dies, (regardless of his/her disability at the time), their business inherited by their spouse/dependent will retain the service-disabled veteran-owned business status in conjunction with Public Law 109-461; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports that if any servicemember, to include those who were mobilized in the National Guard or Reserve, is killed in action and owns at least 51 percent of a business prior to his/her death, the business bequeathed to their spouses/dependents must be granted service-disabled veteran-owned business status for reason of preference in federal contracts; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports any administrative or legislative effort that will improve and increase the benefits bequeathed to the veteran's spouses or dependents upon a veteran business owner's death.

Resolution No. 324: Support the Rollover of IRA Accounts without Penalty or Tax Liability of a Permanent and Total 100 Percent Service-Disabled Veteran with Individual Unemployability
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of honorably discharged veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state, and nation; and

WHEREAS, The United States government has recognized responsibility to its honorably discharged veterans and that alleviating tax burdens for them should be a priority; and

WHEREAS, Pursuant to the Bylaws of this organization it is deemed desirable and in the best interest of its members that action be taken to change present laws; and

WHEREAS, The Federal tax law is administered primarily by the Internal Revenue Service, a bureau of the Department of the Treasury; and

WHEREAS, While the main intent of the law is to provide revenue for the federal government, the tax code is frequently used for public policy reasons, i.e. to achieve social and economic goals; and

WHEREAS, Veterans under 59½ years of age will pay a 10 percent penalty on amount drawn from IRA; and

WHEREAS, Total amount of withdrawal from Individual Retirement Accounts (IRA) is subject to federal income tax; and

WHEREAS, Due to a poor economy, IRAs have lost value; and

WHEREAS, Veterans home mortgages may be higher than the value of said home; and

WHEREAS, High unemployment has caused hardship to the veterans income from other sources in the family; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support legislation to permit veterans who are permanent and total 100 percent service-disabled and permanent and total 100 percent service-disabled with individual unemployability the opportunity to rollover their Individual Retirement Accounts into tax free Roth Accounts, prior to maturity, without penalty or tax liabilities.

Resolution No. 325: Support Licensure and Certification Standards for Veterans Health Administration
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has certain licensures and credentials they require for certain positions; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense provides comprehensive and specific training during military service; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs, VHA is looking for highly qualified individuals to fill their job descriptions; and

WHEREAS, Military experience that is gained while serving in the Armed Forces is valuable to health care and non-health care related positions found within Veterans Health Administration; and

WHEREAS, All valuable experience while gained on active service can translate into academic education for certain positions within the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, Servicemembers experience and training can help fill the vacancies for health care and non-health care related positions within Veterans Health Administration; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support the Department of Veterans Affairs, and specifically the Veterans Health Administration in allowing military education, training, and experience to be considered towards a license or certification for health care and non-health care related positions that require licenses or credentials.

Resolution No. 326: Support Licensure and Certification of Active-Duty and Selected Reserve Personnel
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The unemployment rate in July 2012 for Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) veterans is at 8.9 percent; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are in need of employment after exiting the military; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DOD) provides some of the best vocational training in the nation for its military personnel; and

WHEREAS, DOD establishes, measures and evaluates performance standards for every occupation within the Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, There are many occupational career fields in the Armed Forces that can easily translate to a civilian counterpart; and

WHEREAS, There are many occupations in the civilian workforce that require a license or certification; and

WHEREAS, In the Armed Forces, these unique occupations are performed to approved military standards that may meet or exceed the civilian license or certification criteria; and

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, This situation creates an artificial barrier to employment upon separation from military service; and

WHEREAS, A study by the Presidential Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance identified a total of 105 military professions where civilian credentialing is required; and

WHEREAS, That DOD is obligated to keep such licenses and certifications current and cover the costs of renewal; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support efforts to eliminate employment barriers that impede the timely and successful transfer of military job skills to the civilian labor market; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Defense take appropriate steps to ensure that servicemembers be trained, tested, evaluated and obtain any licensure or certification that may be required in the local civilian workforce; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support efforts to increase the civilian labor market's acceptance of the occupational training provided by the military.

Resolution No. 327: Support Legislation to Improve the Post-9/11 GI Bill
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

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 Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, 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 further

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; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion recommends that VA sustain full tuition and fees reimbursement for veterans attending public undergraduate colleges, while setting a national standard for private and graduate schools.

Resolution No. 328: Support and Strengthen the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA)
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The American Legion has been the leading veterans advocacy organization since its inception in 1919; and

WHEREAS, Such advocacy resulted in the creation and passage of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) and the original GI Bill, codifying into Federal law benefits earned by active and former members of the United States military as a result of their honorable service during a time of war; and

WHEREAS, Both the GI Bill and SCRA have been legislatively updated on occasion by the United States Congress to reflect societal changes and rising costs of providing said benefits; and

WHEREAS, It is the intention of the SCRA to protect and make whole members of the United States military called to active duty by duly authorized and issued orders; and

WHEREAS, Such protection is not extended to include the necessary termination of a contract under Family or Group plans, nor to the necessary cancellation of reservations for air or train transportation, resulting in unnecessary, unintended and expensive costs incurred by servicemembers who are obeying the task placed upon them by duly authorized orders; and

WHEREAS, Such costs coincide with negative credit reports which further exacerbate the ability of the service member to perform his or her duty, and impacts the ability of the individual or family to realize the American dream and own a home by punitive credit rates; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That Congress be urged to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) to include protections for members of the Armed Forces acting under duly authorized and issued orders to include, but not limited to, deployment and temporary duty assignment orders against fees, fines and the resulting negative credit reports by cancellation of ticketed travel on U.S. airlines or train transportation.

Resolution No. 331: Support Legislation to Enable Veterans Service Organizations to Gain Better Access to Federal Surplus Property by Making Them Their Own Category of Eligibility

Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The American Legion is concerned over the education and welfare of America's veterans and their ability to improve their quality of life and to acquire gainful employment; and

WHEREAS, Following the passage of the For Vets Act of 2010 (and signed into law by the President as Public Law 111-338 to amend Chapter 5-section 549-of Title 40 United States Code, to include organizations whose membership comprises substantially veterans as recipient organizations for the donation of Federal surplus personal property through state agencies), its implementation has been limited to programs that demonstrate they have an educational or health program only; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes the significance that federal surplus property can make in the lives of countless veterans who need such property to lead more productive and independent lives; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has the capacity to reach veterans through its various American Legion posts in each state across the United States that would identify posts eligible to utilize not only property for educational and health programs but other services provided on behalf of improving the quality of life and the ability to acquire and support skills for gainful employment by the veterans; and

WHEREAS, General Services Administration (GSA) regulations that authorize how state agencies for surplus property can fully implement Public Law 111-338 have not as yet been put into place; and

WHEREAS, The state agencies for surplus property are hampered by their ability to enable veterans to have full access to federal surplus property; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembles in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support legislation that can enable veterans service organizations to gain increased

opportunities for surplus property to educate, train and improve the quality of life for veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to amend Title 40 Section 549, of the United States Code to enable veterans to gain full access to Defense Department and civilian surplus property distributed through state agencies for surplus property by making veterans service organization their own category of eligibility.

Resolution No. 334: Transitional Housing Allotments for Returning Combat Veterans
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, Unlike the active duty component that are stationed stateside in the final months of their service, Guardsmen and Reservists are fully employed in a combat zone up until the final day that they redeploy back to the continental United States; and

WHEREAS, At the demobilization site, returning veterans undergo approximately three weeks of physicals, transition programs, reunion with family members and inventory accountability; and

WHEREAS, There is little time for these servicemembers to start the process of finding a home, apartment, room or other dwelling; and

WHEREAS, Families are sometimes unaccommodating to returning veterans and cannot or refuse to house them; and

WHEREAS, Young veterans are living with their families, friends, in hotels, in cars, and are homeless; and

WHEREAS, Many single soldiers stay at hotels and are burning up their savings earned over the prior year; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are having to enter unfair leases/agreements just to find a place to stay because they are in dire need; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are ineligible to live in campus housing due to the likelihood of returning in the middle of a semester and are unable to start college for four more months; and

WHEREAS, For 9 months out of the year, universities are in their lengthy fall and spring semester terms and these young men and women can't restart their academic careers until the next term starts; therefore, they are not eligible to live on campus; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 90,000 Guard and Reserve have been re-entering the private sector each year since 2001; and

WHEREAS, A 180-day 'buffer' period will allow veterans to transition back in to the civilian sector with much greater ease and will prevent homelessness; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support the creation of a program by Congress for returning veterans similar to Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), for housing upon return from mobilization for 180 days.

Resolution No. 336: Veterans Entrepreneur Training Program
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, In 1989, The American Legion Department of Utah received a grant for $91,447.00 from the Small Business Administration to be used to fund entrepreneurial training for veterans desiring to implement and own a small business venture; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion program was designed to encourage and motivate veterans to explore their management and organizing abilities required in formulating sound business plans and help in obtaining needed financing for successful implementation of a business; and

WHEREAS, Cooperation with The American Legion and Small Business Administration with local entities that entail schools with Small Business Development Centers, Chambers of Commerce, business owners, State Industrial Development Departments, private consulting support systems, lending institutions, and instruction and information from existing and retired business owners can contribute to The American Legion programs following three fold objectives:

1. To reach out to as many veterans as possible to explore their business interests
2. To select a reasonable number of veterans to participate based on entrepreneurial potential and application of business successful criteria
3. To provide selected veterans with education programs, support workshops and counseling to assist in forming sound business plans; and

WHEREAS, Classes should be held at educational establishments during evening or weekend hours and should include the veteran entrepreneur's spouse or partner whenever possible having proved to be an unequivocal asset to the veteran's success; and

WHEREAS, Due to older age individuals separating from active military, plus activation of Guard and Reserve units who have immediate family obligations that interrupt a Service Member's business or employment while deployed can completely change their future professions when returning could necessitate a training program to fit their changed needs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion request the Small Business Administration and the Congress make funding available to reinstate the Veterans Entrepreneur Training Program grants to help those who are in need to return to productive civilian professions.

Resolution No. 337: Veterans Home Loans
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, Legislation to amend the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Tax Code to delete the requirement that State Veterans Home Loans may only be made to those veterans who are within twenty-five years of date of discharge is pending in Congress; and

WHEREAS, This change in the IRS Tax Code would allow thousands of veterans to become eligible for a State Veterans Home Loan; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion supports amending the IRS Tax Code to delete the requirement that State Veterans Home Loans may only be made to those veterans who are within twenty-five years of date of discharge.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Economic

Resolution No. 192 (NY): **Securing In-State Tuition for Military Children**
Resolution No. 214 (IL): **Raise Ceiling on VA Home Loan for Two Legally married Eligible Veterans**

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 230 (IL): **Increase VA Educational Counseling Awareness**
Resolution No. 231 (IL): **Making Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Mandatory for all Servicemembers**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BARNETT: Mr. Commander, I, Dale Barnett, from the great State of Georgia, as a duly elected and registered delegate to this Convention, move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Do I hear a second. ...*Second.* Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor please indicate by the usual sign. All opposed. The report of the Economics is adopted. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Our first guest this morning commanded the U.S. Army Pacific Western Command from July 1989 until his retirement in August 1991. He also served as the logistics management staff officer for the Office of Defense Representative in Tehran, Iran, just a few years before the Iranian hostage crisis. Today he serves as the director of the Department of Defense Vietnam War 50th Anniversary Commemoration, which is fitting since he served in Vietnam as assistant chief of staff for the 101st Airborne Division. Ladies and gentlemen, please extend a warm welcome for Lieutenant General Claude M. Kicklighter. *(Standing applause)*

Salute to Vietnam Veterans
Lieutenant General (Ret.) Claude M. Kicklighter, United States Army
Director, Department of Defense Vietnam War 50th Anniversary Commemoration

National Commander Wong, thank you very much for that very kind introduction. This morning I would like to brief you on the nation's program to thank and honor our Vietnam veterans and their families as we as a nation commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War.

On this next slide you will see the commemorative flag. There's a lot of symbolism in this flag, and if you stop by our booth, you can pick up tri-folder that tells you all about the flag, or if you'll go to our website, and I won't take the time to describe it all this morning, but I would say that the most significant thing about this flag is the phrase at the bottom of the flag. It says, "A grateful nation thanks and honors you, our Vietnam veteran and your family for your service, valor and sacrifice." We want to see this flag flying all across our nation as we go through this 13 year commemoration.

What we'll discuss this morning is the background of the program. We have a public law that tells us that we will do this, and that law gives us objectives to accomplish during this commemoration, and we've derived a mission statement from that, and this is a three-phase program. Phase one is preparation. Phase two is execution. And phrase three is sustainment. And I'll talk briefly about those three phases this morning, and then I'll close with a few comments and a few highlights from the opening ceremony of this commemoration on Memorial Day in Washington, D.C. at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

In 2008, Congress passed a law authorizing the secretary of defense to conduct this nationwide program. In 2011 the deputy secretary of defense assigned the mission to oversee this to the director of admin and management inside the secretary of defense's office. In 2012, as planned, we made the announcement to the nation about this program. Working with the White House we published a proclamation about the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War. The public law tasked the Department of Defense to recruit, coordinate, support and facilitate commemorative events all across this great nation, and also with our allies in their countries. As well as to schedule major events, and to

prioritize the effort to ensure that we achieve the objectives of that law, and I'll briefly discuss those five objectives.

Objective one is to thank and honor the Vietnam veterans with special emphasis on personnel who were prisoners of war, and those who are missing in action, and those who never returned. Also, a very special emphasis is to make sure that we remember all the families, the Blue Star families and the Gold Star families, the unaccounted for families. Objective No. 2 is to highlight the service of all the armed forces, to make sure we don't leave any out, and also make sure we include the federal agencies that participated in this war, along with government and non-government organizations. Objective No. 3 is to pay tribute to the home front. Objective No. 4 is to highlight the advances in technology, science and medicine that were related to that war, and also to recognize the accomplishments and the sacrifices of our allies that fought along beside us in that war.

The mission statement that is derived from that law, is to assist, and this is all the nation, is to assist a grateful nation in thanking and honoring our Vietnam veterans and their families, the fallen, the wounded, and those who were held prisoners of war and those unaccounted for. We want to make sure that we touch all of our veterans, wherever they live, and we want to touch their families, and we want to make this commemoration hometown-centered. We want to go to where they live and properly thank them for their service 50 years ago. We will also assist this nation throughout this commemorative period to ensure that we get the fullest possible accounting for those still unaccounted for.

Now as I mentioned earlier, this was a long tough war, and many in this audience, most in this audience know that. The preparation phase of this program is Phase 1, and that's where we build, recruit and organize. That will run from 2011 to 2014. When we light up hometown American and go to hometown America to thank and honor the veterans is Phase 2. That runs from 2015 to 2017. And then we sustain this operation from 2018 to 2025. And I'll talk a little bit, briefly about each of the phases and some of the things. We'll only hit the highlights, but we have more information about this on our website or you can contact us and we'll be glad to supply more information.

Again, Phase 1 we had planned to have an announcement and also with the White House, publish a presidential proclamation and we did that on Memorial Day. We are now in the process of recruiting, and we would like to recruit all the posts from the Legion in all your hometowns to help us execute this program. We hope to have by the end of Phase 1, more than 8,000 communities involved, and by the end of Phase 2, 10,000 communities, and by the end of this commemoration, somewhere over 15,000 communities involved.

We will also, and this I think is a very important point, is that we will remember all of our veterans at all of our events from all of our wars. We will also especially remember those veterans who are coming off the battlefields today in Iraq and Afghanistan. And we want to demonstrate to them that what happened to the Vietnam veteran generation, will not happen to them. *(Applause)*

But the main focus will be on the Vietnam veterans and their families. This is their 50th Anniversary, and this is a chance to turn the pages of history back to right a wrong, and our intension is to do just that. We have established an interagency advisory group that meets frequently, that integrates all the effort within the Department of Defense and all the federal agencies. And we'll also going to expand that by bringing Vietnam veterans into that group, and we'll call-in an advisory contingent in the next few weeks.

We will be building strong partnerships which is absolutely essential with veterans service organizations and The American Legion is one of the very first, and have been very strong supporters of this program, and we're extremely grateful about that because that's who you are and that's what you do, and I've known that since I was a teenager.

We are also planning to mint some commemorative coins to raise money to invest in this program. We are requesting the Postal Service to issue commemorative stamps. They

will be very historical about the war. We'll have an exhibit in the Pentagon that will be something like a museum. It will be 300 feet long and 20 feet wide. We are also producing exhibits that can be shipped across the country and to events like this, our hometown events, so we can assist in commemorating in hometown America. We are also working very hard to make sure we don't leave the Vietnamese Americans out of all of our events. We want them to be part of this. And we will certainly include our allies.

The Department of Defense is very united behind this mission, from the secretary and the chairman on down. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the military services, the Guard, the Reserve, and our supporting commands that have missions to help support this.

The Pacific Command will be supporting events in Hawaii and throughout the Pacific where our allies are. The Northern Command will be supporting events in the continental U.S. and Alaska, and the Joint Forces Headquarters in Washington, D.C. will be supporting events in the Washington, D.C. area, and our service bands which are premier bands, and bands around the country will be preparing to put on Bob Hope type shows and travel across the country as needed.

I would also mention that history and education, getting it right is a very important part of this commemoration. We are going to develop educational materials for grades seven through twelve, and for colleges and universities, and we'll be working with ROTC departments as well. We know that there is a lot of educational programs already going on, you have a lot in this great organization, and we don't plan to replicate, but we plan to build on what you have already done. We'll have lesson plans; we'll have lecture series of distinguished veterans on DVDs. We'll have public, private and primary source documents. We'll have lots of publications that will be available to schools. We'll be producing and reissuing documentary films, and we'll have a lot of posters. As we come to the end of Phase 1 in 2014 on Veterans Day, we will start lighting the torches that will carry us into the main effort, which will be in 2015, '16 and '17, on Veterans Day we will have a lot of events calling people to this mission in hometown America.

As we go into the major effort, the execution phase, we will remember our warriors and their families, and remember especially the Gold Star families. If anybody knows the price of freedom, it's our Gold Star mothers and fathers, spouses and children and brothers and sisters. We want to make sure that we reconnect all the families that paid a price for this war. We also want to remember the widows and the children of veterans who have passed on since the war ended. But we want to make sure this is very inclusive and very uniting.

We're asking our commemorative partners in hometown America to do two events each year to thank and honor the veterans right where they live. We will be distributing educational materials throughout this period to our partners, and asking them to help get them into the schools but we will also be working with educational institutions.

We'll continue to work throughout the program with our allies, our five allies that fought with us. And we are assisting Congress in conducting a joint meeting of Congress in early 2015 to help kick this off. Congress will call a joint meeting and tell America and tell you how much this nation appreciates your service.

Military installations throughout our nation will recruit and support the communities where they are located. Each installation will conduct at least one open house annually, where we invite all the veterans and their families to come to be honored, all veterans, but especially the Vietnam veterans. We are asking the installations to support not only local communities, but regional and state events with speakers, color guards and bands as they may be requested or as they may be available to do that.

All the units that served in Vietnam that are still on active duty, we're asking them to have, during this three year period, a homecoming where we invite the veterans and their families to come back to the unit that you served in Vietnam, and inviting all those units that supported that unit. The Guard and Reserve units will recruit and support their local

communities. And think about where those Guard and Reserve units are. They're everywhere.

As we go into Phase 3, and this is the last phase, 2018 to 2025, we will remain focused on thanking and honoring our warriors, and especially our Gold Star families. And we will not think that we have done our job unless we are able to find and thank every veteran and every family member that we possibly can. We will also continue to support commemorative partners. We'll still be doing things in hometown America. We will continue to do everything possible to support our nation's commitment to the fullest possible accounting for those still unaccounted for. As we come to the end of this, we hope that there will be very few that have not been accounted for and returned home.

But we want to make sure, as we come to the end, that we've done it right, and if there's anything that we haven't done, we've got plenty of time to do it right. But especially with educational materials and the history books we want to make sure that they properly reflect the legacy of this great generation. You won all the major battles in that war. You did all your nation asked and then some. You served where duty called, just as your forefathers had done in all our wars. And just as your children and your grandchildren are doing on today's battlefield, we want that legacy reported properly.

And in closing, let me just give you have a few highlights from a Memorial Day event that took place at the Wall. We selected this day to announce to the nation about what was coming in this commemoration, and we also wanted to publish a proclamation, and I think most of you have a copy of that. Attending that event was President and Mrs. Obama; Vice President and Dr. Biden; Secretary of Defense, who was the host; Secretary of Veterans Affairs; Secretary of Interior; Secretary of State was traveling, but the Deputy Secretary of State was there; the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was there; Senator Chuck Hagel who was a young sergeant E-5 in the 9th Division introduced the president, a Vietnam veteran; senior leaders from all the services; the chiefs of services, the secretaries were there. Tom Selleck was the master of ceremony and we had 4,500 guests or more. The Vietnam veterans were the true VIPs for that ceremony. All the luminaries were there to help honor them. The event was open to the public and nobody was turned away knowingly. The VSOs played a key role and they initially started the ceremony by laying wreaths.

And if you look at this slide, you'll see the American Legion is in the top picture in the center. And at the closing, just before we had the flyover of all the vintage aircraft, each of the senior leaders escorted a Gold Star family member from each service to lay a wreath in honor of a name that was on the wall. The Department of Defense was the host, but the Vietnam Veteran Memorial Fund and the National Park Service were co-hosts, and this was a great team effort to begin this commemoration, and help kick it off. This was carried live on three television networks nationwide, and we captured most of the front pages of the major newspapers the next day talking about what we owe this generation.

In this next slide you see the Presidential Proclamation being read in public for the first time by the Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, First Lieutenant Brian Thacker, U.S. Army Vietnam veteran. I know you have a copy of this, but let just quote a few lines. "This will be a 13 year program to honor and give thanks to a generation of proud Americans who saw our country through one of the most challenging missions we have ever faced. While no words will ever be fully worthy of their service, nor any honor truly befitting their sacrifice. Let us remember that it is never too late to pay tribute to the men and women who answered the call of duty with courage and valor. Let us renew our commitment to the fullest possible accounting for those who have not returned."

On this next slide you see the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Marty Dempsey, escorting Mr. Dave Klinker, who is the brother of Captain Mary Klinker, U.S. Air Force nurse, who was killed in Babylift, bringing orphans out of Vietnam at the end.

Let me quote a few remarks from the chairman that day. General Dempsey talked about how much he was inspired as a young 16-year-old boy in his hometown by Captain John Graham who he met after his first tour in Vietnam. He was his hero. Captain Graham was the reason that General Dempsey chose to follow the profession of arms and chose to go to West Point. When General Dempsey was a freshman at West Point, Captain Graham returned from his second tour of duty after being killed as an advisor to the Vietnamese Army. And this is what General Dempsey said that day: "And whether they served in Vietnam or Iraq or Afghanistan, or whether they returned home or are still awaiting their homecoming, there is no difference in their courage and in their sense of duty."

You see Secretary Panetta who is escorting Miss Sarah Frances Shay, the 93-year-old Gold Star mother of Major Donald Shay, Jr., U.S. Air Force who is still missing in action after 42 years. And let me just quote a few remarks from Secretary Panetta's talk that day. "Many more came home from that war to a country that failed to fully acknowledge their service and their sacrifice. And failed to give them the honor they justly deserved. That experience, that failure to thank those who were willing to put their lives on the line for their country was burned into the souls of my generation for too many Vietnam veterans the recognition of their bravery came too late. The Vietnam generation, my generation is graying now, but this commemorative effort will give this country the opportunity today and in the years ahead to try to right the wrongs of the past. To remember those who served in the war and what they did for us, their service and their sacrifice on behalf of us."

This next slide shows what we think is the result of Memorial Day events which helped prepare Secretary Panetta extremely well for his historic trip to Vietnam. He departed for that trip shortly after the event at the Wall. In the spirit of improving bilateral relations in Vietnam, they opened up while he was in country, three previously restricted areas for joint POW/MIA accounting operations, and we hope this will bring more of our unaccounted for home in the near future.

On this next slide we see President and Mrs. Obama escorting Miss Rosemary Brown, the widow of Specialist Four Leslie Sabo during a wreath laying ceremony for Gold Star families. Specialist Sabo was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in the White House only two weeks prior to this Memorial Day event. He lost his life in 1970 serving with the 101st Airborne Airmobile Division, and his nomination for that award got lost for a long period of time.

Let me quote a few lines from the remarks of our keynote speaker that day, our commander-in-chief. "In one of the most painful chapters in our history was Vietnam. Most particularly how we treated our troops who served there. They were blamed for a war they didn't start, when they should have been commended for their service for serving their country with valor. You were sometimes blamed for the misdeeds of a few, when the honorable service of the many should have been praised. You came home and sometimes were denigrated when you should have been celebrated. It was a national shame. A disgrace that should have never happened. And that's why today we resolve that it will never happen again." *(Applause)*

In closing, let me thank The American Legion and The American Legion Auxiliary for all you do and for the key role that you're going to play in assisting a grateful nation in thanking and honoring our Vietnam veterans and their families during this 13 year period. On January 4, 2012 I was asked to come over and meet with our national commander and senior staff in Washington, D.C., and give an overview, and from that meeting we got some very good suggestions about how to conduct this commemoration. Then on May 9, 2012, The American Legion passed a resolution stating The American Legion fully supports the Department of Defense in their efforts to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War, and you'll never know what a shot in the arm that was for us to have to have that backing so early.

We need The American Legion, all the leadership. We need The American Legion Auxiliary and all that leadership. We especially need the 14,000 posts across America and around the world. We need the 2.4 million members in this nation to help recruit, organize, and lead our nation's effort in hometown America where you've been doing that as long as I can remember. And together, we can do what we should have done 50 years ago, to properly thank and honor our Vietnam veterans and their families, and especially the families who lost loved ones.

In closing, let me just quote from a Vietnam veteran, a poem that he wrote. A guy named Albert Nahas. Here's what he wrote: "It mattered not what politicians argued; it mattered not what history would reveal; we had no expectations but to serve where duty called us, and we asked for no reward except a nation's thanks."

And as I was coming to the national commander's dinner last night, I was given a note by one of our Legionnaires. He asked me to close with this, and with your permission I will. He'd like to take a moment this morning to remember a fallen Vietnam veteran named Jackie Clyde Denheart of Hampton Virginia, a very good friend of the 8th district vice commander of the Department of Iowa, Ed Rohner. Jackie was lost exactly 43 years ago while ejecting from a Mohawk in Vietnam. And I ask that we take a moment this morning to have a moment of silence to remember Jackie and his family. And I would add to that, let's take a moment of silence this morning to remember more than 58,000 names on that Wall, and especially the families that had to live without their loved ones. The mothers, the fathers, the spouses, especially the children. The brothers, the sisters. Let's take a moment of silence just to remember all those who gave all their tomorrows. And that's a tough price to pay when you're 18 or 19 years old.

...A moment of silence was observed.

God bless our Vietnam veterans. God bless all of our veterans. God bless their families. And God bless those on the battlefield today. God bless the great United States of America. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you, general. I know you can count on The American Legion to support the effort. As we Vietnam War veterans like to say to each other, Welcome home, brother.

GENERAL KICKLIGHTER: Thank you, brother. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Let history be known that the general was one of my bosses many, many years ago down in Fort Stewart, Georgia, so it's good to see him. I want everyone in this room to support the DoD effort in remembering our Vietnam veterans. We're going to show you a couple of videos and you will be able to see, and it will tell all about it.

...At this time the delegation viewed two short video presentations. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Legionnaires and delegates, let's make sure that will never happen again. *(Applause)*

It is my pleasure to announce that we have more of the Vietnam War Proclamations signed by the president and suitable for framing, available for all Vietnam veterans and families of Vietnam veterans who may not be here today. A Vietnam veteran is any veteran who served between February 28, 1961 through May 7, 1975 inclusive. You can pick them up from our staff at the table near the entrance. If you know a Vietnam veteran that could not be here with you today, you can pick up a copy for him or her. Please do so. But we just ask that you take one per Vietnam veteran. Thank you.

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 such organizations as 2011 Employers of the Year. One Award is for companies employing 50 or less people, another for companies employing from 51 to 200 people, and a third for

companies with more than 200 workers. Each is nominated by a post, and advances through department and national competition levels.

The award in the 50 employee or less category goes to Burditt Trucking of Columbus, Georgia. Accepting on behalf of the company is Mr. Randy Goodman and Department of Georgia Commander William Lienhop. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Employer of the Year Awards for Hiring Veterans

Small Category
Burditt Trucking, Columbus, Georgia

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans for 2011. Presented to Burditt Trucking, Columbus, Georgia, for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 94th Annual National Convention, Indianapolis, Indiana." (Applause)

Medium Category
Alpha Protective Services, Spring Lake, North Carolina

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The award in the 51 to 200 category goes to Alpha Protective Services, Spring Lake, North Carolina. Accepting the award on behalf of company president Mr. James E. Waddell is Department of North Carolina Adjutant Frank Stancil.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans 2011, presented to Alpha Protective Services, Spring Lake, North Carolina, for the exceptional record in the employment in veterans. Presented at the 94th Annual National Convention, Indianapolis, Indiana."

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT STANCIL (NC): The company president could not be here today, which is a shame. He's an outstanding individual. Thank you for this award, God bless you. *(Applause)*

Large Category
Smith & Wesson, Springfield, Massachusetts

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: In the large employer category of 200 plus employees the award goes to Smith & Wesson of Springfield, Massachusetts. Accepting on behalf of the company is Mr. Daniel Fontaine, director of manufacturing. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans 2011. Presented to Smith & Wesson, Springfield, Massachusetts, for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 94th Annual National Convention, Indianapolis, Indiana."

MR. DANIEL FONTAINE: Good morning. Thank you very much. I would just like to say that Smith & Wesson was founded back in 1852, and over the course of those 160 years we're proud to say that we have employed veterans from every era all the way back to the Civil War. So we really appreciate their service, and we're proud to have them as part of the Smith & Wesson family. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

Presentation: American Legion Local Veterans Employment Representative of the Year Award Anthony Medina, Denver, Colorado

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Another employment award that I am honored to present goes to the top Local Veterans Employment Representative in the nation. The award honors individuals who have done such a remarkable job of placing veterans in jobs that even their peers take notice. The Employment Service Award for the Local Veterans Employment Representative for 2011 goes to Mr. Anthony Medina of Denver, Colorado. *(Cheers and applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "The American Legion National Award for Veterans Employment Representative of the Year 2011, presented to Anthony Medina, Denver, Colorado, for your outstanding service to the veterans of the State of Colorado. Presented at the 94th National Convention, Indianapolis, Indiana." (Applause)

MR. ANTHONY MEDINA: Thank you. On behalf of the State of Colorado, the 40 other Denver reps that I work with, thank you very much. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year Award Willetta E. Hilliard-Walker, Huntsville, Alabama

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: 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 Veteran Outreach Program of the Year Award to Willetta E. Hilliard-Walker, of Huntsville, Alabama. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year 2011, presented to Willetta E. Hilliard-Walker, for your outstanding service to the veterans of the State of Alabama. Presented at the 94th National Convention, Indianapolis, Indiana." (Applause)

Presentation: Employer of the Disabled Award Charles Wilson, VA Outpatient Clinic, Lufkin, Texas

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: When the Employer Awards Program was established in 1947 its purpose was to recognize employers across the country who have established an outstanding record in the employment and retention of the disabled. In doing so we are able to educate employers and the general public about the many positive aspects of hiring disabled persons, and thereby increase their employment opportunities. The award goes to Nancy L. Smith of Lufkin, Texas. Here to accept the award on behalf of Miss Smith is Miss Teresa B. Maryska. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of the Disabled 2011, presented to Nancy L. Smith of Lufkin, Texas, for an exceptional record in the employment of disabled persons. Presented at the 94th Annual National Convention, Indianapolis, Indiana." (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: On behalf of every veteran in America, I extend our congratulations and say those words all workers love to hear: "Thank you for a job well done." We are certain that you will keep hiring and assisting veterans. Please tell other businesses about the reliability and work ethic of our veterans. Thank you, and congratulations to all. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Employment Service Local Office of the Year Award
Workforce Solutions Panhandle Office, Amarillo, Texas

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: 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 Workforce Solutions Panhandle Office 0601 of Amarillo, Texas. Accepting the award is Mr. Marin Rivas. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "The American Legion National Award to the Outstanding Employment Service Local Office of the Year 2011, is presented to Workforce Solutions Panhandle Office 0601, Amarillo, Texas, for your outstanding service to the veterans of the State of Texas. Presented at the 94th Annual National Convention, Indianapolis, Indiana."

Presentation: Homeless Veterans Outreach Award
The American Legion Department of Oregon

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: America must never forget the obligations to serve veterans and their families. This includes helping our homeless veterans as they try reentering society as productive, self-supporting citizens. I'm pleased to present the Homeless Veterans Outreach Award to an organization that goes above and beyond the call of duty in helping our homeless. The award goes to the Department of Oregon. Accepting the award is Mr. Robert Huff, homeless veterans chairman. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "The American Legion National 2011 Homeless Veterans Outreach Award is presented to The American Legion family, Department of Oregon, for an exceptional effort towards the elimination of homelessness amongst veterans. Presented at the 94th Annual National Convention, Indianapolis, Indiana."

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Give them a hand. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Outstanding Employer of Older Workers Award
Burditt Trucking, Columbus, Georgia

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The American Legion strongly believes that older workers are a valuable economic resource of proven skills, stability and experience. We also encourage providers 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 older workers. This year's award goes to Burditt Trucking of Columbus, Georgia. Accepting the award for Burditt Trucking are Mr. Randy Goodman and Department of Georgia Commander William Lienhop. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "The American Legion National Award Employer of Older Workers 2011 is presented to Burditt Trucking for an exceptional record in the employment of older persons. Presented at the 94th Annual National Convention, Indianapolis, Indiana." (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you again for all your dedication to the employment of veterans.

At the first National Convention of The American Legion in 1919 the Boy Scouts of America program was adopted to help instill patriotic attitudes in youth. The American Legion believed then, as it does now, that Scouting is a valuable program for developing boys into men of high moral character. Our next guest is a native of San Juan Bautista, California. He earned the rank of Eagle Scout as a youth. As the 11th Chief Scout Executive he provides vision and direction to staff members and volunteers, including

1,100 National Council employees, 5,800 local council employees, and almost 1.2 million adult volunteers serving more than 2.7 million youth across the nation. Please welcome Chief Scout Executive of the Boy Scouts of America Bob Mazzuca. *(Applause)*

Address: Bob Mazzuca, Chief Scout Executive
Boy Scouts of America

Good morning and thank you. Thank you very much. What an honor it is to be here at this great convention with this great organization. As you've just heard, we have been partners since 1919, when you were first started, just nine years after the Boy Scouts of America. And I'm pleased to tell you that today in 2012, 2,551 Scout units, packs, troops, posts and crews across the country are chartered to Legion posts. 53,952 youth members are in those posts, and we cherish that relationship and we always have, especially in these times when it's great to have The American Legion have your back. It truly is, trust me.

Let me just start by saying welcome to the second century of Scouting in America. In 2010, as most of you know, we had our 100th anniversary, our centennial year. And as this was approaching we had an option, we had an opportunity. We could have baked a cake, and on February 8th, the birthday of the Boy Scouts, had the obligatory black tie gala in Washington, and stood around singing happy birthday Boy Scouts, and talk about the good old days, or we could use the occasion of our centennial to what I like to say was reintroduce Scouting to the American people. Because, you see, for well over a decade we had allowed ourselves to be defined by others. We had allowed ourselves to be co-opted by others for other agendas. Kind of a bunker mentality. And I really believed it was time to reintroduce Scouting to the American people, because a whole generation of Americans have wondered where the Scouts went. And so we took advantage of that, starting with New Year's Day at the Tournament of Roses Parade, the first Boy Scout float in that parade in 65 years, ending on Thanksgiving day at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York, and everything in between. And the capstone, our 100th Anniversary Jamboree at Fort A. P. Hill in Virginia.

And what a marvelous celebration that was, and it began the dialogue again about the great role that Scouting plays in American society. It's a great time to be in Scouting, and in my humble opinion, I'm going to tell you this as a private citizen almost. I've been working for the Boy Scouts of America for 42 years. We have a mandatory retirement age of 65 for the CEO, and I turned 65 yesterday, so I'm on my way out, day after tomorrow, to the land of retirement. But I say this with all my heart, that in my humble opinion in this great nation, the United States of America, it has never been more important for Scouting to deliver what it delivers to communities across America than it is today. And the slippery slope that we're on, the dearth of leadership, the leadership with integrity, children facing perils that none of us ever thought of, it's absolutely critical that we stay the course. I'm going to share a couple of perspectives with you on that thought.

When Doctor Richard Carmona was our surgeon general, and there is a great story in itself, what a great man. When he was our surgeon general he testified before a committee of Congress, and a colleague of mine invited me to read that testimony. And I did, and it scared me to death. Doctor Carmona was a brilliant man. He said a lot of things that are way above my pay grade. He was a doctor. But he said something to this distinguished committee that really caught my attention when he said in his opinion we're on the verge of the first generation in our history to be less healthy and likely to live fewer years than their parents.

Now, think about that for a minute. Let me repeat that. Doctor Carmona said to this committee of Congress that we're on the verge of the first generation in our history to

likely to be less healthy and live fewer years than their parents. Now, what kind of an aspiration as a society is that for us? The sedentary lifestyle of kids today, we can't even choose up a team of kick ball on the playground anymore because somebody might get chosen last, and that'll be bad for their self-esteem. We learned in the Scouts a long time ago that if somebody is going to get chosen last you let them do the choosing, but you still play the game. The game is very important.

Physical activity today is at an all-time low for young people. But just think about it. To those of us who are in the business of employing people to help us deliver our goods or services, if Doctor Carmona's prophesy is true, where are we going to find that workforce that will come and give us a day's work for a day's pay with a good old American work ethic to help keep us competitive in this global marketplace that we're in today? If his prophesy is true, how are we going to pay for it? We can't figure out how to pay for the health care issues we have today. If Doctor Carmona's prophesy is true, what does 20 years from now look like? 30 years, 50 years from now?

And one of the things that I've undertaken in this journey to reintroduce Scouting to the American people is I travel all the time. I averaged over the last five years over 200 nights a year in a hotel. Mr. Marriott and I are on a first name basis. And one of the ironies of this, is one of my great joys is traveling through some of America's great airports. That sounds like an oxymoron, but once you get past security and get inside it's a pretty nice experience. Because in every airport in America you see these wonderful young Americans, men and women, either coming home from or on their way to deployment to defend those freedoms that we take for granted so often. And if Doctor Carmona's prophesy is true, where will we find those fine young Americans that will continue to go to far flung places and stand for the freedoms and the liberties that every human being deserves?

So what does that got to do with Scouting? It's got everything to do with Scouting. We own the out-of-doors. We still know how to climb a tree and play Steal The Bacon. In a relatively unstructured way we can challenge young people to become the very best they are capable of becoming, and we do it in a physical way in God's great outdoors, and we teach young people that it's more fun to get to the top of the mountain with your buddies than by yourself; that to become a true leader you reach back and help people along the way. Boy Scouts of America, and its 292 councils across the country, own 983 camping properties. When the mayor of Indianapolis wakes up in a cold sweat in the middle of the night and wants to know what to do about the plight of children in Indianapolis, I want he or she to first think to call the Boy Scouts, because we have a solution, or a partial solution, or we can help get kids back into the great out-of-doors. STEM, science, technology, engineering and math, with the help of Exxon Mobil we launched an initiative two years ago, created the Nova and Supernova Awards to bring children of America back to the notion that science, technology and engineering and math are important.

It's embarrassing and it's fearful and frightful that we have fallen so precipitously in the world in producing scientists, engineers and mathematicians. Twenty-first in the world in math. Our rightful place is at the top, and we need to help get there, and Scouting will do that with your help. And I just kind of want to wrap all that up with the notion that while we have these national challenges that are relatively large and relatively ominous, I kind of look at it this way: Nothing defines a Scout or a Scouter, how many Scouts in the room? How many Eagle Scouts in the room? God bless you all. Nothing defines a Scout or a Scouter better than those 12 magic words of the Scout Law. "Trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent." As a matter of fact, in my opinion there is no greater compliment in the world than to have somebody come up to you and say you're such a Boy Scout. That's the greatest compliment you can have. It's awesome. Nothing defines us better than that.

But it's like anything else, anything else we do in life. To get good at it what do you have to do? Practice. Now, that's the rule. You know, for me it works for everything but golf. No matter what I do I can't get any better at golf. But practice is how it works. And so here's how it works: On Tuesday evening down at the Legion hall that sponsors that Scout troop a young man shows up for his very first meeting. Eleven years old, scared to death, and an older boy takes him over in the corner and gets him side-by-side with those words, and says here, kid, memorize these. What do you mean, memorize these? This isn't school. Trust me, it's important. And so he does. He begins to memorize the Scout Oath and the Scout Law, and after a few weeks he can recite those words because he was told to memorize them, and then to get his next little badge he has to. But that's not the important thing. Here is where the practice comes in. On a Saturday morning they gather up at the Legion hall and they go out into the community and they hang bags on doors in the neighborhood for the food drive. The next week they go and they pick them up, and they take them down to the food pantry. And that young man who hands that bag of food to that volunteer in the food pantry sees the joy in his or her eyes, and begins to feel, not just theorize, but feel what it feels like to help other people at all times. And do that enough over the course of a Scouting career, and all of a sudden that little chromosome is embedded in the DNA to help other people at all times. And then about a year later at that same Legion hall this boy gets elected as a patrol leader. Uh-oh, the dog just caught the car. Because now there are seven other boys that are dependent on him to make good decisions. And over the course of his tenure as that patrol leader he'll make some good ones and he'll make some bad ones, but he'll learn a lot about being a servant leader. He'll learn a lot about the art of leadership.

And then he becomes the troop scribe, and then the quartermaster, and then the senior patrol leader. An entire troop is dependent upon him to lead them to the top of the mountain. And at the end of the day, at the end of that boy's journey, embedded is another chromosome called leadership. It's called leadership. And, you know, the same troop one weekend is going to go off to a camporee sponsored by the council and camp with all the other kids in the council. They're going to have a lot of fellowship and a lot of fun, a lot of Scout skills, games. And on Sunday they're going to go to a Scouts-own service over on the mountaintop, right about sunrise. And in his own faith tradition he will be honoring God, but he'll look around him and see all of the other faith traditions doing the same thing. And certainly his love and respect for his God gets stronger, but so does his respect for the faith traditions of others. And I would submit that that's a pretty good thing.

So at the end of this boy's journey, starting in a partnership with The American Legion, down in the hall, down in a corner, several years later off the conveyor belt comes a young man who now has embedded in his DNA novel notions like service, duty to God and country, leadership and respect for others. I would say that's a pretty good product coming off that assembly line. *(Applause)*

Thank you. The Boy Scouts of America could not do that alone, but in partnership with this marvelous organization called The American Legion, and dozens and dozens of others across the country, we change lives every day. And whether that young man becomes a postman or the president he's going to be a decent adult human American citizen that is in it for the common good, and in it for the right thing. He's going to be embodied and fulfilled with integrity and honor, respect for flag, respect for God, respect for motherhood and all those things that are passé today, and I thank you for allowing us to work together this entire last century to produce young Americans like that.

God bless you, God bless The American Legion, and God bless this country. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: I would like to make an announcement. For those Vietnam proclamations that we have back there, right now we would like to hand out the proclamations to the Vietnam veterans that are in the audience. Any department that would like to pick up extra copies, please wait until the end of the day after the session is over, and we will take whatever is left over back to the National Headquarters area, and you can help yourself back there. But we would like to take care of anybody that is here in the audience first. So please cooperate with us.

Our next speaker served as an F/A-18C pilot and a flight instructor. He worked security assistance initiatives for the U.S. European Command, where he also served as a joint planner. He was also assigned to the Joint Staff, Pakistan-Afghanistan Coordination Cell. He is a veteran of both the U.S. Air Force and Marine Corps. He currently serves as a senior U.S. military observer for the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, located in Jerusalem. He is a member of The American Legion Department of Virginia. Please welcome Lieutenant Colonel Joe Gallagher. *(Applause)*

Address: Lieutenant Colonel Joe Gallagher, United States Marine Corps
Senior U.S. Military Observer, United Nations Truce Supervision Organization

Good morning. Commander Wong, past national commanders and Legionnaires. It's great to be back in front of the Legion again. I would like to thank everyone for their service and sacrifice for our great nation and our veterans. While it's impossible to separate me from the Marine Corps, I appear to you out of uniform to emphasize that my views do not reflect the position or policies of the Marine Corps, the DoD, or the United States government.

I would like to talk to you today about war powers authority. And while this may seem academic or theoretical, it's important because it's really about how and why we send our forces into armed conflict. As a student at the Army Senior Service, the War College I wrote a paper that looked at the post-World War II era, and investigated the connection between congressional and executive processes on the path to major U. S. military conflict and intervention. And I tried to see if there existed a relationship between those political processes of going to war and the outcomes of the endeavors.

Since World War II the war declaration process has been replaced with a resolution process. And, coincidentally, the U.S. has not won a war since the last time we declared a war. In addition to its questionable constitutionality, I submit to you the resolution process fails to sufficiently influence the ultimate national objectives and garner sufficient support over the long-haul.

"War is politics by other means," said the great Prussian war theorist Carl Von Clausewitz, and the resolution process has decoupled the political dimension of war from the act of war itself, exposing our strategies to risk, political machinations, and failing over time to commit sufficient resources to achieve uncertain objectives that were not properly vetted for their political value within the resolution process.

The launch point for any discussion about the war declaration process usually rests with foundational principles of separation of power, checks and balances, and where power is placed with respect to crafting foreign policy within the Constitution. These need to be placed within the overall context of the separation of powers across the branches of government. Source documents such as the Federalist Paper 51 may serve as a wellspring for the power sharing principle. Indeed, Madison insisted on the necessity to prevent any particular interest or group to trump that of another. Additionally, with respect to crafting foreign policy, Hamilton, who was widely known as an executive advocate, cautioned that, "The history of human conduct does not warrant that exalted opinion of human virtue which would make it wise in a nation to commit interests of so delicate and momentous kind, as those which concern its intercourse with the rest of the

world to the sole disposal of a magistrate created and circumstanced as would be the President of the United States."

When applied to the concept of the war declaration we can see that the founders intended to endow the Congress, the branch most representative of the people, with the sole authority to declare a war, as articulated in Article 1, Section 8, and the designation of the executive as the commander-in-chief, which is expressed in Article 2, Section 2. So consistent with the power sharing arrangement between the Congress and the executive the Constitution clearly identifies the Congress to commit the nation to war, and the president to lead the country in war. This war making, war taking distinction, reflects the balance of power articulated in Articles 1 and 2, and are theoretically maintained by the mechanism of the war declaration.

We have since conflated these two concepts by expecting our executive to make the decision to go to war, and then to lead us in war. And in so doing we have compromised the distinct constitutional intention of balance. So if you look at the war experience of our country, the U.S. declared war five times prior to World War II, and no time since, despite arguably being more militarily active in the period since 1946 to the present. So why has our government disregarded the former war declaration process when it seemed to have served the republic so well up to and including World War II? Why did this change? I submit there are several reasons for this, and I would like to look at environmental reasons, and then political and structural reasons.

Following World War II the strategic landscape became volatile and uncertain. Two major events shaped what would become the predominant school of thought for developing U.S. national security policy in the strategic environment of the Cold War. These two events, the successful test of a nuclear weapon by the Soviet Union and a communist victory in China, they led and fostered a national security staff that focused primarily on halting the advance of communism. U.S. national security strategists formulated a robust, rigid strategy of containing communism as the panacea for foreign policy challenges and defending national interests in this new bipolar strategic landscape post-World War II. This school of thought would come to dominate national security thought for over 40 years. Thus, the Doctrine of Containment and a directive to implement it, the National Security Council Report 68, the NSC 68, dominated U.S. foreign policy for several decades following World War II.

The NS 68 culture appeared to facilitate the concentration of power to the executive branch. In fact, former Secretary of State Dean Acheson declared the purpose of the NSC 68 was to bludgeon the mass-mind of top government that not only could the president make a decision, but that the decision could be carried out. The new national security climate supported decision making culture comfortable with the executive branch as the primary or sole crafter of foreign policy. It was not a coincidence, therefore, that Cold War security advisers eschewed the war declaration process and replaced it with a desultory resolution process to authorize the nation's use of military power for large and small operations.

Additionally, advances and changes in technology exacerbated congressional abdication because nuclear warfare reduced decision cycles to minutes, not days or weeks. The new strategic concept of mutually assured destruction would not allow sufficient time for traditional war time decision making, or so it was thought. This new strategic environment set the conditions for the gradual migration of war powers from Congress to the executive branch. The policy formulation process which gave birth to the NSC 68 led to executive dominance of the war making powers, which marginalized Congress in the process. Additionally, nuclear weapons and the aircraft and missiles that delivered them shifted the national decision making mindset from traditional deliberation to crisis response, strengthening the perception that only the executive branch could act with the speed necessary to address the threat. The policy developed in the NSC 68 era

inevitably disregarded congressional consensus, and marginalized the traditional constitutional approach for authorizing the nation's use of force.

Two other factors contribute and perpetuate this phenomenon. The Constitution grants most foreign policy prerogative to the Congress in Article 1. Article 2 grants the president very limited authority in the foreign policy arena. This results in a structural dichotomy, because the executive branch is better positioned to lead and execute, while congressional actions are more indirect and diffuse. Congress' bicameral design and widely dispersed support base do not optimize the expeditious exercise of its power. Consequently, considerable power has flowed from Congress to the executive.

Second, execution of U.S. foreign policy is fraught with political uncertainty and vulnerability. Compared to domestic issues, foreign policy decisions and initiatives are susceptible to greater unpredictability. Therefore, when dealing with high levels of uncertainty Congress often finds it easier to defer to the executive branch, thereby reducing congressional members' exposure or liability. Because most Americans elect their congressional representatives based on domestic issues, they tend to pay little attention to foreign policy. Members of Congress often defer acting on foreign policy matters as a safer political option. This political safe haven of indecision, however, does not serve the nation well because it encourages the concentration of power into the executive branch.

As the third branch of government, the Supreme Court has been conspicuously silent when it comes to the interpretation of constitutional war power. The court's role in such matters is much more subtle than executive ambition or legislative acquiescence. The court has never directly challenged the constitutionality of presidential war making. Conversely, it has given the appearance of broad concurrence on presidential authority involving foreign affairs and military interventions. This is manifest in two ways.

First, the court has refused to hear cases challenging presidential actions; and, second, the court has supported and affirmed executive authority in the cases it in fact has decided to hear. Historically the court has been reluctant to hear cases that challenge the constitutionality of governmental roles and responsibilities, so expecting intervention or a decisive voice from the court on issues involving conflict between executive and legislative war power authority seems overly optimistic.

Now let's see how these dynamics come together to create strategic risk and liability. I refer back to Carl Von Clausewitz, the great Prussian war theorist, which if you're writing a war paper at the Army War College you realize that you'll never get a good grade on the paper if you don't include something from Clausewitz in there. Clausewitz's greatest contribution to the study of war is often regarded as his emphasis on the conceptual link between politics and war. War is never a separate phenomenon Clausewitz wrote, but the continuation of politics by other means. Behind this proposition is a deeply textured argument about the intrinsic political purpose of war. This political purpose encompasses the components comprising war. Societal disposition, economic capability, and strategy formulation. Clausewitz advised leaders to thoroughly consider the use of any violence so that the link between war and politics should never be overlooked. Even in the 21st century war retains this political dimension despite the recent emergence of non-state actors and trans-national groups. Warfare has changed significantly over the years, but war itself has not.

In other words, success at the tactical level of war first requires careful preparations at the political and strategic levels. The enabling institutions for success in war, Congress, the president, cabinet and other advisers, all need to be fully engaged in the development of feasible, suitable, and acceptable strategy. And this carefully crafted strategy needs to include legitimate justification for violence, rigorous calculation, and valuation of political objectives and commitment of resources sufficient to achieve strategic objectives.

Since 1945 the United States has built the world's most capable war fighting machine. So why then have most of the nation's military interventions since World War II ended in defeat or stalemate? Political leaders should attend more to what Clausewitz calls the political dimensions of war, national unity, and the political value of the objective as inseparable from national military strategy. War theorists have long emphasized the importance of national unity and the political value of the war objective. Thousands of years ago Sun Tzu identified the necessary precondition of national unity for successful war strategy.

National unity enables political leaders to muster resources and amass human capital necessary for our forces Clausewitz advised, to discover how much of our resources must be mobilized for war we must first examine our own political aim. National unity underwrites the commitment the nation needs to successfully prosecute war, provided the war has political value commensurate with the effort expended.

The founders directed this nation to use a collaborative process to assess the political value of war. So the Constitution requires Congress to deliberate on the decision to go to war, and when it so decides, to declare war. Therefore, the Constitution serves as the guarantor of ensuring national unity and a legitimate valuation of the war's political objective, provided through and supported by the mechanism in the war declaration. As the practice of declaring war has become passé, American strategy has likewise become disjointed and disconnected from national security objectives.

Following World War II an acquiescent Congress and an aggressive presidency have for decades fostered a strategic climate that failed to maintain links between the political dimensions of the state and its strategy. The predominant NSC 68 thinking, largely a product of executive national security panels that administrations have embraced and Congress has blithely followed, provided inadequate guidance on how objectives and capabilities should be joined to produce coherent overall strategy. This connection, Clausewitz observed, is necessary for success in war. Collectively these dynamics sever the link between the electorate, the constitutionally intended legislative process, and the executive. Matters of war, however, require the collective involvement of the people. Militaries fight wars, but nations go to war.

In the final analysis congressional abdication of its Article 1 authority to oversee the nation's foreign policy has exposed America to unacceptable strategic risk. As an example, our nation's last war declaration provided by Congress after the attack on Pearl Harbor, "Directed," the president to employ naval and military forces and the resources of the government to carry on war against Japan. All of the resources of the country were pledged by the Congress. This declaration garnered the necessary resources, implied national unity and sufficient political value of the war objective.

By contrast, after the attacks of 9/11 Congress provided a "use of force" resolution that was broad and vague, placed all of the initiative with the executive with no oversight, and lacked commitment or involvement from the Congress. Poor strategy ensued, replete with fluctuating ends and means. Eleven years into Afghanistan the paucity of debate and dialogue, even during a frenetic election season, reflects the political value of the war effort. Meanwhile, our troops continue to die.

So I leave you with this: War is always a political act, and it is insufficient to have an academic debate over the constitutionality of war authority. Since the end of World War II an assertive executive branch has run roughshod over an abdicating Congress, which has compromised U.S. military efficacy. It has repeatedly resulted in the expenditure of national blood and treasure for strategically hollow ends. The Constitution is in itself a strategic national security document. The founders' wisdom, imbued in Articles 1 and 2, capture in the Clausewitzian sense the necessary prerequisites for successful prosecution of war.

As the executive and congressional branches deviate from U.S. constitutional foundations with respect to war authority, they increasingly leave the military and the nation vulnerable to unacceptable strategic risk. The current interpretations, our disregard for war power authority as practiced today, no longer maintain the necessary connective tissue between political and military muscle movements. As a result, U.S. national and military strategy has become disjoined from the legitimate political will of the people. So we ask if Congress is not willing to declare war, then maybe we should consider whether we should engage in it. I want to thank you all today for the opportunity to engage you, thank you for your service, and God bless America. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: I would now like to call our five national vice commanders to join me on stage for our next presentation, which will be given by Bron Mogenis, trustee for the Chapel of the Four Chaplains Foundation, and the District of Columbia Department Commander Kent Webber.

Presentation: Chapel of Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion
Bron R. Mogenis, Trustee, Chapel of Four Chaplains Foundation
Kent Webber, District of Columbia Department Commander

Good morning, Ladies and gentlemen. Today I'm sort of wearing two hats. I'm a Legionnaire, past department commander for the District of Columbia. I'm the trustee also of the Foundation of the Chapel of the Four Chaplains, which I will tell you a little bit more about. This is sort of a highlight for me to get to honor veterans. You can never honor veterans often enough. And so for me, you're my heroes and I feel very honored to be able to do this.

No tradition of American society is more precious to, or characteristic of our culture than that of voluntary reaching out to neighbors in need, such as selfless service as part of both our civic and our religious heritage. The Legion 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, the nation, humanity without regard to race, religion or creed, so dramatically exemplified by the four chaplains of different denominations, who on January 2, 1943 aboard the sinking *Dorchester* gave away their own lifejackets, their only means of survival so other servicemembers could live. This was indeed a heroic act.

A couple years ago along with a number of trustees, I was invited to Philadelphia for a special function, and that encompassed the people that survived the *Dorchester*, relatives and so forth. And I met, who at the time was young man, he had to lie about getting into the service, and he couldn't help but tell he what he felt; what he saw. Can you imagine the captain saying, because you're 150 miles off the American base in Greenland, "Go to sleep with our lifejackets." And everybody says, "It's uncomfortable. I'm not going to do that." And then one of the last submarines, German submarines in Torpedo Alley puts a fish right below her waterline exactly at 12:43, January 2, 1943. The amount of panic that this young man saw and described, the screams; the people jumping onto rafts that were already overcrowded; people jumping in between ships and so forth. The only thing that calmed them were the four chaplains of different denominations who walked around making jokes offering help and so forth. Consequently, of the 902 servicemembers that were being transported in this ship, which was converted from a luxury liner, 672 died. This is the kind of thing that our veterans see; that our veterans hear; our veterans participate with. And the young man that talked to me said he was looking for some help, he was looking for a little bit more of a senior person who could tell him what to do, but he couldn't. So he jumped, and he hung on to

this rope ladder for as long as he could, and then he couldn't get off and he was too high to be rescued.

In February of 1951, the Chapel of Four Chaplains, an interfaith memorial chapel, was dedicated in Philadelphia by former President Harry S. Truman. Today, as it has over the many years, the Chapel of Four Chaplains serves the memory of these brave men. Thus to continue to recognize, and encourage active brotherhood and sacrifice among Americans of every age and station in life, the chapel continues to award the Legion of Honor Award to individuals who have demonstrated the selfless and transformative achievement that is above and beyond that of professional organizational positions an individuals hold.

Over the years, this may be of interest to you, this award has been presented to a number of presidents. President Harry Truman; Dwight Eisenhower; Jimmy Carter; Ronald Reagan; George Herbert Walker Bush; George Bush; a number of U.S. legislators and such luminaries as Bob Hope; John Glenn; James Mitchner; Mickey Rooney; the FBI director and that leaves the last five national commanders, and the last 25 national vice commanders also received this award.

Today, it is my singular honor to present these awards to National Commander Fang Wong; to Vice Commander Larry D. Sheets; to Vice Commander Milton Heifner; to Vice Commander David Voyles, and Vice Commanders Mervin G. Gunderson and James H. Hales.

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 Kent Webber, and awarded to National Commander Fang A. Wong; National Vice Commander Larry D. Sheets; National Vice Commander Milton G. Heifner; National Vice Commander David N. Voyles; National Vice Commander Mervin Gunderson, and National Vice Commander James H. Hales, Jr.

(Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: At this time I call on Past National Commander Jimmie Foster of Alaska to present the Plaque of Appreciation to James E. Copher, president of the 2011 National American Legion Convention Corporation of Minnesota, for hosting the 2011 National Convention.

Presentation: Plaque of Appreciation to the City of Minneapolis, Minnesota Host City of the 2011 National Convention

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me honor and pride to come before you here Indianapolis. It was great memory for me particularly, to come the great city of Minneapolis, Minnesota for the culmination of the 93rd Annual National Convention of The American legion.

It was a platform that we had a great time, the city rolled out the red carpet. No problems. If there were, we didn't know about them. They took care of them. And we had a great time. It takes a lot of energy, effort and work from a nucleus of people from the great state of Minnesota. Their president of the corporation was Mr. Jim Copher, and I know when I went out it was a sad thing but I know Fang Wong was ready to come in. So I just want to say thank you to the great state of Minnesota for everything they did, and to Jim for all the hospitalities and courtesies extended to me, my family, and any distinguished guests. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

DELEGATE COPHER (MN): Commander Foster, we thank you for those remarks. On behalf of the 93rd National Convention Corporation of Minnesota, we would like to thank the delegates and the alternates and the guests that were at the Minneapolis convention. I hope you had a good time, and remember, the 2018 Convention when we kick off the 100th anniversary and we'll be back in Minneapolis. We look forward to seeing you folks there. Thank you. *(Applause) ...At this time the delegates viewed a video. (Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: For the last 40 years, America's national security has been closely tied to the availability of foreign oil. Simply put, we have often had to purchase our energy from regimes and nations that don't always have our best interests at heart. This is one of the reasons why The American Legion supports the construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline. Not only would it provide needed jobs for veterans, it would reduce our dependency on Middle Eastern oil. Our next guest earned an engineering degree at the United States Military Academy at West Point, and an MBA from Pepperdine University. He is a past chairman of the American Petroleum Institute's Pipeline Committee, and is the president and CEO of Colonial Pipeline. He also serves as chairman of the Common Ground Alliance, an organization dedicated to preventing damage to all underground facilities, including pipelines. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Mr. Tim Felt. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Tim Felt, Past Chairman, Pipeline Committee
American Petroleum Institute

Well, thank you very much for that welcome. I wasn't prepared to see that rather extensive video that covers a lot of the material that I probably would have wanted to cover. But I am honored to be here today and represent America's oil and natural gas industries before a group of individuals whose stories are of the history of service to our nation, both in peace and in war. As an organization, the Legion sets the standard for supporting America's youth, its veterans and returning war heroes. So on behalf of the oil and natural gas industry, I would like to thank you.

Our industry provides a strong link to America's military by providing the energy it needs in both peacetime and wartime operations. We provide feed stocks necessary for manufacturing critical equipment used by all the armed services. The gasoline, diesel and fuel and military fuels we provide not keep the military on the move, it provides an unequaled transportation system for our country.

As I will outline today, we have the opportunity to make ourselves even more secure as a nation, by producing more of this energy here at home. The oil and natural industry supports more than nine million jobs and contributes almost eight percent to the GDP of the country. We also pay our fair share. In 2011, the effective tax rate for our industry was 40.6 percent, as compared to 25 percent for the rest of the industrial companies and the S&P. If those numbers are hard to put in perspective, let me put it another way. Every day the oil and gas industry pays $86 million to the federal government in rents, royalties, income taxes and bonus payments. Now this is not a complaint. Every one of us in the oil and gas industry knows how lucky we are to live in the United States. Our time, our effort, our investments go to serve the country. Every year the industry invests more than $470 billion in the U.S. economy. That's more than half the entire 2009 stimulus package. And the great thing is, it comes from private industry, and it happens every year without an act of Congress. It doesn't cost the taxpayer a dime. Since 2000, the industry has invested more than $2 trillion in all forms of energy, including alternative energies. In fact, one of every five dollars invested in renewable energy since 2000 has come from the oil and gas industry.

I would like to speak for just a moment about the part of the industry I know pretty well, and that's Colonial Pipeline Company, and the liquid pipeline industry. We're a relatively small company, a little over 700 people located Atlanta, Georgia. Despite all the recent tough economic times, our company has hired about 150 people in the last few years, and we're about ready to fill another 30 to 50 positions. We spend hundreds of millions of dollars on upgrading our capabilities, and we're ready to do more. We're a very efficient operation, moving a gallon of gasoline from the Gulf Coast to New York City for four and a half cents a gallon, no matter what the price of fuel is. I said we're a small company, and we are. But we are representative of many of the companies in the oil and gas industry. Some smaller, some larger. And like them, we are all ready to do more.

We could produce even more energy and put even more people to work, and we could dramatically enhance our national security by vastly producing or even eliminating the dependence on energy from other countries. This is all possible because America's energy resources in 2012 are unmatched by any nation. We can now drill for oil and gas more than a mile below the ocean surface, looking for oil and gas that are several miles below the sea floor. And we can reach these vast supplies of shale oil and natural gas, using technologies such as hydraulic fracturing. We're producing so much natural gas, in fact, the prices have plummeted. It's been a boon to homeowners who heat with gas or use electricity generated with gas. And it spurts new manufacturing in America by businesses that use natural gas. The new day of energy abundance is a sea change from what we had just a few years ago when we were hearing about running out of oil. In fact, we've been hearing about running out of oil since 1886. That's been changed. We're not hearing that quite as much anymore.

The real concern though is how will we take advantage of what we have. Will we do more to set our own course on energy and take advantage of what this could mean for the country? I'm not talking what the oil and gas industry can do, or wants to do, our industry is ready to do more.

Now, this is a question that circles back to U.S. energy policies. Quite simply, will the government support more development? Will it increase access to our nation's offshore supplies? Will it speed up federal oil and gas permitting to get more projects moving quicker? Will it build the necessary energy infrastructure like the Keystone XL pipeline? I'm really proud of the fact that the Legion supported that pipeline. Or, will the government single out this innovative job creating industry with punitive taxes that will only undermine its competitiveness and success?

We can do two thing that support things that the country vitally needs. We can provide more jobs and better energy security. That's why we're a little bit disturbed with the Keystone XL pipeline being stopped, because it is the most shovel-ready energy security enhancing opportunity in the nation. It's a multibillion dollar investment spanning five states, and would provide much more friendly Canadian oil to the United States besides providing up to 20,000 jobs in the next couple of years, construction jobs as well as hundreds of thousands of more jobs down the road.

Our country needs and wants more natural gas, yet regulations are in the works that would be so restrictive that we risk leaving that resource in the ground. There are multiple federal departments and agencies now contemplating new regulations on hydraulic fracturing. That technology has been used for more than 60 years and it's subject to multiple regulations already. But those who want no more oil and gas at all are trying to stop its use. Hydraulic fracturing may be the most exaggerated environmental issue in more than a decade.

The number of new federal oil and gas leases in the United States was down by 44 percent between 2009 and 2010, compared to the previous two year period. You might be thinking: Wait. I've heard political ads saying that oil and gas development has risen in

the last seven years. Well, those ads are partially true. Production is increasing. But the progress is happening on state and private lands, not on federal lands. In 2010, nonfederal drilling permits across the U.S. increased by 31 percent. But federal drilling permits dropped by 13 percent. The truth is, that oil and natural gas production in America is increasing, despite what the federal government is doing, not because of what it is doing.

Many in Washington want to build an energy future based on renewables, and there's nothing wrong with renewables, in fact, our industry sees a promise in renewables too, and has invested quite a bit in renewable energy. But renewables can't do it all. They can't even do most of it, not with what we'll need for the next several decades. The U.S. Energy Information Administration predicts we'll need 10 percent more energy to meet our nation's demand in the year 2035. Even with significant increases in renewables, oil and gas will need to supply 57 percent of the nation's total energy that year.

The bottom line is this: Energy is vital to America's well-being, and the more oil and gas that we can produce at home, the better off we'll all be in many ways. What we need is every form of energy, not just renewables and not just fossil fuels. We can't stay trapped by policy driven by philosophy that says we have to have less oil and natural gas in order to have more of something else.

Oil and natural gas need to be part of our energy future, and indeed the question is not will we need them, the question is where will we get them. We have the supplies, we have the technology. The choice is clear to me. I hope it's clear to you. We can produce more at home, more of the oil and natural gas we need, investing billions more in our economy, putting more people to work and strengthening our position around the world. Or we can let others outside of our country have a greater influence.

Policymakers will make that decision. You and all Americans will soon decide who those policy makers will be. I urge you to make energy an election year issue. Join the conversation about energy. Advocate for policies you support, and elect those who will make the law of the land as we need. We're proud to be a sponsor to this convention, and to support the wonderful men and women who have bravely served our country. And we're proud of the products and services that our industry provides to the country; to our citizens; our manufacturers; to our infrastructure, and to our military.

We are proud of the over 3,000 products made by the petrochemical feedstocks that improve the health, economy and quality of life of people all over the world. Our industry provides the energy, the jobs and the tax revenue for a strong recovery and a secure energy future. Thank you very much for your time. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Mr. Felt just became the latest member of The American Legion. *(Applause)*

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 2012 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year is an Eagle Scout who joined the Bennington, Vermont Police Department as an officer 22 years ago and now serves as its chief of police and public safety director. His exemplary performance has earned him the respect and confidence of his community, as well as the greater law enforcement community of Vermont and its nearby neighbors in Massachusetts and New York. Since his appointment as chief of police, he established traditional foot patrols in specific areas where greater cooperation and open communication with the residents was desired. He's a strong proponent of community policing, which has contributed significantly to his department's ability to deal with the wide spectrum of law enforcement issues that are encountered on a daily basis. He has volunteered with several organizations including the Boy Scouts of America, Special Olympics and Big Brothers and Sisters. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm round of applause to Police Chief Paul J. Doucette, Jr.

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 Paul J. Doucette, Jr., for outstanding selfless service over and above normal duties through heroic acts, community service and professional achievement thereby exemplifying the meaning of the phrase: America's Finest. You reflected great credit upon yourself, the Bennington Police Department and law enforcement officers everywhere. Presented by The American Legion at the 2012 American Legion National Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana." (Applause)

Presentation: 2012 National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year
Paul J. Doucette, Jr., Chief of Police, Town of Bennington, Vermont

Good morning and thank you. I am truly honored to be the recipient of the 2012 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year from The American Legion. The American Legion has been a big part of my career. Post 13 in Bennington, Vermont has never stopped giving to the programs that I've wanted to start.

My wife is here today as you saw, with my beautiful children. And they have made many sacrifices throughout the years so that I could be as successful as I have become. One of the most important things that I want to share with all of you is, I accept this award today based on many factors. But I share this award with the town of Bennington, the state of Vermont, New England, and all law enforcement officers throughout this country. Law enforcement officers throughout this country do the same job every day. We go out; we put our lives on the line; we help people; we do the best that we can. The same thing that all of you have done in the past and presently.

I want to thank you, all the members of The American Legion for supporting all the programs that you support, including Scouting. Scouting has been key. I've been a member of scouting for well over 25 years. As an Eagle Scout I firmly believe that Scouting helped me get to where I am today by living by the Scout Law and the Scout Oath every day. Again, thank you for all that you do. God bless you and God speed. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The image we have of firefighters 11 years ago, running into the Twin Towers as others were running out on 9/11, simply reminded us of what we already knew, that it is a dangerous profession full of heroes. Just as members of The American Legion answers our nation's call during times of war, America's firefighters answer their communities call during time of emergency.

Our 2012 American Legion Firefighter of the year belongs to Waukegan, Illinois Fire Department. A 24 year member of his fire department, Lieutenant Christensen and his Engine 5 crew were awarded the Medal of Valor from the state Fire Marshall's Office for their heroic response to a house blaze on August 18, 2010. The crew is credited with saving the lives of two children during the fire. While carrying a child from the building, Lieutenant Christensen realized that there was no pulse or breathing from the victim. Without regard for his own life, Lieutenant Christensen ripped off his own breathing apparatus and began administering mouth-to-mouth and CPR until an ambulance arrived. His career has been marked by professionalism and dedication to duty. Please extend a warm welcome to Lieutenant Thomas Christensen. *(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 Thomas M. Christensen, for selfless service over and above normal duties through heroic acts, community service and professional achievement thereby exemplifying the meaning of the phrase: America's Bravest. You reflect great credit upon yourself, the Waukegan Fire Department and

firefighters and emergency medical technicians everywhere. Present by The American Legion at the 2012 American Legion National Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana."

Presentation: 2012 Firefighter of the Year
Lieutenant Thomas M. Christensen, Waukegan Fire Department
Waukegan, Illinois

I can't tell you enough what a huge honor this is today. I'm accepting this award on behalf of the million plus firefighters who every day risk their lives to protect those they serve. I want to thank Battalion Chief John Schmidt, for submitting my application for consideration for this award. I also want to thank the Waukegan American Legion Post 281 for sponsoring me; the Department of Illinois, and mostly my family and my wife for supporting me in all my endeavors. The only thing I can think of that would make this event even more special, is if my father could be amongst his peers proudly watching as I accept this award. Thank you very much and God bless each and every one of you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Our next guest began his career at Arthur Andersen in Chicago. He left Arthur Andersen for a manufacturing firm in Carmel, Indiana. He moved from manufacturing to banking in 1993. He has been with Fifth Third Bank of Central Indiana for ten years, and has held positions as a large corporate relationship manager, middle-market team leader, community market sales manager, and international manager. He is currently the executive vice president of Fifth Third Bank of Central Indiana. Please welcome Kevin Hipskind. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Kevin Hipskind, Executive Vice President
Fifth Third Bank, Central Indiana

Good morning. I am humbled and honored to be here on behalf of Fifth Third Bank. I would just like to start by thanking everyone here for the personal sacrifice that each one of you have made for our communities and our country. And I also want to thank you for your continued support of the veterans of our country, your local communities and our nation.

Fifth Third Bank came from humble beginnings. We began as the Ohio Valley Bank in 1858. We later were purchased by Third National Bank, and then later merged with Fifth National Bank at the turn of the century, and became Fifth Third Bank. We too have grown by supporting our communities. We became the first financial institution in the nation to form a charitable foundation in 1948. We believe that our success that has come from our humble beginnings, to become one of the nation's 20 largest banking institutions, has been due to the fact that we have invested in our communities.

This morning, what I would like to do is as a token of our appreciation to The American Legion as a part of our $50,000 commitment to The American Legion, would like to present a check to Commander Wong for Operation Comfort Warriors in the amount of $10,000. Thank you for your continued support. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you very much. The Chair 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
Hon. Vincent M. Gaughan, Illinois, Chairman

National Commander Fang Wong, National Adjutant Dan Wheeler, National Judge Advocate Phil Onderdonk, brother and sister legionnaires, fellow guests and friends.

The Committee on Constitutional Amendments met on Sunday, August 26, 2012 in downtown Indianapolis. The Committee Liaison, Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. of Maryland, called the roll and announced that 36 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 stated a quorum was present and proceeded to the first order of business, which was the election of the permanent chairman and secretary.

Vincent M. Gaughan from Illinois was elected Chairman, and Cathy J. Gorst from Wisconsin was elected Secretary. There upon, they assumed their respective places.

Copies of the resolutions, the Report of the Standing Committee, the National Constitution and Bylaws, the Uniform Code of Procedure for organizations of National Conventions of The American Legion which include the Standing Rules of the Convention, and the Godwin Report were made available to all members of the committee.

The Chair called upon Philip P. Onderdonk, Jr., National Judge Advocate, to give a summary background on the reports of the resolutions assigned to the Committee, which was done. A motion was made by Charles Mills of New York and seconded by Frank Reese of Florida, that all members of the Standing Committee on Constitution and Bylaws 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 unanimously.

The Chair then stated based upon National Judge Advocate's report to the Committee with regard to the requirements for consideration of 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 those requirements.

The Chair further stated that he was in agreement with the Report of the Standing Committee on the Constitution and Bylaws.

Resolution No. 2 from the National Executive Committee was considered. The Chair ruled that this resolution was in order. Basically what this does is allow the departments to, beside create liaisons between the department and the post, to create and charter them now.

Resolution No. 2: Recommend Amendment to the American Legion National Constitution Article VIII, Section 3
Origin: National Executive Committee, Resolution No. 24, May 2012
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments

WHEREAS, The Internal Revenue Service rules and regulations and the requirements of The American Legion Corporate Charter do not mesh very well in the area of Department organization; and

WHEREAS, Departments have the power to organize any intermediate bodies between Department and Posts pursuant to Article VIII, Section 3 of the National Constitution of The American Legion; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion tax exempt group is only open to chartered entities which currently are: National, Departments and Posts; and

WHEREAS, Access to The American Legion tax exempt group will solve a number of problems for intermediate bodies and those Departments which wish to allow intermediate bodies to be chartered; and

WHEREAS, This resolution is recommended to the National Convention by the National Executive Committee; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That Article VIII, Section 3 of the National Constitution of The American Legion, which currently reads:

> **"Departments shall have authority to create intermediate bodies between the Posts and Department to act as a liaison between such organizations and for the purpose of promoting the programs of The American Legion."**

be amended so that Article VIII, Section 3 of the National Constitution of The American Legion shall read:

> **"Departments shall have authority to create and charter intermediate bodies between the Posts and Department to act as a liaison between such organizations and for the purpose of promoting the programs of The American Legion."**

Douglas Goodwin of Missouri, made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2, National Executive Committee resolution. This was seconded by James Johnson of Louisiana. The motion was cared unanimously.

Next, **Resolution No. 10** from Kansas. This was considered. The Chair ruled this resolution out of order. Richard Perry of Arizona made a motion to adopt the ruling of the Chair. This was seconded by Robert Baranowski of Massachusetts. The motion was carried unanimously.

Next, **Resolution No. 42** was next considered. The Chair ruled Resolution No. 42 from Colorado out of order. Douglas Goodwin of Missouri made a motion to affirm the ruling of the Chair. This was seconded by Richard Perry of Arizona. The motion was carried unanimously.

Next, **Resolution No. 170** from Wisconsin was considered. The Chair ruled Resolution No. 170 out of order. James Johnson of Louisiana made a motion to affirm the ruling of the Chair, seconded by Douglas Goodwin of Missouri. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution No. 206 of California was next considered. The Chair ruled Resolution No. 206 out of order. Robert Baranowski of Massachusetts made a motion to affirm the ruling of the chair; seconded by Douglas Goodwin of Missouri. The motion was carried unanimously.

The Chair then asked for a motion that the Chairman and Secretary be permitted to sign the report to the Convention on behalf of the members of the Committee. Frank Reese of Florida made the motion and it was seconded by Lloyd Woods of Maine. The motion carried unanimously.

Douglas Goodwin of Missouri made a motion to recess subject to the call of the Chairman. The motion was seconded by James Johnson of Louisiana. The motion again carried unanimously.

The Chair then thanked the committee for its cooperation and productive meeting. The meeting was them declared in recess pending a call from the Chairman of the committee.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN GAUGHAN: Mr. Commander as a delegate to the 94th Convention of The American Legion, I move the adoption of this report. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you, Judge. Any discussion? All those in favor so indicate by the usual sign. Opposed. The report of Constitutional Amendments is adopted unanimously.

Before we hear the next report, would those who will present donations to the Child Welfare Foundation, please gather backstage. The Chair now 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

The Convention Committee on Children and Youth met on Sunday, August 26, 2012 at 9:00 a.m. in the Indiana Convention Center, Room 105, Street Level. The meeting was organized by electing delegate Dennis R. Boland of Florida as Chairman and Don Suchy of Nebraska as Secretary. There were 50 members of the committee present.

The committee considered seventeen (17) resolutions. Seventeen resolutions were approved.

Resolution No. 250: Protect Children From Unrestricted Media
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, In the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion we pledge "To uphold the Constitution of the United States;" and "To maintain law and order;" and

WHEREAS, Movies, TV shows and TV news, and the Internet have become very explicit in describing and depicting various types of violence; and

WHEREAS, Organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) have taken it upon themselves to defend such actions as the constitutional right of freedom of speech of the author, regardless of the potential consequences to minor children; and

WHEREAS, God has been rejected as a violation of civil rights; and

WHEREAS, The void has been filled with violence, vulgarity, racism, and every other form of moral depravation that can be imagined; and

WHEREAS, Laws governing such productions allow for a vast expansion of audiences at all media levels promoting a violent country without restraint; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support efforts to restrict the excessive use of violence, vulgarity and other forms of moral depravity in movies, TV programs, TV news and the Internet; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That departments and posts are encouraged 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; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the National Commission on Children & Youth disseminate educational materials to inform department and post leadership about the dangers

inherent in the media, in an effort to return the country to the God-given principles of life, liberty, and the true pursuit of happiness.

Resolution No. 251: Financially Assist Families Faced by Catastrophic Illness of Their Children
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, A catastrophic illness is any illness or condition, acute or chronic, for which expenses are incurred that are not fully covered by a private insurer, federal or state health care assistance, or other financial resource; and

WHEREAS, When a child becomes ill or disabled, the cost of medical care alone can be catastrophic for the family; and

WHEREAS, Families of any income level may be faced with high uncovered medical expenses for their children; and

WHEREAS, Families with or without insurance are vulnerable to extraordinary medical bills; and

WHEREAS, Several states have enacted legislation to establish Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Funds to help families bear the excessive financial burdens associated with the care of children with special health care needs and disabilities; and

WHEREAS, These funds have been proven effective and are designed to act as a safety net for families from all walks of life who have excessive expenses related to a child's medical needs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges the federal government to expand the present federal Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant programs to include catastrophic illness; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion through department and post leadership, urge state governments to enact legislation to assist financially those individual families faced by the catastrophic illness of their children in order to maintain the integrity of the family.

Resolution No. 252: Maximize Efforts to Screen Children for Sickle Cell Disease
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long advocated the use of preventive medicine to protect children from many childhood ailments; and

WHEREAS, Sickle cell disease (anemia) is an inherited disease of red blood cells which can cause life-threatening pneumococcal infections; and

WHEREAS, Sickle cell disease affects 1 in 375 African American newborns born in the United States and smaller proportions of children in other ethnic groups; and

WHEREAS, There is no specific treatment for children with Sickle Cell disease, but early diagnosis, treatment and counseling dramatically reduce the risk of infections and death; and

WHEREAS In 2007 the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force mandated screening for sickle cell disease in newborns in all 50 states and the District of Columbia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges the maximum dissemination of information presently known about Sickle Cell disease; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the fullest use of any suitable procedure developed to screen all newborns.

Resolution No. 253: Oppose All Efforts to Undermine, Alter or Otherwise Corrupt the Institution of Marriage
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, A guiding principle of The American Legion's Children & Youth Program is to strengthen and maintain the integrity of the family unit; and

WHEREAS, In determining the meaning of any Act of Congress, or of any ruling, regulation, or interpretation of the various administrative bureaus and agencies of the United States, the word "marriage" means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife, and the word "spouse" refers only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or wife; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes that the natural family is the fundamental unit, inscribed in human nature and centered on the voluntary union of a man and a woman in a lifelong covenant of marriage for the purposes of: satisfying the longings of the human heart to give and receive love, welcoming and ensuring the full physical and emotional development of children, sharing a home that serves as the center for the social, educational, economic and spiritual life of a child, and building strong bonds between succeeding generations to pass on a way of life that assures the perpetuation of the natural family; and

WHEREAS, Children are dependent on a mother and father for their physical, emotional and spiritual needs and that the existence of a marital bond between a mother and father is vital for the child's overall well-being; and

WHEREAS, Children raised by their married mother and father experience lower rates of social problems, to include premarital childbearing, illicit drug use, arrest, health problems, emotional or behavioral problems, poverty, and school failure or expulsion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion recognizes that marriage is a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion opposes all efforts to undermine, alter or otherwise corrupt the institution of marriage, which is the cornerstone of a healthy family.

Resolution No. 254: Oppose Any Attempt to Weaken Present Laws Governing Penalties for the Production, Sale and Distribution of Pornographic or Obscene Materials to Minors
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, Since 1960, The American Legion has maintained a position of complete opposition to the production, sale and distribution of pornographic or obscene materials to minors (defined as children under 18 years old); and

WHEREAS, Present laws forbid the production, sale and distribution of pornographic materials to minors; and

WHEREAS, Any attempt to eliminate such protective laws from state and/or federal criminal codes would have a negative impact on our youth and society in general; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion strongly opposes any attempt to weaken our present laws governing the penalties for the production, sale and distribution of pornographic or obscene materials to minors.

Resolution No. 255: Support Efforts Aimed at Improving Child Care Services for Children
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, The American Legion is deeply concerned about the quality of life issues surrounding our children and youth; and

WHEREAS, According to the National Center for Education Statistics there are approximately 21 million infants, toddlers, and preschool children under the age of six in the United States with more than 8.8 million of these children in child care; and

WHEREAS, Child care services have traditionally been providing care, supervision and protection for children of pre-school and early school age, when the primary caregiver is necessarily absent from the home; and

WHEREAS, A 2005 study by the Florida State University Center for Prevention & Early Intervention Policy found that high quality child care can accelerate children's social, emotional, cognitive, and verbal development; and

WHEREAS, A 1995 study funded by the Smith Richardson Foundation entitled "The Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study" found that of 100 child care centers studied, 92 percent were providing inadequate care to infants and did not meet children's need for health, safety, warm relationships, and learning; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion is authorized to collaborate with the leading national child care organizations as determined by the National Commission on Children and Youth to the end that The American Legion can maintain an effective role in the promotion of adequate child care programs; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That departments and posts are encouraged to cooperate with the state and community public or private agencies with day care responsibilities to the end that licensed child care facilities will be available to all children in our nation; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That departments and posts are urged to continue to encourage the adoption and implementation of safe and consistent licensing standards for childcare in facilities throughout this nation; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That departments and posts be encouraged to assist in raising the level of understanding among the general public about the needs of adequate child care, and urged to commit the resources to achieve a level of quality that is necessary for children to grow in a healthy and safe environment.

Resolution No. 256: Support Efforts to Immunize all Children
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long recognized that there is no place in civilized society for communicable diseases; and

WHEREAS, Vaccination is the best protection against 16 major diseases; and

WHEREAS, Every state sets its immunization requirements for school-aged children; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion reaffirms its position of supporting the fullest use of any licensed vaccine to immunize children; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That departments and posts are urged to provide leadership and support to stimulate local treatment and immunization programs so that children in every community may achieve the fullest protection against communicable diseases.

Resolution No. 257: Support Funding Comprehensive Health Care for Children & Youth Programs
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, The American Legion has and will continue to do everything possible to ensure that every child has a home, health, education, character, and opportunity; and

WHEREAS, Since its inception, the Maternal and Child Health Services Title V Block Grant has provided a foundation for ensuring the health of our Nation's mothers and children; and

WHEREAS, The Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant has operated as a Federal-State partnership for more than 77 years; and

WHEREAS, When the Social Security Act was passed in 1935, the Federal Government, through Title V, pledged its support of state efforts to extend and improve health and welfare services for mothers and children; and

WHEREAS, Title V funds are used by states and jurisdictions to implement a wide range of maternal and child health care programs (assessment, diagnosis and treatment for low-income children, long-term care for special needs children, rehabilitation services for blind and disabled children, prenatal care for women, and childhood immunization) and to develop comprehensive, family-centered, systems of care for children with special health care needs; and

WHEREAS, These programs are dependent upon the annual appropriation of funds by the Congress of the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion affirms its support of the programs as outlined by the Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant contained under Title V of the Social Security Act and urges the Congress to appropriate funds that meet or exceed current funding levels, to include all programs related to the Comprehensive Health Care for Children and Youth.

Resolution No. 258: Funding for Drug Trafficking Prevention Programs
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, The illegal trafficking of drugs into the United States is one of the greatest threats to the welfare and safety of our citizens, particularly our youth; and

WHEREAS, The enemies of our Nation and way of life hope to destroy us from within by debilitating our most precious resource for the future, our youth; and

WHEREAS, The economic and social costs of drug abuse annually exceed the $100 billion mark; and

WHEREAS, The efforts to halt the entry of such illegal drugs may be seen as a war of will and resources -- a war that at the present we are not winning; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge the President and Congress of the United States to appropriate funds that meet or exceed current funding levels for state, federal, and military drug trafficking prevention programs.

Resolution No. 259: Prevention of Child Sexual Exploitation
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, The sexual victimization of children is overwhelming in magnitude, yet largely unrecognized and underreported; and

WHEREAS, Statistics show that one in five girls and one in ten boys are sexually exploited before they reach adulthood, yet less than 35 percent of those child sexual assaults are reported to authorities; and

WHEREAS, The widespread use of the Internet to sexually victimize children presents an even broader threat to our children's safety; and

WHEREAS, According to Highlights of the Youth Internet Safety Survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice "one in five children (10 to 17 years old) receive unwanted sexual solicitations online"; and

WHEREAS, By far the most prevalent exploitive act reported to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children is the production and distribution of pornographic images of children; and

WHEREAS, The lives of the children featured in these illegal images are forever altered, not only by the exploitation itself, but by the permanent record of it; and

WHEREAS, The impact of these terrible acts can devastate families and put children at risk of depression, disassociation, and post traumatic stress – symptoms that can last well into adulthood; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support appropriate legislation aimed at the prevention, investigation and prosecution of child sexual exploitation; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion be authorized to collaborate with national and state agencies and organizations involved in the prevention of child sexual exploitation as determined by the National Commission on Children & Youth to the end that The American Legion can maintain an effective role in preventing child sexual exploitation; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That departments and posts are encouraged to raise community awareness about the prevalence of sexual exploitation of children and are encouraged to cooperate with law enforcement agencies, government entities and public/private organizations that seek to empower the public to take immediate and direct action to enforce a zero tolerance policy regarding child sexual exploitation.

Resolution No. 260: Reducing or Preventing Teen Pregnancy
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long been concerned with the health and quality of life issues surrounding its young people; and

WHEREAS, Despite declines since 1991, the teen birth rate in the United States remains as much as nine times higher as in other developed countries; and

WHEREAS, In 2009, approximately 410,000 births occurred among teens ages 15-19; and

WHEREAS, Childbearing has adverse consequences for teenage mothers and particularly for their children, contributing directly to mothers and their children being poorly educated, unmarried and lacking job skills; and

WHEREAS, The offspring of teen mothers have high rates of illness, mortality, educational and emotional problems, and often are the victims of child abuse at the hands of parents too immature to understand their baby's needs; and

WHEREAS, Preventing teen pregnancy is an effective way to address a range of other pressing social issues including poverty, child and family well-being, responsible fatherhood, workforce development, and out-of-wedlock childbearing; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support appropriate legislation aimed at reducing or preventing teen pregnancy; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion is authorized to collaborate with national and state teen pregnancy prevention organizations as determined by the National Commission on Children & Youth to the end that The American Legion can maintain an effective role in the promotion of adequate teen pregnancy prevention programs; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That departments and posts are encouraged to support and cooperate with organizations and agencies that seek to educate teenagers on the advantages of delaying pregnancy.

Resolution No. 261: Locate Missing Children and Prevent Child Victimization
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, Each day in the United States, an average of 2,185 children, 17 years and younger, are reported missing or disappear by abduction, run away or are lost to some unknown cause; and

WHEREAS, The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) was created in 1984 as a central resource and data clearinghouse for law enforcement, victims and their families, to aid in fighting for the safe recovery of missing children and the protection of all children from sexual exploitation; and

WHEREAS, Today more children come home safely than at any time in our nation's history, law enforcement is better prepared, and families are more alert and aware than ever before because of the tireless work of NCMEC and law enforcement; and

WHEREAS, NCMEC's overall recovery rate for missing children is 94.9 percent, demonstrating that the current system is working due to effective response of law enforcement, technological advances, and the general public paying attention to missing children photos; and

WHEREAS, Although NCMEC has made a significant impact in tackling this daunting problem, there is much that remains to be done for too many children still do not make it home, and too many are still victims of sexual predators; and

WHEREAS, Even one child disappearing is the concern of all responsible persons; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support appropriate legislation aimed at locating missing children and preventing child victimization; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to appropriate funds that meet or exceed current funding levels for the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion be authorized to collaborate with national and state missing and exploited children agencies and organizations as determined by the National Commission on Children & Youth to the end that The American Legion can maintain an effective role, at all levels, in locating missing children and preventing child exploitation; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the departments and posts are encouraged to increase the public's awareness of child victimization and its detrimental effects on the children and youth of our society and are urged to cooperate with credible organizations and agencies that seek to locate missing children in their states and communities.

Resolution No. 262: Prevent Child Maltreatment
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, The American Legion has, since its inception, voiced and demonstrated active concern about the health and welfare of children; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau reported that in 2010 more than 3.6 million (duplicate) children were the subjects of at least one report and over 702,000 of these children were found to be victims of child maltreatment; and

WHEREAS, The federal government defines child abuse and neglect in the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) of 2010 as "Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act, which presents an imminent risk of serious harm"; and

WHEREAS, According to CAPTA, child maltreatment encompasses physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and psychological maltreatment; and

WHEREAS, All responsible citizens have a valuable role to play in building strong communities in which families and children are valued and supported, and in which children are safe from all forms of maltreatment; and

WHEREAS, There are concerned adults who care about this problem and will work to combat its degenerative effect on our society; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support appropriate legislation aimed at preventing child maltreatment; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion be authorized to collaborate with national and state child maltreatment prevention organizations as determined by the National Commission on Children & Youth to the end that The American Legion can maintain an effective role in the promotion of child maltreatment prevention programs; and, be it further

RESOLVED, The departments and posts are urged to cooperate in all ways possible with organizations and agencies that advocate for child maltreatment prevention and are urged to promote and increase the public's awareness of child maltreatment and its detrimental effects on the children and youth of our society; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges all educators, coaches, school administrators and all others responsible for children in any capacity to familiarize themselves with the warning signs of all forms of child maltreatment and report any suspected maltreatment to the proper authorities and ensure that these children are referred to the appropriate child protective service in their community; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue through its Children & Youth program, at all levels, to educate the public of their obligations and duties with respect to reporting suspected cases of child maltreatment.

Resolution No. 263: Programs and Organizations that Promote Child Safety
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, unintentional injury remains the leading cause of death and disability among children ages 14 and under in the United States; and

WHEREAS, In 2010, every day, more than 25,200 children ages 0-19 are injured seriously enough to require medical treatment, totaling more than 9.2 million children each year; and

WHEREAS, The top causes of unintentional injury-related deaths and disabilities among children and adolescents are automobile accidents, drowning, fire/burns, and suffocation; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated that as many as 90 percent of unintentional injuries can be prevented; and

WHEREAS, A combination of education, environmental improvements, engineering modifications, enactment and enforcement of legislation and regulations, economic incentives, community empowerment and program evaluation is effective at reducing the incidence and severity of unintentional death and disability; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support appropriate legislation aimed at preventing or reducing unintentional injury among children and adolescents; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion is authorized to collaborate with the leading national safety organizations as determined by the National Commission on Children and Youth to the end that The American Legion can maintain an effective role in the promotion of adequate child safety programs; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That departments and posts are encouraged to provide leadership on organized safety commissions and are urged to actively promote child safety at the state and local levels.

Resolution No. 264: National School Lunch Program
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, There has been as expression of concern by health authorities and various national organizations with an interest in the status of proper nutrition among young people; and

WHEREAS, The National School Lunch Program and other federally-supported nutrition programs for children have demonstrated their effectiveness as evidenced by the reduction of health problems and improved performance among children; and

WHEREAS, In Fiscal Year 2010, more than 31.7 million children each day got their lunch through the National School Lunch Program; and

WHEREAS, The National School Lunch Program cost $10.8 billion in FY 2010; and

WHEREAS, Since 1941, The American Legion has supported the National School Lunch Program and other related programs of nutrition for children; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That Congress appropriate funds at or exceeding current funding levels for the National School Lunch Program.

Resolution No. 265: Establish "National Family Week"
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, One of the principles guiding The American Legion's Children & Youth Program is to maintain the integrity of the family unit; and

WHEREAS, The family unit is the center of our affections and the foundation of our American society; and

WHEREAS, No institution can take the family unit's place in giving meaning to human life and stability in our society; and

WHEREAS, It is fitting that official recognition be given to the importance of strengthening family life; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges the President of the United States and the Congress to establish "National Family Week" during Thanksgiving Holiday Week as an annual observance.

Resolution No. 266: Improving Services for Children Living in Foster Care
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, The American Legion affirms that all children need safe, permanent families that love, nurture, protect and guide them; and

WHEREAS, On any given day in the United States, half a million children and youth are in foster care, removed from their homes because of abuse and neglect; and

WHEREAS, While foster care protects children who are not safe in their own homes, too many times what should be a short-term refuge becomes a long-term saga, involving moves from one foster home to another; and

WHEREAS, Social agencies, both public and private, and dedicated foster parents provide these children with a temporary or a permanent environment that will help them become the responsible citizen of tomorrow; and

WHEREAS, These agencies and foster parents are finding it increasingly difficult to provide the basic needs of these children, such as medical and dental care, education, food, clothing, skilled social work, and other community resources; and

WHEREAS, These ends can be met only by increased funding and concerted public effort on the part of all citizens, governmental and private agencies, legislators, and others responsible and concerned for the future of these children; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support appropriate legislation aimed at improving services for children living in foster homes; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion is authorized to collaborate with the leading national foster care organizations as determined by the National Commission on Children and Youth to the end that The American Legion can maintain an effective role in the promotion of adequate foster care programs; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That posts are urged to volunteer their talents and energies in behalf of foster children and are urged to make their communities aware of the vital role that adequate foster care services play in enabling these children to develop into mature, responsible and productive adults.

A motion was made by John Konkol (NY) and seconded by Kenneth Bouchard (ME) that the Convention Committee on Children and Youth authorize the chairman and secretary to sign and deliver the report on behalf of the committee to the National Convention. The motion was approved.

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed. The report of Children and Youth is adopted. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Garland D. Murphy, Jr., Award

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: 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 the Department of Ohio. *(Cheers and 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 2011-2012. 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: U.S. 'Udie' Grant Legacy Award

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: 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 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 2011-2012 in recognition of outstanding support for The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. We thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: If anyone has donations to the Child Welfare Foundation I will now accept those on stage.

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

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BOLAND: Commander, on behalf of the Board of Directors, and I have the honor to be the president of the Child Welfare Foundation, it is an honor to award you with Spirit of Excellence Award, a diamond lapel pin from the Child Welfare Foundation, sir.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Wow. Thank you very much.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): On behalf of the Department of Ohio, Charities, Inc., we want to start out this year with $15,000 to Child Welfare.

CHAIRMAN BOLAND: On behalf of Post 340 in Pensacola, Florida, a donation of $3,000 to the Child Welfare Foundation.

DELEGATE TAYLOR (SC): I bring you greetings from the great State of South Carolina. I'm Mickey Taylor, past department commander. On behalf of the Department of South Carolina I would like to present an $877 check to Child Welfare, and a $746.13 check for the Children's Miracle Network.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NE): On behalf of the great State of Nebraska we would like to present you with a check for $1,870.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NH): From the Department of New Hampshire I would like to present a check for $498.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IA): On behalf of the tall corn State of Iowa I wish to give you $2,000 to the Child Welfare Fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (CT): On behalf of the Department of Connecticut, our contribution is $4,500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AK): Dorman H. Baker, Post 11, Fairbanks, Alaska, $500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (SD): On behalf of the Department of South Dakota, our contribution is $702.70.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MA): From the Department of Massachusetts, $5,366.

DELEGATE SHAFER (TX): Joe Shafer, Missing Man Post 667, Universal City, Texas. A small donation. Thank you.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BOWEN (NY): Mr. Commander, W. Michael Bowen, delegation chairman from the great Department of New York. We're proud to present you a check in the amount of $13,500. *(Applause) ...At this time National commander Wong resumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you very much for the donations. I guess we will give you the number in a few minutes.

Our next guest flew 295 combat missions during the Vietnam War. During his Air Force career he was commander and leader of the Air Force Thunderbirds; commander of Moody Air Force Base, Georgia; inspector general of the Pacific and commander of the Air Force Recruiting Service. His book, *My Enemy, My Friend*, chronicles an intense dogfight between his F-4 Phantom and a North Vietnamese MiG-21, and his subsequent meeting and friendship with the MiG pilot. He retired from the Air Force as a brigadier general, and was inducted in the Kentucky Aviation Hall of Fame. Ladies and gentlemen, please extend a warm welcome to Brigadier General Edward 'Dan' Cherry. *(Applause)*

Address: Brigadier General (Ret.) Edward 'Dan' Cherry, United States Air Force
Author: *My Enemy, My Friend*

Thank you, commander, and ladies and gentlemen. What a thrill it is for me to be here with you today and experience this wonderful meeting with all my fellow Legionnaires. Today I'm going to tell you a story. And, yes, it's a war story, but more important than that it is truly a story of forgiveness, reconciliation, and the power of friendship, all things that we as human beings desperately need on a daily basis. So I hope you enjoy this presentation.

I want to start by telling you some details about a new friend I made. His name is Nguyen Hong My, pilot first class, Vietnam Air Force, and he currently lives in Vietnam in Hanoi. We'll talk to you about the first meeting that happened back in 1972, and then I'll go over some details about what happened after that first day that we met on April 16, 1972, and then the unlikely reunion that occurred in 2008, and the full circle of forgiveness, and then what is our message, what do I hope that you go away with today after hearing this story.

As the commander mentioned, I had a wonderful Air Force career. I look back on those days with great, fond memories. I got a chance to fly the very best fighters that the Air Force had, the F-105, and then the F-4 Phantom. And in 1972 I found myself at Udorn Air Base, a Royal Thai Air Base in Thailand, on my second combat tour flying the F-4D.

My new friend, Nguyen Hong My, after completing four years of pilot training in the Soviet Union, began flying combat out of his base at Noi Bai Air base in North Vietnam in 1968. And to get you a little bit oriented geographically here, my base, as you can see in the bottom left-hand corner of this slide, Udorn Air Base is denoted by the blue dot. And then his base, Noi Bai, about 30 miles to the northwest of Hanoi. And then where we first met in mortal combat about 35 miles to the southwest of Hanoi.

