113th Congress, 2d Session – – – – – – – – – – – – – – House Document 113–93

PROCEEDINGS OF 95th NATIONAL CONVENTION *of the*

AMERICAN LEGION

Houston, Texas

August 23–August 29, 2013

AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
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113th Congress, 2d Session – – – – – – – – – – – – – – House Document 113–93

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 95TH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

COMMUNICATION

FROM

THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIVISION, THE AMERICAN LEGION

TRANSMITTING

THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND INDEPENDENT AUDIT OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, PROCEEDINGS OF THE 95TH ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, HELD IN HOUSTON, TEXAS FROM AUGUST 23–AUGUST 29, 2013, AND A REPORT ON THE ORGANIZATION'S ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR PRECEDING THE CONVENTION

FEBRUARY 26, 2014.—Referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and ordered to be printed

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Washington, DC, February 11, 2014.

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 95th annual National Convention held in Houston, Texas from August 23–29, 2013 and a report on our organization's activities for the year preceding the convention.

For God and Country,

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

Table of Contents

Foreword vii
National Convention and Officers of The American Legion 1919-2013 ix

Proceedings of the 95th Annual National Convention

Tuesday, August 27, 2013

Call to Order: National Commander Koutz 1
Invocation 1
POW/MIA Empty Chair Ceremony 1
Pledge of Allegiance 2
Preamble to The American Legion Constitution 2
Opening Ceremony: Rita Cosby, Master of Ceremonies 2
The American Legion Youth Champions:
- 2012 American Legion Baseball All-Academic Team Captain 7
- 2013 Boys Nation President 8
- 2013 Eagle Scout of the Year 8
- 2013 Junior Shooting Sports Sporter Champion 10
- 2013 National Oratorical Contest, 1st Place Winner 10

Presentation: Spirit of Service Awards 11
Address: Sergeant Major Bryan B. Battaglia, United States Marine Corps 15
Greetings: Mrs. Peggy Thomas, National President, American Legion Auxiliary 17
Presentation: The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal, The Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders 18
Greetings: Christopher J. Huntzinger, Past National Commander, Sons of The American Legion 20
Presentation: The American Legion Patriot Award, Samsung North America 22
Greetings:
- Hon. Sheila Jackson Lee, U.S. Representative, 18th Congressional District of Texas 23
- Daniel A. Corbin, 2012-2013 Department Commander of Texas 25
- John D. Morris, President, National Convention Corporation of Texas 26

Presentation: The American Legion Riders 27
Greetings:
- Gordon Moore, Dominion President, The Royal Canadian Legion 30
- George Beaulieu, Dominion President, ANAVETS 31
- John Crisford, National Chairman, The Royal British Legion 33
- Hans Song, Deputy Secretary General, Veterans Affairs Commission, Republic of China 34
- Joseph W. Dooley, President General, National Society-Sons of the American Revolution 36
- William Thien, Commander-in-Chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars 37
- John E. Thompson, President, NALPA 37
- Michael Dakduk, Executive Director, Student Veterans of America 38

Address: Theodore Roosevelt, IV, Chairman, 100th Anniversary Observance Honorary Committee 39
Call for Convention 42
National Commander's Report to Convention 43
Operation Comfort Warriors Donations 45
Presentation: Nancy Martin, Senior Vice President, Fifth Third Bank 48
Address: Mike Durant, President Pinnacle Solutions, Inc. 49
Reports:
- Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules 61

Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs (Section I) 62
Convention Committee on Finance 63
Address: Hon. Joe Biden, Vice President of the United States 64

Wednesday, August 28, 2013

Call to Order 71
Invocation 71
Pledge of Allegiance 71
Presentations:
Employer of the Year Award for Hiring Veterans 71
2013 National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year 72
2013 Firefighter of the Year 73
Chapel of Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion 74
Address:
Lawrence Romo, Selective Service Director 77
Kevin McDugle, Executive Director, Soldier's Wish 78
Hon. Eric Shinseki, Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs 79
Hon. Jeff Miller, Chairman, U.S. House Committee on Veterans' Affairs 84
Seth D. Harris, Deputy Secretary, United States Department of Labor 88
Josue Robles, Major General (Ret.), President and CEO, USAA 92
Presentation: Plaque to the City of Indianapolis 94
Report: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs (Section III) 95
Presentations:
Department Membership Awards 97
National Recruiter of the Year 97
Consolidated Post Reporting 2012-2013 99
National Emergency Fund Awards 100
National Emergency Post Excellence Awards 100
Greetings: Jay Guerrero, Office of Senator John Cornyn 102
Report: Convention Committee on Employment and Veterans Preference and Other Economic Matters 103
Address:
Hon. Al Green, U.S. House of Representatives, 9th Congressional District of Texas 110
David Bellavia, Silver Star Recipient 113
Presentations:
Employer of the Year Award for Hiring Veterans 117
Local Veterans Employment Representative of the Year Award 117
Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year Award 117
Enhance the Lives of Disabled Persons Award 118
Employment Service Local Office Award Ottawa 118
Homeless Veterans Outreach Award 118
Employer of Older Workers Award 119
Report: Convention Committee on Children and Youth 119
Presentations:
Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award 119
U. S. 'Udie' Grant Legacy Award 120
Address: Matthew D. Shank, Ph.D., President, Marymount University 120
Report: Convention Committee on Americanism 122
Presentations:
Frank N. Belgrano, Jr. Trophy 124
Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy 124

Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy 124
Reports:
Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs (Section II) 124
Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments 130
Address: Hon. Ted Cruz, United States Senate 134
Report: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation 136
Presentation: William F. Lenker National Service Trophy 142

Thursday, August 29, 2013

Call to Order 143
Invocation 143
Presentation: The American Legion Fourth Estate Awards 143
Address: Tico Perez, National Commissioner, Boy Scouts of America 146
Reports:
Convention Committee on Foreign Relations 149
Convention Committee on National Security 151
Presentation: Plaque and Colors to Outgoing National Commander 159
Special Order of Business: Election of National Officers 160
Administering the Oath of Office to the National Commander 168
Acceptance Speech: Newly Elected National Commander 168
Election of National Vice Commanders 171
Presentation: Colors to Incoming National Commander 175
Greetings:
Nancy Brown-Park, National President, American Legion Auxiliary 176
Joseph W. Gladden, National Commander, Sons of The American Legion 177
Benediction 178
Announcement of Annual Recipients 179

The American Legion 94th Annual Report

Foreword, National Adjutant Daniel S. Wheeler 187
Excerpts from the Constitution of The American Legion 187
Past National Commanders 189
National Executive Committeemen 190
Reports of the National Vice Commanders:
Jeanette Rae 191
John E. Neylon 193
Glenn A. Hickman 195
James H. Holland 196
David R. Hall 198
Reports:
National Chaplain 199
National Historian 200
National Judge Advocate 201
Administrative Services 215
Library and Museum 215
John H. Geiger Operations Center (G.O.C.) 217
Americanism Commission 217
Counter-Subversive Activities Committee 223
Committee on Education 223
Commission on Children & Youth 225
American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Inc. 237
National Convention Commission 238

Economic Commission 239
Employment Committee 242
Veterans' Preference Committee 242
Finance Commission 253
Emblem Sales Committee 254
Revenue Enhancement Committee 254
Foreign Relations Commission 258
Internal Affairs Commission 262
Sons of The American Legion 263
The American Legion Riders 263
Trophies, Awards and Ceremonials Committee 265
Resolutions Assignment Committee 265
Constitution and By-Laws Committee 266
Membership & Post Activities Committee 266
National Legislative Commission 267
National Security Commission 281
Aerospace Committee 334
Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness Committee 334
Law and Order Committee 335
Merchant Marine Committee 335
Military Affairs Committee 335
National and Homeland Security Council 336
Naval Affairs Committee 336
Public Relations Commission 336
The American Legion Magazine Commission 337
Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission 339
Report of the National President of the American Legion Auxiliary 361
Consolidated Financial Statements with Supplementary Information 391

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-Fifth Annual National Convention in Houston, Texas, August 27 – 29, 2013.

The final report of the National Organization for the period ending December 31, 2012, and Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2012, and Surplus Analysis, January 1, 2012, to December 31, 2012, 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: Jeanette Rae, Nevada; John E. Neylon, New Hampshire; Glenn A. Hickman, Ohio; James H. Holland, South Carolina; David R. Hall, West Virginia.

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, Ind., 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

95th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Houston, Texas, Aug. 27 – 29, 2013
Commander: James E. Koutz, Indiana
Vice Commanders: Jeanette Rae, Nevada; John E. Neylon, New Hampshire; Glenn A. Hickman, Ohio; James H. Holland, South Carolina; David R. Hall, West Virginia
Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Ronald Derrick, Idaho
Historian: N. Larry Rozier, North Carolina
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. Maryland

PROCEEDINGS

of the

95th Annual Convention

of

The American Legion

Tuesday, August 27, 2013

...At 8:00 o'clock a.m., the delegates assembled for the 95th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Ladies and gentlemen, as we begin our program, please join me in a round of applause for Peter Ole. 36 years. *(Applause)*

Call to Order
James E. Koutz, Indiana, National Commander

The 95th 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 then remain standing while rendering a salute for the singing of the National Anthem by Jerry L. Duhon. *... At this time the delegation rose and rendered a salute to the Colors, followed by which the National Anthem was sung by Mr. Jerry L. Duhon. (Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Color Guard, you may retire. Thank you. For the invocation, I now call on National Chaplain Ron Derrick of Idaho. Ladies and gentlemen, please uncover.

Invocation
Ronald Derrick, Idaho, National Chaplain

Let us pray. Almighty God, thank you for the safety in our travels, for the rest last night and the awakening this morning. Grant us Your presence throughout this convention and give us Your wisdom in all deliberations. Grant comfort to those who mourn and a healing touch to all those in need physically, mentally, spiritually. Give protection to those who serve in uniform. If warriors should fall in battle, grant them entrance into Your kingdom. Be with the leaders of this great nation and may their hearts and ears be attendant to Your wisdom and guidance and reasoning. To You we give all glory. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you, Chaplain Ron. Please remain uncovered and standing for the POW/MIA observance and the Pledge.

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: 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, 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.

Pledge of Allegiance

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Ladies and gentlemen, National Sergeant-at-Arms Al Pulido of Indiana, will lead us in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

...At this time the delegation recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Preamble to The American Legion Constitution
James E. Koutz, Indiana, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Legionnaires, please cover and join me as we affirm our commitment to the principles and ideals of The American Legion that was founded reciting the preamble of the Constitution. ... *The delegation recited the preamble to The American Legion Constitution.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Please be seated.

Opening Ceremony

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: To begin our opening ceremonies this morning, singing "We're The United States of America" from his latest album, "America, America," please welcome Grammy-winning music artist Mr. BeBe Winans with recording artist Margaret Bell. *(Applause.)... At which time the song "We're The United States of America" was sung by BeBe Winans and Margaret Bell. (Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you, BeBe and Margaret. Our opening ceremony host today has been a familiar face on television for more than twenty years, including ten years on Fox News where she hosted "The Big Story with Rita Cosby." She also hosted a top-rated show on NBC, "Rita Cosby Live and Direct," where she did live programs across the world, including with our troops in Afghanistan, along the U.S.-Mexico border and in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina.

Rita Cosby is a three-time Emmy Award-winning journalist who's interviewed more than a dozen world leaders and five U.S. presidents. She is currently a special correspondent for the top-rated CBS syndicated TV show "Inside Edition" and hosts the acclaimed Clear Channel WOR Radio program "The Rita Cosby Show."

She has received the prestigious Ellis Island Medal of Honor, The Lech Walesa Freedom Award, and was selected by *Cosmopolitan Magazine* as a "Fun and Fearless Female." October 11, 2010, was officially named the "Rita Cosby Day" in the state of New York because of her journalism and exemplary service on behalf of her work. In 2011 she was recognized by the U.S. Congress for her professionalism and charitable achievements.