We both got up the same time that morning, went to our individual squadrons, and I discovered that I was flying this big beautiful airplane, F-4D Number 550. Hong My was flying a MiG-21, and one of the few that they had that was camouflaged at that time.

Now, many of you, if you're aviation buffs or history buffs, you have followed the History Channel program called *Dogfights*. And the *Dogfights* producers called me up one day several years ago and said that they wanted to feature my dogfight on their program, and I was very flattered by that. And if you're familiar with the program at all you know that they use very, very accurate and authentic digital animation, coupled with interviews by the real people who were involved, and excellent narration to put the whole thing in context. And if you've ever tried to have someone explain to you the dynamics of a dogfight you understand what I'm about to say, that it's very, very difficult to tell the details of something that is so changing and so dynamic. But the History Channel does a marvelous job, and I would like to show you an excerpt from an episode called "Hell Over Hanoi," about the dogfight that occurred on April 16, 1972.

...The delegation viewed a videotaped presentation entitled "Hell Over Hanoi."

GENERAL CHERRY: Well, needless to say, it was an exciting day for Basco Flight. Really a fighter pilot's dream, where you train, you plan, and then when you have the opportunity you're ready and you come away victorious. My flight leader, Fred Olmsted, went on to shoot down one of the two silver MiGs that went over our head to begin with. So we did a little celebrating in the officers' club at Udorn Air Base that night, and I wondered somewhat about the fate of the MiG pilot because I saw him so clearly in his parachute. As you debrief intelligence you're giving all the details that you can possibly remember from that encounter. But the very next day I was up flying another combat mission. So for 36 years I put that way in the back of my mind, the questions of who he was and did he survive and that sort of thing.

Now, for Nguyen Hong My there was no celebrating to go on at all. He was very badly injured in his ejection. Both of his forearms were broken because his ejection seat malfunctioned and didn't capture his arms like it should have. He injured his back severely because his arms were useless, and when he hit the ground he hit very hard. But he did go into multiple surgeries, rehab, and then got back on flying status. But by then the war was over. But what he realized very quickly was that he was in such pain every time he would pull g's in his airplane, even on a training mission, that he had no future in the Air Force. So he resigned his commission, went back to college and became an insurance executive with Vietnam Insurance Company. Now, today Hong My is retired. He lives in Hanoi, Vietnam, and being a grandparent enjoying those grandchildren like many of us do here in America.

My career. After that I finished my tour in June and went back to the United States and was an instructor pilot in the F-4 for a little while, and as the commander mentioned to you I had the great honor and privilege to be the commander and leader of the Air Force Thunderbirds in the late '70s. What an honor to represent our country to the American people, and also in foreign countries. A great responsibility, probably the hardest job I ever had, but also the most rewarding.

From there I got to command the 8th Tac Fighter Wing in Korea, flying the F-16. And in 1988, though, it came time to do something else. And I decided that after living the nomadic life for 29 years, I know my wife and I sat on the front steps, and as the last moving van came up, when we started counting the number of times we had moved in our 29 years in the Air Force, it ended up being 22 times. But I look back on those days with great fond memories. The Air Force was so good to me, taught me so much. I owe it so much today. But the decision was made.

I went back to Bowling Green, Kentucky, and made some good friends there. It was my hometown originally anyway. And one of the groups I joined very quickly was a group we called the Walking Group. Now, we get up early every morning, go for a real

fast three mile walk, and then we go to McDonald's and drink coffee and solve all the world's problems. So I know you're comforted by that.

But we have a lot of fun. And one of the things we do too is try to do social things together, and my buddies in the group wanted me to set up a tour of the Air Force Museum. And we did that. Took a weekend and drove from Bowling Green, Kentucky, to Dayton, and toured the museum. And while we were touring it the staff made us aware that there was an airplane not far from Dayton on display in front of a VFW club that had historic significance to Kentucky, and the airplane was in trouble. As the conversation continued we discovered that it was none other than Phantom 550, the airplane I was flying on April 16th. And before we left Dayton to go back to Kentucky all my buddies wouldn't hear of anything, we had to go find the airplane and see it. So we drove to the little town of Enon, Ohio, stopped at the Minute Mart and asked them where is your VFW club, and they told us it's down this country lane. Came around a curve and there she sat, looking out there in the field, looking somewhat lonely and forlorn, grass growing up all around her. Her tires were flat. But it made me very proud to see my red Victory Star still on the air intake there up by the engine. So someone had paid attention to her history, but someone was not paying attention to the way they cared for her, as you can see by some of these close-up photos. All the way back to Bowling Green all we could talk about is what can we do to save this airplane.

And from there this novel notion of Aviation Heritage Park surfaced. We knew that there were distinguished aviators from our community that had done amazing things in the past, but their stories had been lost in history. And we felt like if we could use Phantom 550 as a cornerstone to build an educational facility to keep these stories alive so that they can be inspirational to young people, and to make them realize that they need to reach for their dreams, and that anything is possible, and that all these wonderful things of the past were not accomplished by strangers from somewhere else, but people who live right there in their community maybe right down the street from them, but just at a different time. And so that's how Aviation Heritage Park got started.

Kind of a long story short, but in December of 2005 the Air Force had given us permission to take possession of the airplane, and Phantom 550 rolled into Bowling Green, Kentucky, on two flatbed trailers. We had a lot of work to do, as you can imagine, getting rid of the bird abuse on her that you saw in those pictures. But this is what she looks like today, Phantom 550 restored to her combat colors, still serving her country and inspiring youth on a daily basis that they need to reach for their dreams, stay in school, work hard, and anything is possible for you as well.

Now, every nonprofit that I have ever been involved with had many more ideas than it ever did resources, money. So we kept brainstorming ways to make money. We were in tremendous debt. As you can see here, this is an aerial view of Aviation Heritage Park, with exhibit space for seven airplanes, with three in place, one on the way. But we were tremendously in debt, and my friends kept saying, you know, Dan, if we could find the identity of that MiG pilot somehow we could get national publicity and maybe do a fundraiser from that somehow and pay off some of our bills. Well, it was a joke at first. We'd laugh it off and then go on to something else. But it kept coming up, so I said okay, let's get serious, let's do some serious outreach. And we did that.

We worked very, very hard for several months, and we were very fortunate to make contact with this lady. Her name is Thu Uyen. She's a television journalist in Vietnam, and a very popular one. She does the evening news on their television network. She is the equivalent of Diane Sawyer in Vietnam. Very, very professional. And so she wrote me an email, and she had heard about my quest to find out more about the MiG pilot, and she said write me a letter and tell me what you want to do, and I'll see if I can help you.

Now, along with the evening news Thu Uyen hosts a program also called *The Separation Never Seems To Have Existed*, and that's like an old program we had here in

the United States, and I think many of you will remember, *This Is Your Life*. They take video profiles of people who have been separated for years for whatever reason, and then on live national television they reunite them so that the audience can experience the emotion of the reunion. She thought that if she could find this MiG pilot, that that would fit the format of her show, for me to meet him face-to-face for the first time there. And so I wrote her an email back and I gave her the date and the time and the place of the dogfight. I told her that I had always been curious about his fate. I had no idea if he lived or died, I didn't know what his name was, I didn't know if he had a family, but I was certainly curious, and if she could help me I would like to meet him someday.

I never expected anything to come of it, but it was only two weeks later another email arrived from her, and she said we have found the brave MiG pilot and we want you to come to Vietnam and meet him on live national television. I was very skeptical, apprehensive. I thought it might be a setup, I thought it was too good to be true. But in all of my investigation and looking into the details of the invitation I received encouragement from everyone to accept it, which I did.

And so in April of 2008 I found myself in downtown Saigon, or what is now known as Ho Chi Minh City. And for those of you who served in Vietnam and spent time in Saigon you might remember this hotel. It was quite famous during the war years as well. Still a very nice hotel. And then the very next morning after I arrived I met with Thu Uyen up on the top of the hotel in an outdoor restaurant where we went over the details of the television show.

The show started that evening. I was seated in the audience, and Thu Uyen introduced the program, invited me to come up on stage with her, and she started asking me basic questions about why I was there, what I hoped to accomplish and so forth. And I answered those. And then, very dramatically, on the other side of the studio she introduced this man. Now, keep in mind I have never seen a picture of him, all I know is his name, Nguyen Hong My. And other than that I didn't know a thing about him.

But he stepped out from behind this partition, and came walking directly toward me, and he looked exactly like I would imagine a Vietnamese fighter pilot should look. Very muscular, a little on the short side like me, but a totally shaved head, and he came walking directly toward me. He didn't have a smile on his face, but it was a pleasant look. And as he approached me I extended my hand, and we clasped our hands in a very, very firm handshake, and he said to me, "Welcome to my country. I'm glad to see that you're in good health, and I hope that we can be friends." And that's how this amazing relationship started. *(Applause)*

We continued our interview. And before the TV program both Hong My and I had provided the producer with still photographs of our families, my grandchildren and children, my wife and everybody. And while we were being interviewed these photographs are being shown on the monitor, and I can see them clearly. And I got very choked up and very emotional. I was terribly embarrassed, because here I am on live national television and tears are streaming down my face, and I'm starting to do it again. I could hardly talk. And I think what happened to me right then is it finally dawned on me that how easily this story could have had a totally different outcome. And I'm so far away from home right now, and those precious grandbabies are back there. It really got to me. So it was a little while before I could compose myself and continue the interview. So I'm terribly embarrassed. You know, I'm in front of him doing this. Well, the only thing that saved me was the fact that as they started showing photographs of his family, his children and grandchildren, he did the same thing I did. So that made it seem to work pretty good.

Well, the show was over, and as a tradition in the Orient I had brought a gift for him from Kentucky. And I couldn't think of a better thing than a bottle of Kentucky bourbon. He treasured it. He says today that he has not touched it, that it's on display in his home, and I'm not sure about that. But, anyway, he was very proud to get it. And then we went

to the Majestic Hotel in downtown Saigon, at a rooftop restaurant, and drank a little wine and had dinner, got to know each other a little bit better. And I discovered very quickly that Hong My has a wonderful sense of humor. And he turned to me and grasped my hand, and he said, "In your airplane you shoot missile like this or like this?" And I said, "No." And it's a very good question. But, anyway, I said, "No, in the F-4 we have a trigger and you shoot missile like this." So he grasped my trigger finger and he goes, like that. And then broke out into a big laugh. So he spanked my trigger finger. And again, as you can see, the bonding is going on immediately between the two of us. I'd wondered what I would talk about the first time I met him, and my solution to all that was, well, he's a fighter pilot, we can always, you know how we do, talk with our hands? He does the same thing. And we talked about airplanes at the beginning, and then our families and so forth.

And then he invited me to come to his home, he lives in Hanoi, and have dinner with his family the very next night. And so we got on Vietnam Airlines, flying from Saigon to Hanoi, and what an eerie feeling that was looking out those windows onto that Vietnamese countryside. And it all looked the same. It looked exactly the way I remembered after flying countless combat missions over the same place. But here I am shoulder to shoulder with a MiG-21 pilot, going to his home in Hanoi. Thirty-six years earlier who would have predicted that? It was an amazing experience.

We arrived at the hotel in Hanoi, and as it turns out he lived within walking distance of the hotel. He picked me up at the appointed time, and we took this amazing stroll through the streets of Hanoi. I had seen the city many times from the air, but under totally different circumstances, as you can imagine. And it was just enjoyable walking through those streets with beautiful French architecture. And then we got to his neighborhood, and down a little alleyway that led to his front door. And as we approached the front door his son, Quan, came out holding his little grandson Duk. Duk is Hong My's only grandchild, and on that very day Duk was celebrating his first birthday. So as you can see, granddaddy is pretty proud of him. I went over to see if I could establish some sort of a relationship with the little boy, and the next thing I know Hong My handed me Duk. How emotional that was for me to realize that in such a short period of time he would trust me to hold his only grandson. It was a very, very special moment for both of us.

Then we went into his home and had this amazing Vietnamese dinner. I have no idea what some of the things were that we ate, but it was all good. And again, wine was part of it. I think we ran out of wine and had to drink a little brandy instead. And so it came time to go back to the hotel. And if you've ever traveled to Asia lately, particularly Vietnam, you get the sense that almost everyone has a motor scooter. And Hong My is no different. Very few cars, but thousands of motor scooters. So Hong My thought it would be a great idea for him to take me back to the hotel on his motor scooter. So that's what we did. We took off around midnight. The streets are just hugely busy, but we roared through the streets at night. And this whole thing struck me funny, and I'm thinking to myself, you know, you didn't die when you were over here before, but you're going to die tonight. *(Laughter)*

But it was great. And as we got to the hotel he said, "I would like to be your tour guide tomorrow if you will allow me to," and I said, "That would be wonderful if you would." And he took me everywhere you can imagine. And the very last place we went, at my request, was this famous Hoa Lo Prison, or what is more commonly known as the Hanoi Hilton. I had many friends that spent time there, years there, and I felt like it was my duty to go back and try somehow to experience a little bit about what they went through.

The prison is now a museum, and I'm sure it's cleaned up significantly from what it was back then. But the prison was built around 1900, and the museum has mostly exhibits about Vietnamese prisoners being held by the French, because the prison was

actually built by the French back then. But there is a section that shows some photographs of American prisoners of war being held. And so as we approached the prison and started on the walking tour, Hong My, who is normally as you can tell already, very gregarious and outgoing and fun-loving, became very somber, walking very respectfully a couple of steps behind me as I made my way through this walking tour. And as I got closer to the American section I'm looking at photographs and becoming very, very emotional, very sad, identifying some of my friends. And I'm standing there looking at these photographs, and Hong My stepped up behind me and whispered in my ear, he said, "Did you have a friend in here?" And I said, "Yes, I did." I said, "That's my friend right there. That's Colonel John Flynn right there." And he dropped his head and he stepped back, again very serious and respectful of me. Came out of the prison and it was a tough thing to do, but I was so glad that I did it. And Hong My knew I was having a hard time, and he just came over to me and patted me on the back, and that meant a lot to me at the moment.

And at this point it was time to leave Vietnam and come back to America after this trip, and I invited him to come to our country and visit me the following year. And he accepted. So all the way back I'm trying to figure out all these wonderful things that had happened to me over the last three days. Just an incredible series of events. Very enjoyable, very emotional and everything.

I immediately turned back to my buddies at Aviation Heritage Park to figure out how we were going to arrange a trip for Hong My to the United States. And lo and behold, all the pieces fell into place, and in April of 2009 Hong My arrived with his son, Quan, in Nashville, Tennessee. My wife, Sylvia, and I, were there to greet him and give him a good Kentucky welcome. We jumped in our car and started the drive to Bowling Green. It's about an hour's drive from Nashville. And I had just finished my book, *My Enemy, My Friend*. It had just been published, and I wanted Hong My to have a copy of it. And I had a little goody bag for him, gifts from Kentucky and that. As we got to his hotel and it was time for all of us to go bed, I gave him the book and I said, "Hong My, this is for you. I hope you enjoy it." I knew that he read English quite well. And so we said good night.

The very next morning I picked him up for breakfast, and the first thing I wanted to ask him was how did you like the book. And I asked him that, and he said, "I didn't like your book." And that crushed me. You know, I worked so hard on it and I really wanted him to like it. But he said, "I didn't like it." And I'm worried now about our relationship. This is the second day of his time in America for the first time, and I just changed the subject totally and we went on with our plans, which were really wonderful things that we had in mind, and we just dropped that subject altogether. And I thought, well, I'll pick back up on that later, sometime later in the visit. I had no idea why he didn't like it.

But we went, later that day, out to Aviation Heritage Park, on April 16th, the anniversary of our dogfight. In 2009 Hong My participated in our ribbon cutting and grand opening of Aviation Heritage Park. And for the first time in history a fighter pilot who was shot down in combat returned to sit in the cockpit of the actual airplane that shot him down. Never happened before, and we made it happen on April 16, 2009. *(Applause)*

I had a chance to reciprocate, too. My wife, Sylvia, fixed him a good southern dinner. I don't know if he could identify what he had to eat, but I hope he did. I think he enjoyed it. And he got to meet my children and my grandchildren, and they got along famously. That was great fun, doing that.

And then for some reason I thought it was important to get him in the cockpit of a Cessna 172. We did that. We flew to Frankfort, Kentucky, where our Vietnam Veterans Memorial is, and I wanted him to see that. We're so proud in Kentucky of our Vietnam Veterans Memorial. It's in the shape of a giant sundial, and as the shadow from the obelisk traces its way across the plaza it touches the name of every Kentuckian who was

killed in the war, on the day he was killed. We're very proud of that, and I was so glad to show Hong My that because we're so proud of it. From there we went down to the Sun 'n' Fun Fly-In in Lakeland, Florida, and from there to our nation's capital in Washington, D. C. So proud I was of our country, so proud of the way people responded to him, how warmly he was received. We were guest speakers at the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum, which was a wonderful experience. And we also did all the tourist things that you normally do. And again I'm busting with pride to show him my country.

But the last thing we did, which was so important to me, was to take him to our Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington. It really was an emotional experience for both of us. We spent a lot of time there. And Hong My, I'll never forget his reaction to it, but he said to me, "You know, it makes me so sad to see these 58,000 that have died, but equally sad to realize how many of the family members that were left behind because of the war." So it was an emotional experience, but something that was important to both of us.

And then it came time for him to go back to Vietnam and say goodbye. But before he left I had to double back on the question about the book. I said, "Hong My, when you first got to America you told me that you didn't like my book." And I said, "I wish you would tell me why you didn't like it." And he said, "Oh, no, Dan. I didn't mean that I didn't like your book. I just don't like the title, because I don't think you and I were ever really enemies. We were just soldiers. We were just soldiers doing the best that we could for our countries." And he is absolutely right. *(Applause)*

What do I hope that you walk away from this presentation with today? Hopefully it's a little bit of strength and this notion of reconciliation is good and those things. But we hope that we can be an example. And first and foremost, both Hong My and I want to, by telling this story, help other Vietnam War veterans. And I think we've done that in our presentations around the country. We also want to be an inspiration to our two countries. We think there is a bright future ahead for Vietnam. When I was there just recently in 2008 a warm welcome, hardly any memories of the war there. They're moving on. And I think that our two countries, our relationship has a great potential for the future. The common human message here is the futility of grudges, the benefits of moving on from the past, and the power of friendship and reconciliation cannot be overstated.

Ladies and gentlemen, it's been a great thrill and honor for me to be able to speak to you today. God bless you all, and God bless The American Legion, and God Bless America. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: I have three announcements. I'll do the good one first. This is the good news. We have collected $47,818.83 on stage for the Child Welfare Foundation. Thank you very much. The total from the Convention so far is $58,581.20. *(Applause)*

That's the good news. Not so good news is the people coming in and going out back there is kind of disrupting folks that are trying to listen. So, sergeant-at-arms, please see that the delegates and guests when they come in, they're seated and orderly while the Convention business is being conducted. Thank you.

You might want to pay attention to this one. This is not so good news. Administrative announcement. In preparation for our speaker later today, we must ask anyone needing to use the bathrooms please exit the hall and use the bathrooms outside, and then come back through security. You will not be allowed to use the bathrooms on the sides because they will be sealed off by security.

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. *(Applause)*

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

Thirty-six members of the Credentials and Internal Affairs Committee Section III (Membership) considered one resolution which originated from the Department of Connecticut.

Lou Cook of North Carolina nominated Denise Rohan of Wisconsin as Chairman. It was seconded by Toby Little of Illinois. The motion to close nominations was made by Ken Mueller of Texas. Both motions carried. Ken Mueller of Texas nominated Gerald Goetzinger of South Dakota as Secretary. It was seconded by Lou Cook of North Carolina, motion carried. Jeff Kauffman of Ohio made a motion that the Chairman and Secretary be authorized to sign the report of the Committee. The motion was seconded by Frank Carr of Virginia.

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 ensure proper wording and form without changing the substance or meaning of the Resolution. The motion was seconded by Doug Uhrig of Wyoming. The following resolution was referred to the Standing Committee on Membership & Post Activities:

Referred to the Standing Committee for Membership and Post Activities

Resolution No. 202 (CT) **Study of Membership Administration**

CHAIRMAN ROHAN: As a duly authorized delegate to this Convention from the Department of Wisconsin, I move for the adoption of this report. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed. The report of Credentials and Internal Affairs, Membership is adopted. Thank you Madam Chairman.

It is now time for the membership awards. The departments and individuals who will be joining me on stage did an outstanding job during 2012. We are continuously building relationships with the active duty and Reserve military components and National Guard. Plus, programs and activities such as The American Legion Riders; Heroes to Hometowns; Operation Comfort Warriors; assistance through the Family Support Network and many, many others, have expanded the opportunity for The American Legion to fulfill the promises of our Four Pillars. Couple all this with our continued commitment of service to veterans, their families and our communities, and you can clearly see where The American Legion growth potential is unlimited. While our membership numbers are roughly the same as last year, we still have room to improve in areas such as renewals and traditional new starts.

Now, several departments have tried to improve on this by either revitalizing old posts or starting new posts. California, North Carolina and Washington all started five new posts this past year. But keep in mind, we cannot 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 is strength in numbers. So today we would like to recognize a few departments and individuals for their efforts in improving our membership numbers.

I now ask that National Vice Commander Milton G. Heifner assume duties at the podium, and that the national vice commander assigned to each department join me as we congratulate departments from their areas.

...*At this time National Vice Commander Heifner assumed the Chair.*

Presentation: Department Membership Awards

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HEIFNER: Anyone that would like to make a contribution to NEF, please make your way backstage.

The O.L. Bodenhamer Trophy is presented to the department that led The American Legion in traditional membership for the Flag Day report on June 14. This department was 98.466 percent of their goal by the Flag Day report. Please give a warm welcome to the Department of Florida. This presentation is to Department Commander Fletcher Williams, Jr., Membership Chairman Bob Brewster, and Department Adjutant Mike McDaniel. *(Applause)*

One department has exceeded its goal by meeting every target date the membership year. The Department of Philippines is the recipient of the All Target Dates award. A plaque is being presented to Department Adjutant Christopher Schrauben. We are also presenting him with a plaque for achieving 100 percent of their membership goal through traditional methods by the May target date. *(Applause)*

Philippines Department Commander Joseph Carsley is being recognized as the Department Commander of the Year, because the Philippines exceeded its membership goal by the May target date. Commander Carsley is unable to be here, but a plaque is being presented on his behalf to the department adjutant for Commander Carsley's leadership and the hard work in achieving its goal this year.

We had another department exceed its membership goal this year utilizing traditional membership methods. In doing so, a plaque is being presented to Department Commander Tom Stern and Department Adjutant and Membership Chairman Bill Shetz from the Department of Mexico. *(Applause)*

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 cases. This year we have four winners in the Race to the Top competition. Please join me in welcoming these district commanders to the stage. Category 1, Ray E. Thiessen, Department of Arizona. Category 2, Ronald W. Parshall, Department of California. Category 3, Jay Conti, Sr., Department of Florida. This is Jay's second consecutive time winning the award. Category 5, Robert D. Kiley, Department of Florida. These district commanders were presented a new Legion cap, a polo shirt and a shadow box. We sincerely appreciate all their hard work and dedication. Thank you all. *(Applause)*

...National Commander Wong resumed the Chair.

Presentation: National Recruiter of the Year

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Now, this leads me to our most prestigious membership award. This Legionnaire is no stranger to the National Recruiter of the Year competition. This year's National Recruiter of the Year is Dr. Frank Carr of the Department of Virginia. He recruited 546 new members into The American Legion. This is his fourth time earning the title of National Recruiter of the Year. He also won this award in 2006, 2007, and 2008. Accompanying Frank on stage are his two grandsons, Xavier Johnson-Carr, and Kylen Johnson-Carr.

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

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER VOYLES: Commander Wong is presenting two new Legion caps, a shadow box plaque and a polo shirt signifying that Frank earned the title of National Recruiter of the Year for the 2012 membership year. Congratulations, Frank. *(Applause)*

We hope that you continue to recruit more members into our great organization. Frank, can you make it the fifth year? Is there someone in the audience who's up to the challenge to dethrone Frank? Remember, all you have to do is just ask, they will join.

DR. CARR (VA): First, I give honor to my Lord and Savior; to my wife, Matti, who's been there by my side; to Commander Wong; Membership Director Billy Johnson and his staff that has truly helped me out all along the way; my department membership team that's been by my side and have taken care of keeping track, and to all of you that's in The American Legion. If it wasn't for the things that we do in The American Legion there would be no reason for me to go out and do the work that I do, but it's because of the things that The American Legion stands for, I don't mind going out and recruiting people for it.

It's a great pleasure each year, and again, the only thing that I can tell people when they ask me what's my magic bullet for recruiting people, is just ask. On the way out of here we made a quick stop at a military base for a couple of hours in a place called Fort Lee, Virginia, and I know some of you have probably been there, and within two hours we recruited about thirty some people. So just ask those out there, it's not hard. There's no magic that you have to do, but just go and ask, and that's what I've been trying to do every since I've been in The American Legion. I thank you, and I appreciate the award, and it's been a blessing to be a part of The American Legion. Again, thank you. *(Applause) ...At this time National Commander Wong resumed the Chair.*

Presentation: Consolidated Post Reporting 2011-2012

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The Consolidated Post Report is a summary of what The American Legion posts have accomplished in their communities. 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 2011-2012 membership year, our response rate was 63 percent, with, 8,818 posts reported out of 13,993 posts. As you can see, we need to improve our reporting so we can truly show what American Legion is doing in our local communities. A certificate was mailed the departments who met the challenges of improving over last year's response rate and achieving at least a 75 percent response rate this year. Those departments were Alaska and Georgia. I think they deserve a round of applause. *(Applause)*

Now, I have asked the departments that exceeded the challenge and had a response rate of 95 percent or higher to join me on stage today for special recognition. At this time we will present their plaques to the department commander.

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

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER GUNDERSON: First recipient is Commander George Cushing, Department of Arizona. Fletcher Williams, Jr., Department of Florida. Kenneth Goth, Department of Missouri. Everett Robison, Department the Montana. George Cyboron, Department of Nebraska. Jon Marsh, Department of Oregon. Kerrie Gill, Sr., Department of Pennsylvania. Erick Michaud, Department of Rhode Island. Francis Killay, Department of Vermont. Douglas Ramos, Sr., Department of Virginia. Tommy Hayes, Department of West Virginia. Denise Rohan, Department of Wisconsin. Ronald Wood, Department of Wyoming. *(Applause)*

...At this time National Commander Wong resumed the Chair.

Presentation: National Emergency Fund Awards

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The National Emergency Fund is perhaps one of the most visible ways we demonstrate our devotion to mutual helpfulness to our

fellow Legionnaires. But I don't know how many times I have heard longtime Legionnaires mention that have just now heard of the National Emergency Fund. Departments are encouraged to assign, or better yet, seek volunteers to be department NEF coordinators who can travel and assist fellow Legion members in the processing and submission of NEF applications. In this way, we can help ensure that our Legion family members are assisted during a most troubling and challenging time.

During this challenge year, we distributed a total of $195,922 to 150 American Legion family members, and 13 American Legion posts for the disasters experienced in 2011-2012. We also raised $223,961 and currently have three million dollars available for those in need. It's great to know that when a Legion member needs help, the Legion family will step up and give without reservation. And it is because of your continued giving that we are able to sustain this fund. I think we all deserve a round of applause for each other. Thank you. *(Applause)*

Those department commanders who were the top fundraisers in their respective categories based on membership size and amount raised will be presented a plaque. We have nine department commanders being recognized today. At this time, we will present their plaques. *...National Vice Commander Sheets assumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SHEETS: The six department commanders who are being recognized as the top fundraisers in their respective category, and they are: David M. Hicks, Department of Illinois. Larry J. Abshire, Department of Louisiana. Melvin G. Smullen, Department of Maryland. George Cyboron, Department of Nebraska. Kerrie G. Gill, Sr., Department of Pennsylvania. Francis J. Killay, Department of Vermont.

There are three department commanders who met and exceeded the NEF challenge by per capita and they were: Phil Youngblood, Department of Georgia. Jeanette Rae, Department of Nevada. W. Michael Bowen, Department of New York. *(Applause)*

Three departments were sent a certificate for meeting their per capita challenge of 100 percent, and they were: The Department of Alabama; Department of Arkansas; Department of Mississippi. Congratulations.

Thank you for your hard work and ensuring Legion family members in local communities know where to turn during a natural disaster. So, 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 take of our own when they need help. At this time I would ask those departments that would like to present checks for the National Emergency Fund to come forward and make your presentations now.

CHAIRMAN BESSON (IL): Commander, I would like to start this donation off from my local post in Stonington, Illinois with a check in the amount of $500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): Mr. Commander, on behalf of the Department of Ohio and Charities, Inc. Incorporated, I want to start you off with a check for $10,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MN): Commander, on behalf of the great state of Minnesota we have a check for $3,000.

NEC MEMBER KILE (WV): Mr. Commander, on behalf of the great Southern Caucus, I have two checks, one for NEF for $2,411, and one for Operation Comfort Warriors for $2,410.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ND): On behalf of the Department of North Dakota, I have a check for $1,415 for the National Emergency Fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (SC): On behalf of the Department of South Carolina $1709.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MT): Post 21 of the Big Sky Department of Montana, hosted the Fun Days Golf Tournament between Nevada, Idaho and Montana this year, and after three days of fun we came up with a check for $1,000 for the National Emergency Fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AK): Commander, from the great state of Alaska, $1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NH): Mr. Commander, from the Department of New Hampshire family, I have a check here for $720.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IA): From the great Department of Iowa, I have check here for the NEF for $2,000.

DELEGATE GILL (PA): Commander Wong, Kerrie Gill, past department commander from the great Department of Pennsylvania, I have a check for $51,313.27 which brings our total to over $56,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MI): Commander Wong, on behalf of the Department of Michigan, I have a check for $2,000.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GOTH (MO): Commander, I'm Kenny Goth from the great state of Missouri, and we're proud to give to the National Emergency Fund $7,630.23.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (VT): On behalf of the Green Mountain State, Department of Vermont, we have two checks totaling $700.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BOWEN (NY): Mr. Commander, W. Michael Bowen, delegation chairman from the great state of New York, home of junior Past National Commander Richard M. Pedro, are proud to give you a check for $50,000 for the NEF. *(Applause) ...At this time National Commander Wong resumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you very much. We'll get the announcement shortly.

When The American Legion chose USAA to be it preferred provider of insurance and financial services in 2010, a few Legionnaires who were already USAA members like myself, probably said, "What took so long?"

After all, the two organizations have so much in common that it just seemed like a natural fit. The American Legion was founded in 1919 by World War I veterans looking to solve a problem: Care for the sick and wounded of the war and their families. Well, USAA was founded in 1922 by World War I veterans seeking to solve a problem: To provide automobile insurance for officers whose lifestyles were deemed too risky. USAA holds strong to his mission of facilitating the financial security of military families and its core values of service, loyalty, honesty and integrity. USAA is celebrating its 90th anniversary this year. Please turn your attention to the monitors for a video about this milestone. ... *At this time the delegation viewed a video. (Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Before joining USAA in 1994, Major General Joe Robles had a decorated 28 year Army career. He was one of the few to rise from private to major general, serving from Vietnam through Iraq, with assignments that included commanding general of the Army's 1st Infantry Division and director of the Army budget. He was known as the blue-collar general for the connection he had with the troops. General Robles served as CFO of USAA for nearly 13 years before becoming CEO and president in 2007. He has since led USAA to its best performance ever. In 2009, *The Christian Science Monitor* named Robles the Number One Veteran in Business. He was inducted into the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome General Joe Robles.

Address: Major General (Ret.) Josue 'Joe' Robles, United States Army
President and CEO, USAA

How are you all today? Well, thank you so much, Commander Wong. What a privilege to join you here at your 94th National Convention of The American Legion. When I was on active duty in the Army, we had a truism that still rings true today: the Legion is the gold standard for veterans advocacy. *(Applause)*

As you have just heard, The American Legion and USAA have a lot in common. Two years ago our two organizations became officially connected when USAA was named the preferred provider of financial services to Legionnaires. For those of you who are longtime USAA members, and to those of you who have just recently joined, let me first say thank you for your membership and thank you for your service.

In recent months there's been a lot of talk about the one percent and the 99 percent. But I have a different one percent in mind. It's the same one percent that The American Legion has been standing up for since 1919. I'm talking of course about the less than one percent of our citizens who have served their country in the military. I think we'll be hearing a lot more about this one percent the next few years, as more of our brave service men and women return home from dusty battlefields to rejoin civilian life. Over the next decade as operations in Iraq and Afghanistan draw down, the U.S. military is projected to shrink by an estimated 100,000 troops to an end strength of 1.3 million.

As you have know doubt heard, the defense budget is also going under the knife with a projected reduction of 31 percent in planned spending over the next 10 years. In the words of my favorite social philosopher, Yogi Berra, "It feels like déjà vu all over again." In the aftermath following the fall of the Berlin Wall in November of 1989, and the end of the Cold War, I was director of the Army budget in the Pentagon. We were faced with finding ways to slice the defense budget by 34 percent. There was also a significant reduction in troops from 2.1 million to 1.3 million. We've been there before.

Cuts in defense contributed $820 billion to deficit reduction. Back then the pundits called it the down payment on the peace dividend. Today a lot of people are anticipating another big peace dividend as we reduce up to a trillion dollars in defense outlays over the next ten years. Is this true? Can we really expect a peace dividend? Well, if you define the peace dividend as borrowing less to spend less, then yes, history is about to repeat itself. But our leaders have their work cut out for them. They have to consider ways to make the right cuts while preserving our national security and the readiness of the force.

As they struggle to find this balance, like I did years ago, I hope they will keep in mind three major imperatives: One. Make sure we're prepared to defend against future threats to our national security. Imperative number two: Understand that an investment in the military is an investment in America. And three, do everything we can to ease the reintegration of our returning veterans into civilian society. *(Applause)*

Let me briefly explore each of these imperatives, starting with making sure we're prepared for future threats. We've seen this pattern many times in the past hundred years: Ramp up for war, then ramp down for peace. But the truth is, it always takes a little while to ramp back up to fighting strength, and while we have done it repeatedly over this last century, each time a little more risk is induced in the equation, and we've got to be extremely careful. After the Cold War, many said we wouldn't be fighting conventional wars again, so we didn't need a conventional force. They were wrong. Iraq and Afghanistan have stretched our resources very thinly. Sure, the nature of the enemy has changed, as have the tactics of the enemy, but we don't always know where the next big threat will develop, whether it be in a jungle, whether it be in a desert or whether it be on the open plains or urban area. So, we have to be very careful as they slash defense outlays

and cut troops, to make sure we don't cut too deeply and find ourselves vulnerable to the next big threat.

The second imperative is to understand that an investment in the military is an investment in America. People sometimes forget that while the primary mission of the military is national security and national defense, there are other key benefits to our society that are presented by the military. One is during natural disasters. As you just articulated, and awarded some your folks for helping toward the natural disaster cause and participating, the military is always there. They're always at the front edge of the encounter and the disaster, just like it was seven years ago and one day during Hurricane Katrina where the first responders were not necessarily FEMA, but the Army and National Guard and other service personnel who acted first and acted decisively to save lives and protect property. That scenario is being played out again in Southeast Louisiana as we speak right now. Hurricane Isaac is making a lot of people evacuate their homes. With water damage and all kinds of things going on, we know that the military will play a front and center role in this disaster.

Another important military contribution to American society is the development of citizen leaders. The founding fathers of the military though of the military as a citizens army, not necessarily a professional fighting force. The idea is they would serve their country in time of need and then blend back into society. Today our all volunteer military is a variation on the theme of a citizens army. Some are making the military a career, but others choosing to return sooner to civilian life and resume their civilian careers, which is fortunate for the rest of us because they bring with them some of the finest leadership and technical skills in our society, and they seed those skills through the halls of business, education, law, medicine and politics.

I'll just digress for a minute. When I was commander of the Big Red One, at that time we a force structure that looked like this: Two active duty brigades and one what they called the round out brigade. My round out brigade was from the South Carolina National Guard. A great historic outfit. But as we were getting ready to go for a national training center deployment, we had to spend a lot of time at home station training, so the commander of the South Carolina Brigade spent a lot of time at Fort Riley, Kansas where the Big Red One was stationed at that time, went through a lot of training exercises to get ready for the deployment to the national training center. He was a lawyer in a big law firm in Columbia, South Carolina. And I could see he was getting a lot of pressure from his bosses about missing so much work. So I had a simple communication for them: You should be paying us, the U.S. military, for training your brigade commander in the art of leadership, in the art of decision making, and things that he can use in his business, because we spent a lot of time and a lot of energy training him. I think they got the point. The point is, that we, the military, do a bang-up job of training people to be leaders in society as well as in the military. *(Applause)*

As we way the kind of cuts and investments we need to make, let's take into account all the additional benefits of the military, which brings me to my third imperative.

We need to do everything we can to ease the transition of returning servicemembers back into civilian life. A recent Pugh Research Center study highlighted what many of us already knew. Transitioning back into the civilian world isn't always easy, especially after a prolonged conflict. Nearly half of recent vets, 44 percent, say they had difficulty readjusting to civilian life. And no wonder, it's harder for vets, especially younger vets, to find a civilian job right now. They're also facing financial struggles that are new to them, like paying for health insurance and finding and locating health insurance. And many are returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with wounds both obvious and not obvious. These are wars in which a higher than average percentage of servicemembers experienced combat. So it should come as no surprise that 45 percent of recent vets, 45 percent, have filed for the veterans disability. The statistics are pretty staggering for post-9/11 veterans.

Twenty percent suffer concussions; tens of thousands have experienced traumatic brain injuries; some 1,600 recent vets had had limbs amputated, and according to the Pugh study, 49 percent of post-9/11 combat veterans say they suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome, PTSD.

With all these challenges, it's up to the rest of us to facilitate their transition to civilian life. Companies can do more to hire veterans. At USAA we make it our goal, as you heard in the tape, that one out of every four employees we hire, is a veteran or a military spouse. And we look at their application before we look at anybody else's application. After they're hired, companies can accommodate their physical and mental injuries by providing things like flexible schedules, job mentoring, and time off for treatment and counseling. Other public and private initiatives will play critical roles in helping our servicemembers reintegrate back into the civilian world. Initiatives like the Joining Forces Initiative, excuse me, the Hiring Heroes Act, and of course the program that is near and dear to The American Legion, The American Legion's Economic Commission.

As you can see, today's so-called peace dividend is a little more complicated than some might think. Certainly in a time of massive deficits the military will have to make some real budget adjustments. But I hope our leaders will address the cuts in a way that will not sacrifice the readiness of the country, or the incredible contributions of the one percent who have done and will continue to do so much for so many.

And finally as I walk off the stage, I want to thank all of you for what you do for veterans, your strong advocacy, your passionate advocacy, duty first. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Another bit of good news. Total NEF donations for today, $132,987.50. Thank you. For the Convention the total now is $137,323. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

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

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HALES: 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

Eighty-two members of your Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation met at 9:00 a.m. on August 26, 2012, in Marriott Ballroom, Sections 8-10, Second Floor, Indianapolis Marriott, Indianapolis, Indiana, 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 John W. Hickey Jr. (IN), Secretary; Michael D. Helm (NE), Chairman of the Hospital and Medical Services Subcommittee and K. Robert Lewis (CT), Secretary.

Subcommittee liaison assignments were as follows: Richard Dumancas (MN), 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 67 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 K. Robert Lewis (CT)
REGION 2 James Patterson (TN)
REGION 3 Michael L. Noles (GA)
REGION 4 John W. Hickey, Jr (IN)
REGION 5 Scott F. McKee (CA)

The Convention Committee recommended that such a Committee be appointed for this purpose to serve the Ninety-Fourth National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation.

The 109 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.....78
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved.....15
Referred to the Standing Commission 10
Received and Recorded 0
Rejected 6

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 10 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. 93: Strategic Capital Investment Planning (SCIP) Program
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Strategic Capital Investment Planning (SCIP) program is a ten-year capital plan designed to address VA's most critical infrastructure needs within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) and National Cemetery Administration (NCA); and

WHEREAS, The SCIP plan evaluated gaps associated with space, access/workload, condition, safety, security, energy and other gap data needing to be reduced with Major Construction, Minor Construction, Non-Recurring Maintenance (NRM), Enhanced-Use Leasing, Sharing, and Other Investments and Disposal; and

WHEREAS, The SCIP plan has identified 4,808 capital projects that will be necessary to close gaps over a ten-year period with a cost between $53 and $65 billion with a current facility condition assessment (FCA) deficiency cost of $10 billion; and

WHEREAS, The SCIP Plan does not include activation costs for facilities, which include staffing Full-Time Employee Equivalents (FTEE) and office furniture, which will be additional costs incurred by the Veteran Integrated Service Network (VISN), VA Medical Center and allocated by other VA appropriations; and

WHEREAS, The Government Accountability Office (GAO) report in January, 2011, *Realignment Progressing, but Greater Transparency about Future Priorities is Needed*, recommended, "VA annually provide to Congress the full results of its SCIP process and any subsequent capital planning efforts, including details on estimated costs of future projects"; and

WHEREAS, Under VA's Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) planning process, The American Legion urged Congress to annually appropriate sufficient funds to fund the plan, however, VA was not given the $1 billion appropriation as intended; and

WHEREAS, Funding for VA's Major and Minor Construction Programs have been consistently targeted for reductions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges Congress to provide increased appropriations annually to address Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Construction deficiencies and gaps identified by VA's Strategic Capital Investment Planning (SCIP) program; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That VA include activation costs in their future SCIP cost projections and allocations so VA's budget will not have to offset this lack of national funding; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That VA continue to be transparent about SCIP progress by publicly posting information about projects and costs on an annual basis.

Resolution No. 94: The Department of Veterans Affairs Pharmacy Benefits
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) basic Medical Benefits Package includes prescription drugs and supplies; and

WHEREAS, VA has experienced unprecedented demand for prescription drugs since open enrollment in 1998; and

WHEREAS, By law (Public Law (P. L.) 101-508 and P. L. 106-117) VA must charge veterans a co-payment for each 30-day or less supply of medication provided on an outpatient basis for the treatment of a non-service-connected condition; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act (P. L. 106-117) authorized VA to increase the co-payment amount and to establish an annual cap on the amount of medication co-payment charged; and

WHEREAS, The amount of the medication co-payment and the annual cap may be changed on an annual basis; and

WHEREAS, VA increased the amount of the co-payment from $2.00 to $7.00 dollars effective February 4, 2002; and from $7.00 to $8.00 in 2005; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion opposed the pharmacy co-payment increases citing alternative options; and

WHEREAS, The Office of Inspector General reported an audit of VA regarding pharmacy co-payment levels and restrictions on filling privately written prescriptions for priority group 7 veterans in December 2000; and

WHEREAS, This report raised the issue that the indirect cost of re-writing private prescriptions that are filled by VA physicians can exceed the direct cost of the prescriptions themselves; and

WHEREAS, VA's policy to fill only prescriptions written by VA physicians and the processes that have been developed to comply with this policy affects all veterans receiving or eligible to receive VA health care; and

WHEREAS, VA has been unable to provide all enrolled veterans with services in a timely manner and this has generated interest in filling prescriptions from outside providers; and

WHEREAS, Various legislative proposals have been offered to grant VA the authority to provide veterans with pharmaceuticals prescribed by physicians or other health care professionals who have no affiliation with VA; and

WHEREAS, VA is a managed health care system that requires enrollment; and

WHEREAS, Authorizing VA to fill prescriptions from a private sector physician without the veteran enrolling would fundamentally change the system; and

WHEREAS, VA provides medications and pharmaceutical supplies to veterans, with limited exceptions, only in the course of providing medical care; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion oppose significant pharmacy co-payment increases at the expense of veteran beneficiaries, in lieu of seeking alternative funding sources, such as Mandatory Funding and Medicare Reimbursement, that would generate and provide VA with more adequate system-wide funding; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support the provision of VA Pharmacy Benefits to enrolled veterans only when prescribed by an authorized VA physician or provider in the course of providing them medical care.

Resolution No. 95: Environmental Exposures
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

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 and locations 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, On October 31, 2011, the Institute of Medicine released a report on the long-term health consequences from exposure to burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan, and currently determined that there is insufficient evidence at this point, but recommended

further longitudinal studies over time from to deployment the Joint Base Balad over many years to determine incidences of chronic diseases; and

WHEREAS, The importance of developing a comprehensive policy that allows for maximum flexibility to respond to new research as it becomes apparent in the timeliest and most proactive manner possible is recognized; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, 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 within the Institute of Medicine (IOM) on all locations provided by the DoD; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That veterans reporting to 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. 96: Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

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 Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, 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. 97: Protection of Religious Rights and Ceremonies at National Cemetery Administration (NCA) National and State Cemeteries
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

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 (VSOs) have challenged this policy in the United States District Court; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, 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. 98: Provide the Department of Veterans Affairs the Ability to Purchase Medications Located Outside the United States
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, 41 U.S.C. Sections 10a-10d prohibits the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) from purchasing pharmaceutical products manufactured in 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 Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion petition Congress to enact legislation to provide the Department of Veterans Affairs authority to purchase needed pharmaceuticals, manufactured in United States Food & Drug Administration (FDA) approved facilities located outside the United States.

Resolution No. 99: Increase the Transparency of the Veterans Benefits Administration's (VBA) Claims Processing
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

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, Even though bonuses for Senior Executive Service (SES) employees in the Veterans' Benefits Administration (VBA) have decreased from Fiscal Years 2009 to 2011, bonuses still average around $14,000 for SES employees in the VBA 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 Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, 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, That 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, That bonuses for VA senior executive staff be tied to qualitative and quantitative performance measures developed by VA.

Resolution No. 100: Oppose Legislation Authorizing Legion-Accredited Representatives to Develop Claims Directly on Behalf of the Department of Veterans Affairs

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, There are almost 23 million veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Currently, there are approximately 650,000 veterans who have some type of action pending on their claims by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, Approximately 168,000 of those claims are over six months old; and

WHEREAS, In addition, there is a growing backlog of pending appeals, which is now over 169,000 cases, as well as approximately 18,000 remanded cases at the Appeals Management Center; and

WHEREAS, Appeals are, by definition, among the oldest claims in the system and reflect the claimant's belief that they have not received a fair or proper decision; and

WHEREAS, The nation's veteran population is dying at a rate of over 1,300 veterans a day; and

WHEREAS, Proposed legislation to reduce the backlog of veteran's claims at VA was previously introduced in the United States House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, Under currently proposed legislation, a pilot program, establishing an official federally funded arrangement between County Veteran Service Officers and VA in five states (California, Florida, Ohio, South Carolina, and Texas), with the potential of expanding to other states upon the request of a County Veterans Service Officer in such a state, would be created in order to eliminate the backlog of claims for veterans benefits; and

WHEREAS, Many County Veterans Service Officers are, in fact, accredited representatives of The American Legion and employed by local municipalities; and

WHEREAS, The proposed legislation would allow the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to choose a County Veterans Service Office for development of a claim based upon the office's geographical proximity to the claimant; and

WHEREAS, County Veterans Service Officers are already working long hours to assist veterans and eligible dependents in the application for, administration of, or receipt of benefits under any federal, state, or county veterans benefits program; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, under this program, would refer claims to the County Veterans Service Officer for specific development as specified by the Secretary; and

WHEREAS, Claims submitted to the County Veterans Service Officer under this program would be treated, for receipt of claim purposes, as if submitted to VA; and

WHEREAS, VA referrals to a County Service Officer imply a dual role, that of advocate for the veteran and VA adjudicator of the veteran all at the same time; and

WHEREAS, This dual role would essentially make the County Service Officer a quasi VA employee, creating an inherent conflict of interest between the County Service Officer's role as a veterans advocate and his/her function as a quasi employee of VA; and

WHEREAS, VA referrals could jeopardize the veteran-service officer confidentiality and even violate the Privacy Act and Power of Attorney relationship; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion adamantly oppose any federal legislation requiring an accredited representative of The American Legion to develop claims on behalf of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under a contractual arrangement between VA and County or State government or under any other arrangement where the representative would be acting in an official capacity directly on behalf of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Resolution No. 101: Clarification of "Service in Vietnam" for the Purpose of Agent Orange Presumption
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has begun to implement a General Counsel opinion that impacts negatively on the eligibility of veterans who served their country during a time of war; and

WHEREAS, Until most recently, VA awarded service connection on a presumptive basis for all individuals who served on the Republic of Vietnam soil and also those who served in the territorial waters of Vietnam, thus recognizing such service as service in the Republic of Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, Congress in its plain language included a definition of "Service in Republic of Vietnam" in the most general of terms; "performed active military, naval or air service in the Republic of Vietnam during the period beginning on January 9, 1962, and ending on May 7, 1975," so as to plainly be deemed an intent of inclusion, rather than exclusion; and

WHEREAS, Succeeding interpretations in 38 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and General Counsel precedent opinion (VAOPGCPREC) prior to VAOPGCPREC 27-97 have considered service in a "naval" capacity as service in the offshore or territorial waters of the Republic of Vietnam, as included in the category of "exposed" to Agent Orange, and, therefore, included in those eligible for presumptive consideration; and

WHEREAS, The plain language and sentence structure of the statute is expanded in 38 CFR 3.307(a)6(iii) to include restrictive terminology which was further supported and confirmed in VAOPGCPREC 27-97; and

WHEREAS, The sentence structure and plain meaning of even the restrictive language can be interpreted to include "service in the territorial waters offshore" as "service in the Republic of Vietnam;" as "territorial waters" would be considered to be within the boundaries of the Republic of Vietnam; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion seek legislation to plainly identify and further clarify "service in the Republic of Vietnam beginning January 9, 1962 and ending on May 7, 1975" to include those who served in the territorial waters offshore, as this was clearly the original intent of the statute; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That those individuals who served in "other locations," who can show their condition of service-involved duty or visitation in the Republic of Vietnam, shall also be included under the definition of those exposed to Agent Orange and the resultant presumptive conditions.

Resolution No. 102: Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCS)
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, A Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) is a health care site in a fixed position that is geographically distinct from the parent medical facility; and

WHEREAS, A CBOC can be a site that is operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, A CBOC site can also be contracted since the Veterans' Health Care Eligibility Reform Act, Public Law 104-262, significantly enhanced VA's sharing authority so that it may now be used to contract for primary care and/or for a CBOC; and

WHEREAS, Since 1995, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) of the Department of Veterans Affairs has activated hundreds of new CBOCs to more efficiently and effectively serve eligible veterans and provide care in the most appropriate setting; and

WHEREAS, The establishment of CBOCs is subject to multiple criteria including the development of a CBOC business plan and application of national CBOC criteria, VA Central Office approval and notification of Congress, the availability of funds within the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN), and applicable federal statutes and VA regulations; and

WHEREAS, A CBOC must have the necessary professional medical staff, access to diagnostic testing and treatment capability, and referral arrangements needed to ensure continuity of health care for currently and potentially eligible veteran patients; and

WHEREAS, The VISN Network remains the focal point for CBOC planning, allowing decisions regarding needs and priorities to be made in the context of local market circumstances; and

WHEREAS, CBOC proposals must meet minimum uniform criteria and standards to ensure consistency nation-wide; and

WHEREAS, There has been a major shift in the delivery of mental health services away from inpatient care and towards outpatient care; and

WHEREAS, There has not been a commensurate shift in resources to support the necessary continuum of outpatient care; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion affirm its support for the development of Community-Based Outpatient Clinics that meet established criteria as a means of improving veterans access to high quality health care services in the most appropriate setting and in a cost-effective manner; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue to monitor the incorporation of mental health services as an integral component in the planning, development, and activation of CBOCs to promote reasonable access to services,

and to ensure sufficient resources and capacity at CBOCs to meet the mental health needs of the local veteran population.

Resolution No. 103: Exempt Purple Heart and Medal of Honor Recipients from VA Prescription Co-Payment
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended; Consolidated with Resolution No. 211 (IL))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Under the priority category system at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers, those who were awarded the Purple Heart have been singled out as a special group of veterans deserving special consideration for their service and sacrifice to their country; and

WHEREAS, This special group of Purple Heart recipients has been placed in Priority Group Three; and

WHEREAS, Under the Caregiver Bill, veterans that were awarded the Medal of Honor were placed into Priority Group Three; and

WHEREAS, Priority Group Three veterans do not have to make any co-payments for any of their inpatient or outpatient care; and

WHEREAS, These same veterans, if they are rated under 50% service-connected disabled or receive prescriptions for a non-service connected condition are charged an $8 co-payment for each 30 day supply of medication; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to exempt all those who were the Purple Heart and/or the Medal of Honor and are enrolled in the VA health care system, from any co-payment for prescription drugs.

Resolution No. 104: Gulf War Illnesses
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Approximately 700,000 members of the United States Armed Forces were deployed to the Southwest Asia Theater of Operations during the Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, More than 40,000 women served in theater during the Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, Approximately fifteen percent of the Armed Forces today are women and that percentage is likely to grow in the coming years; and

WHEREAS, The vast majority of Gulf War veterans are in good health, thousands of Gulf War veterans nevertheless suffer from unexplained physical symptoms known as "Gulf War veteran illnesses"; and

WHEREAS, Over 200 scientific studies are investigating these illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Few of the aforementioned studies are focused exclusively on the illnesses experienced by women Gulf War veterans; and

WHEREAS, Misleading information about Gulf War veterans illnesses has spread on the Internet and through the media, and this information has caused a great deal of misunderstanding regarding the severity and prevalence of Gulf War veterans illnesses; and

WHEREAS, The National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine is currently preparing reports that evaluate the nature, the likely causes and the Federal Government's response to Gulf War veterans illnesses; and

WHEREAS, These reports directly affect Department of Veterans Affairs compensation programs for Gulf War veterans illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Several independent expert scientific committees and organizations have stated that a number of suspected causes of Gulf War veterans illnesses are not likely associated with those illnesses, whereas others are more likely associated with those illnesses; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Veterans Affairs established a committee comprised of doctors, scientists, Gulf War veterans and veteran service organization representatives to provide guidance and advice on future Gulf War-related research efforts; and

WHEREAS, Pyridostigmine bromide was used by the United States and some coalition troops as a nerve agent pre-treatment during the Gulf War although the Food and Drug Administration had not yet approved the drug for that use and some researchers contend that pyridostigmine bromide may be associated with Gulf War veterans illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Several medical studies have found that the unexplained physical symptoms reported by Gulf War veterans are similar to other medically unexplained symptom syndromes like chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and irritable bowel syndrome; and

WHEREAS, The President of the United States signed into law legislation amending the Gulf War undiagnosed illness law (title 38, United States Code, section 1117) to include medically unexplained disabilities such as chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, and irritable bowel syndrome; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's contract with a medical consultant from the University of Connecticut proved invaluable in helping the organization strive towards its goal of serving Gulf War veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs to devote the appropriate resources to finding effective medical treatments to alleviate the unexplained physical symptoms of Gulf War veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Veterans Affairs fund more scientific studies that exclusively investigate the health of women Gulf War veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs to quickly implement any reasonable recommendations contained in Institute of Medicine reports, or recommendations offered by the newly established Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans Illnesses, regarding its Gulf War veterans programs and research; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the scientific community to focus its efforts on the most likely causes of Gulf War veterans illnesses and to refrain from supporting or encouraging investigations of risk factors that are not likely related to Gulf War veterans illnesses; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the Department of Defense to not use investigational drugs on U.S. troops without their informed consent; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs to closely monitor the implementation of the changes to title 38, United States Code, section 1117, to ensure proper application of the law at the Department of Veterans Affairs regional office level; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Veterans Affairs continue to develop the Gulf Registry; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion will continue to consult with medical experts from time to time in order to ensure the effectiveness of its advocacy.

Resolution No. 105: Support Presumption of Service Connection for Hepatitis C
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C is an easily transmittable blood-borne virus, which can result in long-term, potentially fatal health problems; and

WHEREAS, Because of the exposure risk factors directly related to military service, veterans have a much higher incidence of hepatitis C than the general population; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) estimates 10 to 20 percent of veterans currently have hepatitis C, compared to under 2 percent for the general population; and

WHEREAS, Vietnam veterans are the group most directly affected by the hepatitis C virus; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans who contracted hepatitis C 25 or 30 years ago or more in service are now showing signs of severe liver disease and 52 percent of the liver transplants done by VA are for veterans with hepatitis C; and

WHEREAS, In 85 percent of cases, no acute symptoms would have shown up at the time of infection with hepatitis C; and

WHEREAS, Military training and combat situations offer many opportunities for transmitting the blood-borne hepatitis virus through blood to blood contact; and

WHEREAS, No effective blood test for hepatitis C was available until 1992; and

WHEREAS, Veterans with hepatitis C who were treated for acute hepatitis during military service and who now claim service connection are generally denied by VA, because they cannot prove the current hepatitis C is related to the hepatitis noted in service; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Veterans' Appeals often rejects claims for service connection for hepatitis C, because the veteran's medical records do not show the presence of hepatitis C at time of discharge from service; and

WHEREAS, Because of the nature of this disease and the long latency period, veterans who experience certain exposure risk factors in service, such as: blood transfusion prior to 1992; exposure to blood on or through the skin or mucous membrane; hemodyalisis; experience of a needle-stick accident or medical event involving a needle, not due to the veteran's willful misconduct; a diagnosis of unexplained liver disease in service; experience of an unexplained liver dysfunction or abnormal liver test; or duty as a health-care position or specialty as prescribed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; should be accorded a statutory presumption for the purpose of establishing entitlement to service connection for hepatitis C; and

WHEREAS, Service connection for hepatitis C is important to veterans and their families, since it entitles the veteran to compensation for any disability related to the disease as well as necessary medical care; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion strongly urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to expeditiously promulgate regulations providing for presumptive service connection for hepatitis C; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to provide for a statutory presumption of service connection for hepatitis C under certain conditions in service; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Department of Veterans Affairs provide regular notification to Congress, the veterans service organizations, and veterans on new treatment modalities for hepatitis C.

Resolution No. 106: Disability and Death Pension Program
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Public Law 95-588, the Veterans and Survivors Pension Improvement Act of 1978, provided major changes in the disability and death pension program for the veterans of World War I, World War II, the Korean, Vietnam, and Gulf Wars and their surviving spouses and children; and

WHEREAS, This pension program established different guaranteed annual income levels for necessary economic support; and

WHEREAS, After extensive study, The American Legion concludes that certain inequities exist in the Improved Pension program that need to be addressed by Congress; and

WHEREAS, Under the current Death Pension program, the annual benefit rate for a surviving spouse with no income and no dependents is $8,219 or about only two thirds of the amount received by a veteran with no income and no dependents; and

WHEREAS, In addition, current regulations provide that surviving spouses are not entitled to pension benefits for the month in which the veteran dies, if they are not found eligible for death pension; and

WHEREAS, The majority of these surviving spouses are elderly and disabled and are living below the poverty level; and

WHEREAS, Under the current Death Pension program, the annual benefit rate for a surviving child with no income where there is no surviving spouse is $2,093 or seventeen percent of the amount received by a veteran with no income or dependents; and

WHEREAS, This limited amount may impose a severe financial hardship on the surviving child; and

WHEREAS, Under title 38, United States Code, section 1543 where the surviving child is residing with a person who is legally responsible for such child's support, the income and corpus of estate of that person is countable for the purposes of determining entitlement or continued entitlement to pension benefits; and

WHEREAS, Currently, when two veterans are married to one another where both meet the disability, service and income requirements, basic pension benefits are payable only at the rate of a "veteran with one dependent," which is currently $16,051 annually; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that since each veteran in their own right meets the eligibility criteria for pension with the exception of being married to another veteran, this discriminatory provision of the law should be eliminated and each veteran should be paid at the basic pension rate of a single veteran without dependents which is $12,256, reduced by the amount of countable family income; and

WHEREAS, In the determination of annual income, payments under all Government Life Insurance programs are countable, but proceeds from fire and casualty insurance policies may be excluded; and

WHEREAS, Previous pension programs have excluded the proceeds of Government Life Insurance Policies in the determination of annual income; and

WHEREAS, Currently, the effective date of reduction or discontinuance of pension based on a change of income shall be the last day of the month in which the change occurred; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes it would lessen the financial hardship of such adjustments to pension if any such change would be made as of the last day of the calendar year in which the change occurred; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support

amendments to title 38, section 1543, United States Code, to accomplish the following:

1. **Establish the pension rates of surviving spouses at ninety percent of the rate for a veteran without dependents;**
2. **Establish the pension rate for a surviving child where there is no surviving spouse entitled at ninety percent of the rate of a veteran without dependents;**
3. **Delete the requirement that the income and corpus of estate of a person Legally responsible for the support of a surviving child be counted in the determination of annual income of such child;**
4. **Provide that when two veterans, who meet the service, disability and income requirements for pension eligibility, are married to one another, each shall be paid at the rate of a single veteran without dependents reduced by the amount of countable family income;**
5. **Exclude in the determination of annual income payments all proceeds from Government Life Insurance policies;**
6. **Change the effective date for reduction or discontinuance of pension based on a change of income from the last day of the month in which the change occurred to the last day of the calendar year in which the change occurred.**

Resolution No. 107: Recognize Operations in Lebanon (1958), Grenada (1983), and Panama (1989-1990) as Periods of War for Department of Veterans Affairs Pension Purposes

Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Subsection 11 of section 101, title 38, United States Code (USC), defines "period of war" as the Spanish-American War, Mexican Border Period, World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict, the Vietnam Era, the Gulf War and the period beginning on the date of any future declaration of war by Congress and the ending on the date prescribed by Presidential proclamation or concurrent resolution of Congress; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, USC, section 1521 (a) provides that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) shall pay pension to each veteran of a "period of war" who meets the length of service requirements specified in section 1521 (j) and who is permanently and totally disabled and who meets the income criteria in this section; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, USC, section 101 (6) recognizes that, for VA purposes, the dates for the "period of war' for the Spanish-American War (April 21, 1898, to July 4, 1902) also include service during the Philippine Insurrection, Boxer Rebellion, and service in the Moro Province from April 21, 1898, to July 5, 1903; and

WHEREAS, Operation "Blue Bat" in Lebanon, July 1, 1958, to November 1, 1958, Operation "Urgent Fury" in Grenada, October 23, 1983, and Operation "Just Cause" in Panama, December 20, 1989, to January 31, 1990, are not qualifying service for pension or benefit purposes, under title 38, USC, definition of a "period of war"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That the Congress be urged to include in the definition of "period of war" in title 38, United States Code, sections 101 (11) and 1521, the following periods – the operations in Lebanon in 1958, Grenada in 1983, and Panama in 1989-1990 for the purpose of establishing entitlement to VA pension.

Resolution No. 108: Request Congress Provide the Department of Veterans Affairs Adequate Funding for Medical and Prosthetic Research
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical and Prosthetic Research Service is very productive in advancing medical knowledge and improving health care for veterans and all other citizens; and

WHEREAS, VA has developed the cardiac pacemaker, nicotine patch, the concepts that led to the Computerized Axial Tomography (CAT) scan, and other medical breakthroughs; and

WHEREAS, Basic biomedical research provides the most rational and cost-effective means of preventive health care and provides treatments and cures for many diseases; and

WHEREAS, Advances in biomedical research lead to the creation of new knowledge in biotechnology and serve as a successful model in lowering long-term health care costs; and

WHEREAS, In 1998, VA realigned its research priorities in response to recommendations of the Department's Research Realignment and Advisory Committee to better serve the needs of the veteran population; and

WHEREAS, The Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) is a venture undertaken by the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research Service to establish a national system to translate research discoveries, innovation, effective and efficient diagnostic and treatment strategies into patient care; and

WHEREAS, QUERI is a comprehensive, data driven, outcome-based quality improvement program that will ensure excellence in all areas of Veterans Health Administration medical care: in-patient, out-patient and long-term care; and

WHEREAS, Continued research is urgently needed for many diseases if medical science is to overcome cancer, heart disease, AIDS, new strains of tuberculosis, mental illness, hepatitis and others, to help spare veterans and citizens from prolonged illness and permanent disabilities; and

WHEREAS, The need to reduce the nation's budget deficit must not compromise the efforts to maintain and improve health productivity and develop new preventive and therapeutic procedures through the Department of Veterans Affairs and other government agencies; and

WHEREAS, It is essential that Congress and the Administration support strong medical and prosthetic research programs within VA so that veterans and all citizens continue to benefit from the exceptional research capability of the Department; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support adequate funding for VA biomedical research activities; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress and the Administration encourage acceleration in the development and initiation of needed research on conditions that significantly affect veterans - such as prostate cancer, addictive disorders, trauma and wound healing, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), rehabilitation, and others - jointly with the Department of Defense, the National Institutes of Health, other federal agencies, academic institutions and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Resolution No. 109: The Department of Veterans Affairs Mental Health Services
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) has a substantial mental health population; and

WHEREAS, According to the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards, of the returning Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) veterans who have sought care at VHA facilities, mental health problems are the second most common medical problem of these war veterans; and

WHEREAS, There has been significant restructuring of VA mental health services during the past several years; and

WHEREAS, This restructuring has often resulted in a downsizing of in-patient-base care, and the shift of treatment programs from residential-based to ambulatory-based programs; and

WHEREAS, There has not been a commensurate re-investment of resources in alternative treatment modalities to maintain community-based mental health services to treat veterans who were de-institutionalized by the closure of inpatient programs; and

WHEREAS, During the past several years, the number of veterans provided specialized substance abuse treatment has declined, while the funding for such treatment has been significantly decreased; and

WHEREAS, Since the restructuring, the Veterans Health Administration now has more mental health patients seeking treatment with fewer mental health providers; and

WHEREAS, Veterans continue to need increased access to mental health services, including, but not limited to, Community Based Outpatient Clinics, Mental Health Intensive Case Management, Substance Abuse Disorder Programs, and Compensated Work Therapy Programs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion shall monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the Mental Health Strategic Plan; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to annually appropriate sufficient funds for the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure comprehensive mental health services are available to veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to provide annual oversight of VA's mental health services.

Resolution No. 110: Department of Veterans Affairs Life Insurance Program
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, No regular government life insurance program was available to veterans entering and leaving service in the period January 1957 to September 1965; and

WHEREAS, Veterans of the Vietnam War serving on active duty during the period beginning September 29, 1965, through May 7, 1975, were covered under either the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program or, later, the Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) program; and

WHEREAS, Upon discharge or separation from service, individuals had only 120 days within which to convert their government life insurance to a private commercial policy, with Veterans' Group Life Insurance not becoming available until August 1974, with a retroactive open period to 1970 for unconverted active or inactive SGLI policies, but not applying to the major portion of the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, Many of these veterans experienced extraordinarily severe readjustment problems and were often financially and/or emotionally unable to take advantage of the conversion provision within the 120-day time limit after discharge from service; and

WHEREAS, Many Vietnam War veterans who did not convert their government life insurance to a private policy, as well as veterans of the World War II and Korean War period whose National Service Life Insurance (NSLI) polices may have lapsed, and veterans of the Cold War period of 1957-1965 who had no government life insurance coverage for their families' protection, but because of disability may not be able to purchase commercial insurance; and

WHEREAS, There is precedent for the reopening of the National Service Life Insurance program in that it was previously reopened in 1965-1966 for World War II and Korean War veterans with disabilities who had been eligible to apply for NSLI on or after October 8, 1940, through December 31, 1956, (disabilities could have been service-connected and/or non-service-connected); and

WHEREAS, Many such eligible veterans, due to financial hardships and problems associated with their service-connected disabilities and adjustments to civilian life, or to notification problems resulting from VA procedures, did not apply for NSLI service-disabled insurance within the prescribed eligibility period; and

WHEREAS, Since 1951, veterans granted a service-connected disability and who are otherwise in good health may purchase up to a basic $10,000 of NSLI service-disabled insurance at standard rates within two years from the date the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) notifies them of the grant of service connection (one year prior to September 1, 1991); and

WHEREAS, VA service-disabled life insurance does not permit an eligibility period for increases in previously rated service-connected disabilities, but only for new ratings; and

WHEREAS, Those who may now be able to afford insurance at standard NSLI-disabled rates, and who still would meet the underwriting criteria, cannot apply due to the statutory bar; and

WHEREAS, The continuous inflation of the past four decades has rendered the maximum face value of $10,000 for basic NSLI coverage totally inadequate; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion sponsor and support legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the reopening of the National Service Life Insurance program for a minimum of one year for all disabled veterans within underwriting criteria similar to that of the Veterans Reopened Program of 1965-1966, to include a similar reopened period for the service-disabled insurance program for those veterans in good health except for their service-connected disabilities, regardless of the date of their service-connected rating, and that such reopened issues be at a maximum optional face value at a level that appropriately reflects current inflationary experience.

Resolution No. 111: Extend the Presumptive Period for Service Connection for Gulf War Veterans with Undiagnosed Illness

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Thousands of Gulf War veterans still suffer from chronic unexplained physical symptoms; and

WHEREAS, Many service members who have served in the Southwest Asia theater since the 1991 Gulf War - including those serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom - have also been exhibiting chronic, unexplained physical symptoms; and

WHEREAS, The Gulf War Era has not been officially concluded; and

WHEREAS, There has recently been some progress in research on the long-term health effects of many of the agents Gulf War veterans were potentially exposed to during the Gulf War, but numerous symptoms experienced by sick Gulf War veterans are still not well understood, the causes of such symptoms remain elusive and answers could likely remain evasive for some time; and

WHEREAS, Additional research into the long-term health effects of exposures is needed, a fact confirmed by the Department of Veterans Affairs Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses; and

WHEREAS, The health effects from the Gulf Wars may not manifest until years after the servicemembers' service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge that legislation be enacted to reinstate and extend the presumptive period for service connection of Gulf War veterans with undiagnosed illnesses indefinitely.

Resolution No. 112: Oppose any Reduction of Eligibility Criteria for Department of Veterans Affairs Per Diem Payments to State Veterans Homes
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, State Veterans Homes were founded for indigent and disabled Civil War veterans beginning in the late 1800s and have continued to serve subsequent generations of veterans for over one hundred years; and

WHEREAS, Today, there are 133 State Veterans Homes facilities in 49 states and Puerto Rico with over 30,255 total beds providing nursing home, hospital and domiciliary care; with more capacity being added annually; and

WHEREAS, The State Veterans Home Program has proven to be a cost-effective provider of quality care to many of the nation's veterans; and

WHEREAS, This program is an important adjunct to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) own nursing, hospital and domiciliary programs; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, authorizes VA per diem payments for veterans residing in State Veterans Homes; and

WHEREAS, There has been consideration of limiting the eligibility for inpatient long term (maintenance) care to veterans in Priority Groups 1 through 3 and Priority Group 4 veterans determined to be catastrophically disabled; and

WHEREAS, Such a change would cause thousands of veterans who are now eligible for per diem to become ineligible; and

WHEREAS, Such a change could cause financial disaster to many State Veterans Homes that now rely on VA per diem for revenue; and

WHEREAS, Such a change could result in a new population of elderly homeless veterans, especially in states that have poor Medicaid nursing home reimbursement rates; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion shall oppose any legislative proposal to reduce the eligibility criteria for VA State Veterans Homes per diem.

Resolution No. 113: Amend the Eligibility Requirements and Extend the Eligibility Time Period for Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (SDVI) program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) was founded by Congress in 1951 to provide life insurance coverage for veterans suffering only from disabilities rated by VA as being connected to their military service to the nation; and

WHEREAS, Service-connected disabled veterans are required by statute to not only be in good health except for their service-connected disability, but must apply for SDVI coverage within two years from the date of their last VA rating for a new, original, disability, with increases in prior VA disability ratings not being includible for this purpose; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans in good health except for their service-connected disabilities, and who are granted rating increases because of worsening severity in such disabilities, continue to be denied SDVI coverage at a time when it has become most needful to them, due to the requirement that SDVI eligibility periods begin only with a VA rating for a new disability and last for only two years; and

WHEREAS, Other service-disabled veterans also continue to be denied insurance, due to the strict two year time limit (from the date of their last original rating) to make application; and

WHEREAS, It continues to be the experience of veterans service organizations such as The American Legion that many service-disabled veterans remain unaware of the SDVI program despite automated VA notifications, a fact supported by VA's own casework experience and program studies, and that the insurance benefit remains inadequate and in need of enhancement; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to amend Sec. 1922(a) of title 38, United States Code, to permit that increases in VA service-connected ratings also provide a service-connected veteran with an eligibility period to apply for VA Service-Disabled Life Insurance in the same manner that ratings for new, original, disabilities presently do, and that the time period of such eligibility be increased from the current two years to a period of at least five years from the date of rating determination and notification, and that such amendment also apply to any new similar issue of VA Service-Disabled insurance that may be enacted into law.

Resolution No. 114: Radiation Exposure
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code (USC), section 1112, lists various diseases which will be presumed to be service-connected in radiation-exposed veterans; and

WHEREAS, The term "radiation-exposed veteran" is defined as a veteran who participated in a radiation-risk activity while on active duty or inactive duty for training; and

WHEREAS, The term, "radiation-risk activity" is defined as involving onsite participation in an atmospheric nuclear weapons test, or the occupation of Hiroshima or Nagasaki during the period beginning on August 6, 1945, and ending on July 1, 1946, or internment as a POW in Japan during WWII which resulted in an opportunity for radiation exposure, or participation in underground nuclear tests at Amchitka Island, Alaska prior to January 1, 1974, or service at gaseous diffusion plants at Paducah, Kentucky, Portsmouth, Ohio, or Oak Ridge, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Radiogenic diseases recognized as being presumed to be related to veteran's exposure to radiation in service-listed in title 38, Code Of Federal Regulation (CFR), section 3.309 - include various cancers that may manifest decades after exposure; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, CFR, section 3.311, requires The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to consider the circumstances of the veteran's service and make a determination of whether the veteran's disease resulted from the claimed exposure; and

WHEREAS, Such determinations are based heavily on an estimate of the veteran's probable dose exposure; and

WHEREAS, It is well documented that, because thousands of veterans who participated in the atmospheric nuclear weapons tests and various other radiation-risk activities did not have dosimetry badges, and record-keeping by the military and other Federal agencies concerning individual and group exposures was poor, current radiation dose estimates have been arbitrary, unreliable, and inaccurate; and

WHEREAS, The VA's continued use of questionable radiation dose estimates has caused the claims of thousands of radiation-exposed veterans to be denied; and

WHEREAS, Congress expressed concern about this problem in a provision of Public Law (PL) 106-419 requiring VA to conduct a two-year study of the radiation dose estimate program and report back to Congress; and

WHEREAS, Based on the lack of credible historic data as to the amount of radiation atomic veterans were actually exposed to, The American Legion believes this requirement in the regulations should be eliminated; and

WHEREAS, PL 106-398 included provisions amending the Radiation Compensation Act of 1990 to include workers in Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear weapons-related programs who were exposed to radiation, beryllium, or silica; and

WHEREAS, Over the years, thousands of veterans have been assigned duty at various DOE nuclear weapons development, testing and manufacturing facilities, such as Hanford, Washington, Oak Ridge, Tennessee and others, and would have been similarly at risk of exposure to radiation, beryllium, or silica; and

WHEREAS, The claim for a radiogenic disease or a disease related to beryllium, or silica by such veterans would be denied by VA, because their military duty does not meet the current definition of a radiation-risk activity in title 38 USC and proof of such exposure for direct service connection would be difficult if not impossible to obtain, nor do these veterans meet the eligibility criteria for benefits under the Radiation Compensation Act of 1990 as amended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion seek legislation to eliminate the radiation dose estimate requirement in claims of veterans who were exposed to ionizing radiation during their military service; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation to recognize military duty at all DOE nuclear weapons development, testing and manufacturing facilities as a "radiation-risk activity"; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation it include title 38, United States Code, those diseases recognized for benefit purposes under the Radiation Compensation Act of 1990 as amended, including those resulting from exposure to beryllium and silica.

Resolution No. 115: Extend Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Mortgage Protection Life Insurance to Service-Connected Veterans who are Permanently and Totally Disabled
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs Mortgage Protection Life Insurance is presently available to veterans entitled to the special adapted housing award under Section 2102 (a) of Title 38, United States Code; and

WHEREAS, Service-connected veterans rated as permanently and totally disabled cannot obtain Mortgage Protection Life Insurance through commercial insurance companies; and

WHEREAS, Their widows and dependents must bear an undue hardship upon the death of such veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion seek the enactment of legislation, which would extend the Veterans Administration Mortgage Protection Life Insurance to service-connected veterans who are rated as permanently and totally disabled.

Resolution No. 117: All Veterans Receive "Wartime" Benefits for Active Military Service Between February 28, 1961 and August 5, 1964
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Certain VA benefits require wartime service by veterans; and

WHEREAS, The present dates for wartime service during the Vietnam War are August 5, 1964, through May 7, 1975; and

WHEREAS, On November 10, 1997, Public Law 105-110 was signed by President Clinton; and

WHEREAS, This legislation amended the public law which established The American Legion (41 Stat. 285; 36 United States Code (USC) 45), approved September 16, 1919, by striking December 22, 1961, and inserting February 28, 1961; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always advocated the principle of equal benefits for equal service and believes that wartime service is not limited to only those who served in combat; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes the provision in section 101(29(A), title 38, USC, which limits entitlement to wartime benefits to those who served "in-country in the Republic of Vietnam" in the period February 28, 1961, to August 5, 1964, discriminates against those other veterans who served on active duty during this period, but who did not happen to have been stationed in Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, During these early years of the war in Vietnam, those serving on active duty in other parts of the world were a part of the build-up of military forces in Vietnam and were subject to transfer to Vietnam at any time; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion shall seek legislation to establish February 28, 1961, as the beginning date of the Vietnam War for VA benefit purposes.

Resolution No. 118: Revision of Work-Rate Standards for Department of Veterans Affairs Adjudicators
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The current Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) work-rate standards are based upon a series of work credits or End Products (EPs) that can be taken upon completion of work at the various stages in the processing of a claim; and

WHEREAS, This data is used to measure and evaluate each individual adjudicator's performance as well as the station's overall performance; and

WHEREAS, Under this type of system, the amount of work performed is measured in terms of the cumulative number of EPs reported without regard to whether the action taken, as indicated by the EP, was correct or proper; and

WHEREAS, Since all action – good and bad – receives the same amount of work credit, there is no incentive to do good quality work or disincentive to do poor quality work, which makes the use of these work credits prone to manipulation and abuse; and

WHEREAS, The use of a piecemeal approach to work measurement does not provide accurate or reliable information on the actual amount of work being performed, its quality, or the amount of time and resources needed to properly process a claim; and

WHEREAS, Without a fundamental change in the work measurement system, the Board of Veterans Appeals will continue to be burdened with an inordinate number of unnecessary appeals, and veterans and their families forced to endure prolonged hardship while waiting for a final decision on their claim; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion seeks legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Regional Office adjudicators shall receive work credit under a system that integrates not only the quantity of work performed, but also the quality of work performed; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That such a work credit system adequately applies negative credit to work found to be in error, whether by decision overturned on appeal, through internal reviews within the VA, such as the Systematic Technical Accuracy Review (STAR), or by any other means that are applicable.

Resolution No. 119: Veteran Treatment Courts
Origin: Maryland
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 Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, 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. 120: Include World War II Veterans in Priority Group 6 for Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Mexican War and WW I veterans were provided priority medical care on reaching advanced age; and

WHEREAS, The average age of the WW II veteran is 82.6 years; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code (USC) fails to provide reasonable care to WW II veterans who are passing away at the rate of 1000 a day; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support legislation to amend title 38, USC, to give the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) the authority to enroll WWII veterans in "Priority Group 6" for the purpose of receiving VA health care services.

Resolution No. 121: The Department of Veterans Affairs Nursing Home Capacity
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Long-Term Care (LTC) has been the subject of discussion and legislation for nearly twenty years; and

WHEREAS, In a landmark July 1984 study, Caring for the Older Veteran, it was predicted that a wave of elderly veterans had the potential to overwhelm VA's long-term care capacity; and

WHEREAS, The recommendations of the Federal Advisory Committee on the Future of Long-Term Care in its 1998 report *VA Long-Term Care at the Crossroads*, made recommendations that serve as the foundation for VA's national strategy to revitalize and reengineer long-term care services; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 106-117, the Millennium Act, enacted in November 1999, required VA to continue to ensure 1998 levels of extended care services (defined as VA nursing home care, VA domiciliary, VA home-based primary care, and VA adult day health care) in its facilities; and

WHEREAS, The Millennium Act specifically requires VA to maintain its in-house Nursing Home Care Unit (NHCU) bed capacity at the 1998 level of 13,391; however, VA has never met this mandate; and

WHEREAS, Recent General Accounting Office reports show that VA has failed to fully implement mandates of the Millennium Act that would expand non-institutional long-term care services; and

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) should be required to restore its nursing home care unit capacity as intended by Congress to the 1998 level of 13, 391; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That VA must create incentives and receive appropriate funding to maintain its nursing home care unit beds rather than abandon them to alternative sources; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That VA be prohibited from counting any but their own nursing home care unit beds for the purposes of compliance with the provisions of Public Law 106-117, the Millennium Act; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress should appropriate sufficient funds to support the provisions of the non-institutional long-term care mandates of Public Law 106-117, the Millennium Act, so that VA is not forced to reduce its nursing home care unit capacity in order to comply with said non-institutional care mandates.

Resolution No. 122: Prostate Cancer Research and Treatment
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Prostate cancer is the most common form of cancer, other than skin cancer, among men in the United States and is second only to lung cancer as a cause of cancer-related death among men; and

WHEREAS, One of six males will develop clinically significant prostate cancer in their lifetime; and

WHEREAS, The American Cancer Society recently estimated that 192,280 new cases of prostate cancer will be diagnosed while 27,360 will die within the next year; and

WHEREAS, Prostate cancer has been demonstrated to be service-connected to Agent Orange exposure and, pursuant to the Agent Orange Act of 1991, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has determined that a presumption of service connection based on exposure to herbicides used in Vietnam is warranted for prostate cancer, in that VA has found a positive association between the condition and such exposure; and

WHEREAS, Advances in biomedical research are leading to new treatments and cures for all forms of cancer, and will lower long-term health care costs; and

WHEREAS, VA is very productive in advancing medical knowledge, improving health care for veterans and all other citizens; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That federal funding for prostate cancer research, treatment, and therapies at the National Institutes of Health, Department of Defense, and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) be significantly increased and that Congress and the Administration re-double their efforts to find a cure for prostate cancer; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Veterans Health Administration increase its investment in prostate cancer clinical research by improving and accelerating clinical trials at VA hospitals and affiliated university medical centers and research programs.

Resolution No. 123: Support Legislation to Place Mariner Medal Recipients in Priority Group 3 for the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Qualified Merchant Marines are eligible for veterans benefits; and

WHEREAS, Congress authorized the Mariner's Medal, which was awarded to any seaman who while serving in a ship during the war period (World War II) was wounded, suffered physical injury, or suffered through dangerous exposure as a result of an act of enemy of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Enrollment levels for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care are set according to eight priority groups established by Congress; and

WHEREAS, Purple Heart recipients are accorded Priority Group 3 status for VA health care; and

WHEREAS, Recipients of the Merchant Medal should be accorded similar priority group status for VA health care; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support legislation that would place recipients of the Mariner Medal in the priority group 3 enrollment level for Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care.

Resolution No. 125: Means Test for Married Veterans
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, United States Code, Title 38 § 1722(b) authorizes income thresholds for veterans eligibility for VA health care benefits; and

WHEREAS, Veterans enrolling in VA health care are authorized additional income thresholds for each dependent they have in qualifying for health care benefits; and

WHEREAS, Currently a single veteran's financial means test threshold is $29,402 or less, which has remained the same; and

WHEREAS, Currently a veteran with one dependent financial means test threshold is $35,284, which has remained the same; and

WHEREAS, A veteran with one dependent, with that dependent being a veteran eligible to apply for VA health care, the financial means test threshold is also $35,284 for financial test year 2009; and

WHEREAS, A veteran married to a veteran, where both are eligible to enroll in VA health care, are penalized by the means test threshold by not having both of their honorable service recognized; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support legislation to amend Title 38, United States Code, Sections 1722(b) to increase the income threshold of a veteran married to a veteran by two times the financial means test of a single veteran for the financial test year applied for enrollment into the VA Health Care system.

Resolution No. 126: Veterans Receive Same Level of Benefits
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 229 (IL))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a membership organization founded in 1919 on the common bond of wartime service during any active U.S. Period of War; and

WHEREAS, The United States Code (U.S.C.) § 101, unfairly categorizes service members and veterans by dates of service and/or theater of operations; and

WHEREAS, Due to this injustice, veterans from different eras and theaters of operations are receiving different levels of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits based solely on their dates and locations of service, rather than their honorable service; and

WHEREAS, For example, the Caregiver and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 recently passed by both chambers of Congress created two distinct caregiver support programs – providing a stipend to caregivers of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) veterans, but not to caregivers of veterans from previous eras; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always advocated on the principle of equal benefits for equal service; and

WHEREAS, All veterans of the United States are all united by the common bond of service and all took an oath of service to preserve, protect and defend the country; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge Congress to direct the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide the same level of benefits for any veteran, regardless of the dates or theater of operations during their military service; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress review current legislation and public laws to ensure that veterans benefits are provided equitably and consistently for all veterans from the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as those veterans from previous eras and conflicts.

Resolution No. 127: Service Dogs for Injured Service Personnel and Veterans with Mental Health Conditions
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Thousands of American soldiers have sustained serious mental and physical injuries during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, Countless numbers of veterans continue to suffer from mental and physical injuries incurred on behalf of our country during prior conflicts; and

WHEREAS, In 2009, Congress authorized the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to extend benefits for the upkeep of service and guide dogs used primarily for the aid of persons with physical disabilities and psychological wounds by amending 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) Section 1714; and

WHEREAS, In the Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 National Defense Authorization Act, Congress mandated VA to conduct a five-year study on the effectiveness of service dogs for veterans with rated mental health disabilities as their primary diagnosis; and

WHEREAS, The VA does not issue a service or guide dog; and

WHEREAS, The VA will only provide a referral and once the dog has been certified, only the maintenance of the hardware with the exception of non-prescription dog food; and

WHEREAS, VA issued a proposed rule on 38 C.F.R. Part 17 to amend its policies and procedures directly related to veterans benefits and service dogs; and

WHEREAS, Veterans should have the same experience in a VA hospital as a private sector hospital with regards to the access of a service or guide dog, but currently do not; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion provided public comments on VA's Proposed Rule on Monday, August 15, 2011, with concerns such as VA does not provide Service Dogs or money for Service Dogs. VA only provides benefits to veterans that already have a service dog a VA doctor deems medically appropriate. As well as VA's selection of the standards set by the Assistance Dogs International (ADI) or the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) for certification process; and

WHEREAS, 38 U.S.C. Section 1714 currently only states that the VA "may" provide service dogs for veterans with mental illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Eligibility for a veteran being issued a service dog is loosely defined and relies on clinical judgment and criterion which is not provided in this regulation and in the proposed rule VA states, "that trained dogs may provide valuable services to veterans diagnosed with certain mental illness, at this time VA does not have any scientific data to determine, from a purely clinical standpoint, whether or when service dogs are most appropriately provided to veterans with mental illness, including post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)"; and

WHEREAS, VA is promulgating regulations that do not clearly define the original Congressional intent of 38 U.S.C. Section 1714 that VA provide the benefits outlined by said section to qualified veterans, as outlined by 38 CFR 1705, with psychological disabilities as their primary VA diagnoses; and

WHEREAS, Many agencies provide service dogs or training for service dealing with mental or psychological disabilities specifically for veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury and PTSD which are not included in the proposed rule; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge VA to clearly define regulations and current eligibility requirements for a veteran to receive a referral for mental and/or physical conditions to pass legislation for clarification and of the original intent of Congress to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as needed in order to ensure VA provides service and guide dogs to veterans with mental health illnesses; and, be it further

RESOLVED, The American Legion urge Congress to pass legislation to changed the "may" to "shall" located in 38 U.S.C. Section 1714; and, be it further

RESOLVED, The American Legion urges VA to provide outreach and education to staff and veterans regarding the guide and service dog programs' policies, procedures, and benefits; and, be it further

RESOLVED, The American Legion urges VA to mirror ADA standards or be less restrictive in regards to service and guide dogs; and, be it further

RESOLVED, The American Legion urges VA to more clearly define its regulations and current eligibility for issuance of service dogs to veterans with mental health illnesses; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That VA expand its list of agencies that can provide and accredit service dogs to veterans for the treatment of physical and mental conditions requiring the use of service and/or guide dogs, use during the three-year pilot study on the effectiveness of service dogs for mental health purposes and thereafter.

Resolution No. 128: Designate United States Air Force C-123K Transport Aircraft as Agent Orange Exposure Sites
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The levels observed in the aircraft greatly exceed the Department of Defense's (DoD) own standards for maximum permissible exposure to any dioxin contaminating interior surfaces; and

WHEREAS, Other federal agencies have reviewed the data and concurred that exposures to personnel at levels exceeding DoD recommendations are likely to have occurred; and

WHEREAS, In response to the State of Arizona and US Environmental Protection Agency environmental concerns, the USAF withdrew the aircraft from commercial resale, quarantined them and, in April 2010, ultimately took extraordinary disposal measures and smelted the remaining fleet; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated that approximately 1,500 service members, including aircrews and maintenance personnel were exposed to military herbicide-contaminated conditions on the C-123 aircraft; and

WHEREAS, Many of these personnel, still surviving, now have health problems commonly associated with herbicide exposure and have endured lengthy legal struggles to prove these problems are service-related; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs has statutory responsibility to accurately designate situations and locations that caused veterans to have been exposed to military herbicides used in Vietnam, as well as their contaminants; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion work with Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to promptly designate the C-123K aircraft, in the United States, as having been Agent Orange exposure sites to permit veterans who were aircrew or maintenance personnel to be eligible for Agent Orange-related benefits.

Resolution No. 129: The Department of Veterans Affairs Enhanced-Use Leasing
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Formerly under the provisions of Title 38, United States Code (U.S.C.), Chapter 81, the Secretary is authorized to lease real property under VA's jurisdiction or control to a private or other public entities for a term of up to 75-years; and

WHEREAS, The Enhanced-Use Leasing (EUL) activity must either: "(i) contribute to the mission of VA; be consistent with, and not adversely affect VA's mission; enhance the use(s) of the property to be leased; and be in exchange for fair consideration to VA as determined by the Secretary; or (ii) result in a demonstrable improvement in services to eligible veterans in the geographic service-delivery area in which the property is located"; and

WHEREAS, "As part the fair consideration to be provided in exchange for the EUL, the Secretary is authorized to accept "in-kind" consideration such as facilities, office, storage, or other usable space, services, money, and/or other "in–kind" consideration"; and

WHEREAS, The Building Utilization Review and Repurposing (BURR) Initiative, which cannot be enacted without the EUL program, was started by the VA in order to meet the needs of homelessness, but does not address other needs of the veterans community; and

WHEREAS, There are other needs that the veterans have to include but not limited to: adaptive sports, women veteran healthcare, mental health, and rural healthcare; and

WHEREAS, VA has repeatedly negotiated agreements involving use of VA assets with business and organizations without contact or discussion with, or seeking input and involvement from, veterans' service organizations (VSOs) and stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, Third party organizations that engaged in EULs with the VA were not held to the reporting requirements as the VA, which will aide in communications with the Chief Business Office; and

WHEREAS, Congress did not reauthorize the Department of Veteran Affairs Enhanced-Use Leasing (EUL) in November 2011; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That the American Legion petition Congress to reauthorize the use of Enhanced-Use Leasing (EUL) for the Department of Veterans Affairs; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress restricts the EUL capabilities to a priority list of services that will meet the needs of the veteran community; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the VA require outside organizations to follow the same reporting procedures as the government in order to ensure effective communication with the Chief Business Office; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports a publicly transparent Enhanced Use Lease process in consultation with veteran service organizations and stakeholders; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose any EUL that does not specifically provide any obvious and permanent benefits, resources or services to the veterans' community.

Resolution No. 130: Vet Centers Expansion to Rural Communities
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Veterans residing in rural areas maintain reoccurring disadvantages accessing earned VA medical care and mental health services as due to traveling distances; and

WHEREAS, The Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 encourages improved mental health services to veterans residing in rural areas; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has identified the need to establish and maintain a nation-wide system of community based programs separate from VA medical centers in order to remove unnecessary barriers to care and honoring requests for counseling without delay; and

WHEREAS, Vet Centers provide a broad range of counseling, outreach, and referral services to assist veterans and family members overcome the readjustment problems associated with war and personal trauma; and

WHEREAS, Vet Centers retain counselors with specific military backgrounds making it more likely to effectively relate to the unique needs of combat veterans; and

WHEREAS, Vet Centers provide bereavement counseling services to surviving parents, spouses, children, and siblings of service members who died of any cause while on active duty, including federally activated Reserve and National Guard personnel; and

WHEREAS, Vet Centers provide outreach services to combat veterans that's integral to locating and engaging veterans by providing them with information and services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support the Department of Veterans Affairs' Vet Centers be expanded in geographic locations that maximize opportunities to reach rural veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Vet Centers be established using input from interested Veteran Service Organizations representing those veterans for whom Vet Centers have been established to assist; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Vet Centers provide a clear definition of those geographic locations that outreach and counseling services are to be provided; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That criteria be used to justify the establishment of new Vet Centers that take into account factors not measurable, but rather reflective of the unique characteristics of each state, its resources and limitations to reach its rural veterans.

Resolution No. 131: State Veteran Homes' Extended Care Facilities Grant Program
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, State Veterans Homes were founded for veterans after the American Civil War and have ably served disabled veterans for nearly 150 years; and

WHEREAS, Every State operates at least one State Veterans Home, with one home in Puerto Rico, and more State Veterans Homes and beds and other programs within them are planned or projected annually to meet a growing demand for long term care programs and facilities for American's elderly, sick and disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, The State Veterans Home program has proven itself to be the most cost-effective source of high quality long-term health care services for the nation's veterans who need skilled nursing, domiciliary, adult day health care and other specialized programs to meet their needs; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) promotes the care and treatment of veterans in State Veterans Homes as an important means to attain its goal of developing, providing and maintaining the highest quality of care for eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, Subchapter III of Chapter 81, Title 38, United States Code, authorizes the State Extended Care Facilities Grant Program, funded by VA through Congressional appropriations, to assist the States through grants for construction of new State Veterans Homes and for significant renovations of existing facilities, at a cost not to exceed 65%

of the total cost of any such project proposed by a State and approved by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, VA has not kept up with the States' pace of grant applications for construction of new State Veterans Homes and significant renovation and modernization projects at existing homes, resulting in a significant backlog of "Priority One" projects already funded by the States, within a total backlog of projects and new homes approaching $1 billion; and

WHEREAS, Congress appropriated $150 million in supplemental appropriations for the State Extended Care Facilities Grant Program, as a small increment of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, H.R. 1, an Act the President approved on February 17, 2009; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support the National Association of State Veterans Homes (NASVH) in supporting full annual funding, at an amount based upon the Department of Veterans Affairs State Veteran Home Construction Program Priority List.

Resolution No. 132: The American Legion Policy on State Veteran Homes Inspections
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, State Veterans Home program, represented by 140 participating facilities within 50 states and in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, has proven itself to be the most cost-effective resource available to the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA), for high quality long-term health care services for those of the nation's veterans who need skilled nursing, domiciliary care, adult day health care and other specialized long-term care programs to meet their needs; and

WHEREAS, VA promotes and closely monitors the care and treatment of veterans in State Veterans Homes as an important means to attain its goal of developing, providing, maintaining and guaranteeing options for the highest quality of long-term care for eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, Each state is accountable for ensuring veterans in its State Veterans Homes receive quality long term and other health care services, and for achieving high patient satisfaction and comfort in safe environmental conditions; and

WHEREAS, A State Veterans Home generally functions within a state's department or division of veterans' affairs, public health, or other accountable state agency, and operates under the governance and oversight of a board of trustees, a board of visitors or other similar accountable public body; and

WHEREAS, State Veterans Homes hold themselves accountable for the quality of care they provide through myriad internal management controls, state and federal long-term care regulations, and integration of model policies, practices and standards advocated by the National Association of State Veterans Homes and other standards bodies, for the continuous quality improvement of their programs of care for sick, elderly and disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, State Veterans Homes are subject to both regular and periodic inspections and audits from State agencies, the federal Department of Health and Human Services, the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, among other inspectors, and are accountable to the general public through the press and news media; and

WHEREAS, Surveys by state agencies and the federal Department of Health and Human Services already hold State Veterans Homes to the same and more conditions and

standards of care as the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), with the exception of eight VA unique and primarily administrative criteria; and

WHEREAS, In the Memorandum on VA Inspections of State Veterans Homes dated June 6, 1996, the VA Under Secretary of Health instructed the Deputy Secretary to modify relevant sections of the Veterans Health Administration Administrative Manual to ensure that State Veterans Homes that are accredited/certified (without waivers) by either the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) or the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) are exempted from annual VA inspections unless there is good reason to believe that the State Veterans Home is not substantially in compliance with the current VA standards. Likewise, non-JCAHO or non-HCFA certified State Veterans Homes may be exempted if they are licensed by the state inspection standards and the state standards approximate VA standards; and

WHEREAS, In the Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government, issued on January 21, 2009, the President instructed the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to issue an Open Government Directive to direct executive departments and agencies to take specific actions to implement the principles of transparency, participation and collaboration to improve the effectiveness of government by encouraging partnerships and cooperation within the federal government, across levels of government, and between the government and private institutions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion supports the consolidation of the duplicitous inspection process and that the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), where applicable, combine their surveys into one inspection of defer to the CMS inspection results, except for those unique VA criteria, to assure that State Veterans Homes function within required standards and fulfill their roles as effective, safe and high quality sources of compassionate care for eligible sick and disabled veterans and their dependents and survivors.

Resolution No. 133: Support Medicare Reimbursement for the Department of Veterans Affairs
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides medical care to eligible beneficiaries as authorized by title 38, United States Code; and

WHEREAS, The fundamental branch of VA that administers and operates this medical care delivery system is the Veterans Health Administration (VHA); and

WHEREAS, VHA is the nation's largest comprehensive, integrated health care delivery system that provides excellence in health care value, service, education and research; and

WHEREAS, The mission of VHA is to meet the medical needs of America's veterans by providing specialized care, primary care and related medical and social support services for eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, VHA consists of hospitals, ambulatory clinics, nursing homes, domiciliaries and readjustment counseling centers located nationwide; and

WHEREAS, VHA continues to be the nation's largest educator of health care professionals through its affiliations with medical schools, academic medical centers and other research institutions; and

WHEREAS, VHA continues to be a major national research asset conducting basic, clinical, epidemiological and behavioral studies across the entire spectrum of scientific discipline; and

WHEREAS, VHA continues to serve as a contingency back-up to Department of Defense (DoD) medical services and, during national emergencies, supports the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS); and

WHEREAS, Enrollment in VHA could be limited by the availability of existing annual federal discretionary appropriations to meet the health care needs of enrolled veterans; and

WHEREAS, VHA continues to seek other revenue streams to supplement limited annual federal discretionary appropriations and meet the growing demands for quality treatment of enrolled veterans; and

WHEREAS, VHA is authorized to bill, collect and retain payments from enrolled veterans and their health care insurers, except Medicare, for inpatient and outpatient care, outpatient medications and long-term care services, and

WHEREAS, Medicare is a prepaid, federally mandated health insurance program for all eligible Americans; and

WHEREAS, Medicare is an entitlement program for nearly forty million Americans; and

WHEREAS, VA is prohibited from billing and collecting Medicare reimbursements for the treatment of non-service-connected medical conditions of enrolled Medicare-eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, Indian Health Service has successfully demonstrated the ability to bill and collect Medicare reimbursement; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's GI Bill of Health proposes Medicare Reimbursement for VA as a realistic health care coverage for enrolled, Medicare-eligible veterans seeking treatment of non-service-connected medical conditions in VHA health care facilities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion advocate to Congress amending title XVIII of the Social Security Act, to allow Medicare Reimbursement for VA on a fee-for-service basis for the treatment of non-service-connected medical conditions of enrolled, Medicare-eligible veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That enrolled, Medicare eligible veterans be authorized to participate in the Medicare Advantage option by choosing VA as their primary health care provider.

Resolution No. 135: Opening the Federal Supply Schedule for Pharmaceuticals to Medicare and Medicaid

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Federal Supply Schedule for Pharmaceuticals (FSS-P) is a schedule of pharmaceutical supply contracts awarded to responsible vendors supplying comparable products and services at fair and reasonable prices to the Government; and

WHEREAS, FSS-P is essentially a price catalog of approximately 24,000 pharmaceutical products available to the Federal Government; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is the largest purchaser of pharmaceuticals under FSS-P; and

WHEREAS, Pricing of pharmaceuticals to VA is at least 24% below and as much as 60% below drug manufacturers' most favored non-federal, non-retail customer pricing; and

WHEREAS, Known as Federal Ceiling Prices (FCP), these prices are generally 14-20% lower than regular negotiated FSS-P prices; and

WHEREAS, Medicaid is a joint Federal and State program that pays for medical assistance for individuals and families with low incomes and relatively few assets; and

WHEREAS, Numerous states encounter shortfalls in Medicaid funds and implement aggressive measures to control growth and curb expenditures, including prescription drug expenditures; and

WHEREAS, Beneficiaries of prescription drug benefits under Medicaid who also receive medical care under Medicare Parts A and B are known as "dual-eligible"; and

WHEREAS, "Dual-eligible" are mostly elderly poor who account for 34% of the enrolled Medicaid population, but 80% of the Medicaid drug bill; and

WHEREAS, "Dual-eligible" beneficiaries were automatically enrolled into the new Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit; and

WHEREAS, In 1990, the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 (OBRA90) required drug manufacturers to provide rebates to State Medicaid programs for outpatient drug purchases in exchange for Medicaid reimbursement; and

WHEREAS, Manufacturers are willing to price FSS-P low because it accounts for a very small fraction of the total domestic drug market and because up to 70% of new doctors receive some residency training in medical school affiliated VA medical centers, thereby creating a continuous flow of loyal prescribers of their products; and

WHEREAS, When OBRA90 Medicaid rebates went into effect, manufacturers responded by raising FSS-P pricing to VA some 14%; and

WHEREAS, If Federal legislation mandates that the new Medicare Part D drug benefit be tied to FSS-P, pharmaceutical manufacturers will act predictably to raise FSS-P prices to VA; and

WHEREAS, U.S. veterans receiving outpatient VA pharmacy benefits requiring co-payments of $8.00 for a 30-day supply of medication would almost certainly end up paying more were VA to lose its protected FSS-P pricing; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has consistently opposed increases in prescription co-payments in the past, arguing that corrections to other programs should not be made "on the backs of veterans"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion oppose any Federal legislation that would open the Federal Supply Schedule for Pharmaceuticals to Medicaid, Medicare Part D, or any other entity or program not now specifically authorized to purchase on the Federal Supply Schedule for Pharmaceuticals.

Resolution No. 136: The Department of Veterans Affairs to Develop Outreach and Peer to Peer Programs for Rehabilitation
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, One of The American Legion's founding principles is Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion considers itself to be a partner with Veterans Affairs in ensuring that our nation's military members and veterans have access to the best health care available; and

WHEREAS, The unemployment rate of returning service members is 14% compared to 9% for their civilian counterparts; and

WHEREAS, Citizen soldiers often return from combat duty and immediately resume civilian life without access to readjustment services of Veterans Affairs facilities; and

WHEREAS, The stated goal of the Veterans Administration regarding mental health is to move away from the maintenance model of treatment and transition to the recovery model; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Administration recognizes that the most important aspect of the recovery-oriented model is peer to peer support; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge the President of the United States and the U.S. Congress to call on the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to develop a national program to provide peer to peer rehabilitation services based on the recovery model tailored to meet the specialized needs of current generation combat-affected veterans and their families; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Secretary of Veterans Affairs direct the Department of Veterans Affairs to develop effective service partnerships with community mental health and addictions agencies to expand access to mental health services for National Guard members and reservists living in rural America; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue to exert maximum effort to ensure that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs utilizes returning service members for positions as peer support specialists in the effort to provide treatment, support services and readjustment counseling for those veterans requiring these services.

Resolution No. 162: Department of Veterans Affairs Veteran Integrated Service Networks

Origin: Washington

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is organized into a national VA Central Office Headquarters and 21 Veteran Integrated Service Networks (VISNs), or regions, which oversee several VA Medical Center facilities and Community Based Outpatient Clinics; and

WHEREAS, VISNs were established by Dr. Kenneth Kizer, Former Under Secretary for Health for VHA to decentralize VA from VA Central Office to regions in order to promote best practices, innovation and be responsible for all financial and operational activities for the VA Medical Center facilities under their jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, Originally, VISN staffing models called for seven to ten full time employee equivalents (FTEE) within each of the 22 VISNS nationwide, for a total of 220 FTE employees nationwide; and

WHEREAS, Over the years, as new VHA programs and initiatives have been designed and implemented by VA Central Office, the VISNs have considerably increased staff to administer, track and manage these programs which is over 1,300 employees today; and

WHEREAS, The VA Office of the Inspector General issued three reports on VISNs recommending (a) the Under Secretary for Health implement a system of financial management and fiscal controls for the VISN offices; (b) strengthen the VISN offices' performance management system and implement management controls over organizational structures and staffing; (c) VA and VHA acquisition management improve oversight of VISN contracts and develop tools to effectively manage VISN contracting activities, which clearly indicates the need for improvements with VISN programs and initiatives; and

WHEREAS, Since the VISN model was developed, there has not been any Government Accountability Office, VA Office of the Inspector General or reports from VHA leadership on the overall effectiveness of the current VISN structure and

geographic boundaries in improving access to and quality healthcare for veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges Congress to direct the Government Accountability Office and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of the Inspector General conduct a comprehensive study to include purpose, goals, objectives and budget and evaluation of the effectiveness of the 21 Veteran Integrated Service Networks (VISNs); and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Veterans Health Administration leadership conduct an internal review and develop an action plan to address VISN management, staffing and its current geographic boundaries/catchment areas concerns, in order to better provide timely access and quality health care for veterans.

Resolution No. 172: Dependency and Indemnity Compensation Benefits to Surviving Spouses of Former Prisoners of War
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended; Consolidated with Resolutions No. 40 (CO) and 213 (IL))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of war veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Millennium Benefits Act, Public Law 106-11, authorized payments of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefits to the survivors of former Prisoners of War (POWs) who died after September 30, 1999, and who were continuously rated totally disabled due to a service-connected disability for a period of not less than one year immediately preceding death; and

WHEREAS, There are thousands of widows whose spouse was a former POW who died before September 30, 1999, and who was rated totally disabled for over one year for a service-connected disability; and

WHEREAS, These widows are not able to become eligible for DIC because their husband's death was before September 30, 1999; and

WHEREAS, When other survivor benefit programs were liberalized, they usually covered the widows of veterans who died before the enactment of the law, e.g. deaths from cancers from Agent Orange; and

WHEREAS, Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) is paid to the widows and widowers of service-connected disabled veterans who die as a result of their service-related condition or who at the time of death were rated 100% service-connected disabled for at least ten years; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans don't reach the 100% level until they are much older and their condition has worsened; and

WHEREAS, The spouse has usually been the primary care giver and companion for these disabled veterans throughout the veteran's lifetime and the VA compensation has been a primary means of support; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to amend section 1318 of title 38, United States Code, to remove the date of September 30, 1999; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion petition Congress to reduce the number of years that a veteran must have a 100% rating from ten years to one years for eligibility of DIC payments.

Resolution No. 173: Allow Beneficiaries to Retain Some of Their Benefits While in Medicaid-Covered Nursing Homes
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 232 (IL))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of war veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, When a veteran without dependents in receipt of pension benefits is covered by Medicaid for nursing home care, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pension is reduced to $90 for incidental expenses; and

WHEREAS, However, when a veteran without dependents who is receiving compensation benefits and is similarly covered by Medicaid, only $30 a month is allowed for incidentals; and

WHEREAS, When a helpless child who is in receipt of pension or Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) and is similarly covered by Medicaid, there is no provision for VA to reduce the individual's award for incidental expenses; and

WHEREAS, When a surviving parent who is in receipt of Parents' DIC and is similarly covered by Medicaid, there is no provision for VA to reduce the individual's award for incidental expenses; and

WHEREAS, Under current VA and Medicaid statutes, the service-disabled veteran, helpless child and surviving parent are financially disadvantaged; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to authorize veterans in receipt of VA compensation, or a helpless child in receipt of VA pension or DIC, or a surviving parent in receipt of VA Parents' DIC, to keep at least $90 of their monthly VA benefits for incidental expenses while in a Medicaid-covered nursing home.

Resolution No. 174: Extend the Filing Period of an Appeal Notice to the Court of Veteran Appeals for Veterans Claims
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 216 (IL))

WHEREAS, Claimants have up to one year from notice of a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) rating decision to file an appeal with any or all adjudicated issues to the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA); and

WHEREAS, Notice of Appeal of a final denied claim by the Board of Veterans' Appeals must be filed with the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC) within 120 days of the denial by the BVA; and

WHEREAS, The CAVC lacks statutory authority to waive the 120 day period for filing Notice of Appeal; and

WHEREAS, Veterans or their surviving spouses can become discouraged, or are not effectively represented, or may require more time to perfect their appeal to the CAVC; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion shall support legislation to extend the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims Notice of Appeal filing period to one year following Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) final denial of an appeal.

Resolution No. 175: National Cemetery Administration
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration (NCA) was established by Congress and approved by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862 to provide for the proper burial and registration of graves of Civil War dead; and

WHEREAS, NCA is currently comprised of 131 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico, as well as, 33 soldiers' lots and monuments; and

WHEREAS, More than 3 million Americans including veterans of every war and conflict are buried in VA's national cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, More than 24 million veterans and Reservists and National Guard members have earned the honor of burial in a national cemetery; and

WHEREAS, Annual internments in national cemeteries have annually increased and are projected to increase for the next several years due to an aging veteran population; and

WHEREAS, Appropriate land acquisition is a key component to providing continued accessibility to burial options; and

WHEREAS, Operations, maintenance, renovation, and construction funding must continually be adjusted to reflect the true requirements of the National Cemetery Administration; and

WHEREAS, NCA administers a program of grants to states, U.S. territories, and federally recognized tribal governments to assist them in establishing or improving state-operated veterans cemeteries in locations where there are no nearby national cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, Congress must provide sufficient major construction appropriations to permit NCA to accomplish its stated goal of ensuring that burial in a national or state cemetery is a realistic option by locating cemeteries within 75 miles of ninety percent of all veterans; and

WHEREAS, In addition to providing a grave site, NCA provides a headstone or marker, a Presidential Memorial certificate, a U.S. Flag, Medallion, and perpetual care for the grave; and

WHEREAS, The 1990 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act eliminated the then-headstone allowance of $85, which was paid to all eligible veterans in lieu of a government-provided headstone or marker and now directly provides a standard government headstone or grave marker to eligible veterans anywhere in the world; and

WHEREAS, VA pays a burial allowance of $2,000 for veterans who die of service-related causes. For veterans who were receiving VA compensation or pension, VA pays $700 for burial and funeral expenses and $700 for a plot; and

WHEREAS, The plot allowance would still be payable to state veterans cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, If a veteran passes away in a Department of Veterans Affairs hospital, nursing home, or domiciliary, or in an institution at which the individual was receiving hospital or nursing care at the expense of the United States at the time of death, VA will pay for the cost of transporting the remains to the place of burial; however, a veteran who passes away in a State Veterans Home is not allowed transportation cost for the remains to the place of burial by VA; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support the establishment of additional national and state veterans cemeteries and columbaria wherever a need for them is apparent and petition Congress to provide

required operations and construction funding to ensure Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) burial in a national or state veterans cemetery is a realistic option for veterans and their eligible dependents; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to return the burial allowances and burial plot allowance to all veterans who served during a time of war or conflict; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the burial allowance for veterans now eligible under 38 United States Code (USC) § 2302 and 2303 be increased from $700 to at least $1500; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the burial allowance for veterans who died as a result of a service-connected condition as set forth in 38 USC § 2307 be increased from $2000 to at least $4000; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That VA be required to annually adjust burial allowances and burial plot allowance for inflation by tying the increased allowances to the Consumer Price Index; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion should support legislation for the restoration of the pre-1990 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act criteria to provide eligibility for a government-furnished headstone or marker allowance and restoration of the burial plot allowance for all honorably discharged veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support action to provide, when an eligible veteran, dies in a state veterans hospital or nursing home, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall pay for the cost of transporting the remains to the place of burial determined by the family within a 75-mile radius.

Resolution No. 176: State Veteran Home Per Diem Reimbursement
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, State Veterans Homes were founded in the late 1800s for indigent and disabled Civil War veterans and continue to serve generations of veterans today; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code (U.S.C.) authorizes the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to pay per diems for care in State Veterans Homes to those veterans with a 70 percent or greater service-connection rating; and

WHEREAS, A Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report 06-264 in March, 2006, *Data Gaps Impede Strategic Planning for and Oversight of State Veterans' Nursing Homes*, identified that certain aspects of VA's per diem reimbursement policy had not been applied consistently and VA headquarters officials have not been consistent in explaining to VA Medical Centers whether they could approve reimbursement to state veterans' nursing homes for care provided to veterans; and

WHEREAS, Public Law (P.L.) 109-461, Veterans Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006, authorized the Secretary of VA to publish a Strategic Plan for Long-Term Care for VA to include specific plans for working with Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance companies to expand the availability of such long-term care, which included State Veterans Homes; and

WHEREAS, In response to the P.L. 109-461 in August 2007, VA submitted the long-term care strategic plan to Congress with the effective dates through Fiscal Year (FY) 2013; and

WHEREAS, A GAO Report 09-145 in January, 2009, *Long-Term Care Strategic Planning and Budgeting Need Improvement*, reported that, "many veterans who need long-term care do not receive it from VA, but instead receive care from other providers that is financed by programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, private health or long-term care insurance, or self-financing by the patients"; and

WHEREAS, GAO Report 09-145 concluded as a result, in VA's long-term care strategic planning, determining future workload is a multi-step process requiring estimating the number of veterans who will need long-term care, the number of those veterans seeking care through the VA and the number of veterans VA will serve, which is expected to increase by 167 percent between FY 2007 and 2013 and that VA provided unrealistic cost assumptions and workloads in its FY 2009 budget submission; and

WHEREAS, VA pays State Veterans Homes a per diem that covers approximately one-third of the cost of providing these services to eligible veterans, which is less than the actual daily cost of care provided by Medicare/Medicaid rate; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has supported enactment of legislation to require VA per diem payments be at a rate of 50 percent of the national average cost of providing care in State Veterans Homes, to increase the VA per diem rate closer to the Medicare/Medicaid rate; and

WHEREAS, In September 2009, The National Association of State Veterans Homes (NASVH) and State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA), recommended that Congress pass a clarifying amendment to P.L. 109-461 to postpone the mandatory implementation of the VA per diem program due to the lower cost of VA's per diem amount, compared to the Medicare/Medicaid rate which would shift all the cost burden on the State Veteran Home operating budget; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion remains concerned that Congress has not provided clarification of Public Law (P.L.) 109-461 and VA has not factually reported its planning workload projections to assist State Veterans Homes budgets; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support legislation to amend Title 38, United States Code (U.S.C.) to provide clarification to the State Veterans Home, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) per diem reimbursements; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to increase VA per diem payments to a rate of 50 percent of the national average cost of providing care in a State Veterans Home to more closely align to the Medicaid/Medicare rate; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That VA accurately report its planning workload projections and budget submissions in future fiscal years to account for the 167 percent increase in long-term care workload identified by the Government Accountability Office (GAO).

Resolution No. 178: Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Disability Compensation
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The current disability compensation program has proven to be a fair and equitable manner in which to indemnify veterans suffering disabilities that are incurred or aggravated in line of duty in the military, naval, or air service; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is totally supportive of every benefit that is currently provided to veterans for their past contributions to their country and its welfare; and

WHEREAS, Disability compensation is a monthly payment made by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) based on a schedule of ratings of reduction in earning capacity from specific injuries as set forth in title 38, Code of Federal Regulations; and

WHEREAS, It is the opinion of The American Legion that there is no way to adequately compensate a veteran for loss of ability to be a working, productive member of society, and that the current monthly rates do not adequately compensate these disabled veterans for the loss due to reduced earning capacity; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes Congress should periodically review the amount of disability compensation veterans are receiving and provide a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to assure they have sufficient economic support; and

WHEREAS, Periodically, proposals are made to tax VA disability compensation benefits; and

WHEREAS, Taxation of these benefits would amount to nothing more than a permanent, enduring reduction in benefits and would demean the sacrifice and service of our nation's service-connected disabled veteran population; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion vigorously oppose any proposal that would subject VA disability compensation benefits to taxation; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose any administrative or legislative proposal to dilute or eliminate any provision of the disability compensation program; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, section 1114, to provide a periodic COLA increase and to increase the monthly rates of disability compensation; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose any legislative effort to automatically index such cost-of-living adjustments to the cost-of-living adjustment authorized for Social Security recipients, non-service connected disability recipients and death pension beneficiaries.

Resolution No. 179: Amend Title 38, United States Code, to Increase the Special Monthly Compensation (k) Award
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended; Consolidated with Resolutions No. 219 (IL) and 221 (IL))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code (USC), section 1114, provides for the payment of disability compensation for a service-connected disability, which is rated from ten percent to one hundred percent under the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Schedule for Rating Disabilities for the particular disability; and

WHEREAS, An additional $99 in Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) is payable, under title 38, USC, section 1114 (k), where a veteran, as the result of a service-connected disability, has suffered the anatomical loss or loss of use of one or more creative organs, or one foot, or one hand, both buttocks, or blindness in one eye and having only light perception in the other eye, or rendered unable to speak, or deafness in both ears, or in the case of a female veteran, suffered the anatomical loss of one or both breasts, including by mastectomy; and

WHEREAS, The SMC (k) award, which is paid over and above the amount of compensation authorized under title 38, USC, section 1114, for these losses or loss-of-use disabilities, is intended to recognize the lifelong physical limitations and psychological trauma associated with such loss or loss of use of the veterans' limbs or other body parts; and

WHEREAS, In contrast to regular increases in the rates of disability compensation through the years, the SMC (k) award, which was initially authorized in 1939, has been increased infrequently; and

WHEREAS, In 1939, the SMC (k) award was originally $18.75 when the rate of compensation for being totally or one-hundred percent disabled was $75; and

WHEREAS, To restore the original twenty-five percent (25%) differential that existed in 1939 between the amount of the (k) award and the compensation rate for being totally or one-hundred percent disabled, the SMC (k) award should be increased to $692; and

WHEREAS, A male veteran may suffer from erectile dysfunction (E.D.) due to an injury they receive while on active duty; and

WHEREAS, Male veterans may also suffer from E.D. due to a service-connected medical condition such as diabetes or hypertension and/or due to a side effect of medication(s) prescribed for a service-connected condition; and

WHEREAS, Male veterans may also suffer from E.D. due to a side effect of medication prescribed for a service-connected illness; and

WHEREAS, Male veterans may resort to prescription drugs such as Viagra and Cialis to address this problem; and

WHEREAS, Under the current Schedule of Rating Decisions that the VA uses, a male veteran who suffers from E. D. due to a service-related injury or due to medication prescribed for a service-related condition becomes eligible for Special Monthly Compensation K; and

WHEREAS, Females now make up close to 20% of the military services and they too will suffer injuries or illnesses which will result in painful or difficult sexual intercourse; and

WHEREAS, This sexual dysfunction in females may include insufficient vaginal lubrication due to depression, pregnancy, stress and fatigue, painful intercourse due to endometriosis, pelvic mass, ovarian cysts, and scarring from surgery, to name a few; and

WHEREAS, Female veterans can sometimes treat these problems with medication, counseling and hormone therapy; and

WHEREAS, There is no corresponding SMC (k) provision for veterans who suffer from female sexual dysfunction and they can only receive this SMC (k) rate if they actually lose their creative organs or a portion of their breast; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to amend its current regulation for Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) (k) to include females who suffer sexual dysfunction to be able to obtain this SMC (k) rate similar to that awarded male veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support an increase in the SMC (k) award, under title 38, USC, section 1114(k) to at least $692; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the evaluation of all SMC awards under Title 38 USC, Section 1114 to ensure that veterans are being fairly compensated for their sacrifices.

Resolution No. 180: Assured Funding for VA Medical Care
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) annual budget consists of both mandatory and discretionary funding; and

WHEREAS, Mandatory funding refers to a process where the level of funding is governed by formulas or criteria set forth in authorizing legislation rather than by appropriations; and

WHEREAS, Under budget law, a mandatory program is one that requires provision of benefits to all who meet the eligibility requirements of the law; and

WHEREAS, Mandatory funding is provided for programs such as Social Security, Medicare and VA compensation and pension; and

WHEREAS, In contrast, discretionary funding is "all other" funding subject to the annual appropriations process; and

WHEREAS, Discretionary funding in VA's current annual budget provides for programs such as medical care, major and minor construction, National Cemetery Administration, State Extended Care Facility Grants, and State Cemetery Grants; and

WHEREAS, There have been annual struggles to obtain sufficient funding to provide access to quality care for eligible veterans seeking care in VA facilities; and

WHEREAS, A method to provide dependable, stable and sustained funding for veterans health care is needed; and

WHEREAS, Assured (mandated) funding is one component of a combination of funding mechanisms to ensure adequate Veterans Health Administration (VHA) funding; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That Congress designate assured funding for VA medical care; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress continue to provide discretionary funding required to fully operate other programs within the Veterans Health Administration's budgetary jurisdiction; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress provide, if necessary, supplemental appropriations for budgetary shortfalls in VHA's mandated and discretionary appropriations to meet the health care needs of America's veterans.

Resolution No. 181: The Department of Veterans Affairs Dental Care
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 223 (IL))

WHEREAS, This great organization was based upon comradeship born of wartime service and dedicated to fair and equitable treatment of all veterans and their dependents; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes that oral health is integral to the general health and well-being of a patient and is part of comprehensive health care; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare system is mandated under Section 1712, Title 38, United States Code, to provide outpatient dental services to veterans rated 100% service-connected, to veterans held Prisoner-of-War, or to those who have sustained dental trauma in performance of military service; and

WHEREAS, Section 1710, Title 38, United States Code, authorizes VA to provide hospital care and medical services to any veteran for a service-connected disability or a veteran who has a service-connected disability rated at 50% or greater; and

WHEREAS, A dental condition is a medical condition which can impact on all other medical conditions; and

WHEREAS, VA currently provides dental services throughout the VA health care system; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion supports

legislation to amend Title 38, United States Code, Section 1712, to provide outpatient dental care to all enrolled veterans.

Resolution No. 182: Presumptive Conditions for Former Prisoners of War
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, In its interest for the welfare of all those who have served in the nation's Armed Forces, one of the major concerns of The American Legion has been the welfare of those who have been prisoners of war (POWs); and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has supported various legislative measures intended to alleviate the disabilities that afflict former POWs as a result of experience during internment; and

WHEREAS, In the past, The American Legion supported enactment of Public Law 97-37, the Former Prisoners of War Benefits Act of 1981, approved August 14, 1981, and the presumptions included in Public Law 100-322; and

WHEREAS, Continued scientific observation of their condition during the years subsequent to their internment indicates additional health problems probably associated with the conditions of their internment; and

WHEREAS, The United States has a fundamental obligation to do everything possible to alleviate any and all health problems of former POWs and see to their physical, social, and economic well-being; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes there is a need to further modify the current provisions of title 38, United States Code, that provide for former POWs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion shall support legislation to amend section 1112 of title 38, United States Code, so as to provide presumptive service connection for the following conditions in the absence of demonstrable inter-current disease or injury:

1. Hepatitis or other infectious diseases of the liver;
2. Arthritis, including osteoporosis;
3. Chronic pulmonary disease (where there is a history of forced labor in Mines during internment);
4. Chronic liver disease;
5. Adult-onset diabetes; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation to be enacted to rescind the requirement in section 1112(b) of title 38, United States Code, that a POW must be held in captivity for at least 30 days to receive benefits and compensation for any presumptive disabilities, specified in that section, that were incurred in captivity; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion shall support any and all efforts on the part of the United States government to alleviate and ameliorate social, economic, and physical disabilities experienced by former POWs where such disabilities can reasonably be attributed to the effects of internment by the enemies of the United States.

Resolution No. 183: The Department of Veterans Affairs' Role in National Emergency Preparedness
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Under title 38, United States Code (U.S.C.), 8111A, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has been established as the principal medical care back-up for

military health care "during and immediately following a period of war, or a period of national emergency declared by the President or the Congress that involves the use of the Armed Forces in armed conflict"; and

WHEREAS, Under the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) and the Federal Response Plan (FRP) VA's specialized duties entail conducting and evaluating disaster and terrorist attack simulation exercises; managing the nation's stockpile of pharmaceuticals for biological and chemical toxins; maintaining a rapid response team for radiological releases; and training public and private NDMS medical center personnel around the country in properly responding to biological, chemical, or radiological disasters; and

WHEREAS, The VA Strategic Plan for 2006-2011 lists as an objective, "Improve nation's response in the event of a national emergency or natural disaster by providing timely and effective contingency medical support and other services"; and

WHEREAS, If VA is to play a key supporting role as part of the FRP and the NDMS, it must have adequate resources to execute its role; and

WHEREAS, The Strategic Capital Investment Planning (SCIP) process was designed to ensure that VA's capital infrastructure meets the needs of veterans for health care services in 2011 and beyond; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) implementation of the SCIP decision must take into consideration and sustain VA's ability to perform its fourth mission as a back up to the Department of Defense; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to continue to take an active role in the development and implementation of plans to enhance Federal homeland security initiatives; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion strongly urges Congress to provide VA with the funding necessary to further enhance its capacity to act as a back-up to the Department of Defense in times of war and to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in responding to national emergencies.

Resolution No. 193: The Department of Veterans Affairs to Provide Interim Benefits for Pending Claims Over 90 Days
Origin: New York
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended; Consolidated with Resolution No. 236 (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 press 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, Veterans who have filed compensation and pension claims with the Veterans Benefits Administration and disagree with the decisions of the Regional Offices are entitled to appeal these decisions to the Board of Veterans Appeals; and

WHEREAS, The Regional Offices take anywhere from 76.6 to 361.7 days to produce a rating decision; and

WHEREAS, Although the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) has authority to complete the development of cases, it remands approximately 25% of cases appealed back to the Regional Offices for additional development, thereby further delaying consideration of the veteran's claim; and

WHEREAS, Another government agency, the Internal Revenue Service, must pay interest on delayed refunds of more than 45 days from the due date of the return; and

WHEREAS, The rate of interest the I.R.S. uses changes every three months to reflect the prime interest rate then in effect; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion shall support any legislation to pay on a non-refundable basis 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 action taken by Congress can include, but is not limited to, a nominal grant or interest that will be at the same rate as used by the Internal Revenue Service when their refunds are delayed more than 45 days; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to establish interim benefits for veterans awaiting action on claims for service connected disabilities if no action is taken by the Department of Veterans Affairs within the first 125 days of the claim's submission.

Resolution No. 196: Co-Payments and Enrollment Fees for Priority Groups 7 & 8
Origin: Michigan
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Since the enactment of Public Law (PL) 104-262, that authorized eligibility reform and open enrollment process, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration (VHA), has experienced a dramatic growth from 2.5 million veterans to over 7 million veterans enrolled in VA health care; and

WHEREAS, Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 saw the astronomical growth of Priority Group 7 veterans seeking health care at their local VA medical facility and the creation of a new Priority Group 8; and

WHEREAS, VA, upon creating the new Priority Group 8, placed an immediate suspension on all new Priority Group 8 enrollments; and

WHEREAS, VHA is authorized to bill, collect, and retain co-payments and the third party insurance payment of Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans; and

WHEREAS, During the past several years, VA has proposed to increase the outpatient co-payment from $15 to $20 and the prescription co-payment from $8 to $15 per 30 day supply, as well as, levy a $250 enrollment fee on Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans; and

WHEREAS, In 2006, VA proposed to eliminate the copayment offset (reduction in payment) to Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans who have third party insurance; and

WHEREAS, The co-payment increases and enrollment fees could suppress the demand for VA services at the expense of Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans who may not be able to afford the co-payment increases and out-of-pocket enrollment fee; and

WHEREAS, VA believes these initiatives will ultimately drive 1.2 million veterans away from the VA health care system; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion adamantly oppose any effort to increase co-payments or impose an enrollment fee for Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans to receive VA health care.

Resolution No. 197: Tobacco-Related Disabilities
Origin: Michigan
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Throughout its history, The American Legion has fought to ensure that disabled veterans receive benefits and medical care for injuries and diseases related to their period of military service; and

WHEREAS, This would include certain diseases developing years after service which can be related to nicotine addiction resulting from the use of tobacco products during service; and

WHEREAS, Over the years, agencies of the federal government, most notably, the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), have promoted, condoned, fostered and encouraged the use of tobacco products by members of the Armed Forces and veterans; and

WHEREAS, DoD continues to be the nation's largest distributor of tobacco products to active duty, reserve, National Guard personnel and their dependents through the military supply system stateside and overseas; to post and base exchanges, canteens, ship's stores and commissaries; and

WHEREAS, Historically, DoD took little or no action to discourage the use of tobacco products by making them readily accessible and affordable (in some instances they were free) to military personnel and has only recently established physical fitness policies to discourage tobacco use by active duty and reserve personnel; and

WHEREAS, VA hospitals up until 1991 continued to provide tobacco products at discounted prices; and

WHEREAS, Although the federal government has required a health warning on cigarette packages and other tobacco products sold to the public beginning in 1965, such warning labels were not required on tobacco products distributed through DoD until 1970; and

WHEREAS, Until the early 1990s, most all claims for disability and death due to smoking were generally denied by the courts and VA due to the lack of scientific evidence of a relationship between nicotine addiction, tobacco use and certain diseases, such as cancers of the lip, mouth, pharynx, esophagus, larynx, lung, pancreas, bladder, urinary tract and kidney; coronary heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, other circulatory diseases, chronic bronchitis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD); and

WHEREAS, Within the last several years, there has been increasing scientific data establishing a causal link between tobacco use and an increased prevalence of certain diseases among those who used tobacco products; and

WHEREAS, There have been ongoing revelations in the course of recent litigation against the tobacco companies about the addictive effects of nicotine and its consequences and the efforts of the tobacco companies to conceal and withhold such information and scientific data from the public, the federal government, the Congress and the courts; and

WHEREAS, In 1993, the VA General Counsel issued a precedent opinion which held that a claim for service connection for a smoking-related disability or death was legally possible; and

WHEREAS, From 1993 until May 1997 tobacco-related illness claims were held in abeyance while VA officials debated the practical and budgetary implications of this change in VA policy; and

WHEREAS, The four specific evidence requirements for a tobacco-related illness claim were finally set forth on May 13, 1997, VA General Counsel precedent opinion:

1. There must be a statement from the veteran that he/she used tobacco products (i.e., smoked, chewed tobacco, or used snuff) during service; and

2. There must be a currently diagnosed medical condition, such as emphysema, chronic obstructive lung disease, lung cancer, etc.; and
3. A medical opinion must state this condition is related to tobacco use; and
4. A medical opinion must also state that the veteran was dependent on nicotine; and

WHEREAS, The VA General Counsel Opinion concluded that, providing these four requirements are met, it would be consistent with the historical concept of service connection for VA to grant direct service connection for nicotine dependence and service connection on a secondary basis for a subsequently developing tobacco-related disease; and

WHEREAS, VA has estimated there would be some 2.5 million smoking-related claims filed over the next five years resulting in additional benefit costs of some $15 billion, which VA believes would have a devastating impact on the VA budget, in particular, and the federal budget, as a whole, while ignoring the plight of veterans who used tobacco on active duty and especially those who were introduced to tobacco during such service; and

WHEREAS, The President's FY 1999 budget request for VA was predicated on legislation barring the grant of service connection of any disability or death due in whole or in part to tobacco use as well as entitlement to VA medical care for such disability; and

WHEREAS, Congress, in the course of debate on the FY 1999 federal budget, used the $15 billion identified as savings resulting from the bar to veterans claims for tobacco-related illnesses as a funding source for the "Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century" (TEA-21); and

WHEREAS, TEA-21, signed by President Clinton as PL 105-178 on June 9, 1998, made veterans use of tobacco products in service synonymous with willful misconduct; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that action should be taken by Congress to overturn this anti-veteran legislation that violates veterans constitutional rights, since no other group of citizens, who are ill from tobacco-related causes, is being singled out and stripped of their eligibility for federal benefits and medical care; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion, support legislation to restore entitlement to service connection for disability, or death, related to the veteran's use of tobacco products during the period of active military service from June 9, 1998, the date of the enactment of Public Law 105-178, the "Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century;" and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the American Legion also supports congressional appropriation of sufficient funds to pay compensation benefits for tobacco-related illness claims.

Resolution No. 198: Exempt Certain Income from VA Pension Rate Determination
Origin: Michigan
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 228 (IL))

WHEREAS, Veterans and surviving spouses in receipt of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pension benefits under Public Law (PL) 95-588 must report all income received from outside sources, since this directly affects the amount of VA pension to which they are entitled; and

WHEREAS, Countable income received by the veteran from most sources would include earnings, disability and retirement payments, interest and dividends, and net income from farming or business; and

WHEREAS, Any reimbursement that would compensate a veteran for expenses due to an accident, theft or loss would also be considered countable income; and

WHEREAS, At many polling places, there is a shortage of needed supervisory personnel and serving as an election judge helps ensure a fair and impartial election process; and

WHEREAS, The amount of financial remuneration received from these types of civic activities is relatively small, but it can result in the reduction in monthly benefits, dollar for dollar, or the complete loss of entitlement to pension; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion, support legislation to amend paragraph (5), section 1503(a), title 38, United States Code, to exempt the reimbursement of expenses related to accidents, theft loss or casualty loss from being included in the determination of countable income with respect to pensions for veterans and surviving spouses and children of veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to exempt income received from jury duty and income from service as an election judge in determining the VA pension rate under Public Law (P.L.) 95-588.

Resolution No. 199: Agent Orange
Origin: Michigan
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Agent Orange was the most common herbicide used in Southeast Asia by the U.S. Armed Forces during the Vietnam War from 1962-1971; and

WHEREAS, Agent Orange was contaminated by the carcinogen dioxin (2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-*para*-dioxin [TCDD]); and

WHEREAS, Over 2 million veterans served in Vietnam during the Vietnam War and are presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange; and

WHEREAS, Scientific evidence has linked human exposure to dioxin and certain diseases; and

WHEREAS, A significant number of Vietnam veterans have developed various cancers, neurological disorders, liver dysfunction and other severe diseases; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion supported Public Law 96-151 (1979), which mandates that the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) conduct a major epidemiological study of Vietnam veterans who were exposed to dioxin, unless it is determined to be unfeasible; and

WHEREAS, 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, A committee convened by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies to study the health effects of herbicide exposure had little information about the exposures the Vietnam veterans encountered and recommended in its 1994 biennial report that VA, upon discovering the feasibility of a valid exposure reconstruction model, facilitate epidemiological studies; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of VA, in response to the recommendation, requested that IOM convene a separate committee to oversee development and evaluation of herbicide exposure models for use in studies of Vietnam veterans; and

WHEREAS, The IOM committee determined - in 2003 - that a model created by researchers from Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health demonstrated the feasibility of a valid exposure-reconstruction model of Vietnam veterans' herbicide exposure and recommended that VA and other governmental agencies promote more

epidemiological studies of veterans by non-governmental groups and independent researchers; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs has still not funded the major epidemiology study mandated by public law; and

WHEREAS, In view of the current absence of alternative judicial recourse to remedy the injustice perpetuated on so many disabled Vietnam veterans, their families and survivors, The American Legion will continue to monitor other pending dioxin-related suits; and

WHEREAS, Information has been released by the Department of the Defense on numerous locations other than Vietnam where the herbicide was tested, sprayed, and stored, including: testing at Fort Drum, New York, in 1959; spraying in the Panama Canal Zone in the 1960s and 1970s and in the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in 1968-69; and the storage of unused herbicide on Johnston Atoll in the Pacific from 1972-78; and

WHEREAS, VA has recently identified more units that were exposed to herbicide at the Korean DMZ; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, section 1116 and title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, section 3.309, set forth certain presumptions that apply to claims for service connection based on herbicide exposure by veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam during the period January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975; and

WHEREAS, Veterans who served in other locations during these periods who may have been exposed to the herbicide and who may have developed one of the recognized Agent Orange-related diseases, set forth in title 38, United States Code, section 1116 and title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, section 3.309, are not entitled to presumptive service connection for their disability, rather they must meet the more stringent requirements for direct service connection; and

WHEREAS, This inequity was not contemplated at the time of the enactment of Public Law 102-4, the Agent Orange Act of 1991, as amended, due to limited available information on the full extent of the United States' Agent Orange testing, spraying, and storage activities; and

WHEREAS, Under title 38, United States Code, Chapter 18, benefits are payable to children of veterans that served in the Republic of Vietnam during the period January 9, 1962, to May 7, 1975, and who suffer from the birth defect spina bifida; and

WHEREAS, Recent legislation has extended the spina bifida benefits to include the children of veterans who served in or near the Korean Demilitarized Zone during the period of September 1, 1967, and August 31, 1971, and determined by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to have been exposed to herbicides during such service; and

WHEREAS, The children of veterans who served in locations other than Vietnam and Korea who were possibly exposed to Agent Orange would be denied entitlement to compensation for spina bifida under the current statute and regulations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion continue to urge the completion of the scientific study mandated by Public Law 96-151; and, be it further

RESOLVED, The American Legion vigorously support the liberalization of the rules relating to the evaluation of studies involving exposure to dioxin and the adjudication of claims based on Agent Orange 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 Agent Orange exposure 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 further

RESOLVED, That veterans reporting to VA medical care facilities claiming exposure to Agent Orange 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 seek legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, section 1116, to provide entitlement to these presumptions for those veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange while serving in areas other than the Republic of Vietnam where Agent Orange was tested, sprayed, or stored; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, Chapter 18, to provide entitlement to spina bifida benefits for the child or children of any veteran who was exposed to Agent Orange as the result of service in the Republic of Vietnam or in other locations where Agent Orange was tested, sprayed, or stored.

Resolution No. 200: Exempt VA Benefits and Services from Pay-Go Provisions
Origin: Michigan
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Budget Enforcement Act (BEA) significantly amended the laws pertaining to the budget process by constraining direct spending through a Pay-As-You-Go (PAY-GO) requirement for all legislation affecting the direct spending of all federal agencies and departments; and

WHEREAS, Under this statute, as an example, if Congress wishes to establish a new entitlement or expand an existing program for veterans, it must find the money to fund such change within existing budget limits; and

WHEREAS, Wartime disabled veterans have earned the benefits and services they, their dependents and survivors receive from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as a result of the injuries sustained during their period of wartime service; and

WHEREAS, The benefits and services received by wartime-disabled veterans as a result of their service-connected disabilities are an extension of the cost of war; and

WHEREAS, This country has a moral obligation to continue to care for these citizen-soldiers who have risen in defense and support of the ideals of this great nation and who have returned to civilian life with service-connected disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Since BEA PAY-GO requires Congress to fund new benefits or services within existing spending limits this, in effect, requires one group of disabled veterans to give up benefits or services, so that another group of wartime disabled veterans can receive benefits or services to which they are entitled; and

WHEREAS, The budget implications of PAY-GO are often a deterrent to favorable congressional action on major changes in veterans legislation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support legislation to exempt the Department of Veterans Affairs benefits and services provided to service-connected disabled veterans, their dependents and survivors from the Pay-As-You-Go (PAY-GO) provision of the Budget Enforcement Act.

Resolution No. 212: Increase Maximum Coverage under the Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (Consolidated with Resolution No. 124 (MD))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (also known as S-DVI or RH insurance) was established in 1951 to meet the insurance needs of certain veterans with service-related disabilities; and

WHEREAS, The maximum coverage was set at $10,000 back in 1951; and

WHEREAS, What cost $10,000 back in 1951 would cost over $77,000 in 2012 due to inflation; and

WHEREAS, This puts a greater burden on the surviving family members to meet the burial and final expenses of a deceased service-connected disabled veteran; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to increase to $50,000 the maximum coverage a service-connected disabled veteran can purchase under the Service-Disabled Veterans insurance program.

Resolution No. 222: Extend Eligibility for National Cemetery Administration Medallion
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Our country has a proud history of honoring deceased veterans by providing a free Government headstone or marker which can be placed either in a VA national cemetery or a private cemetery; and

WHEREAS, Some veteran's families prefer to purchase their own headstone or marker for internment in a private cemetery; and

WHEREAS, Many of these headstones have no engraving upon them to reflect that the deceased was a veteran; and

WHEREAS, To correct this the Department of Veterans Affairs now furnishes a Medallion made of bronze that can be affixed to an existing privately purchased headstone or marker for veterans interred in a private cemetery; and

WHEREAS, Its purpose is to signify the deceased's status as a Veteran and is available in three sizes: 5 inches, 3 inches, and 1½ inches and each Medallion is inscribed with the word VETERAN across the top and the branch of service at the bottom; and

WHEREAS, Under PL 110-157 this Medallion is currently issued to all deceased other than dishonorably discharged Veterans that died on or after November 1, 1990, and whose grave in a private cemetery is marked with a privately purchased headstone or marker; and

WHEREAS, If a veteran died before November 1, 1990 they would not qualify for this Medallion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That the American Legion support legislation to remove the date of November 1, 1990 from the current law (PL 110-157) and change it to grant eligibility for this medallion to all veterans other than dishonorably discharged, regardless of their date of death.

Resolution No. 224: Department of Veterans Affairs Service-Disabled Life Insurance
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (SDVI) program of the Dept. of Vet. Affairs (VA) was founded by Congress in 1951 to provide life insurance coverage for veterans suffering only from disabilities rated by VA as being connected to their military service to the nation; and

WHEREAS, Service-connected disabled veterans are required by statute to not only be in good health except for their service-connected disability, but must apply for SDVI coverage within two years from the date of their last VA rating for a new, original disability, with increases in prior VA disability ratings not being includible for this purpose; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans in good health except for their service-connected disabilities, and who are granted rating increases because of worsening severity in such disabilities, continue to be denied SDVI coverage at a time when it has become most needful to them, due to the requirement that SDVI eligibility periods begin only with a VA rating for a new disability and last for only two years; and

WHEREAS, Other service-disabled veterans also continue to be denied insurance, due to the strict two year time limit (from the date of their last original rating) to make application; and

WHEREAS, It continues to be the experience of veterans service organizations such as The American Legion that many service-disabled veterans remain unaware of the SDVI program despite automated VA notifications, and that the insurance benefit remains inadequate and in need of enhancement; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That the American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to amend Sec. 1922(a) of title 38, United States Code, to permit that increases in VA service-connected ratings also provide a service-connected veteran with an eligibility period to apply for VA Service-Disabled Life Insurance in the same manner that ratings for new, original disabilities presently do, and that the time period of such eligibility be increased from the current two years to a period of at least five years from the date of rating determination and notification, and that such amendment also apply to any new similar issue of VA Service-Disabled Insurance that may be enacted into law.

Resolution No. 225: United States Census to Include Veterans Information
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 184 (GA))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, For over 225 years our brave men and women have served this country in the Armed Forces of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Every ten years the U.S. Census is taken and does not ask U.S. Citizens to identify if they served in the active military, national guard or reserves; and

WHEREAS, Veterans benefits, e.g. National Cemeteries, Community Based Outpatient Clinics, are allocated to states based on Veterans population which is currently estimated based on sampling; and

WHEREAS, Each census therefore does not accurately reflect true veterans, national guard and reserve population and as a result inaccuracies exist; and

WHEREAS, This is a disservice to the men and women who have served our country in time of peace and war; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion strongly support any legislation that mandates the U.S. Census Bureau to include veteran, national guard and reserve data on any future census.

Resolution No. 226: Automatic Waiver for Over-Payments of $300 or LessOrigin: Illinois
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 116 (MD))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Veterans sometimes incur overpayments with the Dept. of Veterans Affairs due to the complexity of VA laws and regulations; and

WHEREAS, The majority of these overpayments are not due to any misrepresentation or fraud on the veteran's part; and

WHEREAS, VA processing of waiver requests through the Committees on Waivers and Compromises and collection of these debts requires significant employee resources and time, printing, mailing, filing, et cetera; and

WHEREAS, Under current regulations, many small overpayment waiver requests are granted; and

WHEREAS, Elimination of processing of small overpayment amounts would allow VA personnel to concentrate on other duties, such as attacking the large claims and appeals backlog, thus improving the timeliness of delivery of benefits to our deserving veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to allow the VA to grant an automatic waiver for those overpayments of $300 or less if the claimant requests one.

Resolution No. 234: Oppose Lump Sum Payments for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Disability Compensation
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 201 (MI))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Disability compensation is paid monthly to an eligible veteran at a rate commensurate with diminished earning capacity resulting from the effects of service-connected disease or injury; and

WHEREAS, Such compensation is designed to provide continuous relief from the service-connected disability for as long as the veteran continues to suffer its effects at a compensable level, usually for the rest of the veterans' life; and

WHEREAS, By law, the rate of compensation is determined by the level of disability present, thereby requiring reevaluation of the disability upon a change in its degree; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans may start out with a lower rating, but as they age the degree of disability worsens; and

WHEREAS, There is some discussion in Congress on having the VA consider establishing lump sum payments for veterans with disability ratings of 20 percent or less; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans who are first discharged from the military and have a service-connected disability are usually in a financial bind and would find a lump-sum payment enticing, and would not focus on the long range implications of this decision e.g. later increases, added stipend for having dependents, secondary service-connected disability to name a few; and

WHEREAS, Such lump-sum payments would not, on the whole, be in the best interests of disabled veterans but would be for Government savings and convenience; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion oppose any recommendation, legislative or otherwise, to establish lump-sum payments of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation.

Resolution No. 235: Add Agent Orange Component to Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) 4.16
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, After veterans are released from service they are able to apply for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) compensation for their injuries and illnesses related to their active duty service; and

WHEREAS, Some veterans are given a VA rating that is less than total i.e. under 100%, but they are unable to secure gainful employment due to their service-related conditions(s); and

WHEREAS, Under VA regulations found in C.F.R. 4.16 the VA is able to grant a total rating for individual un-employability if the veteran has one disability rated 60% or a combined rating of 70% with one disability rated 40%; and

WHEREAS, Under this regulation the following will be considered as one disability: (1) Disabilities of one or both upper extremities, or of one or both lower extremities, including the bilateral factor, if applicable, (2) disabilities resulting from common etiology or a single accident, (3) disabilities affecting a single body system, e.g. orthopedic, digestive, respiratory, cardiovascular-renal, neuropsychiatric, (4) multiple injuries incurred in action, or (5) multiple disabilities incurred as a prisoner of war; and

WHEREAS, Some veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange are being granted compensation for various presumptive conditions e.g. residuals of prostate cancer, diabetes, coronary artery disease, etc. and have a combined rating of 60% or more; and

WHEREAS, They are unable to use the above cited regulation because the disabilities are not from a single accident, affect a single body system, incurred in action or incurred as a prisoner-of-war; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion ask the Department of Veterans Affairs to review and revise C.F.R. 4.16 to include the following new subsection (6) multiple presumptive disabilities from exposure to Agent Orange.

Resolution No. 237: Urn Markers Provided by the National Cemetery Administration
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides veterans' headstones and markers for the unmarked veterans' graves anywhere in the world and the choices range from flat bronze, flat marble, upright granite and upright marble, and also make available niche markers for identifying cremated remains in columbaria; and

WHEREAS, Headstones and markers are inscribed with the name of deceased, branch of service, the years of birth and death and other optional items that may be inscribed are military grade, rank or rate, war era service, months and days of birth and death, an approved emblem of one's belief and text indicating valor awards; and

WHEREAS, There are no provisions for any such marker for a veteran's urn when it is the decision of the veteran's family to not inter the remains of deceased veteran; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion supports legislation to amend United States Code (U.S.C.) Title 38 § 2306 to specify that an additional marker be provided for veterans' urns when an election is made to not bury the ashes of deceased veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That such marker be an appropriate sized adhesive backed metal plate which can be placed on the urn bearing the ashes, as well as providing the same information as the bronze marker now available for burials.

Resolution No. 285: 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 Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, 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. 286: Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Involvement in the Department of Homeland Security
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Homeland Security provides a single source of authority, at the highest level, for all homeland defense programs and policies; and

WHEREAS, The role of the Department of Homeland Security is to coordinate national strategy to strengthen protection against terrorist threats or attacks; and

WHEREAS, One of the critical missions of the Department of Homeland Security is emergency preparedness and response "to minimize the damage and recover from future terrorist attacks"; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical system serves as a primary back-up to the Department of Defense (DOD) in the event of military casualties; and

WHEREAS,VA and DOD have a Contingency Hospital System Plan as part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency; and

WHEREAS,VA is prepared to augment the DOD's network of hospital and health care facilities in the event of a crisis, with 155 medical centers and a significant medical staff, many of whom are veterans; and

WHEREAS, VA also acts as a federal support organization during major disasters, as one of four partners in the National Disaster Medical System; and

WHEREAS,VA provided medical and psychological support to those in need during the months following the September 11, 2001, attack; and

WHEREAS,VA also maintains radiological response teams and decontamination systems should radioactive materials ever be used; and

WHEREAS, VA manages the largest health care program and is the largest medical education and health professional training program in the United States; and

WHEREAS, VA is a federal presence in virtually every local community in the country; and

WHEREAS, VA has the ability to move health care professionals to the site of a disaster and provide medical care quickly and efficiently; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that the contingency plan for disasters developed by VA and DOD should be integrated as a part of the primary health care procedures of Homeland Security; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge Congress and the Administration to include the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in all strategic planning of the Department of Homeland Security; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress takes into account any additional requirements of VA as a result of involvement in Homeland Security obligations when developing VA's annual budget.

Resolution No. 287: Indiana-Ohio Center for Traumatic Amputation Rehabilitation Research
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Many veterans of the War on Terror have been subjected to high energy, penetrating blasts or high-velocity gunshot wounds and many survive their injuries, due to advancements in protective gear and improvements in medical treatment available in theater; and

WHEREAS, *Those injured in Iraq and Afghanistan have required more than twice the number of amputations needed in previous conflicts; and*

WHEREAS, Those with traumatic amputations require extensive physical rehabilitation and functional prosthetics to enable them to live autonomously and care for their dependents; and

WHEREAS, There is a need for research addressing long-term outcomes of military personnel who experienced war-related traumatic amputations; and

WHEREAS, Conditions related to blast injuries and amputations - like heterotropic ossification, a rare and understudied condition where bone growth occurs during recovery at the amputation site - have already begun to manifest in some recovering Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) veterans; and

WHEREAS, The Indiana-Ohio Center for Traumatic Amputation Rehabilitation Research (The Indiana-Ohio Center) was established to specifically promote research that will address the needs of veterans with war amputations; and

WHEREAS, Data on Vietnam War veterans with amputations related to blast trauma has not been widely collected and their rehabilitation experiences would be valuable in illustrating the long-term health effects of traumatic amputations; and

WHEREAS, The Indiana-Ohio Center seeks to develop a databank to capture the long-term health care and rehabilitation experiences of Vietnam War veterans to improve care for future veterans who sustain traumatic amputations and to increase knowledge of war-related amputations for the scientific community; and

WHEREAS, The Indiana-Ohio Center's initiative will also address issues affecting war amputees, such as use of prosthetic devices and access to health care, as well as psychological, social, and economic outcomes; and

WHEREAS, Information gathered during the course of this research would be beneficial in determining possible outcomes in current and future war veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion provide public endorsement for the efforts of Indiana-Ohio Center researchers; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion provide input to highlight issues relevant to war amputees; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion disseminate information (i.e. via publications and the website) about the war amputation research project to the membership in an effort to solicit participation from eligible Vietnam War veterans who may be interested in providing information for the databank; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion provide support for efforts of Indiana-Ohio Center researchers to collect information that would improve the knowledge of the long-term effects of traumatic amputations, at no direct cost to The American Legion.

Resolution No. 288: Department of Veterans Affairs to Include and Treat Family Members of Veterans with Illnesses and Injuries
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The nature of combat wounds suffered by our troops has changed dramatically during the current period of conflict; and

WHEREAS, Injuries such as Traumatic Brain Injury, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and poly-trauma often impact families as well as veterans; and

WHEREAS, Many family members are the primary care givers for these veterans; and

WHEREAS, The modern all-volunteer force is more likely to be married with dependents than their historic predecessors; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code currently allows only treatment for wounded veterans at VA Medical Center facilities; and

WHEREAS, Under certain circumstances it would be advantageous to provide certain types of care to family members in the course of treating a veteran; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge Congress to amend Title 38, United States Code to allow the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to include family members in comprehensive therapy and treat family members of wounded veterans for those conditions determined to be related to the veteran's condition where such treatment is deemed in the best interest of care for the veteran.

Resolution No. 289: WWII Veterans Hospital and Medical Entitlements
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion strongly supports the extension of U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Health Benefits to include all U.S. Veterans; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code (U.S.C.), Chapter 17, Sect. 1710 (a) (2) (e) requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish needed hospital care and medical services without regards to the other VA eligibility requirements to Veterans of WWI and Spanish American Wars; and

WHEREAS, Only a small number of WWI veterans and none from the Spanish American War are alive today; and

WHEREAS, The veterans of WWII have served our country honorably both in the war and as exemplary citizens of our great nation and are reaching an age when such medical services are needed similar to those granted WWI and Spanish American War veterans in the aforementioned law; and

WHEREAS, The current medical services provided to the WWII veterans by VA is based on a category and/or an income means test and proves difficult for these aging veterans to complete as well as being cumbersome for VA to apply and thus prevents some WWII veterans from accessing those services; and

WHEREAS, The funds the VA spends to apply this bureaucratic means test procedure could be better spent providing direct care to these WWII veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support amending Title 38, U.S.C. Chapter 17, to grant World War II veterans the same Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital and medical entitlements as granted

to World War I and Spanish American War veterans to honor their service and ensure the VA continues the same standards of care.

Resolution No. 290: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Means Test
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive 2008-083 establishes policy on Means Test and Geographic-Based Means Test Thresholds; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 107-135, the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Programs Enhancement Act of 2001, directed VA to implement a Geographic Means Test (GMT); and

WHEREAS, VA uses the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) "low-income" geographic-based income limits as the thresholds for VA's GMT; and

WHEREAS, Congress established Priority Groups within the VA to prioritize access to VA health care; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of the VA authorized suspension of new enrollment of Priority Group 8 veterans in January 2003; and

WHEREAS, Using the adjusted gross income may reclassify them as a Priority Group 7, thus allowing enrollment into VA; and

WHEREAS, Using the adjusted gross income may reclassify Priority Group 7 veterans as Priority Group 5 veterans; and

WHEREAS, The eligibility requirement for enrollment in Priority Group 5 or 7 for veterans to receive health care services provided by VHA is based on income; and

WHEREAS, The income for the Means Test is based on gross income, not adjusted gross income; and

WHEREAS, All other Federal agencies have eligibility on adjusted gross income; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support legislation to change Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Means Test policy to allow adjusted gross income to be used for the eligibility criteria in Priority Groups 5, 7 and 8.

Resolution No. 291: The Department of Veterans Affairs to Receive Private Hospital Documentation within One-Year of Services
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is authorized under Title 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) to make payment, or reimbursement, to a claimant for non-VA emergency medical treatment provided to a veteran for non-service connected conditions after individual eligibility determinations have been made; and

WHEREAS, In all non-VA emergency health care, the provider must bill the VA for all charges associated with the emergency treatment and provide medical documentation of the services provided; and

WHEREAS, The itemized bill and documentation must be received by the VA within ninety (90) days of the healthcare provided or the claim will be automatically denied; and

WHEREAS, All national private health care insurance companies queried require the same information be provided to pay a claim; however, require the claim and documentation be received within one (1) year of health care provided; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are burdened with a more rigid requirement to have this medical information sent to the VA within ninety (90) days of the date health care was provided; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion supports amending Title 38 U.S.C. §1725 and 38 C.F.R. 17.1004 (d) to be changed to read "to receive payment, or reimbursement, for emergency services, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) must receive itemized bill and documentation within one (1) year after the date of services."

Resolution No. 292: Eliminate the Requirement that a Veteran had to Serve in Vietnam to be Eligible for Wartime Benefits
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes February 28, 1961 to May 7, 1975 as the period of the Vietnam War, enabling veterans serving during that period to be eligible for membership in said organization as veterans having served during war time as described in our National Constitution; and

WHEREAS, Title 38 United States Code §101 (29) (A) designates only veterans serving in Vietnam during the period from February 28, 1961 to May 7, 1975 as being eligible for all veteran benefits and further stating in §101 (29) (B) that veterans serving in areas other than Vietnam will become eligible for similar benefits starting August 5, 1964 thru May 7, 1975; and

WHEREAS, Not using the period from February 28, 1961 to August 4, 1964 deprives veterans who served honorably, benefits available to all other veterans designated as wartime veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge the Congress of The United States to modify Title 38 United States Code (USC) §101 (29) (A) to eliminate the requirement that a veteran had to serve in Vietnam to be eligible for wartime benefits; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Title 38 USC §101 (29) (B) be eliminated and that the time period of the Vietnam War be firmly established as from February 28th, 1961 to May 7th 1975 enabling all veterans serving during that period to be eligible for veterans benefits.

Resolution No. 293: Veterans Transportation System (VTS) & Benefits Travel
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, In the Fall of 2010, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) implemented the Veterans Transportation Service (VTS) in order to improve access to VHA health care services; and

WHEREAS, The VTS program provided mobility managers, transportation coordinators, and vehicles to be driven by VA staff and volunteers; and

WHEREAS, On May 7th, 2012, the Office of General Counsel released opinion, VAOPGCADV 5-2012, which found that the VA only has the authority to use volunteer drivers to provide veterans transportation to and from VA health care facilities, not paid employees; and

WHEREAS, Some facilities solely rely on the VTS system, because they do not have volunteer drivers; and

WHEREAS, The vans utilized by the VA for must be parked on federal government property; and

WHEREAS, Some drivers in rural locations may drive up to two hours one way to pick up a van, which will total eight hours of driving in one day after conducting one trip; and

WHEREAS, If a Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) were created for local facilities such as Post Offices, the trip times could be reduced by up to half; and

WHEREAS, The guidelines set forth by the physical examinations make it hard to recruit and retain volunteer drivers, which can create an inconsistent delivery system; and

WHEREAS, Neither the Volunteer Transportation Network nor VTS really works hand in hand with the Beneficiary Travel Office; and

WHEREAS, This can lead with decreased efficiency in cost and coordination of patient transportation; and

WHEREAS, Service-connected and other veterans authorized beneficiary travel only receive $.41 per mile, and are subject to a $6 per trip deductible, not to exceed $18 per month; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 110-387 required the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to freeze the Beneficiary Travel deductible amounts as specified in 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) Section 111(c)(5) to $3.00 per one way trip, $6.00 for a round trip with a maximum deductible of $18.00 per calendar month; and

WHEREAS, Eligible veterans are not reimbursed at a reasonable level for costs incurred to visit a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facility for service-connected or other authorized care and treatment; and

WHEREAS, Beneficiary travel pay was never intended to pay actual transportation costs, such as authorized by the government for Federal employees, but instead, provided to help defray costs; and

WHEREAS, There are no provisions in law that VA must increase the per mile travel authorization on a regular basis; and

WHEREAS, The beneficiary travel program is discretionary and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs is required to review the program annually to determine the VA's ability to maintain the program and its ability to increase the reimbursement rate for eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Veterans Affairs has determined that it is necessary to maintain the current reimbursement rate in order to allow the VA health care system to accommodate the increasing patient workload; and

WHEREAS, Mandatory funding for VA health care would allow the Secretary to increase the rate without negative consequences to funding for direct care; and

WHEREAS, The price of gasoline has steadily increased since the $0.41 rate was established, creating a financial hardship for veterans who have to travel long distances for care, or for those who have limited financial resources; and

WHEREAS, The lack of a consistent and reliable mechanism to periodically adjust the per mile authorization for beneficiary travel creates an injustice and an unfair economic burden to many veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) to seek adequate funding to accommodate the needs of the increasing demand for care, to include the need for a Veterans Transportation System (VTS), accompanied by an increase in the beneficiary travel rate; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to provided dedicated funds for both benefits travel and VTS; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the VA co-locate VTS and the Beneficiary Travel Office to develop Transportation Departments at the VA Medical Centers; and, be it further

RESOLVED, The American Legion urge Congress to authorize the VA to establish Memorandums of Understanding with state and local government properties with respect to federal government vehicles used for the purpose of transporting veterans to and from the VA medical facilities; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to periodically adjust the rate to assure that the per mile reimbursement rate is increased at a reasonable and acceptable level.

Resolution No. 294: Department of Veterans Affairs Rural Healthcare Program
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, One out of every three veterans treated by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) lives in rural communities; and

WHEREAS, Rural veterans have been underserved due to a lack of access to health care, which can to attributed greater travel barriers and a lack of public transportation; and

WHEREAS, Although VA has established access standards, the standards and definition of rural and highly rural veterans do not take into account the distance and driving time it takes for veterans to be provided with VA care; and

WHEREAS, The Rural Health Consultants (RHCs) currently are located and fall under the Veteran Integrated Service Networks (VISNs), which leads to additional collateral duties, inconsistent with the schedules, ultimately distracting RHCs from needed outreach to facilities within their VISN; and

WHEREAS, The Rural Health Resource Center (RHRC) is advisory in nature and primarily conducts research without providing direct resources to rural veterans or outreach; and

WHEREAS, VA Medical Centers in rural areas have concerns in recruiting and retaining qualified medical and clinical providers, in many cases rural areas do not have attractive resources for medical providers; and

WHEREAS, While the development of Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) have increased access to healthcare for veterans in rural areas, communication between the CBOCs and medical centers have decreased, creating communication and managerial difficulties; and

WHEREAS, Telehealth services have more than doubled in the last four years, creating more access to healthcare for rural veterans, however, space and bandwidth limit the level of service and number of veterans the VA can serve; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to develop its own definition of rural and highly rural veterans, and not based on the Census Bureau's, but on access and driving times; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Office of Rural Health (ORH) to centralize and consolidate the Rural Health Consultants (RHC) under the ORH; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge ORH to ensure Rural Health Resource Centers provide service to rural veterans from surveys, national hotline and connecting veterans living in rural communities with providers; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to develop a recruitment and retention strategy to incentivize medical providers to practice in rural communities; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to ensure each Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) has adequate staff and direct communication between the CBOC's and medical center's RHC; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the ORH to search for opportunities to expand telehealth services by collaborating with local offices in rural areas that can share space.

Resolution No. 295: Military Sexual Trauma (MST)
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Military Sexual Trauma (MST) impacts thousands of brave men and women in the Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, In FY2010, Department of Defense (DOD) estimated that only 13.5 percent of MST incidents were reported; and

WHEREAS, In addition, reporting of MST is frequently followed by lackluster investigation and prosecution, with many resulting in administrative or dishonorable discharge rather than Uniform Code of Military Justice prosecution; and

WHEREAS, DOD does not have a policy of permanently maintaining files of reported incidents of MST, creating evidentiary roadblocks for future Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) claims; and

WHEREAS, A history of MST has correlations to many health and economic consequences, including PTSD, sexually transmitted infections, homelessness, and substance abuse; and

WHEREAS, According to a 2010 report published by the VA Office of Inspector General, entitled "Review of Combat Stress in Women Veterans Receiving VA Health Care and Disability Benefits," Women Veterans Coordinators (WVCs) are frequently underutilized due to lack of public awareness of the services and assistance provided by WVCs; and

WHEREAS, According to the same OIG report, women veterans are disproportionately granted Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) claims based on MST; for instance, 9 percent of PTSD claims granted to women veterans by Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) were on the basis of MST, compared to only 0.1 percent of male veterans; and

WHEREAS, MST claims and treatment involve delicate, sensitive emotional issues; and

WHEREAS, VBA lacks a complete assessment of its system-wide MST-related workload and outcomes, without which it cannot determine if additional MST-specific training and testing is necessary; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge the Department of Defense (DOD) to improve its investigation and prosecution of reported cases of Military Sexual Trauma (MST) to be on par with the civilian system; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the DOD to examine the underreporting of MST and to permanently maintain records of reported MST allegations, thereby expanding victims' access to documented evidence which is necessary for future Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) claims; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the VA to ensure that all VA medical centers, vet centers, and community-based outpatient clinics employ a MST counselor to oversee the screening and treatment referral process, and to continue universal screening of all veterans for a history of MST; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the VA to review military personnel files in all MST claims and apply reduced criteria to MST-related PTSD to match that of combat-related PTSD; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the VA to employ additional Women Veterans Coordinators (WVCs) and to provide MST sensitivity training to claims processors and WVCs; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the VA to conduct an analysis of MST claims volume, assess the consistency of how these claims are adjudicated, and determine the need, if any, for additional training and testing on processing of these claims.

Referred to Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

Resolution No. 9 (MT): **Prevent Exploitation of Veterans and Family Members Applying for Aid and Attendance**
Resolution No. 41 (CO): **Creation of National Veterans Support Network**
Resolution No. 43 (CO): **Proper Burial for the Troops of the 3rd and 5th Calvary**
Resolution No. 45 (UT): **The American Legion to Urge Congress to Initiate Action to Prevent Charging for the Initial Filing of Claims**
Resolution No. 159 (WA): **Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to Require Quality Timeliness Customer Service (QTC) to Hire Specialists for Compensation & Pension Examinations**
Resolution No. 160 (WA): **Petition The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Congress for a Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Silverdale, Washington**
Resolution No. 177 (GA): **Reinstate Vietnam Veterans with Agent Orange Exposure in the Department of Veterans Affairs Priority Group 6**
Resolution No. 210 (CA): **Patriot Outreach Program**
Resolution No. 240 (NE): **Hot Springs Veterans Affairs Medical Center**
Resolution No. 243 (PI): **Support Legislation to Classify Certain Service of Military Forces in the Philippines as Active Duty for the Purpose of Obtaining Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits**

Rejected Resolutions

Resolution No. 36 (OH): **Protecting Veterans Headstones**
Resolution No. 134 (MD): **In-State Licensure of Department of Veterans Affairs' Healthcare Providers**
Resolution No. 161 (WA): **Require The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Healthcare Providers to have In-State Licensure for the Home State of the VA Facility in Which Care is Provided**
Resolution No. 187 (VA): **The American Legion to Sponsor Ride to Recovery**
Resolution No. 242 (NE): **Amending Department of Veterans Affairs Form 40-1330**
Resolution No. 247 (PR): **Expand Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Program to Veterans of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands**

CHAIRMAN HELM: Mr. Commander, I, Michael D. Helm, Nebraska, as a duly elected and registered delegate to this convention, move for the adoption of this report, respectively submitted. ... *Second.*

... At this time National Commander Wong resumed the Chair.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Is there any discussion? All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. Any opposed? The Report of Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation is adopted. *(Cheers and applause)*

Presentation: William F. Lenker National Service Trophy

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: 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 2011-2012 program year, the trophy is awarded to the Department of Florida. *(Applause)*

The Chair recognize Joseph Caouette of New Hampshire, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Americanism, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Americanism
Joseph Caouette, New Hampshire, Chairman

Mr. Commander, delegates to the convention and guests, to the 94th Annual National Convention of The American Legion, Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28-30, 2012:

Forty-one members of your Convention Committee on Americanism met at 8:30 a.m. on Sunday, August 26, 2012, in the Indianapolis Marriott Downtown, Indiana Ballroom, Section F, First Floor, Indianapolis, Indiana 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 twenty-one resolutions that were assigned to the committee. 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 Mark Avis (MA) 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. The motion was approved.

Twenty-one resolutions were considered with 15 being approved, 1 approved as amended, 4 referred to the Standing Commission on Americanism, and 1 rejected.

Approved as Amended Resolution

Resolution No. 217: English Language be Declared as the Official United States Language
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who come from many ethnic backgrounds and who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, The United States has over its many year history been a haven and in most cases a new home for people from all over the world; and

WHEREAS, These Americans, although keeping their ethnic background alive, were urged to take advantage of our free educational system that taught them the English language, American history, and civics; and

WHEREAS, Many permanent residents and new citizens, although clinging to their ethnic backgrounds did with pride and determination take advantage of learning English; and

WHEREAS, Bilingual programs funded by the Department of Education are designed to teach with the primary instruction in the student's home language, while English is subjected to a secondary status; and

WHEREAS, These programs tend to encourage separatism, rather than a unification of purpose; and

WHEREAS, There exists alternative bilingual education programs which provide a more efficient transition to proficiency in the English language; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion shall sponsor and encourage legislation which would establish English as the official national language; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to encourage and fund alternative bilingual education programs to serve, as was intended, as a short intermediate step to achieve proficiency in the English language.

Approved Resolution

Resolution No. 268: Strategy to Address Social, Economic and Population Problems Related to Illegal Immigration
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The American Legion, since its inception in 1919, has expressed concern that legal and illegal immigrants arriving in this country in large numbers would be unable to effectively assimilate into our society unless numerical quotas were established and enforced; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's concern is exacerbated by the estimates by immigration reform groups and reports by news sources and others that as many as 10 to 20 million individuals are in this country illegally; and

WHEREAS, Numerous authoritative studies have shown that mass immigration has harmed the interests of millions of Americans, including veterans, by undercutting wages and working conditions, increasing welfare costs, overburdening local schools, public health care facilities and other vital social institutions; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has urged the Congress of the United States to adopt an immigration policy that will eliminate social, economic and population problems resulting from our country's failure to secure our nation's borders and to enforce its immigration and employment laws; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is opposed to any amnesty or legalization program, policy or directive that would grant illegal immigrants legal permission to remain in the United States, thereby rewarding them for criminal behavior while penalizing those immigrants following lawful immigration channels and increasing the financial burden on law-abiding taxpayers who would ultimately pay for these services; and

WHEREAS, It is universally thought by both proponents and opponents of illegal immigration that immediate deportation by force of all illegal aliens in the United States is not a workable solution to the issue, with estimates for such action totaling perhaps as much as $215 billion over the next five years according to the Center for Immigration

Studies, an independent non-partisan 501(c)(3) research think tank devoted exclusively to research and policy analysis of the impacts of immigration on the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Center for Immigration Studies reports that as a result of illegal aliens accessing government programs upon being granted amnesty, the costs to government will increase significantly from $10.4 billion a year to $28.8 billion; and

WHEREAS, The Center for Immigration Studies, has proposed an alternative to mass deportation or mass legalization of illegals, seeking instead the attrition of the illegal population and efforts to encourage illegal aliens to leave the U.S. of their own accord; and

WHEREAS, The Center for Immigration Studies plan, which uses the government's own cost estimates, could cut the illegal population by nearly half in five years with an additional investment of less than $2 billion, or $400 million per year; and

WHEREAS, The provisions of the Center for Immigration Studies plan have been reviewed by the National Americanism Commission and are determined to be compatible with the provisions of American Legion resolutions on the subject of illegal immigration; and

WHEREAS, Few candidates for public office or their political parties address the issue of illegal immigration or express a willingness to take a position – either pro or con – as to their stand on illegal immigration in the United States because of the likelihood of alienating a significant number of voters in their jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, Americans are becoming increasingly frustrated by what they see as the federal government's reluctance and/or failure to stop this large influx of illegals and the actions by some states to provide taxpayer funded services and other benefits to illegal aliens thus providing additional incentives for more people to enter this country illegally; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has passed numerous resolutions calling for the enforcement and/or reform of the government's immigration laws, policies and procedures and combined many of the positions regarding social, economic and population problems into 2010 National Convention Resolution #302, which concisely stated The American Legion's positions and strategy to resolve this complex matter; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion be unalterably opposed to illegal immigration and oppose legislation that would result in the granting of amnesty and legal residency, in any form or by any name, to illegal immigrants currently in the United States; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion, on behalf of all Americans and future generations of Americans, urge the Congress and the federal government to authorize and fund the following strategy in addressing the issue of illegal aliens in the United States:

1. Eliminate the jobs magnet and social services benefits:
- **(a) Mandate verification of employment eligibility,**
- **(b) Enforce employer sanctions as called for in current employment laws and assess heavy penalties on employers who knowingly hire illegal aliens,**
- **(c) Make illegal residents ineligible for Social Security benefits, unemployment compensation, and other government-sponsored public services and public assistance,**
- **(d) Eliminate governmental financial aid for illegal alien students;**

2. Enforce existing laws and pass new laws to reduce U.S. illegal population:
- **(a) Reject amnesty or "legalization" programs for illegal aliens,**

(b) Prohibit eligibility to services offered by financial institutions in the United States,

(c) Issue no drivers licenses to illegal aliens,

(d) Designate English as the official language of the U.S. government and print all documents, including election ballots, in the English language only,

(e) Work with state and local governments to discourage illegal settlement;

3. Revise legal immigration procedures; screen and track foreign visitors legally entering the U.S.:

(a) Eliminate the Visa Lottery Program,

(b) Restrict the number of countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program,

(c) Establish numerical limits for all immigration categories of temporary workers to help prevent labor market distortions and create new visa categories or expand the H-2A and H-2B Visa Categories for temporary agricultural and temporary and seasonal workers as necessary to replace illegal workers eliminated from employment opportunities in the U.S.,

(d) Create and enforce a reporting system to track the whereabouts of foreign visitors to include students at academic institutions, members of a country's diplomatic corps, aircraft and vessel crews, foreign press representatives, exchange visitors, H-1B Workers, L-1 Intra-company Transferees and those individuals categorized as humanitarian entrants; and

4. Hold accountable those employers who knowingly hire illegal aliens, especially those aliens showing suspected fraudulent documents, thus suggesting the possibility that identify theft may have occurred; and

5. Promptly deport to their country of origin those illegal aliens convicted of felonies relating to the use of fraudulent identity documents, especially those of children, in order to obtain employment in the United States; and

6. Assist victims of identity theft perpetuated by illegal aliens by providing the victims with assistance in reclaiming their identity while erasing derogatory information, such as criminal convictions resulting from the misuse of the victim's identity records; and,

7. Make institutions of higher education who fail to cooperate with the federal government in monitoring and tracking foreign students ineligible to receive federal student loan monies benefiting foreign students, and, be it further,

RESOLVED, That The American Legion adamantly oppose provisions of any comprehensive immigration reform legislation that grants amnesty or forgiveness to the employers of illegal aliens; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion opposes any legislation or executive order that would allow illegal aliens and others who are in this country illegally to receive in-state tuition rates, federal or other government education grants and or financial assistance to attend a college or university in the United States; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion endorses the report by the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) titled "Attrition Through Enforcement – A Cost-Effective Strategy to Shrink the Illegal Population" and adopts the action as proposed in the report as a portion of its strategy for reform of the U.S. immigration policy; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion work with CIS to obtain Congressional approval and national acceptance of the plan which includes the following:

- **Mandatory workplace verification of immigration status**
- **Measures to curb misuse of Social Security numbers and IRS identification numbers**
- **Cooperation between federal, state and local law enforcement officials**
- **Increased screening of foreign visitors**
- **Increase non-criminal removals through increased interior enforcement**
- **Discourage illegal settlement by adopting additional state and local legislation; and, be it further**

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the United States government to hold respective agency heads accountable in guaranteeing the desired communications and exchanges of technical information concerning the various aspects of the illegal alien issue; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seize every opportunity to request an accountability of our elected officials in implementing and enforcing federal and international laws and treaties to eliminate the large numbers of individuals from foreign countries entering the United States illegally and that all candidates for public office and the Democratic and Republican National Committees express publicly to the American people their positions and solutions to this grave danger to our country's stability; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue an information campaign to alert its members, federal and state elected officials, and the general public of the massive influx into the country of illegal immigrants, the consequences of mass immigration and how it will affect the standards of living in these United States; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion use all possible means to bring forth a solution to the challenges faced by the United States because of illegal immigration.

Resolution No. 269: Return Patriotic Holidays to Traditional Dates
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The dates of certain patriotic holidays have been changed from their original dates to create "three-day weekends"; and

WHEREAS, The time-honored traditional observances of these holidays has been eroded; and

WHEREAS, The majority of Americans view Memorial Day as a time for relaxation and leisure recreation rather than as a solemn occasion and a time to reflect and pay tribute to the American servicemen and women who sacrificed their lives in defense of our Nation; and

WHEREAS, By urging the ringing of bells in our communities for one minute on traditional Memorial Day, May 30, will help Americans to realize that the true purpose of this day is to pay tribute to those who have given so much for their country; and

WHEREAS, Our hope for the future has been made possible because our servicemen and women have made sacrifices in order to secure freedom for America and the ringing of community bells is a fitting way to observe traditional Memorial Day in the years to come; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion calls upon the Congress of the United States to restore the official observance of Lincoln's

Birthday to February 12, Washington's Birthday to February 22, Memorial Day to May 30 and Columbus Day to October 12 each year; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the passage of federal legislation that would result in an annual Presidential proclamation calling on all American institutions, public and private, to toll their bells for one minute, beginning at 11:00 a.m. on the traditional Memorial Day, May 30, in remembrance of the servicemen and women who died defending our Nation and our freedom.

Resolution No. 270: English Language be used in Naturalization Ceremonies
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, Resolution No. 567, titled, "Naturalization Ceremony", was passed by delegates to the 56th annual National Convention of The American Legion in 1974 and opposed any change in the Judicial Naturalization Ceremony for new United States citizens; and

WHEREAS, In recent years, naturalization ceremonies have been conducted in foreign languages; and

WHEREAS, Several resolutions have been passed by The American Legion which urged Congress and the various state legislatures to declare the English language as the official language of government in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Amendments to the Immigration and Naturalization Act make the traditional naturalization ceremony conducted by a United States District Judge optional, thereby removing an integral and indelible step in the naturalization process; and

WHEREAS, Legionnaires and American Legion posts have traditionally participated in naturalization ceremonies as part of the Legion's Americanism program; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion encourages the United States Attorney General to issue a directive making naturalization ceremonies by a U. S. District Judge a mandatory step in the process of acquiring U.S. citizenship; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress, the U.S. Justice Department and the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services of the Department of Homeland Security to require that all Citizenship Naturalization Ceremonies be conducted in the English language.

Resolution No. 271: School Prayer
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, Americans have historically believed in seeking God's protection and guidance through prayer; and

WHEREAS, The value of expressing spiritual convictions through public prayer has been recognized as a firm basis on which to conduct public proceedings; and

WHEREAS, Supreme Court decisions during the early 1960's have had the effect of severely restricting the practice of any manner of public prayer even though these decisions simply addressed prescribed or compulsory prayer; and

WHEREAS, This restriction is most evident in our nation's public schools where a concurrent moral and spiritual decline is clearly manifested; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion reaffirms its support for an amendment to the Constitution of the United States that would

permit voluntary prayer in public buildings, including public schools and at other public gatherings; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress pass legislation to promote the concept of school prayer in order to ensure that our Nation's public school children have a daily opportunity to pray.

Resolution No. 272: Constitutional Amendment to Protect the Flag of the United States
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The American Legion has campaigned diligently for the passage of an amendment to the Constitution of the United States to protect the symbol of our Nation, the Flag of the United States, from physical desecration; and

WHEREAS, Part of that campaign has included the founding of The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc., a coalition of civic, veteran, business and fraternal organizations which have come together to persuade Congress to propose a flag amendment; and

WHEREAS, The legislatures of all 50 states have indicated by memorial resolutions to the U.S. Congress that such an amendment to the U.S. Constitution is needed in view of the 1989 decision of the United States Supreme Court (Texas v. Johnson) that invalidated all flag protection laws; and

WHEREAS, Surveys have shown that over 80% of the American people support the passage of a flag amendment; and

WHEREAS, Flag protection amendments have passed the House of Representatives six times previously, only to fall short of the necessary two-thirds supermajority required in the Senate; and

WHEREAS, Since the time of the American Revolution millions of men and women have proudly defended our country under the "Stars & Stripes" and, as a last gesture of gratitude this emblem of our country is placed upon the coffin of veterans as a token of respect for services rendered to a grateful nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion continue to urge the Congress of the United States to propose and approve an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow the Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the Flag of the United States; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue its efforts through affiliation with The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. to bring to a successful conclusion the grassroots campaign to amend the Constitution of the United States of America in order to return to the people their right to protect the Flag from acts of physical desecration.

Resolution No. 273: Oppose Importation of Foreign Manufactured American Flags
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The Flag of the United States is a uniquely American symbol; and

WHEREAS, The Flag Code of the United States as listed in Title 4, United States Code, Chapter 1, subsection 8(j) states that: "The flag represents a living country and is itself considered a living thing"; and

WHEREAS, Foreign manufacturers are making and exporting to the United States U.S. Flags and/or merchandise which violate certain provisions of the United States Flag Code; and

WHEREAS, Resolution 191, 1982 National Convention, Chicago, Illinois resolves that The American Legion promote through its Posts and Departments the purchase of American manufactured goods; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion encourages its membership, the general public, and all local, state and federal government agencies to purchase and display only American manufactured Flags of the United States; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation through the United States Congress to prohibit the importation of foreign made Flags of the United States.

Resolution No. 274: Conscientious Objectors Tax Diversion
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the United States of America provides for the common defense of all citizens; and

WHEREAS, The freedoms we enjoy and the security of our Nation that we desire rests on the individual determination of each of us to help preserve it; and

WHEREAS, Legislation has been introduced in the Congress that would allow conscientious objectors to elect to have their income, estate, or gift tax be used for non-military purposes; and

WHEREAS, Implementation of such a practice could affect military strength and national security; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges Congress to oppose legislation that would give conscientious objectors a voice in diverting monies from military spending.

Resolution No. 275: Amend the "Temporary Protected Status" Portion of the Immigration Act of 1990
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) is a classification granted to eligible nationals of designated countries who are temporarily present in the United States when natural disaster or political turmoil in their country interferes with their plans to return; and

WHEREAS, A person from a designated country who is in the United States is eligible to be granted TPS only by establishing that the designated country was the applicant's last place of habitual residence; and

WHEREAS, TPS beneficiaries are granted work authorization during the TPS period and for any extensions of the designation; and

WHEREAS, TPS was created by the Immigration Act of 1990; and

WHEREAS, Anyone in the United States from the designated country is eligible for TPS, whether they entered the country in violation of our immigration law in order to find work or for other reasons, or violated the law by staying in the country and taking a job illegally, or were a bona fide visitor; and

WHEREAS, Currently six countries are designated as TPS; and

WHEREAS, Conferring TPS status on persons illegally in the United States rewards them with a work permit that legitimizes their illegal activity; and

WHEREAS, Any person who can establish that they fear persecution if forced to return to their country of origin is eligible for asylum in the United States; and

WHEREAS, TPS allows aliens to live in the United States without our being able to learn their true identities or background information; and

WHEREAS, The events of September 11, 2001 have proven that we can no longer afford to accept people into our country without thorough background checks; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to amend the Temporary Protected Status section of the Immigration Act of 1990 to limit its coverage to foreign visitors legally in the United States.

Resolution No. 276: Support Fairness for Immigrant Spouses
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The American Legion was founded by veterans who were concerned about the welfare of dependents of servicemen and women killed as a result of their service in World War I; and

WHEREAS, Current immigration law requires an immigrant spouse to be married to a citizen of the United States for two years before proceeding with a petition for legal permanent resident status; and

WHEREAS, The immigrant spouse's petition for permanent legal residence is canceled when the citizen spouse dies before the two-year threshold is reached; and

WHEREAS, Current law allows immigrant spouses of U.S. military personnel who die in combat or as a result of combat to continue their original petition for permanent resident status; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is committed to caring for the families of the service men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice by giving their lives in the furtherance of the interests of the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to allow immigrant spouses of U.S. military personnel who die in training on military installations to continue their petition for permanent resident status without the current two-year eligibility restriction; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Immigration and Nationality Act be amended to waive the fees for posthumous citizenship assessed to surviving family members who lose a relative in hostile combat while a member of the U.S. Armed Forces and who has a pending application for United States citizenship.

Resolution No. 277: Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, Since the earliest days of our republic, Congress has exercised its constitutional power to establish a uniform Rule of Naturalization; and

WHEREAS, The Rules of Naturalization, as established by Congress, requires an oath of allegiance and renunciation of all prior allegiances as a condition of naturalization; and

WHEREAS, The Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance serves as a contract between the applicant for citizenship and the United States government in which the applicant, in return for the benefits and privileges received, agrees to

1. Renounce all allegiance to any foreign state or sovereign; and

2. Support and defend the U.S. Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, both foreign and domestic; and
3. Bear "true faith and allegiance" to the United States of America; and
4. Bear arms, perform noncombatant service, or perform work of national importance on behalf of the United States of America; and
5. Take this oath without mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that naturalization is a privilege, not a right, to be granted only in accordance with the conditions established by the Congress; and

WHEREAS, In taking the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance, the immigrant pledges to transfer their full political allegiance from his or her birth nation to the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, According to immigration experts, the great majority of immigrants applying for U.S. citizenship come from countries that "allow or encourage multiple citizenship"; and

WHEREAS, Many immigrant-sending countries, including Mexico, are actively promoting dual allegiance; and

WHEREAS, To retain allegiance to another constitution besides the U.S. Constitution, is inconsistent with the moral and philosophical foundations of American constitutional democracy, thus violating our core principles as outlined in the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance; and

WHEREAS, The integrity of the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance and the integrity of the entire citizenship naturalization process are challenged or compromised by the continuing increase in the number of U.S. citizens who hold multiple national allegiances; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion opposes any and all changes to the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance, as used in naturalization ceremonies, that would dilute or eliminate any of the following important and necessary elements of the oath:

1. **Renunciation of all allegiances to foreign states or sovereignties**
2. **Support for and defense of the U.S. Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic**
3. **Bear 'true faith and allegiance' to the United States of America**
4. **Bear arms, perform noncombatant service, or perform work of national importance on behalf of the United States of America**
5. **Take this oath without mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and, be it further**

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to prescribe the language that is used in the oath of renunciation and allegiance for purposes as outlined in the Immigration and Nationality Act; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the Congress of the United States to enact measures to prevent dual citizenship by naturalized U.S. citizens.

Resolution No. 278: The Boy Scouts of America and the Department of Defense
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The Eighty-Second National Convention of The American Legion in Milwaukee, Wisconsin passed Resolution 334 titled "Support of Boy Scouts of America" which reiterated The American Legion's longstanding support of the Boy Scouts of

America in its efforts to maintain and practice traditional family values with regard to their membership and their leadership standards; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, as chartered by the United States Congress, pledges to "transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy"; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion endorses the concept that the perpetuation of these principles may best be initiated by an enlightened public achieved through the implementation of educational practices offered in the homes, in our schools and through public wide programs organized and developed for this purpose by organizations like the Boy Scouts of America; and

WHEREAS, The Supreme Court of the United States has upheld the constitutional right of the Boy Scouts of America to set their own standards and membership policies because an indispensable part of being free is the right of individuals to hold moral positions and to associate with others who share those positions; and

WHEREAS, Despite the Supreme Court having ruled in favor of the Boy Scouts' freedom to associate with those sharing their moral views and to not associate with those who do not share their moral views, the Boy Scouts have been subjected to a continual barrage of attacks by groups and individuals holding opposing views; and

WHEREAS, These opposition groups have been successful in eliminating the Scouting program from all branches and installations of the U.S. Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that this unrelenting assault against the Boy Scouts is not a unique occurrence but a part of an orchestrated effort to denigrate, damage and systematically destroy traditional American values, as embodied in the Boy Scouts of America, The American Legion, the Flag of the United States, the Pledge of Allegiance, and numerous other embodiments of Americanism; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion express its steadfast opposition to Department of Defense policies that prohibit the chartering of Boy Scout units by components of the Armed Forces of the United States and prohibit the use of Department of Defense installations and facilities worldwide by the Boy Scouts of America; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion use every executive, legislative and judicial avenue available to restore longstanding policies of cooperation between the Department of Defense and the Boy Scouts of America that will allow Boy Scout units the right to use DOD facilities and to authorize components of the active duty military, National Guard and reserve units to charter or sponsor Boy Scout units without fear of legal reprisal.

Resolution No. 279: The Pledge of Allegiance
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, In October 1970, The American Legion's National Executive Committee passed Resolution 13 titled "Defense and Respect for the United States Flag", that voiced The American Legion's support for continuing the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in the nation's public schools; and

WHEREAS, In recent years, several states have passed legislation to encourage and authorize the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance in the schools within their state; and

WHEREAS, In 1954, The Congress of the United States reaffirmed the influence on government by a supreme power when it revised the Pledge of Allegiance by inserting the words "under God" as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation <u>under God</u>, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all; and

WHEREAS, Liberal judicial opinions and media coverage have questioned the propriety of reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools in the United States, citing the unconstitutionality in references to God; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, the Congress of the United States, and many other groups and organizations open their regular meetings by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion reiterate its continuing support for the Pledge of Allegiance in its current form, voicing opposition to any and all attempts to revise it beyond the version approved by Congress in 1954; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the nation's schools to include the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance by teachers and students in regular school activities and events; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion, at all levels, continue its unyielding support for the Pledge of Allegiance and its provisions of national loyalty by using all means practical to inform Americans about the belief in and the reliance in God by our nation's founders in forming our democratic Republic.

Resolution No. 280: Oppose Flag Code Change Conduct During Hoisting, Lowering or Passing of the Flag or During the National Anthem
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The American Legion is recognized as one of the country's foremost authorities on the proper display of the United States flag; and

WHEREAS, Title 4, Chapter 1, Section 9, United States Code previously stated, "During the ceremony of hoisting or lowering the flag or when the flag is passing in a parade or in review, all persons present except those in uniform should face the flag and stand at attention with the right hand over the heart. Those present in uniform should render the military salute. When not in uniform, men should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Aliens should stand at attention. The salute to the flag in a moving column should be rendered at the moment the flag passes."; and

WHEREAS, Title 36, Chapter 3, Section 301, United States Code previously stated, "During a rendition of the National Anthem when the flag is displayed all present except those in uniform should stand at attention facing the flag with the right hand over the heart; men not in uniform should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold the headdress at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart; and individuals in uniform should give the military salute at the first note of the anthem and maintain that position until the last note."; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 110-181, 110th Congress, amended Title 4, Chapter 1, Section 9, United States Code to read: "During the ceremony of hoisting or lowering the flag or when the flag is passing in a parade or in review, those present in uniform should render the military salute. Members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may render the military salute. All other persons present should face the flag and stand at attention with their right hand over the heart, or if applicable, remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Citizens of other countries should stand at attention. All such conduct toward the flag in a moving column should be rendered at the moment the flag passes."; and

WHEREAS Public Law 110-417, 110th Congress amended Title 36, Chapter 3, Section 301, United States Code to read: "During a rendition of the national anthem when

the flag is displayed individuals in uniform should give the military salute at the first note of the anthem and maintain that position until the last note; members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may render the military salute in the manner provided for individuals in uniform; and all other persons present should face the flag and stand at attention with their right hand over the heart, and men not in uniform, if applicable, should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart"; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion appreciates the sincere intent of the current law to recognize all veterans by authorizing the military salute as an option to the traditional means of honoring the flag by placing the right hand over the heart; and

WHEREAS, Military regulations were affected, which previously specified that members not in uniform face the flag and stand at attention with the right hand over the heart, if covered, men shall remove the headdress and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart; and

WHEREAS, Title 4, Chapter 1, Section 4, United States Code states, "The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag" should be rendered by standing at attention facing the flag with the right hand over the heart. When not in uniform men should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Persons in uniform should remain silent, face the flag, and render the military salute; and

WHEREAS, The sentence "Members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may render the military salute," raises the concern that Legionnaires, while wearing a baseball cap or other casual headdress would render a military salute; and

WHEREAS, The non-veteran public may soon follow the lead of those veterans and render the military salute as the flag is hoisted, lowered, is passing or during a rendition of the national anthem when the flag is displayed; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That those sections of the U.S. Flag Code prescribing that members of the Armed Forces and veterans out of uniform may render the military salute during hoisting, lowering, or passing of the United States flag and/or during a rendition of the national anthem when the flag is displayed, causes confusion leading to breaches of flag etiquette, to include proper conduct during the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to repeal that portion of Title 4, Chapter 1, Section 9, United States Code permitting members of the Armed Forces and veterans out of uniform to render a military salute during hoisting, lowering, or passing of the United States flag; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to repeal that portion of Title 36, Chapter 3, Section 301, United States Code permitting members of the Armed Forces and veterans out of uniform to render a military salute during a rendition of the national anthem when the flag is displayed.

Resolution No. 281: Eliminate Damages and Attorney Fees in Establishment Clause Lawsuits
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The American Legion, whose motto is "For God and Country" and has been since its founding by veterans of World War I in 1919, is leading a nationwide effort to combat the secular cleansing of our American heritage through Establishment Clause lawsuits; and

WHEREAS, Many Americans mistakenly believe that the words "separation of church and state" are included in the Constitution of the United States and provide the legal basis for removal of symbols with a religious aspect or references to God in our National Motto or to our country's founders' reliance on God, from veterans memorials, and other public lands, areas, monuments, buildings, seals, or ceremonies; and

WHEREAS, The First Amendment to the Constitution nowhere in fact mentions "separation of church and state," nor "separation of state from religion," but states only: *"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.";* and,

WHEREAS, Judges in increasing numbers have issued orders in Establishment Clause cases that ban the Boy Scouts, ban the Ten Commandments, ban religious symbols at veterans memorials, ban the Pledge of Allegiance, ban historical religious symbols in the official seals of counties, and ban cities and the Department of Defense from assisting the Boy Scouts, and judges in such cases have awarded millions of dollars to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and others in attorney fees to be paid by taxpayers as authorized by 42 U.S. Code Section 1988, the Equal Access to Justice Act, 28 U.S. Code Section 2412, and/or other federal statutes; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that all federal statutes of the United States should be amended to rescind and repeal the authority Congress gave the courts to impose damages or attorney fees in Establishment Clause cases, as the threat of judge-ordered damages or attorney fees is being used as a club to compel local elected bodies, villages, towns, cities, counties, school boards, and state and federal agencies, to surrender to demands to remove or destroy symbols or expressions of a religious aspect from all areas of the public sphere for fear of imposition of damages or attorney fees to be paid by taxpayers, and is being used to chill private citizens from exercising the First Amendment right to seek redress by entering Establishment Clause lawsuits to defend symbols of and references to our American heritage, for fear that damages or attorney fees will be imposed upon them personally; and

WHEREAS, The 86th National Convention of The American Legion, August 31 – September 1, 2, 2004, passed Resolution 326, Preserve WWI Veterans Memorial in Mojave Desert, which called on Congress to amend the Civil Rights Attorney Fees Act of 1976, 42 U.S. Code Section 1988, to prohibit the courts from awarding attorney fees under that statute in lawsuits brought to remove or destroy religious symbols; and

WHEREAS, The 87th National Convention of The American Legion, August 23, 24, and 25, 2005, passed Resolution 139, Amend the Equal Access to Justice Act, which called on Congress to amend 28 U.S. Code Section 2412, or any other similar federal statute, to limit remedies to declaratory and injunctive relief only and to eliminate court-ordered attorney fee awards in cases brought under the Establishment of Religion Clause of the U.S. Constitution; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge the Congress of the United States to amend the Civil Rights Attorney Fees Act of 1976, 42 U.S. Code Section 1988, the Equal access to Justice Act, 28 U.S. Code 2412, and any and all other federal statutes, to limit remedies to injunctive relief and declaratory relief only, and to rescind the authority of the courts to award attorney fees to the prevailing party in lawsuits brought under the Establishment of Religion Clause in the U.S. Constitution.

Resolution No. 282: Star Spangled Banner
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The Star Spangled Banner became our National Anthem on March 3, 1931, when President Herbert Hoover signed Public Law 823; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that many millions of Americans cherish and respect the currently accepted version, both words and music, of "The Star Spangled Banner," such version being the "Service Version" prepared in 1918 by the War Department for use in Army and Navy song books; and

WHEREAS, It has become customary and traditional to sing or play "The Star Spangled Banner" before sporting events and other large gatherings of people in this country in a traditional manner reflecting a solemn pride, dignity and respect; and

WHEREAS, Many American Legionnaires have been offended by disrespectful and unconventional playing and singing of the National Anthem at sporting events; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, by action of the 78th National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah, went on record supporting establishment of a national day of observance for "The Star Spangled Banner;" now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion encourage and recommend the playing of the National Anthem at all sporting events and that it be performed in its original customary and traditional rendition; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge radio and television networks and stations to desist from pre-empting with commercial advertisements the singing and playing of our National Anthem and the raising and/or lowering of our Flag; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion is opposed to any changes in the words and music of the National Anthem as adopted under Public Law 823 of the 71st Congress; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion promote the establishment of March 3 of each year as a national day of observance for "The Star Spangled Banner" and that the patriotic observance of this day stress the origin of "The Star Spangled Banner."

Referred to Standing Commission on Americanism

Resolution No. 34 (OH): **Oppose Legislation or Regulations that Infringe Upon the Rights of Religious Organizations**
Resolution No. 163 (WI): **American Legion Baseball Re-Entry Rule**
Resolution No. 203 (MO): **Clay Bird (TRAP) Shooting Competition**
Resolution No. 248 (PR): **Citizens of United States Territories be Afforded the Right to Vote for United States President and Vice-President**

Rejected

Resolution No. 4 (FR): **Boy Scout Award**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN CAOUETTE: As a duly registered delegate from the Department of New Hampshire, I move for the adoption of this report. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER GUNDERSON: All in favor? Opposed. So ordered. ...*At this time a musical interlude was played.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Please be seated. Born in Detroit, Michigan, our next guest had a successful career in business before entering the public sector. After graduating from Brigham Young University in 1971, he earned dual degrees from Harvard Law and Harvard Business School. After working as a business consultant for several years he founded the investment firm Bain Capital in 1984. Under his leadership Bain launched or rebuilt over 100 companies including Staples, Bright Horizons and The Sports Authority. When a financial scandal hit the planned Salt Lake City Olympics, our guest was asked to take over. He reorganized the leadership, trimmed the budget and restored confidence in what turned out to be highly successful games. In 2002 he was elected governor of Massachusetts. He cut red tape for small businesses, signed into law job creating incentives, eliminated a $3 billion deficit and reduced unemployment. He is running for president on a platform of job creation and economic growth. He and his staff were very receptive in meeting with the Legion in Tampa last week to discuss issues to include in their party platform, such as protecting the U.S. Flag, fighting sequestration and irresponsible defense cuts and providing the best medical care possible for our wounded warriors and veterans. Ladies and gentlemen, let's give a warm American Legion welcome to Governor Mitt Romney. *(Cheers and applause)*

Address: The Honorable Mitt Romney
Former Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Thank you so much for that very warm welcome. Thank you. And thank you, National Commander Wong, for your generous introduction. National Adjutant Wheeler, Auxiliary President Nelson, it's good to see you both as well. And I appreciate this invitation to join you on dry land this afternoon. *(Laughter)*

Our thoughts are of course with the people of the Gulf Coast states. Seven years ago today they were bracing for Hurricane Katrina; this afternoon they're enduring Isaac. We're grateful that it appears that Isaac will spare them from the kind of damage we saw during Katrina. But for many on the Gulf Coast who just finished repairing their homes and are getting their life back to normal, this must be a heavy burden. And so today our thoughts are with them, our prayers go out to them, and our country must do all we can to help them recover. *(Applause)*

Now I'll be heading back to Florida later today, and you may wonder why I'm not down there right now practicing and polishing my final draft of my speech. My answer is this: When our nation called, you answered, and I consider any opportunity to address our nation's veterans a privilege not to be missed. *(Cheers and applause)*

It's an honor to be with you today, to be with you for the 94th Annual Convention of The American Legion. I appreciate most profoundly the service you provided to our country and your sacrifice, and I'm also appreciative of the work that you do today for our nation. The work of many fine Legionnaires in this election, including nine of your former national commanders and one of your past executive directors is very helpful to my effort, to my campaign, frankly. To Robert Spanogle to John Comer to John Sommer and all those who've gathered here and offered their support and advice over the last 14 months, I greatly appreciate your help and your guidance and your continued commitment to a free and strong America.

Now, anyone who knows about The American Legion understands this is much more than just an organization of veterans, as important as that is. Every day you also seek and find new ways to give back to the country, back to the country you love so deeply and have sacrificed so much to preserve. Whether it's American Legion Baseball or the Child Welfare Foundation, your achievements span a whole host of activities that are important, significant, and deeply appreciated by me and by the nation.