Today she will share her most important journey of her life, about her courageous father, who became a prisoner of war and was saved by American troops. This amazing story is profiled in her bestselling book, *Quiet Hero*, which she will be personally signing for you when you stop by Booth 113 in the exhibit hall. Please give a great American Legion welcome to TV and radio star Rita Cosby. *(Applause)*

MS. RITA COSBY: Good morning, everyone. I just want to thank everyone so much for including me in this incredible convention. And before I get started, I want to make sure that all of you who have been talking so much to me about the incredible year that your national commander has had, if all of you could please stand and give Commander Koutz a huge round of applause, everybody. *(Applause)*

I know you've been on the road for more than 300 days, and as a journalist I travel a lot, but I think you beat all of us at Fox News and CBS hands down. Also, I know that he came in with the Legion Riders. Do we have anybody here, any of the Legacy riders here? Could you stand up you guys? You guys are awesome. Where are you? I love seeing you guys roll into town. As you know, I was on Fox News for ten years. And I want to see if we have any Fox fans in the house. (*Cheers and applause)* I thought so.

I also want to say that I have been and always will be a huge fan of all of you. What The American Legion is doing and what all of you are doing especially in this room is nothing short of remarkable. As a journalist, I cover some of the difficult things that are out there. I know of the huge backlog at the VA, I know of budget cuts, and I also know about the heroism of all of you. I feel what you are doing in this incredible organization is more important than ever before. You must stand together because you have incredible power in numbers, and you have an incredible, powerful force with all of these incredible men and women here today. So I encourage you to stand up together, because you have a very powerful voice.

I'm also very proud to be here in the company of heroes. As a journalist, I see a lot of young people who don't have mentors, who don't have anybody to look up to. And this morning I am truly in the presence of heroes. So I thank you, all of you, for being incredible role models, not just for your generations but for the next generation. It is a mission that is near and dear to my heart, and I wanted to come here today most importantly to say thank you to all of you. You'll know in a few seconds why that is so deeply important and deeply personal to me.

I love the U.S. military. I was over in Afghanistan with the U.S. military spending a lot of time with the troops out there in the field. I've also been in the Mideast. I've seen the military in action in Hurricane Katrina on the U.S.-Mexico border time and time again. You guys have been the saviors coming to help people, not just in this country, but overseas. I also went to great heights with the military. Not like the 82nd Airborne; I didn't have big backpacks and big bags over me, but I did jump out of a plane as well at 13,500 feet with the Golden Knights. I tell everybody I made it on my bucket list. Next time I need to have about 100 or 200 pounds of gear on my back so I could be like all of you heroes out here today.

I also have covered a lot of stories in my life and have covered a lot of U.S. presidents, as you heard. I covered Bill Clinton, I also covered President Bush. I tell everybody as a blonde in Washington I should have gotten war pay covering Bill Clinton, but that's for another day. I also interviewed many people in the Mideast. Muammar Gaddafi, I was one of the last journalists who interviewed Muammar Gaddafi, King Abdullah, a number of others.

I've had a lot of things in my life and a lot of blessings in my life. But one thing I did not have until just a few years ago was a father. When I was growing up, I knew my dad was different. I knew one day when he came back from Iran. He was a marathon runner, and he came back and he took his shirt off, and I saw his body and it had cracks all over, looked like cracks in dried mud, and they were scars. And I asked my mother what happened to Dad. I knew instinctively it was something that I could not ask him personally.

My mother said to me, and I remember it like it was yesterday, my mother said to me, "Your father went through tough times growing up. We don't talk about it." And the door was closed for decades. My mother raised us, and my mother and I went on many vacations. She was really my mother and my father.

After my mother passed away, I wondered what happened to this mysterious man who was my father. I missed him. My brother and I were going through an old storage locker of my mother's belongings, which we thought were just my mother's belongings, and inside we saw a beat-up leather suitcase, an old tan battered suitcase that we had never seen before. Inside was essentially my father's life, these items that you see here. That was the moment I realized my dad was a prisoner of war.

You can see right there, there's that rusty POW tag emblazoned with the words Stalag IV-B, and then there's the red and white fighting Polish armband that my dad wore with blood and dirt on it. His blood. And then there was a card of an ex-POW named Ryszard Kossobudzki. At that moment I realized whatever pain I had not having a father in my life for decades, he left the family quite abruptly one Christmas. My parents got divorced. He never spoke to my mother again. But I realized at that moment whatever pain I went through was minor compared to a man who had been a Nazi prisoner of war.

I knew I had two choices. I could either move on and continue my life and my journalism career, or I could forgive my father and find him. And that's what I did. I located my father. He was still alive, thank goodness, in Washington, D.C., and we reunited. What my dad showed me and told me all about was nothing short of heroic. It's a story that many of you in this room will deeply understand more than anyone else.

When my father was 13, he was standing outside. He was in Warsaw, Poland. He was a citizen of Poland. And he was standing outside, and he saw planes hovering above. And his father said, "Oh, isn't it great that the Polish Air Force is doing exercises today?"

It was September 1, 1939. And my father said, "I don't think those are Polish planes. The Polish air base is this way. It's coming this way. Those are German planes." And my father physically saw the beginning of World War II.

What I think is so amazing about my father's story, and it's a story that I think every one of you in this room deeply understands, is my father didn't have to stay. He was a teenager. He was not Jewish. He grew up right outside the Warsaw ghetto, but he was not inside the ghetto. My father's parents were pretty well off and said, "We can sneak you out of the country. We can get you out." My father, at the age of 15, at this point, said, "No, I am staying and fighting."

He gave me a great line. It was one of my favorite lines that my father shared with me. He said, "I would rather die with friends than live with strangers. I am staying and fighting for my country." He nearly died for his country. At one point my father was a part of the Warsaw uprising, and they were just bombarded. You know from history so well what happened to the Poles. They got it from the Russians, boy did they get it from the Nazis, and they were squeezed in the middle and everybody was hitting their homeland. My father was literally frontline fighting for five years. Ninety percent of his unit was slaughtered. Think about it. Many of you have been in battle. Ninety percent were the odds against you. My father decided to stay.

At one point they were being bombarded so much from the air, my father's commander said, "Keep firing, keep firing." And my father had like no bullets left. They were throwing Molotov cocktails. They were fighting with sticks. They were a citizen army. They were invaded. They had nothing. So they said, "Keep firing, keep firing. People are escaping." My dad said, "Nobody's escaping tonight. We're dying for our country. I'm dying. This is it. All my comrades are falling alongside me."

The commander said, "No, there are people escaping." My dad said, "There's nowhere to go. We're being bombarded from the air, from the ground. There's nowhere to go." And his commander said, "There's one place to go; it's below ground." My dad escaped through the sewers of Warsaw. Can you imagine what it must have looked like above ground to know that this was the safest place to go?

My father was seriously injured by a mortar shell. He was hit by a grenade. He was shot at. It's amazing my father survived. But yet my father was captured and my father was taken at the butt of a gun, gun to his head, thrown into a boxcar and taken to this place here, this massive POW camp called Stalag IV-B. It was one of the biggest prisoner of war camps in World War II, anywhere from 30-to 40,000 inmates, and they were starving in the camp. Literally starving.

I want to tell you a beautiful story because I think about this all the time. My dad, of course, in the camp, you don't get any information, as you who have been in captivity know and all of you know too well. So they're in the camp and the Germans were saying, we're winning the war, we're winning the war. At this point the war was turning.

They suddenly saw one day these American POWs who were taken captive from the Battle of the Bulge, and they were walked into the camp. And of course there was so much camaraderie in the camp. The guys who were captured in the Battle of the Bulge looked so bad because they had been forced to sleep outside in the snow for days upon days and just looked decrepit. You know it's bad when a POW thinks you look worse.

So when they came in and my dad saw them and his fellow Polish POWs, they were starving, remember, they saved several days of food so they could send it over to the American barracks with a note saying: Thank you for trying to save us. Think about that gesture. A starving POW sending to another POW. The Americans would pay my dad back in spades.

My dad knew that the Russians were getting closer to the camp, and they knew they had to escape. My father sold the suit on his back. It was a blue suit. He sold it in the camp for a loaf of
bread so he could have enough energy to escape. He shared that bread with other POWs. They thought it was a feast. My dad was 90 pounds and six feet tall. 90 pounds and six feet tall.

One night they escaped. It was one of the biggest escapes in World War II. Many of them were recaptured and killed. But my dad made it to the woods. They broke off into groups, and he was with about 60 other Polish POWs. When he was in the woods one day, still starving, walking at nighttime because too scared to sleep in the day. They were in Germany. It's wartime. You can imagine what they would have done if they caught them after they escaped. They were in the woods and they saw a plane come by. And they thought: This is it. This is the end of the line. It's a German plane. We're done. And the plane threw something out, and they all dove for the ditches. And then the plane came by again, and they looked up and they saw a star and they realized it was an American plane. They realized what was dropped out was not a grenade or anything else, it was a chocolate bar with a note wrapped around it tied with a red ribbon. The note said: Welcome. It's safe to walk now during daytime. There are no troops between you and our American lines. You have 15 miles to walk, and you're free. *(Applause)*

So my dad ran to American lines. Here he was, skin and bones, 90 pounds. And they were just dancing and hugging. When they got to the side of the riverbed, they saw American GIs, 18 years old, like my dad at that point, who hugged my dad and said, "You are free. Your nightmare is over." My dad said at that moment: I am coming to America because it is the greatest country in the world to send their men and women thousands of miles away to free Poland, to free people they do not know. What a great country this is. That's the moment my dad said: I want to one day have the privilege of being an American citizen and to be able to say thank you to the greatest fighting force in the world. *(Applause)*

I returned those items to my dad that I told you about that we found in the suitcase. When my dad picked up the items and he saw that bloody red and white fighting armband, he wondered who survived. He had not been back to Poland in almost 70 years. Think about that. He was too scared to go back. Too many memories, as many of you in this room can relate to. I asked my father if he wanted to go back with me. I had never been there myself, and I wanted to know who he was and I wanted to know who I was. I felt as the daughter of a hero I needed to know. So I called my dad, and he said, "I'll go if you go with me."

On the flight over, my dad was literally throwing up, sweating, he was so nervous, as many of you who have been back to your difficult places of battle. But my dad got a hero's welcome from the president of Poland and was treated like an incredible hero everywhere he went. People were saying: That's the guy who escaped through the sewers, that's the guy. And it was so beautiful to see. My dad and I spent our first Thanksgiving together in almost 30 years in Poland. It was the best Thanksgiving of my life.

As I mentioned, it was incredibly emotional for my dad and I to go back. My dad was confronting his fears and confronting his past. I told my father of all the courageous

things that he did in his life, I think this was one of the most brave things he ever did, was to go there and to see the places where he fought and where he lost so many friends, but also to realize that what he did was important and that the next generation there appreciated what he did.

I want to show you a very short clip, because we videotaped my father. Because my father, at the end of the trip, like all of you in this room, said after everything he went through, and, boy, was it a difficult time, he would do it all again for his country and for freedom. I want you to take a short look at this one minute video. ... *At this time the delegation viewed a video.*

My father and I did a bestselling book together because I felt when I heard this story that I needed to share it with the world. I picked the title *Quiet Hero* not just for my dad but for all of you in the room. I hope I have the pleasure of meeting all of you. I'll be at Booth 113, and I am signing books because all the proceeds of the book go to troops and their families. This is my father's way to say thank you to the greatest fighting force in the world. *(Applause)*

My father passed away last year. It was very emotional for me. But I'm so thankful that at the end of my dad's life he was literally in the hospital signing autographs. How beautiful is that? Young boys and young girls were being led over by their parents when my dad was in ICU and told: You've got to ask this guy, because he was saved by American troops. You've got to learn about the U.S. military. You have to hear about history. You have to hear about the troops and what they do. How beautiful is that, that my dad, literally at the end of his life, was able to see that.

I want to say something to the Vietnam veterans in this room. I wish I was a journalist, I'm too young to have been a journalist in Vietnam. But I love all of you guys, and I would have been the first one at the airport hugging you when you came back, and I'm so sorry I wasn't there during that time. *(Applause)*

Like my father, until my last breath, I will be supporting all of you. You have an enormous friend and fan here with me, and I want to make sure that this next generation never forgets that freedom is not free; that there are incredible heroes out there and so many of you in this room, all of you have answered the call and would do time and time again like my dad. I want to say to you that I am so thankful to have the privilege to be here with all of you. On behalf of my father, thank you for saving his life. Thank you for saving people not just in World War II and beyond, but time and time again. I hope I can do my part, as a citizen member of the military, to let people know how incredible all of you are. God bless you and thank you so much for the privilege to be here this morning. Thank you. *(Applause)*

We're going to continue now with the program. I have to wipe away my tears. Thank you for letting me share this story. One of the most important things that all of you do and something that you can tell I feel very passionately about is passing on the message to the next generation, and you have some incredible young people here today who we want to make sure that we bring up and acknowledge.