Now, here at The American Legion Convention, and in Tampa at the Republican Convention, we are talking about important issues, the very issues that will determine our future as a nation and our people. You have defended our country, and now we have to decide what kind of country we want to live in. Later tonight I hope you'll tune in and listen as my running mate, Paul Ryan, talks about his vision for a better future for all America. *(Cheers and applause)*

We share that vision. And even though the applause seemed to come primarily from Wisconsin my friends in Massachusetts and Michigan go along with it as well. *(Cheers and applause)* It looks like they've separated Michigan and Wisconsin. As I've traveled across the country I've had the privilege of visiting with a number of veterans, and I've heard a number of their concerns. Overwhelmingly the number one concern I hear from young veterans can be summed up in one word: Jobs. They've served their country, they want to get back to work. They need and deserve good jobs, and this president's greatest failure is that he's not delivered those jobs. As president I will get America to work again. *(Cheers and applause)*

I recently traveled to Great Britain and Israel and Poland, three countries that are part of the great fellowship of democracies. The highlights of the trip were just not the places visited, like the Western Wall and Gdansk, but the meetings that I had with great champions of freedom like Benjamin Netanyahu, David Cameron and Lech Walesa. President Walesa welcomed me in, he asked me to sit down, and then he spoke with his characteristic candor. "Where is American leadership," he said. "The world needs America to lead." I came back home with an even deeper appreciation of the importance of strong ties with our allies, and with an even firmer conviction that there is a role that only America can play in the world. The United Nations is a place where nations can come and talk. But leadership, leadership that preserves peace and promotes freedom, must come from the United States of America. *(Applause)*

I know that you know that the world continues to be a dangerous place. Major powers are rapidly adding to their military capabilities, sometimes with intentions that may be very different than our own. The regime in Tehran leads chants of, "Death to America," and it's drawing close to nuclear weapons capability. The threat of radical Islamic terrorism persists despite the welcome removal of Osama Bin Laden and other Al-Qaeda leaders. With instability in Pakistan and horrific violence in Syria, and with North Korea having shared nuclear technology, the threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction continues to be very real. And of course we're still at war in Afghanistan. We still have uniformed men and women in conflict risking their lives, just as you once did. How deeply we appreciate their sacrifice. We salute them, we honor them, we respect and love them. *(Applause)*

All of this is happening around the world now, and yet for the past four years President Obama has allowed our leadership to diminish. In dealings with other nations he has given trust where it's not earned, insult where it's not deserved, and apology where it's not due. A fundamental principle of American foreign policy has long been to work closely with our allies so there can be a greater effort to deter aggression before it breaks out into open conflict. We used to nurture our alliances and stand up for our common values when it comes to friends and allies like Poland and the Czech Republic and Israel. And with nations that oppose us, like Iran and Cuba, President Obama has moved in the opposite direction. Our foreign policy should take a page from the U. S. Marine Corps: "No better friend, no worse enemy." *(Applause)*

A just and peaceful world depends upon our strength and our confidence. Our foreign policy must demonstrate confidence in our cause, clarity in our purpose, and resolve in our might. Confidence in our cause compels us in our relations with other nations to promote liberty, free enterprise, and human rights. Clarity in our purpose requires that when we act we honestly describe our mission, how we'll know when it's

been accomplished and what we've achieved when it's completed. And resolve in our might means that in those exceptional cases where a substantial American interest demands that we take military action, we will employ overwhelming means to protect our troops and to achieve our objectives. *(Applause)*

We're now just months away from an arbitrary across the board budget reduction that would weaken the military with a trillion dollars in cuts, severely shrink our force structure, and impair our ability to meet and deter threats. President Obama's own Secretary of Defense has warned that these reductions would be devastating. And he's right. The devastation will be felt here at home, where up to 1.5 million jobs could be lost, GDP growth could fall significantly. These cuts would place further strains on an already stretched VA system and impair our solemn commitment that every veteran receives care second to none.

A year ago President Obama told your National Convention that, "We cannot, we must not, we will not balance the budget on the backs of our veterans." I thought I finally agreed with him on something. But now he's on the verge of breaking that promise. The Obama Administration is set to cut defense spending by nearly a trillion dollars. My administration will not. *(Applause)*

Working together with my running mate, Paul Ryan, I'll make reductions in other areas and install pro-growth policies to make sure that our country remains safe and secure. There are plenty of places to cut in a federal budget that now totals well over three trillion dollars, but defense is not one of them.

Beyond the president's failure to deliver an economic recovery, and beyond what I see as reckless defense cuts, are the reproachable failures at the VA itself. The packed backlog for disability claims has doubled on his watch. There are now close to 1,000,000 claims waiting to be processed. Veterans face unconscionable waits for mental health treatment. Every day 18 servicemen and veterans take their own lives, an unspeakable and unacceptable tragedy. The problems with the VA are serious and have got to be fixed. We're in danger of another generation of veterans losing their faith in the VA system. On my watch that must not be allowed to happen. *(Applause)*

The Obama Administration has also requested $12 billion in TRICARE fee increases. I will not ask our war time military to shoulder sacrifices while the rest of government grows. I'll not ask our service members, active and retired, to pay more for their health care to free up room for Obamacare. *(Applause)*

I'll keep faith with our troops and with our veterans, and my administration will do better by them. I was astounded to read about a federal building in Virginia that became structurally unstable in 2010 because so many veterans claims had stacked up inside it. I mean to make reforming that agency a personal priority, and I've already started thinking about things I would do to make it work better for you. *(Applause)*

I'll also modify the Post-9/11 GI Bill so that any veteran wishing to continue his or her education is eligible for in-state tuition regardless of residency. *(Applause)*

And to make it easier for veterans to find employment in skilled trades, I'll work with the states to create a common credentialing and licensing standard, and encourage organizations to recognize and grant credit for military training. *(Applause)*

Right now the VA has a shortage of mental health care professionals. I'll hire more. And any time a veteran is unable to receive timely health care from the VA system he or she will be allowed to see a TRICARE provider at the VA's expense. *(Applause)*

I said before that this must be an American century, and to accomplish that we must have the strongest military and the strongest economy in the world. Regrettably, President Obama has failed on both counts. As his term in office comes to an end we're now further from making this an American century. Our economy is weak, and our military is bracing for devastating cuts.

When a country is hurting at home the biggest political debates are understandably about domestic issues. How to get small business growing again, how to get jobless Americans back to work, how to show people who feel trapped in this stagnant economy that the hard times won't last forever because a better future is about to dawn. But you and I know that our debates can change suddenly with a ringing phone in the dead of the night, or a grim-faced reporter in the middle of the day, or a plume of smoke on a clear blue morning. The first job of government is to keep the American people safe, and as president that will be my commitment to the American people. *(Applause)*

But our security and prosperity are connected. Our military strength depends on our economic strength. The well-being of our veterans depends on our ability to make sure they can find good jobs when they come home, and our ability to field the strongest fighting force in the world depends on the leaders in Washington who know how to set priorities, write real budgets and protect our soldiers and their families from devastating cuts. Paul Ryan and I have a plan to keep America strong and secure, prosperous and free. Where the president has failed to lead, we will protect our national defense from cuts that jeopardize critical missions. Where he's let down our veterans, we will welcome them home to a booming economy and the jobs they need. Where he has dodged the tough choices, we'll confront them head-on and deliver a better future for Americans of this generation and the next. *(Applause)*

This week you've seen leaders from all across America gather in Tampa to show how we can build a future that is better than our past. Tonight that will be Paul Ryan, and tomorrow it will be my privilege to make my case to the American people. Together we'll get this country back on track, we'll deliver the recovery we've been waiting for, we'll keep America strong, secure, and the hope of the earth. This is our challenge, this is our pledge. Together we can build that brighter future for ourselves, for our children and for theirs. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you so much. *(Standing applause) ...At this time a musical interlude was played.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: If you would just bear with me, we have a couple of awards. It will probably take about a minute, and then we'll adjourn for the day. Having completed the adoption of the Americanism Report it is appropriate to announce the winners of two Americanism awards.

Presentation: Frank N. Belgrano, Jr., Trophy

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 North Carolina. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy

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 this year is the Department of Hawaii. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy

The Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy is given to the department achieving the most outstanding results in conducting Americanism programs. Last year the National Executive Committee passed Resolution Number 1, which authorized the creation of the

Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy to replace the Hearst Award. Daniel J. O'Connor was the 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. Ladies and gentlemen, the winner of the 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 94th National Convention of The American Legion, Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28 through 30, 2012. Signed, Fang A. Wong, National Commander, and Joseph Caouette, Chairman, The American Legion National Americanism Commission." (Applause)

Presentation: Certificate of Appreciation
Gerald Theriot, Louisiana, National Chaplain

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The man who has served as our national chaplain this year is truly dedicated to the principle of God and country. He's a member of Post 513 in Thibodaux, Louisiana. A retired U.S. Air Force veteran, he previously served his post as a vice commander, historian, service officer and chaplain. He was president of the LaFourche Parish Branch of the NAACP from 1997 to 1999, and retired from the State of Louisiana Department of Social Services. He is also a past department chaplain. It is an honor for me to present a certificate of appreciation marking his year of service as national chaplain to Gerald Theriot. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "Certificate of Appreciation, presented to Gerald Theriot, National Chaplain of The American Legion 2011-2012. Given in recognition of faithful and honorable service to The American Legion." (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Mr. National Adjutant have you any announcements?

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: No, sir.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please join me.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS LOUIE: Legionnaires, please join me in a salute to the Flag of the United States of America.

...At this time the delegates stood and rendered a salute to the Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The time is 3:34. The Convention will stand in recess until 8:30 a.m. tomorrow. Thank you. Have a great day.

...At 3:34 p.m., the Convention was recessed to reconvene the following day, August 30, 2012, at 8:30 a.m.

PROCEEDINGS
THIRD DAY

Thursday, August 30, 2012

... At 8:30 a.m. the delegates assembled for the third day of the 94th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were conducted.

Call to Order
Fang A. Wong, New York, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Ladies and gentlemen, as we begin our program please join me in a round of applause for Pete Ole. *(Applause)*

The Convention will come to order. Sergeant-at-Arms.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS LOUIE: Delegates will stand and render a hand salute to the Flag of the United States of America by the numbers.

...At this time the delegation rendered a salute to the Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: For the invocation I call on National Chaplain Gerald Theriot of Louisiana. Uncover.

Invocation
Gerald Theriot, Louisiana, National Chaplain

Almighty Father, we thank You for life, for truth, and for love. For love because it embraces all of us here in common fellowship, and for the comforting assurance of Your guidance. We thank You for truth that makes us free and increases our knowledge of each other and this great nation of ours. We thank You for life as an opportunity for service. Strengthen us in the conviction that our service is a service to our country and to You. Help us to overcome every sin and temptation, and give us the necessary strength for a holy, reverent and honest life in word and deed. May You shower us with your grace, which we don't deserve, and may we become a sermon in shoes. Grant graciously that our whole life may be of service to You, our heavenly Father. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you, chaplain.

Pledge of Allegiance

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Ladies and gentlemen, please remain uncovered as National Sergeant-at-Arms David Louie leads us in the Pledge of Allegiance. *...The delegates stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The Convention is now in session.

Presentation: The American Legion Fourth Estate Awards
Fang A. Wong, New York, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Good morning. We begin this morning by recognizing outstanding achievement in journalism that had a positive impact on a community. The American Legion Fourth Estate Award is difficult to earn. It is a testament to the demanding nature of the competition and the quality of entries. Not only do the reports have to be informative and entertaining, but they have to provide a tangible benefit to society.

Being honored in the Broadcast Category is KLRT-TV of Little Rock, Arkansas. TV reporter Donna Terrell, having recently lost her daughter, captured the emotional trauma

of a military veteran and his wife who lost their young son to brain cancer in her report, *Grieving a Child*. The report provided valuable information about dealing with the painful loss of a loved one. Let's watch a video clip of that outstanding series.

...The delegation viewed the video presentation "Grieving A Child." (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Accepting the award for KLRT-TV is news director Ed Trauschke and reporter Donna Terrell. *(Applause)*

Broadcast Category
Ms. Donna Terrell, KLRT-TV Fox 16 News, Little Rock, Arkansas

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "2012 Fourth Estate Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Field of Journalism, is presented to Donna Terrell and KLRT-TV for special reports which captured the emotional trauma and provided guidance in dealing with the painful process of losing a loved one, "Grieving A Child." Presented at the 94th National Convention, August 30, 2012, Indianapolis, Indiana." (Applause)

MS. DONNA TERRELL: Hello everyone, and thank you so, so very much. I do want to say that the true award winners of this prestigious honor go to Bobby and Amy Smith of Arkansas. Bobby was in Iraq when he got the word that his son had brain cancer. The American Red Cross stepped in, and they said get him home ASAP, and they did, and he was able to spend time with his wife, his family, and his other child as they watched their son Joel struggle with this horrible disease.

I would like to say, though, when we decided that we wanted to do this special report on *Grieving A Child* we really only had one goal in mind, just one goal, and that was to help people, because there are so, so many people who are dealing with grief, and they handle it silently. Many people expect that after a certain amount of time, be it six months, a year, maybe two years, and who knows, maybe we'll give someone five years, by then you should be over this. But when you talk about a substantial loss like a child, or something that really alters your state of mind, it can take a lifetime, and then many times you don't get over it.

So we wanted to make people aware of that, but we also wanted to reach out to the people who have a hard time getting help, who never live to their full potential because they feel like, well, if I'm happy then I'm leaving my loved one behind, why should I be happy, why should I go on and live this great life when my child or my husband or someone very, very close to me is no longer here, and they feel like they are no longer honoring the memory of that person.

So the goal was to make sure that people realize that you can move forward. You can move forward and you can have a good life, and you take all the love and the cherished memories because that person never goes away. I am a grieving mother, and through my grief sessions I discovered, my grief counselor told me, that sometimes grief can be very much like posttraumatic stress, and I'm sure you in this room understand that. Sometimes when you lose someone that is so close to you, you suffer some of the signs that a person who is going through posttraumatic stress would go through. And I don't think many of us take enough time to recognize what those signs are. And I believe in my heart that through these reports we were able to shed light on this horrible, horrible battle that people face.

I know we helped people. How do I know this? Because many people told me we did. In addition to the report that you saw there was an additional report. On our website, Fox16.com, we created components where people could go and get help, and they could also chime in with a blog and express their feelings. I even had people come up to me on the street and say, Donna, thank you for doing those reports because you helped me so

much, I lost someone important to me and I've struggled with it. The crazy thing is that they struggled in silence, and a lot of their family members didn't even know it.

So as I stand here and accept this award, I did not do this alone. I first of all want you to know that my colleagues and I at Fox 16 in Little Rock, Arkansas, we thank you so very much for this wonderful award. And on behalf of my news director, Ed Trauschke, who is here with us today, we thank you. And on behalf of Joel and Amy Smith and Bobby we accept this award from the bottom of our hearts, and we cannot thank you enough. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The Fourth Estate Internet Award goes to Alex Quade, a freelance war correspondent working for *The Daily Caller*. Her documentary, *Horse Soldiers of 9/11*, revealed the special operations of military and CIA operatives in Afghanistan who responded after the 9/11 attacks. Her report broke the story of a monument that was later dedicated near New York's Ground Zero, capturing the bravery and the essence of the horse soldiers. Here are clips of that great piece.

...The delegation viewed a video clip presentation from "Horse Soldiers of 9/11"

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Here this morning to accept the award, I believe she's a graduate of The American Legion Auxiliary Girls State, correspondent Alex Quade. Let's welcome her. *(Applause)*

Internet Category
Ms. Alex Quade, Fayetteville, North Carolina

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "2012 Fourth Estate Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Field of Journalism is presented to Alex Quade, war correspondent, for a special video report that unveiled the special operations of the U. S. Military and CIA operatives in Afghanistan who responded after the 9/11 attacks. "The Horse Soldiers of 9/11," The Daily Caller. Presented at the 94th National Convention, August 30, 2012, Indianapolis, Indiana."

MS. ALEX QUADE: Thank you so much to The American Legion. As the commander said, I started out as a whippersnapper going to Girls State, and it feels like coming to the full circle. So thank you.

The stories I do are about the troops, they are not about a reporter trying to run around with the troops. What I do is to document their hard work and all of your hard work. Thank you again so much for this honor. I will continue to try to serve America, serve the troops, and serve history. It needs to be documented. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: This year's Print Category Award goes for the second consecutive year to the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. A nine-month investigation and series of articles by reporter Carl Prine, an Army and Marine veteran who served in Iraq, revealed the demands among overwhelming warrior transition units in responding to the needs of wounded Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. Accepting the award is reporter Carl Prine. *(Applause)*

Print Category
Mr. Carl Prine, Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "2012 Fourth Estate Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Field of Journalism, is presented to Carl Prine and the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, for a series of investigative reports uncovering problems with warrior transition units. The in-depth probe brought about Congressional hearings, the

resignation of a senior official, and significant improvements in the units. Presented at the 94th National Convention, August 30, 2012, Indianapolis, Indiana."

MR. CARL PRINE: Good morning veterans. I work for the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. We're a newspaper that believes not only in covering stories about veterans, but also hiring veterans. I'm one of them. Army and Marine Corps. And because we believe so much in your organization and this is such a great honor for us, it is our policy every year we win this to give the money back so you can put it back to use for our veterans nationwide. So thank you very much for what you do. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you very much. Now 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 26, 2012, 45 delegates assigned to the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations met in the Indianapolis Convention Center, Indiana. Mr. Randall Fisher (KY) was elected Chairman and Wayne Jensen (WI) 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 22 resolutions were assigned to the convention committee on foreign relations. The Commission approved 18 of the resolutions as written, two were approved with amendments, one resolution was received and recorded, and one resolution was rejected. The Committee report contains resolutions that will, in conjunction with resolutions previously adopted, provide 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. 8: Taiwan Straits Dialogue
Origin: Alaska
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The Republic of China is a long-time ally, friend, and a major trading partner of The United States of America; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of China, has closely cooperated with the United States against Japanese imperialism during World War II and in the fight against communism during the Cold War; and

WHEREAS, Taiwan is strategically located and is extremely important to the stability, prosperity, and peace of the Pacific Rim; and

WHEREAS, It is in the best interest of all parties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to promote peaceful resolutions of political differences; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That the United States government encourages the parties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to engage in peaceful dialogue and avoid any actions by either side to change the status quo, which would lead to military conflict.

Resolution No. 76: 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 imbedded 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 Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, 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.

Resolution No. 77: Middle East/Gulf States Foreign Policies
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The end of World War I brought about the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the arbitrary delineation of the middle eastern states of the former Turkish held territories of Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Palestine (Israel), Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Aden, Oman, (United Arab Emirates), and the Gulf of Aden states of Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Sudan, and to include the sovereign states of Egypt and Libya; and

WHEREAS, Many of these nations continue to struggle with reforming from authoritarian regimes to more democratic and representative forms of governance; and that the call by their own populations to seek greater freedoms and the protection of individual human rights and universal suffrage must be heard; and that states which fail to provide the basic needs of their people creates an opportunity for extremists and terrorists to flourish and grow; and

WHEREAS, That as each of these nations strives to reform their government they will need the technical and economic support of more developed and advanced Representative Democracies, and these needs will include: creating diplomatic coalitions with other countries and international institutions, creating jobs, open market reforms, developing and establishing stable economic environments, achieving internal and international security cooperation; and

WHEREAS, The President and Congress have both called for a policy that will help promote and assist nations seeking to establish greater democratic reforms in the Middle East; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support legislation and foreign policy that specifically targets diplomatic, economic, and educational programs to promote greater and peaceful democratic reforms in countries within the Arabian Gulf and Middle Eastern Region.

Resolution No. 79: Vietnam Human Rights
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes the comradeship and loyalty of the ethnic minorities of Vietnam to include, Montagnards and Hmong hill people, whose assistance was invaluable during the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion, as veterans of wartime service in the defense of liberty, have a special concern for maintaining peace with freedom and recognize that the protection of Human Rights are vital in that regard; and

WHEREAS, Since diplomatic and trade relations have been established over the last 20 years and normalized as recently as 2007 between the U.S. and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the condition of tribal people who assisted United States forces during the Vietnam conflict has greatly worsened in terms of persecution; and

WHEREAS, The official concern of The American Legion stems from that part of the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion which states: "We associate ourselves together...to make right the master of might; to promote peace and goodwill on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy;" now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges the President and the Congress to support legislation and policies that will compel the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to meet the international standards of Human Rights; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the ethnic and religious minorities within the country of Vietnam be extended those protections and rights to live and worship in peace without threat of imprisonment or retribution from their government; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to take such measures as are necessary to overcome the jamming of Radio Free Asia by the government of Vietnam; and (2) that educational and cultural exchange programs with Vietnam should promote progress toward freedom and democracy; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to create a U.S. policy that will offer refugee resettlement to Vietnam nationals (including members of the Montagnard ethnic minority groups) who were eligible for the Humanitarian Resettlement program, the Orderly Departure program, the Resettlement Opportunities for Vietnamese Returnees program, the Amerasian Homecoming Act of 1988, or any other U.S. refugee program, but who were deemed ineligible for reasons of administrative error, to include inaccurate language translation or certain circumstances beyond their control.

Resolution No. 80: Support for Foreign Exchange Education Programs
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The United States, Mexico, and Central and South America are historic, regional neighbors with a common heritage and thousands of miles of common boundaries; and

WHEREAS, The Congress and the Executive Branch have entered into the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Mexico; and

WHEREAS, College scholarships and educational exchanges help reduce social, cultural, and international barriers and promote good will and understanding; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge Congress to increase financial and political support for existing international education exchange and scholarship programs, such as: the Fulbright, Gilman, and other programs, offered through the Departments of State and Education which will increase cooperative endeavors on all fronts to enhance the prosperity and security of those nations participating; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the US Government to expand the number of scholarships for Mexico, Central America, and South America, particularly for those highly qualified students, who lack funds to attend undergraduate and appropriate vocational-technical programs, provided said students promise to abide by current or future immigration student visa policies after completing their education or program requirements.

Resolution No. 81: The American Legion Global Trade Policies
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, China and other trade countries have purchased billions of dollars worth of US Government bonds, stock market shares, and individual companies with their windfall money from our trade deficit as a result of Congress approving the "World Free Trade" policy a number of years ago; and

WHEREAS, China and other trade countries have not adhered to the global trade rules initially agreed to in the treaty relating to import fees and tariffs resulting with below reasonable costs of the products in the US and higher prices of US products sold in their countries; and

WHEREAS, Revenues realized by other countries from these trade imbalances have resulted in greater purchasing power and the potential for foreign ownership of essential industries and corporations vital to our basic national security interests and infrastructure; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge the President and Congress to balance trade deficits by pursuing the enforcement of the conditions of the trade negotiations made in good faith with these nations and support the efforts of our trade negotiators and diplomatic officials to use every avenue available through the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to pursue our Nation's claims for fair trade practices.

Resolution No. 82: Policy on Africa
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, Decades of colonization, authoritarian rule, severe economic disparity, internal conflicts, rampant corruption, and, in many cases, great resistance to change have overwhelmed the African continent; and

WHEREAS, Today some African nations are beginning to develop strong economic markets, and are making determined efforts to put the continent towards a solid democratic course with multi-party systems and other significant political changes; and

WHEREAS, Promoting policies that support democracy, conflict resolution, economic development, free and open trade, and disease prevention in African countries are in the national interests of the United States, understanding that a major contributing factor to terrorism are failed states; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion supports bipartisan policies and legislation that identify areas and authorize and fund programs where the United States can provide economic, political, and social development in Africa; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes such US policies toward African nations must be intertwined with our nation's overall strategy to promote democracy throughout the world; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That any African nation that clearly demonstrates open democratic reforms, human rights protection, and cooperation in the fight against international terrorism, will have the support of the US government.

Resolution No. 83: The American Legion Foreign Policy Objectives
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion, as veterans of wartime service in the defense of liberty, have a special concern for maintaining peace with freedom and recognize that a strong US foreign policy is vital in that regard; and

WHEREAS, The official concern of The American Legion stems from that part of the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion which states: "We associate ourselves together…to make right the master of might; to promote peace and goodwill on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy;" now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion believes that the following objectives should be incorporated into US foreign policy in order to maintain peace with freedom while preserving and promoting democracy:

1. **Recognition that the US has great and multiple responsibilities as a leader of the Free World**
2. **Dedication to achievement of world peace with freedom, secured by a peace through strength posture**
3. **Support for a global fight on multiple fronts to end the scourge of terrorism**
4. **Support for democracy and human rights in other countries when such is consistent with US national interests and national power**
5. **Participation in essential collective security alliances, provided our allies contribute their fair share**
6. **Negotiation of equitable, verifiable arms control agreements, which improve US**

national security

7. **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**
8. **Determined opposition to international terrorism and drug trafficking**
9. **Support for responsible international organizations that are consistent with US sovereignty and serve US national interests**
10. **Participation in an increasingly interdependent Free World trading system based on fair and equitable trading practices**
11. **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**
12. **Support for the appropriate resources to promote and protect US vital national interests world-wide.**

Resolution No. 84: Central America's Democracy Promotion
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, Over the past decade the nations of Central America have made great strides toward establishing democratic societies; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has taken a great interest in supporting democracy, development, and security in this area so close to our borders and strategically situated between the naval lifeline between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Panama Canal, and one of our major trading partners, Mexico; and

WHEREAS, In the light of the decreasing threat from subversion in Central America as well as budget restrictions in the United States, it is inevitable that US aid to Central America must be reduced; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge the US Government to continue economic aid to friendly, democratic Central American nations which are seeking to develop democratic societies with market economies; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion recommend the US Government provide minimal amounts of military aid while urging Central American nations to adopt the model of Costa Rica and Panama and disband military forces and rely solely on police forces for internal security, thus freeing funds for development and contributing to peaceful relations in the region.

Resolution No. 85: The American Legion's Policy on the United Nations
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The American Legion played a significant role in helping to establish the United Nations after World War II, believing it would help prevent the outbreak of future wars; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has remained generally supportive of the United Nations over the succeeding years, although it has been critical of particular ineffective, wasteful, or undesirable activities of the United Nations; and

WHEREAS, Countries with vast national budget surpluses are exploiting their working citizens for unfair economic leverage in the United Nations; and

WHEREAS, The current scale of assessments, which weighs and considers the "low per capita income" of each member nation, determines the funding structure of the United Nations, is inequitable to the United States; and

WHEREAS, Although the United Nations in half a century of operation has not fulfilled the lofty purposes of international peace and human betterment envisioned by its founders, it continues to be in the national interest for the United States to function as a member of the United Nations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge Congress to use American Leverage to encourage the United Nations to focus on limited, necessary, achievable tasks that truly better the lot of humankind in a sensible, cost-effective manner; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress encourage the United Nations not to infringe on national sovereignty when operating economic and social programs; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress encourage the United Nations to recalculate the assessment of nations' funding obligations to be based on the Gross National Product (GNP) of each country with no "low per capita income" factor to distort the proportion of such obligations; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That in the absence of such reform of the funding formula the United Nations should adopt a weighted voting strength based on the funds contributed by each member nation; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That truly independent authority be provided to the UN Inspector General and ensure that United Nations agencies become subject to periodic, unannounced auditing, the findings of such audits to be reported to member nations; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That an equitable fiduciary relationship be established between the United States and United Nations.

Resolution No. 86: The American Legion's Policy on Veterans' Mail at Overseas Embassies

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, As of January 1, 2010 the Department of State has said it cannot be responsible for the costs of mail going to military retirees at embassies, consulates, and diplomatic missions; and

WHEREAS, This decision has adversely affected the quality-of-life of U.S. military retirees and veterans living abroad; and

WHEREAS, This new policy has negatively impacted veterans' personal lives and will likely result in prohibitive costs in addition to potential unreliable delivery of medications, compensation, absentee ballots, legal correspondence and other important personal documents from Federal, state and local government agencies; and

WHEREAS, According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Veteran Health Administration, the estimated number of veterans that live outside the continental United States at the beginning of FY 2012 was 333,000; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense cannot pay the Department of State for the delivery of retiree mail on the basis of the Anti-Deficiency Act (31 U.S.C. § 1341); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion strongly urges Congress to change any necessary laws to permit the Department of Defense to fund the cost of essential mail service delivered to military retirees at embassies, consulates, diplomatic missions or other U.S. government facilities.

Resolution No. 87: Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC)
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, WHINSEC is established in Public Law 106-398, Section 911 which amended Chapter 108 of Title 10, United States Code by adding a new section numbered as § 2166, to enhance security, and promote democratic values, and foster cooperation among the Organization of American States; and

WHEREAS, In addition to the primary missions cited above, the mission of WHINSEC also includes promoting respect for human rights; knowledge and understanding of U.S. customs and traditions; and training programs covering ethics, the rule of law, international treaties and conventions, international humanitarian law, the military role in democratic societies and civilian control of the military; and

WHEREAS, WHINSEC inherited an unfair and unfortunate reputation from its predecessor, the School of Americas (SOA) and such reputation is being generated by public response to media coverage of claims by a number of human-rights activist groups who accused SOA, without any specific cause and effect evidence, of conducting training that had influenced a total of eight military leaders from Central and South America to commit serious human rights violations and crimes against their fellow citizens, long after leaving SOA and serving in much higher positions of responsibility in corrupted governments; and

WHEREAS, WHINSEC and Department of Defense have long maintained that no school should be held accountable for the actions of only a minute number of its large number of its graduates; and

WHEREAS, American Legion representatives visited WHINSEC in June 2008 and observed ethics and human rights courses being conducted and met with students from South and Central America who expressed appreciation for the training in American alliances, cooperation, democracy, living in free societies and traditional American values; and

WHEREAS, During their WHINSEC visit, The American Legion representatives observed the personal relationships and bonding developed between and among the WHINSEC faculty, the international military students and US military students training along with the international military students and how effectively, therefore, WHINSEC is building the kind of partnering with other nations and their military, police, and first responders that is deemed as an essential element of national power to use in the long fight against extremist terrorism; as well as a very cost effective way to build improved relationships and the international partnering needed for success in the prolonged war against extremist terrorism; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges Congress and the Secretary of Defense to ensure that the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) is adequately funded on the basis that hemispheric training, alliance building, and the sharing of knowledge among the Organization of American States is a vital interest to the U.S. in terms of the establishment of alliances, hemispheric cooperation and national security; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls on Congress to ensure that such funding be restricted for use only for those purposes included in the mission statement of Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC); and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress and the Secretary of Defense to establish similar institutes for other regions of the world where

international mutual cooperation and alliance building can be beneficial to the vital interests of the United States.

Resolution No. 88: The American Legion's Support for World Press Freedom
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, In a democratic society the essential right of the press (print and electronic) to report on government activities, social movements, scientific developments, and other significant events or breakthroughs is one of the basic pillars of our Bill of Rights; and

WHEREAS, Such reporting and expression of speech helps to ensure the transparency of the political and social systems that are in place and that an informed and educated public can more effectively participate politically; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes that oppressive and restrictive regimes around the world work to deter, manipulate or out-rightly deny their citizens the ability to get unfettered information, or to allow free press to investigate and report in those countries; and

WHEREAS, Department of State and US Government News Media Organizations under the Broadcast Board of Governors such as: The Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio Marti TV, and Middle East Broadcasting Network (MBN), are essential news resources to countries whose domestic news sources are oppressed or restricted; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge the President and Congress to designate and provide appropriate funding for the Department of State and US Government News Media Organizations under the Broadcast Board of Governors such as: The Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio Marti TV, and the Middle East Broadcasting Network (MBN); and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports international press freedom and the protection of international journalists who report and investigate news throughout the world.

Resolution No. 89: Enhanced Funding for USAID
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The Department of State is the first line of defense in combating the myriad security threats that face America from abroad, and is charged with a number of missions that are vital to the nation; and

WHEREAS, These missions include: diplomatic relations with foreign nations, promoting peace and stability in regions of vital interest, bringing countries together to address global challenges, creating jobs at home by opening markets abroad, and helping developing nations establish stable economic environments that provide investment and export opportunities; and

WHEREAS, The State Department has been allocated little more than 1% of the total federal budget to accomplish many of these development tasks through the US Agency for International Development (USAID) in contrast to the approximately 19% spent on defense; and

WHEREAS, 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; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support policies and legislation that increase funding for the US Agency for International Development (USAID) within the Department of State and seek use of that funding towards targeted states whose failure to provide for its people could result in the expansion of international terrorism; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That USAID, because of its technical knowledge and expertise, be given a greater role in the decision-making process for the disbursement and usage of funds targeted for reconstruction in nations in which our military presence resulted in the need for infrastructure redevelopment.

Resolution No. 90: Expand Foreign Service Officer Corps
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, Foreign Service Officers have the mission to promote peace, support prosperity, and protect American citizens while advancing the interests of the U.S. abroad; and

WHEREAS, Foreign Service Officers are the primary force in bringing foreign policy objectives to fruition by acting as the essential link between strategic interests and the U.S. Aid and International Development programs that achieve those interests; and

WHEREAS, Given the current climate of international relations and the importance of reconstruction following U.S. combat operations, the Foreign Service Officer Corps needs to be increased to meet the ever growing challenges against American vital interests; and

WHEREAS, Due to the fact the work of the Foreign Service Officer Corps often takes place in hostile and desolate environments, qualified military veterans should be given veterans' preference in the staffing of such positions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge the President, Congress, and the Department of State to significantly increase the number of Foreign Service Officers; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the President, Congress, and the Department of State to implement a veterans' preference policy with the aim of recruiting more veterans into the Foreign Service Officer Corps whose experience may be an essential enhancement of the nation's diplomatic mission.

Resolution No. 91: Secure National Borders Against Illegal Drugs
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The borders that separate the United States, Canada, and Mexico are relatively open; and

WHEREAS, There are rising concerns among US officials regarding the deteriorating security situation which allows significant smuggling of drugs, illegal immigrants, and other contraband across our borders; and

WHEREAS, The violence on the Mexican border has caused a change in smuggling from that area to other parts of our national borders such as Canada and our sea coast; and

WHEREAS, The Mexican government, while attempting to control the problem, is not able to counter the drug cartels due to being out-manned and out-gunned; and

WHEREAS, The United States has the capability to provide assistance to the Mexican Government that would allow it to reestablish control and eliminate the drug cartels; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support the President's and Congress' efforts to provide assistance and aid to the Canadian and Mexican Governments to secure the borders separating the United States, Canada, and Mexico from trafficking illegal drugs across those borders.

Resolution No. 92: Policy on Cuba
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The communist government of Cuba has ruined the Cuban economy, repressed the Cuban people, provided a base for forces inimical to the United States, and committed aggression in many lands; and

WHEREAS, Following the demise of the Soviet Union and the liberation of Eastern Europe, Cuba has lost the sources of foreign subsidies that alone sustained its inefficient communist economy; and

WHEREAS, If the Free World remains firm in its rejection of communism in Cuba, many economic, social, and political indicators point to the likely collapse of the Castro dictatorship in Cuba; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge the US Government to continue to maintain control of Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, continue intelligence flights over Cuba, remain firm in opposition to the export of revolution by Cuba, continue broadcasting true news and information to the Cuban people, and encourage the development of democracy and a free market economy in Cuba.

Resolution No. 267: Taiwan Defense Arms Sales
Origin: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The Republic of China, also known as Taiwan, is a long-time friend having fought with the United States against Japanese Imperialism during World War II and against Communism during the post-war period; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of China is a major trading partner and democratic ally of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Taiwan is strategically located and is extremely important to the peace, prosperity, and stability of the Asia-Pacific region; and

WHEREAS, Under the provisions of the Taiwan Relations Act (Public Law 96-8), the United States is committed to provide defense equipment and defense services, in such quantities that the Government of the Republic of China may maintain a sufficient self-defense capability; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, by The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion supports the sales of the latest American weapon systems, including naval vessels, submarines, military aircraft, high-tech electronics, communications equipment and air-defense missile systems to Republic of China of such quality and in such quantities so as to enable the Government of the Republic of China to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports the continued sales of sophisticated US weapon systems, including, but not limited to, F-16 fighter aircraft,

anti-submarine equipment and torpedoes, anti-aircraft/anti-missile systems, and electronics and communications equipment to Republic of China; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Government of the Republic of China be given preferential pricing for these items but not equal to that given to the US government, to enable the Republic of China to purchase sufficient quantities of these items for their defense needs.

Approved with Amendment

Resolution No. 75: Social Security Survivor Benefits for Non-Resident Alien Spouses and Dependents
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
(As amended)

WHEREAS, From its inception The American Legion has been dedicated to guarding the well being of the surviving spouses of members and veterans of the armed services; and

WHEREAS, All Legionnaires pledge themselves to "devotion to mutual helpfulness"; and

WHEREAS, The survivors of veterans living in countries where appreciable numbers of US military forces are based presently benefit from treaties and administrative agreements which are not applicable to other foreign domiciled "nonresident alien beneficiaries"; and

WHEREAS, Existing Public Law and administrative regulations of the Social Security Administration require Mexican and Central American nationals who claim survivor benefits to provide proof of physical presence inside the territory of the United States either:

a) 30 days every six months or
b) one day per month every month of the year,

but such physical presence may not be required of Social Security beneficiaries of other nationalities when residing outside the United States depending upon whether or not the Social Security Administration has entered into international agreements with the governments of those beneficiaries; and

WHEREAS, Establishing a physical presence in the Unites States requires considerable expense and disruption of family life when a Mexican or Central American beneficiary lives anywhere except along the US-Mexico border; and

WHEREAS, The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (formerly the "Immigration and Naturalization Service or INS"), a bureau of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) exercises the ability to legally deny entry to non-U.S. citizens even when such persons hold valid visas issued by the Department of State; and

WHEREAS, Since the events of September 11, 2001 the USCIS has increased the level of its control of persons attempting to enter the United States; and

WHEREAS, The USCIS has denied entrance into the United States by visa-holding surviving beneficiaries of veterans based solely upon their apparent lack of means of support even though they would have received an appropriate level of income once they had met the physical presence requirements of the law; and

WHEREAS, The regulations implementing Public Law relating to Social Security Survivor Benefits are inherently unfair because they impose different conditions upon surviving spouses which may vary according to the location of that person's domicile; and

WHEREAS, Existing law allows an individual USCIS officer to be the arbiter as to whether or not a potential recipient may enter the US for the purpose of meeting the physical presence requirements of the Social Security legislation; and

WHEREAS, Proposed new Department of Homeland Security regulations would limit visitor visas to a period insufficient to establish physical presence under the requirements of the Social Security legislation; and

WHEREAS, Mexican and Guatemalan surviving spouses of American veterans have requested The American Legion assist them in gaining relief from these unfair and country-specific regulations; and

WHEREAS, Section 233 of 42 USC 433 allows for the establishment of agreements between the social security system established by the act and the social security system of any foreign country; and

WHEREAS, Section 404.463 of the Social Security Act contains a listing of the countries which meet the social insurances or pension system requirements which may result in relief from Section 404.460 "nonpayment of monthly benefits"; and

WHEREAS, The countries of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama are included in this listing; and

WHEREAS, The present situation can be remedied by administrative action by the Office of International Programs of the Social Security Administration without the necessity of new legislation; and

WHEREAS, The Social Security Administration's Internet web site indicates that in some cases bilateral negotiations are being conducted or are being planned, but that such negotiations are not currently planned for all countries of Central America and negotiations with Mexico have been postponed on more than one occasion; and

WHEREAS, The Social Security Administration has responded in writing to requests for information by Legion staff indicating that no discussions are even contemplated with the governments of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua, or Panama; and

WHEREAS, Rules of The American Legion relating to resolutions requiring Social Security legislation are different from resolutions which do not require legislative action by Congress, the following is submitted as a separate resolution from any other resolution relating to Non-Resident Alien Survivor Beneficiaries; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion petition the Social Security Administration's "Office of International Programs" to expedite the negotiation of international agreements with the governments of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama to permit the recession of the nonpayment provisions of Section 404-460 of the Social Security Act, thereby allowing the payment of survivors' benefits and any other legally accrued benefits to the non-resident alien spouses and children of US veterans residing in the above named countries; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That such expedited negotiation apply to the matter of survivor benefits payments and that other matters related to interests of the Social Security Administration not be included if such negotiation would delay the realization of bilateral agreements relating to survivor benefits payments; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress, with the Social Security Administration, establish uniform eligibility requirements applicable to all foreign nationals receiving Social Security survivor benefits so that all such persons shall be subject to the same eligibility requirements regardless of the location of the recipient's domicile.

Resolution No. 78: POW/MIA Policies
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
(As amended)

WHEREAS, American servicemembers remain missing in action or otherwise unaccounted for from America's past wars and conflicts and reports indicate that in former enemy areas where Americans could still be alive, information has been deliberately and cruelly withheld; and

WHEREAS, The families of POW/MIAs suffer untold grief and uncertainty due to the lack of any accurate accounting, and often in spite of the heroic efforts of U.S. search teams; and

WHEREAS, The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2010 called upon the Secretary of Defense to provide funds, personnel, and resources as the Secretary considers appropriate to significantly increase the capability and capacity of the Department of Defense (DOD), the Armed Forces, and commanders of the combatant commands to account for missing persons so that, beginning with fiscal year 2015, the POW/MIA accounting community has sufficient resources to ensure that at least 200 missing persons are accounted for under the program annually; and

WHEREAS, While the Department of Defense has increased funding and resources to the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) to support the expanded mission as explained in the NDAA 2010, the military construction project for a new facility to meet the needs of JPAC has a funding shortfall of $22.79 million, which will delay the ability to occupy the new building; and

WHEREAS, Advancements in science and forensic technology have caused specific locations of alleged remains of US service members to be recently identified by the U.S. Government; and

WHEREAS, New and promising identification techniques involving radiographic comparison and facial superimposition have drastically increased our ability to identify servicemen for whom DNA matching is not an alternative; and

WHEREAS, Each member of the DOD POW/MIA accounting community, which includes the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL), the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO), the Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory (LSEL), and the service casualty and mortuary offices, plays a vital role in the mission to account for unaccounted for U.S. servicemen from our Nation's past conflicts; and

WHEREAS, DPMO is the agency responsible for the administration and policy for military personnel accountability; and

WHEREAS, This accounting effort should not be considered complete until all reasonable actions have been taken to achieve the fullest possible accounting; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion advocates for the full accounting of missing Americans, in every country, on every continent; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes U.S. Government POW/MIA operations are still inadequate, and the President's normalization of relations with Vietnam has not achieved substantially greater progress; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion remains steadfast in our commitment to the goal of achieving the fullest possible accounting for all U.S. military personnel and designated civilian personnel missing and unaccounted for from our nation's wars; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the President and Congress to speak out on every occasion to expedite the return of those U.S. servicemen who remain Missing in Action regardless of location or era of loss; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the President and Congress to support legislation and policies that will use all reasonable resources to achieve the fullest possible accounting of all missing American servicemembers regardless of location or era of loss; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon Congress to provide full funding, personnel, and any other resources for all members of the Department of Defense (DOD) POW/MIA accounting community, and to ensure these funds not be redirected by the DOD for any other purpose; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the Secretary of Defense to quickly fund the shortfall for the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) construction project; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the President and Congress to continue to declassify all POW/MIA information (except that revealing intelligence sources or methods) in a form readily available to public review; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon Congress to establish a joint standing congressional committee on POW/MIA affairs to ensure continued action by the executive branch in addressing the POW/MIA issue; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the President and Congress to initiate or strengthen joint commissions with Russia, the People's Republic of China, and Democratic People's Republic of Korea to increase POW/MIA recovery efforts; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the President and Congress to take further favorable actions toward the Socialist Republic of Vietnam only after Hanoi provides the fullest possible accounting for POW/MIAs in Vietnam or in areas of Laos and Cambodia it controlled during the Vietnam War; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, "Fullest possible accounting" is defined as turning over live prisoners, repatriating remains of those killed in action or who died in captivity, or providing a valid, conclusive report when neither is possible.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 5 (FR): **Veterans Mail at Overseas Embassies**

Rejected

Resolution No. 195 (MI): **Investigation of 1967 Attack on U.S.S. Liberty**

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 WONG: Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor so indicate by the usual sign. Any opposed? The 'ayes' have it. The report of Foreign Relations is adopted. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Before we begin our next report would all those who will be presenting donations for Operation Comfort Warriors please gather backstage. Now 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

Thank you very much, National Commander. And it's an honor for me to present the Report of the Convention Committee on National Security. At 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 26, 2012, 229 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security initially met in the Indiana Convention Center, Rooms 107 - 110, Street 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, Maryland, Secretary

Conservation of Natural Resources
E.C. Toppin, North Carolina, Chairman

Aerospace
Robert C. Weyenberg, Wisconsin, Chairman
Cliff Griffiths, New Jersey, Secretary

Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness
Charles E. Kruger, Minnesota, Chairman
Larry Eary, Texas, Secretary

Law and Order
George E. Wehrli, Florida, Chairman
Harvey Daggett, Connecticut, Secretary

Merchant Marine
Tom Schottenbauer, Virginia, Chairman
Charles Powell, Virginia, Secretary

Military Affairs
Leo F. Malloy, Massachusetts, Chairman\
Marty Rhyne, Virginia, Secretary

Naval Affairs
William B. Goede, Minnesota, Chairman
James Casey, New York, Secretary

At 11:00 a.m., Sunday, August 26, 2012, the delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Security reconvened in the Indiana Convention Center, Rooms 107 — 110, Street Level. Reports of all Convention Committees were read and their recommended actions on resolutions considered. A total of 83 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.

General Security Ad Hoc Committee
Douglas C. Haggan, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 17: Establish a Strategic Plan for Internal Security Within the United States
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, 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; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges the President and 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 help protect the United States from foreign espionage, organized crime, terrorism, and subversive activities; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the President and Congress to enact legislation and take executive action as necessary to deny subversive individuals or groups the ability to infiltrate and subsequently destroy our government agencies and institutions through federal employment.

Resolution No. 25: Prohibit Foreign Investments in U.S. Defense Industry
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, In this era of changing technology, the United States must maintain ownership and control of critical defense industries so that U.S. technological secrets can be protected and adequate production facilities can be maintained to meet any national emergency; and

WHEREAS, The generally declining strength of the dollar and the downsizing of our industrial base in the 1990s and the continuing decline in the 2000s have made it very lucrative for foreign entities to purchase U.S. firms, including those involved in national defense production; and

WHEREAS, Some allies of the United States, which lease or purchase U.S. advanced technology, may transfer or resell to actual or potential enemies of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Such technology transfers threaten the security of sensitive U.S. military technologies and U.S. technological superiority; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge the U.S. Government to ensure that foreign entities are not permitted to own critical industries, especially those involved in producing defense items; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion opposes the transfer and sales of sensitive technologies which may endanger our national security and economic interests.

Resolution No. 33: The American Legion Policy on the Correction of Military Records
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 provided for the recognition of representatives of The American Legion, and other organizations, to serve as counsel before the discharge and retirement boards of the Armed Forces, and this recognition was extended to cover the Boards for Correction of Military Records (BCMRs) when they were created under the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion was actively involved in the legislative process that established the Correction Boards under section 1552 of title 10, United States Code (USC); and

WHEREAS, Although under provision of title 10, USC, 1552, a three year statute of limitations was created which begins as of the date of discovery of an error or injustice on the military records of a former service member, the boards are also authorized, under

statute, to excuse filings beyond the three year period if it is in the interest of justice to do so; and

WHEREAS, For many years, the boards routinely waived the three year statute of limitation so as to provide veterans the opportunity to correct any error or injustice in their records; and

WHEREAS, In the past, the BCMRs have considered that the effective date of commencement of the three year limit was effective the date of the final separation from service; and

WHEREAS, Congress is investigating the fairness and independence of the BCMRs and the effective date for the commencement of the correction of records by active service members; and

WHEREAS, Section 205 of The Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act of 1940 provides for the waiver of periods of limitation for persons in military service with respect to civil proceedings; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruling in the case of Detweiler v. Pena, held that the three year rule does not apply to active duty personnel; and

WHEREAS, The Discharge Review Board, considered to be a lower review agency, has a 15 year statute of limitation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That appropriate action be taken in support of legislation to amend title 10, United States Code, section 1552, so as to eliminate all time limitations restricting when a claimant may petition the Boards for Correction of Military Records for relief of an error or injustice.

Resolution No. 57: Department of Defense Personnel Policy
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime veterans created by an act of the United States Congress in 1919; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense establishes fitness for duty criteria and standards of conduct consistent with the Uniform Code of Military Justice; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense's current standards and directives have produced one of the most dominant military forces in history; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges Congress to conduct and maintain continuous oversight of the current Department of Defense (DoD) personnel policies to ensure satisfactory retention, recruitment, morale, health and effectiveness of the armed forces; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That in the event Congress detects issues which negatively impact the armed forces as a result of the current DoD personnel policy, The American Legion urges Congress and DoD to pass legislation or implement policies to address those issues.

Resolution No. 63: Rebuild America's Defense Industrial Base
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Administration recently proposed in its fiscal year (FY) 2013 budget to cut Pentagon spending by roughly $487 billion over the next decade and because Congress failed to meet the Budget Control Act's deadline to reduce the long-term deficit by $1.2 trillion, the Pentagon now faces the following scenario: current law

now requires additional across-the-board cuts to the Pentagon budget totaling more than $500 billion over ten years; and

WHEREAS, According to Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, sequester will involve cancellation of weapon systems and construction projects, along with research activity and as a result would seriously cripple our industrial base; and

WHEREAS, Admiral Mark E. Ferguson III, Vice Chief of Naval Operations has said that should sequester occur, severe impacts would be immediately experienced by the Navy including research and development programs for defense would be delayed or cancelled; and

WHEREAS, Developing new technologies for the Armed Forces can be hindered by budget shortfalls despite the fact that the U. S. is currently the world leader in development of new technology, thereby disrupting materiel development vital to national security; and

WHEREAS, Much of our defense industrial base, including weapons production and revitalization of the ship-building industry, has been eroded by plant closures and layoffs; and

WHEREAS, The United States fighting forces must be equipped with state-of-the-art technological advances to assure their capability to win on the modern battlefield, whether on land, sea, or in the air; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge the Administration and Congress to rebuild America's industrial base by continuing to adequately fund research, development, and acquisition budgets to assure our military production can meet national requirements especially when U. S. military power is committed; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Administration and Congress encourage the rebuilding of America's defense industrial base by having a proper balance of policies that: increase and then sustain domestic production at levels that maintain a robust and internationally competitive defense industry, keep the arms industry internationally competitive and ensure that the U.S. is not putting itself at risk by having our armaments produced offshore.

Resolution No. 64: Support for Armed Forces Retirement Homes
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States Soldiers' and Airmen's Home (USSAH) and the United States Naval Home (USNH), jointly called the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH), are continuing care facilities which were created more than 150 years ago to offer retirement homes for distinguished veterans who had served as soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines in our Nation's conflicts; and

WHEREAS, The AFRH system, which is available to retiree veterans from all the Armed Services whose active duty was at least 50 percent enlisted or warrant officer, has been supported by a trust fund resourced by 50 cents a month withheld from active duty enlisted and warrant officer paychecks as well as from fines and forfeitures from disciplinary actions, resident fees, and interest income; and

WHEREAS, The extensive downsizing of the Armed Forces has resulted in a 39 percent decrease in revenue and, coupled with rising nursing home care costs, the Homes have been operating at an annual deficit of several million dollars which would potentially require both Homes to close their doors; and

WHEREAS, Congress has authorized the Department of Defense to raise service members' assessments from 50 cents to $1.00 per month as part of the National

Authorization Act of 1995 which has yet to be exercised; and such an increase could raise revenues by about $7 million annually; and

WHEREAS, Even if this potential source of income reaches fruition, it will not likely provide the permanent, long-term funding which is vital to assure the solvency and viability of the U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home and the U.S. Naval Home; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge Congress to support and fund those measures, to include annual appropriations, 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.

Resolution No. 74: The American Legion's Position on the Operational Reserve
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

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 (DOD), in order to meet budget constraints has been required to reduce active duty end strength; and

WHEREAS, A reduction in active duty end strength will require a continued and even increased dependence on the reserve components in the form of an "Operational Reserve" to meet mission requirements; and

WHEREAS, The 2012 Department of Defense base budget request does not identify missions nor budget line items for an operational reserve; and

WHEREAS, The 2013 Department of Defense Budget Request states, "the reserve component (RC) must continue to serve in an operational capacity as well as in a strategic capacity…Preventing and deterring conflict will likely necessitate the continued use of RC elements to protect and serve the Total Force"; and

WHEREAS, The Fiscal Year 2013 budget anticipates the DOD will use the Guard and Reserve as a vital part of the operational force, and where it makes sense as a force of first choice; 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; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion shall urge Congress to reform the laws and policies governing the reserve components to provide them programmable sustainability as an operational force; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Department of Defense be directed to, in compliance with those laws and policies, establish missions and funding 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.

Resolution No. 138: Long-Range Strike Capabilities
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, USAF Chief of Staff General Schwartz has stated that "Deterrence is not a fading construct in national security – re-emerging and growing in importance as an aspect of U.S. defense policy, risks and uncertainty cloud our ability to forecast the weapons needed to offer deterrence in a world of changing economies, alliances, competing political systems all of which require defense planning for the potential threats of ten and twenty years in the future; and

WHEREAS, Continued Russian efforts to update their strategic missiles and air force, an example being the recent flight of the PAK FA stealth fighter and the expected flight of a Chinese equivalent the F-12 circa 2015, resulting in the proliferation of 5th generation aircraft; and

WHEREAS, Development of Russian Surface to Air Missiles has progressed to the point where there is concern about the ability of present non-stealth vehicles in the bomber mix to penetrate modern air defenses; and

WHEREAS, Russia and China have a history of supplying their weapon systems to nations which are often unfriendly with the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, We need to be prepared to deal with advanced fighter technology in quantities and locations beyond Russia and China; and

WHEREAS, China and Russia have failed to support efforts to impose effective sanctions on Iran's nuclear program and in the case of Russia have offered the potential sale of advance SAM capabilities to protect Iran's nuclear installations; and

WHEREAS, Technical opportunities are changing constantly making the selection of what new capabilities should be developed to counter anticipated threats a major challenge as an error in selection of a course of development can have repercussions for decades; questions concerning manned or unmanned, hypersonic conventional or nuclear, missile or aircraft will constantly face the strategic planner while restricted defense budgets and the need to support other facets of the spectrum of conflict will persist; and

WHEREAS, Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley during a recent House Appropriation Committee's Subcommittee hearing testified that, "Modernization is our most significant concern, especially as our fleets age and new technologies drive new investment needs;" and

WHEREAS, Secretary Donley also said that protecting modernization priorities, including the Long Range Strike Bomber, the KC-46A refueling tanker, and key space and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance programs, is vital to the future force; and

WHEREAS, The intention of the USAF to acquire a follow-on bomber by 2018 has been subject to budget inconsistencies even though the air launched cruise missiles, which give the B-25s a chance to penetrate, have already required several upgrades; and

WHEREAS, Questions exist about the nature of the strike solution uncertainties that may arise in the next decade that warrant the relatively inexpensive efforts to define the requirements of a long range strike weapon; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges the Department of Defense to undertake an adequately funded and prioritized program to define the nature of a long-range strike capability in the acquisition cycle where a concept including performance is established, systems engineering plans are ready, a request of proposal is on-hand and ready to commence the development test and production of a new long-range strike capability to address potential threats; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to fully fund the initial steps leading to capability of rapidly beginning the acquisition process for upgrades in long-range strike capabilities should the risk assessment determine it necessary circa 2015.

Resolution No. 141: Support for the Reformation of the Military Voting System
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The 1986 Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (Public Law 99-410) streamlined the procedures for overseas absentee voting; authorized a back-up write-in overseas ballot if the voter did not receive one requested from the state; Postal Service was to ensure that balloting materials were "carried expeditiously and free of postage;" and the overall intent was to ensure "maximum access to the polls" by both uniformed and civilian overseas voters; and

WHEREAS, The 2000 General Election demonstrated numerous problems concerning uniformed and overseas citizens absentee balloting procedures exist not only in Florida, but nationally as well; and

WHEREAS, Although a Presidential Election is held on the same date across the United States, it is composed of 50 separate state elections; and the Constitution of the United States grants the responsibility for the conduct of elections to the states; and

WHEREAS, Many states have difficulty printing and mailing ballots to overseas military voters in a timely manner, thus, posing a challenge for military members and their family members to vote and return ballots within deadlines; and other states will not accept ballots received 30 days before general elections making it difficult, particularly, for military personnel deployed overseas; and

WHEREAS, Absentee ballots from forward deployed military members entitled to free postage in locales like the Iraq, Afghanistan and Bosnia often are not postmarked at mailing but are postmarked en route resulting in late postmarking in CONUS; and

WHEREAS, Military voters should be protected from disenfranchisement based on technicalities that are beyond their control such as postmark discrepancies, missing notarized signatures, and confusion on residency requirements; and

WHEREAS, Some military units compound military absentee voting problems because voting assistance in the military is often an additional duty relegated to the most junior officers and special vigilance is often not given to handling election mail; and

WHEREAS, A worldwide Internet voting pilot program was recently tested by a Department of Defense contractor using digital signatures and ballot encryption, however, it was rejected for security reasons; and

WHEREAS, Many states now allow the fax transmission of absentee voting materials; and

WHEREAS, Despite progress made after more than a decade by the Department of Defense cooperatively working with the states, on average, some 30 percent of all military absentee ballots are still not counted in federal elections; and

WHEREAS, National defense is uniquely a constitutional mandate that gives the Federal government the authority and responsibility to ensure military personnel and their families are not disenfranchised by the circumstances of their service and, thereby, necessitating Federal legislation as the states have not resolved the problem for nearly half a century, and a more adequate uniform and consistent system, not 50 unique systems, is needed; and

WHEREAS, The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) administers the federal responsibilities of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) of 1986, as amended by the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act (MOVE); and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes the progress made by FVAP and the usefulness of its website www.FVAP.gov; and

WHEREAS, The National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws promotes drafts of uniform and model acts, and it could offer uniform formats for the states to follow on military absentee voting; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion 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; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That 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; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the sending and receiving of blank and completed military absentee ballots be accomplished electronically as much as possible; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion takes an advocate role on this vital issue at national, state and local levels.

Resolution No. 142: Support for the Selective Service Registration Program
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 39 (CO) and Resolution No. 218 (IL))

WHEREAS, The American Legion has given long-standing support to universal military training; and despite the success of the all-volunteer force, Selective Service registration continues to serve as our defense manpower insurance policy; and

WHEREAS, The current reality of the upcoming reductions in end-strength across all branches of the active duty force as a result of the Budget Control Act of 2011 only reinforces the need for the capability to reconstitute our forces in a timely manner; and

WHEREAS, World Wars I and II began long before our country became involved, allowing the United States the benefit of abundant time to accomplish registration before troops were actually committed--a luxury we cannot expect to enjoy in today's unpredictable environment; and

WHEREAS, The Selective Service Registration Program has enjoyed remarkable success as more that 90 percent of our 18-25 year old men have registered and there is virtually no resistance to the program; and

WHEREAS, Registration is one of the few remaining obligations our nation requires of its young men and removing this "rite of passage" for all men would reduce each man's level of consciousness about military service and the obligation to defend our nation; and

WHEREAS, If a national emergency arose, females would be as willing as their male counterparts to serve their country; and

WHEREAS, Of the current 2.4 million veterans alive today, 7% are female; and

WHEREAS, Females make up over 15% of the active duty forces in the United States military; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has opened a majority of Military Occupational Specialties (MOS's) to female service members; and

WHEREAS, Each year we see an increase in female membership in The American Legion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion supports the 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; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to amend the Selective Service Registration Program to include the mandatory registration of females between the ages of 18-25 years of age.

Resolution No. 148: Support for the Global War on Terrorism
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime veterans created by an act of the United States Congress in 1919; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is committed to the security and defense of the United States and its allies; and

WHEREAS, In any war, continued public support not only for the troops, but also for their mission, is essential for victory; and

WHEREAS, The United States of America was suddenly, and without provocation, attacked by terrorists on September 11, 2001, resulting in the death of nearly 3,000 innocent people, injuring over 6,000 victims, and causing untold economic damage to the Nation; and

WHEREAS, This attack was not an isolated event, but one in a long series of terrorist attacks aimed at destroying such core American values as liberty, democracy and respect for human rights; and

WHEREAS, In response to this clear act of war against the United States, Congress authorized the use of military force against those persons and organizations who planned and helped carry out the attack, their affiliates and those that harbored them, and to deter and pre-empt future acts of terrorism; and

WHEREAS, Our service members have made tremendous sacrifices over the past decade in fighting the forces of tyranny and terror, including over 6400 the number of U.S. casualties from Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn as confirmed by U.S. Central Command; and

WHEREAS, Members of the United States military and intelligence agencies, displaying great courage and commitment to the mission, are still deployed around the world in support of the Global War on Terrorism, including Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, the Philippines, and elsewhere; and

WHEREAS, While the U.S. and our allies have had great successes in the war on terrorism – most notably the killing of Osama bin Laden – al Qaeda, associated global terrorist groups, and their sponsors continue to pose a grave threat to the national security of the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion fully supports the men, women, and leadership of our armed forces as they are engaged in the Global War on Terrorism; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges all Americans and freedom-loving peoples everywhere to stand united in their support of the Global War on Terrorism, and united in their support of the troops who are engaged in protecting our values and way of life; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the National Commander be, and is hereby authorized, to use whatever means at his disposal to disseminate accurate information about the Global War on Terrorism, and to engage whatever means necessary to ensure the united support of the American people.

Resolution No. 149: Buy American
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime service veterans which pledges to foster and perpetuate one hundred percent Americanism; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense contracts with large corporations and small businesses for the construction and repair of military hardware to include ground systems, armaments, aircraft and other systems for all of our military branches; and

WHEREAS, These government contractors may rely on subcontractors for the production and overhaul of individual components and subsystems to be used in these equipment items; and

WHEREAS, The government contractor manufacturing a system or systems may choose to employ the services of subcontractors located in foreign countries rather than those subcontractors which have comparable equipment and comparable costs in this country; and

WHEREAS, The choices made by the government contractor not only can affect the security of our Nation as well as the employment of many Americans and veterans who may work at these subcontractors at both the originating and overhaul facilities located in the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge Congress to require government contractors to utilize American-made components and subsystems in construction and repair of their equipment over those made by foreign subcontractors for use by the United States military to ensure the defense of the country as well as the continued employment of Americans and veterans at subcontractor facilities.

Resolution No. 157: Develop Defense Against Electromagnetic Pulse Attack
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, In defiance of the United States and international community, both North Korea and Iran recently conducted tests for missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads; and

WHEREAS, In its first budget submission to Congress, the Administration cut $1.16 billion out of the defense budget, more than a 10 percent reduction in a single year; and

WHEREAS, The Administration's Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 budget request for the national missile defense system seeks $900 million--$260 million less than the Administration's FY 2012 request, which was a decrease of $185 million from FY 2011; and

WHEREAS, The FY 2009 budget request for national missile defense was $1.5 billion; and

WHEREAS, The Missile Defense Agency FY 2013 Future Years Defense Program (FDYP) projection for FY 2013-2016 is $3.6 billion less than the Administration's FY 2012 FDYP for FY 2013-2016; and

WHEREAS, The Administration is contributing $8.5 billion to the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) and NATO Missile Defense over the course of the next five years; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. must maintain superior strategic deterrents and defense systems in the interest of national defense from both conventional and unconventional foes operating in either symmetrical or asymmetrical environments; and

WHEREAS, Islamic violent extremists and rogue nations continue to plot against the West and seek to destroy the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, The Congressionally-sanctioned Commission to Assess the Threat to the U.S. from Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) has clearly defined the vulnerabilities in America's homeland defense posture to include potential catastrophic damage to U.S. infrastructure, telecommunications, banking, energy, transportation, food, water, emergency services, space systems, and government agencies; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges the United States Government to fully fund, develop, and deploy a national ballistic missile defense system designed to intercept EMP attacks; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the United States Government to swiftly commission the further development and installation of electronic equipment and components resistant to EMP to quickly provide significant protection and limit damage to high-value electrical generation and transmission assets as well as emergency generation and re-start capability; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the United States Government to expeditiously develop an EMP response plan to include necessary back-up systems and corresponding supply of electronic parts and equipment vital to a successful American defense and response in the event of such an attack.

Resolution No. 284: Guard and Reserve Space-A Travel
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States Department of Defense (DoD) in DoD Regulation 4515.13-R has established a program of travel known as space-available travel—also known as "Space-A"—to allow authorized passengers to occupy DoD aircraft seats that are surplus after all required passengers have been accommodated; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of this privilege was to provide uniformed service members with a respite from the rigors of military service, and to provide retired uniformed service members with recognition for a career of rigorous duty; and

WHEREAS, Under the current rules, Guard and Reserve members qualify for Space-A travel. However, unlike active duty family members, dependents of the Guard and Reserve currently cannot fly Space-A. So called, "Gray Area" retirees (retirement eligible members of the Guard and Reserve who are under 60 years old) are excluded from traveling outside the continental United States (OCONUS) on Space-A; and

WHEREAS, Both the Guard and Reserve have transitioned from a Strategic Reserve into an Operational Force to meet the exigencies of an all-volunteer force in an era of persistent conflict in which all soldiers, active-duty and reserve-component alike, are expected to regularly deploy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges Congress to authorize the DoD to offer space available worldwide travel on military aircraft to dependents of Guard and Reserve members, "gray area" retirees, and widows and widowers of retired members and dependents.

Conservation of Natural Resources Committee
E. C. Toppin, Chairman, North Carolina

Approved

Resolution No. 145: Support Domestic Energy Production
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States' continued reliance on foreign sources of energy places our national security and economic well-being as a nation at risk during times of crisis; and

WHEREAS, The United States continues to import approximately 60 percent or more of its crude oil; and

WHEREAS, The countries of Algeria, Angola, Ecuador, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela are bound by their membership in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC); and

WHEREAS, The United States imports 40 percent of its oil from OPEC-member countries; and

WHEREAS, The war on terrorism and continuing conflict in the Middle East has brought into sharp focus the heavy reliance of the United States on foreign oil which necessitates a re-evaluation of our current and long-range energy policies; and

WHEREAS, Congress has denied petroleum exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Region and the Administration has denied the construction of the northern section of the Keystone Pipeline XL even though such efforts to expand our domestic supply could reduce our reliance on foreign sources of energy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge Congress and the Administration to pursue further development of domestic sources of energy to include: increasing U.S. petroleum production in an environmentally sensible manner so as to reduce America's reliance on foreign petroleum; building new nuclear energy plants; implementing domestic crude oil; gas exploration; and Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming oil shale development; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That conservation of energy and development of domestic energy sources be more actively pursued in the American private and public sectors.

Resolution No. 147: Support Research and Funding for Alternative Energy Resources
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Our growing dependence on foreign oil adversely affects the United States and world economies as was discovered during the oil embargo in 1973 and interruption in the supply of foreign oil during the years of conflict between Iran and Iraq; and

WHEREAS, There is a growing need for creating new employment for the American people and developing new skills especially for our veteran population; and

WHEREAS, The development of alternate energy sources is vital to America's maintaining a competitive advantage in the world economy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge Congress fund research and development of all alternative sources of energy including the utilization of coal; crude oil; oil shale; natural gas; methanol; and

ethanol as well as nuclear energy to ensure our Nation will never be an economic hostage and we can always meet the ever growing competition from China and other Far Eastern industrial complexes and the European Common Market; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Federal Government be strongly encouraged to substantially expand its incentives to industry, either through tax incentives or through research and development grants, in a greatly expanded effort to develop and use alternative energy resources, including substitute power and heating supplies.

Resolution No. 155: Rare Earth Elements
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Rare earth elements are a collection of 17 elements that are critical to civilian and military high technology applications: Scandium; Yttrium; Lanthanum; Cerium; Praseodymium; Neodymium; Promethium; Samarium; Europium; Gadolinium; Terbium; Dysprosium; Holmium; Erbium; Thulium; Ytterbium; and Lutetium; and

WHEREAS, Rare earth elements are distributed globally, with 36 percent of known reserves located in China, and 13 percent located in the United States; and

WHEREAS, China now produces 97 percent of the world's rare earth elements, key components in a large assortment of advanced technologies, and increasing global demand along with Chinese government reductions in export quotas over the past six years have led to international concerns about future supply shortages; and

WHEREAS, Some U.S. weapons and equipment that contain rare-earth elements are: Predator unmanned aerial vehicles, Tomahawk cruise missiles, Zumwalt-class destroyers, night vision goggles, smart bombs, and sonar transducers as well as other sophisticated military applications including guidance and control systems; advanced optics technologies; radar and radiation detection equipment; and advanced communications; and

WHEREAS, China may use its monopoly over rare earths to leverage its influence on U.S. foreign policy, and numerous analysts have expressed concerns that Chinese quota reductions will increase U.S. element dependence; and

WHEREAS, The price of select rare earths has risen almost 500 percent in the last 2 years; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges Congress to add to the Fiscal Year 2013 National Defense Authorization Act, or in separate legislation, a provision requiring the Department of Defense to define which rare earths, if any, are critical to national security, and be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to require the Department of Defense to provide an assessment of the needs of the U.S. rare earth supply-chain for defense and require the Defense Secretary to have a long-term plan in the interest of national defense.

Approved with Amendments

Resolution No. 207: Pipeline Construction and Energy Independence
Origin: California
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Our Republic is in a state of emergency and our people are no longer secure in their "unalienable rights" to "liberty and the pursuit of happiness"; and

WHEREAS; All subsidies distorted the efficient and equitable function of our capitalistic economic system and encourage crony-capitalism; and

WHEREAS; Our current recession is exacerbated by the high cost of energy; and

WHEREAS; We have sufficient energy resources within our borders to make out Nation energy independent for decades and centuries if we construct third and fourth generation nuclear power plants; and

WHEREAS; The development of our energy resources would be greatly increase national security, create jobs, and facilitate paying down our national debt, which now exceeds our Gross Domestic Product and threatens the collapse of our Nation; and

WHEREAS; That all subsidies and tax loop-holes be phase out; and

WHEREAS; That all duplicative and nonessential regulations be revoked; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion call upon Congress and the President to expedite the approval and construction of a pipeline from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico and other points as a step toward greater U.S. energy independence along with allowing the development of all viable energy resources.

Aerospace Committee
Robert C. Weyenberg, Chairman, Wisconsin

Resolution No. 70: Support for the United States Air Force
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, People are the United States Air Force's top priority: the Air Force is the world's premier aerospace force because its great people–active-duty, Guard, Reserve and civilian–continue to serve selflessly as a total force under increasingly difficult circumstances, and in order to grow the force, recruiting and retention are among its highest priorities; to continue attracting and retaining dedicated men and women the Air Force recognizes that it must continue its efforts to improve pay, benefits, and quality of life; and

WHEREAS, Since September 11, 2001 the Air Force has executed more than 440,000 airlift sorties, moving more than 3.6 million tons of cargo and nearly 6.9 million passengers in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom and then New Dawn; and

WHEREAS, The Air Force simultaneously provided top cover and weapons on target with another 162,000 sorties supporting those same operations; and

WHEREAS, Air Force aeromedical evacuation crews surged to complete nearly 180,000 patient movements, averaging 52 per day; and

WHEREAS, On the home front, Air Force fighter, air refueling, and early warning aircraft have flown almost 62,000 total sorties supporting Operation Noble Eagle; and

WHEREAS, The Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve have flown more than 65 percent of these domestic sorties with the Air National Guard currently operating 17 of 18 Aerospace Control Alert sites across the United States; and

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, 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: For example, Global Strike Task Force, which

describes how we will operate in an anti-access scenario is the next step in the journey to fully achieve Air Force missions, while also opening doors to adaptive and innovative operational plans and relevant organization structure; and

WHEREAS, To meet the lower budget levels called for in the Budget Control Act of 2011, the Air Force will reduce its force by 4,200 to 328,600 over the next five years; and

WHEREAS, 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; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge the Congress to appropriately support the United States 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 well into the 21st Century.

Resolution No. 140: Support for Research and Development of Air Breathing Scramjet Powered Vehicle
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The X-43A Scramjet test flights are part of NASA Hyper-X program, an advance research effort in propulsion technologies for high speed flight with the atmosphere and into Earth orbit; and

WHEREAS, After many years of research and development testing the craft met major milestones propelling itself slightly over Mach 7, seven times the speed of sound, or some 5,000 miles per hour in 2004; and

WHEREAS, Unlike any other space vehicle that must haul along weighty amounts of oxygen for propulsion scramjets use the atmosphere as an oxygen source so that scramjet powered craft could haul greater payload into orbit and suborbital flights; and

WHEREAS, In 2010, Scramjet broke its own world record on its third and final flight with a new world speed record for jet-powered aircraft of Mach 9.6 which equates to nearly 7,000 miles per hour; and

WHEREAS, Researchers predict scramjet speed could reach 15 times the speed of sound so that an 18 hour trip to Tokyo from New York City becomes a 2 hour flight; and

WHEREAS, There are few or no moving parts in the scramjet, allowing engine ignition and combustion in a matter of milliseconds which is considered a major aerospace engineering achievement; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges Congress to direct NASA to continue and expand research and development of the air breathing scramjet powered vehicle program and to fully fund and continue this revolutionary program which will once again bring the United States to the forefront of aerospace engineering achievement.

Resolution No. 153: Support for NASA and Advancements in Aeronautical and Space Research
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is critical to defending our Nation and maintaining military superiority; and

WHEREAS, U.S. progress in aerospace research has also had a profound impact on our Nation's quality of life and its economic, social, environmental and political institution and made possible communication on a global scale; and

WHEREAS, The dissemination and use of space systems technology, the research programs on which it is based, and the spin-off products, techniques and services derived from the U.S. space program are vital components of the nation's economy and the well-being of its citizens; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. space program has kept the nation on the leading edge of the technology frontier, has created jobs, improved communications, electronics, material, diagnosis and treatment of medical care for veterans and all Americans, fostered new scholastic interest in space science, provided insight into the evolution of the universe and current state of the earth, its environment and its solar system, and has provided visions and objectives for the future for business, industry and academia and the nation's youth; and

WHEREAS, The final Space Shuttle mission was completed on August 31, 2011; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 7,000 NASA employees lost their employment to the ending of the 30-year Space Shuttle Program; and

WHEREAS, Continued U.S. economic growth is dependent on further expansion of air transportation system which requires further investments and aeronautical research, and in addition, the stunning success of air power in Afghanistan and Iraq is the result of research performed a decade or more ago and reminds us that continued emphasis on military aviation R&T is essential to future U.S. air superiority; and

WHEREAS, To meet lower budget levels called for in the Budget Control Act of 2011, significant budget reductions to NASA's near-term and long-term projects are expected; and

WHEREAS, On September 14, 2011, NASA announced that it had selected the design of a new Space Launch System that it said would take the agency's astronauts further into space than ever before and provide the cornerstone for future human space exploration efforts by the U.S; and

WHEREAS, In light of current reductions and possible additional cuts due to impending sequestration, the viability of NASA's long-term basic research programs and exploration initiatives remain vulnerable; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion deems it imperative that the United States, in the face of increasing 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, we urge the Congress to provide: adequate funding for NASA along with the nation's civilian and military aerospace research and development programs to maintain U.S. technological leadership; adequate funding to build, upgrade and enhance the nation's civilian and military aerospace research facilities and wind tunnels; 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; oversight and investigating functions and related activities with respect to the transfer of American aerospace technology abroad; provide that all of our military

aircrafts are design, manufactured and assembled within the borders of the United States; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That 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; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion shall employ maximum effort to make this nation and Congress rectify the decline in aeronautics research which is imperative to the nation's continued world leadership in economic prosperity and military superiority.

Resolution No. 167: Fully Fund NASA
Origin: Wisconsin
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolutions No. 164, No. 165, No. 166, No. 168, No. 169 (WI))

WHEREAS, Commercial aviation is vital to the Nation's economic well-being; and

WHEREAS, NASA's aeronautics research contributes significantly to air travel innovation and aligns with the principles, goals, and objectives of the National Aeronautics Research and Development Policy and its related National Aeronautics Research and Development Plan; and

WHEREAS, NASA explores early-stage concepts and ideas, develops new technologies and operational procedures through foundation research, along with demonstrating the potential of promising new vehicles, operations, and safety technology in relevant environments; and

WHEREAS, NASA is focused on the most appropriate cutting-edge research and technologies to overcome a wide range of aeronautics challenges for the Nation's current and future air transportation systems; and

WHEREAS, NASA is addressing the research challenges that must be overcome to achieve the goals of the *Next Generation Air Transportation System* or *NextGen*, a technology modernization effort that will make air travel safer, more flexible, more efficient, and to enable the design of vehicles that can support *NextGen* including unmanned aircraft; and

WHEREAS, The goals of NASA are to expand airspace capacity, enable fuel efficient flight planning, reduce the overall environmental footprint of airplanes today and in the future, diminish delays on the ground and in the sky, and improve the ability of aircraft to operate in all weather conditions while meeting or exceeding safety standards; and

WHEREAS, NASA's contributions to the Nation's civilian aviation is essential to public safety and comfort of those flying; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges Congress to make funding of NASA's programs among its highest priority ensuring the continued superiority of the American aviation industry and continued high safety record of American aircraft while looking toward future innovation in a collaborative effort between NASA and the aircraft Industry; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That upon passage at The American Legion National Convention that this resolution becomes a part of The American Legion's efforts in lobbying for continued adequate funding of NASA in the up-coming Congress.

Approved with Amendments

Resolution No. 152: Support Unmanned Vehicles
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Historically unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) commonly known as drones, were primarily used for reconnaissance; and

WHEREAS, Currently, military UAV's perform both reconnaissance as well as attack missions; and

WHEREAS, Since 2006, operations for larger drones have grown from about 165,000 hours to more than 550,000 hours annually; and

WHEREAS, Drones weighing 20 pounds or less flew more than 1 million combat flight hours in 2010; and

WHEREAS, The Coast Guard and U.S. Border Patrol use drones to monitor land and sea to protect oil and gas pipelines; and

WHEREAS, The CIA operates a covert drone program targeting terrorist leaders in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen; and

WHEREAS, The State Department uses surveillance drones to protect U.S. Diplomatic personnel in Iraq; and

WHEREAS, It is difficult to find any other technology in the Defense Department that in a single decade has made such a tremendous impact on our war-fighting capability; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That the U.S. Government be encouraged to continue to proceed on a path of transforming American's armed forces into a modern force capable of providing for the security of all Americans, strengthening and expanding our military capabilities using unmanned vehicles.

Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness Committee
Charles E. Kruger, Chairman, Minnesota

Approved

Resolution No. 19: Fully Enforce Immigration Laws
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Each sovereign nation is responsible for the enforcement of laws regarding its borders; and

WHEREAS, Citizens of each sovereign nation should be protected from those who violate their borders; and

WHEREAS, The United States has laws specifying how to obtain legal entry to our nation; and

WHEREAS, These immigration laws are being violated each day by persons entering our nation illegally and endangering our national security; and

WHEREAS, There are existing laws to arrest, detain, or deport those who violate these immigration laws; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support the strict enforcement of immigration laws already in existence; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That government benefits of any kind should not be granted to any alien who has entered the United States without government permission or stayed beyond the termination date of a visa.

Resolution No. 21: Illegal Immigration Policy
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 227 (IL))

WHEREAS, Immigration and Customs Enforcement estimates that there are 11.5 million illegal immigrants who currently reside within the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Homeland Security, Office of Audits stated that each year more than one million aliens attempt to illegally enter the United States without proper documentation or enter legally and violate the provisions of their visa; and

WHEREAS, A need exists for a broad exchange of intelligence and related action between regulatory agencies which govern immigration policy, social services, and the Department of Justice; and

WHEREAS, Aggressively tracking foreign nationals is a deterrent to terrorist activities and failing to effectively utilize the available systems and technology to track illegal aliens threatens the security and future of the U.S.; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge Congress to adopt an immigration reform policy which emphasizes border security against those individuals attempting to enter this country illegally and internal tracking of all resident aliens and illegal immigrants; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose legislation that would result in the granting of amnesty and legal residency, in any form or by any name, to illegal immigrants currently in the United States; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Homeland Security be provided the monies necessary to ensure both the thorough performance of its responsibilities and the security of the borders of the United States; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose any change to "Title V of the Immigration and Nationality Act" (8 U.S.C. 1531-1537) that would require revealing the source(s) of secret evidence used in the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, Department of Homeland Security, administrative deportation hearings; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the federal government to provide the needed resources to enforcement agencies tasked with curtailing illegal immigration in this country and encourage the Congress of the United States to mandate that the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Student and Exchange Visitor Information System continue and be aggressively administered by the responsible agency of the federal government; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That 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 nationals to the United States; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages a thorough background check and interview for each candidate for a U.S. visa prior to issuing said visa; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That those foreign nationals who perpetrate fraud and/or are visa overstays be arrested by law enforcement and turned over to the Department of Homeland Security for removal/deportation proceedings; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages Congress to pass legislation prohibiting the acceptance of foreign-issued forms of identification deemed untrustworthy by the federal government for application for government-sponsored public services, and that businesses, including financial institutions, be prohibited from accepting foreign issued documents determined to be unacceptable forms of identification; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages Congress to authorize and fund the securing of the borders and points of entry in the United States by: construction of physical barriers; hiring a sufficient number of U.S. Border Patrol Agents; federalization of National Guard troops to assist border security operations; searching all vessel and their cargo arriving at our seaports; enforcement of existing laws and passing of new laws to reduce the illegal immigrant population; and the funding of the Department of Homeland Security to ensure its effectiveness in securing borders of the United States; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages Congress, the Justice Department and the Department of Homeland Security to take necessary action to stop the flow of illegal immigration into this country by means that include, but are not limited to: requiring all legal aliens to carry U.S. Government-issued identification documents; enacting measures that effectively halt the smuggling of illegal immigrants into this country; granting law enforcement agencies at the local, state, and federal levels the authority to work together and with the Department of Homeland Security to apprehend and incarcerate illegal immigrants; and the utilization of military resources as appropriate to assist in stopping the flow of illegal aliens in to this country.

Resolution No. 32: Support for U.S. Blood Banks
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The public needs to be constantly reminded that the blood banks of the United States need to be supported by The American Legion and the public; and

WHEREAS, Emergencies continue to come up where blood is needed without warning; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion continues its support of blood banks to cover such emergencies; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continues promoting the donation of blood for all emergencies where lives are at stake.

Resolution No. 69: Support for the Department of Homeland Security and Coast Guard
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on American soil have made Americans painfully aware of their vulnerability to violence from international terrorism; and

WHEREAS, On September 20, 2001, President Bush announced the establishment of the Office of Homeland Security, a new cabinet position designed to be the single source of authority, at the highest levels, for all homeland defense programs and policies; and

WHEREAS, The Coast Guard was transferred from the Department of Transportation to the Department of Homeland Security; and

WHEREAS, The Coast Guard was able to respond to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, within hours, and its homeland security missions have since significantly increased;

WHEREAS, Included in the numerous peacetime and wartime missions of the Coast Guard is law enforcement in its many facets to include drug interdiction; 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; and

WHEREAS, To carry out these critical missions, it is essential that highly skilled and motivated men and women continue to be recruited and retained by the Coast Guard and its Reserve, and that cutters, aircraft, and required facilities be fully funded; and

WHEREAS, Without adequate resources, the United States Coast Guard will be unable to meet its national and international commitments to the detriment of the American people and other democratic nations; and

WHEREAS, The Coast Guard needs to modernize and recapitalize its integrated surface and air sensors and communication assets allowing the Coast Guard to efficiently and effectively support national maritime security interests well into the 21st century; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion supports the Department of Homeland Security and urges the Administration and Congress to make security of the United States the top national priority; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to arm the Department of Homeland Security with the legal powers and fiduciary tools 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, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to fund homeland-security tasks and functions being performed at regional, state, and local levels; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Administration and Congress to fully fund the United States 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 its modernization and recapitalization initiatives; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the annual Congressional passage of the Coast Guard Authorization Act; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress and the Department of Homeland Security 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.

Approved with Amendments

Resolution No. 65: Support for Financial Anti-Terrorism Law Enforcement
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The United States Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Security, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Internal Revenue Service are the first line of defense of the nation in combating financial security threats

that face America from both home and abroad, and are charged with a number of missions that are vital to the security of the nation; and

WHEREAS, These missions include: policing, investigation, and enforcement of financial laws to ensure the integrity and stability of our nation's banking and financial institutions from both foreign and domestic abuse or manipulation, and to ensure a stable economic environment that provides for legal investment and export opportunities; and

WHEREAS, These departments and agencies are charged with the role of securing both the physical and cyber borders of our nation, and while mindful of the constitutional rights of American citizens; and

WHEREAS, Financial investigations and prosecutions conducted by the Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Internal Revenue Service have uncovered illicit financing schemes and revenue accounts of listed terrorist organizations through knowing or unknowing individuals, investment development groups, associations, charitable, and other legitimate organizations; and

WHEREAS, These departments and agencies must have the ability to use every legal tool and policy at their disposal to ensure that terrorist organizations do not have the ability to be financed through domestic and international financial systems; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion supports legislation that strengthens the abilities of the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security and the Internal Revenue Service to police, investigate, and prosecute financial institutions or individuals within the parameters of the Constitution that use legitimate and illegitimate financial means to help support both domestic and international terrorism.

Law and Order Committee
George E. Wehrli, Chairman, Florida

Approved

Resolution No. 68: Second Amendment
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States guarantees each law-abiding American citizen the right to keep and bear arms of his or her choice; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated that over 60 million individuals, representing over half of the households in America, have chosen to exercise that right by owning one or more firearms; and

WHEREAS, Gun bans, registration, and licensing of firearms and their owners of has had little or no effect in such urban areas such as New York City, California and Washington D.C. and has not prevented violent criminals from obtaining firearms illegally and committing crimes; and

WHEREAS, The restriction of firearms purchases by law-abiding citizens will create a black market in illegal firearms and incur further governmental costs to enforce such restriction; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion reaffirms its recognition that the Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States guarantees each law-abiding American citizen the right to keep and bear arms; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the membership of The American Legion urges our nation's lawmakers to recognize, as part of their oaths of office, that the Second Amendment guarantees law-abiding citizens the right to keep and bear the arms of their choice, as do the millions of American veterans who have fought, and continue to fight, to preserve those rights, hereby advise the Congress of the United States and the Executive Department to cease and desist any and all efforts to restrict these rights by any legislation or order.

Merchant Marine Committee
Tom Schottenbauer, Chairman, Minnesota

Approved

Resolution No. 31: Support for the Jones Maritime Act and Related Cabotage Laws
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 11 (MT))

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always stressed that maintaining a viable U.S.-Flag Merchant Marine and its supporting infrastructure is essential to the economic, national, and environmental security of this nation; and

WHEREAS, The maritime policy of the United States, as articulated in the 1936 Merchant Marine Act, states that "it is necessary for the national defense and development of its foreign and domestic commerce that the United States shall have a Merchant Marine"; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is concerned about the continued decline of the U.S.-Flag Merchant Marine and the shortage of trained American mariners; and

WHEREAS, As of 2005, the privately owned ocean-going U.S.-flag fleet consisted of only 233 active ships, which includes 106 ships in domestic trade and 36 other engaged exclusively in U.S. government work, and only 91 U.S.-Flag ships are operating in international trade in support of the nation's economic and national security interests; and

WHEREAS, The United States is the world's largest trading nation, but only three percent of U.S. imports and exports are carried in U.S.-flag ships which is economically unwise and militarily imprudent; and

WHEREAS, The Jones Act, which is critical to United States national security and to America's economic well-being, should be reaffirmed as should the continuation of the annual appropriations needed to fund the Maritime Security Act of 1996; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support the Jones Act and related maritime cabotage laws critical to America's maritime infrastructure, and therefore, to the United States national defense.

Resolution No. 56: Commercial Shipbuilding for Defense
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States emerged as the world's foremost economic power and trading nation after the Cold War, and America's policymakers have neglected to use these advantages to sustain the nation's naval and maritime power; and

WHEREAS, According to the U.S. Maritime Administration the number of merchant vessels sailing internationally flying the U.S. Flag has been reduced from 1,072 to 191 over the last six decades; and

WHEREAS, In 1955, the U.S. Flag fleet represented almost 25% of the world's overall tonnage while the U.S. share today is approaching a mere 2% of total world tonnage; and

WHEREAS, The 600-ship navy envisioned by President Ronald Reagan would have kept the ship yards busy; and

WHEREAS, U.S. Navy active ship levels have been reduced from 559 ships in 1975 to approximately 285 today, including 11 aircraft carriers, 22 cruisers, 60 destroyers, 29 frigates, 2 littoral combat ships, 9 amphibious assault ships, 2 amphibious command ships, 9 amphibious transport docks, 12 dock landing ships, 53 attack submarines, 14 ballistic missile submarines, 4 guided missile submarines, 14 mine countermeasures ships, and 11 patrol boats; and

WHEREAS, According the Navy News Service, only approximately 20 Navy ships are currently under construction and only about 35 ships are in the procurement process; and

WHEREAS, In the Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 DoD budget request, the Department of the Navy's budget is being reduced by $914 million to meet the lower budget levels called for in the Budget Control Act of 2011; and

WHEREAS, The question of how the United States should respond to China's naval modernization effort, has emerged as a key issue in U.S. defense planning and this question is important to the U.S. Navy because many military programs for countering improved military forces would fall within the Navy's budget; and

WHEREAS, A U.S.-Chinese military conflict is possible however unlikely, due to the significant economic linkages between the two countries and the tremendous damage that such a conflict could cause on both sides; and

WHEREAS, U.S. Navy programs for countering improved Chinese maritime military forces need to positively influence the political evolution of the Pacific region so that the United States can protect its national interests in the Pacific and around the world; and

WHEREAS, China's naval modernization effort encompasses a broad range of weapon acquisition programs including anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBMs), submarines, and surface ships along with improved maintenance, logistics, and training systems; and

WHEREAS, Potential issues for Congress include whether or not the U.S. Navy will be large enough to adequately counter improved Chinese naval capabilities and have the ability to counter Chinese ASBMs and submarines; and

WHEREAS, U.S. commercial build rates not large enough to provide the strategic sealift needed in an emergency, or to support a shipbuilding industry large enough to meet future U.S. naval needs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge Congress to stop further erosion of our vital maritime capability; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the President and 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.

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 12 (MT): **Piracy Against American Flagged Vessels**

Military Affairs Committee
Leo F. Malloy, Chairman, Massachusetts

Resolution No. 14: Airport Courtesy for Military Personnel in Uniform
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of military veterans; and

WHEREAS, Many troops experience the support of patriotic citizens when civilian passengers on commercial flights volunteer to remain seated after arriving at the airline gate of their destination for the purpose of allowing military personnel to depart the plane first, thereby enabling them to be more quickly reunited with their loved ones; and

WHEREAS, This is currently being encouraged by some air crews on some flights; and

WHEREAS, The United States Military is the leader in the Global War On Terrorism and are on the same level or higher than the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) in terms of national security; and

WHEREAS, A majority of military personnel are hand carrying professional military gear and documents that should not necessarily be revealed to civilian passengers during a normal TSA inspection; and

WHEREAS, Members of the United States Military know that they may be called to defend the nation at any time; and

WHEREAS, There are occasionally long lines at security check points, sometimes delaying military personnel; and

WHEREAS, There are security check points reserved for first class, frequent flyers and air crews; and

WHEREAS, There are, upon occasion, other passengers awaiting available seating; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges the Department of Homeland Security to permit military personnel in uniform to utilize any security checkpoint in operation that would expedite their ability to make their flights; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages all U.S. airlines to extend a courtesy to military personnel in uniform by offering preference of available seating second to persons with disabilities or experiencing emergencies, and pregnant women or persons traveling with small children; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages all U.S. airlines to extend a courtesy to military personnel in uniform by allowing military personnel in uniform to disembark the aircraft first; second only to persons with disabilities or experiencing emergencies, and pregnant women or persons traveling with small children.

Resolution No. 15: Authorize and Fund TRICARE for Reserve Components and Dependents
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DOD) created TRICARE to augment its Military Health System; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE largely consists of regional Federally-contracted, for-profit health care providers; and

WHEREAS, DOD's utilization of Reserve Components in the performance of traditionally active duty missions continues globally; and

WHEREAS, 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 and numerous activated Reservists have been non-deployable due to health or dental problems; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge Congress to authorize and fund the Department of Defense (DOD) in providing permanent TRICARE healthcare for members of the Reserve Components and their dependents.

Resolution No. 18: Flexible Savings Accounts
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Medical savings accounts, also known as "flexible savings accounts," are recognized by Title 37 of the United States Code for civilian employees and active duty members of the Department of Defense; and

WHEREAS, Medical savings accounts are pretax dollar savings utilized by families specifically for health care, dental care , and child care expenses; and

WHEREAS, Reserve Component members not under TRICARE historically have had significant mobilization issues due to deferred preventive health care due to cost for such things as dental checkups, which reduced the mobilization readiness of both servicemembers and their units; and

WHEREAS, Medical savings accounts would allow Reserve Component members to afford regular health care, thus improve their mobilization health readiness, and thereby also improve the readiness of the Reserve Components; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion supports benefits that support reserve component members, their military families and the nation; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes the Department of Defense by not allowing medical savings accounts for the reserve components equal to the active duty components is discriminating against those members of the Armed Services Reserve Component who, although they serve equally in the defense of this nation are not allowed access to a medical savings account; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion supports the participation in pretax medical savings accounts for both active duty and Reserve Component servicemembers and military families; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress be urged to pass legislation that enables participation in pretax medical savings accounts.

Resolution No. 20: Grant Access to all U.S. Military Facilities to Military Retirees and Their Dependents
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, A portion of the earned benefits of military retirees is considered to be the use of military facilities, such as post and base exchanges, commissaries, healthcare, recreational facilities, mail, and other U.S. military facilities worldwide; and

WHEREAS, As a direct result of the Status of Forces Agreements between the U.S. government and host countries many of these benefits are usually denied to retired military members and their dependents residing or visiting U.S. military facilities located outside the U.S.; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, 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.

Resolution No. 22: Include Chiropractic Care and Services in TRICARE Coverage
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Many retired veterans have TRICARE for Life as their supplemental health care program; and

WHEREAS, 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

WHEREAS, TRICARE currently does not cover chiropractic care; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge Congress include chiropractic care for all servicemembers and veterans enrolled in the TRICARE health system.

Resolution No. 24: Oppose TRICARE Fee Increases
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, Administration and defense leaders are seeking to impose very large health care fee increases on military retirees and their families; and

WHEREAS, The proposed fee increases are inappropriate and out of line with career service members' unique sacrifices; and

WHEREAS, Military medical and retirement benefits must be markedly better than civilian benefits because they are primary offsets for decades of extraordinarily arduous service conditions; and

WHEREAS, Military retirees' careers 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, extended family separations, just to mention a few; and

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, The recently released Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 federal budget plan calls for dramatically increased TRICARE enrollment fees and pharmacy co-pays; and

WHEREAS, Under the proposed FY 2013 budget, the TRICARE Prime annual enrollment fee would rise from $520 to $2,048 by 2017, an increase of 400 percent in five years; and

WHEREAS, Similarly, TRICARE mail-order pharmacy program co-pays for brand name medications would skyrocket from $9 to $34 over the same five years, yet another increase of nearly 400 percent; and

WHEREAS, The current fiscal realities dictate certain financial concessions may have to be made by our citizens but to unfairly burden America's military retiree families any further is unconscionable; and

WHEREAS, Those who point to the disparity in cost between civilian and military health insurance, and hint at unfairness, simply do not appreciate the huge premiums

already paid by the selfless service and sacrifice of our servicemembers and their families; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion sees this proposal as an erosion of quality of life earned benefits from a grateful nation for honorable military service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion is strongly opposed to proposed hikes in premiums and or enrollment fees being paid by enrollees in the military's health insurance program known as TRICARE; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to decisively reject these unjust proposed increases in the military retirees' TRICARE enrollment fees, deductibles, or premiums.

Resolution No. 26: Reference Veterans Service Organizations at Discharge
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion are veterans of the United States Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, Legionnaires would like to share the veterans services available to newly discharged and retired service members; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recommends that a separation package be supplied to each of these newly discharged and retired veterans and recommends that separation packets contain the names and addresses of all major veterans service organization in the United States by state; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes that the transition from military life to civilian life is sometimes difficult and recognizes that association with fellow veterans and access to available services is highly beneficial in their efforts to become productive citizens; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion respectfully requests each military service include such a package of information in the separation process from the military; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support legislation to insert a clause into the briefing of transitioning service men and women that makes specific reference to veterans service organizations, such as The American Legion, in their civilian communities.

Resolution No. 28: Support for Concurrent Receipt of Military Retirement Pay and VA Disability Compensation
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, Sections 5304 and 5305, prohibit the concurrent receipt of both military retirement pay for longevity of service from the Department of Defense and disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, Federal civil service employees, as well as other Federal government workers, may concurrently receive retirement pay for longevity and disability payments; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that it is inequitable and unfair to authorize one group to receive federal retirement pay and disability payments while prohibiting disabled military retirees from receiving both; and

WHEREAS, According to the Department of Defense, the rationale for this disparity is that "VA disability compensation is 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;" and

WHEREAS, 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 service connected disabilities; and

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, The Fiscal Year (FY) 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; and

WHEREAS, The FY 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 retired pay, as well as veterans who retired under Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA); and

WHEREAS, 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

WHEREAS, Eligible retirees may not receive both concurrent receipt and CRSC but may choose between the two options during an annual "open season"; and

WHEREAS, The FY 2012 Defense Authorization Act failed to include any concurrent receipt provisions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That 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; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge 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, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to authorize the concurrent receipt of military severance pay for less than 30 percent disabled service members and VA disability compensation.

Resolution No. 29: Support for Military Quality of Life Standards
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always supported quality of life features for members of the Armed Forces, their dependents, and military retirees, and survivors as people are the foundation of our Nation's fighting forces; and

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, Military compensation is only one factor in the quality of life equation as to whether a good service members and their families remain in military service: Other major factors include fair treatment, career stability, regular promotions, adequate quarters, adequate health care, commissaries, and day care facilities, all of which ease the numerous sacrifices that are demanded of servicemembers; and

WHEREAS, Our military retirees and their dependents and 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; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges Congress and the Department of Defense to support and fund quality of life features including, but not limited to, the following: military pay comparability for the Armed Forces and regular increases in the Basic Allowances for Quarters; renovation and construction of military quarters and increased funding for child day care centers and pay raises must be competitive with the private sector; adequate medical, mental, and dental health services; morale, welfare, and recreational facilities; and non-privatized exchanges and commissary facilities,; and the Defense Commissary Agency (DECA) and its functions should be retained and not relegated to the military services; preserving an attractive retirement system for the active and reserve components; oppose any changes to the military retirement system, whether prospective or retroactive, that would violate contracts made with military retirees and that would undermine morale and readiness; requiring the Services perform mandatory physical examinations, without waivers, for all separating and retiring service members within 90 days of separation from service; full funding concurrent receipt of military retirement pay, and VA disability compensation as well as Special Compensation pays for disabled military retirees; that the Survivor Benefit Plan/Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (SBP/DIC) offset be eliminated; 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 and increased death gratuity payments, and combat zone tax exclusions for service in South Korea; that 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 60; tax credits to private businesses that pay the difference between military and civilian salaries to mobilized reserve component service members and restore travel exemptions for Reserve and Guard members for expenses associated with attending drills; military health care should also be provided to members of the Reserve Components and their dependents, who become injured while on active duty status regardless of the number of days served

on active duty, to the same degree as active duty members under the same circumstances; and whenever a Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) is conducted, 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.

Resolution No. 30: Support for Pain Management Research, Treatment and Therapies at the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs and at the National Institutes of Health
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The characteristics of modern warfare, including the global war on terrorism, exposes members of the uniformed services to many adverse and dangerous environmental diseases and living conditions; and

WHEREAS, Today's war zone conditions, replete with noxious gases released from explosive devices among other potentially harmful environmental exposures in such theaters as Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as in other areas of the world in which service members are exposed to combat-like conditions, produce traumatic, life altering, battlefield scars, and casualties unheard of in previous wars including infections, instant crushing of protective skull and body bones, loss of sight and limbs, dehydration, blood and other body infections and, in some cases, severely impairment or total loss of mental and physical body motor functions; and

WHEREAS, Military medical rapid response teams provide superb, state of the art, medical and psychological life-saving treatment and care at battlefield sites with an extraordinarily high success rate; and

WHEREAS, Military, Department of Veterans Affairs, and some specialty civilian health care treatment facilities are overburdened with caring for the most serious and most painful battlefield casualties ever witnessed from war; and

WHEREAS, The nation's medical and mental health care professionals have not been provided with sufficient resources to adequately research, diagnose, treat, and manage acute and chronic pain associated with present day battlefield casualties; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That federal funding for pain management research, treatment, and therapies at the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs and at the National Institutes of Health be significantly increased and that Congress and the Administration re-double their efforts to ensure that an effective pain management program be uniformly established and implemented; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs increase their investments in pain management clinical research by improving and accelerating clinical trials at military and VA treatment facilities and affiliated university medical centers and research programs.

Resolution No. 49: Retirement Pay and Disability Compensation
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, In 2004, Congress passed legislation that allowed for the gradual phase-in of full concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and Department of Veterans Affairs disability compensation for service-connected injuries or disabilities; and

WHEREAS, The passed law phases out the VA disability offset by 2014, which means military retirees with 20 or more years of service and a 50-percent or higher VA

disability rating will no longer have their military retirement pay reduced by the amount of their VA disability compensation; and

WHEREAS, the current law does not provide the same equity to those service-connected disabled military retirees with VA ratings of 40 percent or below, or Chapter 61 retirees, who were medically retired with less than 20 years, regardless of VA disability rating; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support legislation for the full concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and VA disability compensation without offset and regardless of rating percentage.