The way you mentor and teach children and let folks know in your own communities and on a national level is so inspiring and is so important. I want to make sure that we bring up the folks who were involved in the youth programs. We want to introduce to you a group of young people who truly epitomize what a great country and what a great job all of you guys have done. Please welcome your American Legion Youth Champions. *(Applause)*

The American Legion Youth Champions

ANNOUNCER: Our first youth champion is the 2012 American Legion Baseball All-Academic Team Captain from Enderlin, North Dakota. The award is based on integrity, mental attitude, cooperation, citizenship, sportsmanship, scholastic aptitude, and general good conduct. He is currently attending Mayville State University considering a career in

elementary education. Please welcome Gareth Hanson sponsored by Post 221 in Sheldon, North Dakota. (Applause)

2012 American Legion Baseball All-Academic Team Captain
Gareth Hanson, Enderlin, North Dakota

Good morning, everyone. We all have had those moments in our life that we will remember forever. For some, it may be getting a first car, a dream vacation, or even graduation day. For me, I can sum up a number of those moments in one word: Baseball.

For, you see, my love for the game began at the age of three when I was able to throw my first ball, as I moved up the ranks from T-ball to Pony to Pee-Wee to Rookie to Babe Ruth and then Legion Baseball. My career with Legion Baseball entitled me to some of those moments I spoke of earlier. There's nothing like the smell of fresh-cut grass when you show up to the ballpark, the thrill of turning a double play, and the sound of my bat connecting for a base hit.

During my high school years, I was involved in many activities: basketball, FFA, band, choir, student council, National Honor Society, and, of course, baseball. I was fortunate to be chosen to attend The American Legion North Dakota Boys State Conference. At this conference I was able to experience political situations and learned about our government body and how it functions.

An activity that I became very involved with growing up was playing Taps for our local Memorial Day services traveling with our American Legion Honor Guard. My grandfather served in the U.S. Navy and asked me if I would sing and play Taps at the Memorial Day services of a local cemetery seven years ago. I am so proud of my grandfather and his service to our country. I started with that one Memorial Day service and now I donate my time to sing and play Taps at four different services every year. I cannot explain the pride I feel to be able to honor all the men and women that have given the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.

I am currently attending Mayville State University double majoring in elementary education and physical education with a minor in coaching. I have a younger sister that is autistic, and she has taught me to be patient with others and to treat others the way that I would want to be treated. I hope to use these lessons that I've learned as I continue on my path of becoming a teacher and coach.

In closing, I would like to take the opportunity to thank a number of people. First, I would like to thank the members of The American Legion Post 221 for serving our country, for honoring our fallen veterans, for allowing me to be part of their yearly services, and for nominating me to receive the scholarship at the state level. Thank you to my local Legion Baseball coaches, parents, and fans for supporting baseball in our community. Thank you to Diamond Sports for being a sponsor of The American Legion Baseball Scholarship and giving me this opportunity to attend this Convention to accept my award. Thank you to my parents and family. Without their support through my life, with all of my activities, I don't know how I could have done it without them. And last but not least, I'd like to thank you, the members of The American Legion, for your service to our country and your unselfishness of dedication of your time to your community and fellow veterans. I cannot thank you enough.

In the words of Abraham Lincoln, "Honor to the soldier and sailor everywhere who bravely bears his country's cause, honor also to the citizen who cares for his brother in the field and serves as he best can the same cause." Thank you, and God bless. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The 2013 Boys Nation President hails from Andover, Minnesota. He plans to attend Brigham Young University. His professional plan is to pursue a career in public service or education. Sponsored by Edward B. Cutter, Post 102, Anoka, Minnesota, please welcome your 2013 Boys Nation President, Simeon Toronto. (Applause)

2013 Boys Nation President
Simeon Toronto, Andover, Minnesota

Good morning. It is my profound privilege to address you. Last year my mother and father visited the beaches of Normandy. After watching the opening film showing real footage of D-Day at the World War II Museum, a small elderly French woman with tears in her eyes approached my mom and said simply, "Thank you for your fathers." They embraced and wept together. I am here to deliver her message to you. Thank you.

After giving so much in countless American conflicts, you've returned home to serve once more. I am the beneficiary of that giving. I'd like to thank Anoka Minnesota Post 102 for sponsoring me and for all of the incredible people I've met in the Boys State and Boys Nation programs. I personally also would like to thank my loving family and the God above, for with Him all things are possible.

I am mindful of President Kennedy's words, "As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words but to live by them." I hope to live in a way that will make you proud.

At Boys Nation it didn't take long for me to discover I was not the most intelligent, eloquent or politically savvy young man in the room. What I did think I offered was an unwavering optimism. I tried to learn everyone's name. I tried to disagree without becoming disagreeable. When the election was over, I was taught to give my honorable opponent his choice of political appointment. I tried to see each senator as not conservative or liberal but simply as American. At times I had to stand up for what I believed was right, even when I was in the minority. It is my hope that compromise, civility, and integrity will return to the democratic process. *(Applause)*

I also learned the terrible but necessary price of freedom by going to the war memorials in D.C. with those that had served faithfully to defend that freedom. Lastly, I rubbed shoulders with vastly different lifestyles than my own. I met an honest to goodness alligator wrestler from Louisiana, a rancher from Montana, and some New England intellectuals. (*Laughter)*

I made friends to last a lifetime. I also met a rather famous individual who lives at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. I still can't stop smiling about being in the same room as the leader of the free world. The American Legion has not only preserved our liberty, it has encouraged and crafted thousands of future informed voters, dutiful citizens, and courageous young men. Thank you. God bless The American Legion, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The 2013 Eagle Scout of the Year is from Salem, Connecticut. His Eagle Scout project involved clearing an historic site to create a public park. He is a student representative on the Salem Board of Education and is the junior vice commander of Sons of The American Legion Squadron 128 and hopes to someday be squadron commander. He has participated in every level of Scouting since 2002. Please welcome your Eagle Scout of the Year, Mark Chmielewski. (Applause)

2013 Eagle Scout of the Year
Mark Chmielewski, Salem, Connecticut

How y'all doing out there? It's a great honor and privilege to be selected as the 2013 Eagle Scout of the Year of the United States of America. As an Eagle Scout and as a member of the Sons of The American Legion, I believe in service to God, service to country, and service to our community. As a child, my parents taught me to dedicate my life to God and to serve others. I was raised to believe that anything is possible through faith. My parents taught me it's better to give than to receive. They taught me to always do my best. Service to my community, service to my country, and service to our military is who I am.

I come from a family that has gravitated to public service and to military service. I'm proud to say that my family has more than 200 years of service to The American Legion, to the Sons of The American Legion, and to The American Legion Auxiliary. My great-grandfather served in the United States Navy during World War I. My grandfathers are both Korean War era veterans of the Air Force. My uncle and my father both served more than 20 years in the National Guard. All are Legionnaires. My father, my older brother Sean and I, are both members of the Sons of The American Legion Squadron 128 of Niantic, Connecticut. Sean is an Eagle Scout and was the national runner-up in 2012. My great-grandmother served in The American Legion Auxiliary for 62 years, my grandmother served for 59 years, and my mother has been a member for 25 years.

I was fortunate to receive scholarships to attend two of the best youth leadership training programs in the country, Boys State and The American Legion Connecticut State Police Youth Week. At Boys State I was selected as a senator. The Legionnaires and counselors taught me how government works. I took full advantage everything that Boys State had to offer. After graduation I was selected as a Boys State junior counselor.

At The American Legion Connecticut State Police Youth week, I was selected as a platoon leader. This program is modeled after state police recruit training. The state troopers and the Legionnaires who ran the program gave me insight into the training and duties of the Connecticut state trooper. During the week-long training I participated in a variety of mental and physical challenges. I participated in daily physical conditioning, daily inspection, classroom instruction and drill and ceremony. The program concluded with the Warriors Path safety and survival course. The Warriors Path was a test of all the skills and knowledge I learned during the week. It emphasized the importance of leadership, teamwork, and it taught me how to overcome adversity.

The leadership lessons I learned as the National American Legion Eagle Scout, at Boys State and at the Connecticut State Police Youth Week will last my lifetime. I learned how to follow, how to lead and how to become a better American.

In addition to thanking The American Legion and the Connecticut State Police, I want to thank the Sons of The American Legion Squadron 128 for allowing me to be the junior vice commander; the Niantic, Connecticut, Lions Leo Club for allowing me to be their director; Boy Scout Troop 123 for allowing me to be their junior assistant scout master; and the Salem Board of Education for allowing me to be the high school student representative.

Above all, I want to thank God. We are blessed to live in the greatest country in the world. Freedom isn't free, and the price of freedom is high. Americans like you have paid the price for that freedom. May God bless you, may God bless those who serve, and may God bless the United States of America. For God and country, thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: In competition in Colorado Springs a few weeks ago, our next two youth champions took top prize in the 23rd Junior Air Rifle Championships. Rachel Martin from Peralta, New Mexico, claimed the Precision Champion title with a 2469.2 out of a possible 2509. Rachel shoots for the Valencia County 4-H Jr. Shooting Club sponsored by Post 85. Unfortunately, Rachel could not be with us today because of school commitments.

In the Sporter category, the championship was captured by a young shooter representing the Carl Hayden High School Junior ROTC program which is sponsored by Post 62 in Phoenix, Arizona. He won the title by firing a 2307.2 out of a possible 2509. He is a freshman at Arizona State University and participates in the Arizona State University Senior ROTC Program. Please welcome our 2013 Sporter Shooting Champion, Alan Rodriguez. (Applause)

2013 Junior Shooting Sports Sporter Champion
Alan Rodriguez-Vega, Phoenix, Arizona

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to thank The American Legion for giving us youth the opportunity to attend events like this. Without The American Legion, I would never in my life have had the opportunity to come to something like this and be treated as nicely as we did by everyone here.

I would also like to thank American Legion Post 62 in Arizona for their support and sponsoring me to participate in the Junior Shooting Sports program and sending me to Colorado Springs. I would also like to thank my parents for being as strict as they were and pushing me to continue through college and get a better education and do better things in life. I would also like to thank my coach, Sergeant First Class John Cordero-Torres, for doing such an amazing job never giving up on me and pushing me past my limits.

As a shooter, I gained many skills such as discipline and patience. Skills I will take on with me for the rest of my life. Part of the thing I will do with those skills is serve as an officer in the United States Army, which is why I'm participating in the senior Army ROTC program at Arizona State University and will serve our nation as second lieutenant. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our next Youth Champion is the 2013 National Oratorical Champion from Kansas City, Missouri. Her oration titled "Let's Talk About Pennsylvania" garnered her a scholarship for $18,000. She is also a 2012 Girls State alumni. Ladies and gentlemen, your 2013 National Oratorical Champion sponsored by Legion Post 95 in Liberty, Missouri is Aggie Rieger.(Applause)

2013 National Oratorical Contest First Place Winner
Agnes Reiger, Kansas City, Missouri

When I began this competition in the fall, I had no idea what I was getting myself into. It was my senior year, and it felt like all I was doing was freaking out about my college classes and paying for college and getting into college. And all I was doing was panicking about the next year. It was like I was running out of air and I couldn't breathe, let alone speak. In this time of terror, my high school speech coach, Jeri Willard, sent me to this competition. I drug my feet and went kicking and screaming to a little library in Liberty, Missouri. I thought that I would just give one little speech and then totally forget about it. But something magical happened instead. Post 95, the most supportive, brilliant batch of heroes I have ever met, honored me with opportunity and the chance to represent something wonderful.

I have to say that I had never before been a part of something so special and meaningful. Thank you for creating and keeping this competition. To Colin Short, to Post 95, to the Legionnaires of Missouri, to Dwayne Benton, to my mom, to my fellow orators, and to all of you, thank you because I get to go to my dream school now, and I can tell you honestly that alone is a life-changing thing. But most importantly, thank you because you listened, because you made me slow down and catch my breath and realize the beauty of our country and our constitution.

In our fast-paced, instant-gratification, artificial world, this is the first real thing I have done in a long time. You filled me with a strength I didn't even know that I could hold and made me realize a voice that actually meant something.

You have taught me humility and honor and patriotism and courage and so much more. I could never thank you enough for being exactly what I needed and what we all need. I am a better citizen because of my speeches, but I am a better person because of you. So thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, your 2012-2013 American Legion Youth Champions. (Applause)

Presentation of the Spirit of Service Awards
Sergeant Major Bryan B. Battaglia, United States Marine Corps
Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

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 Koutz in presenting the awards is Sergeant Major Bryan B. Battaglia, Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Please welcome Sergeant Major Battaglia to your Convention.

Our first Spirit of Service award recipient spends many hours volunteering at Rescue Missions, with Big Brothers of San Diego, Saint Jude Children's Research Hospital and Habitat for Humanity among others.

He is currently assigned to the Public Health Command District, San Digeo at Camp Pendleton. Please welcome your Spirit of Service Award recipient representing the United States Army, Sergeant Edwin Garcia. (Applause)

SERGEANT EDWIN GARCIA: Wow. I feel like I'm receiving an Academy Award. Good morning, Legionnaires, family, friends and guests. I would like to thank The American Legion for this wonderful Convention and for allowing me to be here today. I am extremely honored to be recognized as a United States Army Spirit of Service Award recipient.

It is truly a great feeling to know that you can put a smile on someone's face by assisting in the life of a person in need or to mentor and coach a child while their mother or father are serving our country overseas. But I did not accomplish this alone. Many times the soldiers of my unit were by my side for support and to extend their helping hand.

There are a few people I'd like to thank. First and foremost, our Lord above for without all things would not be possible. I would like to thank my mother and my father for raising me into the person that I am today. Sergeant First Class Jesse William Leonard for countless hours training me and being my coach and mentor.

Last, but most importantly, my wife Jasmine and my daughter Isabella for being by my side during everyday sacrifices. You guys are my motivation and the reason why I do what I do every day. I'm pretty sure everyone can account here that spouses do have the hardest job in the military. Thank you all again, thank you to The American Legion, and God bless. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our next recipient of the 2013 American Legion Spirit of Service Award was born and raised in Togo on the continent of Africa. He moved to the United States in 2004 and joined the U.S. Navy in May of 2005. He organized a Habitat for Humanity program at his command and volunteers countless hours building homes and manning the restore facility, as well as supporting local food banks and mentoring at a local elementary school. Please welcome United States Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Komlan Agbagba. (Applause)

PETTY OFFICER SECOND CLASS KOMLAN AGBAGBA: Good morning everyone. Commander, leaders, and all the members of The American Legion, I am very honored to receive this American Legion Spirit of Service Award.

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to my wife and children, to my family for their support, as well as a thank you to my command, the commander, operational desk and evaluation force in Norfolk, Virginia, for the nomination.

I would like to also thank all my colleagues and friends for their support due to the different community involvement projects that have led to this important recognition. As we all know, our communities have given us so much, and it is always important for everyone to give something back. I believe it is actually a moral obligation to be involved and to give something back to our communities.

I am very grateful as well as very humbled by this award and would like to express my sincere appreciation to all the members of The American Legion for this opportunity. Thank you very much and may God bless The American Legion, the United States, the United States Navy, and all of the other branches of the military and those who have served, who serve this great country. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our next award is given to a Marine for his selfless community service while assigned to 2nd Supply Battalion, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. From January 2011 to June of 2013, he volunteered over 465 hours to various organizations on and off base, including Marine Corps Community Services, Habitat for Humanity, the USO, United Way, assisted living communities, and local elementary schools. He is cited as a leader and mentor in and out of uniform. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Sergeant Man Chan, United States Marine Corps. (Applause)

SERGEANT MAN CHAN: Good morning, Legionnaires, ladies and gentlemen. It is such an honor to represent the Marine Corps for such a fine award. I would like to thank The American Legion for having me here today. It is such an honor to be a member of such a prestigious organization.

Next, I would like to thank the Marine Corps for allowing me to do what I love doing, which is being a Marine. I would like to thank the community centers and the various organizations that allow me to volunteer my personal time to help out with their events and to give back to the community.

And, finally, I would like to say a special thank you to my parents, my family, for the love and support through thick and thin on my military career as a Marine, because without them I would not be standing here before you today or what I am today.

Thank you very much. God bless you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The Spirit of Service Award is presented to our next recipient for volunteering over 600 hours of his off-duty time as a volunteer firefighter for the Half Moon Bay Fire Department, volunteering numerous hours as a head coach for boys soccer, and along with his wife, developing a teen mentorship program in partnership with a local fitness company. From Coast Guard Air Station San Francisco, please welcome Aviation Maintenance Technician Second Class Shawn Pugmire. (Applause)

AVIATION MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN SECOND CLASS SHAWN PUGMIRE: Good morning, everybody. I would like to give my most grateful thanks to The American Legion for the warm welcome and hospitality provided to my family and I. It is an honor for both my wife and I to be in attendance today and even a greater honor to be accepting this award. What makes this award so significant an occasion is to be receiving this from an organization that does so much for this country and its veterans, veterans who have served this country honorably and selflessly and continue to do so to this day. It is with this in mind that I humbly and with great humility accept this award. Thank you. *(Applause)*

There are many people who deserve recognition for their key roles they have played in making this possible, and I could only wish for enough time to thank them all. With that said, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my command for nominating me, the Half Moon Bay Volunteer Fire Department for affording me the opportunity to be a part of the organization, and the AYSO of Half Moon Bay.

There are a couple of people in attendance today who have been instrumental in my success leading to this. First, my father who instilled the morals and ideals that have made me who I am today. I can only strive to be the father to my own children that you have been to my brothers and I. No amount of thanks could ever be enough for that.

And to my wife, it is only by your love and sacrifice, the months at a time of being a single parent, a teacher, a nurse, a homemaker, and everything else you have to do alone while I'm gone. You are the strongest person I know, and I can't thank you enough for everything you are to our family. You deserve this award as much as I do, and this is as much yours as it is mine. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our next recipient has distinguished himself in service while stationed at Traverse City, Michigan, home of the 339th Recruiting Squadron. His volunteerism encompasses support for his fellow troops, local veterans and veterans' organizations, and virtually all citizens in his community. He's a fund raiser, a mentor, a hard worker, and a leader in his community. Representing the United States Air Force, please welcome Staff Sergeant Beau Vore. (Applause)

STAFF SERGEANT BEAU VORE: Good morning. I would like to start by saying thank you to The American Legion family for the warm welcome and true hospitality.

I was reading through the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion, which I am now a proud member of. *(Applause)*

I'm going to memorize it, too. I heard you guys saying it this morning. But I have to tell you, I had goose bumps. This is a serious oath, similar to the one every veteran, elected official and new citizen takes.

I have a few take-aways from The American Legion Constitution that I would like to bring to mind. "For God and country," what we do is not for ourselves, what we do is for God and country. "To foster and perpetuate a 100 percent Americanism"; serving the greater good is as American as it gets. "To inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state, and nation." Inculcate is defined as to teach and impress by frequent repetition or admonitions, or, as I see it, teaching by how we live daily. And it concludes with, "sanctify our comradeship by devotion to mutual helpfulness." Serving is part of who we as veterans are. It is in our blood. We have answered our nation's call throughout our nation's history, and that sense of service continues when we return home because it is in our blood. It is who we are.

The voices of the millions of American Legion family members can attest to the fact, and they prove that every day, that this group is a community service organization, and I am honored to be a part of this organization. I have been asked countless times since I was notified that I was receiving The American Legion Spirit of Service Award, "Sergeant Vore, how do you find time to volunteer so much?" So I got to thinking, and this is what I came up with.

You see, I'm a father of a three-year-old and a one-year-old, you guys probably have seen us around the hotel, and I have one on the way. I'm a student working on my master's degree and a husband working on being a loving husband, and deacon at my local Baptist church, yet I still find time to volunteer.

So I came to this conclusion: You make time for the things you think are important. Serving my community is something I find important. And as a Christian, I know how blessed I am. Just the plain and simple fact that I live in this great nation, free from persecution, reminds me of my blessings every day.

Beautiful family, great job, food on my table, clothes on my back. I'm a lucky man. So why not give back, I ask. I have so much to be thankful for. And while others lack, I do not go without. So I ask: Why not give back to the community that I'm a part of? To me, that is just responsible citizenship.

Since the foundation of this country has been set, the centerpiece of a good American community is the ability of citizens to rally together, lend a hand, invest time

and energy into community programs that fosters, supports, and encourages people to get involved in the betterment of their community. In my community, we have a number of citizens who have taken ownership of their community, exercising and implementing good stewardship over their spheres of influence. And in the end, that is all we can do, selflessly impact the people who are in your sphere. And the fact of the matter is that's all we need to do to make this world a better place, one community at a time. Thank you for your recognition and support. God bless. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, please show your appreciation to the 2013 American Legion Spirit of Service Award winners. (Applause)

MS. RITA COSBY: I want to thank all of you for the honor of being here today. And, also, can we give our great young award recipients another round of applause? How awesome are they? *(Applause)* I hope just seeing this magnificent and truly extraordinary group of young men and women continues to inspire you and continues to remind each and every one of you out there that what you're doing is great and so relevant. How great is the next generation? *(Applause)*

I also want to say that on behalf of a grateful nation, and, again, on behalf of me and my father, I want to thank all of you and all the families out there as well for your service to America past, present and future. I love all of you, and I am so grateful for having the opportunity to be here today and to be able to look all of you in the eye and say thank you, that this country loves you, and I love you dearly. It's been a real honor to be here today with all of you. And now, ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the wonderful BeBe Winans back on deck. *(Applause)*

MR. BEBE WINANS: Thank you. Thank you. There's a song that I wrote and just want to share just a little bit where the song came from. I have been privileged to go sing for the troops several times, and one visit while I was in Kuwait singing, a young man came up to me and he gave me a note and he asked, "Mr. Winans, can you read this when you get home?" I returned home and I read the letter, and it said, "Can you please call my mom and let her know that you saw me and I'm okay. I'm her only son."

And I did that. But the letter moved me in a way of appreciation for the sacrifices that men and women have given our country and us all, all our lives. And so through appreciation I wrote this song, and I dedicate it to all of you on this wonderful occasion.

... At this time BeBe Winans sang "Ultimate Sacrifice." (Applause)

MR. BEBE WINANS: Thank you. Thank you. Indeed, thank you. And what an honor it is to be an American, to live in this great country. And this song, again, I dedicate to every American, to every American that served, to every American that enjoys the freedom that you all give us. It is entitled "America, America."

... At this time BeBe Winans sang "America, America." (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Ladies and gentlemen, please show your appreciation once again to Mr. BeBe Winans and Margaret Bell. *(Applause)*

Rita Cosby, thank you for sharing your story with us today and for your words of encouragement and support. *(Applause)*

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. *(Applause)*

Born in New Orleans, our next guest enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1979. He served as a security guard at Marine Barracks London, an infantryman, and later as a drill instructor at Parris Island. He deployed during the Gulf War and returned to the Middle East during Operation Iraqi Freedom. His personal awards include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star with Combat V and one gold star, the Purple Heart, Navy Commendation

Medal with one gold star, the Navy Achievement Medal with two gold stars, and the Combat Action Ribbon. Today he is the senior enlisted advisor to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and is the senior non-commissioned officer in the U.S. Armed Forces. Legionnaires, please welcome Sergeant Major Bryan B. Battaglia. *(Applause)*

Address: Sergeant Major Bryan B. Battaglia, United States Marine Corps Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Thank you, national commander, for that very kind introduction. Distinguished guests, veterans from all branches of our Armed Forces, spouses, family, and friends, good morning to each and every one of you.

First allow me to remark just how much of an honor it is for my wife Lisa and I to join you at your annual convention. Let me also say that how grateful I am for the opportunity to serve as our Armed Forces senior non-commissioned officer. It is truly a distinct honor and privilege in what literally is leading an enlisted force of nearly 2.3 million serving men and women active, reserve, National Guard, and their families.

Now, to remain on a positive sound bite, I can also rejoice that while I have been graciously allotted 20 minutes for remarks this morning, I assure you that I won't take that long. For two reasons, really. One, so we stay focused on highlighting our award recipients, and, secondly, whenever one can yield back time, I think to an audience it certainly builds points in the acceptance ratings. *(Laughter)*

All kidding aside, General Dempsey, our chairman, would have loved to have been here and sends his warm regards. We both pass along to the entire Convention how tremendously proud we are of the entire force, those who have so honorably served, those who are serving, those who we have laid to rest, those whom we continue to look for.