Resolution No. 55: Codify Burial Eligibility for Arlington National Cemetery
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Arlington National Cemetery is our Nation's most sacred shrine representing an embodiment of the sacrifices that were made to uphold our country's ideals and freedoms; and

WHEREAS, More than 400,000 veterans and their dependents are buried here on 612 acres of land; and

WHEREAS, Arlington is one of more than 100 National Cemeteries but, unlike the others, Arlington Cemetery is administered by the Department of the Army; and

WHEREAS, In spite of restrictive regulations (Title 32, CFR), there have been numerous waivers in past years, falsification of military records to gain interment at Arlington and even an unprecedented Presidential requested waiver and reservation; and

WHEREAS, Eligibility criteria for burials at Arlington need to be codified in order to assure compliance and fairness and to assure that the remaining space at Arlington is judiciously used; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges Congress to codify eligibility criteria for burial at Arlington National Cemetery and that such burial be restricted to servicemembers who die on active-duty; to our most decorated veterans to include recipients of the Purple Heart; former members of the armed forces separated from the military with a physical disability of 30 percent or more before October 1, 1949; and to veterans who spent full careers in uniform, and to their spouses and eligible children; to former prisoners of war; and for the President or former Presidents as Commanders in Chief of the Armed Forces; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes there should be no waivers for unqualified persons except under unique and compelling circumstances that comport with codified non-partisan waiver procedures as established by Congress; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That eligibility for interment of cremated remains of honorably discharged veterans in the Columbarium at Arlington should also be codified.

Resolution No. 58: The Department of Defense Military Retirement System
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, Preserving an attractive retirement system for the active and reserve components is critical to maintaining an effective all-volunteer force; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has on several occasions conducted studies to change, modify, and update the military retirement system; and

WHEREAS, Recommendations from those studies have been repeatedly found to be unsatisfactory; and

WHEREAS, The July, 2011 Defense Business Board study recommended significant changes in the current military retirement system; and

WHEREAS, Many of these same recommendations were made by the 1978 Presidential Commission on Military Compensation; and

WHEREAS, The 1978 report from the Congressional Budget Office addresses the significant risk to maintaining a viable volunteer force if dramatic changes to the current system are made; and

WHEREAS, In the attempt to slow the growth in military personnel costs, The Department of Defense 2013 Budget Request calls for the creation of an independent commission to study the military retirement system; and

WHEREAS, Any changes to the existing military retirement system may violate contracts made with military retirees and currently serving military personnel, and would undermine morale and readiness; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion oppose any changes to the current military retirement system which reduces the incentive for enlistment or re-enlistment.

Resolution No. 59: Earned Military Benefits
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, The profession of arms cannot be compared to any civilian occupations because of the required amount of sacrifice or necessary individual dedication; and

WHEREAS, An all-volunteer military requires benefits commensurate with sacrifices made by military personnel to entice enlistment and re-enlistments; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DoD) has on several occasions conducted studies to change, modify, and update military retirement, healthcare, or other earned benefits yet recommendations from those studies have been repeatedly found to be unsatisfactory; and

WHEREAS, Regardless of identified negative impacts to servicemembers and retirees, DoD continues to attempt to conduct a "bait and switch;" changing benefits for military service with no recourse for currently serving individuals; and

WHEREAS, A change in earned retirement benefits, known as REDUX, was instituted in 1986 but was changed in 2000 because of negative impact on recruiting and retention; and

WHEREAS, Recent recommendations which will have negative impact on promised commissary benefits, depended on by military retirees who live on a fixed income, will further reduce the incentive for enlistment or re-enlistment; and

WHEREAS, Any changes to the existing military benefit system would violate contracts made with military retirees and currently serving military personnel and would undermine morale and readiness; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion, in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion encourage Congress to ensure that any benefit in force at the time of initial

enlistment cannot be reduced in value, and that benefit is to remain in force throughout the entire military career and retirement of a servicemember.

Resolution No. 60: Handling of Military Remains
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, In December 2011, it was revealed that the Dover Air Force Base Mortuary had dumped the incinerated partial remains of at least 274 American troops in a Virginia landfill before halting this secretive practice three years ago; and

WHEREAS, The landfill dumping was apparently concealed from families who had reportedly authorized the military to dispose of the remains in a dignified and respectful manner; and

WHEREAS, When queried, the Department of the Air Force reported that the military wanted to spare families of the additional anguish and "to open up the wound would be cruel" and the Air Force also indicated they would confirm for family members whether their loved one's partial remains had been placed in the landfill if they came forward and requested that information; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense supported the Air Force's handling of military remains in this manner and that the Air Force had been forthcoming; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion go on record as urging the Congress to objectively and thoroughly review the military's handling of remains at all military mortuaries and cemeteries, including Arlington National Cemetery, and that military war dead disposition be accomplished with a spirit of reverence and transparency; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That when war dead and partial remains are unidentifiable as a result of combat action, that they be interred or inurned as unknown remains at national cemeteries with the dignity and decorum as earned and entitled.

Resolution No. 61: National Defense Funding
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 189 (VA))

WHEREAS, One of The American Legion's founding principles is National Security; and

WHEREAS, The primary function of government is to ensure the security of its people and infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, While the Iraq War is over and the Afghanistan War appears to be winding down, the United States faces an even more dangerous and unpredictable world than a decade ago; and

WHEREAS, As the world's sole superpower, a strong, adequately funded American military is essential for global peace and prosperity in the 21st century; and

WHEREAS, Spending on national security did not create the current budget crisis and further cuts to national defense will not solve it; and

WHEREAS, Leadership within the Department of Defense (DOD) has continually warned that significant reductions in defense spending pose serious risks to the future security of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Further cuts to the DOD budget will do irreversible and irreparable harm to the military capability of the U.S. to defend the nation; and

WHEREAS, The force structure of the United States Armed Forces has been in steady decline since the end of the Cold War; and

WHEREAS, A number of the most vital assets to the United States Armed Forces were procured prior to the end of the Cold War and are in desperate need of modernization; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. military has been at war for over 10 years causing equipment shortages and the extension of equipment useful life span to dangerous levels; and

WHEREAS, Redeploying National Guard and Reserve Component units, due to Department of Defense equipment shortages, left unit equipment behind in Iraq and Afghanistan, which has not been replaced for future mission requirements; and

WHEREAS, There has been virtually no research and development conducted for new generation weapons systems; and

WHEREAS, Defense spending, as a percentage of total federal spending, is approaching historic lows not seen since before World War II; and

WHEREAS, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta stated a $1 trillion cut in national defense could increase unemployment by one percent; and

WHEREAS, Even if this unemployment increased by only one-third of one percent, it would equate to approximately 500,000 jobs lost; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has already conducted program reviews which have cut $178 billion from its future budget requests in FY11; and

WHEREAS, Under the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25), the defense related budgets have been reduced by $450 billion over the next ten years; and

WHEREAS, If the Congress fails to reduce the deficit by $1.2 trillion, further defense cuts totaling $650 billion would be enacted; and

WHEREAS, Without a proactive effort by Congress to protect the Department of Defense, their budget will be reduced by more than $1 trillion; now, therefore, be it

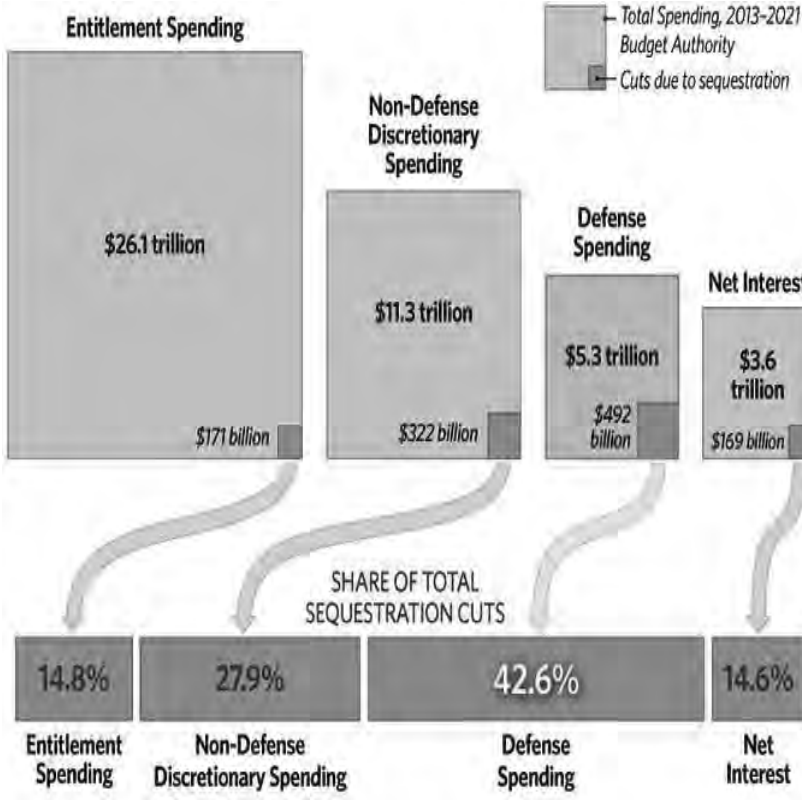
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion demand Congress and the Administration to cease all efforts to reduce the defense budget from its current level.

Addendum A

Budget Control Act Sequestration Would Hit Defense Hardest

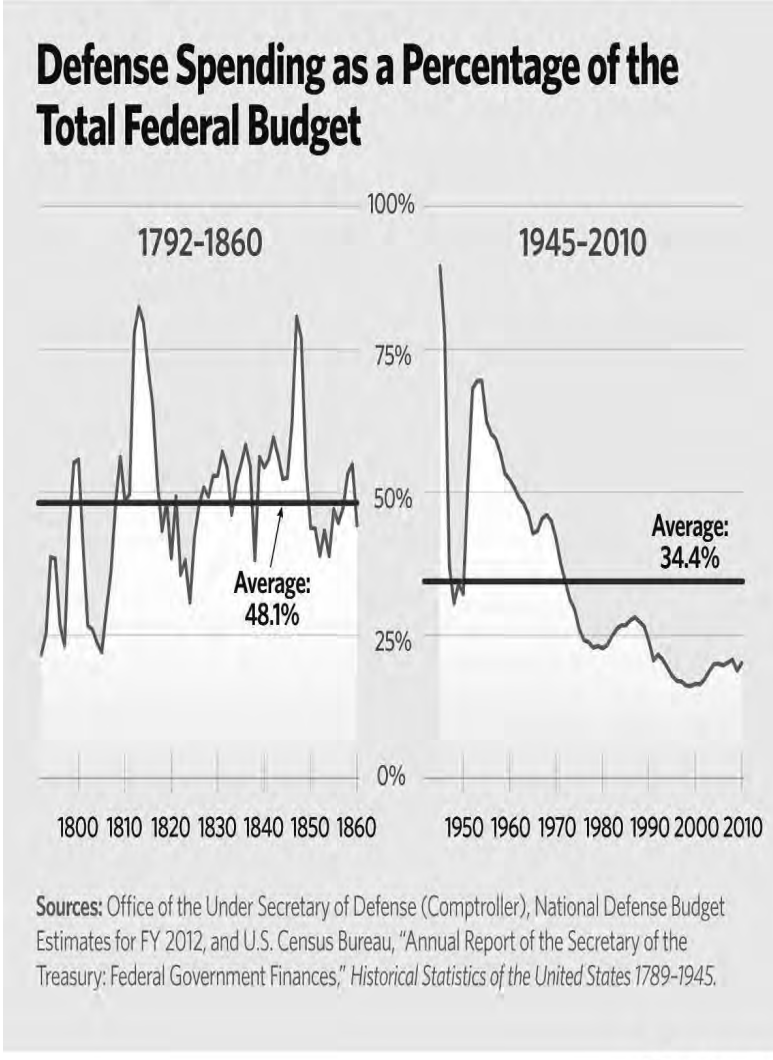
The Budget Control Act's $1.2 trillion automatic sequestration cuts, out of $46.3 trillion in total spending, would impose draconian cuts on defense (on top of an estimated $407 billion in cuts from its spending caps). This would slash the defense budget and jeopardize the U.S. military's ability to defend the nation. Entitlement spending—the biggest part of the budget— would scarcely be touched by comparison.

NOMINAL DOLLARS

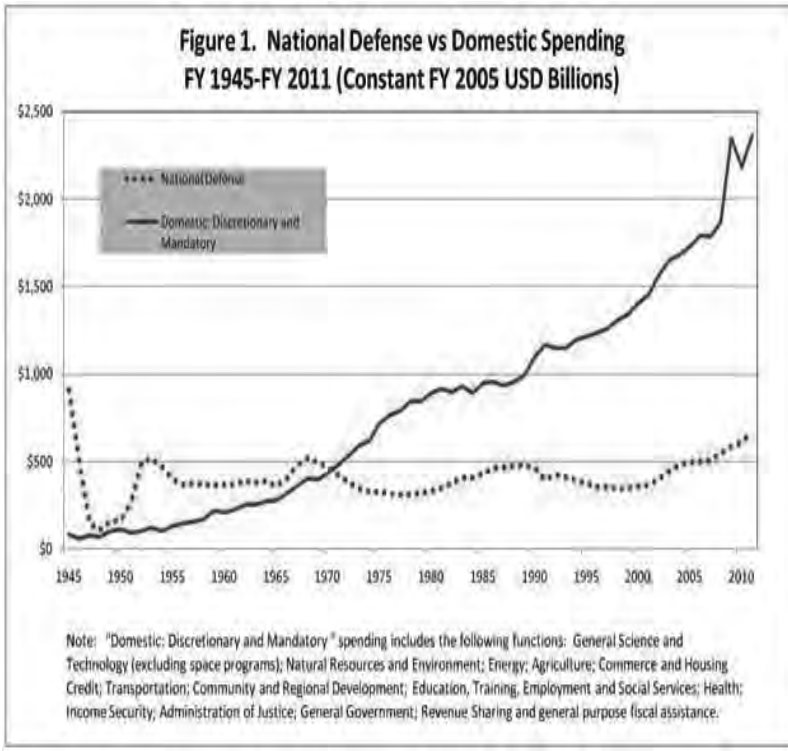


Source: Congressional Budget Office. Graph: Heritage.org

Addendum B


Defense Spending as a Percentage of the Total Federal Budget
100%
75%
50%
25%
0%
1792-1860
1945-2010
Average: 48.1%
Average: 34.4%
1800 1810 1820 1830 1840 1850 1860
1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000 2010
Sources: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 2012, and U.S. Census Bureau, "Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury: Federal Government Finances," Historical Statistics of the United States 1789-1945.
heritage.org

Addendum C



Source: Foreign Policy Initiative

Resolution No. 62: Protection, Preservation and Retention of Federal and Military Monuments in the United States
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, At different times through history there have been attempts by either the Filipino government or other groups to petition the United States Government for the return of the church bells taken by American military forces from the belfry of the church in Balangiga, Samar, Philippines; and

WHEREAS, Any return of a Federal or military monument by the United States of America would set a negative and dangerous precedent on any and all Federal or military monuments; and

WHEREAS, Military monuments honor those servicemen and servicewomen whose sacrifice for the United States of America has preserved the nation and recognizes those who have sacrificed their lives in service to their country; and

WHEREAS, Returning any military monument should never be considered as contributing to the enhancement or reaffirmation of any friendly relationship with foreign countries; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge the

Congress of the United States to establish such laws to preserve and protect all Federal and military monuments within the United States from any foreign government or religious order who attempts to have any Federal or military monument removed from the United States of America.

Resolution No. 66: Support for Legislation Prohibiting Hate Speech at Military Funerals
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

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 service members 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 service member and their 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 service members 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 Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion finds the targeted protest of service member funerals to be a vile and despicable act and not worthy of American citizens who enjoy the freedoms purchased by the sacrifice and death of military heroes; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to designate political protests planned and conducted at targeted service member funerals as hate speech prohibited by law; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress define the official mourning period for servicemembers 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.

Resolution No. 67: Support for the American Battle Monuments Commission
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of war veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, State and Nation; and

WHEREAS, The American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), was established by law in 1923, as an independent agency of the Executive Branch of the United States Government; and

WHEREAS, The American Battle Monuments Commission was charged to erect suitable memorial shrines, for designing, constructing, operating and maintaining permanent United States Military Cemeteries and Memorials in foreign countries; and

WHEREAS, These United States Military Cemeteries have been established throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, These cemeteries are hallowed grounds for America's war dead; and

WHEREAS, Funding reductions for the maintenance of the United States Military Cemeteries in foreign countries has created reductions in human resources, equipment and supplies; and

WHEREAS, United States Military Cemeteries exist in foreign countries today, which are in need of adequate funding for repair, maintenance, additional manpower and other functions necessary to preserve the integrity of all World War I and World War II cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, Visitation numbers are increasing annually at United States Military Cemeteries overseas; and

WHEREAS, This resolution had been approved by the National Executive Committee at the Spring 1998 meetings; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges the United States Congress to appropriate adequate funding and human resources to the American Battle Monuments Commission in order to properly maintain and preserve the final resting place of America's war dead located on foreign soil.

Resolution No. 71: Support for Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion has supported the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU), since its establishment in 1972 as the Nation's

Federal Academic Health Center dedicated to providing uniquely educated and trained uniformed officers for the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, and Public Health Service; and

WHEREAS, The university's nationally ranked military and civilian faculty conduct cutting edge research in the biomedical sciences and in areas specific to the DoD health care mission such as combat casualty care, infectious diseases, and radiation biology; the university specializes in military and public health medicine, focusing on keeping people healthy, disease prevention, and diagnosis and treatment; USU faculty offer significant expertise in tropical medicine and hygiene, parasitology, epidemiologic methods, and preventive medicine; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DOD) and Congress have recognized the extensive military-unique and preventive health care education provided in the multi-Service environment of USU ensures Medical Readiness and Force Health Protection for the MHS; USU is recognized as the place where students receive thorough preparation to deal with the medical aspects of Weapons of Mass Destruction, including chemical, radiological and biological, nuclear, and high yield explosive (CBRNE) terrorism or other catastrophes; USU has developed similar training for civilian first responders, medical professionals and emergency planners; USU is also uniquely qualified and experienced in simulation technology, education and training; and

WHEREAS, USU, recognized by DOD as the Academic Health Center for the MHS, has graduated 4227 uniformed physician officers who represent approximately one-quarter of the total physicians on active duty in the Armed Forces; the current Secretary of Defense refers to the USU alumni as the backbone of the MHS; in addition, the USU Graduate School of Nursing has conferred 369 Masters of Science in Nursing Degrees to uniformed, critically required advanced practice nurses during the current Nation-wide nursing shortage; and, the University has conferred 1080 Master and Doctoral Degrees through its Graduate Education Programs in essential areas requested by the MHS; and

WHEREAS, The establishment of a Joint Medical Command by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) expands the role of USU; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge 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 and maintenance of the USU campus; continue funding the University's collaborative effort for sharing its CBRNE expertise and training; support development of the USU Immersive, Wide Area Virtual Environment (WAVE) Simulation for CBRNE/WMD Medical Readiness Training; support funding for the Graduate School of Nursing Teaching/Educational Programs and, encourage continued close collaboration between the Joint Medical Command and WRNMMC with USU as the core academic health center.

Resolution No. 73: Support Full Funding for the Department of the Army Budget
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States Army is serving a nation at war and, as America's strategic and decisive land and expeditionary combat force, is a proud member of the Joint Force providing combatant commanders with relevant and ready campaign power; and

WHEREAS, The Army's compelling needs include providing landscape power, training and equipping soldiers and adaptive leaders for the rigors of war, sustaining the all-volunteer force, and providing the infrastructure and support systems to ensure the Army is able to execute its missions; and

WHEREAS, The momentum of Army transformation and modernization needs to be maintained so as to deal with irregular, catastrophic, disruptive and traditional challenges; and

WHEREAS, The Army vision is to remain the preeminent land power, the ultimate instrument of national resolve, that is both ready and relevant to the challenges of the dangerous and complex 21st century security environment; and

WHEREAS, Support and funding is required to achieve critical recruiting and retention goals for all Army components; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That the Army's budget and wartime demands be fully funded and that supplemental funding is required for combat and contingency operations and to reset and replace battle losses of equipment; and, be it further

RESOLVED, The Congress will ensure that the Army is fully staffed, trained, and equipped to achieve victory in the War on Terrorism; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress enables the Army to maintain the momentum of key programs while accelerating transformation.

Resolution No. 139: Military Occupational Specialty Standards
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 23 (NC) and Resolution No. 143 (IA))

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 214,098 women serving on active duty in the military comprising 14.6% of the total active force, and 71,182 women serving in the National Guard and Reserve comprising 15.5% 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, 115 female servicemembers have been killed in Iraq and 37 have been killed in Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, A number of female servicemembers 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:

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;

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;

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, The Department of Defense (DOD) submitted its "Review of Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S. Armed Forces" to Congress on December 22, 2011 thereby meeting the requirements of Section 535 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011; 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 Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, 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," and the DOD's Review of Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S. Armed Forces 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. 144: Identifying National Interests before Committing Military Forces and Assets
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, One of The American Legion's founding principles is National Security; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion considers itself to be a partner with the Department of Defense in ensuring the nation's security; and

WHEREAS, The United States Constitution clearly defines the duties and responsibilities of the branches of government relating to defense of the nation; and

WHEREAS, There is no greater responsibility of a government than to protect its population and infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, The War Powers Resolution of 1973 requires the President to advise the Congress and American people what national security interest is served by committing US forces to combat in a sovereign nation; and

WHEREAS, The American people, due to a lack of experience in military matters, have no real understanding of the threats which face the nation; and

WHEREAS, The United States is currently under significant economic and budgetary constraints which has the potential to negatively impact the ability of the military to protect the nation; and

WHEREAS, It has been shown repeatedly an uninformed and uninvolved public will quickly lose confidence, and deny for military operations they do not understand; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support the War Powers Resolution of 1973 (50 U.S.C.1541-1548); and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion, in keeping with its founding principle of a strong national security, call on the President of the United States, in compliance with the War Powers Resolution of 1973, to inform the American people and Congress of the critical national interests served by committing US armed forces or military assets to hostile action; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That before committing military assets to hostile action, specific goals, overwhelming force levels necessary to accomplish the goals, parameters identifying when the specific goals are met, and realistic costs in national treasure

must be identified and articulated to the American people and the Congress; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion define hostile action as any action where the use of lethal force is authorized, imminent, or implied to accomplish a military objective within the borders of a sovereign foreign nation; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage Congress to once again establish itself as the oversight mechanism as prescribed in the Constitution of the United States in Article 1 Section 8, "The Powers of Congress."

Resolution No. 146: Support Fight Against Cyberspace Threats
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The security of the United States is being increasingly challenged by non-traditional threats which may extend the fields of battle and terrorism to cyberspace warfare; and

WHEREAS, The United States Government maintains a comprehensive and integrated system of federal agencies, including the Armed Forces, law enforcement, intelligence, and public health, to detect, deter and defend against cyberspace warfare threats to critical government and private infrastructures; and

WHEREAS, The President has appointed a National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection and Counterterrorism; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge Congress to appropriate the necessary funding to combat the continuing cyberspace warfare threats to the United States in the 21st Century; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion also urge the American public to be vigilant of cyberspace attacks, and that all efforts be made to detect, deter, and defend against the threats of cyberspace warfare, and to prosecute violators to the fullest extent of the law.

Resolution No. 150: Military Commissaries
Origin: Iowa
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, and reducing the number of commissaries and evaluating the privatization of 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 appropriations permits commissaries to sell items virtually at cost, and ending this funding would drastically increase 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 Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge the Department of Defense and Congress to continue full 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 No. 151: Support for the Non-Federal Roles of the National Guard
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Members of the National Guard swear dual allegiance to support and defend the United States as well as the individual states in which they serve; and

WHEREAS, National Guard units perform invaluable non-federal roles such as quelling domestic civil disturbances, providing relief assistance in man-made or natural disasters, as well as civil defense and drug interdiction functions, and other vital missions as determined by state authorities; and

WHEREAS, National Guard units are often the first relief or rescue forces to provide immediate on-scene response in the event of such emergencies; and

WHEREAS, Past large scale natural and man-made disasters could be repeated across the country requiring the immediate intervention of military units to supplement and assist state and local authorities and our citizenry; and

WHEREAS, Numerous overseas missions are expected to continue; and

WHEREAS, The participation of the National Guard in these traditional non-federal roles may be in danger of being severely limited or even eliminated in some cases; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urge 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 interdiction functions as well as other essential state or federal roles as required to include border security.

Resolution No. 154: Support for National Missile Defense System
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972 between the United States and the Soviet Union had placed a cap on deploying missile defense systems and limited more advanced research on such defensive systems; and

WHEREAS, The Bush administration in January 2002 had given Russia and our allies the required six-months notice of U.S. intent to withdraw from the 1972 ABM Treaty and did so in June 2002; and

WHEREAS, Work on the underground silos for the first missile interceptors in Alaska began in June 2002 which reflected the urgency to begin moving on a missile defense system; and

WHEREAS, According to former Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, the New Start Treaty—which was ratified by the Senate in December 2010 and went into full effect in February 2011—in no way limits U.S. plans for missile defense or modernizing its nuclear arsenal; and

WHEREAS, In early 2010, NATO acquired the first phase of an initial capability to protect Alliance forces against ballistic missile threats; and

WHEREAS, At the November 2010 NATO Summit in Lisbon, NATO's leaders decided to develop a ballistic missile defense (BMD) capability to pursue its core task of collective defense; and

WHEREAS, Allied leaders recognized that the planned deployment of European-based U.S. ballistic-missile defense assets would help protect Allies, and agreed that this capability should be an integral part of any future NATO-wide ballistic-missile defense architecture; and

WHEREAS, In June 2011, the NATO-Russia Council defense ministers NRC defense ministers took stock of the work on missile defense since the 2010 Lisbon summit; and

WHEREAS, In March 2012, NATO began implementing the BMD plan; and

WHEREAS, As unreliable, hostile nations such as North Korea and Iran seem determined to acquire the capability to deliver a nuclear strike over long distances, including striking the continental United States, the need for a national missile defense as an essential ingredient of our Homeland Security for the continental United States has become as urgent as ever; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges the United States Government 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.

Resolution No. 156: Reserves and National Guard Retirement Benefit Fairness
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Congress has passed laws that allow Reserve and National Guard members retirement credit points to retire early provided that they served on active duty for 90 consecutive days in a fiscal year and have completed 20 years of service before the age of 60 years; and

WHEREAS, The effective date for this benefit is for those who served after its signing in early 2008; and

WHEREAS, The law signed leaves out all the Reserve and National Guard members who were activated between August 2, 1990 through present that would give them credit for their active duty service toward early retirement; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges Congress to amend the law to retroactively allow early retirement for those Reserve and National Guard members who have completed 20 years of service had been activated to Active Federal Duty since August 2, 1990 the same benefit.

Resolution No. 283: Amend Stolen Valor Act
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 27 (NC))

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, The Supreme Court in the recent case of U.S. vs. Xavier (Javier) Alvarez ruled that the Stolen Valor Act was an unconstitutional abridgement of Free Speech; and

WHEREAS, The court's plurality ruling noted that "Where false claims are made to effect a fraud or secure moneys or other valuable considerations, say offers of employment, it is well established that the Government may restrict speech without affronting the First Amendment"; and

WHEREAS, the court's concurring opinion agreed saying that "it should be possible significantly to diminish or eliminate these remaining risks by enacting a similar but more finely tailored statute; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That the Congress of the United States should amend the Stolen Valor Act, Title 18, Part I, Chapter 33, Section 704, to provide that the elements of fraud be incorporated into previous Stolen Valor legislation such that it accomplishes the same goal as the previous legislation and passes Constitutional muster.

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 185 (GA): **Heroes to Hometowns (H2H) Wounded Warriors (W2) Program**
Resolution No. 188 (VA): **Heroes Vote Initiative**
Resolution No. 191 (NY): **Military Honors Detail Stipend**
Resolution No. 194 (MI): **K-9 Veterans Day**

Resolution No. 245 (PR): **Sergeant Cartagena**
Referred to the Standing Commission on Economics

Resolution No. 51 (TX): **Improve Transition Assistance Program**

Referred to the Standing Commission on Internal Affairs

Resolution No. 13 (MT): **Establish Cyberspace Joint Ad Hoc Committee**

Naval Affairs Committee
William B. Goede, Chairman, Minnesota

Resolution No. 72: Support Full Funding and Resourcing for the U. S. Navy and Marine Corps
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 38 (OH))

WHEREAS, Our national security depends to a large extent on the ability of the United States to maintain sea superiority as well as strategic combat capabilities of the United States Navy and Marine Corps; and

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, To maintain force readiness, the Navy and Marine Corps must balance priorities of manpower, current and future readiness, quality of service and alignment; and

WHEREAS, Balancing critical combat readiness with future navy requirements is essential to US Naval superiority; and

WHEREAS, A 21st century Navy requires rapid technological advancements in the areas of command and control, which will require judicious upgrades of its systems; and

WHEREAS, The programs that will be the core of Navy and Marine Corps forces in the 21st century require substantial investments; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion urges the Administration and the Congress to fully resource and fund the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps to provide credible combat power from the sea.

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 246 (PR): **USS Ponce**

Rejected

Resolution No. 16 (NC): **Commission the USS American Legion**

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 & Individual Participation: Department of Ohio

Category II - 70,000 to 99,999 members

Post & Individual Participation: Department of Maryland

Category III - 40,000 to 69,999 members
Post & Individual Participation: Department of Georgia

Category IV - 25,000 to 39,999 members
Post & Individual Participation: Department of Washington

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 6,000 Medals were awarded to deserving cadets in Senior ROTC and Junior ROTC Units. The winning Departments for 2011-2012 are the Departments of Alaska, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota and Montana. 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 a delegate to the 94th Convention from the Department of Maryland, I move the adoption of this report. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed. The report of the National Security is adopted.

If you haven't already visited the Operation Comfort Warriors booth, it is just outside the hall and to the left. If you donate $25, you can get an Operation Comfort Warriors pin. Thirty-five dollars will get you a baseball cap or fifty dollars or more gets you a special Operation Comfort Warriors coin, and if you donate $100, you get all of the above. What a deal. Now, none of these are paid for out the donated money. All marketing and administrative costs come from the National Headquarters budget, meaning that every penny of your donation will go to the troops. I now accept Operation Comfort Warriors donations on stage. Let the money role. *(Laughter)*

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER CADMUS (MI): Thank you very much. My name is Tom Cadmus representing the Department of Michigan. First of all, I would like to take a point of personal privilege and wish Anthony Mallia a happy birthday from Post 346 of the Department of Michigan, and representing this department, I would like to present the commander a check for Operation Comfort Warriors to the tune of $2,000. Thank you.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BOWEN (NY): Mr. Commander, delegation chairman from the great Department of New York, we're proud to present to you a check for $4,700 for Operation Comfort Warriors.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NY): Mr. Commander, on behalf of Peeksill Post 274, located in Westchester County from the great Department of New York, we are honored to present this check to you for the Operation Comfort Warriors program in the amount of $3,170.

DELEGATE MUI (NY): Mr. Commander, Gabe Mui from Lieutenant B.R. Kimlau Post, your home post. I would like to present you a thousand dollars to support your program Operation Comfort Warriors.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AZ): Commander Wong, on behalf of Post 58 in Fountain Hills, Arizona, I'm proud to present to you for Operation Comfort Warriors a check for one thousand dollars.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): Mr. Commander, American Legion Post 382, Bluffton, Ohio, a check to Comfort Warriors for one $1,000.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank very much. I don't know about anybody else, but Kimlau, my post, they evidently didn't hear the announcement I made. If they would have donated out there, they would have had 10 baseball caps and 10 pins and everything else, so, what a deal, we saved some money. Thank you. Thank you everybody. *(Applause)*

National Commander's Report to Convention
Fang A. Wong, New York, National Commander

Well, ladies and gentlemen, this is a great time to be a Legionnaire. I say this not because everything is going great in the world. It's not. The nation is still at war, our VA's disability backlog is unacceptable, veterans unemployment and homelessness, they are way too high, and the Department of Defense is facing some devastating cuts. But it's still a great time to be a Legionnaire.

These tough issues that I just raised are why we need an American Legion. We are here, we are as relevant as ever, and many of these problems could have been avoided if only our nation's leaders would read and heed to our resolutions and legislative testimony. Since I was a candidate for national commander I have been saying we serve with pride, and I've seen it every day throughout the year at various Legion posts and in all the departments.

We are in a unique position to help the young men and women who are returning from war. They respect us because we are their fellow veterans and know what they are going through. I want all these young men and women to join The American Legion, but the way to do it is not to greet them with a membership application the moment they return home. They are not familiar with our great history of service, nor can we expect to be their top priority at this point in their life. Most young veterans are more interested in jobs and college applications than with The American Legion applications.

Membership is our life blood, but service still remains our very, very top priority. "If you build it, they will come," was the saying of the movie *Field Of Dreams*. Well, fortunately, our American Legion founders built us a great foundation with the Four Pillars of Veterans Affairs, National Defense, Americanism and Children and Youth. By providing great service to these OIF and OEF veterans they will realize it one day and they will eventually join. Remember, it was said that the Vietnam veterans would not join our great organization. I stand before you as living proof that the generalization was dead wrong. That's spelled W-R-O-N-G. *(Applause)*

That said, we can and we must do better recruiting new numbers, and most importantly retain existing members. DMS is doing fine, but it's the traditional members that stay and participate in our programs. If you want the new veterans to join, you must take care of JEF. J-E-F. It stands for Jobs, Education, Family. We applaud the move by the Department of Defense to make it easier for troops to be certified for civilian careers when they leave the military. It makes no sense for someone who has served as an air traffic controller, a combat medic, Military Police officers, or any of the hundreds of other diverse jobs offered by our armed forces, to be told that they don't have the

credentials to be performing in these fields in a civilian society. We have a magnificent military because of these people. Let's remove the unnecessary barriers.

The president can also help put veterans to work by approving the Keystone XL Pipeline. This project would not only provide thousands of shovel-ready jobs at a time when our economy desperately needs them, it would also reduce America's dependence on Middle Eastern oil. One way that is certain to increase unemployment is to disarm America through sequestration and irresponsible defense cuts. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta has stated that a one trillion dollar cut in national defense could increase unemployment by one percent. Even if it increased by only one-third of one percent it would mean half a million jobs lost. This is an election year. Let's make sure all candidates hear our voices.

Which brings me to the issue of education. Veterans make great students. They bring new life experience to the classroom, and are often firsthand witnesses to history. The American Legion has given this country its greatest social legislation, the GI Bill. And The American Legion will guard against those who want to diminish its value, or for-profit institutions that would try to steal the hard earned benefits from our veterans by not providing a decent education. We will also continue to educate young people about our flag, and teach them that it is never acceptable to disrespect, or worse, desecrate our Old Glory. *(Applause)*

Congress needs to finally pass the Flag Protection Amendment. The Flag is often the last and most precious gift a veteran leaves his family when he or she is buried. It is so precious that their loved ones usually keep it in a glass display case to be passed from generation to generation.

It is these people who must take care of the families. That's why programs like The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund, the Temporary Financial Assistance and the Family Support Network are so important. These, along with our other great programs like Operation Comfort Warriors, Boys State, Baseball, Oratorical and Junior Shooting Sports are the foundations that will make the young veterans of today the Legionnaires of tomorrow. As I said before, it is taking care of JEF: Jobs, Education, Family, that will ultimately take care of The American Legion in the future.

There are many other issues in which The American Legion must lead. Our System Worth Saving Task Force will continue to ensure that the VA provides quality service. We will press our government leaders to provide the funding and the means to drastically reduce and then eliminate the claims backlogs. We will remind our leaders that our retired veterans have earned their benefits through long and distinguished service. These benefits are available to anybody who is willing to make this incredible sacrifice. So, hands-off our TRICARE. If you want to enjoy TRICARE, you can go down the street and sign up just like every one of you did. Tell them that. The premiums have already been increased enough, we don't need to increase it any more.

This year has been incredibly good to me. It was humbling to be the national commander on the tenth anniversary of the worst day in American history. As a New Yorker, a retired soldier and a Legionnaire, I will never forget 9/11.

The Iraq War seemed to be a lightning rod for the media and a controversy among the public. But let us not forget for a second that we still have troops in harm's way today in Afghanistan. The global war on terrorism is not over. And, frankly, as long as people are trying to kill us we must always be prepared for another attack. If we do not learn from history we are doomed to repeat its mistakes. I do not really recall anybody suggesting that we cut defense on September 12, 2001. Let's not fool ourselves into thinking that it could not happen again.

Finally, I want to remind you of a very important date coming up. We have heard from and will continue to hear from members of both political parties. We choose no sides, endorse no candidates, and support no political parties. We have Republicans,

Democrats and independents in our ranks and in our leadership. Our founders, including the son of President Theodore Roosevelt, were adamant that The American Legion be non-partisan. Our agenda is simple: Take care of veterans, national defense, our youth, and America. The specifics can be found in our resolutions.

The day that I want you to remember is November 6. As American citizens, and especially as Legionnaires, we have a duty to vote. Many men and women, including our comrades, have died to protect this right. The American Legion family, that's the Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion, is 4,000,000 strong. Let us be heard. With the collective wisdom and experience of people like you there is no way we will be ignored. Thank you for a wonderful year, God bless you all. *(Standing applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you. Thank you. You folks have given the next national commander a great start. Comfort Warriors has collected at this Convention $26,095.50. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

I would like to call my family to the lectern. And, Peter, will you please come up with Barbara? Well, most of you know that my wife is Barbara, not the other. *(Applause)*

This is my immediate family. They are the ones that supported me. They are the ones that put me here. We live together *(Laughter)* legally, and Peter, we don't live together. *(Laughter)* But he is just as important to me with the Legion as anybody else. That's the immediate family.

Outside of that ring we have my post out there somewhere, the Department of New York, our junior past national commander, Mr. Pedro, and of course my most capable campaign manager. I think he still works as my campaign manager running around here, Bob, and the rest of the New York team. That's my family.

Just like you have when you go back to your post, they are your family too. It's their support day in and day out, the encouragement that makes it most rewarding, that I have the opportunity to serve you and go out and do the kinds of things that I have to do. So if we succeeded in any way this year, I think they deserve just as much credit as I do. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

You know, it's nice to have a wife that will remind you of everything. Out of sight, out of mind. Our son Eric is not here because he has to stay in school. So that's more important. You know, JEF: Jobs, Education, Family. So that's the reason he's not here. In case you're looking for him, he's in New York. Thank you. *(Applause)*

Okay. It's getting tough. The first 364 days is pretty easy. Will my national vice commanders please come forward? The five of you have represented me and the organization very well during the last 12 months with your devotion to this great organization, and with much sacrifice on your part. I hear nothing but accolades and thank yous from all the departments that I've visited. If you preceded me they would tell me how wonderful you are in representing the organization, The American Legion. In looking at the reports I believe you guys are doing a great job. I don't know where else I could find so devoted, loyal friends that are willing to work with you. Even though we don't see each other often enough, even though every time we get together I ask them to stop by, we want to chat, most of them say "Again?" Because if you understand, most of the time to chat is I talk, they listen, and it goes on and on and on. So they kind of look at me and say we're not going to sit down again. But I appreciate it. I appreciate everything you're doing, and let's hope that we don't just remove our red caps, go home and forget about this. This is not the end to me, to you. As a matter of fact, to all the leaders that change your cap this time, this is the end of an assignment, your one-year assignment. It's a beginning of another assignment, a lifelong commitment to continue to support, provide, and lead in your own way in your own respective position. That's how I look at

it. We finished this chapter, we'll transition into the next chapter, and I trust that each one of you will continue on doing great things for The American Legion. *(Applause)*

As a token of my appreciation I would like to present you each with a little gift. Thank you. *(Applause)*.

I now call on the national historian, sergeant-at-arms, chaplain, and my aide to come forward. These four gentlemen, they are not as visible as your national vice commanders, though obviously you know what the chaplain does. But the historian and the sergeant-at-arms, they have different details in their own way. And I have to say that the chaplain, we started a few years ago, and he always seeks me out when I see him, and I didn't know why. And one year we were both at the Four Corners. I didn't drink. I'm not sure about him. But he grabbed hold of me and he said, "I need to take a picture." And I said, "Sure." You know, when you're a candidate and people ask for a picture you never say no. And he said, "I'll tell you why afterwards." And he did, and he said, "I'm hoping that we have a chance to work together." And I said, "Yes, I'm looking forward to it too." And God willing, we're here. So thank you.

Bob, I think we met briefly. A gentleman from Nebraska. I believe you used to be adjutant?

NATIONAL HISTORIAN CRAIG: Yes, sir.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: And he said, "I want to be the historian, I will do a good job, I will make sure I keep track of what is going on." And coming from an adjutant I never argue. I said, "Sure, Bob. Go ahead." *(Laughter)*

David. David is an old friend. He's been with my post for I don't know, ever since I joined the post. He's always there. He had his own business. Busy, busy, busy guy. But he volunteered to be a Color Guard, and then later as a sergeant-at-arms. Never missed a ceremony, never missed something that we celebrated. When we needed the Colors he's always there regardless of the day, regardless of the time. And then he spent the rest of his time working and helping the community, improving the lower east side of Manhattan, changing things. So I said, "David, there is nothing else that I can tell you or help you with." He's got everything in life. I said, "I want to bring you to National to let people know that there are people like you out there working every day." Just a regular Legionnaire who never asks for anything. And I believe Public Relations a couple of years ago has a picture of him saluting in one of our ceremonies, and I had nothing to do with it. They picked it up somehow. So I said let me ask you if you would like to be part of the team, and he graciously joined. *(Applause)*

This guy back here. What else can I say? I believe he's more popular than your national commander. *(Laughter)* I think that may have something to do with his first name. Doug is a lot better than Fang. *(Laughter)* But without Doug, this year would not be as successful. Without Doug, I wouldn't know that we could have some fun going from point A to point B in those big airports while we think that we're going to have a heart attack trying to catch our flight. We give each other comfort. We could make it, we could make it even though the door is closing. Without Doug I would have a lot of days and nights that I'll be lost as to what is going on, how do we do this kind of thing. He's been a true friend that I could count on any time, any day. If you need him he's always there. He's more than an aide. When things sometimes are not going well, we could always talk to each other, and we always find something out of it that, hey, it's not too bad, we could take care of it. So, Doug, thank you for a wonderful year. Again, you know, I'm not going to be here without him.

And also, Ann, thank you for sharing him, or giving him to me for one year so we could do this thing together. Thank you very much. Well, ladies and gentlemen, let's one more time give a hand to your 2011-2012 team. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SHEETS: Commander, on behalf of your vice commanders, it's been a pleasure to serve you. We thank you for your friendship, your

leadership. I would like to read this. "Eagle Pride Award, presented to Fang A. Wong, American Legion National Commander 2011-2012, in appreciation of your leadership, from your National Vice Commanders Larry Sheets, David Voyles, James H. Hales, Jr., Mervin Gunderson, and Milton Heifner." Commander, thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you very much. *(Applause)* Thank you very much. This is great. The only problem is United only allowed me three pieces of luggage free. *(Laughter)* Now we will have a few words from our national adjutant.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, may I have a point of personal privilege?

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Yes, sir.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Would Marty Justis and Larry Anthony join me at the lecturn?

Ladies and gentlemen, this is Marty Justis, the executive director of National Headquarters. Marty has been with us for 34 years, and this marks his last Convention, and I would like to give you an opportunity to show your appreciation to this fine staff member for all the work he has dedicated to you over these many years. *(Applause)*

This is Larry Anthony. All of these trophies and awards and caps don't just magically appear. Larry Anthony has been working behind those curtains for 17 National Conventions doing your bidding, and this is his last convention after 17 years with The American Legion. Please give him a round of applause. *(Applause)*

Mr. Commander, ladies and gentlemen, fellow Legionnaires, it has been an immense pleasure both for my staff and for me to have the privilege of working with National Commander Fang Wong, and to get to know his wonderful and humorous wife, Barb, 'The Biker Chick.' *(Laughter)* Both of them were so congenial and hospitable. I would like for the national judge advocate and the national treasurer and the three executive directors to join us up here.

During the course of the last 365 days Commander Wong may have been frustrated at times, but he never showed any sign of being anything except appreciative of the support he was getting from your national staff, and impressed by the quality of every Legionnaire and every member of The American Legion Family that he encountered on his many travels. He is a great leader, he has a fabulous sense of humor, and it has been a genuine thrill to work with him for the past year. He's a man with vision, energy, and a quiet confidence that inspires others to be the best that they can be, just as he promised to be the best that he could be as national commander.

Mr. Commander, it has truly been an honor and a privilege for we, the members of your national staff, to serve you. And as a small token of our appreciation for all that you have done for us and for The American Legion and for America's veterans, we have purchased something that we hope you will remember us by when you're watching your beloved New York Yankees in high definition. *(Applause)*

I don't know what any of this means, but I'm told that inside that box is a 46" Samsung, 240 hertz, 3D LED Smart TV with 1080 pixel resolution. It also comes with built-in Wi-Fi, and a Samsung 8 gigabit Galaxy Tab II Personal Tablet with built-in 3 megapixel camera. Because of its fragile nature I recommend that you carry this aboard the plane on your way back to New York rather than check it as baggage. *(Laughter and applause)* Mr. Commander, thank you for a great year. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you. The only thing that I would like to get from you, Mr. Adjutant, is all those nice words that you spelled out earlier, I would like to use it for my next resume. So give me a copy of that.

...National Vice Commander Hales assumed the Chair.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HALES: After serving this past year as national vice commander I'm truly honored and privileged to represent all members of The American Legion in presiding over the next order of business, at this time when we

present to National Commander Fang A. Wong of New York, the Colors of his year in office and a plaque. At this time I call on Past National Commander John P. 'Jake' Comer of Massachusetts for the presentation of the Colors.

Presentation: Plaque and Colors to Outgoing National Commander John P. 'Jake' Comer, Massachusetts, Past National Commander (Colors) Richard M. Pedro, New York, Past National Commander (Plaque)

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Will the delegates to this National Convention 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.

...At this time the delegation stood and rendered a salute to the Colors.

You may be seated. Commander Fang Wong, on your watch The American Legion was a loud advocate for keeping America strong. We have been sounding the call against sequestration and irresponsible defense cuts. You have visited the war zone in Afghanistan and carried The American Legion's message of advocacy and service to veterans around the world.

You reminded Americans that we have an obligation to returning veterans, including the provision of quality medical care, jobs, and homes. Under your watch Congress passed and the president signed the Veteran Skills to Jobs Act of 2012, which will make it easier for veterans to have their military skills recognized by civilian employers. You have been a strong leader for The American Legion during a time when the nation faces great challenges. You lived up to your own motto of serving with pride, and we thank you for that. Your Colors have traveled the world, and we also thank you for that.

As a point of personal privilege, and I've said this to others throughout this Convention, when my wife Elsie was seriously ill you traveled home, and you were a busy man, and on three occasions you traveled with your wife Barbara to the hospital to visit her before you went to your own home. And on one occasion in the last two weeks of her illness you traveled to our home again with Barbara to offer your best. And then at the time of her death Barbara attended the wake and funeral service, and as you got off the plane from Colorado from the shooting contest you traveled immediately to the funeral home, and you were there along with your aide, Doug, and his wife Ann. So I personally want everyone to know that on five occasions at a very busy time as he traveled back home and he could be doing so many things, he became a member of a true Legion family, and I also thank you for that. *(Applause)* Please rise.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Color Guard, retire my colors. Hand salute.

...At this time the delegation stood and rendered a salute to the Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you, Commander Comer. You and so many other past national commanders have been such an inspiration to me on how to conduct myself in this office. I only hope that I will be able to provide the same wise counsel and advice to my successors as my predecessors have provided me. I will always treasure your friendship, your advice, and as always as a true Legionnaire. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HALES: I now call on the past national commander from the great state of New York, Richard M. Pedro, to present the plaque to our outgoing national commander. *(Applause)*

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER PEDRO: Commander, will you please join me here? You have been a great champion of our veterans, their families and The American Legion. You have led us with pride and dignity, and indeed you have been not only a great leader for The American Legion, but you have made our Department of New York very, very proud. *(Applause)*

I am very happy to present to you a plaque which attests to your election to the high office of national commander of The American Legion for the year 2011-2012. 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 on this 30th day of August, before the delegates assembled at the National Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana. Congratulations, Commander Wong, and God bless you. *(Applause)*

Special Order of Business: Election of National Officers

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: We have come now to a special order of business, the election of national officers. I call on National Judge Advocate Philip Onderdonk, who will read the rules of Convention governing the nomination and election of officers.

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE ONDERDONK: Thank you, Mr. Commander. The rules for election of National Officers of The American Legion.

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 the approval of the convention, a judge of election and such number of tellers as 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.

Rule 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 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 team for the remaining number of places 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 Commander 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 election of national officers.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you, judge. As chairman of this Convention, I now appoint as judge of the election, John Aldecoa, adjutant of the Department of Arizona, and as tellers of the election, Hubert R. Dagley, II, adjutant, Department of Indiana; Dale D. Chapman, adjutant, Department of Virginia and Burdette

Burkhart, adjutant of the Department of Nebraska. Will the judge and the tellers of the election please come forward and take your place.

National Adjutant Wheeler will now call the roll of the departments. The purpose of the roll call is to receive nominations for national commander of The American Legion.

[*The national adjutant calls each department in turn.]*

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN FRAZIER (AL): Mr. Commander, Willis Frazier, chairman of the delegation from the Department of Alabama where football is king, "Roll Tide." Mr. Commander, Alabama yields to Indiana for the purpose of making a nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JEWELL (IN): Mr. Commander, Richard A. Jewell, chairman of the delegation from the great state of Indiana, Mr. Commander I request that the Chair recognize W. Darrell Hansel for the purpose of a nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The Chair recognizes Darrell Hansel.

NEC MEMBER HANSEL (IN): Commander Wong, Adjutant Wheeler, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen and delegates to the 94th Annual National Convention of The American Legion. It is my distinct honor and personal privilege to stand before you this morning to place into nomination for the high office of national commander the name of an outstanding American Legionnaire and gentleman. He has been my friend for more than 20 years. While he is a native Hoosier, I am a Hoosier transplant, but one whose roots reach deep into the hilly soil of southern Indiana. Like our candidate, I have lived along the banks of the Ohio River, adopted the pragmatic and positive values for which Hoosiers are known, and worked alongside the honest, sincere men and women who call themselves Hoosiers.

Having been chosen by my fellow Hoosier Legionnaires to represent them as a member of the National Executive Committee, having been active in my own department for many years, and having been privileged to serve and advise a number of outstanding commanders at every level, I have developed not only an appreciation for great leaders, but also a sense of who is destined to become one. I see them every time the NEC convenes and witness the leadership provided not only by our officers, but also by the men and women who toil tirelessly in this great body. I see them every time I see the determination and diligence of delegates; committee and commission members and department leaders at work on behalf of The American Legion when a convention convenes.

There are characteristics that truly great commanders possess long before they take up the mantle of leadership. These certainly include a genuine love for The American Legion and for the veterans we serve. A willingness to pitch in and do the hard work that wins no praise but is essential to success, and the study and service necessary to prepare them for higher office and important appointments. But even more than that, the wisdom gained by experience and the courage of his own convictions clearly mark a Legion leader for greatness.

I am pleased to assure you that our candidate possesses these attributes in great measure. He is prepared in every sense to lead us with integrity, intelligence, and courage, regardless of the challenges that come before us. Moreover, he is equipped with that rarest of attributes: Common sense. The common sense to correctly define the challenges we face, and identify appropriate solutions; to set priorities and know when the time to change courses come. Those are the characteristics by which our candidate succeeded in the post, department and national offices he has occupied. And they are the characteristics that he will bring to bear on the office of national commander.

Among the many offices he has held, every one available to a Legionnaire at his post, beginning the day he joined the Legion, which incidentally was only a few days after he returned from a 14 month combat tour of Vietnam. Jim Koutz has been a main

stay at Post 200. He is so not only because of his success in office, but also because of his statewide reputation as the best barbecue chef in Indiana. That is a labor of love what only the high office of national commander could call him from.

He was a 100 percent district membership chairman in 1981 and 1982, and followed that up by becoming a 100 percent district commander the very next year. He wasn't finished. He took the experience gained at the district level and in 1991 achieved a historic all time high in membership as Indiana department commander. Along the way he also distinguished himself as chairman of all the departments standing commissions, as well as chairman of the Finance Special Reserve Committee. If anyone is prepared to lead The American Legion to a new era of growth and prosperity it is Jim Koutz.

The final stage of any candidate's evolution from post commander to national commander is excelling in the increasingly complex positions by which a future commander's metal is tested. Jim has been tested at every turn and met every challenge thrown his way. As chairman of two influential national commissions, Legislative and Economic, as well as a member of the Foreign Relations Commission, the Distinguished Guest Committee and the Citizens Flag Alliance Committee and the Veterans Planning and Coordination Committee, and as well as past national vice commander. The capstone of his preparation for the high office of national commander however is the position he occupies today, president of the National Convention Corporation. And you all know from personal experience what a remarkable job he has done in that capacity.

It is remarkable that a man who has devoted so much of his life to The American Legion, has found time for other interests and responsibilities, but he has. He retired from Amax Coal after 21 years of service. He is currently the county service officer in his home county of Warrick, Indiana, and he continues to serve as a member of the Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs Commission, a board he's served as president in 2007.

He and his wife Vickie live in Boonville, Indiana, where they raised their son Michael. Michael, who works for Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida, is a charter member of Boonville's SAL Squadron 200. Vickie is a past unit, district and department president, a former NEC member and has served on many and diverse national committees. Jim's late father was a World War II veteran and past commander of Post 200. Jim and his family are truly an American Legion family.

A storied past indeed, but those called to service as national commander are not about the past, their duty is to the future, a commitment to it, a plan for getting there, and the ability to communicate that vision to those he leads. For two years at every stop on the campaign trail, he delivered a compelling and deceptively simple message: Every day is Veterans Day. What does that mean to say that every day is Veterans Day? It means that every day we remember the service and sacrifice of our comrades. We remember the foundation on which The American Legion was built, and we strengthen the Four Pillars from which this great organization derives its strength. In practical terms, it means that we return to the pattern of growth of membership. Jim has a plan for that: Recognition for those who recruit three new members, renew five current members, relocate three headquarters post members into local posts, and reinstate two expired members. It's what he calls "Lucky 13," but it won't take luck to do it, it will take hard work by him and by you.

Every day is Veterans Day means that no wounded service man or woman ever again lacks for little things that give dignity and comfort to daily life. His focus, his passion, is the Operation Comfort Warriors program by which the niceties, not the necessities of life, are provided. The program ensures that patients at military hospitals and warrior transition units have the simple things most of us take for granted. Things like comfortable casual clothing; games; DVDs; books; calling cards; electronic devices. It is a program by which the wounded warriors' facilities are furnished with entertainment

centers; computers; game tables and other recreational goods for use in the common areas.

The welfare of our nation's children, the handing down of traditional American values and an appreciation for the unique role that our nation has played in the world stage is sacred and a responsibility that must be met. Our candidate knows that society often sends inappropriate and conflicting messages to our young people, and reinforces altitudes that threaten the foundations on which our country is built. He also knows that many of our fellow citizens believe they are alone in the fight. Well, Jim Koutz knows that we must not only man the ramparts in this battle for the future of our young people, but that we must also communicate and convince our fellow citizens that the battle is not lost; that a they are not alone; that this is why he calls for a new strategy for communicating with our fellow citizens.

The Four Pillars of The American Legion are sturdy and strong. They must stay that way if America is to keep its promise to its defenders. They must stay that way if we are to meet our responsibility to future generations, and they must stay that way if we are to honor the legacy left to us by our founders.

Ladies and gentlemen, The American Legion can require no more than what I have presented to you in search for its next national commander, a proven leader, steeped in traditional Hoosier values and prepared and willing to accept the heavy responsibilities that come with the office. That describes the next commander, and it describes to a 'T' the man I now proudly nominate for the high office of national commander, Indiana's first candidate for national commander in more than 30 years, James E. Koutz of Boonville Post 200, and the great Department of Indiana. *(Applause)*

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HUISMAN (AK): Mr. Commander, Steve Huisman, chairman of the delegation from the great state of Alaska. Mr. Commander, Alaska yields to Nebraska.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CYBORON (NE): Mr. Commander, George Cyboron, chairman of the delegation of Nebraska. Mr. Commander I request that the Chair recognize Michael D. Helm for the purpose of seconding the nomination of the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The Chair recognizes Michael E. Helm.

DELEGATE HELM (NE): Mr. Commander, fellow delegates and distinguished guests. I am Mike Helm, a duly registered delegate from the great state of Nebraska. I come before you to second the nomination of James 'Jim' Koutz as national commander of this great God and country organization, The American Legion. Membership in this organization is special. Even more special is becoming a member and taking a seat alongside your father at your local post. Jim and I share that proud event as we sat in our local Legion posts with our fathers. I am sure his father, George, and my father John, both World War II veterans, shared that same pride. No doubt George is looking on today with great excitement and pride as this, Jim's special moment, unfolds.

Jim and I have shared membership in this organization for many years, and we have been to many Legion events together. In that time, our paths have crossed several times, and I have been a witness to many of the accomplishments of this fine Legionnaire. I remember the first time I really had the opportunity to sit down and visit about The American Legion with Jim. I was in Carbondale, Illinois for an Egyptian Past Commanders event. It is a great and fun event and a fundraiser for the Department of Illinois. Jim was there as a matter of comradeship. As we visited, I was impressed with his knowledge of the many Legion programs. He had a great concern for membership. I am sure that as our commander, Jim will take us up and forward because he knows that in order to be heard on Capitol Hill we are going to need to turn up the volume, and our volume is our membership numbers. On that trip to Illinois, he also talked about Americanism and Children and Youth programs. He served on the Citizens Flag Alliance.

He also has a great love for Boys State, American Legion Baseball and the National Oratorical program.

These are all good and important things to be involved in, but you could tell that his biggest concern was for the veteran. The veteran who needs healthcare, the veteran that needs a job. I know in Jim's year he will work to establish a women veterans coordinator in each department. He sees the large number of women veterans in America, and they are in need of healthcare and family care. He believes that we can be the go-to veterans service organization for their care, and they can become a vibrant part of our membership.

He will also reach out to those veterans struggling to use their educational benefits in a more constructive way. He will offer Legion services to Student Veterans of America, and recruit them as members of our great organization.

Jim is a very knowledgeable Legionnaire with a great love for this organization. I know that he will lead us well. At the same time I know that he will take the time to listen to the members he meets in his year of service.

I consider Jim a great friend and a first-class Legionnaire. I am proud as a delegate from the great state of Nebraska to second the nomination of James E. Koutz of the Department of Indiana to the highest office of national commander. Go get 'em, Jim. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: I now call on the national adjutant for continuation of the roll call.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CUSHING (AZ): Mr. Commander, George Cushing, chairman of the delegation from the great state of Arizona. Mr. Commander, Arizona yields to Michigan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CHATMAN (MI): Mr. Commander, Dick Chatman, chairman of the delegation from Michigan. I also want to remind our friend from the great state of Alabama that the Tide will be rolled by the Michigan Wolverines in Texas on Saturday. *(Laughter and applause)* Mr. Commander, I request that the Chair recognize Kevin Bartlett for the purpose of seconding the nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The Chair recognizes Kevin Bartlett.

DELEGATE BARTLETT (MI): Good afternoon everyone. I am Kevin Bartlett of the great state of Michigan. It is a great honor and a privilege to stand before you today and ask we consider a great Hoosier Legionnaire to become our new national commander. So, on behalf of Jim Koutz, I would like to ask you to express your vote and promote The American Legion with Jim. As national commander I am absolutely certain Jim will serve us all well with dignity and pride as he leads and promotes The American Legion ideas.

His projects that he is going to focus on this year include Operation Comfort Warriors and the National Emergency Fund. So it is my great honor to stand here today and second the nomination of James E. Koutz for national commander of The American Legion. Thank you. *(Applause) ... At this time a demonstration of support ensued.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Will the convention please come back to order? Well, it's your choice. Do you want to party or do you want to elect the next commander? *(Laughter) ...The Adjutant continued the roll call.*

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Arkansas, present. I am holding a sign that says who our next commander is going to be. I appreciate it very much. He came to the state of Arkansas. He made us all feel good, and we learned a lot about the candidate when he was there, and I hope that he learned a lot about Arkansas. Arkansas votes all of our delegates for Jim Koutz.

DELEGATE KRAMLICH (CA): Ken Kramlich, department commander and delegate to this convention. I second that nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GILLIS (CO): This is Colorado, Jim Gillis, delegate chairman, past department commander from the great state of Colorado. We are proud of a few things this year, we're sitting up front. We have a past national commander, Tom Bock. We're proud of the Rockies and Denver Bronco's home in Denver and Peyton Manning's new home. *(Cheers)* We second the motion for James E. Koutz for national commander. Thank you.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ROCZYNSKI (CT) Mary Ann Roczynski, delegation chairman. Connecticut proudly seconds the nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WHITMAN (DE): Ken Whitman, chairman of the Delaware delegation. The Department of Delaware seconds the nomination of James Koutz for national commander of The American Legion for 2012 and '13.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (DC): The nation's capital, proudly votes for Jim Koutz.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WILLIAMS (FL): Florida, authorized delegate chairman from the state of Florida, casts all of our votes for Jim Koutz.

DELEGATE MORRIS (FR): Bill Morris of the Department of France, elected delegate to this 94th Convention. From the birthplace of The American Legion this great organization, proudly casts its nine delegate votes for Jimmy Koutz for national commander, 2012-2013.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LIENHOP (GA): Commander, Bill Lienhop, delegation chairman from the great state of Georgia. We second the nomination for James Koutz.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Hawaii, the 'Aloha State' casts its nine votes for James E. Koutz

DELEGATE CAMPO (ID): Ike Campo, delegate from the Department of Idaho, proudly supports James Koutz for national commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IL): Illinois proudly casts all its unanimous votes to Indiana for the great commander, Jim Koutz.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IA): The great Tall Corn State seconds the nomination of Jim Koutz.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ALLEN (KS): Dale Allen, delegation chairman from Kansas. Kansas seconds the nomination of Jim Koutz for commander.

NEC MEMBER COFFMAN (KY): Randall Coffman, National Executive Committeeman Department of Kentucky, home of the 2012 NCAA basketball champion Wildcats, and home to be of the 99th National Convention of The American Legion in 2017, proudly seconds the nomination of our fellow Legionnaire, neighbor to the north, Jim Koutz.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ABSHIRE (LA): Larry Abshire, chairman of the delegation Department of Louisiana, home of the 2012 American Legion Baseball National Champions. We second the nomination to the great gator hunter from Indiana, Jim Koutz.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DEARBORN (ME): Mr. Chairman, I'm Brenda Dearborn, delegation chairman and delegate from the great state of Maine. Maine casts all 31 votes for Jim Koutz for national commander of our great organization.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LARSON (MD): J.D. Larson, chairman of the delegation from the great state of Maryland, the host department for the next greatest convention, 2015 in Baltimore, come to Maryland and get the crabs. We second the nomination of Jim Koutz.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SILVESTRI (MA): Steve Silvestri, delegate chairman from the Bay State where it all begins, Massachusetts, home to Past National Commanders John J. Comer, Paul A. Morin, and the 21st century champions Boston

Celtics; Red Socks; Bruins, and of course your New England Patriots, let the games begin, proud to second the nomination for our next national commander James Koutz.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN STERN (MX): Tim Stern, delegation chairman for the Department of Mexico, we proudly cast all of our votes for James Koutz.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Minnesota proudly seconds the nomination of Jim Koutz.

NEC MEMBER GOSA (MS): Robert Gosa, NEC and a delegate to this convention. I would like to say that I am just a part of the delegation this morning, and I would like to proudly give our second to my friend and a Vietnam veteran, Jim Koutz from Indiana, thank you.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GOTH (MO): Kenney Goth, delegate chairman of the great state of Missouri, the home of The American Legion's first United States President, and the St. Louis Cardinals, proudly seconds the nomination of Jim Koutz.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ROBISON (MT): Everett Robison from the great state of Montana proudly seconds the nomination for Jim Koutz.

ALTERNATE NEC MEMBER MICHALSKI (NV): Ron Michalski, alternate NEC. We proudly second the motion for the next national commander, James Koutz.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MAYNARD (NH): Ken Maynard, delegate chairman, seconds the motion for Jim Koutz.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LIBERATORE (NJ): Harold Liberatore from the great state of New Jersey, seconds the nomination.

DELEGATE CHAIRMAN CHEATHAM (NM): Ed Cheatham, delegation chairman, seconds the motion for Jim Koutz.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BOWEN (NY): W. Michael Bowen, delegate from New York, seconds the nomination for Jim Koutz.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LEE (NC): Ben Lee, delegate from North Carolina, proudly casts all of our votes for Jim Koutz.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KRAUSE (ND): Bob Krause, delegate chairman from the great state of North Dakota, casts all of our ballots for Mr. Jim Koutz.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): Ohio proudly casts all of its ballots for Jim Koutz.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HARDISON (OK): John Hardison, delegate chairman for the great state of Oklahoma, home to the Oklahoma Sooners, and the OSU Cowboys and Oklahoma City Thunder, we cast our votes for Jim Koutz.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MARSH (OR): Jon Marsh, delegation chairman from the great state of Oregon, proudly seconds the nomination of James Koutz.

DELEGATE COCCO (PA): Joe Cocco delegate from the great and the largest department, Pennsylvania, seconds the nomination for Jim Koutz.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (PI): From the Department of the Philippines, west of the best of the west, casts all its votes for James Koutz.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN AEALA (PR): Luis Aeala, chairman of the delegation, our votes are for Jim Koutz.

DELEGATE BATES (RI): Cory Bates, department commander from the great state of Rhode Island, casts all its votes proudly for Jim Koutz.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN TAYLOR (SC): Micky Taylor, delegate chairman from the great state of South Carolina casts 33 votes for Jimmy Koutz.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WEINMANN (SD): Mark Weinmann, delegate chairman of the great state of South Dakota, birthplace of American Legion Baseball and the home of the shrine of democracy at Mount Rushmore, seconds the nomination for Jim Koutz.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HAMMER (TN): Mr. Commander, Mike Hammer, delegation chairman casts all votes from the Department of Tennessee for Jim Koutz for national commander 2012-2013.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GARZA (TX): J.G. Garza, delegate chairman, seconds the nomination for Jim Koutz from the great state of Texas.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (UT): Utah, home of the greatest snow on earth, and the American Legion legend William Christoffersen, hereby supports Jim Koutz for commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KILLAY (VT): Frank Killay, duly elected delegate chairman from the Green Mountain State, Department of Vermont, casts 21 votes for James Koutz for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN RAMOS (VA): Doug Ramos, delegation chairman from the Commonwealth of Virginia, seconds the nomination of Jim Koutz for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CABUAG (WA): Jacob Cabuag, delegate chairman from the Department of Washington, the only evergreen state in this country, land of sunshine and summering, casts its total strength of 42 for the Legionnaire from the Department of Indiana James Koutz.

NEC MEMBER KILE (WV): Bill Kile NEC, go Mountaineers, casts our votes for Jim Koutz. Go Herd.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WI): The Department of Wisconsin seconds the nomination and pledges its entire delegation strength to support Jim Koutz for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WOOD (WY): Ron Wood, delegation chairman for the Cowboy State, Department of Wyoming, where the altitudes are high, the multitudes are low, and the attitudes are great, we second the motion of nominating Jim Koutz for national commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander that completes the roll call.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you, Mr. Adjutant. Now I recognize from the floor, microphone one.

DELEGATE ZELINSKY (IL): Mr. Commander, Chuck Zelinsky, a delegate from the Department of Illinois. Mr. Commander, in view of the fact that there is but one candidate for national commander, I move that 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 James E. 'Jim' Koutz, be elected national commander by acclamation.

I will now make the first motion. Mr. Commander, I move we suspend the rules of this convention pertaining to the election of national commander, and the nomination and election of the national vice commanders which rules shall be reinstated at the conclusion of the election for national vice commanders.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: There's 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. ...*Second.*

Hearing a second, this motion is non-debatable and requires a two thirds vote. All those in favor of the motion signify by saying "aye." Opposed. *[Motion carried unanimously]* I now recognize from the floor, microphone number two.

DELEGATE GILL (PA): Mr. Commander, Kerrie Gill, delegate from Pennsylvania. Mr. Commander, I move that the nominations be closed for national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: We have a motion that nominations for the office of national commander be closed. ...*Second.*

Hearing a second. The motion to close nominations is a non-debatable motion and requires two thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saying "aye." All those opposed signify by saying "nay." *[Motion carried unanimously]* I now recognize from the floor, microphone one.

DELEGATE LENOTTE (MA): Mr. Commander, John Lenotte, delegate from the Department of Massachusetts. Mr. Commander, I move that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention, and that James E. Koutz be elected national commander by acclamation. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Hearing a second. There is a motion before us that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention, and that James E. Koutz be elected national commander by acclamation. All those in favor the motion signify by saying "aye." Those opposed by saying "nay." *[Motion carried unanimously]* 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 James E. Koutz as the national commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: I declare James E. Koutz elected national commander of The American Legion. Would the sergeant-at-arms assist the new national commander of The American Legion to the platform. *(Standing applause)*

The Chair recognizes Past National Commander Joe Frank of Missouri for the purpose of administering the oath of office to the newly elected national commander of The American Legion.

Administering the Oath of Office to the National Commander

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Please be seated. Congratulations to you Legionnaire and friend, James E. 'Jim' Koutz upon your nomination and election as national commander of The American Legion 2012-2013. All of us are extremely proud of your achievements and your wonderful family, and your many loyal Legionnaires, the Indiana Department. We share your enthusiasm.

The delegates attending this Convention, are well aware of your record of service to The American Legion and of the numerous veterans that have brought you to this time in your life. It's very exciting I'm sure. Your energy, your dedication, your skills and your enthusiasm must now totally focus on the strengthening of our Four Pillars and augment The American Legion throughout the entire United States and abroad. Your year of leadership will be defined by the mandates, the National Conventions, and developing events throughout this world. Every Legionnaire and every officer of The American Legion including those superb staff, must now be on alert for your call to action.

Each of us pledges, commander, actively to assist you during this exhilarating opportunity to serve our organization and our God and our country. Jim Koutz, if you agree to assume the office, step forward to pledge your oath of office.

The convention will please rise. Raise your right hand. Legionnaire James E. "Jim" Koutz, do you solemnly pledge to perform faithfully and impartially the duties of the office of national commander of The American Legion?

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: I do.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Please repeat after me. I further pledge that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America, and the National Constitution and Bylaws of The American Legion. I do not subscribe to the principles of any group opposed to our form of government, so help me God. Congratulations, commander. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Ladies and gentlemen, the 2012-2013 national commander of The American Legion, James E. Koutz. *(Standing applause)*

Acceptance Speech: Newly Elected National Commander
James E. Koutz, Indiana

Thank you very much. National Commander Wong, National Adjutant Wheeler, past national commanders, delegates, alternates, guests to this 94th National Convention. Thank you very much.

If I were to say that I was not excited at this moment, I would be less than honest. I am excited. I'm excited about the opportunity that you have given me. I'm excited about the future. And I'm excited about The American Legion. Before I tell you why, let me first perform my first official act. I do humbly and proudly accept my election to the high office of national commander. *(Applause)*

I solemnly pledge to do my very best in carrying out the great responsibilities I'm about to undertake. Thanks to you for the confidence in me, for your support and encouragement, and most of all for your friendship and hospitality during the many long days of campaigning that are now behind me. There's so many people in the hall today that I want to single out for a very special thanks. Anyone who's ever had to do this knows that you're running a risk of leaving somebody out. But I believe me I owe it to them, and take that risk.

First of all I must thank my lovely wife Vickie. *(Applause)* I would not be standing here if she had not been standing along beside me every step of the way. From the earliest campaign organizational meetings, the long hours of receptions and handshakes, she has been by my side encouraging, reassuring, and most importantly keeping things in perspective. She has been that for me for over 39 years of married life, and I can't imagine doing any of it without her. I wouldn't have wanted to. And my son Michael who continues to be one of my greatest supporters. *(Applause)*

My sister Mary who is on stage and her husband Jeff Okes. My niece Alisha and her husband Dr. Nan. And let me tell you just a little story about Alisha's husband. His parents came here from Vietnam. I met them. What great parents, and what a son that came back here and learned, went to school in the United States of America and now a doctor. Thank you, Nan. I have a sister, Francile, two years older than me. She's been laying in a nursing home for almost 40 years with MS. I know that she would like to be here with me today, but can't.

The men and women of my home post, Boonville Post 200. Nestled in the rolling hills and meandering river banks of God's country, southern Indiana. Where are you. *(Applause and shouts)* They just rode on a bus four and a half hours up here this morning to be here with us, and I thank you for that.

The men and women of the great Department of Indiana that have stood with me throughout this campaign. They've been generous with their time and their money. And I encourage you to stop by our department headquarters and see our wall of honor, a permanent display, listing all of those, including many of you in this room that have made contributions to my campaign possible. I can tell you that they made those contributions not only because of support and yes, affection, they might have felt for me, but also because of the deep and enduring love they have for their home state and the pride that comes when one of us is successful. Fellow Hoosiers, today we are all successful, and I can't thank you enough. *(Applause)*

Individually, countless fellow Legionnaires have left their mark on me and helped me make the journey to this great office possible, and I cannot go on without acknowledging them. Wherever you are, you know how much you mean to me. Let me start with the list of campaign workers: All the campaign workers that helped me through this campaign. Our National Executive Committeeman Darrell Hansel was the chairman. Alternate NEC Paul Steward, another chairman. Past Department Membership Chairman Ed Trice. Thank you all very much.

I want to thank all the National Convention volunteers, ladies and gentlemen, just because I was president of this Convention doesn't mean I did all the work. I had a great team. I thank you all very much for that.

I want to thank some people that are on the stage today with me. Past Department Commander Tom "Thumper" Henderson. Thumper has been with me through thick and thin. He was my membership chairman in 1990-1991 when the Department of Indiana made all time high by May 1st of that year, with all districts being a hundred percent. And I have his lovely wife, Florence, who is not with us today, in my mind right now.

I want to also thank Allen and Vee Titus and their family. I call them mom and dad because they've helped me get where I am today. I want to thank Webber LaGrange. Bill Jackson who came here from Mississippi to be with me. And I got to mention one guy that is probably looking down today, many of you in this room know him, he was our NECman for many, many years, Gilbert Sheeks, the guy that probably really got me started, along with Allen Titus.

I want to thank Past National Commander Bob Turner. He was my national commander when I was department commander. And also looking down today, Past National Commander Ray Smith. *(Applause)*

Ray Smith was my commander when I was national vice commander, and I was with him and went to his house about two weeks before he died, and visited him. I want to thank National Adjutant Dan Wheeler; Past National Commanders Jake Comer, Dick Pedro; NECman Jerry Hedrick, and all of our great national staff. And I also want to thank another man that's probably looking down on this Convention at everybody in this room, Past National Commander John H. Geiger. *(Applause)*

And let me tell you why I want to thank John H. Geiger. There are probably not many people in this room that know that when I was national vice commander I went to Illinois on the membership caravan, it was January, 2001. I was having trouble with my voice. John Geiger came to me and said, "Go see a doctor." I said, "I haven't got time. I'm national vice commander, I'll get it done when I'm done." He said, "No, you go to the doctor now."

So after doing the eight day tour in Illinois, another nine day tour in Ohio, I went home and went to the doctor, and things weren't so good. I ended up having cancer of my vocal cords from that good old Agent Orange. I had a minor surgery, 43 radiation treatments and never missed a beat. I had them give me double radiation treatments so I could go to my departments that next weekend. I have to thank Past National Commander John Geiger. *(Applause)*

And I want to thank Steve Short. As many of you know, he's going to be my aide. He's already started and doing a great job.

Today is a day to look forward. A backward glance on any journey away from home is always appropriate, and as I set out on the path that you have laid before me, I look back fondly because I am anxious to get started.

The challenges that lay before The American Legion are many and serious, but in that regard we are no different than the men and women who came before us. I am no different than the men who stood in this place for 94 years. They faced inadequate medical care for veterans; long waits and earned benefits to be paid; the absence of jobs and educational opportunities for veterans. They struggled to convince the nation that those returning home from horrors of war deserved the best this nation has to offer.

My friends, I've heard it said that the defenders of liberty always should be among the first to enjoy its blessings. I endorse that thought, but I am certain that we as a nation could not have done as good a job as we can to see that that is true.

There are needs that are often unspoken, overlooked and disregarded. There are needs that vary from veteran to veteran and do not lend themselves to the systematic fulfillment by an impersonal bureaucracy. No, these are human needs and they must be

met person to person. One caring human being caring for another. Needs that will never show up on a government purchase order or inventory sheets, but needs that must be met in order that life can be made truly whole again.

That is where Operation Comfort Warriors comes in. As you know, nearly 20 percent of returning service men and women have suffered traumatic brain injuries. Many more suffer from PTSD, and hundreds if not thousands come home with injuries and amputations that may take months if not years of hospitalization and therapy in order to recover. That care will be provided. But what will not be provided are the little things, the nonessential that all of us need just to feel normal. The American Legion launched Operation Comfort Warriors to provide those things, and every one of us has a role to play in this operation.

What do you do? You can contribute. You can do it online; you can do it by mail; you can conduct a fundraiser at your local post and contribute those proceeds. This operation depends on our financial support. One hundred percent of your gifts go to the wounded warriors. The national organization will cover the costs of administration and marketing. Don't you wish there had been an Operation Comfort Warriors when you came home? We can't undo the past but we can see that it's not repeated. I will make Operation Comfort Warriors a priority during the coming year, and you'll hear from me on that frequently.

I will even take your checks with me, if you want to hand one to me whenever you see me. And I hope you do. And if you donate enough for a baseball cap, lapel pin, coin or water bottle, display them proudly. We can't afford the expensive TV commercials, but by doing the great things and showing the logo to the public, and more importantly the troops who will know about this great program. Before I move on to the next topic, let's watch this short video clip about Operation Comfort Warriors.

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

As many in this room heard this morning from National Commander Wong, we raised $26,000 just this week. My goal is half a million dollars. So we're only $474,000 away. But what a cause, to take care of our wounded warriors with The American Legion Operation Comfort Warriors. What a beautiful coin. Be sure you get yours. *(Applause)*

Caring for our comrades is not a new endeavor for The American Legion, we have done it in many ways over the decades, and it forms one of the fundamental Four Pillars of this great organization, but the kind of care for our comrades I speak of, goes even beyond what we usually think of. It includes opposing automatic cuts to the defense and the VA budgets that will come about if the federal government continues to fail to meet the moral and budgetary obligations.

As your national commander, I will fight sequestration unfailingly and unceasingly, and I'll make sure that we hold our representatives accountable for appropriate measures to prevent it. Caring for our comrades includes opposing unnecessary and disproportionate increases in healthcare costs for military retirees. Opposing the closing of defense industries and putting thousands of workers into the unemployment market to compete for an already shrinking supply of employment opportunities. And supporting and encouraging and proposing improved transition assistance activities at every level, private and public.

I will be at the forefront of these efforts as your national commander, and you can be assured that the entire organization will stand with me in this breach. We'll stand in the breach when it comes to resolving the persistent and overriding failure of the VA to come up with a way to handle VA claims timely, efficiently, and effectively. The growing backlog of claims threatens the well-being of hundreds of thousands of veterans; deprives communities of the economic activity such benefits represent, and breaks a promise made by our nation.

We have offered solutions. We have been heard. And still the backlog persists. This year is the year that we break that log jam. And while we're breaking things, let's break the back of the unemployment among veterans this year. We can do that by supporting the Jobs to Skills Act which makes the MOS training sufficient for civilian licensure in many instances. We can do that by insisting that veterans preference laws will always be enforced; that no less than three percent of all federal contracts go to veteran-owned businesses. We can keep an eye on the Post 9/11 GI Bill to be sure it meets the young veterans needs. We can see that on-the-job training qualifications for educational assistance, and we can see that veterans on campus know what their benefits are, where to find them, and they're encouraged to stay in school until their degree is earned. In every one of these instances, the key phrase is: We can. I believe we can do anything that we set our minds to. That was my message as a candidate and it will continue to be my message: Hope, possibility, and achievement.

Nowhere is the attitude more essential than in the membership arena. As you know, our membership numbers have been disappointing for more than a few years. Certainly this is not a lack of hard work. I know of no other group of Legionnaires who work harder and longer than our membership workers. Our problem may be that while we're good at what we do, we're not so good at talking about it. I believe we can turn this membership program around if we carry our message to the millions of veterans who depend on us and yet don't know who we are. There are empty billboards all over the country. I can assure you that the owners of these spaces don't want empty billboards staring down on the traveling public. Ask them to donate the space. You can surely afford a poster. Knock on doors and talk to people. Not only will it get you a member renewed or a neighbor signed up, but you may just find out something about one of your comrades: A death; a loss of a job; a serious illness. How else will you know? And if you don't know, how will you help him or her?

Welcome home ceremonies to say thank you to the young men and women of your community who left home as youngsters and came home more mature and seasoned than their age might suggest. You think your community won't notice? They will.

Knowing what kind of people we are will encourage your neighbors and fellow citizens to entrust their children to our programs, to our flag education efforts, our oratorical contests, our Boys State program, our Scout troops and shooting sports activities. What we do for young people has a direct impact on the kind of adults that they will become. I can assure you that there are many forces at work today, who would like nothing better than to make our children into their kind of citizens. To oppose that kind of influence has been among our charges since the day we were founded.

These are the kind of things that I've been saying for two years. They do not represent a position developed on the purpose of being elected. They are the result of a lifetime influence brought to bear on me and my family, my Hoosier neighbors and the Legionnaires who came before me. I will continue to make these points because I know that any one of you given the same opportunity that's been given to me, would make them too.

I now will mention a little bit about L-E-A-D. Lead. Leadership, education, and development. This is a training program that I would like every department to use to their advantage. National staff will come to your department and teach your Legionnaires the four topics you choose from fourteen offered. Two topics in the morning session, and two new ones in the afternoon session. This training is provided at no cost to your department. It is vital that we educate our newest members about the Four Pillars of The American Legion.

That is the sense in which I will go forward from this place and speak on your behalf, to act on your best interests and devote every day to the welfare of our comrades.

I do that because I believe that in America, every day is Veterans Day. Let us celebrate. *(Applause)*

Remember our victory celebration tonight. Six to 9:00 p.m. at the Indianapolis Sheraton City Centre. Buses will arrive from the J.W. Marriott; Indianapolis Marriott and the Westin. Two buses making trips to each of those hotels. One bus will run from the Crowne Plaza, Omni and Hyatt to the Sheraton starting at 5:00 p.m. and continue to 10:00 p.m. Reception is on the ninth floor, the pool floor. Come casual. We're going to have fun with music, food and play. But remember, tomorrow we go to work.

Thank you all so very much and God bless. *(Standing applause)*

First Lady Presentation

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you, Jim. 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. Koutz on behalf of all the past first ladies of The American Legion. *(Applause)*

MRS. LUDWIG: Vickie, on behalf of the first ladies here, former first ladies, I want to welcome you as our newest first lady, and wish you well this coming year. Sharon Conatser is going to pin you with your badge as first lady. Congratulations. *(Applause)*

Election of National Vice Commanders

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you, Mary and ladies. I now recognize microphone number two.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LEE (NC): Mr. Commander, my name is Ben Lee, delegation chairman from the great state of North Carolina. Mr. Commander, since the rules of this Convention have been suspended, I move that the nominations for the office of national vice commander be made from the floor of this Convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: There is a motion before us that nominations for the office of national vice commander be made from the floor. ...*Second.* Hearing a second, the motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saying "aye." Those opposed by saying "nay." We will now entertain nominations for the office of national vice commander from the floor. *[Motion carried unanimously]* I now recognize microphone number one.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KLOSTERMEIER (OH): Mr. Commander, Bob Klostermeier, delegation chairman of the Department of Ohio. I ask you to please recognize Jim Morris for the purpose of a nomination for national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The Chair will recognize Jim Morris for the purpose of a nomination.

DELEGATE MORRIS (OH): Mr. Commander, officers and delegates and guests to The American Legion 94th National Convention. I have the honor and the privilege to nominate a great Legionnaire, Glenn Hickman, from the Department of Ohio, for the high office of national vice commander.

Glenn earned his eligibility by serving in the United States Air Force during the Vietnam era. Glenn has served The American Legion as a post commander three times, a district commander, and was department commander of Ohio for 2002-2003.

He has served on many committees and commissions at the post, district and department level, and the national level, including Children and Youth, the Americanism Council, and the National Legislative Council. Glenn created and chairs Charities, Inc. in the Department of Ohio to manage and disperse the charitable gambling proceeds from posts throughout Ohio. Charities, Inc., has provided millions of dollars for VA hospitals, educational programs and youth activities.

Glenn is employed by Smith Purdum, where he is an insurance agent, where he has earned many Quota Club certificates. Glenn is a senior advisor in the insurance field. Glenn has been active through his service in civic and fraternal organizations, and has been an active advocate of the veterans throughout Ohio since he left the military in 1970.

Glenn is a true leader. Not only has he held many positions of leadership, but he also continues to mentor those who wish to become advocates of veterans and leaders in this same organization. Glenn continues to work with the state and federal elected officials to encourage legislation to benefit veterans and active duty military people. Glenn is a true patriot, promoting Americanism within the community, and he actively participates and promotes patriotic events. He helps to make sure that no one forgets those who helped to provide the freedoms that we all take for granted.

Glenn is a generous and caring individual, and continues to give of himself. He not only practices self-service to the community, state and nation, but he also encourages the same of others, the sign of a true leader. Glenn has the support of his wife, Diane, and his family. He also has the support of his post, district and Department of Ohio. So with pride I proudly place into nomination the name of Glenn Hickman for the high office of national vice commander. We hope you will join us with your support. Thank you, and may God bless America. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The Chair recognizes microphone number two.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MAYNARD (NH): Mr. Commander, Ken Maynard, chairman of the delegation from New Hampshire. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize Charles Leveille for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The Chair recognizes Charles Leveille.

DELEGATE LEVEILLE (NH): Mr. Commander and national officers, members and guests. As a duly elected delegate to the 94th American Legion National Convention I am honored to nominate John Neylon for the high office of national vice commander.

John earned his American Legion eligibility serving 12 years in the U. S. Navy from 1957 to 1969. Serving on various naval air station ships, John deployed multiple times as a helicopter air crewman before completing his service as an instructor.

An honorary life member of Ingerson-Smith Post 41, John was elected department commander in 1999. Prior to this election he held many offices and served on many committees at the post, district and department levels, including three years as post commander, two years each as district commander, department membership commander, and vice commander. In 1996 he was nominated the national award winning American Legion Medium Size Employer of the Year, and in 2007 was appointed by New Hampshire Governor John Lynch to serve on the commission to study issues affecting veterans unemployment. Most recently he represented New Hampshire for four years as a National Executive Committeeman, after previously serving four years as an alternate NEC. John currently serves on the National Foreign Relations Commission and the National Legislative Council. His previous national appointments include Americanism Commission, Economics Commission, liaison committees, Veterans Preference Committee, Distinguished Guest Committee, and National Security Council.

In addition to The American Legion, John remains very active in the veterans community, working in the Disabled Veteran Outreach Program, before retiring as a veterans employment counselor. John continues to serve our New Hampshire veterans as an ombudsman mediator for the Department of Defense, employer support and Guard Reserve, and as a volunteer for the New Hampshire Department of Corrections, advocating for incarcerated veterans. In addition to The American Legion, John is a life

member of ANAVICUS, DAV, National Order of Trench Rats, New Hampshire Veterans Association, and the Benevolent Protective Order of the Elks, where he is a past Elk of the Year. He also holds membership in the honorable Order of the Kentucky Colonels, and the Ancient Order of Hibernians, and the Scottish Rite.

Mr. Commander, as a duly elected delegate from the great state of New Hampshire who previously had the honor to nominate this candidate for department commander, alternate National Executive Committeeman and National Executive Committeeman, I proudly put forth the name of John Neylon as New Hampshire's endorsed candidate for the high office of national vice commander. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The Chair recognizes microphone number one.

DELEGATE WARDEN (NV): Mr. Commander, John Warden, delegation from the state of Nevada. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize Ronald Gutzman for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The Chair recognizes NEC Ron Gutzman.

NEC MEMBER GUTZMAN (NV): Commander, national officers, guests, comrades, it is my honor to introduce you to Jeanette Rae. Jeanette Rae has served her country and her country's veterans for more than 30 years.

When she entered active duty in the Air Force in 1979 Jeanette helped to open new career fields as one of the first women to enter and complete the highly competitive all-volunteer field of explosive ordinance disposal. Later in her career she served in the Air Force Reserve as a career professional to aid other Air Force personnel to select and progress through their career fields. Jeanette's military decorations include the Air Force Commendation and Meritorious Service Medals. Though she retired from military service in 2002, culminating in almost 24 years of military service, Jeanette continued to serve military veterans of Nevada as the state of Nevada's Veterans Services Program manager from 2005 to 2011. As a Certified Public Manager she oversaw state service officers throughout Nevada who act as advocates to assist veterans with the complexity of completing and filing claims for disability and medical care through the Veterans Administration.

In September 2011 she accepted a position within the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA Medical Center, Reno, Nevada, as a supervisor of patient benefits. She now leads a staff of 15 professionals who deliver medical benefits in the area of eligibility and enrollment, beneficiary travel, decedent affairs, administrative officers of the day in the emergency department.

Lastly, on behalf of veterans throughout Nevada and the United States, Jeanette is a Paid-Up-For-Life member of The American Legion Post 12 in Reno, Nevada, and recently completed her year as commander, Department of Nevada. She's a member of the National Commission on Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation, and served on the National System Worth Saving Task Force. She's a graduate of The American Legion College, class of 2005, and has served in numerous other positions at the post, district, department, and national levels.

Jeanette grew up in Auburn, California, and currently resides in Reno with her husband, David Evans. She enjoys country western dancing. Her two sons, Patrick and Jason, live in California and Utah with their wives and children.

My name is Ron Gutzman, a registered delegate at this Convention, and I nominate Jeanette Rae for national vice commander representing our Western Caucus. Thank you. God bless. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The Chair recognizes microphone number two.

DELEGATION SECRETARY HAWK (SC): Mr. Commander, Jim Hawk from the great state of South Carolina, delegation secretary. Mr. Commander, I request that you

recognize our National Executive Committeeman John Palmer for the purpose of a nomination for the high office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The Chair recognizes NECman John Palmer.

NEC MEMBER PALMER (SC): National Commander Wong, distinguished guests, fellow Legionnaires. It is my pleasure and honor to introduce you to a gentleman from the state of South Carolina who is highly worthy of this high national position. His name is James Hallie Holland. He was born October 24, 1940, in Olar, South Carolina. He is the eldest of five children born to the late Leroy and DesiMay Holland.

At an early age his parents moved the family from Olar to Aiken, South Carolina, where he attended Aiken Grade School and the Martha Schofield High School, graduating in 1958. After graduation, Holland enlisted in the United States Army and was trained by the Signal Corps in electrical equipment operation and maintenance. He served with the Army Air Defense Command in the northeastern United States, spending most of his enlistment at Fort Hancock in New Jersey.

After leaving the Army he returned to South Carolina, where he entered Benedict College, graduating in 1965 with a bachelor of science degree in biology. That same year he received a George Washington Carver fellowship and attended Tuskegee University, where he received his master of science degree. Having maintained an affiliation with the Army through the U.S. Army Reserve while attending college, he returned to the Army full-time after completing his studies in Tuskegee. James Holland completed a career of 21 years of active duty service, which included serving with the 5th Special Forces Group in Vietnam, and with the Berlin Brigade in Berlin, Germany. His service took him to many other military assignments within the continental United States, West Germany, Alaska and Honduras. After returning from the military in 1987, Holland returned to Aiken, South Carolina, his hometown, where he continues to live today.

In addition to his military service and various entrepreneurial and real estate endeavors, Holland has taught in the Aiken County Public School System, served on the Aiken County City Planning Commission, and is very involved with the restoration of Pinelawn Cemetery, which he has actively worked to get listed on the National Register of Historical Places.

He is an active member of Aiken Post 212, Winthrop Hall, for over 20 years. He has served as district commander, zone commander and vice commander of The American Legion Department of South Carolina. In 2008 he was elected commander of the 30,000 members of the South Carolina Department of The American Legion. In 2009 he walked across the state, from the mountains to the sea, 332 miles. He did this for the veterans, to raise funds and awareness for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship. In 2009 he also received South Carolina's Patriots Award for service to his community, state and nation. The Patriots Award is the highest civilian award to be given by the Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina.

He was married for over 20 years to Fay Abrams Holland of Columbia. He has two daughters, Nicole H. Holland of Columbia, and Doctor Nichelle Holland Swinler of Hopkinsville, Kentucky, and four wonderful grandchildren. Mr. Commander, as a registered delegate to this Convention, I would like to place the name of James H. Holland for the high office of national vice commander, sir. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The Chair recognizes microphone number one.

NEC MEMBER KILE (WV): Mr. Commander, Bill Kile, NECman from West Virginia. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize Past National Commander Miles Epling for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The Chair recognizes Past National Commander Miles Epling.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER EPLING (WV): National Commander Fang, distinguished Legionnaires and guests. I come before you this morning to nominate an outstanding and very dynamic Legionnaire. David R. Hall was a native of Point Pleasant, West Virginia, and he graduated from Point Pleasant High School in 1967.

He enlisted in the United States Army in 1968, and served as an infantry staff sergeant during the Vietnam war, as well as an instructor in jungle warfare. He worked for American Electric Power for 41 years, and retired last year. A member of The American Legion for 27 years, he is a PUFL member, and he served as post commander for three years, first vice commander for two years, Children and Youth officer for 13 years and the executive committee, and all committees of his post. He served as the Fourth District commander for West Virginia for four years, and district oratorical chairman for five years. He has served as department vice commander. In the year of 2008-2009 he served West Virginia proudly as our department commander. On the national level he has served on the Distinguished Guests Committee for seven years, and he currently serves on the National Resolution Assignment Committee.

Mr. Hall is a member of ANAVICUS, a life member of VFW, Loyal Order of the Moose and Masonic Lodge. He and his wife, Susan, live in New Haven, West Virginia. They have two children and four grandchildren. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my honor to place into nomination for the high office of national vice commander for the year 2012-2013, my friend, David R. Hall. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: I now recognize microphone number two.

DELEGATE (CONAWAY) (KS): Mr. Commander, Clark Conaway, delegate from the state of Kansas. I move that nominations for the office of national vice commander be closed. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: We have a motion that nominations for the office of national vice commander be closed. The motion is non-debatable, and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saying "aye." Those opposed? *[Motion carried unanimously]* The Chair recognizes microphone number one.

DELEGATE BOWEN (NY): Mr. Commander, W. Michael Bowen, delegate from New York. Mr. Commander, I move that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this convention, and that Glenn A. Hickman from Ohio, John E. Neylon from New Hampshire, Jeanette Rae from Nevada, James H. Holland from South Carolina, and David R. Hall from West Virginia be elected national vice commanders by acclamation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: We have a motion that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this Convention, and that James H. Holland, Glenn A. Hickman, John E. Neylon, David R. Hall and Jeanette Rae be elected national vice commanders by acclamation. ...*Second.* The motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saying "aye." Those opposed? *[Motion carried unanimously]* 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 the convention for James H. Holland, Glenn A. Hickman, John E. Neylon, David R. Hall, and Jeanette Rae, for the offices of national vice commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: I declare John Holland, Glenn Hickman, John Neylon, David Hall and Jeanette Rae elected national vice commanders of The American Legion. *(Cheers and applause)* Will the new national vice commanders come to the platform to be introduced and sworn in.

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

yourself 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 on 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, for we all serve as equals. We all are 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: The rehabilitation of all disabled veterans, and the care of those who are now 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; 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. Please raise your right hand and repeat after me.

...At this time the national vice commanders were administered the oath.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Congratulations, national vice commanders. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Colors to Incoming National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: I now call on Past National Commander Marty Conatser of Illinois to present the Colors to our incoming national commander.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Thank you, Mr. Commander. Legionnaires and distinguished guests, please rise for the presentation of our National Colors by the Color Guard of Post 472 of Houston, Texas. Hand salute.

...At this time the delegation stood and rendered a salute to the Colors.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The audience may be seated. National Commander Jimmy, you stand before the convention having received the unanimous vote of the confidence of your ability to represent not only Legionnaires, but all American veterans. As a veteran I know you are up to the challenge. You have served The American Legion in numerous capacities over many years. You have the experience, knowledge and leadership that we're looking for. I know that the delegates know you are the right man to carry out the job. May the Colors that we present you provide a source of inspiration and pride.

National Commander Koutz, God bless you and your American Legion as you lead us in this coming year. Congratulations. *(Applause)*

Audience, please rise. Color Guard, please retire the Colors to their post. Right-hand salute. *...At this time the delegation rendered a salute to the Colors.* You may be seated.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you, commander. 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 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 their families. She is a member of the Department of Virginia, and holds the Auxiliary's motto of "Service, not self" as her governing principle, one that she demonstrated as the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Deputy for the VA Medical Center in Richmond, Virginia. Eligible for membership through her late husband and Army veteran John C. Thomas, she has held numerous positions at every level during her

more than three decades of service in The American Auxiliary. Please give a warm American Legion welcome to National President of The American Legion Auxiliary Peggy Thomas. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Peggy I. Thomas, Virginia, National President American Legion Auxiliary

Commander Wong, and to all in the assembly, I congratulate you on electing a wonderful man in James Koutz. I'm looking forward to serving with him this year, and with the newly elected SAL Commander Chris Huntzinger, and we will work the entire year as a Legion family concentrating on membership with the Legion.

We are asking in the Auxiliary that each member recruit one, at least. If they can recruit one, and with as many members as the Auxiliary has, if only one-fourth comes in with one new member it will be terrific.

But I say to you that I am in this organization to honor our veterans past, present and future. My whole life it seems has been committed to the Auxiliary. As my daughter spoke this morning, representing my family, she said, "I revere my family, my pets, my friends, and they all come right under the Auxiliary and The American Legion." And she's not far wrong, because I am totally committed.

And as Commander Wong said, I volunteer at the VA Hospital in Richmond, and I witness firsthand the devastation that war inflicts upon our young men and women in service. They come home a lot of times not only wounded in body, but in spirit. I say to you, who is better to take care of these people than we as a family, the Legion, the Auxiliary, and the SAL?

One of my focuses this year is the homeless veterans, especially the female veterans. Some have children. They are afraid to sleep in homeless shelters, and they are afraid to be on the streets, but they dare not go to the social service for fear of losing their children. And I think as a Legion family we can help resolve a lot of these problems if we all work together.

But I stand in complete support of the Legion. The Auxiliary is there to support the Legion. We have no mandates of our own. And I pledge my support to Commander Koutz. I'm looking forward to a wonderful year. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The man chosen to lead the Sons of The American Legion is a charter member of Penbrook Squadron 730 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Eligible for membership through his father's Vietnam War service and his grandfather's World War II service, he has served in the Sons of The American Legion for 22 years. Education is his focus. He's an instructor for the Detachment Legion College, and teaches several regional detachment workshops. He has served at every level in the Sons of The American Legion. He and his wife Kathy have been married for 14 years and reside in Harrisburg, where Kathy is active in The American Legion Auxiliary. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion Christopher J. Huntzinger. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Christopher J. Huntzinger, Pennsylvania National Commander, Sons of The American Legion

Thank you, Commander Wong, members of The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary, my fellow Sons of The American Legion, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, comrades all.

Congratulations, Commander Koutz, on behalf the 349,000 members of the Sons of The American Legion. I look forward to working with your new commander and

President Peggy Thomas this year for the betterment of our programs in aiding our veterans, the troops, our children and youth, our communities, our states and our nation. It is day one of forging our future together as an American Legion family, for this family.

As many of you well know, the Sons of The Legion have continued to produce each year, our Sons do, with record numbers. Not just in membership, but with funding for our programs and the volunteer hours in support of the Four Pillars of our great organization, The American Legion. 2013, ladies and gentlemen, will be no different.

Commander Jim, we pledge our support as Sons of The American Legion to you, and to what I believe is the greatest organization in the world, The American Legion.