We also recognize, ladies and gentlemen, that it takes a very special family to endure the sacrifice and hardships, you know, to move from school to school, from town to town, to shoulder the uncertainty, as you all have, waiting for the return of your loved one. The military spouse, military children, very special families indeed, and we hope that each of you all share in our excitement and pride that our military families are the heart and soul of our force. Families are so important that it takes really some very unique qualities and skills for a family to be together, for a family to stay together.

One important attribute that immediately comes to mind is communication. It's a necessity in nearly every function of life. Now, in many ways we have a habit in the military of comparing ourselves to professional sports teams. And while that's okay, marriage and the military are also very alike. For example, our military has a chain of command. Believe me, a marriage does too. And like the military, a marriage is only going to survive with effective communications. Marriage, military, professional sports. What a trifecta.

I'm reminded of a speech that President Reagan was giving once on the importance of communication and how much it plays into what you and I do. He says one day he was told a former placekicker from the Los Angeles Rams who later became a sports announcer, some of you may know, a guy by the name of Danny Villanueva, was telling President Reagan about communications. Danny said that he had been having dinner over at the home of a young ballplayer for the Los Angeles Dodgers. His young wife, of the ballplayer, was bustling about getting dinner ready. They were talking sports, and the baby started crying. So over her shoulder the busy wife said to the husband, the ballplayer, "Change the baby." Now, again, he was a young fellow, newly married, and a bit embarrassed in front of Danny Villanueva. And so he said, "What do you mean change the baby? I'm a ballplayer. That's really not my line of work."

Now, she turned around, put her hands on her hips, reestablished that chain of command and communicated with absolute clarity. She said, "Look, buster, you lay the diaper out like a diamond. You put second base on home plate, you put the baby's bottom on the pitcher's mound, you hook up first with third, slide home underneath, and if it

starts to rain, the game ain't called. You just start all over again." *(Laughter and applause)*

Well, so with that said, you know, while our families are that heart and soul, our men and women continue to volunteer to serve to protect our freedoms. And while the downsizing takes place to protect our borders and homeland, to support and defend our Constitution, to live and operate on the edge, to do our nation's bidding, even times although wanting to get into it, having to sit on the bench waiting for a spot, hand held high saying, "Put me in coach, put me in."

So let me pass a few broad-stroke points on the near future of our military, of our force. It's no surprise to anyone here that we're into the longest conflict in our nation's history. And as we have redeployed forces from Iraq and presently and methodically downsized forces in Afghanistan, that's going to cause a restructuring and reshaping of our military. We call it Joint Force 2020. And, you know, nothing new, as we have after every major conflict: World War II, Korea, Vietnam. This reshaping comes as part of the cycle.

But rest assured, ladies and gentlemen, that while our Armed Forces is going to be leaner tomorrow than it was today, we are going to remain ready, relevant, trained, equipped, and postured to meet any emergent requirement that our president or secretary of defense may direct. This reshaping will impact all of our service branches, even our National Guard. And while the downsizing takes place, there is, in fact, some good news, some build. We are going to increase in our special operations forces, in our cyber defense community. You all know the kind of work our special operators or cyber folks do. And just because we end operations in Iraq, and soon Afghanistan, doesn't mean that terrorists or other adversaries go away. There's going to remain a demand to eliminate threats. So while you may see reduced footprints in previous populated areas, you will see a little more visibility and focus in others.

You see, despite what some would ask us to believe, warfare does fundamentally remain a human endeavor. Technology and its gravitational pull cannot be viewed as a panacea. So in deterring and defeating our enemy, our military must and will remain leader centric and yet just technology enabled. We also face some fiscal challenges. The bill is, in fact, large. Not our first time being here either. We're developing ways to tighten our belt and use other innovative means to shave redundant costs.

From a military perspective now, our national debt reminds us that, as said previously today, freedom is in fact not free. I use that term in the most dignified and honorable context. Keeping our adversaries out of reach, yes, it comes with a monetary cost, but, more importantly, it comes with a human cost, the precious lives of our servicemen and women who have gallantly given their all. Let me reassure you that our military will forge through these fiscal challenges just as we always have.

I can remember as a very young troop on the heels of Vietnam that my senior NCOs and officers brought me as a young whippersnapper, my peer group, through some very difficult times. Very little money to work with. But they and you got us through it. Now it's my turn to maneuver the force through these fiscal barricades, and we are prepared and postured to do just that.

As I scan the room, one of the instant optics that hits me is diversity. Such a great thing for our all-volunteer force. You know, we come from all walks of life. We stretch from coast to coast. Literally there is no crevice of our country left untouched. We attend different schools. We come from different denominations. And in some cases, we're, in fact, raised beyond the borders of our 54 states and territories. We join different service branches under different contracts with different specialties. Yet, while gravely different, there are many similarities, and one that strikes us this morning is what brings these young warriors to the stage: Volunteerism.

You know, it is not surprising, rather remarkable, as to how over the last 237 years we have grown together as a profession of arms, as our nation's defenders. For many of you, remember long ago upon our enlistment or accession, we all swore or affirmed an

oath to support and defend the Constitution. Every one of us, the same identical oath. No difference in its words. Equal in its meaning. And think about it, nowhere else in any civilian profession hired out of a high school classroom would require such a verbal commitment of such magnitude, to swear that we will honorably wear the cloth of our nation, to support and defend our country, at all costs.

It confirms that this job is more than just a job. It is a calling, isn't it? Life-changing. And that's authenticated by your presence here. Not to shortchange the real reason why I'm up here, and that's to highlight these servicemembers to my left whom not only volunteered as members of this profession but also volunteered their spare time and skill beyond their regular duties. It leads me to say how grateful our Department of Defense is for organizations such as The American Legion to recognize the extra efforts of our men and women who extend their volunteerism.

I also find it a bit special, everyone, that while today we highlight the aspect of volunteering, it was on this very same day back in 1945 that President Truman said the situation in the Pacific continues to have many elements of danger and actually urged Congress to continue conscription for a further two years. How times have evolved. But despite that evolution, our force remains a loyal, patriotic, and professional brotherhood that society respects and admires. It's an organization that many nations, in fact, envy, due largely because of the hard work that over the years many in this room have shaped and paved the way.

Our actions, in fact, shape the way our nation perceive our Armed Forces, and our country must continue to look upon us with the highest of ratings. Just as your Legion model depicts for God and for country, our Armed Forces will continue to uphold the standard in everything we represent: trust, honor, leadership, courage, to mention a few.

And so, ladies and gentlemen, these five service members standing before you, courageous in their actions and compassionate in their hearts, to move along an initiative or a project, to help a person in need, to devote personal time and effort in hopes of making the world a better place, they humbly stand shoulder to shoulder as proud members of your, my, our Armed Forces.

Thank you all for your continued service and sacrifice, and may God continue to bless all of our troops and their families. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: For more than three decades our next guest has held numerous leadership positions in The American Legion Auxiliary at the unit, district, department and national levels. She joined the Auxiliary through her late husband, John C. Thomas, a U.S. Army veteran. She is the first national president from Virginia since Anna Gear in 1983-1984. Her southern charm and grace have made it a true pleasure to serve alongside her this year as both of our great organizations advanced the great cause of serving America's veterans. She is a Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service deputy at the Hunter Homes McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond, Virginia. Simply put, she is as patriotic as they come. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm American Legion family welcome to the national president of The American Legion Auxiliary, Mrs. Peggy Thomas. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Mrs. Peggy Thomas
National President, American Legion Auxiliary

Commander Koutz, SAL Commander Chris Huntzinger, distinguished guests, to all assembled here, I bring you greetings from The American Legion Auxiliary, the national organization made up of 800,000 women dedicated to supporting The Legion. We work as a family with The American Legion and SAL, and, if we all work together, we can accomplish three times as much. Before I say anything else, I want to say to every veteran or active military in the room, thank you for your service.

We have many things that we need to accomplish. It has come to the time of passing the torch to the next leadership in a few days. But I ask that everybody remember our mission. We're to serve the active military, the veterans, and their families. We have homeless issues. We have homeless female veterans out on the street with children, and they are afraid to go to homeless shelters for obvious reasons. So we work to take care of our sisters and our brothers out there, because no veteran should ever not be able to lay his or her head on a pillow at night. *(Applause)*

It is a national disgrace. But I thank you all for giving me such a wonderful, wonderful commander to serve with this year. We have seen very little of each other except when we travel outside the United States. But we run into each other once in a while, and the SAL commander, and it is always a pleasure. But, again, thank you for giving him to me and Auxiliary for one year. I can't say enough about his leadership. He's down to earth, he's sincere, and a wonderful Legionnaire and a wonderful human being.

And I want to say to you, God bless you, God bless you the United States of America and our troops abroad. Thank you for allowing me to be here this morning. Have a good convention. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: If the Dallas Cowboys are America's team, our next guests can be appropriately called America's Cheerleaders. Not because of what they do on the football field, but because of how they conduct themselves away from it. In 1979 the Department of Defense recognized the value that the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders provided to servicemen and women and invited them to join the USO Christmas tour of South Korea. A tradition was born. The Cheerleaders have now made 75 USO tours to more than 200 locations worldwide and have conducted cheerleading classes for many children of military families.

When not performing at football games or traveling overseas, they spend time supporting charities and visiting hospitals, including many VA hospitals. They have also given their support to the Salvation Army, the Susan G. Komen Foundation, the Association for Hearing Impaired Children, the American Heart Association, the March of Dimes, the American Cancer Society, the Make-a-Wish Foundation, nursing homes and children's homes. For more about these remarkable women, turn your attention to the video monitors. ... *At this time the delegation viewed a video. (Applause)*

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to present the highest honor that our organization can bestow, The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal, to the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders.

Representing them today are Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders Director Kelli Finglass and Judy Trammell. Please welcome the Dallas Cheerleaders.

Presentation: The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal
The Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders
Kelli Finglass, Director
Charlotte Jones Anderson, President

MS. FINGLASS: Good morning and thank you. Good morning! Okay. We brought cheerleaders in here to wake y'all up. Now y'all need to give us some love back. Here we are in Houston, Texas. Actually, incidentally, we're playing the Texans this Thursday back at AT&T Stadium in Dallas. How many real Dallas Cowboys fans do we have out there? *(Cheers)*

My name is Kelli Finglass and I'm the director of the cheerleaders, and I want to thank you all for inviting us here and for honoring us with this. This is a very, very big deal for our organization.

I have to be honest with you. I have two professionally written speeches; I can't read them because I don't have my reading glasses with me up here. I'm certain I could probably borrow a pair of reading glasses from one of you, but I don't want to read words

that aren't from my heart. I would like to spend a couple of minutes and, if you would allow me, I'm not going to read from a teleprompter and I'm not doing a publicist speech. I just want to speak to you from the heart on behalf of the Dallas Cowboys cheerleaders.

Our first real experiences in sharing a patriotic moment with our Armed Forces was when we were invited in 1979 to Korea. The history behind our first USO tour was a letter that was written to Tex Schramm, our general manager, from the Department of Defense asking if some members from our Dallas Cowboys football team could come to Korea during the holidays.

And while it was a brilliant idea and a wonderful opportunity for our football team, the Dallas Cowboys were in the middle of football season and at that time playoffs. So Mr. Schramm, and we have the letter in our files back in Dallas, but Mr. Schramm had a little handwritten note to his assistant, Suzanne Mitchell, that said the players can't go, but how about the cheerleaders? The Cowboys had kind of this new idea of these glamorous, beautiful cheerleaders on the sidelines of a NFL game. He basically said we can cook up a little show and send the cheerleaders to Korea for Christmas and still represent the Dallas Cowboys.

So that's exactly what we did. We sent eight Dallas Cowboys cheerleaders to Korea in 1979. They didn't have a costume collection or a scored or scripted show, but it was performances of spirit and enthusiasm. And the performances were very well received, so well received that now, 35 years later, our tours and the opportunity to perform for our military men and women and their families overseas has become the highest honor, the most distinguished performance opportunity, and the most memorable thing any of these cheerleaders ever get the chance to do. *(Applause)* Thank you.

Our shows now are entitled "America and Her Music," they are an hour and a half long, they have 16 costume changes, and I would like to acknowledge my wingman, Judy Trammel, our choreographer. *(Applause)* Judy has personally taken multiple USO tours, and she has choreographed these tours now for 29 years. So when the Dallas Cowboys cheerleaders are out on tour and we're performing for our Armed Forces, there are people behind the scenes that don't get all the glory.

I'd like to acknowledge Dan Devens, who is our tour manager now, who is responsible for getting us here today. Dan himself has taken 26 USO tours with our ladies and is now the leader of this mission of our organization. He won't come out on stage, but I'm going to acknowledge him for that anyway. *(Applause)*

I'd like to also just introduce Sydney, Jackie, Holly, and Mia. They are all four members of our current squad. They cheer at all of the football games, they all hold down full-time jobs, and they've all been on tours to places like Korea, Iraq, Afghanistan, and all over the world to say thank you to our troops. *(Applause)*

Sometimes as the leader of the cheerleaders I take on the role of kind of teacher/preacher. And there is one thing that I preach to our ladies daily and at the first meeting, and that is to be thankful. Today is a day of us being thankful to you. I appreciate this opportunity to share with you some very genuine, heartfelt reflections of how we feel about everyone in this room. First and foremost, we are thankful for your service to our country. *(Applause)*

In sharing this honor, we've learned more about The American Legion and what you folks do in the lives of others. And another thing that I am very passionate about our cheerleaders learning through these experiences is to not do things in loud, arrogant manners but do great deeds in quiet ways. In learning more about what you all do and how you improve the lives of children and families of our military and our veterans, we're blessed to have organizations like yours and we're blessed that your organization is led by the people that really, really make a difference.

Jerry Jones, our owner and general manager has always felt that the visibility and the power and the magic of the NFL and the power of the Dallas Cowboys allows us to do such special things. Simply stated, we're all just a bunch of young, small-town girls,

well, I used to be young, I'm not young anymore, but these girls are young women from small towns that came together because they're beautiful and they're talented.

After they had the experiences from these tours where they traveled to Korea, they eat in mess halls, they have MREs, they are in Black Hawks, they're in Chinooks, they go out to the fields, they decorate makeshift Christmas trees with little candy canes because they're away from their families, too, they see firsthand the sacrifices that our military and their family members make. They see firsthand now the war zones. They see firsthand the freedoms that all of you have created or protected for us. And they leave changed women.

So thank you to the USO and to the MWR and to Armed Forces Entertainment for allowing us to do something that seems so, cheerleading? Really? Thank you for allowing us to take this talent and the ability to entertain and truly walk away changed women. I can stand here and I know that these five women that share this stage with me are better Americans because of their experiences with our military, so we thank you for that.

In closing, I again would just like to thank The American Legion for what you do in the lives of others. We appreciate this award. We actually do our tours quietly. This group, we will be taking our 77th tour this Christmas. All four of these ladies will hopefully be on that tour. We'll keep going wherever our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen are. We'll keep going. So thank you for supporting us and thank you for celebrating this wonderful honor today. And we appreciate, first and foremost, like I said earlier, thank you for your service to our country. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Well, I just thought that I was an Indianapolis Colts fan. *(Laughter)*

The man who has led the Sons of The American Legion over the last year is the son of a U.S. Army veteran of the Korean War and grandson of an Army World War II veteran. A member of the Penbrook Sons of The American Legion Squadron 730 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, he helped charter his squadron, which has grown from 16 to 600 members. He has served the Sons at every level and is a 24-year member. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome past national commander, that's got a good ring to it, of the Sons of The American Legion, Chis Huntzinger. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Christopher J. Huntzinger, Pennsylvania
Past National Commander, Sons of The American Legion

Please be seated, and thank you so much. Wow, is that a tough act to follow. Probably the toughest one all year. And I'm a Washington Redskins fan. How about it?

Commander Koutz, Adjutant Wheeler, members of The American Legion, The American Legion Family, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good morning. I bring you greetings on behalf of the more than 351,000 members of the Sons of American Legion, your Sons of The American Legion which have always been working hard each and every day to promote The American Legion programs and benefit our veterans, our men and women serving around the world and around the nation serving our great nation, our children and youth, the posts and their communities.

I want to thank you for your service, Legionnaires, in all and any of the great wars and your service to The American Legion Family. Today you're The American Legion. Many of you are dual members. I also thank you. Where is the Department of Pennsylvania? *(Cheers)* I'll be home soon. I'll be home soon. Thank you.

Reported at our recent convention this past weekend, let me tell you a little bit about what your Sons of The American Legion accomplished this year. Over 320,500 volunteer hours and $1.1 million to Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation programs; more than $60,000 for our project this year, the Fisher House Foundation; $1.9 million for the Americanism programs; and 762,000 hours with the programs including the Boys State, Junior Shooting Sports, American Legion Baseball, Flag Education, Scouting, and many,

many more programs. Of course we are the largest single contributor each and every year to The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, this year $453,599. *(Applause)*

I'd just like to let you know that it was reported, we found out yesterday, that we donate another $100,000 more this year, we will surpass the $6 million mark for Sons of The American Legion contributions all time to CWF. Total reported programs this year for the Children & Youth programs, $1.2 million and over 146,500 service hours. Your Sons helping with The American Legion programs each and every year, this year was no different, more record numbers.

Commander Koutz, it has been a great pleasure traveling, working, and representing our great organization with you this year. I've enjoyed every moment. I've enjoyed the tours with you and wherever I've been, to the VA facilities, the Fisher Houses and the departments and their activities, while forging our future together as an American Legion family. Legionnaires, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your hospitality this year and for your strong support each and every year for the Sons of The American Legion. Have a great convention. God bless you. God bless our great United States of America. Thank you so very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Before our next segment, I ask that the American Legion Riders and others who are presenting checks for the Legacy Fund please gather backstage in order to expedite your presentations.

The Republic of Korea and the United States share a special bond which was forged as our brave military members fought side-by-side in defense of freedom. Within those two great countries exists another close friendship between Samsung Incorporated and The American Legion.

In 1996, the worldwide electronics leader generously endowed a scholarship fund of $5 million to be administered by The American Legion. Through the endowment, Samsung was able to show its appreciation to the United States for coming to South Korea's aid during its struggle against communist forces during the Korean War. Through interest earned on the fund, the Samsung American Legion Scholarship Program has granted more than $4.66 million of scholarship money to the children and grandchildren of U.S. veterans since the program's establishment. Because of Samsung's generosity, nearly 1,700 young men and women have been able to achieve their dreams of obtaining higher education. I am proud to present the 2013 American Legion Patriot Award to the Samsung Group. Please join me in welcoming the president and CEO of Samsung North America, Y.K. Kim, and Executive Vice President Dr. David Steel. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion Patriot Award Presented to The Samsung Group for its dedication and generosity toward America's young people and for keeping alive the legacy of U.S. veterans who served in the Korean War. In 1996 the Samsung Group, the worldwide electronics leader, endowed a scholarship fund of $5 million for administration by The American Legion, the largest organization of wartime veterans in the United States. Through its endowment, Samsung was able to show its appreciation to the United States for coming to South Korea's aid in its struggle against communist forces during the Korean War. Through the interest earned from the fund, the Samsung American Legion Scholarship Program has granted more than $4.66 million of scholarship money since its establishment. Because of the Samsung Group's financial support, nearly 1,700 direct descendents of U.S. wartime veterans have been able to attend colleges and universities. On behalf of the 2.4 million wartime veterans of The American Legion, thank you for your support of The American Legion's Four Pillars of Youth, Americanism, Veterans and Defense. Presented this 27th day of August 2013 at the 95th National Convention. (Applause)

Presentation: The American Legion Patriot Award
Samsung North America
Yang Kyu Kim, President & CEO

Thank you and good morning. It's also very hard for me to go after the cheerleaders, so please give me some help here. But I really want to thank all of you for the incredible honor that you have given Samsung today with The American Legion Patriot Award. This means a lot to us as it is coming from those of you who have done so much to secure the freedoms of this country. We're especially proud to receive this award right here in Texas, which is a state where Samsung employs more than five and a half thousand people and we've invested $15 billion in advanced manufacturing in Austin. *(Applause)*

Thank you. We also have the headquarters for our telecommunications business in Richardson near Dallas, and our commitment to Texas was recognized earlier this year when both the House of Representatives and the Senate passed a resolution expressing their appreciation to Samsung for all of our commitments in this state. So thank you, Texas.

Now, many of you will know Samsung for the technology products that we make, from smart phones to televisions, from semiconductor chips to refrigerators. And, in fact, I hope many of you here today own our products and enjoy using them. Thanks to those products and the support of our customers all around the world, we have become the largest technology company. But even though we continue to grow, we never lose sight of our roots. This year is especially meaningful as it marks the 60th anniversary of the end of the Korean War. And as we commemorate this anniversary, we remember the many sacrifices that were made on the field of battle. The economic success of South Korea that you see today owes so much to those sacrifices.

For us in Samsung it is even more personal. We are reminded of how much we owe to the contributions of those who have come before us. Our success as a global technology leader would not have been possible without the steadfast commitment of the United States to the security of Korea. We are grateful for everything that United States government and Armed Forces have done and continue to do to ensure stability and peace on the Korean peninsula.

That's one reason why we tried to do all that we can to reinvest in America. We've created thousands of jobs from California to New Jersey. Just last month we broke ground on construction for a new R&D center in Silicon Valley. While our semiconductor business has been in San Jose for three decades, a new Silicon Valley R&D center will accommodate hundreds of world-class experts in research and development. And here in Texas, during the recent expansion of Samsung Austin Semiconductor, we hired over 300 veterans for high-paying manufacturing jobs. And veterans will continue to play an important role in our hiring. *(Applause)*

We strive to be a good corporate citizen, wherever we do business. Through our community program, Hope for Children, Samsung and our partners have donated more than $30 million to children's causes around the country. The main support for our community activities is education. In 2009, we launched a program to make science and technology learning fun and interesting for kids. Through our Solve for Tomorrow program we have touched more than 4,000 public schools across America, and this year alone the program will award $2 million of technology to every state across the country.

This past spring we expanded Solve for Tomorrow by bringing similar engaging science learning experiences to kids outside of the classroom, as Samsung summer science camps at colleges across the country sent under-served kids from urban and rural communities to work side by side with university professors at Michigan State, the University of Illinois, Cornell, Rutgers, Oregon State, and the University of Florida. Through partnerships with the University of California at Berkeley, Georgia Tech, MIT, and the University of Texas at Dallas, we bring students together to introduce them to

mobile application development. Through these Samsung mobile app boot camps, kids learn while competing for $35,000 in scholarship funds.

So as one of the world's leading technology manufacturers, we also recognize the impact our activities and business has on the environment. In 2013 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency named Samsung as Partner of the Year for Sustained Excellence for our participation in the ENERGY STAR program. This too is all about science and technology, so this year we're working closely with the National Environmental Education Foundation to bring green science and learning programs to America's public schools.

But our first major grant in support of education was to The American Legion. We are delighted that you have so successfully operated the Samsung American Legion Scholarship program since 1996. Thanks to your stewardship of the endowment, hundreds of descendants of American veterans have been supported to pursue college degrees. We hope that through this program we can continue to support education for the next generation of American leaders and show our profound gratitude for the service that all of you have given to this nation. So on behalf of Samsung, thank you again for your service and for this great honor. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Our next guest is a forceful voice in Washington. She is serving her tenth term as a member of U.S. House of Representatives. She represents the 18th Congressional District of Texas centered in Houston, the Energy Capital of the world. She's dedicated to upholding the constitutional rights of all people. Please give a warm welcome to the Honorable Sheila Jackson Lee. *(Applause)*

Greetings: The Honorable Sheila Jackson Lee
United States House of Representatives
18th Congressional District of Texas

What a wonderful morning. I'm delighted to be able to welcome you from far and wide to the 18th Congressional District, a historic district in its own right, but welcoming one of the greatest and most forceful fighters for justice and veterans and soldiers, The American Legion, the nation's largest wartime veterans service organization. And you are committed, as you have stated, to honor the national security and continued devotion to our fellow service. I stand here before you taking the pledge. I will never abandon our veterans, our families, our servicemembers, and all of those who contribute to the security of this nation, the United States military. *(Applause)*

Your organization's reality is on the front lines of every place our soldiers find themselves. No matter what branch, they're called upon at a moment's notice. Whether it's the DMZ, whether or not it's World War I or II or the wars before or conflicts or the Korean War, Vietnam, and places now in Iraq and Afghanistan, whether it was the Balkans War and those that I've not mentioned, when the call is made, your membership, those who are now serving, come at a moment's notice.

We live in difficult times. As a member of the Homeland Security Committee, I can assure you that we see every day the constant threat around the world. As the secretary of state just said, we've just experienced a moral obscenity in Syria. And the nation now has to come together and pray. Many of those will be called upon if the decision is made to be able to respond to the atrocities of gassing your own people.