Thank you this afternoon for your time, God bless you all, and God bless our great United States of America. Thank you again. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: National Commander Koutz and National President Thomas, please join us. Ladies and gentlemen, National Commander Jim Koutz, National President Peggy Thomas, and Sons of The American Legion National Commander Christopher J. Huntzinger, our dynamic leadership team for the upcoming year. Let's give them a big hand. *(Cheers and applause)*

Just a reminder that the Post-Convention NEC meeting will occur in Room 127 and 128 immediately after adjournment. All the new national officers are to attend.

Is there any further business to come before this Convention? Please uncover as outgoing National Chaplain Gerald Theriot offers the benediction.

Benediction
Gerald Theriot, Louisiana, National Chaplain

Lord God, we give You thanks for the opportunity that we have had of meeting as comrades who have served our beloved nation. We thank You for the times of fun and fellowship that You have given us. Now, as we are about to leave one another we will remember our comrades who are not with us today. Be with those who are in despair, and those who are lonely. Comfort and strengthen them with Your presence. Inspire us, O Lord, to continue to seek peace in our world from a position of strength, justice and compassion. May we ever be ready to serve You, our God, and our nation. We make our prayer in Your holy name. Amen.

Retirement of Colors

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: National Security Chairman Mike Schlee, please retire the POW/MIA flag. Thank you.

...At this time the POW/MIA flag was retired.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Please cover. The Color Guard will retire the flag of the United States. Delegates will stand and hand salute on my command. Retire the Colors. Hand-salute.

...At this time the delegation stood and rendered a salute to the Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: The time is 1:31. I now declare this 94th 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: Senator Richard G. Lugar

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: Mark Ellis – Los Angeles Dodgers

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: Emerson Gibbs, Post 125, New Orleans, LA (26 strikeouts)

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: American Legion Post 125, New Orleans, LA

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: (3-way tie with 16 RBIs) Taylor Elman, Post 1, Omaha, NE; Evan Ryan, Post 1, Omaha, NE; Matthieu Robert, Post 125, New Orleans, LA.

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 New Jersey

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 North Carolina

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: Emerson Gibbs, Post 125, New Orleans, LA

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 Louisiana

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: Joey Latino**
Coaches: Kenneth Goodlett and Jeffery Chappuis
Post 125, New Orleans, LA

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: **Brent Tenuto, Post 72, Brooklawn, NJ**

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:	**Sutter Union H.S. AJROTC, Post 122, Rayville, LA**
Precision Individual:	**Colt Gross, North Augusta H.S., Post 705, Yuba City, CA**
Sporter Team:	**Rayville H.S. AJROTC, Post 122, Rayville, LA**
Sporter Individual:	**Cody Sanchez, Valencia County 4-H, Post 85, Los Lunas, NM**

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: **Evan Ryan, Post 1, Omaha, NE (.571 batting average)**

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 Hawaii**

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: **Evan Ryan, Post 1, Omaha, NE (36 total bases)**

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 Indiana**

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: **Samantha Migliori, Post 151, Middletown, NY**

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):

2011 – Frank Kebelman, John W. Fotsch, John H. Brown. *2012* – Ruben R. Rothschild, Claude E. Davenport, Joseph M. Badger, Gordon E. Lovsletten, Robert Snyder, John H. Green, Darrell R. Gregg, Gail Goodson, Keith A. Smith, Stoney Oesterreich, Gregg L. Scott, Robert T. Holihan, J. Frank Sturges, Brad L. Epstein, Burl R. Kennedy, Gary Roach, LeRoy H. Graw, Claudia Glass, Kenneth W. Dick, William J. Kropa, Michael J. Kulick, Richard R. Barden, Gerald A. Ephault, Thomas E. Merino, Christopher J. Dufford, Peter L. Reeder. (as of: 11/14/12)

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: National Education Association

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): Individual: Edwin A. Findlater. ANAVICUS: Patrick Zuk, Norm Lemay, Robert Balfour, Edward Plyley, Colin Clay, Frank Rieger, Ernie Yeadon, Robert "Joey" Barrett, Jerome Burke, Henry Hildebrand, Betty Roe, Gord Kent, Donna Currie, Bob Milk, Janice Graham, Jean V. Wight, Robert Rietveld, John Beugeling, Anna Marie Dolan, George Martel, Gilles Desjardins, Albert McBride.

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: Departments of Arizona, Florida, Missouri, Nebraska, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming.

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) 2011 Winners:

Category I	**Smith and Wesson (MA)**
Category II	**Alpha Protective Services (NC)**
Category III	**Burditt Trucking (GA)**

Note: The 2012 National Employer of Veterans Award Recipient(s) will not be announced until 2013 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) 2011 Winners:

LVER of the Year:	**Anthony Medina (CO)**
DVOP of the Year:	**Willetta E. Hilliard-Walker (AL)**
ES Office of the Year:	**Workforce Solutions Panhandle Office 0601 (TX)**

Note: The 2012 National Employment Service Award Recipient(s) will not be announced until 2013 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):

2011 Winner	**Nancy L. Smith (TX)**

Note: The 2012 Enhance the Lives of Disabled Persons Award Recipient will not be announced until 2013 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):

2011 Winner	**Burditt Trucking (GA)**

Note: The 2012 National Employer of Older Worker Award Recipient will not be announced until 2013 National Convention.

National <u>Department</u> 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 <u>which best meets the standards established for that particular competition.</u>

RECIPIENT(s):

Department of North Carolina	**(One-Year Narrative History)**
Department of Ohio	**(One-Year Yearbook History)**

National <u>Post</u> 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 <u>which best meets the standards established for the competitions</u>.

RECIPIENT(s)
Marshall S. Sayner Post 341, Bella Vista, AR (One-Year Narrative History)
Adams Township Post 553, Toledo, OH (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 2012

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): Representative Bob Filner (CA)

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) 2012 Winners

Category I	**Detachment of Montana**
Category II	**Detachment of Tennessee**
Category III	**Detachment of Wisconsin**
Category IV	**Detachment of California**
Category V	**Detachment of Florida**

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 awarded for 2012**
Category II	**None awarded for 2012**
Category III	**None awarded for 2012**
Category IV	**None awarded for 2012**
Category V	**None awarded for 2012**
Category VI	**None awarded for 2012**

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 Kentucky

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 2012**

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: **Dr. Frank H. Carr, Department of Virginia**

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: **Department of Philippines**

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 Florida**

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 Frederick W. Fiegel**

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 Hayley Feindel**

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 Nicholas S. Sottile**

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 Anna E. Stein**

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 A. Denney**

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:	**Department of Maryland**
Individual Participation:	**Department of Maryland**

Category III **Departments with 40,000 to 69,999 members:**

Post Participation:	**Department of Georgia**
Individual Participation:	**Department of Georgia**

Category IV **Departments with 25,000 to 39,999 members:**

Post Participation:	**Department of Washington**
Individual Participation:	**Department of Washington**

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: **Police Chief Paul Doucette, Bennington Police Department, Bennington, VT**

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: **Lt. Tom Christensen (24-year veteran) Waukegan, Illinois Fire Department**

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, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana.**

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; Carl Prine, Reporter**
Internet – Alex Quade, Freelance War Reporter (The Daily Caller)
Broadcast – KLRT-TV 16; Donna Terrell, Reporter

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: **Captain Dale Dye, US Marine (Ret.)**

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): **The Honorable Isaac Newton "Ike" Skelton, IV (US House of Representatives 1977-2011**

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:	**Sgt. Joshua J. Boudreaux**
Navy:	**OS2 Alvin Balthazar**
Marine Corps:	**Sgt. Juan Vallejomunoz**
Air Force:	**SSgt. Chris T. Pearson**
Coast Guard	**P O Tyler T. Arrowood**

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**

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 2012**

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 Florida**

The American Legion 93rd Annual Report

FOREWORD

The American Legion continued to have a strong year under the leadership of National Commander Fang A. Wong, Flushing, New York. 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

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
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
Jimmy L. Foster, Alaska

National Executive Committeemen

F. Wayne Turner, Alabama
James E. Pisa, Alaska
Deodoro M. Aguilar, Arizona
James V. Bynum, Arkansas
Edward C. Landis, California
Ralph P. Bozella, Colorado
Richard W. Anderson, Connecticut
Lyman R. Brener, Delaware
Warren N. Cuffee, D.C.
Robert J. Proctor, Florida
Liam Kane, France
Charles F. Wessinger, Georgia
Andrew W. Johnson, Hawaii
Wayne D. Mitchell, Idaho
Luis V. Gonzalez, 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
Michael E. Cassidy, Massachusetts
Jerry A. King, Mexico
Thomas G. Holzgen, Michigan
Raymond DeZurik, Minnesota
Robert E. Gosa, Mississippi
Richard A. Heigert, Missouri
Elmer W. Palmer, Montana
Douglas Boldt, Nebraska
Ron Gutzman, Nevada
Earlon L. Beale, New Hampshire
William 'Billy' Mack, New Jersey
Prospero J. Sanchez, New Mexico
Charles I. Herschlag, 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
(resigned 5/10/2012)
Normand G. Vadnais, Rhode Island
John E. Palmer, South Carolina
Paul A. Evenson, South Dakota
Rollen D. Bradshaw, Sr., Tennessee
James E. Prendergast, Texas
William E. Christoffersen, Utah
Richard H. Farmer, 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
Marvin R. Siegfried, Hawaii
Thomas E. Mattice, Idaho
Larry W. Moore, 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
Steven M. Jimmo, Massachusetts
Melvin J. Goldberg, Mexico
John H. Skinner, Michigan
Marland A. Ronning, Minnesota
Steve Sweet, Mississippi
Charles W. Goodin, Missouri
David M. McLean, Montana
Jerry Landkamer, Nebraska
Ronald L. Michalski, Nevada
William R. Roy, Jr., New Hampshire
Daniel E. McCole, New Jersey
Felix Trujillo, New Mexico
Stanley H. Clark, 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
Carmelo Gonzalez, Puerto Rico
Daivd A. Golde, Rhode Island
VACANT, South Carolina
Philip C. Anderson, South Dakota
Charles R. Dornan, Tennessee
Paul E. Dillard, Texas
Terry D. Schow, Utah
Royal E. Sheeley, 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
Mervin G. Gunderson, Montana

This has been an exciting and challenging year for the Western Region. I would first like to thank the Department of Montana for all the support and encouragement I received this past year. I especially appreciate all the help I received from the Department of Montana adjutant, Gary White. His guidance and assistance was invaluable. The posts and entire membership of Montana gave me great support and encouragement. I would also like to thank the Western Region Departments that invited me to visit them during my year as National Vice Commander. Each of the Departments treated me very kindly and ensured I was given the opportunity to see the Results of their Legion programs and membership efforts. Finally, I could not have had such a successful year without the encouragement and assistance of the entire national staff. Especially helpful were Jennifer Norton, Marti Wooden, and National Adjutant, Dan Wheeler. Along the way I received invaluable advice from many of our Past National Commanders.

My first job was to be thoroughly briefed about how The American Legion works. From September 12, 2011 to September 16, 2011 I attended extensive training at National headquarters in Indianapolis. Following the training I was offered the opportunity to spend Saturday and Sunday calling Department commanders and adjutants so we could get acquainted. Those calls continued when I returned to Montana.

I flew to Washington, D. C. on September 19, 2011 where my training continued with our Washington staff. The training was very informative and enhanced my networking capabilities with the national organization. I attended the National Commanders testimony in Washington, D. C. September 20, 2011. While in D. C. I had

the opportunity to meet with members of the Montana delegation. We were able to discuss veteran issues that the Legion felt was important.

National Commander Fang Wong made his visit to Montana September 27, 2011 through October 1, 2011. I was able to attend the district meetings with Commander Wong. His message was well received in our state.

October 13, 2011 to October 16, 2011 took me to the Department of Idaho. It was a great experience seeing the dedication that Department gives to veterans. Ricky Helsey escorted me as we traveled across Northern Idaho on a food drive for that region's veteran home. The truckloads of canned food along with other food items the Department of Idaho Legion posts donate to the veteran homes helps with the facility's bottom line. The veteran homes are able to utilize appropriated funds to provide the residents with social opportunities that would never be available without the donated food from the Legion.

While in Idaho I was given the opportunity to visit their largest post in Post Falls, Idaho. The efforts put forward by their commander have made a significant difference within that community. I attended a district meeting held by one of the smaller posts. The diversity of membership and the commitment of Legion family members gave me a larger understanding of the importance of the Legion in our communities.

The next week, October 21, 2011 to October 23, 2011 took me to the Department of Oregon. I attended their Department Executive Committee (DEC) meeting in Ontario, Oregon. The membership was enthusiastic. The Western Region of Oregon has a great understanding of the importance of membership. I visited with several veterans who showed me their commitment to programs and membership.

On October 25, 2011 I traveled to Carroll College in Helena, Montana to make a presentation of the Army Navy Air Force Veterans in Canada and the United States (ANAVICUS) scholarship to their selectee. It was a nice photo opportunity for ANAVICUS and the Legion. Carroll College is extremely happy that their student received the scholarship.

From October 28, 2011 to October 30, 2011 I was at the Department of Montana for their fall conference. The timing was right for me to thank the Department membership for all the assistance they had given me. It was a rewarding experience seeing first hand the support I received from my Department's Legion family membership.

November 1, 2011 took me to Washington, D. C. to lobby the super committee on behalf of veterans. It was an interesting meeting with my super committee representative. I was able to see first hand the gridlock in the Congress and lack of cooperation on both sides to resolve economic issues in the U.S. I would be remiss if I did not mention the excellent support and guidance given to me by our Legion's Washington, D. C. legislative office and in particular Tim Tetz.

I made my first visit to the Department of Nevada in Las Vegas for their DEC meeting from November 4, 2012 to November 5, 2012. Their guest motivational speaker was Daniel "Rudy" Ruettiger, the Notre Dame football player who only played a few seconds of the final game of his career. Leading candidate for National Commander, Jim Koutz attended the DEC meeting too. Department Adjutant Lionel Motta and Department Commander Jeanette Rae both showed their leadership skills and enthusiasm for Legion programs and growing their membership numbers. In fact their membership chairman, John Warden, made me a side bet on which of our Departments would be leading at the 100% goal date. Throughout the remainder of the year Montana and Nevada were neck and neck. However, on the 100% date Montana was leading.

From January 19, 2012 to January 22, 2012 I was in the Department of Arizona for their District conference. It was a great experience and I was again able to meet many Legion members who were very committed to Legion programs and membership. The Department had a great membership chairwoman who was enthusiastically encouraging

that Department to achieve one hundred percent membership. Membership chairman, Jackie Salter-Miller was actively working membership, especially their Direct Mail Solicitation (DMS) list. Their commander, George Cushing, took me under his wing and allowed me to view several posts and veteran sites in Arizona. His commitment to The American Legion left me feeling good about our organization. While in Arizona I was able to visit a new veterans home. The Veterans Administration (VA) has created a model home based on a quad concept with veterans receiving their health care needs, meals, and establishing localized socialization with fellow veterans in their quad. The building was beautifully laid out with private rooms for the veterans. The concept truly removed the sterile image of veteran health care from the facility.

On January 27, 2012 I was greeted by the Department of Colorado and given the opportunity to speak to a large group of new veterans who were being inducted into the military. It was a moving experience that reminded me of my own induction into the U. S. Army in 1968. PNC Tom Bock and Department of Colorado Adjutant, Pat Smith, drove me Cheyenne, WY that evening so I could attend that Department's Mid-Winter conference. Wyoming put on a great conference. Their membership is small but very committed to the precepts of The American Legion. Past National Vice Commander (PNVC), Todd White, was in attendance and provided me with a great deal of encouragement. I received such a great reception from the Department of Wyoming that I decided to adapt my membership speech through a series of personal experiences that covered the pillars of The American Legion. Each pillar provided a unique concept that individual members could take with them. The central theme remained that membership makes all our Legion programs possible. That vein of thought was center post of all my talks for the remaining travels of my year.

February 3, 2012 to February 5, 2012 I was in Pasco, Washington for the Department of Washington's mid winter conference. During the conference I was able to work with individuals on membership concepts. Department of Washington Adjutant, Dale Davis, allowed me to participate in all their events. The highlight for me was the acknowledgment of their youth champions. You could see the fruition of our Legion programs and the impact they made. Not only on the youth but the communities they came from. It was in Washington that I began posting pictures of my visits on Facebook. I continued that task through the rest of my year

On February 7, 2012 and February 8, 2012 I was able to accompany Past National Commander (PNC) Conley on his Montana visit with a System Worth Saving. It was certainly an eye opening experience. That short trip instilled in me the need to keep the Legion strong. The issues that were raised and the underpinnings of problems within the VA in Montana were easily seen through the questions that PNC Conley had posed. The VA people we talked to had their own ideas of how the Montana VA was operating. However, it became quite clear that some of their perspectives were based more on enhancing their position rather than ensuring veterans were receiving the best healthcare possible.

February 10, 2012 to February 12, 2012 took me to the Department of Utah. I was able to attend their Department American Legion Oratorical contest. PNVC Setterberg was the moderator. Following the contest I addressed the participants, Legion membership, and guests. It was refreshing to see the orators tackle the diversity of our U.S. constitution from varying perspectives. The Department winner from the previous year was present. She gave a very nice overview of her experiences since winning her contest.

I returned to the Department of Nevada February 17, 2012 and February 18, 2012. The meeting was in Reno, Nevada. Again, Department Commander Rae and Adjutant Motta showed their commitment to The American Legion. Of course I wore my Nevada tie that I had been given during my previous visit in Las Vegas. I was given the

opportunity to speak to their membership at a local post. Montana and Nevada were still running very close in membership. We renewed our membership challenge. It was nice to see the leadership in Nevada respond so well to the needs of the Legion. The Legion programs were highlighted along with membership. The Department was actively working their DMS numbers. That simple plan was building their numbers.

February 26, 2012 and February 27, 2012 took me to the Washington, D. C. conference. I made several trips to Capital Hill to speak to Senators and representatives about the need to continue funding for veterans. I also spoke about the need to get the VA backlog worked more aggressively so we could get more veterans serviced by the VA. While in D. C. I stopped by the National office and met our college veterans who were working to establish links to veterans on campuses across the U. S.

March 8, 2011 to March 11, 2011 took me to the Department of Alaska. My visit there was spectacular. Their membership was enthusiastic and working their Legion programs. Membership was going slowly. I encouraged them to work their DMS numbers. While in Alaska I was given an airplane tour of the Kenai Peninsula. Candidate for National Commander, Dan Delliger, joined us on the flight. Alaska is a huge state with many miles between VA health care facilities. NEC man, Jim Pisa gave me good insight as to the challenges Alaska faces. Department Adjutant, Gene Franks gave me a very nice overview of Alaska's size. It is amazing to see first hand the challenges that state faces on a daily basis. Travel is a major concern with most travel being accomplished by airplane. That creates a major cost for post visits and District, or Department meetings.

I returned to the Department of Washington for membership promotion March 15, 2012 to March 18, 2012. We visited several posts in the area. Part of the visit involved stops at VA health care facilities. We visited a CBOC and were able to visit a wounded warrior program that had recently been instituted at Fort Lewis. I noticed the VA was working to ensure female veterans were having their health care needs taken care of by providing a separate unit at the Hospital. This visit also showed the stark difference between veteran populations in the state. The Legion is actively working VA claims. The backlog of claims was a major issue for their service officers. We were able to visit the Northern border region and see how the Department of Homeland Security is using video monitoring to protect that region. PNVC Bill Schrier was present for the DEC meeting and tour.

March 22, 2012 I returned to Arizona for the funerals of PNC Galbraith. Department of Arizona Commander, George Cushing, joined me at the cemetery on March 23, 2012. PNC Galbraith's family was very appreciative of our attendance. Following the funeral, commander Cushing allowed me to visit with posts in the Phoenix area.

April found me working membership in Montana. Several of us joined together to work the DMS numbers in Billings, Montana. We were able get a good number of transfers completed.

May 2, 2012 I accompanied Department of Montana Adjutant, Gary White, to do the presentation of another ANAVICUS scholarship at Carroll College. The college and the student are very grateful for the scholarships ANAVICUS continues to provide.

I attended the NEC meetings on May 8, 2012 and May 9, 2012. Immediately following the meetings I joined my wife, Patty, for National Commander Fang Wong's homecoming in Albany, New York. The homecoming was well attended. Patty and I were the representatives from the Western Region. Bob Morrill and Department of New York Adjutant Dick Pedro were very instrumental in ensuring Patty and I were given the opportunity for great sight seeing in the area.

May 14, 2012 to May 15, 2012 I attended the United States Coast Guard Academy in New Haven, Connecticut. I presented 1/C Hayley B. Feindel the most outstanding athlete award from The American Legion. It was a great experience visiting the

Academy. Rear Admiral Stosz, Superintendent of the academy, was very grateful for The American Legion's presence. It was a great honor being in the presence of staff and cadets from the Academy.

While in Connecticut I visited the Sub museum and spoke to some of their cadre. I visited Sub Vets post one in Groton, Connecticut. I also visited one of our Legion posts in that area. I had a great visit with Legion members of the post and met several younger post leaders.

From June 3, 2012 to June 10, 2012 I attended the Department convention in Angeles City, Philippines. The Philippines has led the nation in membership percentage all year. Department Commander Joe Carsley ensured I was well taken care of. I visited the war memorial in Manila. There I placed a wreath for our fallen soldiers. I was taken to the U. S. embassy and given an overview of U. S. policy regarding possible usage of Subic Bay by the U. S. again. We traveled to Subic Bay and I got a very nice tour of the area. I was able to lay a wreath at the cemetery at Angeles City. That cemetery contains more Philippine Scouts then the cemetery in Manila. The Angeles City cemetery is being renovated through the efforts of the VFW and The American Legion.

The Department of the Philippines was very grateful to have a national officer attend their Department convention. It was the first time in recent memory that a national officer has attended their Department convention. The Department of the Philippines continues to look at establishing new posts as well as grow the membership of existing posts. It was nice visiting with membership from Okinawa. That is their largest post. The Department of the Philippines is looking at establishing a new post in Thailand to help the Pacific area grow the Legion's presence.

The Sons of The American Legion is being rejuvenated in the Philippines. Their new leadership has been very active and is working with the Department to help both organizations to grow

June 21, 2012 to June 24, 2012 I attended the Department of California convention in Redding, California. I had the opportunity to visit the National Cemetery in the area. I also visited a new veterans home that has not yet opened its doors for 2 years because of budgetary problems at the state level. It is a very nice facility. The Legion is working with the California Legislature to get the facility funded. Legion membership in California continues to struggle with growing their membership numbers. Their Department commander, Hugh Crooks has done an outstanding job of working with the legion family. Commander Crooks' leadership has caused their Auxiliary to diligently work with The American Legion and its programs. The enthusiasm of the California Auxiliary is outstanding.

My last visit was to the Department of Colorado, Past National Commander Tom Bock, Office Manager Elaine Bock, Department Adjutant Pat Smith and National Executive Committeeman Ralph Bozella have been working hard to increase Colorado's membership. Three years ago the Department began an earnest effort to contact DMS members and move them into local posts. As a result that Department has grown their membership and is now leading the Western Region's Continental membership percentage. They have shown the Legion that an enhanced effort to work DMS is a long-term solution to dwindling membership numbers. Their membership chairman, Carol Kennedy, is an outstanding example of Legion leadership working to make membership grow. Sons of The American Legion (SAL) National Commander, Jim Roberts, was present in Colorado. He was very well received and his SAL membership in Colorado is doing a great job in raising awareness of the SAL and Legion. The fundraising efforts of the SAL and their VA & R representation are exemplary. My visit to Colorado was an uplifting experience. That Department's hard work continues to make the Legion an integral presence in all areas of Colorado.

On July 17, 2012 through July 20, 2012 I attended Operation Never Forgotten in Montana. Fifty-five veterans who were injured in the war on terror were given the opportunity to travel to Montana and relax in our open spaces while participating in recreational activities. American Legion post 14 from Bozeman played an integral part in providing travel from the airport to Big Sky, Montana. They also hosted a dinner for the veterans. The group was very impressed that a national officer of The American Legion took the time to visit them.

On July 26, 2012 I was fortunate enough to throw out the first pitch for the Department of Montana American Legion Class "A" baseball tournament in Great Falls, Montana. The baseball program is an integral part of The American Legion's programs. I did attend the trophy ceremony at the tournament's conclusion of the tournament.

In retrospect this has been an exceptional year for the Western Region and me. The Western Region went from last place in membership to second in the nation. The Western Region Departments have shown that they are capable of growing the Legion with a coordinated effort. We finished the year with seven of the top ten Departments coming from the Western Region. Throughout the year the difference in membership in all regions remained at no more than two and one half percent. In several instances there were only a few tenths of a percent separating the Regions. There currently is only three tenths of a percent between the Southeast Region and the Western Region for first place. It appears National Commander Wong is on the right track with his membership efforts.

Personally, I found this to be one of the most rewarding years of my life. The membership I had the opportunity to visit with made me very proud of The American Legion. My love of The American Legion and the work we do has been cemented further. All our Western Region Departments treated me exceptionally well. I want to ensure they understand how much their courtesies meant to me. I am now looking forward to seeing another great year under the guidance of our nominee for National Vice Commander for 2012 - 2013, Jeanette Rae.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
James H. Hales, Jr., Pennsylvania

With a few more weeks remaining before our Convention in Indianapolis it is difficult to attempt an assessment of the success or nonsuccess of the 2011-2012 Legion year. In retrospect there were grandiose ideas that great things would be accomplished and there would be some legacy left for all to remember or carry forward. However, following in the footsteps of so many exceptional leaders who have served in the leadership of The American Legion has left little room for distinctive or unique achievements.

Since its inception, our organization has always been in the forefront of advocating for the veterans of this Nation. We have from our very beginning, urged for a strong national defense, fought for and secured quality health care and benefits for veterans, promoted *Americanism,* community service, and demonstrated concern for the welfare and education of the youth of America. All of the officials who have served the National Organization in the past have been tantamount to those principles and ideals. I am humbled and stand in awe of being in the company of such outstanding Legionnaires.

This year we have fought diligently for passage of legislation pertinent to veterans' issues and veterans health care. We continue our support of *Resolution No. 169* to uphold America's commitment to defend against worldwide extremists and terrorism. The campaign to pass legislation to protect the Flag of our Nation from desecration has continued, and it is genuinely hoped that it will be approved in the near future. And finally, our community service and youth programs have continued to thrive and run

smoothly, thanks to the dedication, competency and leadership of the commission/committee chairmen and their respective commissions/committees.

We have again continued to collect contributions sufficient to make the necessary distributions from the *National Emergency Fund* (NEF). Donations to the *Legacy Scholarship Fund, Temporary Financial Assistance* as well as other charities continue to remain sufficient to meet the requirements of those programs.

There has been a continuation of successful cooperation between The American Legion, the Auxiliary, the Sons of The American Legion and Legion Riders. It has been truly an honor to work with them and to participate in many of their activities. There has been continued growth in our Sons of the American Legion program and they have demonstrated their commitment and dedication to The American Legion time-and-time again. The Legion Riders program has become one of our premier programs, and has contributed immensely to our membership recruiting effort by their visibility and promotion of a patriotic agenda.

The most glaring failure this year has been lack of success with regard to membership in the Northeast Region. Our goals were achieved through the 90% target date with the Northeast Region holding its own in the middle of the numeric standings. However, we faltered and we failed to make the 95% goal by the designated target date. We then failed to achieve 100% of our membership goal for 2011-2012. For this under achievement in reaching our goal for membership I make no excuse. However, I do genuinely regret our sub-standard performance with regard to the membership program.

It is believed that the Department Commanders did all that could be done this year, but our society is changing rapidly and priorities have shifted. There has been a major change in attitude toward, and importance of membership in any organization, whether it is a social, fraternal, civic, service, veterans or any other organized group. In general, there has been a steady decline in the popularity and interest in participation with group activities throughout the population of the U.S. Organizations made-up of *like-interest* groups have given way to cable TV, computers, Internet services, e-mail, population mobility, faster-paced life-styles, and more extensive and diverse family activities.

Notwithstanding the shortfall in membership, it has been a great year and my service as a National Vice Commander has been a gratifying and rewarding experience. I do sincerely appreciate the opportunity to have served in this capacity and I thank everyone who helped make this opportunity possible to serve the greatest veterans organization in the world — The American Legion.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Milton G. Heifner, Iowa

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve The American Legion as a national vice commander for the 2011-2012 year. I was selected to represent the Central Region which, for this year, consisted of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia and Wisconsin. I owe a very sincere thank you to the Department of Iowa for the support given to me in my election to this office. Also, a huge debt of gratitude to the national staff for their support and help throughout the year; especially Jennifer Norton with scheduling, Marti Wooden for travel arrangements and the public relations staff for assistance with speech preparation. It has also been a great honor to represent National Commander Fang Wong and to carry his message of 'We Serve With Pride' to all the American Legion Posts and Departments I visited.

I began my year by attending orientation training September 13th to the 19th in Indianapolis, IN which included an introduction of all the national staff and an explanation of their duties and responsibilities. Training sessions were held on how to conduct interviews with the media which proved to be extremely useful throughout the

year. Also, while in Indianapolis, I began the process of calling each district commander in my region to introduce myself and let them know how much their work is appreciated. There are a total of 112 district commanders in the Central Region. During September, I also attended the National Commander's testimony before the House Joint Services Committee on Veterans Affairs in Washington D. C.

In October, 2011 I attended the Iowa Sixth District Fall Conference held the 1st, the National Commander's homecoming on October 8th in Indianapolis and the American Legion Fall Meetings held in Indianapolis from October 9th to the 13th.

In November I participated in the Department of Virginia's Fall Conference held the 4th to the 6th, the Iowa Membership Tour November 14th to the 17th, and the Illinois Past Department Commanders Conference at Carbondale, Il November 18th to the 20th.

January, 2012 was the Illinois Membership tour from the 20th through the 29th. In addition to visiting the posts regarding membership we also toured three veterans homes to visit with the residents and determine if their needs were being met and to find out from the staff what the American Legion could do to aid the home.

In February, 2012 I attended the West Virginia Mid-Winter Conference held the 3rd and 4th, the Iowa Mid-Winter Conference held the 10th , 11th and 12th. and the Washington D.C. Conference and Legislative Visits held February 26th through the 29th.

March included the Ohio Membership Tour from the 5th to the 8th, Michigan Membership Roundup the 9th to the 12th and the Wisconsin Membership Tour from the 13th to the 15th.

In April, 2012 I attended the Indiana Spring Conference the 13th to the 15th and the Iowa Sixth District Spring Conference on the 28th.

I participated in the dedication ceremony of the Iowa Veterans Cemetery at Van Meter, Iowa on May 5th, 2012. I also attended the Indiana Spring Conference May 8th to the 10th, attended the National Commanders Homecoming in Albany, NY May 11 and 12, attended Armed Forces Day at the Lockport, IL American Legion Post on May 9th and participated in Memorial Day Ceremonies in Washington D.C. May 27th to the 29th. This included laying a wreath at the Viet Nam Veterans Memorial on May 28th. A special thanks to Peter Gaytan, Executive Director of the American Legion Washington D.C. office for his superb efforts in the Memorial Day arrangements.

In June I participated in Ohio's Buckeye Boys State the 10th and 11th. On June 15th I presented the American Legion award at the Merchant Marine Academy to Nicholas S. Sottile, United States Merchant Marine Outstanding Drill and Ceremonies graduating senior. I also attended the Michigan State Convention in Kalamazoo from June 28th to July 1st.

In July I attended the Iowa Department Convention held the 13th to the 15th.

In August I attended the American Legion National Convention held in Indianapolis, IN from the 24th to the 30th.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Larry D. Sheets, Florida

Serving as National Vice Commander has been an honor and a privilege full of rewarding and challenging experiences. It has been a pleasure to serve this great organization as one of five national Vice Commanders.

Following my election at the 93rd national convention in Minneapolis, MN, I traveled to national headquarters in Indianapolis, and Washington, D.C., for training and orientation. This intense and valuable training were an asset to me as I visited the departments that made up the Southeast Region.

I hosted a breakfast meeting with the department commanders from the States in the Southeast Region, where we became acquainted and solidified our plans to reach a goal

of 100% membership. I want to thank my Matt Herndon, my National Liaison for his assistance during my year of service. In Indianapolis I spent Friday and Saturday on the telephone, talking to as many District Commanders that I could reach in all of the states in the region.

At the Washington, D.C. office, we were briefed by the chairmen of the programs that operate from that office. I was also honored to attend the National Commander's testimony to the joint House and Senate committee on Veterans Affairs.

October 8-13, I attended the annual Fall Meetings of The American Legion in Indianapolis. I attended the Commander's banquet in honor of the NEC, and attended the NEC meetings.

November 18-20, I attended the Department of Florida Mid-Winter Conference in Orlando, FL.

January 13-15, 2012 I made my official visit to the Department of Alabama, in Montgomery at their Mid-Winter Conference. I spoke at the general session and met many members of the Alabama Legion Family. January 20-22, 2012 I made my official visit to the Department of Louisiana in Alexandria, LA. To attend their Mid-Winter Conference. January 27-28, 2012, I visited the Department of Kentucky, in Louisville to attend their Mid-Winter Conference. I spoke at the general session, and was presented a genuine "Louisville Slugger" baseball bat with my name engraved on it.

February 3-5, 2012, I made my official visit to the Department of Tennessee in Nashville, to attend their Mid-Winter Conference. I spoke at the general session, and was presented with a "Soaring Eagle" award by Department Adjutant Mike Hammer. This is something that I will always remember.

March 16-18, 2012, I made an official visit to the Department of Georgia to attend their Spring Conference in Atlanta. I spoke at the general session and met many friends from Georgia, including my Sister and Brother in Law who are active in the American Legion Riders in Jonesboro, GA.

On April 23, 2012, I was invited to speak at the opening ceremonies st the Viet Nam and All Veterans Reunion in Melbourne, FL. The ceremony was very impressive, and there were many Legionnaires present.

May 8-10, 2012, I attended the annual Spring Conference, and the meeting of the NEC, in Indianapolis. May 11-13, I attend the National Commander's Homecoming in Albany, NY. While in Albany, I was able to visit the baseball hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY.

May 20-22, 2012, I had the honor of representing National Commander Wong and present the American Legion Award to the top cadet in the graduating class at the U.S. Air Force Academy, in Colorado Springs, CO. I witnessed a Pass and Review by all of the Academy cadets, as well as a Luncheon at the Academy Officers Club in honor of the individual awards presenters.

June 1-3, 2012, was my official visit to the Department of South Carolina, in Greenville, to attend their Department Convention. I was the speaker at the general session, and assisted the Department Commander with awards presentations.

June 6-10, 2012 was my official, visit to my home Department of Florida, where I attended their Department Convention, in Orlando, FL. I spoke at the general session, and had the honor of swearing into office the new Department Commander, at the installation of officers.

In each Department I visited I made it a point to bring greetings to the American Legion Auxiliary, the Sons of The American Legion, and The American Legion Riders. I learned many years ago that a good Legionnaire always stays on the good side of the Auxiliary, because they are always there when they are needed. The same applies to the Sons of The American Legion. I am a dual member of The American Legion, as well as the Sons of The American legion.

At all of the Riders meetings I attended I witnessed nothing but good things. I believe that in the future the American Legion Riders will prove to be a great asset to our organization.

July 13-14, 2012, I visited Florida Boys State, in Tallahassee, FL. Having been a former City Counselor at Florida Boys State, it was nice to meet many old friends. I was honored to be able to speak to the citizens of Florida Boys State at the graduation and awards program.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my home department of Florida for their endorsement and support of me during my year as National Vice Commander. I also thank the departments that make up the Southeast region for the courtesies, and hospitality shown me when I visited them.

I want to also thank the staff at National Headquarters for their guidance and support during my year of service. To be successful one needs to surround themselves with good and competent people. I feel that I along with the other four National Vice Commanders developed a powerful and successful team, which was led by a hardworking and dedicated National Commander. Thank you Commander Wong for placing your trust in me.

This has been a year full of memories that I will forever cherish.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
David N. Voyles, Missouri

8/25/11 to 9/2/2011	Being installed at the National Convention in Minneapolis, MN was a great honor for me and my Department of Missouri.
9/9/11 to 9/11/11	I had the privilege of being part of the Flag Folding for Veterans at Country Squire Assisted Living and giving a short speech on 911 Remembrance at Military Heritage Museum in St. Joseph, MO.
9/12/11 to 9/22/11	American Legion training in Indianapolis, IN and Washington, D.C. learning the do's and don'ts by the National Staff. What impressed me the most was the passion that the National Staff has for helping our Veterans.
10/7/11 - 10/13/11	Traveling to Indianapolis, IN Fall Conference to pass resolutions protecting our veteran's benefits.
10/28/11	Fall Conference - MO official visit educating the Department on programs and issues on the V.A. and D.O.D. budget.
11/3/11 to 11/10/11	Texas membership visit working with other Legion members. Signing up new members and transferring members out of the holding area.
11/10/11 to 11/12/11	It was a great honor to represent the American Legion on Veteran's Day Ceremony in Washington, D.C. and meeting the President and First Lady at the White House during breakfast.
1/13/12 to 1/15/12	Headed to Norfolk, NE - Mid Year Conference where I had the opportunity to talk to Ladies' Auxiliary, SAL, and Legion Riders on issues that concern the American Legion Family.
2/4/12 to 2/7/12	Visit the East side of Missouri for a membership promotion. We were treated with respect and appreciation at every post visit.
2/10/12 to 2/12/12	Left for Oracoma, South Dakota, to speak to the American Legion family on important Legion issues.
2/25/12 to 2/29/12	At the Washington, D.C. Conference, we talked to our Representatives on the budget cuts to our Veterans. Most impressive moment was listening to the National Commanders Testimonial at the Joint House Committee on Veteran's Affairs.

3/3/12 to 3/4/12	Visit Osseo, MN Appreciation Rally
3/19/12 to 3/21/12	Visited 18 Posts in Kansas for a membership drive. Helped to recruit members during the visit.
3/22/12 to 3/24/12	Helped out Post 21 in Independence, MO on a Revitalization Membership Drive and setting up a Job Fair for Veterans.
5/6/12 to 5/10/12	Spring Meeting in Indianapolis, IN, sharing our experience with all the other National Vice Commanders during their travels.
5/10/12 to 5/13/12	National Commanders Home Coming was an opportunity for camaraderie with all National Officers serving the American Legion family.
5/18/12 to 5/20/12	Very impressed on how Kansas ran their Department Convention.
5/24/12 to 5/26/12	Traveled to Newburgh, New York, for a ceremony at West Point. I was very proud to be part of the award ceremony.
5/28/12 to 5/29/12	When visiting Little Rock, Arkansas, I was part of the Department Commander and his officers Oversight Commitee. Everybody had good ideas on how to help the Legion family. I was very proud to be part of this Oversight Committee.
6/15/12 to 6/17/12	Presented Blake Schmit the MVP Award at Cooperstown, New York, one of the most impressive part of this trip was when Blake's parents told me they wanted to know more about the American Legion concerns for Legion Veterans. This showed me that our programs do make a difference to others.
6/21/12 to 6/24/12	Jamestown, N. Dakota Department Convention was very impressive by the attendance and how they ran their convention.
7/11/12 to 7/15/12	My last stop was Houston, TX for their Department Convention. We shared our ideas with each other on how we could improve our programs and to get our message out to the public about our Legion family.
8/23/12 to 8/31/12	At the National Convention in Indianapolis, I will end my year of representing the National Commander, Fang A. Wong, as National Vice Commander. It has been a privilege to represent the American Legion family. I want to thank this great organization for giving me the opportunity to make new friends and for the added education, that I received during all my travels in the Midwest Region.

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL CHAPLAIN
Gerald Theriot, Louisiana

On August 31, 2011, during the Post Convention DEC meeting which followed the 93rd American Legion National Convention in Minneapolis, MN, I was appointed as the National Chaplain for the year 2011-2012. The theme that I chose during my year was "Using Spiritual Gifts for God and Country". I presided over the Chaplains Conference which was held from September 23-25, 2011. This conference focused on providing guidance and information relative to the duties of Legion chaplains. Encouraging remarks and presentations were received from Jill Druskis, Director of Americanism C&Y Division, Mike Buss, Deputy Director and Joe Caouette, National Americanism Chairman. Rev. Greg Clapper of the Indiana Air National Guard talked about his experience as a military chaplain and Past National Chaplain Norris Keirn (IN) talked about the diverse groups that the chaplain must serve. Chaplain Keirn and Past National Chaplain Daniel Seehafer conducted a Question and Answer session entitled "New Chaplains Assistance". I presented a "Gold Star Banner Ceremony" which has been adopted for use by the Department of Louisiana. The Auxiliary Chaplains participated in

the joint morning session and had a separate discussion group under the leadership of the Auxiliary National Chaplain, C. Nini Lynch (GA). Protestant and Catholic Worship Services were conducted prior to the close-out session on Sunday morning. A memorial service was held during that session.

During the Fall Meetings from October 8-13, 2011, in addition to the Fall NEC meetings and the dedication of the John Geiger Operations Center, I participated in several other luncheons and dinners.

After my return home, I attended seven District Conferences in my home state of Louisiana during the months of October and November 2011. Participation in Veterans Day commemorations at the Chennault Aviation and Military Museum in Monroe, LA, a Veterans Day ceremony at the Belle Teche Nursing Home in New Iberia, LA and the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, LA were special highlights during November. I accompanied members of our District who held a Christmas party at the Southeast Louisiana War Veterans Home in Reserve, LA. The veteran residents seemed pleased that an American Legion national officer had visited their home.

I participated in Houma, LA Post 31's Teenager of the Year program as well as my own post's Martin Luther King Jr. Day program. During the Department of Louisiana Mid-Winter Conference, I performed duties as our Department Chaplain. In the latter part of the month, I assisted in conducting our District Oratorical Contest.

During the Washington Conference in February 2012, I offered invocations at the start of business for both the Senate and the House of Representatives on Capitol Hill. I was honored to meet the Chaplain for the Senate, Dr. Barry Black and the House Chaplain Fr. Patrick Conroy. The experience of providing opening prayers for the House and Senate has always been one of the highlights of the National Legion Chaplain's year and provides additional recognition for our national organization. During this conference, I also attended a State Department Reception. Invocations and benedictions were also offered during the various commission meetings and dinners while at this conference. After returning home, I attended the eight Louisiana District conferences during the months of March and April 2012.

In addition to offering prayers during the Spring NEC Meetings and the Commander's Banquet while in Indianapolis in May 2012, I also attended the Department of New York Homecoming Ceremony for National Commander Fang Wong. During that month, I participated in the Memorial Day program at the Regional Military Museum in Houma, LA. At our Department Convention, our newly elected Department Commander, Herbie Petit Jr., reappointed me as the Department Chaplain for the year 2012-2013.

I was invited to participate in our Boys Nation program at Marymount University in Alexandria, VA in July 2012. I led the Boys Nation Memorial Service on Sunday, July 22, 2012. The title of my message to the delegates was "When Will They All End?" The intent was to encourage them that as they visited the various monuments and memorials on our National Mall to think about the many veterans and citizens who sacrificed their lives so that we might have the freedoms that we continue to enjoy. Commander Wong and I assisted in laying a wreath at the Tomb on the Unknowns at Arlington National Ceremony.

Our 94th National Convention will be held in Indianapolis, Indiana from August 24-30, 2012. I am looking forward to participating in the American Legion Riders' Legacy Scholarship Candlelight Tribute, the Chaplains Breakfast, the National Memorial Service and our national parade.

The appointment to the office of National Chaplain of the American Legion is one the highest achievements of my life. The American Legion national chaplains whom I have known have been devoted in service to the members of our organization. My hope

is that I have served with the same spirit of compassion and dignity that has been demonstrated in the past.

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIAN
Robert B. Craig, Nebraska

It is a privilege and high honor to serve The American Legion as National Historian during the 2011-2012 program year. I wish to thank Commander Fang Wong for appointing me to his officer team.

We have communicated with department adjutants and historians offering encouragement and assistance in documenting the activities and history of the organization for those who follow. Howard Trace, Director of Library and Museum, and his professional staff are vital resources to our post and department historians. They are available to provide answers and offer advice to those who take up the responsibility of preserving our history.

It has been my intent to increase participation of department historians in the annual fall historians' conference with the goal of assisting to educate and train new officers. We implemented training for six new department historians at this year's conference. I want to thank Charemon Dunham (SD) for conducting the orientation and seminar. With the centenary of our great organization approaching, it is vital for us to remember our past and to preserve and commemorate our history.

Department historians and past national historians who make up the National Association of Department Historians of The American Legion (NADHAL) are a great resource for continuity and training. I thank them for assisting me in the management and judging of the National History Contest this year. National staff member Lynda Lydick is the historian's direct liaison and I thank her for her support and ever-positive attitude.

A note of special commendation is extended to Past National Historian Delfo Barabani (MA) who served again this year as our Coordinator of Contest Judging and Tabulation, a very demanding task which he has accomplished for the past 25 years.

As a matter of official record, there were nine department entries and 34 post entries received for judging in the four categories of the National History Contest for the 2010-2011 contest year.

Results of the One-Year Department Narrative History Contest are:
First Award Plaque, Department of North Carolina
Second Award Plaque, Department of Maine

Results of the One-Year Department Yearbook History Contest are:
First Award Plaque, Department of Ohio
Second Award Plaque, Department of Missouri
Third Award Plaque, Department of North Carolina
Honorable Mention, Department of Florida

Results of the One-Year Post Narrative History Contest are:
First Award Plaque, Matthews-Crawford Post 131, Warrensburg, Missouri
Second Award Plaque, Frank B. Bartlett Post 7, Buckhannon, West Virginia
Third Award Plaque, The Woodlands Post 305, The Woodlands, Texas
Honorable Mention, Dwight Cowles Post 370, Overland Park, Kansas
Honorable Mention, Parkville Post 183, Baltimore, Maryland

Results of the One-Year Post Yearbook History Contest are:
First Award Plaque, Lt. J.L. Shryer Post 430, Durant, Iowa
Second Award Plaque, Jackson-Silver Post 68, Greenwood, Maine
Third Award Plaque, Stonewall Jackson Post 336, San Antonio, Texas
Honorable Mention, Alois-Dreikosen Post 469, Marathon, Wisconsin
Honorable Mention, Dundalk Post 38, Dundalk, Maryland

Honorable Mention, Ontario Post 67, Ontario, Oregon

During the 2011 Fall Meetings our national officers, members of the National Executive Committee, Legionnaires and staff participated in the dedication of the John H. Geiger Operations Center in Lawrence, Indiana. An historical display was also mounted in the fourth floor lobby of the national headquarters building honoring Commander Geiger's lifelong service to The American Legion.

I have attended numerous American Legion meetings at various levels and responded by phone, mail and email to questions and concerns of members regarding organizational history and contests. I was also afforded the opportunity to participate in the revision and editing of the History section of the *Post Officer's Guide & Manual of Ceremonies*. We hope that the update to the 2012 edition will be helpful for those serving as historian at any level, and especially to those who enter and compete in post and department history contests.

At the Washington Conference, I attended several of the commission programs and learned from expert speakers. As an ex-officio member of the National Cemetery Committee, assigned to the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, I was able to meet with the committee and hear a system update from Steve Muro, Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, United States Department of Veterans Affairs. An excellent selection of speakers addressed the Commander's Call on Hill Day, and the National Commander's Public Relations Award luncheon honored retired U.S. Marine Corps Captain Dale Dye for his outstanding military consulting and training for the Hollywood film industry. An extra special duty was participation in the 100th Anniversary Observance Committee inaugural meeting.

At the Spring Meetings I was again invited to participate in the meeting of the 100th Anniversary Observance Committee. Exciting progress is being accomplished.

I was pleased to host more than 70 at the National Historian's Luncheon in Indianapolis during our National Convention on August 25, at the Indianapolis Marriott Downtown. Brigadier General J. Stewart Goodwin, Executive Director of the Indiana War Memorials Commission, presented an overview of this nationally recognized treasure situated on the Mall right outside of our headquarters doors.

For anyone who has not checked the American Legion website recently, I would note two new assets reflecting the history of our great organization. On the landing page you will find a feature entitled "A Moment in Time." Interesting observations and informative historical facts are posted weekly and are also archived so that you may quickly review others. It's a treat to learn or be reminded of important, often little-known historical facts.

The other asset I invite you to investigate is the substantive research tool which has been activated this year; the Digital Archive. It allows access to a host of Legion materials and publications. The online clearinghouse of Legion materials has been more than a year in the making and is constantly updated going both forward and backward in time. It can be accessed through multiple search modes. From http://www.legion.org, click on 'media' and then click on 'digital archive,' or directly at http://archive.legion.org. Enjoy the vast amount of information available to you!

On a personal note, I recommend the updated and revised American Legion Extension Institute which is now available online. I have taken the course through various revisions over the past 40 years. It is a valuable information tool.

Our organization benefits from the services of an outstanding director and staff for our Library and Museum, and I want to specifically thank Howard Trace and his entire professional crew for their continuing dedication to The American Legion.

It has been a great personal honor to serve as a member of Commander Fang Wong's team and to confirm that, "We Serve with Pride."

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE
P. B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

Contracts

The following two hundred and six (206) contracts have been reviewed or prepared:

(1) Articles of Agreement by and between The American Legion and The American Legion Maryland National Convention Corporation, Inc., covering the convocation of the 2015 Convention of The American Legion in the City of Baltimore, State of Maryland, 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 2012.

(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 City Wide of Indianapolis for structural and environmental services (cleaning) at the Geiger facility.
(21) A Contract by and between The American Legion and Communications Products, Inc. for software upgrade for the existing server running Windows 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 Talagy for temporary help during the 2012 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 the Geiger facility.
(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 2012.
(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 Geiger 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 Geiger facility lettershop.
(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 Geiger facility.
(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.
(56) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Mid-America Elevator Co., Inc. for maintenance of the elevators at 700 N. Pennsylvania Street building.
(57) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and VDS, an upgrade and maintenance support to the Avaya phone system.
(58) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and McGill Power Sales and Engineering, Inc. for the purpose of a 3-year maintenance plan for the new UPS system.
(59) Agreement by and between The American Legion and TWTelecom for internet circuit upgrades.
(60) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Grand Beach Inn for American Legion Baseball participant lodging.
(61) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Specialists Marketing Services, Inc. for acquiring outside name lists for the DMS Program.
(62) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Sudden Industries to analyze ways in which the Legion and members could benefit from using mobile devices to communicate, market and promote services and programs.
(63) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and PAETEC Communications for necessary connections for the purchase of the new telephone system hardware and software at the DC facility.
(64) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Weider History Group for acquiring outside name lists for the DMS Program.
(65) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Skibo Corp. and Ballavance Consulting for software for the Paychex TLO that imports pay-cycle data to Finance Division.
(66) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Xerox for CF 495 Printer and maintenance services and deliverables of their products.
(67) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and AT&T for mobile device and service plan discounts.
(68) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Hear PO a discount program provider for hearing services and products for Legion/SAL members, their families and Legion employees.
(69) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and The Country Club of Indianapolis for the annual Golf Outing.
(70) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and @mire, inc. for work on the Digital Archive used by the Legion Library.
(71) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Hilton Hotels Corporation for lodging for World Series Baseball participants.
(72) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Pitney Bowes Postage Meter System, Lease Agreement used at the Geiger facility.
(73) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Alpha Media Group for acquiring outside name lists for the DMS Program.

One Hundred-thirty-two (132) 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
A.M. Mailing Services, LLC
Aberdeen American News-South Dakota
Able Card, LLC
Acxiom
AEGON Direct Marketing
ALG Worldwide Logistics, Inc.
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 Direct Mail
Daily Freeman Journal
Database 101
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
Fiserv Solutions, Inc.
Freedom Graphic Systems
Fry Communications, Inc.
Fulfillment Xcellence, Inc.
FXI
G E Financial Assurance
Gallagher Benefit Services

Global Card Services
GMAC
Goldleaf Data Corporation
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
MCS Direct
Media 1, LLC
Merkle, Inc.
Midwest Direct Mailers
Military Advantage
MMP Direct and Printing
Moore Wallace Response Marketing
Morgan Printing, Inc.
Mutual of Omaha
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.
Printing Partners, Inc.
Production Services Associates, LLC
Propco Marketing
PSA
Quadriga Art, Inc.
R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company
Richardson Sports
Ripon Printers
River's Edge Printing

Royle Printing Company
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 JAY Group, Inc.
The Willow Group
TN Marketing
Torrington Telegram-Wyoming
Transamerica
TransAmerica Affinity Services, Inc.
Transcom
TransContinental Direct
Travalution, LLC
True North Companies
US Monitor
V12 Group
Valley Printworks
Ventura Printing
VERTIS
Veterans Online, LLC
Virtual DBS
Vision Printing & Graphics, LLC
Weider History Group
Wiland Direct
Wilson Sporting Goods Co.
Woodward Communications, Inc.

Litigation

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. In the most recent decision the district court ruled for the defendants. There is still no word at present on an appeal by Newdow.

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 as an amicus. The Supreme Court ruled the case was not yet ripe and remanded. We are continuing to support the memorial.

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 filed an amicus brief in support of the post. A consent order has been negotiated and is pending before the judge. It amounts to a government surrender and includes payment of $215,000.00 by the United States to plaintiff's lawyers for fees and expenses.

The case is over although we will continue to monitor the governments' compliance.

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

LANCE DAVENPORT, et al.,
Petitioners

v.

No. 10-1297

AMERICAN ATHEISTS, INC., et al.,
Respondents.

In this case, The American Legion has filed as amicus brief in the U.S. Supreme Court supporting the Utah State Police's practice of placing crosses on the side of a road or highway where a state trooper died in the line of duty. We did the same thing in the 10th Circuit. We do not know when we will hear a result.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS
WESTERN SECTION

Kevin Lucey, et at

Civil No. 10-30163-Map

v.

Prudential Insurance Co.

The American Legion is an amicus on the side of the plaintiffs against Prudential Insurance, which has the contract to underwrite the SGLI. When a service member dies on active duty, Prudential does not give a check to the beneficiary, usually the wife, as required by the law establishing the program. Prudential gives the beneficiary a checkbook with no guidance. Hence, the insurance company gets to keep all or part of the money ($400,000.00) for many months. It adds approximately ½ of 1 % interest per year to the account, but earns considerably more than 5% on the money. Plaintiffs want Prudential to follow the law, as we do. The VA objected to our joining the case. As a result, we discovered the VA had authorized the deviation from the requirements of the law.

Prudential has essentially admitted all the relevant facts. Hence, we expect a settlement.

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

United States of America, *Plaintiff-Appellee*,

No.08-50345

D.C. No.
2:07-cr-01035-RGK-1

v.

Xavier Alvarez, AKA Javier Alvarez, *Defendant-Appellant*.

This is a Stolen Valor case. Alvarez claimed a number of decorations he was not entitled to because he never served. The Ninth Circuit ruled the Stolen Valor Act unconstitutional. The U.S. Government sought certiorari. The American Legion joined as an amicus. Certiorari was granted. The American Legion filed a brief on the merits. The case was argued February 22, 2012. We lost! The solution may be another statute.

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE TENTH CIRCUIT

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Plaintiff — Appellant,

No. 10-1358
(D.C. No. 1:09-CR-00497-REB-1)
(D. Colo.)

v.

RICK GLEN STRANDLOF, a/k/a Rick Duncan,

Defendant- Appellee

THE AMERICAN LEGION;
CHRISTOPHER GUZELIAN,

Amici Curiae.

This case, another one on stolen valor, was dismissed pursuant to United States of America v. Xavier Alvarez.

IN THE
SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

Lionel Guerra,
Petitioner,
v. No. 11-773
Eric K. Shinseki,
Secretary of Veterans Affairs,
Respondent.

This case involves The American Legion proceeding as an amicus curiae with pro bono counsel on behalf of a veteran. The veteran has a number of disabilities from his combat injuries. These are: A 70% rating for an upper-extremity gunshot wound; a 70% rating for post-traumatic stress disorder; a 40% rating for injuries to his left leg and thigh; a 40% rating for injuries to his right leg and thigh; and a 30% rating for neuropathy. While none of his disabilities was individually rated at 100%, the total of the individual disabilities is 100%.

The VA would not give Mr. Guerra 100%. The Federal Circuit determined that he was not entitled to 100% disability because it was giving deference to the administrative decision of the VA.

This decision violates the pro-veteran canon of the U.S. law and the veterans' law. The Federal Circuit relied upon the *Chevron* case, which under the administrative procedure law would give deference to the administrative agency where the matter was ambiguous.

In this case, the Supreme Court has already ruled in the number of cases that in an ambiguous situation involving a veteran that the court should rule in favor of the veteran. This is based upon, inter alia, *Henderson v. Shinseki*, another case in which The American Legion appeared as an amicus.

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE STATE OF ALASKA
THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT IN ANCHORAGE

AMY VINCENT, individually, and as
Personal representative for the estate of

Coral Hammond, and as parent and
Guardian, for the use and benefit of
Maizy Vincent, and MARK VINCENT,
individually, and as parent and guardian,
for the use and benefit of Maizy Vincent,

Plaintiffs,

vs.

SUSITNA VALLEY UNIT #35
AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
DEPT. OF ALASKA, AMERICAN
LEGION AUXILIARY, DEPT. OF
ALASKA, INC., THE AMERICAN
LEGION AUXILIARY, THE
AMERICAN LEGION, THE
AMERICAN LEGION-SUSITNA
VALLEY POST 335, AND THE
AMERICAN LEGION, DEPT. OF
ALASKA, INC.

Case No. 3AN-12-5634 CI

Defendants.

On March 2, 2010, Ann Peeples was driving a GMS Sierra near Summit, Alaska, carrying Doris Thomas and Deborah Gilchrist from the Matanuska Valley to an American Legion Auxiliary district meeting in Fairbanks to sell clothing. The police report claims she was doing 50 mph or more down a hill on an ice covered road. A collision occurred resulting in death.

The case was referred to the insurance companies for The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary.

Motions to dismiss were prepared for both The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary on different, but similar grounds. They were granted. The case is closed as to The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary.

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 1,126 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 18 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 180 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 2011 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 2011 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. Required charitable registrations have been transferred to the Fundraising Division.

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, 2011 through May 31, 2012

Incoming Letters and parcels (distributed to Divisions for processing)	1,090,000
Incoming Parcels	2,541
Outgoing Letters/Parcels (Exclusive of National Emblem Sales)	10,708,758

Freight and Express
June 1, 2010 through May 31, 2011

Out - Cartons	2,713
Out – Pounds	109,613
UPS – In	2,082
UPS – Out	6,397

LIBRARY AND MUSEUM
Howard Trace, Director

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.

In January of 2012 the Digital Archive, available at http://archive.legion.org, was launched to provide access to current and historical materials of The American Legion. Over 2,000 items have been added to the Digital Archive, including over 1,200 active resolutions. Digests of National Conventions and National Executive Committee meetings along with publications, pamphlets, and other material will be continually added to this resource.

The Emil A. Blackmore Museum received a donation from the family of Past National Commander John H. Geiger of much of his memorabilia. This donation included pins, buttons, uniforms, banners, plaques, gavels, and other accoutrements of his time in The American Legion. The Museum also received a minor refurbishment for the 94th National Convention in Indianapolis.

A number of researchers made extensive visits to the Library. Areas of research involved drum and bugle corps, veterans organizations during and after World War II, the 1927 National Convention, and anti-communism efforts.

Bulletins, Reports, etc. Received and Filed	2,794
Books, Pamphlets and *The American Legion Magazine* cataloged	265
Items Microfilmed	7,393
Correspondence Written by National Historian	485
Correspondence Written by the Librarian	1,585
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Mailed	680
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Received	146
Follow-ups of Correspondence	50

Significant Gifts to the National Headquarters Library

Donated by PNC Clarence M. Bacon: *One Step At A Time* by Josh Bleill

Donated by PNC Robert W. Spanogle: "Band of Brothers" framed drawing by Tom Butler

Donated by Walter Auer: *The Way We Actually Were* by Walter Auer

Donated by Michael J. Lacivita: *Rag Man, Rag Man* by Michael J. Lacivita

Donated by Larry R. Gadberry: Sullivan Indiana Post #139 yearbook

Donated by Scott F. Paradis: *Warriors Diplomats Heroes: Why America's Army Succeeds, Lessons for Business and Life*

Donated by Charles Chapman: Post 138 dedication programs and B Battery, 134th Field Artillery unit history 1915 to 1919

Donated by Adjutant Sandy Lipman: Sons of The American Legion Detachment of Michigan history book

Donated by Roy Shawhan: 1950s, 1960s and 1970s National Convention programs and Minnesota Legionnaire

Donated by Randy Kessler on behalf of Mrs. Lou Templeton: *Manila Bay Sunset: The Long March Into Hell* by Billy D. Templeton

Donated by Melvin Cook: *The United States Navy in the World War* by James C. Russell and William E. Moore

The following books were donated by The National Association of Department Historians of The American Legion (NADHAL): *The Burma Campaign* by Frank McLynn; *Liberty's Surest Guardian: American Nation-Building from the Founders to*

Obama by Jeremi Suri; *Advance and Destroy: Patton as Commander in the Bulge* by John Nelson Rickard; *Day Before Yesterday: The Reminiscences of Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.* by Eleanor Butler Roosevelt; *Not Without Honor: The History of American Anticommunism* by Richard Gid Powers and *Westmoreland: The General Who Lost Vietnam* by Lewis Sorley

Significant Gifts to the National Headquarters Museum

Donated by Indiana State Museum: Uniform dress shirt; uniform dress pants; uniform cords (two light blue cords); The National Guard Manual Basic book; Album; two loose photographs – D Company and American Legion Cap; 75 year American Legion pin; 72 American Legion pin; Rifle Cross; To the Utmost Extent of Our Power; miscellaneous medals and five badges.

Donated by Betty M. Rutz: Japanese Invasion money – 10 centavos and Poem

Donated by William L. Little: Hat, papers and black & white pictures

Donated by Pueblo County Historical Society: *The American Legion Weekly* and other World War I publications

Donated by James W. Hare: Military bugle

Donated by Patrick K. Myers: "Land of the Free, Home of the Brave" framed and matted lithograph

Donated by Vivienne Geiger Hildebrand: Various artifacts from PNC John H. Geiger

Donated by Daniel T. Watrous: Membership pin

Donated by Lawrence Dugan: A signed numbered print, "Bloody But Unbowed"

Donated by Theodore Roosevelt, IV: Portrait of Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. and Long Island Reserve Center bronze plaque

Donated by Steve Theodore: 1922 National Convention ticket

Donated by PNC Jimmie Foster: March 26, 1920 issue of The American Legion Weekly

Donated by James Thurman: 1937 National Convention matchbook

Donated by Jane E. Caufield: National Convention and department convention medals, hats and photographs

Donated by Phil Morris: World War I photographs

Donated by Jann Spalding: L. P. Spalding's photographs, memorabilia from World War I and The American Legion's 1937 trip to Europe

Donated by National Treasurer George A. Buskirk: World War I memorabilia of Levi C. Stang

Donated by Walt Richardson: South Carolina American Legion Riders Legacy Ride patch

Donated by Betty J. Otto-Kretzer: 1980s Department Convention badges, programs and invitations from 1980s – 1990s, two membership award plaques and a post cap and other miscellaneous photographs and pins related to Page T. Otto's activities with Antietam Post 236 (MD) and the Department of Maryland

Donated by Roy Shawhan: Membership round-up pins and Auxiliary Past National President pin

Donated by McGee & Company Fine Jewelers: Hand carved by artist Peter Mueller, amethyst and calcite bald eagle on citrine crystal and calcite and tourmaline base

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 be 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 2011-2012 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 77 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 67th 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 77-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 2012 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. Jonathan Hess of Tuscaloosa, Alabama was elected President and Joseph Aumuller of Libertyville, Illinois was elected Vice President of the 67th 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 Sates 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 nor 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 75th Annual National Oratorical Finals Contest was held in Indianapolis, Indiana, in April 2012. The three finalists were: First place – Rebecca Frazer, Morgantown, Indiana; second place – Charles Baines, Meridian, Idaho; third place – Jack Donaldson IV, Eden Prairie, Minnesota.

The American Legion continues to maintain a relationship with the National Forensic League (NFL), the nation's preeminent speech and debate organization. The American Legion had a booth at the NFL National Tournament in Indianapolis, Indiana, in June 2012. National Champion Rebecca Frazer reached the 10th round of the Original Oratory category and contest program manager Colin Short served as a judge in the Original Oratory category national final.

Boy Scouts of America

The American Legion charters 2,564 Scout units in communities across the country involving 68,290 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 Jason Dreyzehner of Abingdon, Virginia, as its 2012 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 Jonathan Chapman III, Germantown, Tennessee; Robert Kawecki, Charlotte, North Carolina; and Sean Chmielewski, Salem, Connecticut.

In addition, an estimated 8,000 certificates honoring new Eagle Scout recipients are distributed annually.

Over 500 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 Law Cadet Program

In 2011, the responsibility of conducting the Junior Law Cadet program was transferred from the National Security Commission to the Americanism Commission.

There are currently sixteen departments that offer a Junior Law Cadet Program: Arizona; Connecticut; Delaware; Illinois; Kansas; Massachusetts; Michigan; Missouri; Nebraska; North Carolina; Ohio; Pennsylvania; South Carolina; South Dakota; Vermont; and Virginia.

Promotional materials and a website will be made available in the near future to provide information for departments to adopt and publicize the program. Departments will be encouraged to work with their state police or other law enforcement agency to develop a program.

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 1,182 active clubs with almost 15,000 young people participating annually.

The 22nd Annual Junior Air Rifle National Championship was conducted August 7-12, 2012 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 1,563 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 2012 winners were Colt Gross of North Augusta, South Carolina (Precision) and Cody Sanchez from Los Lunas, New Mexico (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 2012-2013, awarded nine $5,000 scholarships to recipients in six states to assist in furthering their education. This brings their cumulative total for the past 52 years to 882 scholarships, totaling nearly $2 million to help eliminate personnel shortages in this important area of nursing. This scholarship program will again be offered for the 2013-2014 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 17,500 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 87th season in 2012. Almost 82,000 players on 4,410 teams participated in this American Legion Americanism youth activity during the past year. The 2011 George W. Rulon American Legion Baseball Player of the Year is Blake Schmit, from Eden Prairie, Minnesota. Blake is attending the University of Maryland.

The American Legion Baseball World Series was held August 17-21, 2012 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. Sixty Hall of Fame members played American Legion Baseball, including Ron Santo, who was elected to the Hall of Fame in 2012. Other American Legion Alumni inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame include Tony Gwynn, Tom Seaver, Johnny Bench, Stan Musial, Carl Yastrzemski, 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 electronic 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 11-17, 2012.

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 2012 edition of *Need A Lift?* is available online at The American Legion website (www.legion.org/needalift) and on a CD-ROM. 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. For the update scheduled in Fall 2012, The American Legion will mail over 31,000 postcards and flyers promoting the *Need A Lift?* website to secondary 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 1050, Indianapolis, Indiana, 46206. 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 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.

The National Education Association (NEA) received the 2012 American Legion National Education Award for the NEA's over ninety years of dedication in implementing great ideas in schools that drive great results for students across the nation, and for the their continued co-sponsorship of American Education Week with The American Legion.

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
Exective Section

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Larry L. Price, Redfield, South Dakota - Vice-Chairman
Roger L. Wild, Lincoln, Nebraska - Commander's Representative
Eugene Thompson, Marseilles, Illinois - Consultant
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COMMISSION ON CHILDREN & YOUTH
Dennis R. Boland, Florida, Chairman
Jill K. Druskis, Nebraska, Director

The American Legion has been a staunch supporter of 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 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 and the Sons of The American Legion, as well as supporting independent organizations such as the 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-four years, The American Legion's Children & Youth Programs have 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 and supporting 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.

2011 - 2012 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 2011 – 2012, 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 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 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 2011 – 2012 program year, the program aided 1,596 children with $877,220 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 National Commission on Children & Youth has attempted to accomplish its goals during the 2011 – 2012 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 & 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 2011 – 2012 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 89 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, 8,000 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, 2011 through May 31, 2012 and combined with these reports.

During the reporting period, The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation recorded $787,951 in donations from members of The American Legion Family and individuals across the country. During the same period, our Temporary Financial Assistance program expended $877,220 in grants to 1,596 children of veterans. For the 2011 — 2012 Children & Youth programs year, including contributions to the Child Welfare Foundation, posts, squadrons, units and departments of The American Legion and its affiliated and supporting organizations reported a grand total of $13,160,467 in expenditures and contributions to benefit the children of America.

Children & Youth Literature

During the 2011 — 2012 program year, 232,939 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 Fang A. Wong 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
Executive Section

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Gary W. Gifford, Maryland - Member
Herbert J. Petit, Jr., Louisiana - Member
Robert M. Johnson, Maryland - Member

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 Administrative Expense by Legion	Total Aid for Children from 8/40	Total Number of Children Served by Legion	Total Aid Legion Lines 3 thru 9
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
REGION 1										
Connecticut	57%	$8,333.68	$3,722.41	$21,170.00	$7,170.00	$32,158.00	$9,070.00	$89.50	416	$81,714
Maine	61%	$2,108.07	$368.01	$38,727.00	$12,657.00	$21,457.00	$8,352.00	$200.00	941	$84,089
Massachusetts	46%	$0.00	$3,074.53	$92,051.00	$18,130.00	$20,548.00	$3,045.00	$471.00	945	$137,439
New Hampshire	65%	$3,136.59	$2,236.25	$29,390.00	$26,617.00	$3,600.00	$9,450.00	$23.00	688	$73,455
Rhode Island	100%	$0.00	$0.00	$72,677.00	$5,545.00	$34,700.00	$697.00	$50.00	1,062	$113,669
Vermont	100%	$0.00	$85.00	$12,191.00	$7,611.00	$0.00	$3,925.00	$25.00	1,162	$23,837
TOTAL:	**60%**	**$13,580.34**	**$9,486.20**	**$266,206.00**	**$77,930.00**	**$112,463.00**	**$33,539.00**	**$858.50**	**5,214**	**$514,063**
REGION 2										
Delaware	62%	$3,970.00	$250.00	$2,606.00	$6,752.00	$0.00	$817.00	$0.00	727	$14,395
D.C.	45%	$0.00	$120.00	$134,337.00	$1,870.00	$55,399.00	$0.00	$0.00	0	$191,726
Maryland	71%	$3,137.21	$6,960.00	$120,602.00	$100,480.00	$0.00	$15,876.00	$100.00	4,439	$247,155
New Jersey	35%	$13,717.79	$1,365.00	$379,485.00	$46,497.00	$177,150.00	$16,560.00	$34.00	3,176	$634,809
New York	64%	$9,347.98	$6,004.42	$246,894.00	$132,153.00	$869,950.00	$46,666.00	$398.00	2,669	$1,311,613
Pennsylvania	99%	$31,857.60	$2,367.60	$321,848.00	$218,010.00	$221,701.00	$34,392.00	$260.00	7,674	$830,436
Virginia	100%	$92,070.48	$5,016.93	$118,042.00	$126,263.00	$41,809.00	$17,885.00	$285.00	18,346	$401,371
West Virginia	95%	$17,016.33	$345.00	$5,530.00	$8,765.00	$52,493.00	$19,220.00	$0.00	12,155	$103,369
TOTAL:	**75%**	**$171,117.30**	**$22,428.95**	**$1,329,344.00**	**$640,790.00**	**$1,419,502.00**	**$151,616.00**	**$1,077.00**	**49,386**	**$3,734,875**
REGION 3										
Alabama	30%	$7,552.27	$3,838.87	$334,486.00	$6,010.00	$184,369.00	$13,989.00	$313.18	1,320	$550,558
Florida	100%	$50,351.43	$46,761.40	$223,744.00	$49,030.00	$66,659.00	$47,259.00	$980.15	9,395	$494,795
Georgia	78%	$10,052.21	$887.52	$80,211.00	$54,476.00	$19,481.00	$25,747.00	$0.00	4,656	$190,855
Kentucky	70%	$12,348.27	$8,110.64	$73,536.00	$2,536.00	$15,095.00	$6,075.00	$532.00	2,525	$118,233
North Carolina	42%	$28,099.50	$3,211.00	$17,338.00	$11,595.00	$9,405.00	$7,433.00	$0.00	1,074	$77,072
South Carolina	37%	$7,522.75	$1,215.17	$34,545.00	$12,485.00	$12,679.00	$2,245.00	$0.00	830	$70,692
Tennessee	58%	$11,089.19	$1,985.65	$8,586.00	$6,825.00	$0.00	$7,487.00	$0.00	503	$35,973
TOTAL:	**60%**	**$127,015.62**	**$66,010.25**	**$772,446.00**	**$142,947.00**	**$307,689.00**	**$110,235.00**	**$1,825.33**	**20,103**	**$1,529,167**
REGION 4										
Arkansas	27%	$1,910.00	$163.00	$48,585.00	$5,375.00	$55,158.53	$495.00	$175.00	499	$111,862
Louisiana	37%	$736.49	$3,789.78	$27,155.00	$22,041.00	$8,336.00	$29,265.00	$200.00	4,363	$90,523
Mississippi	28%	$10,522.13	$2,275.00	$12,975.00	$3,025.00	$3,230.00	$1,575.00	$0.00	445	$33,602
Oklahoma	4%	$18,801.51	$810.00	$219,795.00	$2,770.00	$92,314.00	$800.00	$98.00	3,019	$335,384
Texas	52%	$41,400.12	$1,985.65	$28,486.00	$98,184.00	$0.00	$28,508.00	$1,202.00	6,196	$200,766
TOTAL:	**33%**	**$73,370.25**	**$9,023.43**	**$336,996.00**	**$132,395.00**	**$159,038.53**	**$59,643.00**	**$1,670.00**	**14,522**	**$772,136**
REGION 5										
Illinois	44%	$34,357.01	$4,424.50	$127,881.00	$31,375.00	$329,775.00	$98,119.00	$410.25	1,921	$618,342
Indiana	53%	$52,211.55	$9,949.09	$140,502.00	$60,113.00	$104,254.00	$28,027.00	$1,140.00	1,799	$396,197
Michigan	59%	$2,095.81	$2,129.60	$89,926.00	$8,450.00	$231,779.00	$20,811.00	$1,115.35	7,278	$334,307
Missouri	100%	$23,696.79	$5,956.66	$296,060.00	$27,487.00	$326,613.00	$11,412.00	$445.00	1,118	$691,670
Ohio	82%	$9,457.32	$44,752.72	$144,401.00	$87,036.00	$77,986.00	$43,217.00	$829.50	10,149	$407,660
Wisconsin	100%	$1,852.47	$4,104.07	$16,638.00	$13,981.00	$0.00	$27,732.00	$50.00	4,322	$64,558
TOTAL:	**70%**	**$123,670.95**	**$71,316.64**	**$795,609.00**	**$226,442.00**	**$1,070,387.00**	**$221,318.00**	**$3,940.10**	**26,587**	**$2,512,733**
REGION 6										
Iowa	62%	$14,425.32	$831.00	$53,208.00	$11,495.00	$29,475.00	$16,121.00	$0.00	1,982	$125,555
Kansas	64%	$13,785.30	$1,725.10	$179,835.00	$10,892.00	$89,919.00	$4,700.00	$491.73	1,747	$301,338
Minnesota	53%	$2,104.38	$7,634.00	$51,597.00	$53,282.00	$16,211.00	$17,565.00	$740.00	4,918	$149,133
Nebraska	100%	$0.00	$1,250.45	$82,635.00	$11,880.00	$28,359.00	$8,990.00	$1,471.90	1,788	$134,586
North Dakota	61%	$2,467.46	$1,000.00	$19,166.00	$13,013.00	$10,376.00	$2,980.00	$0.00	1,116	$48,996
South Dakota	57%	$0.00	$261.00	$950.00	$5,243.00	$0.00	$1,101.00	$233.49	550	$7,788
TOTAL:	**65%**	**$32,782.46**	**$12,701.55**	**$387,391.00**	**$105,805.00**	**$174,334.00**	**$51,457.00**	**$2,927.12**	**12,101**	**$767,396**
REGION 7										
Arizona	100%	$60,413.46	$2,422.64	$341,192.00	$47,264.00	$128,042.00	$31,429.00	$1,408.47	8,873	$612,172
California	71%	$29,595.20	$8,743.42	$60,039.00	$45,683.00	$15,800.00	$56,799.00	$3,242.74	23,899	$219,902
Colorado	38%	$20,116.41	$446.00	$650.00	$4,370.00	$100.00	$4,720.00	$17.00	661	$30,419
Hawaii	71%	$0.00	$541.92	$10,975.00	$1,960.00	$11,047.00	$0.00	$0.00	10	$24,524
Nevada	56%	$7,795.86	$6,883.53	$13,383.00	$3,571.00	$2,500.00	$865.00	$111.00	261	$35,109
New Mexico	2%	$7,347.11	$1,876.36	$12,162.00	$3,050.00	$4,824.00	$1,000.00	$0.00	7,500	$30,259
Utah	15%	$949.34	$25.00	$1,208.00	$183.00	$0.00	$475.00	$0.00	26	$2,835
TOTAL:	**57%**	**$126,217.38**	**$20,938.87**	**$439,601.00**	**$106,081.00**	**$162,313.00**	**$95,291.00**	**$4,779.21**	**41,430**	**$955,221**
REGION 8										
Alaska	81%	$0.00	$836.60	$12,261.00	$20.00	$13,001.00	$7,819.00	$300.00	767	$34,238
Idaho	64%	$23,040.53	$2,269.99	$70,622.00	$4,445.00	$54,496.00	$1,220.00	$264.55	3,007	$158,358
Montana	99%	$8,700.32	$350.00	$45,651.00	$10,518.00	$16,561.00	$1,856.00	$160.00	9,023	$83,796
Oregon	100%	$39,755.39	$290.00	$57,652.00	$3,902.00	$53,599.00	$1,113.00	$62.00	1,626	$156,373
Washington	72%	$133,234.95	$2,442.00	$29,558.00	$6,065.00	$46,463.00	$8,189.00	$675.01	2,330	$226,627
Wyoming	98%	$4,296.00	$5,599.40	$150.00	$2,226.00	$0.00	$223.00	$0.00	27	$12,494
TOTAL:	**85%**	**$209,027.19**	**$11,787.99**	**$215,894.00**	**$27,176.00**	**$184,120.00**	**$20,420.00**	**$1,461.56**	**16,782**	**$669,887**
REGION TOTALS:	**64%**	**$876,781.49**	**$223,693.88**	**$4,543,486.00**	**$1,459,566.00**	**$3,588,845.53**	**$743,519.00**	**$18,538.82**	**186,125**	**$8,971,092**
FOREIGN										
France	29%	$0.00	$152.00	$100.00	$545.00	$150.00	$20.00	$0.00	0	$967
Mexico	9%	$0.00	$0.00	$450.00	$0.00	$300.00	$0.00	$0.00	0	$750
Philippines	14%	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$1,060.00	$2,969.00	$0.00	$0.00	0	$3,999
Puerto Rico	4%	$438.38	$65.00	$0.00	$250.00	$525.00	$0.00	$0.00	0	$1,278
TOTAL:	**10%**	**$0.00**	**$0.00**	**$7,200.57**	**$2,425.00**	**$3,914.00**	**$20.00**	**$0.00**	**0**	**$13,560**
GRAND TOTALS:	**64%**	**$877,219.87**	**$223,910.88**	**$4,550,686.57**	**$1,461,991.00**	**$3,590,140.53**	**$743,539.00**	**$18,538.82**	**186,125**	**$11,466,027**

TABLE #1 REPORTING PERIOD: JUNE 1, 2011 - MAY 31, 2012

Children Served by Auxiliary Departments	57,824
Children Served by Legion Departments	186,125
GRAND TOTAL	**243,949**

Auxiliary Direct Aid to Children	$469,279
Auxiliary Fundraising for Children	$679,589
Child Welfare Foundation by National Auxiliary	$2,500
Child Welfare Foundation by National 8/40	$1,225
Child Welfare Foundation by Individuals	$11,391
Bequests to Child Welfare Foundation	$603
C.W.F. by Sons of The American Legion	$504,264
Child Welfare Foundation by National Legion	$25,589
GRAND TOTAL	**$13,160,467**

TABLE NO. 2

EXPENDITURES FROM NATIONAL TEMPORARY AID FUNDS TO DEPARTMENTS ACCORDING TO YEARS

	1926-45	1946-65	1966-85	1986-95	1996-2005	2006-2011*	June 2011 - May 2012	Grand Total
Alabama	29,181.33	51,167.08	76,790.45	152,617.32	137,824.69	61,569.78	7,552.27	516,702.90
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	186,373.45	60,413.46	785,337.85
Arkansas	33,873.20	25,962.22	2,861.07	55,004.98	16,181.61	12,931.86	1,910.00	148,744.74
California	30,108.15	16,026.45	1,550.00	7,559.00	30,034.44	105,925.18	29,595.20	220,796.42
Colorado	41,621.11	22,618.11	1,395.00	12,205.83	17,592.15	81,616.36	20,116.41	197,164.97
Connecticut	1,854.00	446.00	450.00	1,192.00	7,971.56	16,244.75	8,333.68	36,485.99
Delaware	2,035.00	1,000.00	475.00	2,635.00	8,497.64	521.00	3,970.00	19,133.64
DC	2,570.00	1,203.50	600.00	26,136.75	2,319.00	2,010.51	0.00	34,839.76
Florida	33,341.28	25,520.50	2,530.00	27,060.88	64,469.81	165,849.09	50,351.43	369,122.99
Georgia	89,884.07	86,684.42	4,865.00	8,496.51	12,861.60	21,812.76	10,052.21	214,068.77
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	147,019.43	23,040.53	406,505.05
Illinois	30,220.79	4,343.53	10,525.73	92,128.56	276,545.19	69,329.35	34,357.01	517,450.16
Indiana	31,850.08	9,066.40	2,920.00	126,545.18	173,400.66	97,826.62	52,211.55	493,820.49
Iowa	17,493.08	597.00	3,928.45	13,782.47	227,865.82	95,754.58	14,425.32	373,846.72
Kansas	20,766.80	42,064.35	8,923.00	9,241.54	16,291.60	5,650.99	13,785.30	116,723.58
Kentucky	23,643.50	45,527.90	54,854.96	44,238.66	12,445.22	109,445.40	12,348.27	312,703.91
Louisiana	23,400.50	38,454.30	3,395.00	7,340.45	33,897.24	2,555.86	736.49	109,779.84
Maine	3,618.94	1,910.26	2,676.55	15,912.00	22,305.05	13,519.19	2,108.07	62,050.06
Maryland	5,687.00	3,390.57	3,383.00	4,770.00	31,620.94	9,767.62	3,137.21	61,956.34
Massachusetts	2,754.50	455.00	150.00	4,850.00	18,888.67	14,931.34	0.00	41,829.51
Michigan	23,695.33	33,281.24	15,346.82	14,012.24	52,676.66	49,438.20	2,095.81	190,746.30
Minnesota	8,610.77	23,322.79	11,840.33	137,579.21	89,538.19	30,606.38	2,104.38	303,602.05
Mississippi	40,293.63	53,254.14	117,892.56	51,214.68	84,261.79	37,525.57	10,522.13	404,964.70
Missouri	53,073.08	47,799.64	11,056.00	17,969.51	38,984.13	76,820.22	23,696.79	269,399.37
Montana	5,414.25	1,668.85	1,575.30	38,571.40	57,913.91	55,888.88	8,700.32	169,732.91
Nebraska	18,470.10	17,795.68	17,531.06	3,373.25	759.49	4,349.51	0.00	62,279.09
Nevada	565.00	766.00	7,272.00	995.00	16,818.94	10,900.15	7,795.86	45,132.95
New Hampshire	4,250.50	4,941.50	0.00	53,557.79	12,510.00	15,568.65	3,138.59	94,057.03
New Jersey	8,995.53	1,946.00	4,478.00	55,576.20	53,194.60	20,548.48	13,717.70	158,456.51
New Mexico	20,074.30	53,096.74	58,723.89	111,071.87	49,262.39	7,560.18	7,347.11	307,136.48
New York	7,887.54	4,803.00	1,150.00	33,784.24	63,432.27	25,251.56	9,347.98	165,656.59
North Carolina	46,597.50	81,019.60	9,740.00	20,750.18	68,774.55	117,195.58	28,099.50	372,176.91
North Dakota	26,017.45	11,788.21	5,771.32	8,499.46	11,426.94	7,652.01	2,467.46	71,622.79
Ohio	23,930.43	5,116.25	11,613.89	11,357.65	13,289.44	48,780.00	9,457.32	123,544.98
Oklahoma	40,458.05	65,406.47	88,986.03	156,914.96	203,764.51	119,727.06	18,801.51	694,028.59
Oregon	1,250.50	13,750.15	24,595.95	42,465.83	14,796.00	65,173.31	39,755.39	201,787.13
Panama	675.00	534.00	600.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,809.00
Pennsylvania	22,847.41	551.00	19,204.85	38,183.37	29,380.12	58,747.12	31,857.60	200,871.47
Puerto Rico	17,057.00	57,754.00	55,499.50	43,400.00	11,100.00	8,640.43	438.98	193,909.31
Rhode Island	1,562.00	1,641.00	1,060.00	18,499.38	16,182.72	5,049.90	0.00	43,995.00
South Carolina	68,453.05	26,693.34	5,339.00	500.00	13,610.16	51,518.60	7,522.75	173,637.10
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	36,661.35	54,100.32	11,089.19	264,181.92
Texas	35,373.50	47,392.43	26,714.50	7,884.74	31,464.75	112,828.14	41,400.12	303,078.18
Utah	11,125.48	3,248.00	3,396.00	12,014.42	14,034.34	12,793.04	948.34	57,560.62
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	99,660.05	92,070.48	381,354.96
Washington	3,378.00	427.50	625.00	86,884.89	511,131.69	371,761.89	133,234.95	1,087,443.92
West Virginia	27,629.98	11,305.94	3,460.00	17,750.68	40,628.59	17,774.78	17,016.33	135,656.30
Wisconsin	18,881.98	8,067.25	8,878.00	16,242.76	74,327.21	65,274.83	1,652.47	191,524.52
Wyoming	4,180.00	1,993.00	1,350.00	978.06	13,746.91	15,590.71	4,296.00	42,135.62
Other Depts.	560.00	173.50						3907.00
Miscellaneous**	19,499.21							$19,499.21
TOTAL	**$1,121,572.95**	**$1,089,976.73**	**$777,325.21**	**$1,926,240.98**	**$3,327,257.51**	**$2,799,177.90**	**$877,219.87**	**$11,918,771.15**

*Includes January 2011 - May 2012

**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	4	8	7	75	94
July	0	0	0	1	13	87	101
August	0	0	11	15	19	148	193
September	0	0	7	18	5	162	192
October	0	0	0	15	8	93	116
November	0	0	10	13	8	95	126
December	0	0	2	0	10	170	182
January	0	0	7	9	7	133	156
February	0	0	5	9	7	82	103
March	0	0	5	7	5	85	102
April	0	0	2	2	10	109	123
May	0	0	4	7	3	94	108
Totals	0	0	57	104	102	1333	1596
Percentage	0.00%	0.00%	3.57%	6.52%	6.39%	83.52%	100.00%

TABLE #3 REPORTING PERIOD: JUNE 1, 2011 - MAY 31, 2012

Table No. 4

Printed Material Furnished Upon Request
During Period June 1, 2011 through May 31, 2012

	Total
8&40 Nursing Scholarship	4,772
American Legion & Children's Miracle Network - Brochure	5,976
American Legion Child Welfare Foundation	13,968
American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation	14,525
Annual Children & Youth Program Piece	11,519
Children & Youth Department Chairman's Guide	350
Family Support Network	19,333
Gateway Drugs	13,756
Make Halloween a Safe and Fun Night - Brochure	38,835
National Family Week	2,360
Play It Safe	14,525
Serving America	21,323
Serving Communities	19,967
Serving Veterans	22,817
TFA Applications	500
TFA Brochures	14,288
Warning Signs -- Suicide Prevention	14,124
Citations:	
Annual Children and Youth Citations	1,088
Certificate of Meritorious Service	52
National Achievement Award	9
Special Children & Youth Citation	279
TOTAL	234,366

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 2011, the Board of Directors approved grants to 18 non-profit organizations in the amount of $506,683 for projects to be completed in calendar year 2012. The organizations and amounts are as follows:

American Legion Child Welfare Foundation Grants

Alstrom Syndrome International	Mount Desert, Maine	$13,125
American Humane Association	Englewood, Colorado	$35,250
Angel Flight Soars, Inc.	Atlanta, Georgia	$16,564
Autism Speaks, Inc.	New York, New York	$22,500
Be The Match Foundation	Minneapolis, Minnesota	$16,050
Birth Defect Research for Children	Orlando, Florida	$18,500
Children's Institute, Inc.	Rochester, New York	$ 9,500
Mercy Medical Airlift	Virginia Beach, Virginia	$43,400
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY)	Minneapolis, Minnesota	$41,000
National Center for Missing and Exploited Children	Alexandria, Virginia	$25,500
Organization for Autism Research	Arlington, Virginia	$49,355
Second Wind Fund, Inc.	Lakewood, Colorado	$23,724
Starr Commonwealth-National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children(TLC)	Albion, Michigan	$20,000
Texas National Guard Family Support Foundation (TXNGFSF)	Austin, Texas	$40,000
The American Legion Department of Arizona/ Detachment of Arizona	Phoenix, Arizona	$49,500
The American Legion, Department of Kansas	Topeka, Kansas	$32,000
ThinkFirst Foundation (Think First National Injury Prevention Foundation)	Naperville, Illinois	$25,715
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, Inc. (TAPS)	Washington, DC	$25,000

During the 2011 - 2012 contribution year, donations exceeded $787,950 with over $506,264 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 6, 2012, 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 93rd annual National Convention of the American Legion convened in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 26 – September 1, 2011. National Commander Jimmie L. Foster of Alaska called the National Convention to order at 9:00AM on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2011 welcoming Legionnaires to Minneapolis and thanking them for their continuing service to our Country and to our veterans. The 93rd annual National Convention began with the Honorable Barack Obama, President of the United States, addressing nearly 6,000 American Legion Family members on Tuesday morning. Later in the day the Honorable Al Franken, U.S. Senator from Minnesota, the Honorable Mark Dayton, Governor, State of Minnesota, the Honorable R. T. Rybak, Mayor of Minneapolis, Thomas J. Lannon, 2010 – 2011 Department Commander of Minnesota and James E. Copher, President of the 2011 National Convention Committee welcomed legionnaires to the National Convention. Other guest speakers addressing the 93rd National Convention of the American Legion were the Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Office of the House Democratic Leader, the Honorable Jeff Miller, US House of Representatives, the Honorable Michele Bachman, US House of Representatives, the Honorable Eric K. Shinseki, Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Mr. Kevin Bergner, Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer of USAA, Nesse Godin, Holocaust Survivor, as well as Teresa Scanlan, Ms. America 2011. Mr. Daniel "Rudy" Ruettiger served as the master of ceremonies for the superb opening on Tuesday, August 30, 2011.

There were many highlights during the 2011 National Convention, but four events conducted at the National Convention deserve special mention. The Patriotic Memorial Service, featuring the Minnesota Boychoir, and the annual parade, both held on Sunday, Aug. 28 were attended by nearly 3,000 and 7,000 American Legion Family members respectively. On Monday, Aug. 29, a free concert by the Army Soldier Show was held for 2500 enthusiastic attendees. On Tuesday, Aug. 30, the National Commander's Banquet for Distinguished Guests was held at the Minneapolis Convention Center. This

banquet, featuring country-folk-rock group Nitty Gritty Dirt Band as the entertainment, was attended by over 2,100 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 2011.

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 2017 National Convention, the National Convention Commission reviewed bids from Detroit, Michigan, Louisville, Kentucky, Reno, Nevada and Salt Lake City, Utah. 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 Louisville, Kentucky be awarded the 2017 National Convention for Aug. 25 – Aug. 31. The National Executive Committee later approved the recommendation.

Future conventions and dates:

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
Louisville, Kentucky	Aug. 25 – 31, 2017
Minneapolis, Minnesota	Aug. 24 – 30, 2018
Indianapolis, Indiana	Aug. 23 – 29, 2019

DISTINGUISHED GUEST COMMITTEE
Stephen W. Short, Indiana, 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. 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, 2011, through June 30, 2012. 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 Steve Gonzalez, Assistant Director Davy Leghorn 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

2011-2012 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 27, 2011, in the Minneapolis Convention Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, in conjunction with the Ninety-third Annual National Convention. A report on that meeting was made to the National Executive Committee on Monday, August 29, 2011. 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 12-13, 2011. A complete report on that meeting appears in the Digest of Proceedings of the National Executive Committee, October 2011.
(3) At the 52nd Washington Conference, on Monday, February 27, and Wednesday, February 29, 2012 which were held in the Washington Hilton 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 7-8, 2012, in the headquarters office 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 9-10, 2012.

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, 2011 to July 31, 2012, on matters pertaining to the National Economic Commission:

- On November 30, 2011, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on "U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business Certification Process."
- On March 8, 2012, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans Affairs' on various legislation regarding "Education, Credentialing, Training and Employment."
- On May 16, 2012, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans Affairs' on "Examining Executive Order #73607 and its Impact on Schools and Veterans."
- On June 21, 2012, the Assistant Director testified before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on various pieces of legislation regarding "Training, Credentialing and Employment."

- On June 6, 2012, the Deputy Director submitted testimony to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on "Veterans' Employment and Training Services (VETS) Transition Assistance Program (TAP)."
- On July 15, 2012, 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 has 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 2011 in the Employer of Veterans Awards Program.

The Commission's Awards Subcommittee met to select the following National winners:

Large Employer: Smith and Wesson, Massachusetts

Medium Size Employer: Alpha Protective Services, North Carolina

Small Employer: Burditt Trucking, 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: Anthony Medina, Colorado

DVOP of the Year: Willetta E. Hillard-Walker, Alabama

Employment Local Office: Workforce Solutions Panhandle Office 0601, Texas

Other Awards
Employer of the Disabled: Nancy L. Smith, Texas
Employer of Older Workers: Burditt Trucking, Georgia
Homeless Veterans Outreach Award: The American Legion Department of Oregon

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE
Albert M. Robotti, New Jersey, Chairman
Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, 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., Maryland, 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.

Education

The National Economic Commission hosted a one-day seminar titled: "Veterans On Campus" on Sunday, February 26, 2012 in the Georgetown Room, Concourse Level at the Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C. "Veterans on Campus" was designed to reach out to academia, Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) and student-veterans on how academia and VSOs can assist this younger generation in transitioning from military to college life. This event attracted over 100 guests who listened to a variety of issues. The symposium was opened by Chairman Barnett with discussion from keynote speaker: Karen Gross, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Undersecretary of Education, Department of Education, while Past National Commander and Past National Adjutant Robert Spanogle provided the closing remarks.

The four panels, which included one made up of student veterans, discussed successful programs and promising practices to support student veterans on campus. In addition, they discussed barriers to the development of such services and what programs would benefit veterans in graduating from college. The other three panels addressed the issue of faculty training as one of the best ways to reduce confusion and stigma related to the student veteran population. The training would minimize confusion about the importance of VA appointments as well as raise awareness among the faculty of available institutional services for veterans. These trainings could also offer faculty a better understanding of military culture, which would ensure military students a positive learning environment on college/university campuses across the country.

Veteran students face many of the same challenges as adult or non-traditional students: They are older and more mature, many are tending to the needs of a family and some are commuting long distances to complete their education. Military students, however, also bring with them a structure, sense of discipline and work ethic that typically far exceeds faculty expectations. With a greater number of veterans expected to enter all areas of post-secondary education in the years to come, it is important to highlight the additional leadership and other qualities and characteristics that veterans bring to the academic environment and communicate those to faculty.

Finally, in October 2011, the National Executive Committee of the Economic Commission adopted resolution No. 37: "Support Regulation of For-Profit Schools and State Approving Agencies." The resolution outlined measures that were recently communicated to President Obama in a letter co-signed by several Veterans Service Organizations. On April 27, 2012, President Obama signed Executive Order 13607 to help protect students and prospective students using their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits from aggressive and deceptive targeting by educational institutions, particularly for-profit career colleges. The American Legion played a major role in the execution of this executive order.

Credentialing

The National Economic Commission of The American Legion collaborated with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to host a National Credentialing Summit on Tuesday - Thursday, February 21-23, 2012, at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Washington, D.C. This summit brought together stakeholders from around the country to converge at one location to help identify the key barriers faced by service members, veterans, and military spouses, as well as highlight the efforts that have been undertaken by federal government agencies, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, states/jurisdictions, private and public sector, and Veteran Service Organizations, to better recognize military training and experience.

The civilian workforce increasingly relies upon credentialing as a way to regulate entry into certain occupations and to promote accountability for performance and public safety. Credentialing also offers benefits to the military, and can be used to promote recruiting, retention, and professional development. Promoting civilian credentialing of service members and veterans will enable them to demonstrate to employers the comparability and value of their military education, training, and experience. Returning veterans face a lengthy credentialing and licensing process that is required for them to transition their skills, training, and experience from the military to civilian workforce. Many industry areas require specific federal and state licenses and credentials, but do not recognize military training or experience. When civilian credentialing boards and employers fail to fully recognize military education, training, and experience, the service member, veteran and America lose out. Veterans face reduced chances of obtaining a job on par with their skills and the civilian workforce cannot take full advantage of the extensive skills training in which our nation has so greatly invested.

To that end, The American Legion's aggressive advocacy efforts lead to President Obama signing H.R. 4155, *Veterans Skills to Jobs Act*, into law on July 23, 2012. This law (Public Law 112-147) will direct the head of each federal department and agency to treat relevant military training as sufficient to satisfy training or certification requirements for federal licenses. However, this bill only addresses the issue on the federal level with much needed work on a state-by-state basis.

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 for 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 were 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.

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. The American Legion participates in 100 Job Fairs a year through our national partnerships.

In addition, The American Legion has collaborated with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Department of Labor, Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS), Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) and various corporate

sponsors, in hosting numerous veteran specific Job Fairs across the nation. This new 'Hiring our Heroes' Initiative seeks to drastically lower the rising unemployment rate amongst our nation's veterans by bringing Job Fairs to many of the nation's underserved communities. Since the inception of this joint initiative with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, The American Legion has been successful in hosting Job Fairs at Legion Posts throughout the country. As of July 31, 2012, The American Legion has conducted over 50 Job Fairs with the Chamber under the Hiring our Heroes Initiative with a total confirmed Job Fairs of 121. With all the Departments combined, so far there are 221 Job Fairs being considered for this initiative.

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 Chairpersons, Children and Youth representatives, as well as members from The American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion.

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. The average time to assist veterans are as follows: average time in applicant 50 days; average time in evaluation and planning 101 days; average time in extended evaluation 154 days; average time independent living 319 days; average time in rehabilitated to employability (education and training) 700 days; average time in job ready status (job search) 195 days; and average time interrupted 213 days. 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 141 veterans**.** With 141 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.

Department Of Labor Veterans' Employment And Training Service (DOL-VETS)

Veterans' Employment and Training programs are designed to help veterans 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 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
- One-stop Career Centers' Veterans' Gold Card Initiative
- Veterans Retraining Assistance Program
- Centralized Veteran Job Search/Military Translator Website

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 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 emphasize these qualities, to both the public and private sectors, by providing a clear voice that hiring veterans is good for business and good for the nation.

The total number of unemployed veterans is roughly 806,000 (196,000 of them are OIF/OEF). The American Legion understands that, with an overall unemployment rate at 9.5 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:

- 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.

Transition Assistance Program (TAP)

The American Legion recognizes that the new TAP is vital to transitioning service members finding success in the civilian workforce. The VOW to Hire Heroes Act, signed into law by President Obama on November 21, 2011, created the new TAP mandate that all service members, with limited exceptions, participate in the TAP program by November 2012, to help prepare them for civilian employment.

As announced by President Obama on July 23, 2012, the Department of Defense (DOD) in conjunction with the Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Labor (DOL) is launching a redesigned Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to better prepare service members for the transition to civilian life. The redesigned TAP, named Transition GPS (Goals, Plan, Succeed), is a crucial element of the president's plan to reduce veteran unemployment levels, and aims to bolster and standardize the transition support that Sailors receive in order to make them as employment ready as possible.

Pilot courses began in early July at various military installations. Upon completion of the courses at all Department of Defense (DOD) sites, the new Transition GPS will become the standard curriculum taught at all transition centers. Also, an interagency transition to Veterans Program Office team will collect service members' feedback as part of a comprehensive evaluation of the curriculum and format.

In summary, the Transition Assistance Program has been redesigned into a comprehensive, mandatory program that includes pre-separation counseling, a military to civilian skills review, a VA benefits briefing and application sign-up, financial planning support, job search skills building, and individual transition plan preparation. The new TAP curriculum also includes additional career-specific capstone courses in (1) an Education track, (2) a Technical and Skills Training track; and (3) an Entrepreneurship track, which will hopefully promote seamless transitions back into civilian workforce.