You have come together to be able to remind us, in a place where I have the privilege of representing 300,000 in this region of those who served in the United States military, you have come to remind us every day that we cannot fail those who have never, never failed us. *(Applause)*

So as I welcome you this morning, I want to be reminded of those issues that you have asked us to be attentive to. You'll never find us attempting to raise the TRICARE

rates, because how much more can you take? Sequestration should end now and we should never touch any veteran's benefit and continue to secure those benefits. *(Applause)*

We must navigate and make sure that we provide those resources for those soldiers coming out. We must make sure the education benefits fit them. And, yes, I have worked tirelessly with the late John Murtha to bring the first off-site post-traumatic stress disorder center to Houston, Texas, to continue to fund and recognize that post-traumatic stress disorder should not limit you, it should not stigmatize you, it should not isolate you, and you should not be a statistic of suicide because we have not provided you with the resources that you and your family need. *(Applause)*

So I welcome you in the name of your name, your valiant name, your courageous name, your powerful name, and I welcome you in the name of the words said by President Obama that this is a grateful nation. We're always grateful, but we must act it, we must walk it, we must talk it, we must make sure that you are close to our hearts.

So I close, my friends, by saying that as I continue to work on legislation such as the National Day of Honor that I passed with 434 votes to 0 in the United States Congress to be able to honor all returning combat vets, all returning vets during the times of war, and to see the various activities that came about after the coming down of the Iraq War. I was so pleased to see the communities around America did their own thing and welcomed soldiers home. As I continue to work for housing for veterans, hiring veterans, I want to say this to you. That in your name there should never be a moment that a soldier comes home to the soil of the United States of America that he or she is not recognized with thanks and appreciation. There's nothing wrong with a parade. There's nothing wrong with a party. There's nothing wrong with a celebration when our brothers and sisters come home.

I close by giving you one name, the name of Daniel Somers, age 30. His story was in the Washington Post. It probably wasn't a story that his mother and father wanted you to read. Because Daniel was a multiple-tour Iraq War veteran. Daniel was a gunnery. Daniel had a post-traumatic brain injury. Daniel suffered from PTSD. Daniel sought help over and over again. Daniel's appointment was not given for weeks and months at a time. Daniel did not get mental health services. Daniel committed suicide. Daniel was only 30 years old.

So I think that our mission today, the mission of The American Legion, is more important than it's ever been. And you are the firewall. You are the champions. And it is my honor and privilege to be able to say to you that you are welcomed. And if I might, if you would give me the privilege of allowing me, a civilian, just to say, "I salute you." God bless all of you. Welcome, welcome, welcome. God bless the United States of America and the United States military. *(Applause)*

May I quickly have national adjutant and of course our commander just come quickly, please, so that I can acknowledge them. And may I also indicate that I am wearing the national Auxiliary's pin of a president of the Auxiliary. Let me acknowledge all the women here, service and Auxiliary members as well, but allow me to present these to both Mr. Wheeler and of course to James Koutz.

And I will not read them in their entirety, but I will tell you that the concluding remarks of this Certificate of Congressional Recognition acknowledges The American Legion 95th National Convention first to our national commander as a volunteer and a servant of the people, and it indicates that you have been a leader in breaking the backlog for the Department of Veterans Affairs, you have been constant, and therefore you are deserving of the respect, admiration, and commendation of the United States Congress on behalf of all of your membership. *(Applause)*

There's nothing better than a person who recognizes the value of an organization so much that he has grown up in that organization, served almost in every capacity, loves the organization, and is there for the organization whenever you need him.

We stood together on Sunday looking at this greatest parade of leaders coming through, and so to Daniel, I want to present to you a Certificate of Congressional

Recognition acknowledging your leadership of The American Legion and as well indicating that you deserve the respect of the people of the United States and the United States Congress. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: A retired soldier with the U.S. Army who served with the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam where he earned two Bronze Stars, he is also the mayor of Killeen, Texas, and a life member of The American Legion, ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the 2012-2013 past department commander of Texas, Daniel A. Corbin. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Daniel A. Corbin, 2012-2013
Department Commander of Texas

Commander Koutz, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, howdy. Welcome to the great state of Texas. If Texas was a country, it would have the 15th largest economy in the world, between Australia at 14 and Mexico at 16. And welcome to Houston, the fourth largest city in the United States. Texas is the home of America's team, the Dallas Cowboys, recently acknowledged by Forbes Magazine as the most valuable sports franchise in the United States.

Texas is also the home of the last two Heisman trophy winners: Johnny Manziel, the quarterback of Texas A&M University, who is from Kerrville; and Robert Griffin III, formerly the quarterback at Baylor University, now the all-pro quarterback of the Washington Redskins. He hails from Copperas Cove, Texas. *(Applause)*

Texas is the home of more than a dozen military installations. The largest of those are at Fort Bliss and Fort Hood. Fort Bliss is located in west Texas at El Paso and has more available training area than any military base in the nation. Fort Hood is located in central Texas in Killeen. It was the home of the 1st Cavalry Division and the 4th Infantry Division during Operation Iraqi Freedom. You may recall that the 4th Infantry Division captured Saddam Hussein.

United States Senator John Cornyn said recently that the strength and resilience of the Fort Hood community is legendary. No U.S. military installation has deployed more troops into overseas theaters of combat since September 11, 2001, than Fort Hood. And unfortunately none have endured more combat casualties in both Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Fort Hood was also the site of the shooting by Major Nidal Hasan on November 5, 2009, resulting in the death of one civilian and 12 soldiers and wounding of 32 others. Members of our Texas delegation in Washington, D.C., are currently drafting legislation that would make the Fort Hood victims and their families eligible for all the honors and benefits available to their comrades serving in overseas combat zones, including the Purple Heart. They deserve no less. *(Applause)*

There are plenty of things for you and your family to do in Houston to make your stay more enjoyable. Their shopping is fantastic, according to my wife. The restaurants are amazing, and I can attest to that. There are many museums for those who find the heat and humidity uncomfortable and want to stay indoors. NASA is just a few miles south on I-45. Visit Minute Maid Park, home of those amazing Astros, the only ballpark that has a hill in center field. See the historic Astrodome and its big brother, Reliant Stadium, home of the Houston Texans. Visit the Battleship Texas and the San Jacinto Monument to learn a little bit about Texas history. Enjoy the beaches of Galveston just to our south.

In Texas, patriotism, love of country, support of the military, and respect for our veterans is the norm. From the Rio Grande Valley to the piney woods of east Texas, from the oil fields of west Texas to the rolling-hill country of central Texas, from the world's largest concentration of oil refineries on the Gulf Coast to the rugged terrain of Big Bend, from the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex to the farmlands of the Texas Panhandle, we

Texans welcome The American Legion 95th Convention to Houston, Texas. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you very much, Dan.

A past national vice commander of The American Legion, he served in the U.S. Army from 1954 to 1963. He has also served The American Legion at every level and has played a key role in helping us prepare for this large gathering. And he can sing. Please welcome the president of The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Texas, John D. Morris. *(Applause)*

Greetings: John D. Morris
President, National Convention Corporation of Texas

Okay, Commander, we will do that. I'm a person of few words, which you will realize momentarily, but I want to start my welcome address with a little song, if you don't mind; kind of change things up. And I know it's one that you've heard before. A good friend of mine and yours a number of years ago wrote this song and it was recorded.

... At this time, John D. Morris sang:

"It's time for convention, and once more The Legion stands up to be counted again. Honoring us as the proud host, you're welcome to our post. We're all very glad that you came. The longer you stay on, the longer this goes on, greater will be the gain. 'Cause it's time for convention, and once more The Legion stands up to be counted again." *(Cheers and applause)* That song was written by our late Past National Vice Commander Harvey Holcomb.

Commander Koutz, fellow Legionnaires and guests, on behalf of the National Convention Corporation of Texas, I'm very proud to bring you greetings and a hearty welcome to Texas and my hometown, also the hometown of our National Color Guard, again, for the 95th Annual National Convention.

I do hope that each and every one of you has had an enjoyable stay here so far, that you've been able to go out, enjoy the sights and the entertainment field around Houston, and that you'll be able to go back home when we disperse and tell your friends and neighbors what a wonderful time that you had here in Houston.

I particularly want to thank all of you that participated in the parade last Sunday. I know that it was kind of hard for some of you not used to the weather, but thank the Lord the weather wasn't like most of you were going to expect it to be. We had shade. We had clouds. We had wind. But, you know, we didn't have any thunder and lightning and rain. The good Lord was good to us. I think He heard all of my prayers in the last couple of months when I went to mass. I was on my knees asking Him to please help us get through this parade and have a successful one. And with your help and your participation, I feel sure that that's the way it happened and that's the way it will be. And I will go back and ask the good Lord and tell Him thanks for all of the good things He has done.

Again, I want to thank all of you for your attendance. If you didn't get everything done while you were here, you know you're always welcome to come back to Houston, Texas. So with that, I will leave you and say, "Y'all come back, ya hear?" Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you, John.

Next I would like to call on Terry Woodburn, adjutant of the Department of Illinois, to the podium so he can help lead the presentation of Legacy Scholarship Fund donations. Those presenting checks will please proceed to the microphone, announce the amount and donor, and go to the front on the floor for a photograph. While the photographs are being taken, I ask National Vice Commander James Holland to assume the duties at the lectern. *... At this time National Vice Commander Holland assumed the Chair.*

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

Thank you. Commander Koutz, Chairman Besson, Adjutant Wheeler, distinguished guests, all, I had prepared a few remarks before we get into the video for this year's ride. But you know when you have a credit card out or a hotel key and you take a magnet and run over that magnetic strip or it gets too close, it just blanks everything out? I had some really neat remarks prepared, but in the process of bringing my chairman down here and our delegation chairman and immediate past commander, we had to come right through the Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders standing back here. I mean, right through. And kind of all I can think of now is if my mind is that hotel key and they're the magnet: All I can really say now is uuhhhh... *(Laughter)*

Not too many years ago, well, actually more years than I'd like to remember, when you actually had to get up to change the channel on the television set, there was a cigarette commercial, I believe it was Virginia Slim, and their big slogan was, "You've come a long way, baby."

The young fledgling program of The American Legion, The American Legion Riders, it was a very young program, but they quite literally, as well as figuratively, have come a long way, baby. This is our eighth run. We've covered just under 12,000 miles in 23 states, raising for scholarships to this point $3.5 million. And on the run coming down there was another 350,000-360,000. And I have a feeling by the time these presentations are done that will probably double, putting us well over the $4 million mark.

It's been a neat labor of love. And if you can imagine, that's just eight times coming to National Convention. When you add the thousands of miles literally that the riders do within their own states to raise this money during the course of the year, it's incredible the amount of rubber that's left on the road. At this time I'd like to go ahead and introduce a video for your pleasure to get some of the highlights of this run.

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

It truly is a labor of love. And one quick story. At our Rider meeting on Friday, I had heard from a couple of folks as we were conducting kind of like an out-briefing of the run that there was an incident on the way. And try to get a visual of this as you think about it. Supposedly there was an upset pickup truck driver who had some trouble getting around or getting through, and they supposedly met the Riders at their next gas stop and was in the process of getting out of his pickup truck with a baseball bat evidently to address some of the riders. Now, put that picture in your mind. Here's a guy in a pickup truck trying to get out with a baseball bat looking at 300 guys in leather with half of them probably got a gun in their saddlebags. *(Laughter)*

The old Blue Collar Comedy Tour group, I think it was Ron White, had an album, and I think the album was probably named for this guy, and that is "You Can't Fix Stupid." *(Laughter)*

At this time I'd like to bring forward our chairman, delegation chairman and immediate Past Department Commander Wayne Wagner for a presentation.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WAGNER (IL): Illinois, in addition to the $5,000 plus that was sent in previously, we have $13,350 to present.