The American Legion recommends closely monitoring this new program to ensure that the curriculum is relevant to the current job market situation and of actual benefit to service members separating from service. Further, it is not enough that it has been legally mandated that DOD must provide service members separating from service the opportunity to attend the TAP classes in entirety, but that they must follow through and ensure that this is being implemented within all the branches of service.

Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP)

The American Legion notes that there are approximately 67,500 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 2013.

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 2013.

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, and 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 2013.

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 2013.

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.

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 (Minneapolis and Mid-Winter Conference)

The National Economic Commission hosted an extremely successful Small Business Development Workshop in which 100 participants attended. Attendees were given 12 hours of intensive instruction on how to do business successfully with the government, and, equally important, how to sustain their relationships and stay in business. Speakers representing defense contractors spent part of the first day outlining the types of products and services sought by the government, as did experts from private industry. Speakers from financial and legal firms then presented overviews on business financing, bookkeeping, tax reporting requirements, and related topics. In addition, Jan Frye, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Acquisitions and Logistics, Department of Veterans Affairs, spoke to the National Economic Commission members regarding employment initiatives as well as veteran and service-disabled veteran business owners contracting with the VA.

The free two-day workshops included representatives from PNC Bank, JPMorgan Chase Bank, Superior Bank, The Boeing Company, BAE Incorporation, Athena Construction, BLS Group Incorporated, The BPI Group, Hollank & Knight Law Office, Protorae Law Office, Smith-Manus Bond Agency, congressional representatives, along with federal agencies, which included, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Small Business Administration (SBA), Department of Agriculture (USDA), Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) and the General Services Administration (GSA).

One of the primary issues during the workshops were the numerous barriers for entry into federal contracting for small businesses, which includes: weak policies that limit the effectiveness of tools that are supposed to facilitate contracting opportunities; inadequate workforce training to help contracting officers, small business advocates, and program offices to successfully use contracting tools; and a lack of coordination among and accessibility to agency training and outreach events designed to help small businesses navigate the contracting system. Action must be taken to remove these barriers and ensure veteran small businesses get access to federal contracts.

The American Legion recommends that VA and SBA develop a comprehensive partnership to assist veterans who are interested in participating in federal procurement, with each department utilizing their resources to ensure proper implementation. As interpreted by Federal Court, the VA is mandated by law to purchase all products and services from SDVOSB / VOSB as mandated by the Veteran First law, as long as those SDVOSB / VOSB meet both the legal and contract requirements. Any regulations, policies, and procedures disseminated by the VA that deny SDVOSB / VOSB their contracting preference and priority as defined by the United States Court of Federal Claims is a violation of law.

Home Loan Guaranty Program

VA's Home Loan Guaranty program has been in effect since 1944 and has afforded approximately 19 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 percent funding fee (1/2 percent 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 1.40 percent of the loan amount and those using it for a second or subsequent time pay 2.80 percent.

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 $2,800. For a second time user the fee on this loan amount would be $5,600. 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.

Veteran Homelessness

The National Economic Commission of The American Legion held a successful Homeless Veterans Roundtable on Friday, February 24, 2012, in Lincoln Room West, Concourse Level, Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C. During the roundtable it was noted that VA and HUD reported approximately 67,500 homeless veterans on a single night in January 2011 (2011 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress).

VA has taken decisive action toward its goal of ending homelessness among our nation's veterans. To achieve this goal, VA has developed a five-year plan to assist every homeless veteran willing to accept services retain or acquire: safe housing; needed treatment services; opportunities to retain or return to employment; and benefits assistance. VA has started two prevention initiatives: 1) Supportive Services for Veterans and Families (SSVF) – VA's primary prevention program designed to help veterans and their families rapidly exit homelessness, or avoid entering homelessness and 2) Veterans Homeless Prevention Demonstration (VHPD) Program. This is a collaborative program between VA, HUD and DOL. This project is a multi-site (Texas, Florida, Washington, New York & California), three-year pilot designed to provide early intervention to recently discharged OEF/OIF veterans and their families to prevent homelessness. VA will continue to partner with the community, national and local service providers, and other state and federal agencies to provide comprehensive care to homeless veterans and veterans at-risk for homelessness.

Also, mentioned was the successful Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) within the Department of Labor's Veterans Employment and Training Services (DOL-VETS). HVRP is the only nationwide program focused on assisting homeless veterans to reintegrate into the workforce. This program is a highly successful grant program that needs to be fully funded at $50 million. Currently, HVRP is funded at $38.26 million. Among other matters, best practices were conveyed on how to successfully engage the homeless veteran issue in the local community and how to

successfully execute a Stand Down. Furthermore, it was noted that The American Legion has taken a leadership role within local communities by volunteering, fundraising, and advocating for programs and funding for homeless veterans.

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 Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program. The initial $60 million award served approximately 22,000 veteran families at 85 non-profit community agencies in 40 states and the District of Columbia. Recently, Congress increased authorization of SSVF to $300 million. 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. The SSVF Program is the only federal, veteran-specific program offering rapid re-housing and prevention resources to community service providers.

In addition, 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. 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.

In conclusion, The American Legion has provided housing for homeless veterans and their families as well (i.e., Departments of Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Connecticut). One of the goals of The American Legion is to help bring federal agencies, non-profit organizations, faith-based communities and other stakeholders to the table to discuss best practices, along with funding opportunities, so homeless veterans and their families can obtain the necessary care and help in order for them to properly transition from the streets/shelters into gainful employment and/or independent living.

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 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 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 $2,746,697 for 2011. 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, found in the 2012 National Convention Program and the 2011 Annual 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 National Emergency Fund

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 2011 and for the first three months of 2012.

January 1 to December 31, 2011
(12 months)

Gross Sales	*$11,329,838*
Cost of Goods Sold	*6,027,109*
Overhead	*3,561,396*
Operating Profit	*1,741,333*

Total number of 2011 orders processed was *101,090*

January 1 to March 31, 2012
(3 months)

Gross Sales	*$2,548,078*
Cost of Goods Sold	*1,335,629*
Overhead	*889,113*
Operating Profit	*323,336*

Total orders processed for first 3 months of 2012 was *23,461*

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
John Stovall, Washington, D.C., Director

The following report covers the activities of the Foreign Relations Commission and its staff during the program year ending June 30, 2012

The Ninety Third Annual National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota, 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, Minneapolis, Minnesota
August 30, 31, September 1, 2011

Resolution No. 48 Securing Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenal

National Executive Committee Meetings
October 12-13, 2011

Resolution No. 27 Repatriation of United States Army Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl

National Executive Committee Meetings
May 9-10, 2012

Resolution No. 19: Rescinding obsolete resolutions dealing with Foreign Relations

National Executive Committee Meetings, Fall 2011

An executive session of the Foreign Relations Commission met on October 10, 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 one resolution.

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 a proposed resolution calling on the Department of Defense to utilize all reasonable efforts for the safe repatriation of United States Army Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl. This resolution was referred to the foreign relations commission by the National Convention Committee on foreign relations which met during the 93rd Annual National Convention.

After the commission conducted a thorough analysis of the proposed resolution and engaged in lively discussion on the issues at hand, the commission reached a consensus and made a unanimous recommendation to the National Executive Committee (NEC) to recommend the resolution.

The business meeting also included a presentation by Mr. Freddy Gessner, which began with a review of active and future legislative actives in Washington, D.C. Mr. Gessner covered discussions taking place between staff and the Department of State's office of international organizations to develop a potential outreach plan that would involve the American Legion seeking members with overseas expertise to participate in State Department operations in foreign countries. The presentation also reviewed the efforts by the division in working with the Travel Security Administration's (TSA) Office of Disability Policy (ODPO) and outreach to develop innovations to their screening procedure for individuals with disabilities.

Additional, Mr. Gessner included in his presentation a recount of the Joint Prisoners of War/Missing in Action Accounting Command's (JPAC) annual report. The presentation covered JPAC's accounting results for the October 2009 through September 2010 fiscal year. The commission also discussed the National Defense Authorization Act of 2010, which contains language directing the Department of Defense to increase the number of annual identifications to 200 by 2015. The commission determined that the two potentially greatest challenges to JPAC reaching this goal are potential funding cuts to JPAC and the Defense Prisoner of War / Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) and the effects of Congress not passing a budget in the upcoming year.

On Tuesday, October 11th, the Foreign Relations and National Security Commissions came together to hear from Colonel Gerald Hadley, Commander of the 76th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Col. Hadley provided the Commissions with insight based on his experiences being attached to infantry units as well experiences of his deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. Col. Hadley also discussed military family support issues with the Commissions.

The Foreign Relations Commission looks forward to working with National Commander Wong and the distinguished members of the National Executive Committee in preparation for the National Convention. We thank you for your support.

Washington Conference, 2012

The Foreign Relations Commission met in a joint session along with the National Security Commission on February 27th and convened for its business session on February 29th during the 52nd annual Washington Conference at the Capital Hilton, Washington, D.C. The following is a summary of those sessions:

Morning Joint Session, February 27th

The Foreign Relations Commission, met in a joint session with the National Security Commission. The commissions were honored to welcome National Commander Fang A. Wong, Past National Commander (PNC) Clarence Bacon, PNC Miles Epling, PNC William Detweiler, PNC Tony Jordan, PNC Marty Conatser, PNC David Rehbein, PNC Clarence Hill and PNC Bob Spanogle. National Commander opened the session by relaying messages from the troops he received during his recent travels to Afghanistan, Korea and Hawaii. National Commander Wong explained that the troops are most concerned about three issues when it comes to their service career: 1) TRICARE-system preservation; Retirement-system preservation; and 3) Reductions in Defense spending. National Commander Wong said that the troops are just as concerned for future generation of troops as they are for themselves; especially in the interest of maintaining a superior all-volunteer force.

The joint session included presentations by three guest speakers: Lieutenant Colonel Joseph V. Gallagher III, USMC, Senior U.S. Military Observer, United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, Government House, Jerusalem; Clifford D. May, President of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD); and Bob Calvert, the founder and host of Talking with Heroes Talk Show Program.

Lieutenant Colonel Joseph V. Gallagher was invited to expound on his recently published Parameters article entitled: Unconstitutional War: Strategic Risk in the Age of Congressional Abdication. Lt. Col. Gallagher gave an overview of article which explained that "there is an imbalance of constitutional power across the branches of the US government. Congress has failed to preserve its constitutional privileges, specifically its sole authority to declare war. Over the past 60 years, through a combination of executive initiative and congressional abdication, the United States has engaged in large scale offensive wars absent congressional war declarations, despite Congress's constitutional authority and requirement to formally declare the nation's wars. For the 162 notable military deployments after World War II, Congress never declared war, opting instead to pass resolutions that effectively circumvented the constitutional war declaration process. Arguably, in its major military actions since 1950, the nation has failed to articulate political objectives commensurate with its sacrifice of blood and resources. This dubious record stands in stark contrast to the ends obtained from wars that Congress actually declared." Lt. Col. Gallagher concluded by stating that "US national and military strategy has become disjoined from legitimate political will. American military operations are hampered by the leadership's inability to harness the national will. If this nation declared war when it engaged in war, as the Constitution requires, the United States would wage fewer of them—and be far better positioned to win them."

In the next presentation, Cliff May discussed a recent FDD article which examines Iran's affiliation with al Qaeda. Mr. May reported that Director of National Intelligence James Clapper recently testified to the Senate Armed Services that, "Iran has harbored al Qaeda leaders, facilitators" and that "the Iranians may think that they might use, perhaps, al Qaeda in the future as a surrogate or proxy." Mr. May continued by discussing how the U.S. Treasury Department designated the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security as Iran's primary intelligence organization—for its sponsorship of terrorism—and among the terrorist groups Treasury said MOIS supports: al Qaeda.

In light of this, Mr. May asked why hasn't there been more public discussion of the Iranian-al Qaeda relationship? He gave two reasons: (1) Scholars, journalists and intelligence analysts who denied this association in the past are reluctant to admit they were wrong. (2) Knowledge conveys responsibility: If Iran is – and long has been -- married to al Qaeda, and if Iran is now just a few spins of a centrifuge away from

acquiring nuclear weapons, it follows that strong measures must be taken against this growing threat. In closing, Mr. May said that's a message many Americans do not want to hear and it's certainly a message many American leaders do not want to tell them.

The joint session concluded with Mr. Calvert describing his involvement in supporting our troops beginning almost 8 years ago as a result of his 18 year-old daughter enlisting in the Army.

The Talking with Heroes program is not about politics he said. The program is about helping, honoring, and supporting our men and women in the military and their families. The program enables military personnel an opportunity to share their untold stories about the work they are doing worldwide.

The program also interviews military support and veterans groups for them to share what they do to support our troops, their families, the wounded and more. Mr. Calvert has traveled to Iraq five times since 2006 and to Afghanistan three times in 2010 and in July and August 2011. After his presentation, Mr. Calvert offered the Legionnaires in attendance an opportunity to be interviewed on camera for a new phase in his research project.

Afternoon Joint Session / POW/MIA Update, February 27th

The expert panel on the POW/MIA issues was comprised of Bob Newberry, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/Missing Personnel Office and Director of the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office and Ann Mills-Griffith, Chairman of the Board, National League of Families.

The discussion revolved around the challenges faced by DPMO and JPAC due to congress's inability to pass a budget while simultaneously mandating the National Defense Authorization Act which states that JPAC and DPMO will increase the number of remains accounted for to 200 persons per year by 2015. In addition, Mr. Newberry explained the need for an increased budget to fund equipment and personnel that will be needed to excavate missing personnel from difficult to reach areas within Laos and Vietnam. It was pointed out that in FY 2012 JPAC's budget in increased by $30 million while none of the other accounting community organizations have been allocated any increases.

The panel discussed operations in North Korea. In October 2011, the Department of Defense and North Korea agreed to resume remains recovery operations in the North. Four Joint Field Activities are scheduled to begin in April 2012. Each JFA will consist of 34 U.S. personnel. There will also be 2 recovery teams consisting of 13 personnel each, and one joint survey team consisting of 4 personnel. The Department is working to ensure that these JFAs do not come at the expense of operations for losses in other wars.

On December 1, 2011, SECDEF directed that accounting for missing personnel in the Iraq Theater of Operations be transferred from CENTCOM to DPMO. DPMO has established a new branch to investigate these cases. The most current news from this is the identification of Sgt Altie's remains. The family of Major Gilbert has asked the Air Force to change his status to Killed in Action/Remains not Recovered. USCENTCOM has retained responsibility for accounting for SGT Bergdahl while DPMO is prepared for the possibility that it might be transferred in the future.

After several years of inactivity, the Russian Government has identified its new Co-Chairman and other Russian commissioners of the USRJC. Efforts are underway to facilitate a meeting between the U.S. and Russian Co-Chairman to discuss the Commission's way forward. Research in support of DPMO objectives continues in a number of Russian archives during these discussions. DPMO's Moscow office remains active in archive collections while efforts to reduce the six week advanced notice to access the archive collections continue.

Approximately 73,000 Americans are still missing worldwide from WWII. DPMO is conducting extensive research to identify loss sites for these individuals and conducting investigation and recovery operations in Europe and throughout the Pacific (island nations, Papua New Guinea, China). Recently the Department has been working to get access to loss sites in the Philippines, Burma, and India. DPMO is also working with the Army on a multi-year project to digitize WWII records (X-files and IDPFs) on these missing Americans, so that all elements of the accounting community can work on WWII cases regardless of their locations. The goal is to make these records publicly available once they are digitized.

Wednesday Session (Business Meeting), March 3rd

Foreign Relations Commission Chairman Randall Fisher led commission led the business session in three sections: 1) a presentation by Doctor Jennifer A. Davis, Defense Intelligence Agency; 2) the proposed resolution to rescind 3 non-legislative resolutions; and 3) introduction of John Stovall, Director, National Security and Foreign Relations Division.

Doctor Davis, professor at the Defense Intelligence Agency and Ph.D in Child Soldering provided the Commission with a very informative briefing on the issue of the use of child soldiering throughout the world. Two issues were highlighted from the presentation by the Commission. First, the need for the U.S. Senate to ratify the U.N. Convention on the rights of children (CRC); and second, the issue of the President signing a waiver of penalties on several countries that recruit child soldiers for a second year in a row, in order to allow the U.S. to provide foreign aid. The penalties are mandated under the Child Soldiers Protection Act (CSPA) against Yemen, Chad, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The proposed resolution to rescind 3 non-legislative resolutions 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.

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.

National Executive Committee Meetings, Spring 2012

An executive session of the Foreign Relations Commission met on Monday May 7th, 2012 in the Circle West Center 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 resolution: Rescinding Obsolete Resolutions Dealing with Foreign Relations. Included in this resolution are: Resolution 7 (1954): Immediate release of the American servicemen who fought in Korea

who have not been accounted for; Resolution 17 (1928): Promote international understanding by education and contact to promote the peace and goodwill among the peoples of nations; and Resolution 513 (1941): Re-examine Philippine-American relationship.

After the commission conducted a thorough analysis of the proposed resolutions and engaged in lively discussion on the issue at hand, the commission reached a consensus and made a unanimous recommendation to the National Executive Committee (NEC) to recommend the resolution.

On Tuesday, May 8th, the National Security and Foreign Relations Commissions met in joint session at the Circle Center Conference Room of the Sheraton Hotel in Indianapolis and welcomed guest speaker John Hanson, Senior Vice President, United Service Organizations (USO). Mr. Hanson gave an in-depth presentation on how the USO fulfills its mission of lifting the spirits of America's troops and their families.

The Foreign Relations Commission thanks National Commander Fang A. Wong and the distinguished members of the National Executive Committee for their continuing 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, commemorative activities and conducts the Annual National Legion College.

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 Sons of The American Legion provide financial assistance and volunteer support to all major American Legion programs (more detailed information later in report).

The Internal Affairs Commission also provides program guidance for The American Legion Riders programs administered within the various departments. The American Legion Riders, organized by chapters in some 1,400 American Legion posts, have grown to more than 100,000 members with activities in virtually every department. The Riders raise money for many charitable causes, most notably The American Legion Legacy Scholarship. Since 2006, the annual American Legion Legacy Run has conducted seven major cross-country, multi-day motorcycle runs, traveling more than 9,175 miles and collecting over $3.5 million for college scholarships for the children of our servicemen

and women who have died on active duty to our country. In 2012 The American Legion Legacy Run from Niagra Falls, NY to the convention city of Indianapolis, IN raised $672,000 for the Legacy Scholarship Fund.

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 2011, we had 52 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 552 Legionnaires ready to assume leadership at various levels.

Sons of The American Legion

For the 38th 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 2011 with a record 348,361 members. This number represents a 1.5% percent increase over the previous year. A total of 32 Detachments achieved 100% membership.

Membership in the Sons of The American Legion for 2012 is expected to surpass that of 2011 and give them another "All Time High" for 2012 prior to National Convention.

The Sons of The American Legion continues its support of American Legion programs and is heavily involved with support to our nation's veterans in the VAVS program. In 2011, the S.A.L. provided over 327,333 volunteer hours in VA homes and hospitals. Donations in cash and goods to these veterans exceeded $1,694,024, nationwide. Other projects include Americanism programs of which $2,006,492 was donated along with 615,893 hours of service. This was remarkable considering only 20% of the Squadron's submitted reports. The Sons have raised over $506,000 in the year 2012 for the Child Welfare Foundation surpassing all previous years. The Sons also provided numerous grants through The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Since 1987, the Sons of The American Legion have contributed over five million dollars to The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation.

The Sons continue to support the Legion programs with major emphasis on VAVS, National Emergency Fund, 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, 2012, the American Legion provided $412,700 in grant monies to Legion and SAL members, as well as American Legion posts. During the same period, the NEF received donations totaling $573,100.

In a normal year, approximately $375,000 is dispersed as grants to our members and posts. Every dollar contributed to the fund is used for rendering financial assistance to those that qualify who have incurred devastation from a declared natural disaster. The grants are to be used for immediate needs – lodging, food and clothing – and not as a substitute for insurance. In order to qualify, members must have been displaced or evacuated from their primary place of residence and be a member in good standing at the time of loss. Monies to support the administrative costs of maintaining this fund and to conduct fundraising are absorbed through existing budget areas.

The NEF is unique and members know they can turn to The American Legion for immediate financial assistance without payback. Through the generosity of Legion and SAL members, the National Emergency Fund will continue to meet the needs of our Legion Family in the aftermath of local, state and national weather related disasters.

Consolidated Post Reports

The Consolidated Post Report was established in 1975 in order to assist departments in the documentation of the various activities a specific post has done during the twelve-month reporting period, June 1st through May 31st.

During the 2011-2012 reporting year, sixty-three percent of posts (8,800 posts) reported some activity.

Throughout the reporting year American Legion post members volunteered 895,003 hours in assisting veterans at VA Hospitals; they donated $2,258,893 in emergency aid; 46,528 Legionnaires gave over 83,746 pints of blood; events covered through different media outlets totaled 178,028; they performed 112,798 funeral honors at a cost of $2,710,522; they sponsored 2,254 American Legion baseball teams at a cost of $5,925,258; Legion posts sponsored 2,097 Boy Scout units for a cost of $1,680,477; through various school assisted programs they spend $4,856,870; they presented 26,805 American flags; performed 3,917,943 community service hours while spending $4,621,777 in support of those activities; and all other donations to Family Support Network, Cancer Research, United Way, Legion Endowment Fund, Children's Hospitals, National Emergency Fund, Special Olympics, Temporary Financial Assitance and other various activities totaled $11,485,398.

TROPHIES, AWARDS AND CEREMONIALS COMMITTEE
Randall W. Busch, Nebraska, Chairman

This committee supervises all of the official national awards and recommends to the National Executive Committee recipients for the Distinguished Service Medal. Over the years, some of those awarded The American Legion's highest honor have been Gen. 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 and missing of the Vietnam War, 10 U.S. presidents of the 20th century, The Boy Scouts of America and many other citizens of renown who have made lasting and significant contributions.

Other awards for which Internal Affairs makes recommendations include the International Amity Award and the Canadian Friendship Award. The commission also prepares a report for the National Executive Committee on miscellaneous awards presented each year.

Finally, the committee supervises the contents of the *Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies* of The American Legion.

RESOLUTIONS ASSIGNMENT COMMITTEE
C. Wayne Schrader, Illinois, Chairman

The Resolutions Assignment Committee meets at least three days before the convening of the 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, between 200 and 300 resolutions will be assigned.

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS COMMITTEE
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 & 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 2010 membership 2,405,207
Final 2011 membership 2,403,295
2012 membership as of Aug. 1, 2012 2,360,000

49th Annual National Membership Workshop

The 49th Annual National Membership Workshop convened in Indianapolis on August 3-4, 2012, with more than 400 department and district officers from nearly all 50 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 1,500 American Legion posts in the past 16 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
Ken Governor, New York, Chairman

This report covers activities of the National Legislative Commission from August 13, 2011 through August 10, 2012. 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 created in 1975 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 (currently vacant), two deputy directors, an assistant director, an assistant director/grassroots coordinator, one secretary, and a research analyst. The director, deputy directors, and assistant directors are registered lobbyists and submit semi-annual lobbying reports to Congress, in addition to quarterly reports on legislation which our organization lobbies Congress. Because The American Legion is a federally chartered organization, an annual report is also prepared and submitted to Congress.

112th Congress, 1st Session

When fiscal year (FY) 2012 began on October 1, 2011, none of the 12 required appropriations measures had been passed by Congress. As a result, Congress passed and the President signed five continuing resolutions (CRs) which provided temporary funding – at FY 2010 levels – for the entire federal government for a limited period. One of these measures was Public Law (P.L.) 112-55, enacted on November 18. This measure – referred to as a “minibus” as opposed to an omnibus – besides funding the federal budget until December 16, also funded the Departments of: Agriculture; Commerce; Justice; Transportation; Housing and Urban Development; Science programs and their related agencies.

Finally, as the end of 2011 approached, Congress passed an omnibus measure funding all the remaining federal departments for the balance of FY 2012. This final measure, P.L. 112-74, was passed by both chambers and signed by the President on December 23. This law contains the FY 2012 funding for Military Construction and the Department of Veterans Affairs. A more detailed examination of VA's budget will appear in the latter portion of this report.

Children & Youth

P.L. 112-55 – mentioned above – contains funding for 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. Enacted funding for DOJ programs supported by our organization include:

- $8.1 billion for the FBI, an increase of $149 million over FY 2011 funding;
- $2.0 billion for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA);
- $1.2 billion for the U.S. Marshals Service.
- $1.1 billion for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF); and,
- $263 million for various state and local law enforcement and crime prevention grant programs, aimed at combating juvenile delinquency and youth crime prevention. These programs are 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.

Economic

On November 21 President Obama signed P.L. 112-56, the "*VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011*." The measure passed the Senate on November 10 by a 95-0 vote, while the House on November 16 agreed to the amended bill by a vote of 422-0.

The "VOW to Hire Heroes Act" will boost employment opportunities for the one million unemployed veterans in this country. The unemployment rate for about a quarter-million veterans who have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan stands at 12.1 percent. Of the estimated one million jobless veterans in America, two-thirds of them fall within the 35-64 age group.

Key provisions of P.L. 112-56 include:

- Tax credit of up to $5,600 for businesses hiring veterans who have been looking for a job for more than six months, as well as a $2,400 credit for veterans who are unemployed for more than four weeks, but less than six months.
- Tax credit of up to $9,600 for businesses hiring veterans with service-connected disabilities who have been looking for a job for more than six months.
- Making the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) — an interagency workshop coordinated by the Departments of Defense, Labor and Veterans Affairs — mandatory for service members moving on to civilian life to help them secure meaningful jobs through resume-writing workshops and career counseling.
- Expanding education and training opportunities for older veterans by providing 100,000 unemployed veterans of past eras and wars with up to one year of additional Montgomery GI Bill benefits for education or training programs at community colleges and technical schools.
- Providing disabled veterans up to one year of additional vocational rehabilitation and employment benefits.

- Allowing service members to start looking for federal jobs before separating from active duty in order to facilitate a truly seamless transition from the military to jobs at federal agencies.

One portion of P.L. 112-74 – the Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY 2012 – contained funding for the Department of Labor (DOL). Funding for DOL's Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) totaled $264.9 million, an amount which is $9.3 million more than FY 2011, and $4.9 million more than requested by the Obama Administration. Specific areas of funding included:

- $165.4 million for State Administration Grants;
- $38.3 million for Homeless Veterans programs, and,
- $35.2 million for Federal Administration;
- $14.6 million for the Veterans Workforce Investment Program.
- $9 million for the Transitional Assistance Program;
- $2.4 million for the National Veterans Training Institute;

During his meetings with members of Congress, Commander Wong stressed the need for federal assistance to combat high unemployment among the nation's veterans.

Foreign Relations

The Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY 2012 provides $42.1 billion in total discretionary funding for the State Department and Foreign Operations, which is $6 billion below the funding levels for FY 2011, and $8.7 billion below the President's request. Specific areas of interest to The American Legion include:

- $8.2 billion in total global assistance to Global Health Programs, including the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, measles, malaria, and a possible influenza pandemic;
- $3.1 billion in military assistance to Israel;
- $1.3 billion in economic and military aid to Egypt;
- $1.1 billion for international narcotics control and law enforcement; and,
- $1 billion in and border security/anti-terrorism military aid to Pakistan; and,
- $627 million in assistance for nations of Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia.

Internal Affairs

On December 13, 2011 President Obama signed P.L. 112-66, a bill to amend title 36, United States Code, to authorize The American Legion under its federal charter to provide guidance and leadership to the individual departments and posts of the American Legion. This law amends the Legion's charter to clarify statutorily the autonomous, independent nature of our posts and departments. It would also facilitate credit card processing of online membership renewals. The House version of the bill, H.R. 2369, was introduced on June 24, by Rep. Jason Altmire (PA). The measure accumulated 432 cosponsors, an historic number of cosponsors and a sign of respect for our organization. A Senate companion measure, S. 1639, was introduced on October 3 by Sens. Jon Tester (MT) and Dean Heller (NV). On October 6, the Senate passed S. 1639 by unanimous consent. The House passed S. 1639 on December 6, by a unanimous voice vote.

National Security

On September 8 members of the Legislative Division staff met with the staff of Reps. Richard Hanna (NY), Darrell Issa (CA), and Elijah Cummings (MD) to discuss H.R. 2061, the "*Civilian Service Recognition Act of 2011*." This bill would authorize the head of an executive agency to pay the expenses for the presentation of a U.S. flag for an agency employee who died of injuries sustained which were related to his or her employment.

While the desire to recognize and honor the service of civilian employees with the presentation of an American flag is admirable, The American Legion felt this bill poorly defined eligible recipients, the manner in which the flag would be presented, and other details. Prior to this meeting, a vote by the House was delayed due to Rep. Hanna's schedule. That gave The American Legion an opportunity to address our concerns and criticisms of the bill.

As a result of this meeting, H.R. 2061 was rewritten to address our organization's suggestions. The .House passed the measure on November 2 by a vote of 425-0, with the Senate approving the bill by unanimous consent on December 8. It was enacted by the President on December 20 as P.L. 112-73.

On September 23 The American Legion submitted testimony for the record regarding a hearing of the Joint Subcommittees on Oversight and Investigation of the House and Senate Armed Services committees. The hearing was an update of the status of Arlington National Cemetery. While The American Legion has been appreciative of the management of the embattled cemetery by Director Kathryn Condon in the year since she took over in June of 2010, in terms of a long term solution the policy of the Legion is for administrative duties of the cemetery to be transferred to the VA's National Cemetery Administration (NCA). Director Condon has done a laudable job working to correct errors of the past, and uncover the full extent of the previous mismanagement, yet in the long term, the mission of managing the cemetery is more consistent with the mission of NCA rather than DOD.

The sooner management can begin transitioning to NCA operation of the cemetery, the better. While the current staff at Arlington struggles to come up with new techniques and standard operating procedures, it should be noted these procedures are already in place at 131 National Cemeteries nationwide. NCA recently received a satisfaction rating of 94 percent in the American Customer Satisfaction Index. It is the most highly lauded agency of the federal government for the smooth execution of its duties.

FY 2012 spending for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was included in P.L. 112-74, the omnibus appropriations bill. The measure provides $39.6 billion for the operations of DHS programs, a $2 billion reduction from FY 2011 spending and $4 billion less than the President's spending request. Some of the specific program totals of interest to The American Legion include:

- $11.7 billion for the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, an increase of $362 million over last year's amount;
- $10 billion for the U.S. Coast Guard, $86 million below last year's spending total;
- $7.8 billion for the Transportation Security Administration, $153 million more than last year's funding total;
- $5.9 billion for the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, an increase of $50 million over last year's funding;
- $2.4 billion for the state and local "first responders" grant program, $1 billion below last year's spending level;
- $1.7 billion for the U.S. Secret Service, an increase of $151 million over last year's level; and,
- $966 million for the Federal Air Marshals, an increase of $5 million over the previous year's funding amount.

The bill also contained a provision prohibiting funds to transfer, release, or assist in the transfer or release of Guantanamo detainees to or within the U.S. or its territories.

Spending amounts for DOD programs were also included in P.L. 112-74. Discretionary programs were funded at $518.1 billion, an increase of $5.1 billion over the FY 2011 enacted amounts, and $20.8 below the President's request. An additional $115.1

billion would be assigned to the Overseas Contingency Operations account. Some of the major funding proposals include:

- $163.1 billion for Operations and Maintenance, which provides for operating and maintaining the armed forces;
- $131.1 billion for Military Personnel, which includes pay and allowances, training, bonuses and incentive pays, and health and retirement benefits;
- $104.6 billion for Procurement accounts, allowing DOD to provide the troops with the best weapons and equipment possible; and,
- $72.4 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:

- $32.5 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;
- $4.7 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, which secures and dismantles weapons of mass destruction and their associated infrastructure in former Soviet states; and,
- $453 million for 54 M1A2 SEP Abrams tanks.

Military construction spending was pegged at $13.1 billion for these projects – a decrease of $3.5 billion below last year's level and $1.7 billion below the President's request. Within that total, the law funds military family housing construction at $1.7 billion, which provides for a total of 48 new family housing construction projects, 80 replacement projects, and improvements to 216 family housing units. It also contains $1.1 billion for construction and alterations for new or existing military medical facilities, and fully funds the FY 2012 BRAC request. The law also includes $270 million in Overseas Contingency Operations funding for eight military construction projects designed to advance efforts in the Global War on Terror. These projects include housing, logistical, and basic operations facilities in Afghanistan, Bahrain, and Djibouti.

Another agency funded by the FY 2012 omnibus measure was the Selective Service System. For this year, the agency will receive $23.9 million, a decrease of $242,000 from last year. The Selective Service System's mission is to supply manpower to the armed forces to ensure the security of the U.S. in the event of a national emergency.

On December 31 President Obama signed P.L. 112-81, the FY 2012 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). After wrangling over several provisions – including one about the long-term detention of enemy combatants – both chambers finally agreed to a conference report. One part of the final agreement included a provision relating to the exhumation of American naval personnel buried in Tripoli, Libya in 1804. The Secretaries of Defense and the Navy will evaluate the feasibility of exhuming, identifying, and returning the remains to family members in the U.S. A report will then be submitted to the Armed Services committees of both chambers by the end of

September, 2012. The American Legion will continue to push for the recovery of the remains of these American heroes.

Several provisions in the new law comply with The American Legion's opposition to arbitrary TRICARE fee increases by tying any such increases directly to military retirement pay raises. Specifically, the NDAA reads, "Whenever after September 30, 2012, the Secretary of Defense increases the retired pay of members and former members of the armed forces…the Secretary shall increase the amount of the fee payable for enrollment in TRICARE Prime by an amount equal…to the percentage increase in such retired pay."

Another aspect of P.L. 112-81 that relates to TRICARE, and was supported by the Legion, aims to ensure there is an adequate number of health-care providers honoring the benefit to meet the military retiree community's needs.

The American Legion also firmly supports the addition of the National Guard's voice on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Chief of the National Guard Bureau Gen. Craig R. McKinley will serve as a full member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which previously consisted of only a chairman and vice-chairman and heads of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps. "The National Guard, while not a separate military service branch, does have distinct roles and missions that warrant a seat at the table among the top leaders in the Pentagon," said National Commander Fang A. Wong. "This action properly recognizes the unique but connected role the National Guard and all our Reserve components play in today's military affairs."

The NDAA law also contains a provision that authorizes DOD to make a thorough review of the military health system, with the intent of creating a unified medical command. This provision was supported by The American Legion.

Among the many bills still awaiting action is S. 253, a bill that would establish the World War I Centennial Commission to: (1) plan, develop, and execute programs, projects, and activities to commemorate the centennial of World War I; (2) encourage private organizations and state and local governments to organize and participate in such activities; (3) facilitate and coordinate such activities throughout the United States; (4) serve as a clearinghouse for the collection and dissemination of information about centennial events and plans; and (5) develop commemoration recommendations for Congress and the President. It would also designate the Liberty Memorial of Kansas City in Kansas City, MO as the National World War I Museum and Memorial; and the District of Columbia War Memorial in Washington, DC as the District of Columbia and National World War I Memorial.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Department of Veterans Affairs funding for FY 2012 was included in P.L. 112-74, the consolidated omnibus appropriations measure. VA funding totaled $122.2 billion, with discretionary funding amounting to $58 billion — $2.1 billion above last year's level. It also includes $52.5 billion in advance appropriations for VA's three medical care accounts.

The chart below shows VA's medical care accounts, with the President's proposed FY 2012 VA discretionary funding, the proposed FY 2013 advance appropriations for the medical care accounts, the advance funding contained in P.L. 112-74, and The American Legion's proposed appropriations totals as presented to Congress in September, 2011 by National Commander Wong.

VA MEDICAL DISCRETIONARY PROGRAMS

	President's FY 2012 VA Advance Appropriations	President's FY 2013 VA Advance Appropriations	Final FY 2013 Advance Appropriations P.L. 112-74	American Legion's FY 2013 Request
Medical Services	$39.6 billion	$41.3 billion	$41.3 billion	$38.1 billion
Medical Support & Compliance	$5.5 billion	$5.7 billion	$5.7 billion	$5.3 billion
Medical Facilities	$5.4 billion	$5.4 billion	$5.4 billion	$6.2 billion
Medical/Prosthetic Research	$509 million	$509 million	$581 million	$600 million
Total Medical Care	***$51.0 billion***	***$52.9 billion***	***$53.0 billion***	***$50.2 billion***

The chart below presents funding for non-medical programs, showing: the final FY 2011 discretionary funding totals for VA's non-medical accounts; the President's FY 2012 proposal for these accounts; final funding amounts contained in P.L. 112-74; and The American Legion's proposal from Commander Wong's testimony in September of 2011.

VA NON-MEDICAL DISCRETIONARY PROGRAMS

	P.L. 111-322 FY 2011 VA Funding	President's FY 2012 VA Budget Proposal	Final FY 2012 VA Appropriations P.L. 112-74	American Legion's FY 2012 VA Budget Request
National Cemetery Administration	$250 million	$251 million	$251 million	$260 million
General Operating Expenses – VBA	$2.5 billion	$2.5 billion	$2.0 billion	$2.6 billion
Information Technology	$3.3 billion	$3.2 billion	$3.1 billion	$3.5 billion
Major Construction	$1.2 billion	$590 million	$590 million	$1.2 billion
Minor Construction	$468 million	$550 million	$482 million	$800 million
State Homes Construction Grants	$100 million	$85 million	$85 million	$100 million
State Cemeteries Construction Grants	$46 million	$46 million	$46 million	$60 million

On October 5 the President signed P.L. 112-37, the "*Veterans Health Care Facilities Capital Improvement Act of 2011*." The bill passed the House on September 20 by a vote of 412-3, and was approved by the Senate three days later by unanimous consent. Among its many provisions the measure:

- Authorizes VA to carry out certain FY 2012 major medical facility construction projects including; seismic corrections to VA medical facilities in Seattle, WA, West Los Angeles, CA, St. Louis, MO, and San Juan, PR; major construction at facilities in Palo Alto, CA, and Fayetteville, AR; and the expansion of construction projects in Orlando, FL.
- Authorizes leases for outpatient and clinics in Columbus, GA, Fort Wayne, IN, Rochester, NY, Salem, OR, San Jose, CA, South Bend, IN, and Springfield, MO.; and,

- Extends to December 31, 2018, specified authority for: treatment, rehabilitation, and additional services for seriously mentally ill and homeless veterans; housing assistance for homeless veterans; and, VA's Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans.

On October 12, the House passed H.R. 2433, the "Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) Act of 2011." The recorded vote was 418-6. This measure was one of the focal points of Commander Wong's testimony and meetings with members of Congress during his two week visit to our nation's capital. It now awaits action in the Senate.

As passed by the House, H.R. 2433 would:

- Direct the Department of Labor, from January 1, 2012 to March 31, 2014, to provide for monthly payments, through VA, of up to 12 months of retraining assistance, to certain veterans from 35 to 60 years of age applying by October 1, 2013, who: (1) were last discharged from Armed Forces active duty service with an honorable discharge, (2) have been unemployed for a designated period of time, and (3) are ineligible for specified veterans' benefit educational assistance. It also sets forth the maximum number of eligible veterans who may participate in the program and the permitted forms of education and training;
- Revise guidelines for stationing Transition Assistance Program (TAP) personnel to require DOL to contract with a private entity or entities to provide specified counseling, employment, and training services;
- Require the mandatory participation of all Armed Forces members eligible for employment assistance and other transitional services unless a documented urgent operational requirement prevents attendance;
- Modify the demonstration project on credentialing for Armed Forces active duty service members transitioning to civilian employment by requiring the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training to: (1) select at least 5 but not more than 10 (currently, at least 10) military occupational specialties, and (2) enter a contract with an appropriate entity representing a coalition of state governors to identify credentialing, certification, and licensing requirements incorporating the necessary skills for such specialties;
- Create a three-year pilot program requiring DOL to make grants and enter contracts for veterans employment and training services with any of the ten states with the highest unemployment rates in the nation; and,
- Prohibit full-time disabled veterans' outreach program specialists (DVOPs) and local veterans' employment representatives (LVERs) from performing non-veteran related duties and services.

On November 9, President Obama enacted P.L. 112-53, the "*Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2011*." This law – effective December 1, 2011 — increased the rates of veterans' service-connected disability compensation, additional compensation for dependents, the clothing allowance for certain disabled veterans, and dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses and children. The COLA would be tied to the same COLA given to Social Security benefits recipients. This was the first COLA for veterans' compensation recipients in two years.

112th Congress, 2nd Session

The Second Session of the 112th Congress convened on January 3, 2012. Major issues on the agenda for both chambers include the economic recession and the fiscal year (FY) 2013 federal appropriations. To date, The American Legion has participated in fourteen congressional hearings during the Second Session.

On February 13, President Obama released his FY 2013 federal budget proposal. This budget contains increased funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The proposed VA funding for next fiscal year – which begins October 1, 2012 – totals

$139.7 billion for all VA programs. This is an increase of $10.5 billion over current year funding.

The charts below compare VA discretionary spending from: FY 2012 final funding, the President's FY 2013 proposal; and The American Legion's recommendations as presented by Commander Wong to the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs committees last September. The first chart outlines VA medical programs – mainly advance appropriations – while the second chart shows non-medical areas.

VA MEDICAL DISCRETIONARY PROGRAMS

	Final FY 2013 Advance Appropriations P.L. 112-74	**President's FY 2014 VA Advance Appropriations**	**American Legion's FY 2014 Request**
Medical Services	$41.3 billion	$41.5 billion	$44.0 billion
Medical Support & Compliance	$5.3 billion	$5.7 billion	$5.5 billion
Medical Facilities	$5.7 billion	$5.4 billion	$6 billion
Medical/Prosthetic Research #	$581million	$583 million	$600 million
Total Medical Care	***$52.9 billion***	***$53.2 billion***	***$56.1 billion***

This account is *not* included in the advance appropriations calculations.

VA NON-MEDICAL DISCRETIONARY PROGRAMS

	Final FY 2012 Appropriations P.L. 112-74	**President's FY 2013 Budget Proposal**	**American Legion's FY 2013 Budget Request**
Natl. Cemetery Administration (NCA)	$251 million	$258 million	$260 million
General Operating Expenses – VBA	$2.0 billion	$2.2 billion	$2.2 billion
Information Technology	$3.1 billion	$3.3 billion	$3.3 billion
Major Construction	$590 million	$532 million	$5.3 billion
Major Construction – NCA	$38 million	$10 million	$100 million
Minor Construction	$482 million	$608 million	$1.2 billion
Minor Construction – NCA	$42 million	$58 million	$100 million
State Veterans Homes Grants	$85 million	$85 million	$85 million
State Veterans Cemetery Grants	$46 million	$46 million	$50 million

Some proposed funding for specific areas include:

- $1 billion to provide VA services for homeless and at-risk veterans, through collaborative partnerships with local governments, non-profit organizations, and the Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Justice (DOJ), and Labor (DOL);
- $250 million to improve access and quality of care for VA-enrolled veterans residing in rural areas by supporting their unique needs;
- $128 million for the Veterans Benefit Management System (VBMS), designed to reduce the processing time and the claims backlog, facilitate quality improvements through rules-based tools, and automatic claims tracking; and,

- $32.7 million to fund 279 additional vocational rehabilitation and employment (VR&E) counselors to ensure that veterans receive timely information about education opportunities, job counseling and placement.

On February 15 and 19, The American Legion testified before the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs committees respectively, giving its views on VA's FY 2013 budget request. The testimony re-emphasized the VA budget request presented by National Commander Wong last September. The American Legion will continue to monitor the FY 2013 budget process.

Congressional elections will take place this November. All 435 seats in the House of Representatives and 34 Senate seats will be in play. As of August 6, ten senators are retiring and one was defeated for re-nomination. In the House, 27 members have announced plans to retire, 11 are running for U.S. Senate seats, and two are seeking different offices. Eight House incumbents were defeated while running for re-nomination, and another was defeated while running for another office.

Americanism

In January of 2011, Representative Jo Anne 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 89 cosponsors. Five months later, Sen. Orrin Hatch (UT) introduced Senate Joint Resolution (S.J. Res.) 19. That measure now has 36 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 May 10 the full House approved H.R. 5326**,** a measure to fund the Departments of Commerce and Justice and Science programs. The vote for passage was 247-163. Several of the accounts in the Department of Justice are of particular concern to The American Legion. Some of the funding amounts for selected accounts include:

- $8.2 billion for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI);
- $2.0 billion for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA);
- $1.8 billion for state and local law enforcement and crime prevention grant programs;
- $1.2 billion for the U.S. Marshals Service;
- $1.1 billion for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF); and,
- $210 million for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

A Senate companion measure, S. 2323, has not yet been acted upon by the full Senate. These measures are still in the preliminary stages of the legislative process..

Economics

On June 14, the Senate Appropriations Committee voted 16-14 to approve S. 3295, the FY 2013 spending bill for the Departments of Labor (DOL), Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies. The House Appropriations Committee has developed a draft of the same bill, but has not acted upon it. Within the DOL budget is funding for the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans Employment and Training (ASVET).

The chart below outlines funding for ASVET accounts appropriated for FY 2012, the President's proposed FY 2013 fund amounts, and proposed funding levels for FY 2013 as contained in S. 3295. 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 2012*	*FY 2013 President's Budget Proposal*	*FY 2013 VETS Funding, Senate Version*
State Administration Grants	$165.1 million	$170 million	$172 million
Transition Assistance Program	$8.9 million	$12 million	$14 million
Federal Administration	$35.1 million	$35.2 million	$35.2 million
National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI)	$2.4 million	$3.4 million	$3.4 million
Homeless Veterans Assistance Programs	$38.2 million	$38.2 million	$38.2 million
Veterans' Workforce Investment Programs	$14.6 million	----------	----------
Totals	**$264.4 million**	**$258.9 million**	**$262.8 million**

The measure now goes to the full Senate for action. At this time, the House Appropriations Committee has not approved a companion measure to the Senate's bill.

On July 23, President Obama signed P.L. 112-147, a measure entitled the "*Veterans Skills to Jobs Act.*" The measure passed the House on July 9 by a recorded vote of 369-0, while the U.S. Senate approved the bill two days later by unanimous consent. This law would direct the head of each federal department and agency to treat relevant military training as sufficient to satisfy training or certification requirements for federal licenses. During the bill's consideration on the House floor, Rep. Jeff Denham (CA) – the measure's original sponsor – stated, "If you've had the best training in the world, you ought to be able to get the best jobs in the world; and this body ought to make sure that certification, that licensure is a seamless process. If you leave Active Duty today, you ought to have work tomorrow in the private sector utilizing that very same training."

On August 6, President Obama signed P.L. 112-154, the "*Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012*." The measure originally passed the House of Representatives on May 23, 2011 by a vote of 380-0. It was passed by the Senate on July 18, 2012 as an amended omnibus veterans bill. On July 31, the House agreed to a Senate version, sending it to the White House for enactment. Several provisions in that measure are related to Economic issues. They are:

- VA's program for specially adapted housing requires it be temporarily expanded. Provisions include eligibility for specially adapted housing assistance grants for veterans with lower limb loss, as well as veterans with vision impairment. The legislation also revises current law to exclude the temporary residence adaptation grant from counting towards the total grant, and improves assistance support, annually adjusted, for disabled veterans living in a family member's home (extended through December 31, 2022).
- Surviving spouses will be eligible for VA home loan guarantees for a period of ten years after the death of their service member, veteran, or POW. Furthermore, a veteran would be able to count a dependent child, serving in the Armed Forces, to satisfy VA occupancy requirements under the home loan program. Lastly, VA's adjustable rate mortgage (ARM) loan guarantee program shall be made permanent, as will VA's hybrid adjustable rate mortgage (HARM) loan guarantee. The fee for VA's Home Loan program will

be waived for disabled service members transitioning to veteran status under the legislation.

- Renews VA's enhanced-use lease authority (expired December 2011), with increased oversight of the program and limits leases to programs serving homeless veterans only.
- Authorizes grant funds for new construction of transitional housing for homeless veterans, as well as matches funds from private and public sources for such housing, with annual reports from VA to Congress. The bill would also extend fully funded programs aiding homeless veterans, including homeless veterans' reintegration programs and support services for very low-income veteran families.
- Many homeless veterans also require specialized care. The bill instructs VA to provide treatment and rehabilitation services to homeless veterans who are not considered seriously mentally ill. Additionally, male homeless veterans with minor dependents would be classified as special needs veterans to receive grants and per diem payments for services. The measure also authorizes grant recipients to provide services to the dependent if a veteran is receiving services from the grant organization. Furthermore, the bill would increase case management and coordination of care for homeless veterans through local and state agencies, tribal organizations, and/or nonprofits as a means to better assist homeless veterans through housing programs.
- Veterans in specially adapted housing, receiving subsistence allowances, utilizing independent living services or VA home loans, or in receipt of VA-paid transportation, and which are hindered or destroyed by a natural disaster, shall continue to receive assistance from VA under this legislation.
- VA's authority to guaranty timely payment of principal and interest on pools of mortgage loans will be extended, as will VA's authority to collect loan fees and adjustments of maximum home loan guaranty amounts.
- The Department of Labor will be required to publish data for government contractors, indicating their record of hiring veterans. Additionally, VA will establish a "VetStar" program to recognize companies that have made significant contributions to veteran employment.

National Security

On June 7 the House passed H.R. 5855, legislation to fund the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for the next fiscal year. The vote was 234-182. The Senate Appropriations Committee passed S. 3216, a companion to the House measure on May 22. The Senate panel's recorded vote was 27-3.

The Senate bill totals $45.2 billion in discretionary spending, while the House version spending amount is $39.1 billion.

Programs of interest to The American Legion under these bills:

- $11.9 billion for U.S. Customs and Border Protection in the Senate bill, $10.2 billion in the House version;
- $10.3 billion for the U.S. Coast Guard in the Senate measure, $10 billion in the House bill;
- $7.6 billion for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) in the Senate bill, while the House version allocates $5.1 billion;
- $5.6 billion for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in the Senate version, $5.5 billion in the House bill;
- $1.8 billion for state and local grant programs for "first responders in the House measure , with the Senate bill giving this program $1.4 billion;
- $1.6 billion for the U.S. Secret Service in both bills:

- $930 million for U.S. Air Marshals in the Senate measure, $880 million in the House bill; and,
- $258 million for the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in the Senate bill, while the House would allocate $256 million.

Both measures now go to their respective chambers for consideration and passage.

Military Construction funding for FY 2013 is contained in H.R. 5854 and S. 3215, MilCon/VA spending measures. Under the provisions of both bills, military construction accounts would receive $10.6 billion, $569 million below the President's budget request. Some of the specific accounts addressed include:

- $7.3 billion to fund active duty military construction, including operational, training, and research facilities, barracks, schools, hospitals, and clinics, in the House bill, while the Senate measure would allocate $7.1 billion;
- $1.6 billion is requested for family housing construction and privatization projects in both measures;
- $1 billion for reserve component construction, including readiness centers, training facilities, and related construction necessary for the training and administration of the reserve components in each bill;
- $476 million for various Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) accounts in both measures;
- $254 million to fund the U.S. share of joint U.S.-NATO military facilities in both versions; and,
- $151 million for chemical demilitarization construction in each bill.

President Obama on August 6 signed P.L. 112-154, entitled the "*Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012*." Two provisions in that measure relate to national security. They are:

- While ensuring the freedom to protest, but protecting the rights and the honor of the families of the fallen, those wishing to protest military funerals, or at national cemeteries, shall be subject to restrictions, and if violated, protesters shall be punished by criminal or civil action. In addition, service members who die on active duty shall now be eligible for Presidential Memorial Certificates to honor their service to the Nation.
- With space at Arlington National Cemetery expected to run out in the mid-2050s, reservations for more than one gravesite will no longer be permitted, nor will reservations be honored until time of death, except under extraordinary circumstances. Furthermore, decisions regarding organizations wishing to place monuments honoring the service of a group or individual at Arlington National Cemetery will now be administered by the Secretary of the Army, with Congress retaining the right to overrule the decision within 60 days of notification.

On July 19, by a vote of 326-90 the House passed H.R. 5856, the fiscal year 2013 spending bill for the Department of Defense (DOD). The bill totals $605.8 billion, which includes $87.7 billion in Ongoing Military Operations in Afghanistan.

During floor debate, a number of amendments were adopted. They included 4 separate amendments – all approved by voice votes – which transferred funds from other DOD areas to reassign those funds to certain areas in the Defense Health Programs. Specifically, the transferred funds include: $15 million for spinal cord research; $10 million for Gulf War illness research, adopted by a voice vote; $10 million for traumatic brain injury and PTSD research and treatment; $10 million to increase suicide prevention outreach; and $5 million for eye injury research. In a healthcare-related area, an amendment was introduced by Rep. Cliff Stearns (FL) to prohibit the implementation of an enrollment fee for the TRICARE for Life program. This amendment passed by a recorded vote of 399-17.

Other adopted amendments included the prohibition of funds relating to the reduction of this country's nuclear forces. There was also an amendment prohibiting the use of funds to implement another round of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC).

Some of the major funding proposals include:

- $175.2 billion for Operations and Maintenance, which provides for operating and maintaining the armed forces, which is $12.1 billion more than the current year;
- $128.5 billion for Military Personnel, which includes pay and allowance, training, bonuses and incentive pays, and health and retirement benefits, a total which is $2.6 billion less than FY 2012;
- $102.5 billion for Procurement accounts, allowing DOD to provide the troops with the best weapons and equipment possible, $2.1 billion under current totals; and,
- $70 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; this funding amount is $2.4 billion less than FY 2012 spending amount.

Some specific accounts funded include:

- $32.8 billion in Defense Health Program costs;
- $15.2 billion to procure 11 Navy ships including 3 DDG-51 *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyers and advanced procurement for 2 SSN-774 *Virginia*-class attack submarines;
- $5.2 billion for 29 F-35 Lightning II (formerly the Joint Strike Fighter) aircraft, including $2.7 billion in continued RDTE costs;
- $2.6 billion for 37 F/A-18E/F Hornet carrier-based aircraft;
- $2.4 billion for 69 UH-70 Blackhawk and 42 MH-60S/R helicopters;
- $2 billion for the National Guard and Reserve Equipment account;
- $1.7 billion for 18 MV-22 and 4 CV-22 Osprey aircraft;
- $1.3 billion for chemical agents and munitions destruction;
- $1.1 billion for drug interdiction and counter-drug activities of DOD;
- $986 million for 12 E/A-18 Growlers electronic warfare aircraft, including advance procurement for 15 additional Growlers;
- $792 million to maintain and modernize 3 Navy cruisers slated for decommissioning; and,
- $519 million for the Cooperative Threat Reduction program, which secures and dismantles weapons of mass destruction and their associated infrastructure in former Soviet states.

The Senate has not yet voted on its version of this measure.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

On May 22, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved S. 3215, the fiscal year (FY) 2013 funding measure for Military Construction programs and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and related agencies. The vote was 27-3. The bill would fund these operations at $146.6 billion, $466 million below the President's request, yet $228 million above the current year's funding totals. Action by the full Senate is pending.

On May 31, the House of Representatives approved H.R. 5854, the House companion bill to S. 3215. The vote was 407-12. The bill would fund VA operations at $125.4 billion, an amount $259 million below the President's request and $13.1 billion above the current year's funding totals. Total VA mandatory funding is $74.6 billion, with discretionary spending set at $62.7 billion.

S. 3215 provides $135.6 billion for VA accounts, a total of $13.8 billion above FY 2012 funding amounts. $74.6 billion will go to mandatory programs – compensation and

pension, insurance, and VA housing – while discretionary programs will receive $60.9 billion. In addition, the Senate committee approved $165 million in additional funds over the amounts passed last year for FY 2013. These added amounts were a result of specific need, including updates to VA medical care projections for the coming year. These areas include: $155 million for medical care; $8 million for the Board of Veterans Appeals to address the ever-growing backlog of appeals; and $2 million for the Office of the Inspector General.

The chart below indicates VA's medical care accounts with FY 2013 VA discretionary funding, the President's proposed FY 2014 advance appropriations for the medical care accounts, the funding amounts passed by the House and Senate Appropriations committees, and The American Legion's proposed appropriations as presented to Congress last September by National Commander Wong.

	Final FY 2013 Advance Approps. P.L. 112-74	**President's FY 2014 VA Advance Approps.**	**H.R. 5854, FY 2014 House Proposal**	**S. 3215, FY 2014 Senate Proposal**	**American Legion's FY 2014 Request**
Medical Services	$41.3 billion	$41.5 billion	$41.5 billion	$43.6 billion	$44 billion
Medical Support & Compliance	$5.3 billion	$5.7 billion	$5.7 billion	$6.0 billion	$5.5 billion
Medical Facilities	$5.7 billion	$5.4 billion	$5.4 billion	$4.9 billion	$6.0 billion
Medical/Prosthetic Research #	$581million	$583 million	$600 million	$583 million	$600 million
Total Medical Care	***$52.9 billion***	***$53.1 billion***	***$53.2 billion***	***$55.0 billion***	***$56.1 billion***

This account is *not* included in the advance appropriations calculations.

The chart below presents funding for non-medical VA programs, showing FY 2012, the President's FY 2013 proposal, the funding amounts passed by the House and Senate Appropriations committees, and The American Legion's proposal for FY 2013.

	Final FY 2012 Approps. P.L. 112-74	President's FY 2013 Budget Proposal	H.R. 5854, House FY 2013 Proposal	S. 3215, Senate FY 2013 Proposal	American Legion's FY 2013 Request
National Cemetery Administration	$251 million	$258 million	$258 million	$258 million	$260 million
General Operating Expenses – VBA	$2.0 billion	$2.2 billion	$2.2 billion	$2.2 billion	$2.2 billion
Information Technology	$3.1 billion	$3.3 billion	$3.3 billion	$3.3 billion	$3.3 billion
Major Construction	$590 million	$532 million	$532 million	$532 million	$5.3 billion
Major Construction – NCA	$38 million	$10 million	----------	----------	$100 million
Minor Construction	$482 million	$608 million	$608 million	$608 million	$1.2 billion
Minor Construction – NCA	$42 million	$58 million	----------	----------	$100 million
State Homes Construction Grants	$85 million	$85 million	$85 million	$85 million	$85 million
State Cemetery Construction Grants	$46 million	$46 million	$46 million	$46 million	$50 million
Total VA Construction	*$1.20 billion*	*$1.27 billion*	*$1.27 billion*	*$1.27 billion*	*$7.85 billion*

Some specific areas of funding in S. 3215 include:

- $7.2 billion for long term care for the nation's aging veterans as well as the severely wounded combat veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan;
- $5.8 billion for health care and support services for homeless veterans;
- $403 million to meet the unique needs of women veterans;
- $250 million for medical services for veterans in rural and highly rural areas, including Native American veterans; and,
- $86 million for the Board of Veterans Appeals, to address the increasing backlog of appeals claims.

Other accounts in the measure which interest The American Legion include:

- $74 million for the American Battle Monument Commission (ABMC) in the House bill, $58 million in the Senate version;
- $32 million for the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims in both measures;
- $149 million for Arlington National Cemetery, which includes an additional $103 million for expansion of the cemetery, in both bills; and,
- $68 million for operations, maintenance, and the capital plan for the Armed Forces Retirement Home in both measures.

On July 9, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed H.R. 4114, the "*Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment* [COLA] *Act of 2012*," by a voice vote. It now heads to the Senate for consideration and passage. If enacted, H.R. 4114 would increase the annual cost-of-living rate between 1.3 and 1.9 percent for veterans and would go into effect on December 1, 2012. The amount of the COLA is not currently known because it is based on the costs of goods and services determined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index; this calculation will not be made until October.

On August 6, President Obama signed P.L. 112-154, the "*Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012*." The measure originally passed the House of Representatives on May 23, 2011. It was passed by the Senate on July 18, 2012 in an amended omnibus version. On July 31, the House agreed to the Senate version, sending it to the White House for enactment. The bill was amended by the Senate with the inclusion of a number of other House-passed bills, yielding a veterans omnibus package. Provisions of the bill include:

- Veterans and their families who fall ill (or are ill) due to contaminated well water between 1957 and 1987 will be eligible to receive healthcare through VA for certain medical conditions. For family members, VA will be considered as the "payer of last resort."
- VA would waive co-payments for veterans utilizing tele-health care to provide better access to VA services for rural veterans. VA would also evaluate the feasibility of providing reimbursements for travel for veterans wishing to receive care at their nearest Vet Center. Additionally, VA will establish rural health resource centers to better understand the challenges of veterans living in rural regions.
- VA shall enter into contracts with State veteran homes in all 50 states to provide nursing home care to better care for elderly and severely service-disabled veterans.
- New protections will be mandated to prevent sexual assault occurring at VA facilities from going unreported and unpunished.
- Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), one of the signature wounds of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom, will now have access to expanded individualized rehabilitation and reintegration services to increase their independence and quality of life.
- VA would be required to implement tele-consultation capabilities at its facilities in order to better coordinate health care for veterans. Tele-consultation also aims to increase training for medical residents within VA's healthcare system. In addition, the current ban on allowing service dogs who assist veterans visiting VA facilities would be lifted.
- VA shall establish a system to improve its ability to identify billable claims and make appropriate collections for medical care, as well as extend its authority to collect (through September 30, 2013) copayments from veterans in hospice or nursing home care. VA's authority to recover costs for certain healthcare and services provided to veterans through a third party provider also will be extended.
- Survivors and dependents would be allowed to use up to 81 months of VA educational assistance.
- The legislation also instructs DOD and VA to provide annual reports to Congress (through 2021) on GI Bill programs, specifically how the programs affect recruiting and retention in the military services.
- When a VA disability claim is sent for review to the Board of Veterans' Appeal, the agency of original jurisdiction will waive review of new evidence presented to the board (unless specifically requested). Furthermore, veterans needing assistance with claims may now assign a signatory on their behalf to sign and file the claim (i.e., those under the age of 18, mentally incompetent, or physically disabled). VA must also provide veterans the option of how to receive claims-related communications, for instance, via electronic communications. Through this legislation, claims processors also must make every attempt to assist veterans in obtaining relevant records, including private medical records (up to two attempts).

- Allow veterans to file jointly for Social Security and Indemnity compensation. Furthermore, claims for certain disability ratings may be retroactively paid when claims are fully completed when submitted to VA; surviving spouses could receive benefits from VA in the month of death, as well as accrued benefits; and couples who both receive disability compensation will receive increased pensions (for those who qualify). In addition, the legislation protects pension benefits for veterans, surviving spouses, and dependents from insurance claims, court awards, settlements, theft, or casualty loss.
- VA shall review and revise its skills and competency thresholds for Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) employees to ensure claims for compensation and pensions are not affected by poorly performing employees, and that appropriate personnel actions are enforced. Furthermore, VA will be required to submit quarterly reports on VA conferences to Congress.
- VA will provide reimbursement for ambulance services only to and from VA facilities. Furthermore, "attributable income" for veterans' reporting to VA shall be clarified to mean the most recent year information is available.
- Under the Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act (SCRA), the period of time that banks will be prohibited from foreclosure/eviction of service members due to late payments will be extended from 9 to 12 months after military service.

NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION
G. Michael Schlee, Maryland, Chairman
John Stovall, Washington, D.C., Director

The following report covers the activities of the National Security Commission and its staff during the program year ending June 30, 2012.

National Convention, Minneapolis, Minnesota
August 30, 31, September 1, 2011

The Ninety Third Annual National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota, 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:

Resolution No. 19	Honoring the Four Chaplains
Resolution No. 40	Military Occupational Specialty Standards
Resolution No. 42	The American Legion's Position on the Operational Reserve
Resolution No. 9	Secure Northern Border
Resolution No. 44	Stolen Valor Act
Resolution No. 47	Support for Legislation Prohibiting Hate Speech at Military Funerals
Resolution No. 60	The American Legion Policy for the United States Government to Provide Maintenance to Clark Veterans Cemetery in the Philippines
Resolution No. 105	Military Commissaries
Resolution No. 106	The American Legion's Position on DOD's Military Retirement System

National Executive Committee Meetings
October 12-13, 2011

Resolution No. 1: National Defense Funding

Resolution No. 30:	Identifying National Interests before Committing Military Forces and Assets
Resolution No. 31:	The Department of Defense Military Retirement System
Resolution No. 32:	Family Support Outreach Program/Adopt a Unit
Resolution No. 33:	Earned Military Benefits
Resolution No. 34:	Department of Defense (DoD) Personnel Policy
Resolution No. 36:	Rescinding Obsolete Resolutions

National Executive Committee Meetings
May 9-10, 2012

Resolution No. 1:	National Defense Funding
Resolution No. 13:	Airport Courtesy for Military Personnel in Uniform
Resolution No. 14:	Handling of Military Remains
Resolution No. 16:	Protection, Preservation and Retention of Federal and Military Monuments in the United States
Resolution No. 17:	Rescinding Obsolete Resolutions Dealing with National Security
Resolution No. 18	Illegal Immigration Policy

National Executive Committee Meetings, Fall 2011

An executive session of the National Security Commission met on October 10, 2011 in the Circle Center Conference Room of the Sheraton Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana, to discuss current national security issues facing the United States and review and consider 15 resolutions.

National Security Commission Chairman Schlee opened the meeting and welcomed Past National Commander Clarence Bacon of Maryland, Past National Commander Tony Jordan of Maine, Past National Commander Ron Conley of Pennsylvania, Past National Commander Bob Spanogle of Michigan, and Past National Commander 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 committee and council chairmen were introduced and thanked for their service.

The commission proceeded to consider the 15 resolutions.

After review and discussion, eight resolutions are recommended by the commission for approval: National Defense Funding; Earned Military Benefits; Immigration Reform to Enhance National Security; Rescinding Obsolete Resolutions; Identifying National Interests Before Committing Military Forces and Assets; Department of Defense Personnel Policy; Family Support Outreach Program/Adopt a Unit; and The Department Of Defense Military Retirement System.

Three resolutions are recommended by the commission for rejection and two resolutions are recommended to be received and recorded. These resolutions are listed in Addendum A.

In addition, the commission considered and concurred on two resolutions providing funding guidelines for the National Firefighter of the Year and the National Law Enforcement of the Year Awards. These resolutions will be reported by the Finance Commission.

While all resolutions are important, your commission feels that the National Defense Funding resolution deserves special emphasis. If the defense cuts that some are proposing or are imminent under the Budget Control Act occur, our nation will be at peril. In briefings two weeks ago, defense experts warned us that the results of these potential reductions would be "irreparable" and "irreversible." The Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee has said that "any additional reductions would be devastating." This demands action by The American Legion to forcefully oppose these cuts. There are three supporting documents attached to Resolution 1 (National Defense Funding) which further

explain the potential disaster these cuts might bring both to our armed forces and the nation.

Resolution No. 30 (Identifying National Interests Before Committing Military Forces and Assets) is also of particular note and spells out a recommended position for the U.S. Government to identify national interests before committing military forces and assets. This recommended position also calls for clear and understandable disclosure to the American people. Resolution No. 30 has two supporting documents.

The National Defense Funding resolution and the resolution on Identifying National Interests Before Committing Military Forces both had their origin in earlier meetings of the Special Committee on Afghanistan and Iraq.

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. At the session, the National Defense Funding resolution was again reviewed and discussed.

Deputy Director Joe Grassi presented an extensive update on national security issues and the Budget Control Act.

The commissions were happy to welcome Colonel Gerald Hadley, Commander of the 76th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Col. Hadley has spent the majority of his career with Infantry units and he has deployed to both Afghanistan and Iraq. He discussed the current challenges facing our military including family support issues.

The National Security Commission thanks National Commander Fang A. Wong and the distinguished members of the National Executive Committee for their continuing support.

Washington Conference

The National Security Commission met in a joint session along with the Foreign Relations Commission on February 27th and convened for its business session on February 29th during the 52nd Annual Washington Conference at the Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C. The following is a summary of those sessions.

Morning Joint Session, February 27th

The National Security Commission, met in a joint session with the Foreign Relations Commission. The commissions were honored to welcome National Commander Fang A. Wong, Past National Commander (PNC) Clarence Bacon, PNC Miles Epling, PNC William Detweiler, PNC Tony Jordan, PNC Marty Conatser, PNC David Rehbein, PNC Clarence Hill and PNC Bob Spanogle. National Commander Wong opened the session by relaying messages from the troops he received during his recent travels to Afghanistan, Korea and Hawaii. National Commander Wong explained that the troops are most concerned about three issues when it comes to their service career: 1) TRICARE-system preservation; Retirement-system preservation; and 3) Reductions in Defense spending. National Commander Wong said that the troops are just as concerned for future generation of troops as they are for themselves; especially in the interest of maintaining a superior all-volunteer force.

The joint session included presentations by three guest speakers: Lieutenant Colonel Joseph V. Gallagher III, USMC, Senior U.S. Military Observer, United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, Government House, Jerusalem; Clifford D. May, President of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD); and Bob Calvert, the founder and host of Talking with Heroes Talk Show Program.

Lieutenant Colonel Joseph V. Gallagher was invited to expound on his recently published *Parameters* article entitled: Unconstitutional War: Strategic Risk in the Age of Congressional Abdication. Lt. Col. Gallagher gave an overview of article which explained that “there is an imbalance of constitutional power across the branches of the

US government. Congress has failed to preserve its constitutional privileges, specifically its sole authority to declare war. Over the past 60 years, through a combination of executive initiative and congressional abdication, the United States has engaged in large scale offensive wars absent congressional war declarations, despite Congress's constitutional authority and requirement to formally declare the nation's wars. For the 162 notable military deployments after World War II, Congress never declared war, opting instead to pass resolutions that effectively circumvented the constitutional war declaration process. Arguably, in its major military actions since 1950, the nation has failed to articulate political objectives commensurate with its sacrifice of blood and resources. This dubious record stands in stark contrast to the ends obtained from wars that Congress actually declared." Lt. Col. Gallagher concluded by stating that "US national and military strategy has become disjoined from legitimate political will. American military operations are hampered by the leadership's inability to harness the national will. If this nation declared war when it engaged in war, as the Constitution requires, the United States would wage fewer of them—and be far better positioned to win them."

In the next presentation, Cliff May discussed a recent FDD article which examines Iran's affiliation with al Qaeda. Mr. May reported that Director of National Intelligence James Clapper recently testified to the Senate Armed Services that, "Iran has harbored al Qaeda leaders, facilitators" and that "the Iranians may think that they might use, perhaps, al Qaeda in the future as a surrogate or proxy." Mr. May continued by discussing how the U.S. Treasury Department designated the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security as Iran's primary intelligence organization—for its sponsorship of terrorism—and among the terrorist groups Treasury said MOIS supports: al Qaeda.

In light of this, Mr. May asked why hasn't there been more public discussion of the Iranian-al Qaeda relationship? He gave two reasons: (1) Scholars, journalists and intelligence analysts who denied this association in the past are reluctant to admit they were wrong. (2) Knowledge conveys responsibility: If Iran is — and long has been — married to al Qaeda, and if Iran is now just a few spins of a centrifuge away from acquiring nuclear weapons, it follows that strong measures must be taken against this growing threat. In closing, Mr. May said that's a message many Americans do not want to hear and it's certainly a message many American leaders do not want to tell them.

The joint session concluded with Mr. Calvert describing his involvement in supporting our troops beginning almost 8 years ago as a result of his 18 year-old daughter enlisting in the Army.

The Talking with Heroes program is not about politics he said. The program is about helping, honoring, and supporting our men and women in the military and their families. The program enables military personnel an opportunity to share their untold stories about the work they are doing worldwide.

The program also interviews military support and veterans groups for them to share what they do to support our troops, their families, the wounded and more. Mr. Calvert has traveled to Iraq five times since 2006 and to Afghanistan three times in 2010 and in July and August 2011. After his presentation, Mr. Calvert offered the Legionnaires in attendance an opportunity to be interviewed on camera for a new phase in his research project.

Afternoon Joint Session / POW/MIA Update, February 27th

The expert panel on the POW/MIA issues was comprised of Bob Newberry, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/Missing Personnel Office and Director of the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office and Ann Mills-Griffith, Chairman of the Board, National League of Families.

The discussion revolved around the challenges faced by DPMO and JPAC due to Congress's inability to pass a budget while simultaneously mandating the National Defense Authorization Act which states that JPAC and DPMO will increase the number of remains account for to 200 persons per year by 2015. In addition, Mr. Newberry explained the need for an increased budget to fund equipment and personnel that will be needed to excavate missing personnel from difficult to reach areas within Laos and Vietnam. It was pointed out that in FY 2012 JPAC's budget in increased by $30 million while none of the other accounting community organizations have been allocated any increases.

The panel discussed operations in North Korea. In October 2011, the Department of Defense and North Korea agreed to resume remains recovery operations in the North. Four Joint Field Activities are scheduled to begin in April 2012. Each JFA will consist of 34 U.S. personnel. There will also be 2 recovery teams consisting of 13 personnel each, and one joint survey team consisting of 4 personnel. The Department is working to ensure that these JFAs do not come at the expense of operations for losses in other wars.

On December 1, 2011, the DOD directed accounting for missing personnel in the Iraq Theater of Operations be transferred from CENTCOM to DPMO. DPMO has established a new branch to investigate these cases. The most current news from this is the identification of Sgt Altie's remains. The family of Major Gilbert has asked the Air Force to change his status to Killed in Action/Remains not Recovered. USCENTCOM has retained responsibility for accounting for SGT Bergdahl while DPMO is prepared for the possibility that it might be transferred in the future.

After several years of inactivity, the Russian Government has identified its new Co-Chairman and other Russian commissioners of the USRJC. Efforts are underway to facilitate a meeting between the U.S. and Russian Co-Chairman to discuss the Commission's way forward. Research in support of DPMO objectives continues in a number of Russian archives during these discussions. DPMO's Moscow office remains active in archive collections while efforts to reduce the six week advanced notice to access the archive collections continue.

Approximately 73,000 Americans are still missing worldwide from WWII. DPMO is conducting extensive research to identify loss sites for these individuals and conducting investigation and recovery operations in Europe and throughout the Pacific (island nations, Papua New Guinea, China). Recently the Department has been working to get access to loss sites in the Philippines, Burma, and India. DPMO is also working with the Army on a multi-year project to digitize WWII records (X-files and IDPFs) on these missing Americans, so that all elements of the accounting community can work on WWII cases regardless of their locations. The goal is to make these records publicly available once they are digitized.

Wednesday Session (Business Meeting) February 29th

National Security Commission Chairman G. Michael Schlee opened the business session to conduct its conference business. The meeting was organized in three sections: 1) National Security Update; 2) Military and Military Families Outreach & Support Discussion; 3) National Executive Committee Spring Meetings and National Convention Forecast.

John Stovall, Director, National Security Division, began the National Security Update by introducing himself to the commission and by describing his focus on strengthening relationships between the American Legion National Security and Foreign Relations Division and Capitol Hill and the White House along with the Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of State. Mr. Stovall fielded two questions on Islamic-extremist attacks on domestic military installations and U.S. nuclear defense posture respectively. Mr. Stovall concluded that we must delve into those subjects more deeply

and be sure to communicate The Legion's position on these matters without equivocation.

Special guest speaker John Paul Cook presented his views during the Military and Military Families Outreach & Support portion of the program. Mr. Cook began by thanking The American Legion for support on a broad range of issues. He said that The Legion's efforts to establish relationships with Family Readiness Groups should be applauded; especially the outreach being conducted to the reserve components often situated in rural areas. He went on to congratulate The Legion on its recently made partnership with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and encouraged The Legion to work to perpetuate a similar relationship with the Pentagon. The Joint Ethics Regulation is a huge impediment to The American Legion and its efforts to reconnect with and assist troops currently serving in the active component. With the drawdown of approximately 100,000 troops due to the Budget Control Act imminent, we can expect the DOD to lean more heavily on the reserve components, he said while pointing to the promotion of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau to the Joint Chiefs of Staff as part of the most recent defense authorization. "A Best Practices Summit that focuses on the Legion programs that are working may be an idea worth pursuing," he said.

Joseph Grassi, Deputy Director, wrapped up the meeting by discussing the planning processes underway for the Spring Meetings and the National Convention.

National Executive Committee Meetings, Spring 2012

An executive session of the National Security Commission met on May 7, 2012 in the Circle Center Conference Room of the Sheraton Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana, to discuss current national security issues facing the United States and review and consider 8 resolutions.

National Security Commission Chairman Schlee opened the meeting and welcomed Past National Commander Clarence Bacon of Maryland, Past National Commander Ron Conley of Pennsylvania and Past National Commander 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 committee and council chairmen were introduced and thanked for their service.

The commission proceeded to consider the 8 resolutions. After review and discussion, 7 resolutions were recommended by the commission for approval: National Defense Funding; Support for the Global War on Terrorism; Protection, Preservation and Retention of Federal and Military Monuments in the United States; Handling of Military Remains; Rescinding Obsolete Resolutions Dealing with National Security; Airport Courtesy for Military Personnel in Uniform; and Illegal Immigration Policy. The updated resolution on National Defense Funding contains new addenda which illustrate the need for sustained defense resourcing.

One resolution was recommended by the commission to be disposed of administratively.

The meeting included a presentation on the defense budget by Director John Stovall. He suggested that current projected defense cuts combined with possible additional sequestered cuts of up to $500 billion over the next ten years under the Budget Control Act (BCA) would dangerously weaken America's military readiness and strategic position in the world. Also noted were the dramatic increases in TRICARE fees proposed under the Administration's FY 2013 budget request.

Director Stovall also gave an update on Arlington National Cemetery (ANC). Progress at ANC under their new leadership has been impressive. For example, they have implemented a new system that will dramatically improve public interaction with the cemetery. The system combines close aerial mapping of the burial sections, photos of the

front and back of each headstone, and scanned images of all documents and records associated with each of the over 400,000 gravesites.

In addition, Past National Commander Bacon addressed the commission with a comprehensive update on the transition of wounded warriors from Walter Reed Army Medical Center to the recently established Walter Reed Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. Overall, the transition has gone well with the exception of uncompleted road construction and delayed accessibility to some support facilities also due to uncompleted construction.

Deputy Director Joseph Grassi gave a brief overview of the plans for the commission's pre-convention trip to the National Guard Patriot Academy and Muscatatuck Urban Training Center both located in Butlerville, Indiana. The visit will be conducted on August 24.

On Tuesday, May 8, the National Security and Foreign Relations Commissions met in joint session at the Circle Center Conference Room of the Sheraton Hotel in Indianapolis. Foreign Relations Commission Chairman Randy Fisher opened the meeting and welcomed National Commander Clarence Hill of Florida. The commissions were honored by PNC Hill's attendance and very appreciative of his participation in the Joint Session. The main program featured guest speaker John Hanson, Senior Vice President, United Service Organizations (USO). Mr. Hanson gave an in-depth presentation on how the USO fulfills its mission of lifting the spirits of America's troops and their families.

Also, both commissions thank National Commander Fang A. Wong for visiting the Joint Session and addressing our group with concerns involving national defense funding, maintaining superior armed forces and troop support in face of possibly catastrophic defense cuts under the Budget Control Act's looming sequestration deadline.

National Security Chairman Schlee followed and reconvened the National Security Commission for a briefing on the Military Coalition press release which was published yesterday, which implores Congress to take action to prevent sequestration. If there are any concerns in this regard, please keep in mind that in accordance with Resolution No. 37 (Spring NEC 1988) Reaffirmation of The American Legion Policy Concerning Affiliation with Other Organizations, The American Legion shall not be a member of, or affiliated with, any organization, committee, association, council or group whereby The American Legion might be committed to a policy contrary to that adopted by The American Legion.

The American Legion has not been silent on these issues. On the contrary, we have been actively and aggressively fighting for a strong national defense. In response to the creation of the Joint Select Committee on Debt Reduction commonly referred to as the "Super Committee," the National Executive Committee passed Resolution No. 1 (National Defense Funding) during the Fall 2011 NEC and updated and reaffirmed our position in the National Defense Funding Resolution before you.

Furthermore, last October, the 12 elected representatives and senators who served on the Super Committee were visited in Washington, D.C. by 40 Legionnaires from 11 departments to personally discuss our grave concerns with the drastic budget cuts currently pending under sequestration.

In closing, in our continuing effort to educate our membership on the vital issue of military readiness, we will be holding a National Security Symposium on Monday, August 27 during the 94th National Convention. This symposium will address important topics such as the defense budget, strategic threats, war powers and the Constitution, and preserving the defense industrial base. We encourage everyone to attend this event and please spread the word about this event to your friends and fellow Legionnaires.

The National Security Commission thanks National Commander Fang A. Wong and the distinguished members of the National Executive Committee for their continuing support.

National Security Principles

The American Legion upholds the following national security principles as fundamental to the best interests of the United States: The National Security Strategy needs to be reassessed so that missions and resources are more closely aligned; 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; 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; 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; Peacetime Selective Service registration should be retained to maintain our capability to rapidly reconstitute forces in the event of national emergencies or war; Force modernization for the Military 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; 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; 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; 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; The United States Government must honor its obligations to all service members, veterans, military retirees and their families and survivors, and lasting compensations and incentives should be equitable and not reduced in value by budgetary gimmicks and program changes; 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; 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

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 John Stovall, Director; Joseph Grassi, Deputy Director; Freddy Gessner, Assistant Director; Marlene Hall, Assistant Director; Ray Spencer, Military Review Board Supervisor; David Michael, Military Review Board Representative; and Larry Provost, Military Review Board Representative 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: Robert C. Weyenberg (WI)—Aerospace; Charles E. Kruger (MN)—Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness; George W. Wehrli (FL)—Law and Order; Charles F. Moreland (FL)—Merchant Marine; Leo H. Malloy (MA)—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 93rd 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 2011 through June 2012, many thousand 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, 2011 through June 15, 2012, many Departments of The American Legion actively participated in the Blood Donor program. The leading departments included Ohio, Virginia, Washington, Tennessee, Montana 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. Police Officer Scott Womack of North Carolina was named as the 2011 National Law Officer of the Year and was presented with the honor at the 93rd National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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. Captain Brian Michel of Georgia was named as the 2011 National firefighter of the Year and was presented with the National Firefighter of the Year Award at the 93rd National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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 93rd 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 93rd 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 Alaska, Hawaii, Illinois, Minnesota, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont and Virginia. The American Legion presented over several thousand ROTC Medals to ROTC students in 2011.

NAVAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
William B. Goede, Minnesota, Chairman

Guided by resolutions adopted at the 93rd 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.

The new PR System Tool Kit was developed, produced and distributed in 2012. The toolkit offers a wide array of new media tools, information, and templates for press releases, advisories, letters, as well as electronic PSAs, videos, website media ads, and PR presentations. It provides insight into new media technologies, references, websites and tips on using social media to the benefit of post public relations efforts. The interactive PDF file is available for direct use online or download at: http://www.legion.org/prtoolkit. The American Legion Public Relations Toolkit received a Platinum Hermes Award in the Communications Plan category for 2012 from the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals.

The public service television spot series, "Honor Our Veterans," was also honored with a National Telly Award for excellence. The spots call on all Americans to go beyond saying "thanks" to taking tangible action in supporting veterans by going to The American Legion website where suggestions and links are provided ranging from writing letters to veterans up to contributing to American Legion charities. The "Honor Our Veterans" spots are of exceptional broadcast quality and call on all Americans to support veterans and promote The American Legion's advocacy. They are available free in any digital format required by request to pr@legion.org.

Commission staff also developed a series of radio and television PSAs for patriotic holidays. The series includes spots for Veterans Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Flag Day and Armed Forces Day. A new PSA promoting the High School Oratorical

competition was also developed following taping of interviews at the IUPUI campus in April.

To date, more than $1 million has been raised for Operation Comfort Warriors since its inception in December 2008. More than $700,000 was spent to purchase items meant to improve the morale, welfare and recreation of wounded, injured or ill warriors in U.S. military hospitals and warrior transition units around the world. A delegation of Legion national directors along with members of the Department of Georgia visited Fort Benning, Ga. on a Reconnect tour April 18-20. While there, Operation Comfort Warriors provided nearly $10,000 worth of fitness equipment for the new Warrior Transition Battalion barracks. OCW also provided $25 Amazon gift cards for each of the 400 wounded warriors stationed at the Ft. Benning WTB. Additionally, Public Relations Commission staff attended the GI Film Festival in May, where they distributed AMC movie theater gift cards to Washington-area wounded warriors. OCW has also provided gifts and tickets for wounded warriors and their families to attend Six Flags Fiesta Texas.

The Memorial Day American Legion ad slick used the theme, "Freedom is not free." Two color and two black & white versions were sent by email to 5,272 daily and weekly newspapers. Other new media products made available to Legionnaires included electronic files for two outdoor billboard signs that promote The American Legion. The file contains an editable field for local post information.

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.

The American Legion Amateur Radio Club (TALARC) operated for three days in commemoration of The American Legion's 93rd birthday in March. More than 300 amateur radio operators from around the country – and Canada – contacted club station K9TAL with congratulatory messages on the 20-meter shortwave band. Each received a commemorative certificate. There are now more than a thousand licensed American Legion family members who are members of TALARC.

Awards

At the 52nd Washington Conference, The National Commander's Public Relations Award was presented to Capt. Dale Dye, USMC (Ret.) for raising public awareness about military culture and history through his role as a senior military advisor and actor in Hollywood. The company he founded, Warriors, Inc., played a major role in the creation of some of the most successful and heralded war films in history, including *Platoon, Band of Brother* and *The Pacific*. Another Warriors, Inc. film, *Saving Private Ryan,* was selected in a survey of readers of *The American Legion Magazine* as "The Greatest War Film Ever."

The American Legion Fourth Estate Award was presented at the 94th National Convention in Indianapolis, Ind., to the Pittsburgh Tribune Review, the Daily Caller and Television Station KLRT. This was the second consecutive award for the Tribune-Review.

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, American veterans in our nation.

THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE COMMISSION
Dennis J. Henkemeyer, Minnesota, Chairman
Jeff Stoffer, Indiana, Director

The American Legion Magazine Division uses a variety of print and electronic media channels to inform and support veterans, their families and communities throughout the United States and beyond. The division uses media to raise awareness of the organization, enhance the member experience, provide tools for participation and to disseminate The American Legion message to the general public.

The two most prominent media channels – *The American Legion Magazine* and www.legion.org – rank first nationally for audience size among veteran magazines and websites. The magazine's household circulation is nearly 2.4 million with an overall readership of nearly 4 million. *The American Legion Magazine* ranks No. 1 among all U.S. titles for having read four of the last four issues, according to Mediamark Research, Inc. The American Legion's national website has average monthly visitation between 300,000 and 600,000, which is greatest among veterans service organizations. The American Legion Online Update e-newsletter, which has more than 382,000 subscribers per week, has a remarkably high open rate of 30.4 percent.

Several other American Legion national media products and services are the responsibility of the Magazine Division. They include:

- The *Dispatch*, the organization's national leadership newspaper, reaches approximately 19,000 households per month with news and information relevant to officers in the organization.
- The Dugout e-newsletter, in support of American Legion Baseball, has a subscriber list of more than 31,000.
- The American Legion Annual Report, a snapshot of the year's events and financial statements, is produced by the division, available both in print and electronic formats, distributed to more than 20,000 members.
- The American Legion's social-media footprint is managed by the Magazine Division. This includes nine Facebook pages with a combined weekly reach of 97,444, a Twitter following of more than 10,000, and a YouTube channel.
- The American Legion National Convention Program is produced by the division and is distributed to more than 10,000 each year during 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 24,000 subscribers.
- The American Legion Veterans Career Center e-newsletter provides information about job fairs and career events. Newly introduced, it has a subscriber base of about 1,100.
- The American Legion Youth Alumni Association e-newsletter for former participants of the organization's youth programs, has more than 2,400 subscribers.
- The division has recently introduced the first members in a family of apps for mobile devices, including an American Legion Claims Coach, an organizational tool for veterans and service officers looking to file VA claims. Other mobile products include an American Legion National Convention app and a mobile version of the national website.
- The division's media program also promotes and supports a variety of membership services, including online joining and renewing, as well as membership administration and networking in the members-only area of

the national website, www.mylegion.org, where more than 4,000 post officers are registered administrators and nearly 20,000 members have posted profiles.

The division is monetized by a $3 per-member allocation each year, along with paid advertising and some 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. Other monetization streams include online donations, e-merchandising, registration fees and cost savings through the conversion of print products to digital. Online membership transactions skyrocketed in 2012, when more than 145,000 members renewed online in the first year it was offered electronically.

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 2012 is a special package in the September magazine, to coincide with numerous electronic-media features, in support of American Legion service officers and their efforts to break the VA backlog. The magazine also has exclusive interviews with President Obama and Republican nominee for president, Mitt Romney, scheduled in the October issue. Additional feature stories have focused on the defense budget, unrest in the Middle East, breakthroughs in limb transplants, the dangerous waning days of Operation Enduring Freedom, robotics at war, artificial intelligence, the last battle of the Vietnam War and much more. Accompanying nearly every prominent magazine piece is a video and web counterpart, offering readers deeper engagement with the subject matter.

The American Legion Magazine Division also provides writing, editing, images and design for a number of media products under the responsibility of other divisions, including The American Legion Online Extension Institute, the "Why You Should Belong" booklet, "Our Pillars, Your Platform" guide to election issues, and many speeches, press releases, posters and other forms of media.

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, 2012.

The Twenty-first Annual National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota, 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:

2011 National Convention
Minneapolis, MN

Res #	Title
4	The American Legion Policy on Environmental Exposures
8	The American Legion Policy on Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans
37	Policy to Protect the Rights and Ceremonies of Volunteer Honor Guards
38	Policy to Provide the Department of Veterans Affairs the Ability to Purchase Medications Located Outside the United States
39	Policy to Increase Transparency of the Veterans Benefits Administration's (VBA) Claims Processing
52	Policy to Prevent Any Organization or Person from Charging for Claims Assistance

109	Veteran Treatment Courts
110	Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Programs
111	Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER)

National Executive Committee Meeting
October 13-14, 2011

Origin	Title
33 Natl. Conv.	Policy on the Use of Service Dogs for Injured Service Personnel and Veterans
65 Natl. Conv.	Policy to Expand Burial Benefits to All National Guard and Reservists with Honorable Discharges or Those Whose Death Occurred During Service
83 Natl. Conv.	Including Compensation Benefits Processing and Contact Information at the Initial Intake Interview
VA&R	Permanent Exemption for Pharmacy Procurements Under the Veterans Health Administration Acquisition Realignment Plan
VA&R	NVLSP Agreement FY 2012
VA&R	Rescinding Non-Legislative Resolutions from the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission
VA&R	No Fee is Permitted to be Charged for Assistance in Preparing or Filing a VA Benefits Claim and to Provide Other Information Concerning Representation

National Executive Committee Meeting
May 4-5, 2012

Origin	Title
VA&R	Post Deployment Health Committee
VA&R	Rescinding Resolutions of the VA&R Commission
VA&R	Department of Veteran Affairs Enhanced Use Leasing (EULs)
VA&R	Consider Air Force C-123K Aircraft under Agent Orange Presumptive List
VA&R	Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Quality of Care Report

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission Meetings

Members of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission held four meetings during the period August 31, 2011, through May 5, 2012.

The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee met on August 28, 2011, during the National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota 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 10-11, 2011, 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 12, 2011.

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission met for the 88th consecutive year in Washington, DC, on February 27, 2012, in conjunction with the 52nd Annual Washington Conference.

Annual National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference

The 89th Annual Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Conference was held at the Washington Hilton Hotel in Washington, D.C. on February 27, 2012.

National Commander Fang A. Wong (NY) presented The American Legion Volunteer of the Year Award to Walter V. Finley, Jr. (NY). Conferees were addressed

by the W. Scott Gould, Deputy Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs; Allison A. Hickey, Under Secretary for Benefits, Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs; Robert A. Petzel, M.D., Under Secretary for Health, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs; and Matt Stiner, M.P.A., Director of Development and Outreach, Justice for Vets.

A Women Veterans Panel discussed the evolving role of women veterans today and was moderated by Verna L. Jones (NC), Director of the VA&R Division. Other panelists included:

Serena Chu PhD., Program Analyst, Office of Rural Health, Office of the Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health (ADUSH) for Policy and Planning, Department of Veterans Affairs; Sandi Mabry, CFNP, Women Veteran Health Care Provider, Stephens City Veterans CBOC; Hilda R. Heady, MSW, ACSW, Senior Vice President and Chair, Rural Health Research and Policy Group; Linda Gee CRNP, Cumberland VA CBOC; and Cindy Huges, Counselor, Martinsburg Vet Center, Department of Veterans Affairs.

In the afternoon, presentations included: Steve L. Muro, Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, Department of Veterans Affairs; Richard C. Stark, MD, Director of Primary Care Operations, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs; Joe Paiva, Executive Director Virtual Lifetime Electronic Records, Department of Veterans Affairs; and Laura B. Balun, Director, VA Voluntary Service Office, Department of Veterans Affairs.

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Legislative Activities

The VA&R Division participated in a total of eleven (11) hearings. The testimony was delivered at both field (2) and subcommittee (3) hearings. Please refer to the following table for more information about the content and timeline of the hearings:

Date	Topic	Person Involved	Testimony
January 24, 2012	The State of VA Disability Ratings	Verna Jones	Written
Februrary 9, 2012	Investigations on VA Fiduciary Program	Lori Perkio	Oral & Written
March 29, 2012	Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs on Pending Legislation	Verna Jones	Oral & Written
April 5, 2012	Examining the Role of Vet Centers	Bruce Thiesen	Oral & Written
April 16, 2012	House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health on Pending Legislation	Jacob Gadd	Written
April 18, 2012	A Look at Claims Representatives' Role in the Disability Claims Process	Randall Fisher	Oral & Written
April 21, 2012	Improving Access to Quality Healthcare for Rural Veterans	Mervin Gunderson	Oral & Written
June 6, 2012	Aid and Attendance, A Department of Veteran Affairs Program	Lori Perkio	Oral & Written
June 19, 2012	Reclaiming the Process: Examining the VBA Claims Transformation Plan as a Means to Effectively Serve Our Veterans	Richard Dumancas	Oral & Written
June 20, 2012	Pending Legislation: HR 5747, HR 3860, HR 4740, and HR 5948	Lori Perkio	Oral &Written
July 18, 2012	Invisible Wound: Examining the Disability and Compensation Benefits Process for Victims or Military Sexual Trauma	Lori Perkio	Oral & Written

Informational Services/Distribution of VA&R Releases

The American Legion has several pamphlets and brochures available upon request to veterans and organizations in need.

In particular to the Department of Veterans' Affairs and Rehabilitation Division, highest in demand (with a soon to be newly revised cover) is The American Legion Guide:

Women Veterans — Identifying Risks, Services, and Prevention." (Stock # 70-022) Also popular is "The American Legion Guide to: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder- What is it? Who gets it? What can be done?" (Stock # 70-003) Presently under revision is "The Sourcebook for Military Personnel and Veterans". (Stock # 70-002)

Currently unavailable until further notice is "The American Legion: Post Service Officers Guide." (Stock # 73-001)

The following brochures are also informatively helpful and can be requested from The Veterans' Affairs and Rehabilitation Division:

- "What to do Before A Veteran Dies: A guide to pre-planning." (Stock # 70-021)
- "Veterans Serving Veterans-A summary on The American Legion Volunteer Program in the Community" (Stock # 70-012)
- "Agent Orange Benefits & Programs: A Guide for Vietnam Veterans and Their Families." (Stock # 70-006)
- "Gulf War Era Benefits & Programs: A Guide for Veterans and Their Families." (Stock # 70-004)
- "Welcome Home: Operation Iraqi Freedom & Operation Enduring Freedom Veterans. Know Your Benefits." (Stock # 70-024)
- "The American Legion and Habitat for Humanity Volunteer involvement toolkit." (Stock # 70-011)

Also available is "The System Worth Saving Guide" (Stock # 70-028).

Since 2003, the System Worth Saving Task Force Members and National Staff annually conduct a series of site visits to the Medical Facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Reports generated from these visits are compiled into a document detailing specific resources and challenges of each medical center. This year's focus is Quality of Care and Rural Health. Beginning in 2012, two reports will be published annually in contrast to the one.

The Heroes to Hometown program is now under the National Security Division. All handbooks and pamphlets, including those belonging to the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program, are used as handouts at seminars, conferences, and Department Conventions. Supplies 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 through Ms. Jillian George at Washington, DC Headquarters at 202-263-5769 or by email at jgeorge@legion.org.

The American Legion National Cemetery Committee

Background

Members of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission (VA&R) Cemetery Committee met with Steve L. Muro, Department of Veterans Affairs Undersecretary for Memorial Affairs, on February 27, 2012 in the International Ballroom West, Washington Hilton Washington, D.C.

Currently, the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) maintains 131 National Cemeteries, 20,000 total acres, and 3.1 million gravesites. The National Cemeteries has approximately 8.1 million visitors per year. The NCA is organized into five Memorial

Service Networks (MSNs) headquartered in: Philadelphia, PA; Atlanta, GA; Indianapolis, IN; Denver, CO; and Oakland, CA. The NCA also has a national office in VA Central Office and a national scheduling and employee training center in St. Louis, MO which serves all national cemeteries.

NCA Employees

Currently, the NCA has a total of 1,700 full time equivalent employees (FTEEs), with 73.5 percent of their employees being veterans. For example: 80% Cemetery Directors and 73.5% permanent NCA employees are veterans. Since 2009, the NCA has hired 307 Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) veterans. This is the highest veteran employer ranking among any federal government agency.

FY2013 NCA Budget Request

The requested overall budget for FY2013 is $372 million. The NCA budget appropriations are as follows:

- Operations and Maintenance= $258 million
- Major Construction= $10 million
- Minor Construction= $58 million
- Veterans Cemetery Grants Program= $46 million

Burials

In 2011, the NCA performed 117,426 total burials and issued 372,659 headstones and markers, 4,500 Medallions and 779,666 Presidential Memorial Certificates ordered. Five new national veterans' cemeteries were also opened in 2011 to serve veterans in Colorado, Florida, New York, and Nebraska

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.

In the near future, the NCA will have available pre-need burial planning through e-benefits where a veteran can pre-arrange burials as needed.

National & State Veteran Cemeteries

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. Five new national veterans' cemeteries were also opened in 2011 to serve veterans in Colorado, Florida, New York, and Nebraska. Future national cemetery sites include: Northwestern NY; New York City area; East Central, FL; Western, FL; Indianapolis area; Chicago area; South Central, CO; Eastern, NE; Los Angeles area, and San Francisco area. State cemetery construction sites were 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.

Customer Satisfaction

In 2011, the 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.

NCA Burial Programs and Initiatives

The Cemetery Committee discussed several programs and initiatives, which included: the national cemetery audits for burial verification, Arlington National Cemetery, and land acquisition for 5 new cemetery constructions in the urban areas. The

Committee also discussed Arlington National Cemetery and how the NCA was assisting with training employees, providing assistance with operations and providing oversight.

NCA National Shrine Commitment

Maintaining cemeteries as national shrines is one of the 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 the 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 2012.

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. These numbers are far below what could be construed as an equitable benefit.

a. Service- Related Deaths:

The VA will pay up to $2,000 toward burial expenses for deaths on or after September 11, 2001. The VA will pay up to $1,500 for deaths prior to September 10, 2001. If the veteran is buried in a VA national cemetery, some of the cost of transporting the deceased may be reimbursed.

b. Non- Service Related Deaths:

The VA will pay up to $700 towards burial expenses on or after October 1, 2001 if hospitalized by the VA at the time of death or $300 toward burial and funeral expenses if not hospitalized by VA at the time of death. For deaths on or after December 1, 2001, but before October 1, 2011 the VA will pay up to $300 towards burial expenses and a $300 plot allowance.

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.

American Legion Recommendations

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 258 cases. She has reviewed 98 cases and submitted written reports on 36 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.

Claims Service

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, Department of Defense Medical Evaluation Board and Physical Evaluation Board through a staff of thirty-one 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, Medical Evaluation Board and Physical Evaluation Board, Benefits Delivered at Discharge, Pension Maintenance Center, Life Insurance, Debt Management, and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation.

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 twelve 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.

The Appeals Management Center (AMC) unit exclusively works on remanded appeals that have been returned by the BVA. Remanded appeals are for development of additional evidence, due process, or reconsideration of issues. These appeals are among the oldest cases and are worked on a priority basis. The American Legion has one Appeals Representative and one secretary assigned to the Appeals Management Center in Washington DC.

The Medical Evaluation Board and Physical Evaluation Board team works directly with military members. When military members have a medical condition that may cause them to be unfit to perform their required duty, they are evaluated by the Department of Defense. The American Legion has three MEB/PEB representatives; one stationed in Washington DC, one stationed at Fort Sam Houston TX, and one stationed at Joint Base Lewis/McChord Washington.

Benefits Delivered at Discharge allows active duty service members to apply for disability compensation benefits from the VA prior to retirement or separation from military service. This program permits service members with at least 60 days but no more than 180 days remaining on active duty to file. The 60 days is to allow sufficient time to complete the medical examination process prior to separation from service. The American Legion has two BDD representatives; one stationed in Winston Salem, NC and one stationed in Salt Lake, UT.

The VA Pension Maintenance Centers (PMC) process annual Eligibility Verification Reports and most other adjustments of benefits for individuals in receipt of non-service connected Disability Pension, Death Pension and Dependency Indemnity Compensation. The VA has three PMCs and The American Legion has representation to assist all claimants and DSOs; one at Milwaukee, one at Philadelphia, and two at St. Paul. The St. Paul representatives also handle debt management services for claimants that have been notified of an overpayment.

The VA Life Insurance Agency offers security in the event of the insured's death and financial protection to survivors. The American Legion has one representative at the Philadelphia VARO to assist veterans and their survivors with life Insurance.

Board of Veterans Appeals/AMC American Legion

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, 2011, through June 31, 2012. The Office Manager of the Appeals and Special Claims Unit is Patricia (Patti) Senft as of October 24, 2011 to the present.

During this period, our Appeals Representatives reviewed a total of 7,855 cases. Included in this total were 105 (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 45,398 decisions, of which 9,183 (20.2%) had American Legion representation. These decisions consisted of 2,603 (28.34%) approvals, 4,230 (46.0%) remands, 2,057 (22.4%) denials, and 293 (3.1%) others. The last category includes administrative withdrawals, vacated cases, deaths, and dismissals. These figures represent a 2.8% decrease in appeal approvals, a 7.8% decrease in remands and a 9.2% decrease in denials over the previous 12-month period.

The Special Claims Service of the Unit reviewed and disposed of 1 case involving a request by a Department Service Officer 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 2011 and 2012 were to continue to eliminate avoidable remands and to reduce the backlog of pending appeals, this continues to be a challenge and 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. This program was terminated in November 2011, after determining the HP summary briefs did not significantly increase efficiency by the appeal representatives.

As of July 1, 2010 there were 3,563 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 June 2010. The American Legion has custody of approximately 2,999 pre- June 2010 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 7,855 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.

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 experienced 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 include 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 2012 school was held February 22 - 24, 2012 at the Washington Hilton in Washington, DC. There were more than 120 service officers in attendance. The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Washington Conference took place the following week. The second session of 2012 was held August 1 - 3, 2012 at the Sheraton City Center Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana. There were 141 service officers in attendance.

Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service

The VAVS National Deputy Representative attended the sixty-sixth meeting of the VAVS National Advisory Committee (NAC) that was held in Charleston, SC during March 14th-16th. The American Legion's Deputy National Representative, Brian Bertges, also served a member of the NAC Executive Committee and was futher appointed as the recommendations subcommittee chairman, a member of the Partners Incorportation Executive Committee, and a member of the recruitment subcommittee. 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.

During FY 2011, The American Legion had 8,807 regular service volunteers, who volunteered 938,306 hours of service in conjunction with other members 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 $20.1 million to VA. The American Legion also had an additional 2,442 new volunteers added in FY 2011 with an increase of 3,855 RS volunteer hours. Unfortunately, with the decrease in occassional hours, The American Legion had a net loss of 5,523 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, Brian Bertges, Assistant Director for Policy and Research, Warren Goldstein, Senior Field Service Representative, Steven Henry, Field Service Representative, Jon Naraine, Field Service Representative Kevin Blanchard, and Jillian George, Administrative Assistant.

From November 2011 to June 2012, the Health Care Policy Unit conducted 67 site visits throughout the VA Medical Center system with the System Worth Saving Taskforce members to collect data for the 2012 System Worth Saving Reports. This year's reports focused on: Veterans Rural Health Care programs and Quality of Care and Patient Satisfaction.

The Health Care Policy Unit continues to assist veterans with questions about the following health care policy areas: health care enrollment, third-party billing, TBI, PTSD, Suicide Prevention, Caregiver Program, burial benefits and other health care issues and concerns as received.

The VA&R Health Care Policy Unit continues to update the System Worth Saving and Health Care Center websites with stories and health care topics of interest. 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 262 requests for accreditation and 157 requests for cancellation were received from the Departments and submitted to VA for necessary action. As of June 30, 2011, there were 2,545 Accredited Representatives of The American Legion with 18 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, 2011 through June 30, 2012.

The most current table of organization of the National
Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission as of June 30, 2010, is as follows:

Director.....1
Secretary.....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

Assistant Director, MEB/PEB.....1
MEB/PEB Representatives.....2

Office Manager, Board of Vets. Appeals Unit.....1
Appeals Representatives.....12
Secretaries.....3
Medical Consultant.....1

Assistant Director for Policy and Research.....1

Women Veterans Outreach Coordinator.....1

Appeals Representatives.....1
Secretary.....1

Total Personnel - Washington office.....35

Satellite Offices

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 67 VA medical facilities along with The System Worth Saving Task Force. VA&R staff all 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.

Three Certificates of Appreciation have been awarded during the period July 1, 2011, through June 30, 2012, for an overall total of 1,325 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.

Twenty-Five Citations For Meritorious Service And Loyal Cooperation In The American Legion's Veterans Affairs And Rehabilitation Program Were Presented During The Period July 1, 2011 To June 30, 2012. Since This Type Of Recognition And Appreciation Began, 5,097 Citations For Meritorious Service Have Been Presented.

The American Legion Auxiliary

Departments and units reported so many amazing ways that they supported veterans and their families. This chairman could write a book on all that has been done across the country to "Honor the Service" of those who have served.

This year, the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Program introduced the Creative Arts donation cans – Pringles cans wrapped in a clever label to help units raise our $150,000 national commitment to the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. National President Kris Nelson reported seeing lots of donation cans during her travels. As of this writing, we are a bit short of our commitment but I know that by the close of books, departments and units will have raised the money we need to support the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

A new mini-grant program that supports a local Creative Arts Festival program was established to help create awareness about these programs. This year, we have provided three grants to VA medical facilities in California, North Carolina and New York. Priscilla Imburgia from the Department of New York wrote:

- I can't even tell you how excited I was to receive the grant money. The $2,000 will be enough to get us started right away! Now we can move forward quickly and get those waiting for clay projects started in their therapy involvement.

The American Legion Auxiliary is committed to combat homelessness among veterans. The Department of Wisconsin added a Homeless Women Veterans Program to its Department Plan of Action. With lots of hard work from the members, they were successful in establishing a grant program that offers assistance to homeless or at-risk women veterans. They recruited 34 American Legion Auxiliary members to be the connection to women veterans in each of their 12 districts and worked with other organizations in a joint effort to help women veterans know and understand their benefits.

They held 12 Making Connections – Women to Women workshops to explain benefits and answer questions.

I had the opportunity to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Fayetteville, Ark., with the national VA&R division chairmen. We all left with a personal commitment to continue to make a difference in the lives of veterans and their families.

A special thank-you to every member of The American Legion Family who worked tirelessly to honor the service of those who have served with honor.

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
National President, Kris Nelson, Minnesota

Honoring Their Service. It's why I joined the Auxiliary and why you did too. So choosing that as my national president's theme seemed like the obvious thing to do. I thought it would be a great way to show others why we are committed to the ALA. But I think it did more than help others understand us better. I think it helped Auxiliary members better appreciate and understand each other and provide a poignant reminder that we all serve for exactly the same reason. I hoped you would be inspired by my theme – I had no idea how much you would embrace it.

Throughout my travels this year, I was thrilled to walk into department meetings seeing members wearing "Honoring Their Service" buttons, proudly displaying the veteran who made them eligible for Auxiliary membership close to their heart. Many units took the theme further by creating "Honor Walls" to display images of their veterans at local posts. It's hard to forget why you're there with the eyes of your loved ones staring back at you.

The Honor Walls made each post I visited feel like home. My own home is filled with photos of the people who mean the most to me – my family. And family is a word that came to mind often this past year. There are many types of families. My own family, who made many sacrifices: living without me, supporting me and embracing my service as I represented our members. There's The American Legion Family – it takes a village as they say, and our village is TAL, ALA, SAL and Riders all working together. There's our military family, and when a servicemember is activated and deployed, it is our duty to be there and meet the needs of the family left at home. And there is our ALA National Headquarters family who often reminds me of what family is all about. Growing up, we often don't always appreciate our family like we should – we sometimes take the things they do for granted – and yet when we stumble or are in need, they are always there for us. That's why I created two awards this year to recognize the efforts of our NHQ family – the Mission Mover and Shining Star awards. The service opportunities made available to all Legion Family members proved once again that working together as a family is always win/win, whereby we each receive much more than we give.

The Auxiliary's motto of Service Not Self was evident throughout the year as our members diligently worked our programs, inviting community members to join them, mentoring Junior members, supporting our veterans, and volunteering hundreds of thousands of hours at VA hospitals and clinics.

It was rewarding to see how much our younger members want to give back. Earlier this year I met a 10-year-old girl from South Dakota who received the Good Deed Award. On her own, she sent more than 200 cards to active-duty soldiers. In New Hampshire, Junior members taught veterans how to make poppies. In Louisiana, Honorary National Junior President Brittany Watts was on staff at ALA Louisiana Girls State where she shared with the girls in attendance what the American Legion Junior Auxiliary is and invited them to join us. It seems our Juniors are always looking for service opportunities, so we must always continue to develop programs and projects that will meet these needs.

It's been a privilege and honor to represent you as your national president. I learned so much when visiting military bases. I enjoyed serving side by side with many of you at VA hospitals and facilities. Representing our organization in the Far East and Europe gave me a great knowledge and appreciation of how very much The American Legion Family is respected across the globe and how much citizens appreciate our veterans and military for continuing to protect their freedoms and liberate not only the U.S. but global communities.

We reached some amazing milestones this year. Our ALA Call to Service Corps hit the $3 million mark in service contributions to the Auxiliary. ALA members pledged 6 million Operation Honor Card hours, which were then presented to First Lady Michelle Obama.

In January, we initiated pods where we grouped similar programs together simplifying how units could work our programs. Our national chairmen created "How-To" sheets, plus adopted units – mentoring them and educating them on how to simplify mission outreach working within pods. The results were shared in the In the Know eBulletin so that they could be emulated nationwide. Additionally, we improved and simplified online reporting tools. As a result, ALA departments increased their reporting of annual impact numbers from 33 to 92 percent helping us to share our accomplishments with The American Legion, each other, and the world at large.

As I end my term, I leave inspired by the service we continue to give, humbled by the opportunity that you all gave to me and thankful to our veterans and military who continue to give back to our nation to protect our freedom. I am very concerned about the continual decrease in our membership, but energized that thousands of members have embraced our mission and continue to seek service opportunities.

I am ready to return to my husband, Terry, eager to spend more time with my family and waiting for the hugs and kisses of my grandchildren.

I am proud of our accomplishments but ready to pass the torch to my close friend, Peggy Thomas. I know she will carry that torch with pride, honor and humility as I have. Our organization is in good hands with future leadership that is compassionate and dedicated. I thank you all for this opportunity.

National Vice President
Peggy Thomas, Virginia

The 2011 National Convention in Minneapolis was a memorable and exciting time for me as I embarked on the amazing journey that characterizes the position of national vice president.

The national vice president's year is a planning year — Finance Committee meetings, Long Range Strategic Planning meetings, National Membership Workshop, ALA Foundation meetings and more.

But what a great year it has been serving both God and Country. I have met so many fantastic members this past year who are serving our mission. They make me proud to be a member of this truly inspirational organization.

It was wonderful to meet and interact with so many members while acting as moderator at the Mission Training workshops in Connecticut, Nebraska, Missouri, and Nevada. The chairmen did a great job presenting their programs and sharing ideas with the members. It has been a somewhat challenging year as the program pods were introduced and the Mission Training workshops were activated.

I was privileged to attend the national commander's testimony before the joint hearing of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs committees. Commander Wong did an outstanding job presenting The American Legion's position on veterans' issues. I also attended the National Commander's homecoming in Indianapolis.

It was productive to meet with the Honorable Eric K. Shinseki, Secretary of U.S. Veterans Affairs, in Washington, D.C., expressing the Auxiliary's concern about the number of homeless veterans, especially homeless women veterans with children.

The Presidents & Secretaries Conference was quite successful. I met with the department presidents and learned their plans and strategies for reaching their goals.

The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Fayetteville, Ark., was an exceptional display from some very talented veterans. We are honored to be a national co-sponsor. The Fayetteville VAMC hosted the event and did an outstanding job.

At the Washington DC Conference, Michael Peterson and Col. Jill Chambers (Ret.) were presented the Public Spirit Award for their efforts for the military and veterans.

In May, I was privileged to represent the national president at the U.S. Naval Academy Awards Ceremony in Annapolis, Md., where I was honored to present the women's varsity swimming MVP award to Midshipman First Class Katherine Leslie Jones for her leadership and athletic skills. These young men and women are trained to defend our country and are very appreciative that the Auxiliary recognizes their achievements.

In June, I was part of the Boston site visit for the 2012 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. I met with National Secretary Dubbie Buckler, Elizabeth Mackey, and the VAMC hosts.

As your vice president, I am continually amazed at the wonderful things our members are doing. Their dedication and service of our units to the American Legion Auxiliary is astounding. It has been a privilege to serve under the capable leadership of National President Kris Nelson, who is a true visionary.

National Secretary
Mary "Dubbie" Buckler, Indiana

In 3 years as part of the American Legion Auxiliary national leadership team, we've successfully met some significant, longstanding challenges in an environment of decreased revenue and increased public and regulatory scrutiny of nonprofits. I came aboard during the planning year for then-Vice President Rita Navarreté, and have been part of the planning process for PNP Carlene Ashworth, NP Kris Nelson, and VP Peggy Thomas. The ALA's accomplishments stem in large part because planning has been inclusive and continuous, working as a team. There's no "I" in team. A team attitude is essential for positive, necessary change.

The stark reality was – and is – that things have to change. The ALA's 92 years of heritage and relevance cannot move forward on 92-year-old practices. Times have changed – laws, regulations, habits. People have more options for their spare time. People are joining less, and those who do will renew only if they find personal fulfillment in belonging or because they are so proud of what an organization does that they want to support it.

These have been austere years with revenue off mark for a decade and membership loss hovering at a 40-year low. The ALA must understand "investing in itself" and wisely spend its time, talent, and money on things that position the organization to grow and flourish

We've tackled many critical issues the last 3 years at ALA NHQ, while operating at a 15-30% staffing vacancy, competitively losing good staff members to better paying opportunities, and cutting expenses 23%. We have "done more with less." Our current NHQ staff is talented, educated and experienced, and we care deeply about the ALA's mission – supporting our ongoing NHQ homeless veterans service project, collectively volunteering over 100 hours, and with 100% of staff financially donating to the ALA!

My priorities remain to build organizational capacity, streamline and simplify, and improve branding, awareness, and communications. Over 90% of the budget goes to support mission delivery; less than 10 percent for administration. With creativity, teamwork, and exceptional dedication, we've vastly improved communications and resources, generated new revenue sources, and maintained a stellar record of spotless audits – a giant accomplishment, with kudos to the entire staff.

With our focus on YOU, our members, we revamped the magazine, updated eNews, launched eBulletin, and dramatically improved our ALAforVeterans.org website. A member portal interfacing with ALAMIS is in the works so YOU can interact more via our website. We developed a marketing brand that enhances the ALA's "first glance" image, provided two celebrity PSAs, produced a marketing/membership video that departments could customize, and opened the ALA video channel. We completed an ALA Girls State Program and Operations Guide, and will soon roll out an ALA Department Operations Guide.

Despite declines in national grant-making and donor-giving, we've generated $4 million in outside support. The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is now the ALA's largest external funder, investing in the ALA by granting over $3 million to the ALA Call to Service Corps Consortium. The ALA now awards nearly 60 AmeriCorps and VISTA resources to some 20 nonprofit organizations that rely on us to help them in mission delivery to our military, veterans, and their families. The ALA is now a prominent national leader in marshaling veterans' outreach efforts across the country. This is huge!

Since embarking on a new direct mail donor program, the past 3 years we've raised nearly $1 million in donations, with over 80,000 gifts coming from non-members. We recently launched a new USAA affinity credit card partnership with member card perks that surpass anything we had previously, and are excited to soon launch a whole new ALA Member Benefits program with superior financial offerings and a larger array of benefits. It's all about YOU, so stay tuned!

National Treasurer
Marta Hedding, Indiana

Finance and Membership – They go hand in hand. Three years ago, the 2009 National Convention rejected the first dues increase to have been proposed in 14 years. These past three years, the national organization continued to cut expenses, the NEC continued to approve deficit budgets, investments continued to take a hit, and dues revenue failed to cover the cost of program and member services. In FY11 alone, dues revenue fell short of covering program services by nearly $2.6 million.

Thankfully, the 2011 convention body passed a $4 annual dues increase that becomes effective with 2013 dues. While this increase provides temporary relief, it does not guarantee the Auxiliary's long-term financial health.

Based on projected future needs and the declining membership trend, the $4 dues increase is a Band-Aid, not a solution. As your National Treasurer, I highly recommend that the organization soon adopt a sustainable dues structure of scheduled incremental increases – one that keeps pace with inflation and allows the organization to invest in itself. Such a structure would 1) alleviate the recurring financial jeopardy the organization faces when dues revenue is insufficient to meet expenses; 2) prevent the emotional rollercoaster caused when the organization goes too long without an increase; and 3) avert the ill will generated in the course of resolving the dues revenue shortfall. Just a fifty cent (50¢) increase every three years is insignificant to the individual member but extremely beneficial to the financial well-being of the organization.

Membership has been on a steady decline since 1995 with the exception of 2002 – the "9/11 blip" when a surge in patriotism motivated more members to pay dues. Despite the efforts of the National Membership Committee and membership teams throughout the organization, Auxiliary membership has dropped by more than 18,000 members since last year. Why?

The results of a 2010 Member Survey were jolting. Contrary to what some may think, dues were not a factor in why members don't get involved or don't renew. Responses indicated that discrimination, discord and mistreatment are the main reasons members don't renew. How can we grow an organization in a culture of blame, disrespect and conflict.

Units whose members welcome and engage all members are showing positive results – in growth and their impact on those we serve. Unfortunately, for too many units the norm is a reluctance to change, give up control and accept new people and ideas – a primary cause for our membership decline.

For our organization's future, the best ways to "Honor Their Service" are to address our long-term financial health, focus on our mission, and treat others as we wish to be treated. ALAMIS – Organizations depend on data management.

One of the bright spots of the last three years is our investment in technology. Since going "live" in June 2010 and hiring IT Systems Administrator Tammy Wiggins last year, we have addressed outstanding issues, created many useful reports and continue to refine and streamline the system.

We now have 150 units directly accessing ALAMIS, and will add other "test" units as authorized by their departments. Test units can pull reports, update member profiles, enter their leaders, and are begging to do more. Features such as entering new members, renewing members, and processing dues will become available over time based on consultation with departments. At year-two, following the launch, ALAMIS – the really big multi-year project – is proving to be the strategic tool envisioned years ago. Kudos to all ALAMIS users for helping make this dream a reality!

National Chaplain
C. Nini Lynch, Georgia

It has been an inspiration and an honor to serve the American Legion Auxiliary this year as National Chaplain. We began the year with the National Chaplain's Conference in Indianapolis. The 12 Auxiliary chaplains in attendance put together a Plan of Action, and judging from the reports I have received, it was actively put into place across the nation.

Thanks to Past National Chaplain Vickie Thrower of Alabama, we utilized the chaplains' Facebook group to notify one another of important news items.

I received 15 department chaplain reports. Units have reported participation in 9/11 memorials; Fields of Honor; random acts of kindness; Pearl Harbor memorials; Four Chaplains services; prayer services for military and their families; and memorial services for deceased veterans and killed-in-action military personnel. Units have draped their charters in memorial to deceased members, and units have reported literally tens of thousands of cards sent to the ill, bereaved and those in need of encouragement. Over 5,000 emails were sent. Units assisted their respective Legion posts with placement of flags on the graves of veterans. Gold Star mothers and wives have been honored with services and banners. Blue Star Banners were offered to community members with military in their families. Holidays were observed by units that sent cards to military around the world, and assistance was given to military families to enhance their holidays in the absence of their loved ones in service. Visits were made to hospitals, VA centers and shut-ins and assistance was given at stand downs across the country.

Donations to the Cavalcade of Memories, Auxiliary Emergency Fund, Child Welfare Foundation, Chapel of Four Chaplains, Fisher House Foundation, Wounded Warriors, Christmas and Thanksgiving donations to families of military, love offerings and others topped $37,000. It is heartwarming to know that in our slow economy and with the difficulties we all face, giving has not diminished. God's love is evident in the actions of American Legion Auxiliary members here at home and with our troops around the world. I have received many prayers for National President Kris Nelson's Prayer Book, and more are coming in daily. My thanks to each of you who sent reports, prayers and notices to the Chaplains' Facebook group. It has been such an honor to serve with each of you.

I have enjoyed every aspect of my office this year: the Chaplains' Conference, the Presidents & Secretaries Conference, our president's homecoming, the Reflections for Auxiliary magazine, contributing to the Mission Training workshops around the country and sharing prayers for units to employ for various functions. May God bless and keep each of you and our American Legion Auxiliary, the largest and greatest women's patriotic organization in the world!

National Historian
Diane Harley, South Carolina

Auxiliary members throughout the departments took my challenge to make many footprints for those who will follow. They strove to fulfill the mission of "In the Spirit of God and Country, we serve veterans, the military and their families." The information given at the Mission Training workshops, more simply instructing members on how to work the programs in the pod format, gave even the smallest units an opportunity to succeed. Five departments reported holding leadership and training workshops of their own. In the fight against homelessness, homeless veteran were served in every department.

Members participated in stand downs, hundreds of Buddy Baskets were distributed to homeless veterans who were moving into their own homes, and backpacks filled with toiletries and snacks were given to those who had not found a home. The Department of Wisconsin raised over $55,000 to supply essentials to homeless women veterans in transition. Send-off and welcome-home events were held for troops going to or returning from war zones, and units sent thousands of care packages to those still abroad.

Junior members did their part by assisting in preparing Hero Packs for Operation: Military Kids for the children of deployed servicemembers. The Department of Maine reported raising over $18,000 to purchase 28 kayaks for an OMK camp in Gilead. Several departments reported taking part in the Veterans History Project, another area in which the Juniors were heavily involved. Units and departments developed or added to their archives, preserving their history. Servicemembers who made the ultimate sacrifice were honored and remembered by the placing of wreaths and memorial services.

The Department of Arizona participated in the "Missing in America – Veterans Recovery Program," where the remains of 18 indigent and homeless veterans were interred with full military honors in the Southern Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery. The work done by unit members is too extensive to include in one report. Donations were made to AEF, Creative Arts Festivals, Child Welfare Foundation and Auxiliary Foundation. Thousands of hours were spent volunteering at VA hospitals and veterans homes. Schools were given supplies. Flag etiquette and Americanism programs were held. And the list goes on.

Membership was a top priority for everyone. Divisional membership chairmen created Facebook groups, allowing members to communicate and send friendly challenges between departments. Everyone eagerly awaited Wednesday morning when

the weekly membership reports and bulletins were issued. Eight departments reached or exceeded 100 percent membership by June 15, well before the July 15 target date, and several more were on their heels.

National President Kris Nelson did an incredible job as she traveled around the country and the world. Wherever she went, she made new friends and stepped up to help in whatever project was being done. Whether it was packing care packages, talking with and distributing gifts to hospitalized veterans or placing memorial wreaths, she was there.

Eastern Division National Vice President
Lorraine "Rani" Gray, Vermont

The awesome women of the Eastern Division have been very busy throughout the year in the spirit of Service Not Self by enhancing the lives of our veterans, active military, and their families, both at home and abroad. The accomplishments by these women are incredible.

We held several conference calls and shared information about how each state has worked toward their numeric objectives for membership. These conference calls have been motivating, informative, and through these efforts I think we have kept Eastern Division in 1st place! We currently have three states at 100 percent. Congratulations to District of Columbia for being No. 1 in the nation at 122.97 percent!

We promoted membership by wearing the "Honoring Their Service" commemorative buttons, placing ALA brochures in outreach clinics and other public places, getting the word out through department bulletins and newsletters, advertising and promoting in local newspapers, and holding special events.

A Mission Training was held in Hartford, Conn. with 93 in attendance. Unfortunately, we got snowed in, roads were shut down, airports were closed, and there was no electricity, no heat and no coffee. But the women of the Eastern Division came together in the crisis, learned a lot, and got the job done. They all brought toiletry items as our "Give Back Service Project," which were donated to West Hartford VAMC.

The East Coast was devastated by Hurricane Irene. Many military and veterans' families lost their homes and possessions. Through the AEF program and the efforts of The American Legion Family, we worked hand in hand to support these veterans and their families and helped them rebuild their homes and lives.

All the Eastern states held ALA Girls State programs, mentored Juniors, promoted Americanism in our communities, and provided thousands of scholarships to the children of veterans. We have collaborated with other veteran organizations: OMK, stand downs, Veterans Creative Arts Festivals, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, Operation Homefront, and Operation Comfort Warriors to show our support of our veterans and their families. We held welcome-home events, promoted the Give 10 to Education program, distributed poppies, held gift shops at our VA facilities and veterans homes, and volunteered thousands of hours. We, the women in the Eastern Division, are proud that we have enhanced the life of our veterans by our volunteer service supporting the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Many of our departments/units are sharing their projects and pictures on social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. Some departments/units have websites packed with information about who, what, when, where, along with forms, applications, and scholarships.

I am extremely proud to say that the members of the Eastern Division have been giving their all for love of God and Country, and have taken time out of their busy schedules to thank our veterans every day in the name of freedom. HOORA!!

Central Division National Vice President
Florence Briggs, Indiana

All nine departments in the Central Division have worked hard to fulfill the mission of the Auxiliary. The Department of Illinois celebrated "Hats Off To Our Veterans" by purchasing a golf cart for Hines Fisher House and registering veterans for a Wounded Warrior event. One unit was mentored by the National Youth programs pod. Juniors assembled and distributed pocket flags to troops being deployed, greeted returning troops and gave Blue Star Banners.

Indiana had a great start with POW/MIA ceremonies, training sessions, "Honor Their Service" dinners and parades, visits to Camp Atterbury and veterans homes and preparing for national convention in Indianapolis. The Department of Iowa started the year leading the division in membership and used new methods that worked to achieve the first three milestones and first place at conference. They held Wheel of Fortune challenges to benefit veterans and participated in Legislative Day.

Kansas had a struggle with membership, but a great year recruiting 30 new field service and home service volunteers who volunteered over 105,000 hours and donated over $50,000 to veterans programs. They have a very active Junior membership, and gave thousands of dollars toward scholarships. Michigan benefited from membership challenges and the "Honor Their Service" program to get many 100 percent units and three over 150 percent.

ALA Girls State, Poppy days and troop deployment ceremonies highlighted the year. A student was honored by receiving the Children of Warriors Scholarship. Missouri served their veterans at Creative Arts Festival and VA Medical Center luncheons. They also provided Buddy Baskets and volunteered at their seven state-funded veterans homes.

The president's USO project raised $10,000 and ALA Girls Staters provided snacks for U.S. Canteens. They produced a video with music of Legion Family members that was used as a membership recruitment tool.

The "Shining Stars" of Ohio gave "Bundles of Joy," clipped coupons, supplied the USO, presented Blue Star Banners, and gave Buddy Back Packs and Buddy Buckets to homeless veterans and Hero Packs to children of servicemembers from ALA Girls Staters and Juniors. They also distributed over $21,000 to various women's veterans programs. The Department of West Virginia distributed poppies and had an active Girls State program. Wisconsin established a committee called "Homeless Women Veterans" to assist those homeless and in transition program and they gave $40,000 in grants to women veterans in need.

The theme of "Libraries of Love" encouraged donations of books about the lives of military children. At Juniors Conference, the Juniors introduced a veteran to the group. Two Juniors brought the "Give A Hug" doll of their father who was deployed at the time.

Southern Division National Vice President
Winnie Broussard, Louisiana

My goal was to instill the spirit of God and Country in our mission along with, "Honor Their Service," in the hearts of all members and others by publicizing what we do as American Legion Auxiliary family members. I was proud to promote that "we support and serve veterans and their families."

Many members are wearing the picture of the veteran they are honoring on their lapel. All departments in the Southern Division are to be commended for all the great work they've been doing on membership and the programs of the American Legion Auxiliary. All worked very hard to reach membership goals and are still actively trying to reach higher goals. New units have been chartered and many units have been revitalized.

The program pod concept was used in many of our departments, and monetary donations and voluntary hours were tremendous. I am extremely proud of all the great work that was done by members in the Southern Division.

Each department demonstrated that they care for our veterans, our military, their families, and our country, state and community.

Western Division National Vice President
Carmen Metzer, Idaho

All the departments have countless hours of volunteering and have contributed generous donations of money and goods. These women have filled hundreds of boxes with comfort items for deployed troops, supported programs for homeless veterans and Operation: Military Kids, folded pocket flags and participated in stand downs. Many hours were spent at VA Medical Centers, VA homes and at Christmas gift shops.

Many departments sponsored welcome-home parties to honor the troops and their families with parades, food and entertainment. Most of them involved the whole community. Unit members have offered to help with mowing lawns, fixing flat tires, babysitting or whatever needs to be done.

Mission Training was held in Las Vegas in January where I was the moderator. The members learned how to use the pod system to "Honor Their Service," which was presented by our national chairmen. The training was well attended, and the members went home with valuable information. In the spirit of Service Not Self, our members brought donations which were given to the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System.

Membership has been one of our challenges. We utilized conference calls with the department presidents, membership chairmen and division membership chairmen to encourage membership and gain ideas from each other. Nevada is the only department at this time to reach 100 percent.

I am very proud of the dedication and hard work of all the members in the Western Division as they have shown by "Honoring Their Service."

Northwestern Division National Vice President
Linda Feezer, Wyoming

The Northwestern Division led the membership race for many months and just lately has been passed by other divisions. Four of the seven departments stayed in the top 10 for many weeks, and just recently moved down the list.

The seven departments of the Northwest Division have been active in serving our veterans through hours volunteered and dollars spent. The number of veterans assisted exceeded 67,000. This is almost an average of 10,000 per state in our division. 290,000 hours were volunteered in service to veterans and 40,000 hours to our military members. The number of poppies purchased for distribution by the Northwestern Division equaled 606,562, raising $295,900 to help with projects for our veterans in the coming months.

Military families were also a focus of the Northwestern Division as seen in service provided to approximately 9,000 families. Approximately 30,000 hours and $94,534 were donated to help our military families. 344 scholarships were awarded to students, totaling $112,900 to local scholarships, and $19,043 donated to department scholarships.

There was a good turnout for the Mission Training workshop held in Omaha, Neb. in December. Pertinent information was given by the national chairmen regarding their committees and the new pods. Everyone in attendance felt the workshop to be very successful, from the newest member to the longtime member.

Americanism Committee
Melanie Taylor, California, Chairman

The American Legion Auxiliary is celebrating its 92nd year, and Americanism is one of our great programs that is still going strong. Members across this nation continue to show their support in various ways throughout their communities. Whether it is large or small, loud or quiet, one person or many people, they are once again sharing many activities promoting patriotism. The simple act of flying our nation's flag every day, or chairing the Fourth of July fireworks show for your community shows true Americanism. The Flag Amendment was introduced in Congress again this year and our members were asked to support this proposed Constitutional amendment by contacting their Congressional representatives asking for their support in protecting our flag from desecration.

Many members showed their patriotism by wearing flag pins and buying flag stamp from their post offices. Flags were presented to schools and other organizations, and many units purchased and folded the pocket flags to send to their loved ones serving in the military. Flag-folding ceremonies were performed and retirement ceremonies were held showing the proper way to dispose of our American flag. What better way to show support for our servicemembers and their families than by sponsoring deployment ceremonies displaying yellow ribbons, welcome-home ceremonies by waving Old Glory and providing for everyday needs of those families while their loved ones were deployed.

Over 25,000 students participated in the Americanism Essay Contest. This year's topic was "How Can I Show My Patriotism in My Community?" Once the five classes of essays were judged in the departments, they were sent to be judged in their divisions. These students put tremendous thought into their essays, and it is evident in the winners chosen this year. Members were asked to participate in the Get Out the Vote and Kids Voting USA campaigns by offering rides to the polls, hosting political debate nights for the candidates and discussing political issues with their children.

Auxiliary members were asked to support The American Legion's Americanism programs by participating in the Legion's Oratorical Program. They served as escorts, timers and judges. Many Auxiliary members served as coaches, scorekeepers and drivers for the Junior Shooting Sports Program. Auxiliary members worked The American Legion Baseball games serving as scorekeepers, sponsors, team drivers, fundraisers and in the concession booths all across America.

We should all be very proud of the time and effort our members have put into showing their true love of our country. I am proud of each and every one of you and thank you for all that the American Legion Auxiliary has accomplished this year.

Auxiliary Emergency Fund Committee
Marie Goede, Minnesota, Chairman

The need for AEF is greater now than ever. 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 an even wider impact, affecting members encompassing half of the continental U.S.

Many units host AEF fundraisers to generate contributions. Some units pass the hat at monthly meetings while others hold events ranging from bake sales to raffles to support the national AEF. Many individual members also make direct donations to AEF. All donations, no matter the size, are needed and appreciated.

The hard work and creativity of Auxiliary members and their units have been the driving force behind the theme "Honoring Their Service." To date, all division chairmen

reported the yearly activities of the departments in their divisions. Several novel ideas and on-going efforts were utilized to raise money for this fund. These ideas included, but were not limited to: unit member donations, candy sales, bake sales, book sales, garage sales, silent auctions, raffles, white elephant sales, luncheons and dinners, golf tournaments, craft fairs, penny walks, cake walks and gift baskets. These labors provided a total of $126,483 in donations. AEF grants totaling $104,331 were awarded to more than 90 members, and a total of $62,000 in disaster grants was awarded to 44 members. Our goal this year was to receive 10 percent more in donations over last year's total, and we are continuing to work toward that goal. Thank you to all units, county councils, districts, departments and individuals for your generosity. Your contributions continue to make our program successful. Moreover, this is a shining example of members helping members. It is an honor to belong to the largest women's patriotic organization, and each year I am grateful for my eligibility and to be part of such an outstanding group of devoted individuals. Despite the challenges we face, let us continue to honor the service of our veterans.

For information on how you can leave a legacy gift to the ALA through your estate, we recommend you contact your attorney or financial advisor. Michael Butt, Communications and Business Development Director at ALA National Headquarters, or Development Coordinator Madison Maves can also assist. They can be reached at 317-569-4500 or via email, on the staff page of the ALAforVeterans.org website.

Additional information about donating to support the American Legion Auxiliary can be found online at www.ALAforVeterans.org.

Cavalcade of Memories Committee
Elizabeth Stewart, North Carolina, Chairman

For members who live too far from Indianapolis to visit the Cavalcade, there's exciting news: The national Communications staff and graduate students from the Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) School of Informatics are bringing the National Cavalcade to you. Pretty exciting, don't you agree? IUPUI graduate students working on the project include Joan Savage, a U.S. Navy veteran, and Jay Hardin, chief financial officer of Virtual Fireflies LLC.

A multimedia project is in full swing at National Headquarters, and that means our members can take a virtual tour of the museum at www.ALAforVeterans.org.

In the near future, you will be able to view Auxiliary museum artifacts and their descriptions displayed in several general categories. After the students complete the initial phase of this big project, the national Communications team will film and produce an introduction to the Cavalcade and an overview of the artifacts at National Headquarters.

A few of the historic and must-see items in the museum include the States Dinner gown of the Auxiliary's first national president, Mrs. Lowell F. Hobart Sr. (Edith) of Ohio, worn in 1921. This beautiful gown has been restored and sealed in a special museum case. Historic media pieces are framed and grouped by decades: 1920s through 1950s; 1960s through 1980s; 1990s; 2000s and beyond. Framed covers of ALA magazines from the past nine decades are also new additions.

Visitors to the 2012 National Convention in Indianapolis are sure to make National Headquarters and the Cavalcade a tour stop in late August and may be greeted by National Cavalcade of Memories Vice Chairman Kenya Ostermeier and coordinator Kay Wigley.

Departments and units all over the country are preserving memories of the way we were and focusing on a continuing Cavalcade for future generations, incorporating the

National President's theme of "Honoring Their Service" and our motto, "In the spirit of God and Country we serve veterans, the military and their families."

ARIZONA - Susan Lind from Unit 97 encouraged members to write biographies of veterans by interviewing families of veterans. It's an Arizona Centennial Project of this very active unit.

MICHIGAN - Members are enhancing unit histories by including stories of veterans. Honoring their service, they proudly wear the custom ALA button with a photo of the special person who gave them eligibility in the Auxiliary.

ALABAMA - Trish Montgomery has compiled a memory book honoring past department presidents with a copy from the Cavalcade to Department President Betty Smith at convention.

IOWA - Remembered, Not Forgotten - Department President Martha Travis' theme fits so well with Cavalcade of Memories, reports Fran Kirk. Like many others, units and the department post pictures of ALA Girls State governors, to name a few.

KANSAS - Trish Ward reports that a 'Reflections' book in the Kansas Cavalcade has been updated to a pdf format. A donation for this package of history earned the department money to buy a curio cabinet for the Cavalcade.

TEXAS - Glenda Waddell reports that outstanding members are being interviewed for a history project.

CALIFORNIA - Olivia Headley, first president of Unit 43, the Post to the Stars Auxiliary, presented the perfect Christmas gift to the 80-member unit. It was a framed copy of the unit charter she had believed was lost.

WISCONSIN - Joan Chwala's Cavalcade stumped past department presidents with an entertaining quiz at the annual banquet. Guests were asked to identify when she presented a guess who from 1970 to the present. One interesting remembrance was that the late PNP Estella Hanell loved hats.

Liaison to Child Welfare Foundation
Elsie Bailey-Comer, Chairman

At its annual meeting in October 2011, the board of directors approved $506,683 in grants to 18 nonprofit organizations for projects to be completed in calendar year 2012. 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: Alstrom Syndrome international of Mount Desert, Maine was awarded $13,125 for their project, "The Alstrom Syndrome Handbook." American Humane Association of Englewood, Col. was awarded $35,250 for their project, "Family Group Decision Making Docutraining." Angel Flight Soars, Inc. of Atlanta, Ga. was awarded $16,564 for their project, "Angel Flight Soars 'Broadcast Outreach Campaign'." Autism Speaks, Inc. of New York, N.Y. was awarded $22,500 for their project, "100 Day Kit for Newly Diagnosed Families." Be the Match Foundation of Minneapolis, Minn. was awarded $16,050 for their project, "Super Sam vs. the Marrow Monsters: A Guide to Bone Marrow Transplant for Children." Birth Defect research for children of Orlando, Fla. was awarded $18,500 for their project, "Birth Defect Research for Children's Accessibility & Outreach Project." children's institute, Inc. of Rochester, N.Y. was awarded $9,500 for their project, "Building Strong Military Families Through Play." Mercy Medical Airlift of Virginia Beach, Vir. was awarded $43,400 for their project, "Child Health Program - Info Dissemination Upgrade." national Association for the education of Homeless children and Youth (NAEHCY) of Minneapolis, Minn. was awarded $41,000 for their project, "Voices for Homeless Students." national center for Missing and exploited children of Alexandria, Vir. was awarded $25,500 for their project, "Child ID App." organization for Autism research of

Arlington, Vir. was awarded $49,355 for their project, "Understanding Autism: A Guide for Secondary Teachers." Second Wind Fund, Inc. of Lakewood, Col. was awarded $23,724 for their project, "Teen Suicide IS Preventable: Campaign to educate school gatekeepers about suicide prevention and how Second Wind Fund, Inc. can help reduce the teen suicide rate in their communities." Starr commonwealth- national institute for trauma and Loss in children (TLC) of Albion, Mich. was awarded $20,000 for their project, "Trauma Informed and Resilience Focused Virtual Resource Center for Military Parents." Texas National Guard Family Support Foundation (TXNGFSF) of Austin, Texas was awarded $40,000 for their project, "My Parent Is Deploying To Combat." The American Legion Department of Arizona/ Detachment of Arizona of Phoenix, Az. was awarded $49,500 for their project, "Deployment Josh Development Program." The American Legion, Department of Kansas of Topeka, Kan. was awarded $32,000 for their project, "Drug Free America - Ruler - Bookmark." ThinkFirst Foundation (ThinkFirst national injury Prevention Foundation) of Naperville, Ill. was awarded $25,715 for their project, "ThinkFirst Campaign to Prevent Childhood Injuries." Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, Inc. (TAPS) of Washington, D.C. was awarded $25,000 for their project, "TAPS Grieving Children's Care Kit – 'Klinger: A Story of Hope.'"

During 2011, donations exceeded $755,183, with more than $418,456 coming from 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. Your support allows CWF to continue funding projects that improve the quality of life for our nation's children. Every dollar given to the foundation is used for grants that assist young people.

At a board of directors meeting in Indianapolis on May 6, the following Legion 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 American Legion Child Welfare Foundation retains its tax-exempt status. Gifts 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 Committee
Janet Jefford, Connecticut, Chairman

As we "Honor Their Service," the Children & Youth Program asked our members to also honor our littlest heroes, the children of our military and veterans. As noted in the mid-year report, Operation: Military Kids (OMK) continues to be the most popular way for units and members to connect with military children. In the spirit of children helping children, Juniors in New York joined members at their Mid-Winter Conference to stuff over 350 Hero Packs. Lake Stevens Unit 181 in Washington held a Christmas Carnival at the Everett Naval Station for over 180 kids and families.

In March, they partnered with Operation Homefront to host a baby shower, distributing over $3,900 worth of baby items to these proud new military parents. April was the month to honor youth impacted by deployment. The Department of Illinois encouraged everyone to "purple-up" on Friday the 13th as a visible way to show support and appreciation to military children for their strength and sacrifice. Through OMK's "Pillow Case and Love Bear" project, military children received over 500 bears and 15,000 pillowcases. Units in South Dakota purchased books such as "My Dad's a Hero,"

"My Mommy Wears Combat Boots" and "'H' is for Honor-A-Military Family Alphabet" and donated them to public libraries. May, as Mental Health Awareness Month, provided opportunities to educate communities about the unique problems facing military children.

Children of veterans were not forgotten as units held Christmas parties, Easter egg hunts, carnivals and numerous other activities. A unit in Minnesota created activity bags for children accompanying parents and grandparents to VA hospitals. Units supported the C&Y programs of The American Legion by helping during Legion baseball games and promoting Halloween safety.

Following one of the C&Y how-to sheets in the Plan of Action, Louisiana participated in a "Trunk for Treat" event, handing out candy and Halloween safety brochures. The 110 District in Florida worked together and adopted 14 National Guard families with 29 children. Florida Unit 5, working with the Legion Family, held a "Haley's Comet" casino night for 3-year-old Haley who witnessed the murder of her mother and grandmother. Over $6,000 was raised for Haley's trust account. When a National Guard veteran who had recently lost his job and whose wife was pregnant needed open-heart surgery, a unit in Louisiana responded by raising $1,200 so the other children and the family could have a Christmas.

This year, 33 Youth Hero Awards and 139 Good Deed Awards were presented. Twenty-three departments participated with Connecticut leading the way with 25 nominations. Justin Jackson of Florida earned his Youth Hero Award by saving all of his siblings from their burning home. Brady Giles, age 8, of South Dakota earned the Good Deed Award for starting Operation Holiday Cheer. Brady started the project as a way to thank troops over the holidays for their service. He would ask local military families what their servicemember missed most about home. Surprisingly, the answer given most often was grass. So Brady sent patches of potted grass along with other home comfort items.

Although only 32 departments reported, the stories were inspiring and the impact numbers were amazing. In all, close to 150,000 children were served this year with units reporting approximately $683,000 in direct aid to children and $552,000 given to agencies that serve children, not including the Legion's Child Welfare Foundation. What a wonderful way to Honor Their Service!

Community Service Committee
Martha Corriher, North Carolina, Chairman

Auxiliary members really took to the Community Service challenge to honor veterans and military. Three divisions achieved 100 percent department reporting, sharing a wide array of activities. Many units implemented a different service each month for veterans, servicemembers and their families.

From troop send-offs to welcome-home celebrations, members made it known they were there to lend a helping hand. Following the many disasters across our nation, members answered the call to assist those who have defended our country. Members have taken on the roles of caterers, seamstresses, lawn care workers, taxi drivers, babysitters, entertainers, teachers, vacation planners, employers, tutors and the list goes on.

A whopping 2,985,480 hours were dedicated to service for our veterans at a value of $5,385,069 through various activities and Auxiliary programs, and 515,981 hours and $1,641,799 were given to support our military and their families.

Your service impacted over 922,037 veterans, military and their families through actions and generosity. Members did not forget our homeless veterans. They continue to supply toiletry items, clothing, household items and offered their friendship while assisting them during their time of transition. Units assisted with job fairs, providing refreshments and transportation to these events. Units partnered with their local

government to hold events for veterans, servicemembers and their families to let them know how much their service is appreciated.

Junior members jumped on the bandwagon by providing tray favors, and holiday cards and visiting veterans in VAMCs, state veterans homes and local nursing facilities. Units opened up their post homes as a collection point. They promoted their projects while getting their communities involved and shared who the American Legion Auxiliary is, what we do and how the community can stay involved to assist our veterans, servicemembers and their families. Many units said these activities enabled them to sign up new members from their communities. They would not have known these prospective members existed were it not for activities they were promoting. Through various community service projects, the door was opened to collaborate with other organizations.

Churches and other faith-based organizations were some of the first to join the Auxiliary in projects. Units were contacted by local businesses who, after reading articles about Auxiliary projects, asked if they could provide goods and financial assistance to their projects. This has led to many community collaborations that will continue for years to come. Such efforts and service projects have been a big help in generating interest in local communities to research their families' history to see if they can become a part of the Legion Family and share their family's military history with their community. Units have opened up their post homes and simulated mini-USOs for their communities by hosting dances, dinners, programs for children of the military, job fairs and educational seminars.

Constitution & Bylaws Committee
Sharon Conatser, Illinois, Chairman

Do you pursue happiness in your life? The American Legion Auxiliary has a constitution, bylaws and standing rules. They give you the right to serve, volunteer and appreciate our veterans, military personnel, children and our communities. Take a part in your unit and serve on behalf of your eligibility. Constitution and bylaws are the basis for governance of your department, district, county and unit. Preparing and adhering to an updated constitution, bylaws, and standing rules will provide a more successful organizational process. Always remember that department, district, county and unit constitutions, bylaws, and standing rules cannot be in conflict with national governing documents.

Twenty-two departments reported to this chairman. All reported contacting their units about the national dues increase and encouraged them to update their documents to reflect this amount. For example, California's members worked very hard to keep fellow members informed, and worked with their units to be sure their governing documents were up to date. If your unit members are up to date and understand the constitution and bylaws, many conflicts can be avoided. Present each new unit member with a copy of your governing documents at the beginning of her membership. This will help her feel like an informed part of your unit. It is helpful to review the documents yearly so you are up to date.

The Department of Texas reported giving certificates to units that submitted their constitution, bylaws and standing rules to the department chairman for review and approval. A little recognition goes a long way. The Department of New Mexico reported presenting a skit on "How Not to Run a Meeting." Several departments reported that their governing documents had been posted on their website. The Department of New York reported 82 percent of their units sent in reports. Over half of their units give their constitution and bylaws to new members; over half have reviewed their constitution and bylaws, and standing rules this year. In the Department of South Carolina, at each district meeting, mini workshops on constitution and bylaws were held.

The department chairman and committee are helping new units write their constitution and bylaws, and standing rules. Several units sent out the how-to sheets included in the Plan of Action to their units. In the Department of New Hampshire, "Ben Franklin" attended the Junior Conference and presented a program on constitution and bylaws and their importance in running an organization effectively.

Hard work, planning and enhancements to your constitution and bylaws can ensure harmony in your unit and beyond.

Education Committee
Coral May Grout, Massachusetts, Chairman

The Auxiliary's Education Program impacts children and adults of all ages. Our community schools often have military children enrolled, so our programs honor the service of their parents. The Education Committee worked very hard this year, which culminated in 100 percent reporting from all 52 departments. The Veterans in the Classroom Program, one of our premier ways to honor veterans, was held in nearly every department.

The number of students involved with Veterans in the Classroom in Illinois was reported as being 3,597. Unit 34 in Texas held a luncheon for local veterans at a school with more than 3,000 students and teachers. In all, 13,602 students nationally were participants in Veterans in the Classroom Programs.

Nearly every department also promoted the scholarship program at all levels — locally, within departments and at the national level. Reports reveal that more than $1.5 million in scholarships were awarded! The Department of Missouri received 13 applications for the Children of Warriors Scholarship, of which six were the children of deployed personnel. "Give 10 to Education" was reported in all departments except for three. In the Department of Washington, a unit collected school supplies and sent them to a local soldier stationed in Afghanistan. He, in turn, delivered them to a school that needed supplies. Unit 832 in Texas adopted an elementary school whose student body was comprised of 100 percent military children. The unit used Give 10 to collect items for the staff and students, including paper, pens, pencils, erasers, and books.

Members assisted with adult literacy programs in many departments. In Arizona, eight units spent 535 hours volunteering with adults. They reached 58 adults, of which 25 were veterans. Their members spent $925 on this program. Some units assisted with American Legion programs, including the Oratorical Contest. Members donated their time to help with judging and timekeeping. The American Legion Auxiliary has been an active participant in American Education Week since its beginning. Forty-eight departments reported participation. In Maryland, 28 units spent 479 hours in 113 schools. Units spent $3,476 on items related to American Education Week. Members delivered apples to teachers, sent thank-you notes, and baked goodies. Many departments reported that units participated in various literacy programs.

"United Through Reading" was included in nine department reports; reading on Dr. Seuss Day was popular in six departments; and 28 departments reported that members tutored or mentored children and adults. In Louisiana, $12,700 was spent on classroom literacy. The chairman reported that 3,000 members traveled more than 20,000 miles and spent more than 12,000 hours as classroom volunteers. A unit in Kansas helped the child of a veteran by donating $1,000 toward the student's educational needs. In Maine, a unit purchased 164 educational DVDs for children of deployed personnel to use. "Need a Lift?" was distributed in 12 departments. Education is the key to our nation's success, and our unit members embraced that in all that was accomplished this very successful year.

Finance Committee
Nicole Clapp, Iowa, Chairman

Your National Finance Committee is a five-member committee with each currently appointed member serving a five-year term. The primary roles of the National Finance Committee include developing an annual proposed budget; reviewing financial reports; and investment planning, fundraising campaigns, and member benefits enhancements.

Each of the five Finance Committee members takes her responsibility very seriously and brings invaluable skills and knowledge to our discussions. One member of the Finance Committee is appointed to serve on the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Board and another committee member serves on the American Legion Auxiliary Audit Committee. Committee responsibilities include, in addition to developing the annual budget, overseeing the financial policies of the organization, reviewing the annual audit of the ALA and the Foundation and making recommendations to the National Executive Committee for action to ensure the organization is meeting nonprofit benchmark and governmental mandates.

Among the major areas of financial accomplishments, our financial performance thus far for 2011-2012 fiscal year, has been very positive. Due to the success of our investments, in conjunction with your donations to the National Presidents' Scholarship, we were able to increase each national scholarship award by $1,000, for a total increase of $15,000. The successful fundraising efforts by our direct mail vendor are continuing with three campaigns designated for the American Legion Auxiliary and one for the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation during this fiscal year. We appreciate your continued support of these efforts. For example, the Holiday Card Campaign netted $160,000 compared to $120,000 last year, and in 2011, the calendar year donations totaled a net of more than $330,000. The data analysis of those donations through May 2012 indicated 90,000 gifts were received. Thank you, members, for your generosity! As an interesting sidenote, 34,000 of those gifts came from non-ALA members.

In the area of member benefits, two major initiatives were accomplished. At the Washington DC Conference in February, Gallagher Benefit Services joined with the ALA in a service agreement with the mutual goal to add value to our member benefit program. Through this relationship, we will be able to enhance the depth and breadth of the benefits we offer to our members. In April, a five-year contract commenced with USAA establishing a credit card affinity program for members with an annual royalty guarantee of $25,000. Our intent is to share the royalty revenue with the departments. So, members, please consider obtaining the USAA card if you have not already done so.

The Finance Committee has been brainstorming opportunities all year to improve the services we offer to you, our members, our veterans and their families. The Finance Committee and National Headquarters staff explored, through the fiscal year 2012-2013 budget planning process in June, possible ideas and related cost effectiveness options such as defraying conference registrations, travel, and rehab assessments. On behalf of the Finance Committee, thank you for your dedication, commitment and generous financial support of the American Legion Auxiliary's tireless efforts to fulfill our mission

ALA Girls State/Girls Nation
Kathy Dungan, Mississippi, Chairman

Teaching Americanism and patriotism is a vital part of the ALA Girls State Program. Another part is volunteerism. This year we were asked to focus on "Honoring Their Service" by incorporating service projects in ALA Girls State sessions. These projects included volunteering, distributing, crafting and donating many items, including money and gift cards. I received 100 percent reporting from all 49 departments that

participate in the ALA Girls State Program. All departments worked exceptionally hard in planning and implementing their service projects at their ALA Girls State sessions.

The Departments of Pennsylvania, Idaho, Louisiana, Kentucky, Ohio and Maine made Hero Packs for military families. Vermont brought toiletry items to be distributed to veterans homes. Departments such as New York, Wisconsin, Arizona and Massachusetts made pocket flags at their sessions. California made friendship bracelets that were distributed by Operation: Military Kids to military children. Cards and letters were written to troops overseas and veterans in VA hospitals and nursing homes by the Departments of Utah, Florida, Kansas, Virginia, North Carolina and Alabama.

ALA Iowa Girls State delegates made coloring books and distributed them to military children. The Departments of Nevada, Oklahoma and Colorado invited a female veteran to speak to their delegates. Nebraska delegates performed the National Anthem at a minor league baseball game. Minnesota held a candlelight ceremony to honor deceased veterans. New Hampshire distributed the booklet "101 Ways to Support Our Troops" to their delegates. South Dakota's project was "Women of War," a homeless shelter for women veterans.

North Dakota included Legionnaires to help inform delegates of our mission. Tennessee visited veterans at the VA Medical Center and also delivered donated personal items. Virginia collected gift cards for a Wounded Warriors picnic. Departments, including Washington, Arizona, New Jersey, Illinois and Rhode Island, participated in patriotic ceremonies and asked veterans to participate. Those ceremonies included poppy memorial services, flag disposals, flag folding, POW/MIA table ceremonies, Blue Star Banner and citation presentations and flag etiquette.

Alaska delegates visited the Vietnam moving wall. Mississippi delegates visited Camp Shelby, toured the base and distributed pocket flag to the troops. Florida and New Mexico asked their delegates to continue volunteering in their communities upon returning home with projects such as poppy distribution, hosting a veterans breakfast and participating in patriotic parades and celebrations. Oklahoma asked delegates to help cleanup after the devastation of the tornadoes and to report their volunteer efforts. Honoring Their Service was definitely the focus of the American Legion Auxiliary Girls State Program this year!

Junior Activities Committee
Lisa Williamson, Alaska, Chairman

Junior members hit the ground running this year; the Plan of Action and objectives were not changed from last year, so we knew where we were heading, what worked last year and what didn't.

The first Junior Activities objective focused on service projects for our military, veterans and their families.

For example, the Juniors in Arizona raised money for "Pets for Vets," a nationwide program that strives to help heal the emotional wounds of military veterans by pairing them with a shelter dog. Shelter dogs receive a second chance at life while giving our returning soldiers a second chance at health and happiness.

Many units across the nation have Junior members, but they are not all in an active, organized group. It takes only one person to make a difference as 10-year-old Lily Hammond of North Carolina's Burgaw Unit 165 proved. She was inspired to bake cookies for families of recent high school graduates after learning they were spending their first holiday season apart since joining the military. With assistance from a local JROTC, Lily was able to bake and deliver cookies to 12 military families in her community.

Speaking of cookies, Juniors from across the country visited area veterans homes at Christmas and gave cookies and gifts to our veterans.

Honorary National Junior President Brittany Watts championed the Children of Warriors National Presidents' Scholarship as her special emphasis of the year. She promoted the scholarship's special patch for Junior members and earned the patch herself by mowing lawns and donating the money earned. The Juniors in Louisiana supported her by organizing a can pull tab drive, and having a table at a Legion post dinner. Although not every Junior member raised enough for the special patch, Junior members still contributed money for the fund. This scholarship was also promoted by sending emails to area schools and promoting its application requirements.

Speaking of emails, the final objective – technology – really makes our girls feel useful, intelligent and of value to our organization. Modern technology is so easy for them; thankfully, they are incredibly patient as many serve as trainers and helpers to senior members!

The Department of Michigan Juniors have a wonderful Facebook group where they keep over 100 members — both senior and Junior members — up to date regarding meetings, conferences and conventions. To keep Juniors interested, a question is posted each week asking for their input. Photos are uploaded regularly, and it is a work-in-progress.

Our Juniors show dedication and heart. Some I have met and worked with could be considered "old souls" as they shock me with their compassion and dedication for something other than themselves. These Junior members of our great organization are able to make a positive impact!

Leadership Committee
Mary Davis, Washington, Chairman

The American Legion Auxiliary is as strong as its leaders at all levels. In preparation for a successful year, unit and department chairmen began planning Leadership Training Programs, which would be presented to unit members throughout the year. They considered various avenues for incorporating National President Kris Nelson's focus to honor the service of local veterans and military into the Leadership Program.

Leadership skills were honed to ensure meaningful support for a successful outcome of programs. Bev Buchanan, Department of Delaware, summed up her theory to best prepare unit leaders: "One of the key factors in being a good leader is to steer your committee chairmen in the right direction and then guide them through their own ideas," she said. "This gives them the confidence to become leaders in their own right. Each year…my goal is to watch the shy and timid member turn into an excellent chairman."

Individual members completed the National Leadership Course, attended department-, district- or county-sponsored seminars, and units conducted leadership training courses. Leadership booklets were prepared and distributed at training seminars. New members were encouraged to attend seminars or take the National Leadership Course. When presenting her leadership 59seminars, Arizona Department Chairman Betty Smith provided additional information about the National Leadership Course. She provided personal hands-on training about working with posts and officer and chairman duties. Additionally, incoming leaders were trained at the Auxiliary leadership seminars, which were also open to Legionnaires and Sons of The American Legion members.

Another method that proved valuable in assisting members with strengthening their leadership skills was mentoring. Department of Idaho Chairman Carmen Metzer believes a leader does not say "get going;" instead, a leader says, "let's go" and then leads the way. Chairman Metzer, as well as members of many units in Idaho, have been mentoring new members as a way to train and identify future leaders. An active past department

presidents group is available to mentor at all district and unit meetings and take phone calls whenever a member of the Department of Montana requests help, according to Chairman Linda Lewis.

After honing leadership skills, members were able to take lessons they learned in training and apply those lessons to any of the mission-based programs of the Auxiliary. Our programs are successful because of effective leadership.

Legislative Committee
Ann Rehbein, Iowa, Chairman

The American Legion Auxiliary's Legislative Program mirrors that of The American Legion by supporting the Legion's priorities and mandates. To learn more about these areas, Auxiliary leadership met with members of The American Legion staff in Washington, D.C. following the Washington DC Conference. Topics discussed were national security, economics, veterans affairs and legislation.

A meeting was also held with the Honorable Eric Shinseki, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, where upcoming legislation was discussed. Several members were able to attend Commander Wong's testimony before a joint session of the U.S. Senate and House Committees on Veterans Affairs. At this year's Washington DC Conference, the entire Legion Family joined together in a legislative priority meeting to update members on the point sheets and priorities before embarking on individual visits to their senators and representatives. The Legislative Council continues to grow and become an important part of the Legislative Committee's activities.

Each member of the council needs to be on friendly terms and preferably have a personal relationship with the member of Congress with whom she works so that she can communicate the views of The American Legion, especially in the case of emergency legislation. Auxiliary members across the nation have chosen to honor their service and continue the work of ensuring veterans and their families are treated properly and given a fair chance.

Thousands of members have contacted their senators and representatives, both national and local, by phone, mail, email, fax and even Facebook and other social media. Twitter has also been used to update members on important issues. Units reported using the Plan of Action, Legislative Advocacy Guide, ALA eNews, The Dispatch and The American Legion Legislation Action Center on The American Legion's webpage for information gathering. They then disseminated this information by reporting at their unit meetings, holding rallies, and sponsoring town hall meetings and meet-the-candidate nights.

Several units noted that they used the Action Center to access voting records and monitor the votes of their elected officials. Legislation that was of high importance this year included Protecting VA and DoD from the 2011 Deficit Reduction Law, VA home loans, Disabled Veterans Tax, Keystone XL Pipeline, FY '13 DoD Budget, FY '13 VA Budget and the Flag Protection Amendment.

Concerned Auxiliary members will continue to monitor such important issues and take action when called upon.

Long Range Strategic Planning Committee
Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan, Wisconsin, Chairman

A strategic plan is a document that provides long-term guidance and clear direction to the entire organization, instead of individual, incremental, year-by-year changes driven by administrative and traditional annual changes in leadership. Having a good strategic

plan helps us plan our work, identify projects, set priorities, and allocate resources wisely to meet the needs of the future.

For the American Legion Auxiliary to be effective at delivering our mission, we must be capable of reacting effectively to meet the needs of our veterans, our military and their families. A strategic plan helps us anticipate their long-term needs and, in turn, position ourselves to be able to serve their needs well into the future. The strategic plan provides a guiding light for members so they can assess their efforts and the organization's response to changing factors, and then adjust appropriately. A strategic plan, then, is really a "document of agreements," a multi-year plan of far-reaching goals about the future of the organization and the steps to get there.

Your national Strategic Planning Committee is proud to report that we have accomplished many of the key provisions within our national strategic plan. The technology initiatives have been implemented, and improvements are being continually made. The Gateway to Services is an online ALA Resource Guide for Veterans and Military Families. It contains a wealth of information, and we urge you to become familiar with it and to share the news about it with veterans and servicemembers in your communities.

The Unit and Department Standards team's report of suggestions and templates is now on the website. The American Legion Auxiliary Membership, Leadership and Character Initiatives tackled some tough problems facing the organization. Much of their work is now being incorporated into a Department Operations Guide and the next edition of the Unit Handbook.

The new mission and vision statement adopted by the National Executive Committee makes it clear why we exist and who we serve in our communities. The vision statement says what we want the organization to be in the future, the premier service organization for people to join to help us fulfill our mission.

Earlier this year, the final report from the professionally facilitated 2010 American Legion Auxiliary National Convention Focus Sessions was completed and posted on the ALA national website. All of the member feedback comprised 29 single-spaced pages. The massive amount of material collected was assimilated and reviewed by the Strategic Planning Committee over multiple meetings. Recurring questions and comments were then shared with committees of Past National Presidents who composed responses to the common concerns presented.

The committee also benefited from training provided by nationally renowned Maxwell Associates, Inc., that helped the Long-Range Strategic Planning Committee assess where we are, where we need to be, and how to get there. The training served as a refresher to some and an orientation to others, and centered on the rudiments of strategic planning – what it is, what it isn't, and how to do it effectively. The role of the strategic planning committee is not to serve as a "hot topic" response committee; rather, its role is to develop the organization's long range strategic plan, review it, track its relevance and accomplishments, and assess how the organization is spending its time and energy against the organization's purpose. Do our actions support our strategic direction? Do they align with our mission?

Last, but certainly not least, the committee has spent three years addressing the need for governance reform. We gathered much member input, and hope you will carefully consider the proposal to be presented at this convention.

Membership Committee
Trish Ward, Kansas, Chairman

What is Membership? Membership is the foundation and backbone of our organization. Its health is critical to ensure we can efficiently carry out the work

necessary to fulfill our mission. It strength controls our ability to initiate vital change. It defines the depth of our collective character, determines our effectiveness, and through it is the vehicle to positively impact those we serve.

Creating a theme that would resonate with every member plus developing numeric objectives that are reasonable, believable and achievable were the essence and focus of the year's initiatives. "Honoring Their Service" reminded each member of their veteran connection and served as the catalyst to encourage members to make their eligibility visual to invite membership conversation. Telling people we are a veterans service organization is one thing; showing them is something else.

Our members got creative and innovative as they proudly displayed their veteran connection for all to see. Units reported creating "Honor Walls" representing a collage of images of veterans from their local communities to include those from whom the members themselves were eligible. Merging a historical element together with a modern twist, Edwin T. Stiles Unit 153 in St. Johns, Mich., created an "Honor Quilt" containing "Commemorative Honor Buttons" of special veterans from their community and post. Using the buttons as "stars" for their flag, the quilt encouraged interest and served to capture the attention of others who share a similar appreciation and commitment to veterans and their families.

Every department reported using a personal connection to reach out to members, and that personal touch continued to be our most effective renewal and recruitment tool. As demonstrated by Fort Atkinson Unit 348 in Fort Calhoun, Neb., grassroots members remained the foundation of our collective membership effort. At 160 percent of their numeric objective, this small unit, previously struggling, was inspired by one woman's commitment and dedication.

The importance of strong mentors and leaders played a critical role in many overcoming their challenges and achieving their objectives. Across the nation, members reinforced the importance of building a strong Legion Family and creating a mentality that is results-oriented. Helping each other succeed, working together on mission-related activities and remaining visible in their communities served to enhance the concept of "Honoring Their Service" and reminded prospective members that supporting our veterans, troops and their families never goes out of style.

As technology continued to play a role in the way members communicated, the power of websites, email, Facebook and Twitter helped many to stay in touch and initiate contact. For the first time in our history, five generations are now working and volunteering together. Our ability to effectively manage this dynamic and communicate respectfully to all members is most assuredly the key to solidifying our future growth and remaining relevant to our nation and accessible to those we serve.

National Security Committee
Vickie Koutz, Indiana, Chairman

Auxiliary members stepped up and helped fill the needs of those we support. We served by recognizing troops through the Yellow Ribbon Program. Delaware made 700 yellow ribbons to decorate their communities. Nebraska hosted lunch for a "Yellow Ribbon Run" fundraiser. Twenty units displayed ribbons when soldiers returned.

North Carolina presented 1,036 ribbons at 19 different events. Fifty ribbons were given to the families of deployed soldiers in South Carolina. We served by honoring our military through the Blue and Gold Star Banner Programs. Louisiana distributed banners to families. Sixty-five units in Minnesota distributed 73 Blue Star Banners and two Gold Star Banners to local families. Units in Montana and Nevada presented banners. Two Gold Star Mothers in Oklahoma received flower on Mother's Day in memory of their fallen family members.

We served by clipping coupons. Missouri members clipped $200,000 worth of coupons. Ohio volunteered 30,494 hours to clip $3,405,646 worth of coupons and spent $20,672 shipping them. Members in California spent 9,610 hours clipping coupons with a total value of $1,291,188. Idaho also collected coupons worth $83,728.

We served by volunteering at USO facilities. Members from eight units in North Dakota volunteered 5,000 hours at their center. New Jersey collected 7,783 pounds of cookies for the USO. That helped satisfy the sweet tooth for a lot of servicemembers! A Texas unit purchased a video camera to use for the USO's United Through Reading Program. An Indiana unit collected cards, soap, shampoo and other personal care items for distribution.

We served by helping our military stay connected with their families. Virginia members donated 450,000 minutes in phone cards so members of our deployed military could call home. Each of those minutes was a precious link to loved ones. We served during various holiday celebrations. Wyoming distributed valentines to their adopted Army Reserve unit. Some Utah ROTC students assisted a local unit by stuffing 10,000 eggs at Easter. A Vermont unit adopted military families and made sure the children had supplies for school, along with providing them proper Thanksgiving dinners. A Maine unit held its annual Gifts of Gratitude Christmas auction, raising $15,696. A Georgia unit volunteered 316 hours making Christmas baskets, traveling 629 miles delivering them. Hawaii volunteered more than 400 hours to assist 300 servicemembers.

We serve by honoring our troops. Unit 370 in Kansas supported the "No Dough Dinners" at Fort Riley where they served free dinners to troops and families. Five units in Oregon participated in Military Appreciation Month. A New Mexico unit held a baby shower for military families and donated gifts to expectant moms. Units in Washington supported four groups of military personnel in Afghanistan at Kandahar Hospital. A Mississippi unit sponsored a homecoming dinner at the armory.

One of the most touching ways we served was reported by Tennessee: Unit members lined the streets with American flags in solemn tribute to a fallen soldier en-route from the funeral home to the cemetery.

The American Legion Auxiliary has been actively working the National Security Program this past year. I want to thank everyone who had a hand in making the National Security Program a success.

Past Presidents Parley Committee
JoAnn Cronin, Missouri, Chairman

It has been a great pleasure serving as chairman for the national Past Presidents Parley Committee. The dedication displayed and service completed by our members truly has been astounding.

Our mission this year was "to recognize and honor women veterans and to utilize the experience and knowledge of past Auxiliary leaders." Judging by the numerous "Honoring our Servicewomen" and "Unit Member of the Year" nominations, reports of members mentoring new members, chartering new units and forming department and unit parleys, I would say we delivered on our mission.

It is my pleasure to share that departments across the nation sent in nominations for their Unit Member of the Year. This award recognizes the contributions made by a valued unit member and is truly our chance to recognize grassroots members on the national level.

Several of our members also took the time to nominate a military servicewoman so that she could be honored on the National Convention stage. I felt privileged to read all of the submissions and select the winners from such an inspiring group of nominees.

I encourage members to continue submitting their nominations so that we can recognize our active-duty servicewomen on the national level, for they are the Faces of Freedom.

This year, women who have been president of a unit, department, or the national organization have contributed to the Auxiliary as members of the Past Presidents Parley. These leaders have shared their wisdom and provided ongoing mentorship to ensure the continuity and strength of the organization at all levels.

Poppy Committee
Krisann Owens, Oregon, Chairman

The Poppy Program continues to bring the public's awareness to our veterans and their needs. Communities across the nation recognize the poppy as a lasting tribute to the men and women who served and continue to serve this great nation. Donations collected go to programs that support veterans' basic necessities of life.

Planting "Poppy Fields" within our communities has brought beautification projects and awareness to the significance of the poppy, plus created opportunities for our units to partner with local governments and community members. Strong relationships have been built through the planting and nurturing of Poppy Fields.

Many ALA Girls State sessions begin or end with poppy corsages made by ALA members. It is another way to reach out to our community by showing our ALA Girls State citizens how important the poppy is to not only our organization, but to our veterans. Learning about the poppy will stay with them and it will always be a reminder of their time at ALA Girls State.

Our members still create many amazing displays full of poppies and stories. These department events bring out the creative and artistic side of our members, and they are truly works of art. Members bring a varying view of how and where the poppy is used and the displays are the highlight of our department conventions.

We also experienced many contests of poppy usage including "Poppy Hat" contests. These were fun and exciting ways to not only show off our poppy but to also serve as a remembrance to the sacrifices of our veterans.

The Poppy Poster Contest has allowed children to participate in a fun, creative and exciting project. It teaches children the importance of the poppy and the story behind it. We had some wonderful entries this year and the divisional winners will be printed in the national magazine.

Our members have reached out to local schools to teach students the poppy story so they can recite it at any time. Learning the poppy story also provides the opportunity for students to learn what a veteran is. We've found that sometimes students and their families don't realize that a close family member is a veteran until later, when they share the story of the poppy that they learned in school from members of the American Legion Auxiliary.

The "Miss Poppy" and "Little Miss Poppy" pageants have given girls the opportunity to give back to our veterans. When passing out poppies at a dinner or event, each Miss Poppy becomes a true ambassador of the Poppy Program. Our veterans are delighted to see these girls carrying on the tradition it has taught them, the tradition of respecting our veterans and honoring their sacrifices. Each Miss Poppy knows and understands the story of the poppy and also can recite the poem "In Flanders Fields" by Col. John McCrae.

Public Relations Committee
Diane Duscheck, Wisconsin, Chairman

Public Relations is a support tool to the outreach programs of the American Legion Auxiliary. Units have used every media source possible to spread the word about the Auxiliary's support of veterans, military and their families. Projecting the positive activity of the Auxiliary has served to promote membership as well as to inform the public of the central values of the organization. Whether low-tech or high-tech, the means of sharing information meets the needs of the units.

In the Departments of Minnesota, Oregon, Wyoming, and Alabama, units have paired with television and radio stations to get their messages to members and the public. One unit had its own 20- to 25-minute daily program called "Coffee Time," which was hosted by its president.

All districts in Indiana reported that some form of networking is being used – websites, email, Facebook, LinkedIn, blogging, texting and ebulletins – in order to promote a positive image of the American Legion Auxiliary. At conferences, members tweeted chairmen's reports from the conference floor.

Window clings were distributed to members of The Wisconsin American Legion Family so they would promote their membership and pride in the organization wherever they drove.

Junior and senior units in Kentucky have utilized Facebook to keep in touch with other units, to share best practices, and to learn of Auxiliary events that are taking place throughout the country. A listing of unit websites, Facebook pages and email addresses was shared with the units.

Pictures taken at the Just Soup Ministry and at clothing drives in Delaware were shared with local newspapers and were sent to Auxiliary members along with emails to keep the membership informed. Chairmen also ventured beyond their comfort zones to learn to burn disks for unit events and the department magazine.

YouTube was used in Virginia to reach members who were unable to attend meetings and conferences. Videos of chairmen reports were uploaded to their department's YouTube account and were available for viewing at a later date by members and new viewers. Live streaming video of Spring Conference was shared, including leadership training, chairmen reports and the address of the national commander. Constant Contact, an online email marketing tool, was used to increase their email database and to reach more members. A "Join Our Email List" button was added to their Facebook page to encourage fans to subscribe.

As evidenced above, departments and units have used almost every conceivable media style successfully in order to reach members and nonmembers to portray the positive and caring image of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee
Nancy Brown-Park, California, Chairman

Departments and units reported so many amazing ways that they supported veterans and their families. This chairman could write a book on all that has been done across the country to "Honor the Service" of those who have served.

This year, the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Program introduced the Creative Arts donation cans – Pringles cans wrapped in a clever label to help units raise our $150,000 national commitment to the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. National President Kris Nelson reported seeing lots of donation cans during her travels. As of this writing, we are a bit short of our commitment but I know that by the close of books,

departments and units will have raised the money we need to support the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

A new mini grant program that supports a local Creative Arts Festival program was established to help create awareness about these programs. This year, we have provided three grants to VA medical facilities in California, North Carolina and New York. Priscilla Imburgia from the Department of New York wrote: "I can't even tell you how excited I was to receive the grant money. The $2,000 will be enough to get us started right away! Now we can move forward quickly and get those waiting for clay projects started in their therapy involvement."

The American Legion Auxiliary is committed to combat homelessness among veterans. The Department of Wisconsin added a Homeless Women Veterans Program to its Department Plan of Action. With lots of hard work from the members, they were successful in establishing a grant program that offers assistance to homeless or at-risk women veterans. They recruited 34 American Legion Auxiliary members to be the connection to women veterans in each of their 12 districts and worked with other organizations in a joint effort to help women veterans know and understand their benefits. They held 12 Making Connections – Women to Women workshops to explain benefits and answer questions.

I had the opportunity to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Fayetteville, Ark., with the national VA&R division chairmen. We all left with a personal commitment to continue to make a difference in the lives of veterans and their families.

A special thank you to every member of The American Legion Family who worked tirelessly to honor the service of those who have served with honor.

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, 2011 and 2010 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, 2011 and 2010, 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 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 companies. Such information is the responsibility of management and was derived from and relates directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the consolidated financial statements. The information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audits of the consolidated financial statements and certain additional procedures, including comparing and reconciling other information directly to the underlying accounting and such records used to prepare the consolidated financial statements or to the consolidated financial statements themselves, and other additional procedures in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. In our opinion, the information is fairly stated in all material respects in relation to the consolidated financial statements as a whole.

Crowe Horwath LLP
Crowe Horwath LLP

Indianapolis, Indiana
May 1, 2012

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statements of Financial Position *December 31, 2011 and 2010*

	2011	2010
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 2,838,169	$ 2,686,749
Accounts receivable	2,293,985	3,110,763
Interest receivable	605,899	741,462
Prepaid expenses and deposits	1,237,649	579,425
Deferred membership expense	8,717,182	8,692,559
Inventory	2,433,969	2,500,115
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	39,165	50,922
Beneficial interest in trust	316,898	336,597
Prepaid pension expense	-	1,542,507
	18,482,916	20,241,099
Investments		
General	25,355,652	25,860,863
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved Funds	30,220,097	28,121,944
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership fund	22,505,485	23,197,380
Samsung scholarship fund	8,127,347	7,843,214
Building funds	4,717,543	4,377,546
Sept. 11 Memorial scholarship fund	6,418,584	4,812,835
Special account – Endowment Fund	2,312,288	2,255,689
General account – Endowment Fund	6,989,878	6,724,930
National Emergency Fund	2,976,891	2,789,006
Other	2,820,926	2,747,336
	112,444,691	108,730,743
Property, plant and equipment, net	6,171,871	6,692,041
	$ 137,099,478	$ 135,663,883
LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable	$ 2,438,175	$ 1,668,774
Scholarships payable	1,184,518	1,205,583
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	189,159	187,005
Deferred income	1,146,099	1,060,185
Deferred dues income	23,037,185	24,110,482
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	8,490,607	7,153,516
Accrued vacation benefits	954,722	829,557
Accrued pension expense	3,303,798	-
Other liabilities	270,603	360,144
Notes payable	1,678,367	1,885,963
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life membership	20,155,727	19,990,712
Life memberships due to state and local posts	20,273,978	20,118,073
	83,122,938	78,569,994
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	27,657,140	32,682,582
Temporarily restricted	13,655,967	12,002,212
Permanently restricted	12,663,433	12,409,095
Total net assets	53,976,540	57,093,889
	$ 137,099,478	$ 135,663,883

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statements of Activities *Year ended December 31, 2011*

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
Revenue, gains and other support				
National member dues	$ 28,197,464	$ -	$ -	$ 28,197,464
Direct membership solicitations	8,767,665	-	-	8,767,665
Member service fees income	1,128,191	-	-	1,128,191
Affinity income	3,830,175	-	-	3,830,175
Sales of emblem items	11,303,617	-	-	11,303,617
Advertising	9,352,156	-	-	9,352,156
Contributions	3,108,111	1,456,388	84,538	4,649,037
Label and printing fees	1,046,466	-	-	1,046,466
Interest and dividends, net of trustee fees of $285,667	2,158,284	809,597	74,896	3,042,777
Net realized gains	287,432	10,847	-	298,279
Other	2,082,941	-	-	2,082,941
	71,262,502	2,276,832	159,434	73,698,768
Net assets released from restriction	1,229,423	(1,229,423)	-	-
Total revenues, gains, and other support	72,491,925	1,047,409	159,434	73,698,768
Expenses				
Salaries	15,059,423	-	-	15,059,423
Employee benefits	3,035,623	-	-	3,035,623
Cost of sales - emblem	6,008,625	-	-	6,008,625
Department and magazine costs	2,221,473	-	-	2,221,473
Direct publication	12,109,012	-	-	12,109,012
Executive and staff travel	1,847,304	-	-	1,847,304
Commission and committee	1,945,776	-	-	1,945,776
Printing and postage	8,037,789	-	-	8,037,789
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,770,375	-	-	1,770,375
Office and other operating	13,435,663	-	-	13,435,663
Occupancy and usage	2,268,508	-	-	2,268,508
Special projects and programs	2,946,242	-	-	2,946,242
	70,685,813	-	-	70,685,813
Change in net assets from operations	1,806,112	1,047,409	159,434	3,012,955
Net unrealized gains - investments	2,542,548	606,346	94,904	3,243,798
Net change in PUFL	(3,596,231)	-	-	(3,596,231)
Amortization of pension loss	(666,288)	-	-	(666,288)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	(5,111,583)	-	-	(5,111,583)
Change in net assets	(5,025,442)	1,653,755	254,338	(3,117,349)
Net assets, beginning of year	32,682,582	12,002,212	12,409,095	57,093,889
Net assets, end of year	$ 27,657,140	$ 13,655,967	$ 12,663,433	$ 53,976,540

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statements 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
Contributions	1,828,736	1,817,084	83,902	3,729,722
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	1,850,980	-	-	1,850,980
	64,658,806	2,699,538	90,627	67,448,971
Net assets released from restriction	1,115,212	(1,115,212)	-	-
Total revenues, gains, and other support	65,774,018	1,584,326	90,627	67,448,971
Expenses				
Salaries	14,656,208	-	-	14,656,208
Employee benefits	2,685,809	-	-	2,685,809
Cost of sales - emblem	6,109,622			6,109,622
Department and magazine costs	2,070,536	-	-	2,070,536
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	(177,238)	1,584,326	90,627	1,497,715
Net unrealized gains - investments	366,984	222,645	180,912	770,541
Net change in PUFL	3,380,105	-	-	3,380,105
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 Statements of Cash Flows *Year ended December 31, 2011 and 2010*

	2011	2010
Cash flows from operating activities		
Change in net assets	$ (3,117,349)	$ 6,228,696
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash from operating activities		
Depreciation expense	1,063,977	1,072,930
Loss on disposal of property and equipment	-	5,232
Bad debt expense	155,018	7,494
Realized gain on sale of investments	(298,279)	(396,968)
Unrealized gain on investments	(3,243,798)	(770,541)
Net change in Paid-Up-For-Life annuity	3,596,231	(3,285,143)
Amortization of pension loss	666,288	783,605
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	5,111,583	(1,363,940)
Contributions restricted for long-term purposes	(84,538)	(83,902)
Change in assets and liabilities:		
Accounts receivable	661,760	(468,463)
Interest receivable	135,563	(74,266)
Prepaid expenses and deposits	(658,224)	559,181
Deferred membership expense	(24,623)	(266,571)
Inventories	66,146	(291,818)
Beneficial interest in trust	19,699	14,895
Accounts and scholarships payable	748,336	(79,697)
Deferred income	(2,925,603)	(2,320,939)
Prepaid (accrued) pension expense	(931,566)	(817,222)
Other accrued liabilities	37,778	353,788
Net cash from operating activities	978,399	(1,193,649)
Cash flows from investing activities		
Purchase of property and equipment	(543,807)	(653,724)
Purchase of investments	(99,542,367)	(160,521,453)
Sales and maturities of investments	99,370,496	163,480,783
Investments in affiliate (CFA)	11,757	(4,270)
Net cash from investing activities	(703,921)	2,301,336
Cash flows from financing activities		
Contributions restricted for long-term purposes	84,538	83,902
Payments on loan	(207,596)	(196,902)
Net cash from financing activities	(123,058)	(113,000)
Net change in cash and cash equivalents	151,420	994,687
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	2,686,749	1,692,062
Cash and cash equivalents, end of year	$ 2,838,169	$ 2,686,749
Supplemental cash flows information		
Income taxes paid, net of refunds received	$ (6,000)	$ (274,046)
Interest paid	105,654	105,654

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 13-14 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's emblem. Income is expended by the Legion on several different programs, including the 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, The American Legion Charities (ALC), 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.

The American Legion Charities is a tax-exempt trust established to solicit funds from individuals, organizations and corporations, and to disburse said funds as may be directed to various Legion programs and charities. The American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation, a tax-exempt Indiana corporation, was created to provide permanent funding for the rehabilitation of American 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 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, or 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 their 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 participate 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, 2011 and 2010.

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 accordingly, and the Legion has concluded that they need not be capitalized. Some 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. ALC, ALEF and NEF are exempt from federal income taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. None of these entities is considered to be a private foundation. The Legion is subject to income tax on unrelated business income. In 2011 and 2010, the Legion incurred no tax expense. In 2011 and 2010, the Legion received $6,000 and $274,046 of refunds (net of payments), respectively.

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, 2011 and 2010, 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 2008. 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, 2011 and 2010.

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, accounts payable 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.

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.

Subsequent Events: Management has performed an analysis of the activities and transactions subsequent to Dec. 31, 2011, to determine the need for any adjustments or disclosures to the audited financial statements for the year ended Dec. 31, 2011. Management has performed its analysis through May 1, 2012, the date the financial statements were available to be issued.

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 impracticable to determine a value for collections, and the Legion has accordingly concluded that they need not be capitalized. The following items have been appraised, or are in the process of being appraised, for insurance purposes:

	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 physicaldesecration.

CFA recognized a change in net assets of ($11,758) and $4,270 in 2011 and 2010, 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 2011 and 2010.

NOTE 4 – BENEFICIAL INTEREST IN CHARITABLE LEAD TRUST

ALEF has been named a beneficiary of a charitable lead trust. Under the charitable trust, 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 2.64-percent discount rate in 2011 and a 3.31-percent discount rate in 2010, the present value of future benefits expected to be received by ALEF was estimated to be $316,898 and $336,597 at Dec. 31, 2011 and 2010, 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, which requires an entity to maximize the use of observable inputs and minimize the use of unobservable inputs when measuring fair value. GAAP describe 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 is based on quoted prices in active markets (Level 1 inputs). The fair value of asset-backed securities, corporate and state bonds, and municipal bonds is 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, 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, the Legion is unable to redeem the assets of the trust and only receives distributions (Level 3 inputs).

The FASB has issued Accounting Standards Update (ASU) 2010-12, 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 2010-12 has been interpreted to include other assets that use NAV, such as the beneficial interest in assets or trusts. ASU 2010-12 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, 2011, 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	$ -	$ -	$ 316,898
Money market accounts	13,038,485	-	-
U.S. government obligations	71,873,306	-	-
Mutual funds		-	-
State and municipal bonds	-	8,271,091	-
Corporate bonds	-	19,261,809	-
	$ 84,911,791	$ 27,532,900	$ 316,898

	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**

The tables below present 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, 2011 and 2010:

	Beneficial Interest in Trust
Beginning balance, Jan. 1, 2011	$ 336,597
Change in value of split-interest agreements	(19,699)
Ending balance, Dec. 31, 2011	$ 316,898

	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

NOTE 6 – PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT

The Legion's property and equipment, and the related accumulated depreciation at Dec. 31, 2011 and 2010, are as follows:

	2011	2010
Washington, D.C., real estate		
Land	$ 80,000	$ 80,000
Building	5,257,798	5,232,998
Construction in progress	3,698	-
Indianapolis real estate		
Land	389,264	389,264
Building	3,851,186	3,775,509
Construction in progress	1,442	-
Furniture, fixtures and equipment		
National Headquarters, Indianapolis	6,236,955	6,234,413
Washington, D.C.	804,316	830,922
	16,624,659	16,543,106
Less accumulated depreciation	(10,452,788)	(9,851,065)
	$ 6,171,871	**$ 6,692,041**

Depreciation expense for the years ended Dec. 31, 2011 and 2010 was $1,063,977 and $1,072,930, respectively.

NOTE 7 – LONG-TERM DEBT

In 2003, the Legion refinanced its long-term debt on its facility for Emblem Sales, Information Technology and Member Benefits. 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 the long-term debt is $1,678,367 and $1,885,963 for 2011 and 2010, respectively.

The future maturities of the long-term debt are as follows:

2012	$ 217,907
2013	229,740
2014	242,217
2015	255,371
2016	269,239
Thereafter	463,893
Total	**$ 1,678,367**

Interest expense was $94,961 and $105,654 for the years ended Dec. 31, 2011 and 2010, 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 2015. Rent expense under these leases for the years ended Dec. 31, 2011 and 2010 was $494,348 and $480,469, respectively.

Minimum lease commitments are as follows:

2012	$ 475,889
2013	373,816
2014	356,100
2015	350,350
Total	**$ 1,556,155**

In addition, the Legion has a lease with the State of Indiana, for rental of the National Headquarters building in Indianapolis, which expires on June 30, 2013. The lease can be renewed at the option of the Legion for four 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 2011 and 2010 was $906,400 and $837,900, 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 may be withdrawn for current operations each year. In 2011, the annual dues amount was not withdrawn from the trust account. 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 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 commission and a two-thirds affirmative vote of the 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 2011 and 2010.

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 committee in two successive meetings not less than 60 days apart.

NOTE 11 – TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

Temporarily restricted net assets are donor-restricted for specific purposes. At Dec. 31, 2011 and 2010, the restricted purposes were as follows:

	2011	2010
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	$ 1,084,917	$ 1,074,023
Samsung scholarships	2,101,778	1,821,311
Legacy Scholarship Fund	6,461,292	5,272,950
National Emergency Fund	3,103,583	2,905,160
Boy Scouts	467,899	467,899
Operation Comfort Warriors	251,149	268,723
Others	185,349	192,146
	$ 13,655,967	**$ 12,002,212**

NOTE 12 – 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.

	2011	2010
Purpose restrictions accomplished		
Overseas graves decoration	$ 27,657	$ 24,300
Scholarships and grants (including relief aid)	965,745	833,278
Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation and Children & Youth programs	236,021	257,634
	$ 1,229,423	**$ 1,115,212**

NOTE 13 – 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 Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation and Children & Youth activities of the Legion.

At Dec. 31, 2011 and 2010, the permanently restricted net assets were as follows:

	2011	2010
Samsung scholarships	$ 5,000,000	$ 5,000,000
American Legion Endowment Fund	7,663,433	7,409,095
	$ 12,663,433	**$ 12,409,095**

NOTE 14 – ENDOWMENT COMPOSITION

The Legion's endowments include donor-restricted endowment funds and are comprised of 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 of 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, 2011 and 2010:

Endowment net asset composition by type of fund as of Dec. 31, 2011:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Donor-restricted endowment funds	$ -	$ 2,101,778	$ 12,663,433	$ 14,765,211

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

Changes in endowment net assets for the year ended Dec. 31, 2011:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Net assets, beginning of year	$ -	$ 1,821,311	$ 12,409,095	$ 14,230,406
Investment return				
Investment income, net of fees	-	495,931	-	495,931
Net appreciation (realized and unrealized)	-	298,457	169,800	468,257
Total investment return	-	**$ 794,388**	**$ 169,800**	**$ 964,188**
New gifts	-	-	84,538	84,538
Appropriation of endowment assets for expenditure	-	(513,921)	-	(513,921)
Net assets, end of year	**$ -**	**$ 2,101,778**	**$ 12,663,433**	**$ 4,765,211**

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**

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. In order to make a principal disbursement, a majority vote by the National Executive Committee is required.

NOTE 15 – 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 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 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 $364,833 and $336,809 in 2011 and 2010, 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, 2011 and 2010:

	2011	2010
Benefit obligation	$ (53,114,809)	$ (47,056,871)
Fair value of plan assets	47,811,011	48,599,378
Funded status	**$ (3,303,798)**	**$ 1,542,507**
Interest cost	$ 2,714,869	$ 2,707,448
Actual return on assets	(1,996,724)	(4,433,441)
Amortization of prior service costs	121,085	121,085
Amortization of loss	666,288	783,605
Difference between expected and actual return on assets	(1,770,796)	787,687
Net periodic pension cost	**$ (265,278)**	**$ (33,616)**
Net loss (gain)	$ 5,332,668	$ (1,242,855)
Prior service cost	(121,085)	(121,085)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	**$ 5,111,583**	**$ (1,363,940)**
Prepaid benefit cost	$ 14,511,744	$ 14,246,466
Accumulated benefit obligation	51,114,809	47,056,871
Vested benefit obligation	50,949,483	46,768,704
Net periodic pension cost	(265,278)	(33,616)
Benefits paid	2,785,091	2,779,150
Measurement date	**12/31/2011**	**12/31/2010**

Estimated future benefit payments:

2012	$ 3,226,158
2013	3,289,933
2014	3,337,613
2015	3,383,626
2016	3,454,286
2017-2021	17,186,034

The asset investment policy is a lower-risk strategy. The fair value of the Legion's defined benefit plan assets at Dec. 31, 2011 and 2010 are as follows. See Note 5 for descriptions of inputs for each type of asset.

	Fair-Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2011, 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	$ 1,623,455	$ -	$ -
U.S. government and agency obligations	14,601,727	-	-
Asset-backed securities	-	5,556,069	-
Municipal bonds	-	1,768,208	-
Corporate bonds	-	10,732,185	-
Common stock			
Materials	634,981	-	-
Industrials	1,728,855	-	-
Consumer goods	2,206,411		
Energy	1,469,565		
Health care	1,781,671	-	-
Financials	2,462,856		
Telecommunication	501,042	-	-
Technology	1,626,752		
Utilities and other	813,442	-	-
Accrued interest	303,792	-	-
	$ 29,754,549	**$ 18,056,462**	**$ -**

	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 goods	2,201,059		
Energy	1,445,041		
Health care	1,492,950	-	-
Financials	2,764,561		
Telecommunication	559,618	-	-
Technology	1,852,958		
Utilities and other	655,242	-	-
Accrued interest	300,728	-	-
	$ 29,582,645	**$ 19,016,733**	**$ -**

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 these overall rates and the target asset allocation of the plan.

Weighted-average assumptions	2011	2010
Discount rate	5.25%	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 $1,209,754 and $121,085, respectively.

NOTE 16 – FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

The following represents a functional breakdown of the Legion's expenses by program and supporting services:

	2011	2010
Program services		
Veterans programs and services	$ 33,604,636	$ 35,108,669
Americanism, Children & Youth activities	3,958,400	2,806,143
	$ 37,563,036	$ 37,914,812
Supporting services		
Management and general	16,442,779	12,929,185
Member development	11,445,606	10,945,144
Fundraising	5,234,392	4,162,115
	$ 33,122,777	$ 28,036,444
	$ 70,685,813	**$ 65,951,256**

Member development includes direct-response advertising expense of $8,447,032 and $8,970,472 for the years ended Dec. 31, 2011 and 2010.

NOTE 17 – 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
Consolidated Statements of Financial Position *December 31, 2011*

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Charities	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Eliminations	Total
ASSETS						
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 2,711,506	$ -	$ 19,915	$ 106,748	$ -	$ 2,838,169
Accounts receivable	2,293,985	41,360	1,589	5,668	(48,617)	2,293,985
Interest receivable	522,909	-	68,714	14,276	-	605,899
Prepaid expenses and deposits	1,235,985	-	1,664	-	-	1,237,649
Deferred membership expense	8,717,182	-	-	-	-	8,717,182
Due from American Legion Endowment Fund	2,000,000	-	-	-	(2,000,000)	-
Inventory	2,433,969	-	-	-	-	2,433,969
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	39,165	-	-	-	-	39,165
Beneficial interest in trust	-	-	316,898	-	-	316,898
Prepaid pension expense	-	-	-	-	-	-
	19,954,701	41,360	408,780	126,692	(2,048,617)	18,482,916
Investments						
General	25,355,652	-	-	-	-	25,355,652
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved funds	30,220,097	-	-	-	-	30,220,097
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership fund	22,505,485	-	-	-	-	22,505,485
Samsung scholarship fund	8,127,347	-	-	-	-	8,127,347
Building funds	4,717,543	-	-	-	-	4,717,543
Sept. 11 Memorial scholarship fund	6,418,584	-	-	-	-	6,418,584
Special account – Endowment Fund	-	-	2,312,288	-	-	2,312,288
General account – Endowment Fund	-	-	6,989,878	-	-	6,989,878
National Emergency Fund	-	-	-	2,976,891	-	2,976,891
Other	2,820,926	-	-	-	-	2,820,926
	100,165,634	-	9,302,166	2,976,891	-	112,444,691
Property, plant and equipment, net	6,171,871	-	-	-	-	6,171,871
Total assets	$ 126,292,206	$ 41,360	$ 9,710,946	$ 3,103,583	$ (2,048,617)	$ 137,099,478
LIABILITIES						
Accounts payable	$ 2,486,792	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ (48,617)	$ 2,438,175
Scholarships payable	1,184,518	-	-	-	-	1,184,518
Due to American Legion National Headquarters	-	-	2,000,000	-	(2,000,000)	-
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	189,159	-	-	-	-	189,159
Deferred income	1,146,099	-	-	-	-	1,146,099
Deferred dues income	23,037,185	-	-	-	-	23,037,185
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	8,490,607	-	-	-	-	8,490,607
Accrued vacation benefits	954,722	-	-	-	-	954,722
Accrued pension expense	3,303,798	-	-	-	-	3,303,798
Other liabilities	270,603	-	-	-	-	270,603
Notes payable	1,678,367	-	-	-	-	1,678,367
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life Membership	20,155,727	-	-	-	-	20,155,727
Life memberships due to state and local posts	20,273,978	-	-	-	-	20,273,978
	83,171,555	-	2,000,000	-	(2,048,617)	83,122,938
NET ASSETS						
Unrestricted	27,568,267	41,360	47,513	-	-	27,657,140
Temporarily restricted	10,552,384	-	-	3,103,583	-	13,655,967
Permanently restricted	5,000,000	-	7,663,433	-	-	12,663,433
Total net assets	43,120,651	41,360	7,710,946	3,103,583	-	53,976,540
	$ 126,292,206	$ 41,360	$ 9,710,946	$ 3,103,583	$ (2,048,617)	$ 137,099,478

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statements of Financial Position *December 31, 2010*

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Charities	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Eliminations	Total
ASSETS						
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 2,563,611	$ -	$ 23,650	$ 99,288	$ -	$ 2,686,749
Accounts receivable	3,110,763	8,129	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
	21,688,502	8,129	442,690	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	$ 125,341,661	$ 8,129	$ 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
Due to American Legion National Headquarters	-	-	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	32,660,913	8,129	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	46,757,965	8,129	7,422,635	2,905,160	-	57,093,889
	$ 125,341,661	$ 8,129	$ 9,423,509	$ 2,905,160	$ (2,014,576)	$ 135,663,883

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statements of Activities *Year ended December 31, 2011*

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Charities	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Eliminations	Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	$ 28,197,464	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ 28,197,464
Direct membership solicitation	8,767,665	-	-	-	-	8,767,665
Member service fees income	1,128,191	-	-	-	-	1,128,191
Affinity income	3,830,175	-	-	-	-	3,830,175
Sales of emblem items	11,303,617	-	-	-	-	11,303,617
Advertising	9,352,156	-	-	-	-	9,352,156
Contributions	4,186,829	83,631	84,538	344,439	(50,400)	4,649,037
Label and printing fees	1,046,466	-	-	-	-	1,046,466
Interest and dividends, net of fees	2,639,457	-	313,525	89,795	-	3,042,777
Net realized gains	197,818	-	97,051	3,410	-	298,279
American Legion Endowment Fund income	311,595	-	-	-	(311,595)	-
Other	2,082,941	-	-	-	-	2,082,941
	73,044,374	83,631	495,114	437,644	(361,995)	73,698,768
Expenses						
Salaries	15,059,423	-	-	-	-	15,059,423
Employee benefits	3,035,623	-	-	-	-	3,035,623
Cost of sales - emblem	6,008,625	-	-	-	-	6,008,625
Department and magazine costs	2,221,473	-	-	-	-	2,221,473
Direct publications	12,109,012	-	-	-	-	12,109,012
Executive and staff travel	1,840,336	-	6,968	-	-	1,847,304
Commission and committee	1,945,776	-	-	-	-	1,945,776
Printing and postage	8,037,789	-	-	-	-	8,037,789
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,408,503	50,400	311,595	361,872	(361,995)	1,770,375
Office and other operating	13,416,367	-	19,296	-	-	13,435,663
Occupancy and usage	2,268,508	-	-	-	-	2,268,508
Special projects and programs	2,946,242	-	-	-	-	2,946,242
	70,297,677	50,400	337,859	361,872	(361,995)	70,685,813
Change in net assets from operations	2,746,697	33,231	157,255	75,772		3,012,955
			-	-		
Net unrealized gains - investments	2,990,091	-	131,056	122,651	-	3,243,798
Net change in PUFL	(3,596,231)	-	-	-	-	(3,596,231)
Amortization of pension loss	(666,288)	-	-	-	-	(666,288)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	(5,111,583)	-	-	-	-	(5,111,583)
Change in net assets	(3,637,314)	33,231	288,311	198,423	-	(3,117,349)
Net assets, beginning of year	46,757,965	8,129	7,422,635	2,905,160	-	57,093,889
Net assets, end of year	$ 43,120,651	$ 41,360	$ 7,710,946	$ 3,103,583	$ -	$ 53,976,540

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statements of Activities *Year ended December 31, 2010*

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Charities	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
Contributions	3,341,421	8,129	83,902	296,270	-	-	3,729,722
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	1,850,980	-	-	-	-	-	1,850,980
	66,918,430	8,129	451,821	379,783	-	(309,192)	67,448,971
Expenses							
Salaries	14,656,208	-	-	-	-	-	14,656,208
Employee benefits	2,685,809	-	-	-	-	-	2,685,809
Cost of sales - emblem	6,109,622	-	-	-	-	-	6,109,622
Department and magazine costs	2,070,536	-	-	-	-	-	2,070,536
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	1,064,967	8,129	116,628	307,991	-	-	1,497,715
Net unrealized gains - investments	507,002	-	221,852	41,687	-	-	770,541
Net change in PUFL	3,360,105	-	-	-	-	-	3,360,105
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	5,532,409	8,129	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	$ 46,757,965	$ 8,129	$ 7,422,635	$ 2,905,160	$ -	$ -	$ 57,093,889