DELEGATE TURNER (MD): Howard L. Turner, Post 276, Department of Maryland, is giving another thousand dollars to the Legacy Fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MI): Post 4 Riders, Mount Clemens, Michigan, $500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MI): Pinckney Post 419, Department of Michigan, total $6,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (FL): On behalf of the Department of American Legion Florida Family, $27,976.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NY): On behalf of the delegation from New York, another $5,200.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NY): On behalf of the Legion Riders Cottreall-Warner Post 942 in Webster, New York, $1,500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (FR): On behalf of the Legion Riders and Legionnaires from the Department of France, $1,330

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NC): Department of North Carolina, $824.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEAGATE (NM): From all the posts in the Department of New Mexico, we have a total of $4,500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WI): On behalf of the great Department of Wisconsin and my fellow Legion Riders and Legion family, we have $13,349.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (VA): In addition to the monies already submitted by the Department of Virginia ALR Chapter 28, the Dumpreys wanted to deposit $250.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (CA): State President of The American Legion, Department of California, Pancho Villa, we have two donations. One from Post 534, that's out of Orcutt; Chapter 48 out of Oxnard, donation of $600, which comes out to a total of $3,100 from the Department of California.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (VT): Department of Vermont, Brandon Chapter 55, $500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ID): On behalf of the first Western Regional ROMP Committee sponsored by the Pocatello Post 4 in Idaho and Blackfoot Post 23 in Idaho, we present a check for $2,500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ID): From the Legion Riders of Post 101 and Post 26, Mountain Home, Idaho, check for $5,000.

DELEGATE HALFORD-PANDOS (OK): J. Halford-Pandos from the great state of Oklahoma, I make a personal donation of $200 in honor of my husband and all Vietnam veterans.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: From the Foreign and Outlying Departments and Posts of The American Legion, FODPAL, $250.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AK): From the Department of Alaska, the largest state, the least amount of roads, and only 94 members, $7,500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AZ): From the Department of Arizona, we have a check for $3,000. And there's a little addition. We have a donation from our 2013 Boys State delegates, a check for a thousand dollars from them.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AZ): Post 29, Glendale, Arizona, $2,750.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AZ): You also have ALR chapters, commander. They brought in checks from ALR 2 Tempe in Arizona for $200; ALR 6, Prescott, Arizona, $250; ALR 79 in Yarnell, $500, which was previously sent in; ALR 52 in Sierra Vista, $750; ALR 5 in Phoenix, $2,000; ALR 86 from Overgaard gave you a check for 3,000 during the Legacy Run; and ALR 58, our Commander's own ALR chapter, $4,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AZ): Which brings our Arizona total to $17,950. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IA): On behalf of The American Legion Rider Chapter 37, Ames, and the Department of Iowa, $250.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IA): On behalf of Spencer Post 1 Legion Riders, Department of Iowa, $200.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MO): On behalf of The Legion family, the state of Missouri, we give an additional $18,730.66.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NJ): On behalf of the great state of New Jersey, we'd like to present a check for $1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NJ): On behalf of Bayonne Post 19, Bayonne, New Jersey, $500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IN): On behalf of the riders of Boonville American Legion Post 200, $500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IN): On behalf of the family at Kenneth N. Dowden Wayne Post 64 in Indianapolis, $5,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WY): On behalf of The American Legion Riders, Department of Wyoming, a thousand dollars.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ND): On behalf of The Legion family of North Dakota, we present a check for $12,273.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (SD): From the Department of South Dakota, family, $4,086.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (PA): From the great Department of Pennsylvania, we'd like to present a check today, bringing our donation for the year to $67,952.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (TX): Commander, on behalf of Converse Post 593, we're a little too small to host the Legacy Run as it came through, so we joined our friends at Post 245 and hosted you there. We gave you a check there. Since that time, we've raised an additional $267, so our total this year will be $30,267.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (TX): Commander, we're presenting a check from American Legion Post 491 in Granbury, Texas, and the riders for $1,200.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (TX): American Legion Post 575, Lubbock, Texas, $1,366.50.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NH): Commander, on behalf of the Department of New Hampshire, we have a check for $1,780.66.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (CT): Commander, on behalf of the state of Connecticut, we'd like to present you with a check for $1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (GA): On behalf of Georgia and the many riders groups that worked projects and the efforts of a rider who has rode every mile of all eight Legacy Fund rides we give you $32,372.86.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ME): As two members of the Legion Riders from the Department of Maine, we'd like to donate $5,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): The American Legion Charities, Inc., Department of Ohio, donates $10,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): Massillon Post 221 of Ohio, Riders, $6,500, very hard earned.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): Chapter 336, Brakeman-King Post 336 in Painesville, Ohio, $500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): On behalf of the dynamic 9th District and the Howland Chapter 700, our total is almost $10,000 given throughout. We're presenting the balance of that check. Additionally, with Miami Chapter 586 out of the 3rd District, total of $2,386.45 to be added.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (SC): From the great state of South Carolina, we present a check to the Legacy Scholarship Fund for $52,416.39.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (DE): The Department of Delaware in addition to the $14,350 raised on the road and already donated to National Commander Koutz on Thursday, here are our additional contributions totaling $12,550, $7,500 of which comes from one of our two mega posts, Oak Orchard Riverdale Post in Millsboro, making our final contribution at $26,900 from Delaware, a small state with a big heart.

DELEGATE OTTE (NE): It was another great year to be on the run. I'll tell ya, I've been on several of them, and this was another one of them. I have a total here of $26,045 from the state of Nebraska, which, I have to make mention, one check for $2,500 was on behalf of a deceased adopted veteran at the Bellevue Veterans Home in Nebraska. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: From the National Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms Club, which you probably didn't know they had one, Legacy Run, check for $500; Children & Youth, $500; Emergency Fund, $500. For a total of $1,500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MN): Mr. Commander, from the 86,000 members of the great state of Minnesota, The American Legion Riders, we have a check for $51,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MA): The Department of Massachusetts Legion Riders, a check for $7,890. ... *National Commander Koutz resumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: American Legion Riders, what can we say? You know, I rolled all five days, all 1,500 miles with these guys and gals, and it was fantastic. The grand total for this year's Legacy Scholarship Fund Ride, $764,033.71. Thank you so very much! (*Cheers and applause)*

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 is a member of Royal Canadian Legion Elmira Branch 469 in Ontario. He served in the 2nd Battalion of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the Royal Canadian Legion Dominion President Gordon Moore. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Gordon Moore, Dominion President
The Royal Canadian Legion

Thank you for those kind words. Just before I start, I am a Pittsburgh fan, a Steelers fan, so I may change to Dallas now. The other thing is on Friday night I had the opportunity to attend the baseball game, and unfortunately the Houston Astros showed the Blue Jays how to play ball. Oh, well.

National Commander Koutz, honored guests, members of The American Legion, on behalf of the approximately 320,000 members of the Royal Canadian Legion and more than 1,400 branches located in Canada, the United States, Germany, the Netherlands, and most recently Lake Chapala, Mexico, I bring you greetings.

We also add a more personal note that our Dominion secretary, comrade Brad White, and his wife Therese as well as my wife Kathy are also pleased with the kind hospitality that you've extended to us during our stay so far. So I will be very careful about my remarks here today so we continue enjoying your generous hospitality.

For many of us here today looking back, we see that the 20th century represented a particular hard set of challenges to our basic freedoms, the rule of democracy, and the basic rights to name a few. Back then we fought largely against a clearly identifiable foe. Today the fight has taken on a whole new dimension with terrorism. Despite these changes to warfare, our collective response to these threats has continued; so must our shared commitment to the welfare of our servicemen and women. Our men and women have a common history of answering the call when our nations were in need, and we have every right to expect our governments to answer a call in time of need as well.

For these reasons, our assistance is needed and fully warranted for those veterans in need of a standard of life and dignity which their service entitled them. Only then will we be assured that no veterans will be left behind or face the prospect of dying alone. It is a common history of serving shoulder to shoulder as well as our shared belief for the welfare of our veterans that have made our organizations the leading veterans organizations in our respective countries and gain so much attention and respect at home and abroad.

I have been a member of the Royal Canadian Legion since 1985, and I take considerable comfort in the knowledge that in this business of helping veterans both The American Legion and the Royal Canadian Legion will always see eye to eye on important issues such as promoting participation in the Legion for younger veterans and better health care for older veterans. To that end, I would like to cite some examples, bearing in mind that Canada, 1/10th the size of the United States, so the numbers I will use will multiply by 10, should have an idea in American terms the equivalent impact that we are having.

We both share a common interest in helping veterans who are experiencing financial hardships. You call it the Legion's Temporary Financial Assistance; we call it the Legion's Benevolent Funds. Last year we gave our veterans $13 million to help them and their families through our benevolent program. Last June we held a news conference to launch our own version of the Legion Riders program, and the plans are underway to help generate awareness about the Legion. It is a community engagement across the country, and it serves us to our serving and retired veterans, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police personnel, and their families.

Recently the Legion has also launched a national partnership with Wounded Warriors to help promote support services for Canada's veterans. This past January we embarked on a letter writing campaign impressing upon our government that must-needed changes were needed regarding funeral and burial services to our veterans. I did the press conference on January 30, and on February 12 I received a phone call from the prime minister's office asking to meet with me at any time of the day, any day of the week, Saturday, Sunday, so staff would meet with me. So obviously the prime minister of Canada, his Honorable Stephen Harper, got sick and tired of the email and letters coming to him. God bless him.

It is estimated that more than 100,000 both electronic and hard copies were sent, and the federal government listened to us. In fact, in their most recent budget, the Royal Canadian Legion was listed by name as the agency the federal government would be working with to ensure our veterans who suffered from financial hardship need not worry that they would die alone and without a proper burial. We're also pleased to report that we raised more than $13 million for our veterans during our three-week Poppy Campaign in 2012, with more than 40,000 Canadians attending the Remembrance Day Ceremony at the National War Memorial.

Comrades, these are just a few examples of the common history of advocating on behalf of the interest of the veterans and belief. I have done so in effort to impress on the delegates here today the important work we do and the positive impact we have on the lives of our veterans. In doing so, I hope to have renewed our shared belief in the ability of respective organizations so that we can relieve hardships and suffering facing our veterans.

I also hope I'll be sharing a few examples of our common belief and efforts towards serving our veterans that we value close relationships with The American Legion. It is also hoped by doing so that any member of the Royal Canadian Legion in the United States would enjoy the same kind of generous hospitality that we enjoy today. Likewise, I want to ensure everyone here that any member of The American Legion in Canada would enjoy the same entitlement and respect as a member of our Legion. Thank you and God bless you all. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada Association, or ANAVETS, is Canada's oldest veterans and community service organization. There is one unit in the USA 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. He is a recipient of the Governor General's Medal for 43 years of exemplary service to his community as a firefighter. Legionnaires, please join me in welcoming George Beaulieu, the Dominion president of the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada. *(Applause)*

Greetings: George Beaulieu, Dominion President
Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada

National Commander Koutz, special guests, comrades all, good morning. It gives me great pleasure to be with you this morning, to bring greetings from all your comrades from the Army, Navy, and Air Force Veterans in Canada.

We were blessed to have our National Commander Koutz attend our National Convention last September in Winnipeg, Manitoba, where I was elected as Dominion president. It is always a pleasure to host Past National Commanders Jake Comer and Dan Ludwig who consistently attend and make our conventions memorable.

2013 marks an important milestone in our nation's shared history. The first special service force, the joint American-Canadian commando unit from World War II, marks the 70th anniversary of their operation in Italy. The legacy of the Devil's Brigade and their operational success leading to the capture of Rome, marking the beginnings of a special operations unit of today. I would just like to say one of our family from Quebec was a very good friend of ours and was in that unit, and he did share some stories. The Green Berets, the Delta Force and the Navy SEALs in America and Canada's Joint Task Force 2 share a common history with the Devil's Brigade, and our special operations units have continued to serve together in coordinated operations in Afghanistan and around the globe.

This year we also celebrate the 60th anniversary of the end of the Korean War. The Korean War was the first real test for the United Nations in collective security. Both Canada and United States invested blood and treasure to ensure success in this far-off land. The Battle of Kapyong reminds us that together in the face of overwhelming odds the fight for peace and freedom cannot break the ties that bind us.

It is fitting, then, that this year also marks the 60th anniversary of the charter of our United States unit, ANAVICUS. This charter cemented a friendship between our two organizations which share a commitment to honor and protect past and present veterans who fight for our freedoms, common ideals, and respective countries, shoulder to shoulder.

In Canada we are advocating alongside our comrades at the Royal Canadian Legion for better services and benefits for our soldiers who are facing rehabilitation and transition to civilian lives after service. Many of these men and women are facing invisible foes that come in the form of flashbacks, night terrors, anxiety, addiction issues, and other symptoms of occupational stress injuries and post-traumatic stress disorders. We need to continue to press the government to provide all of the necessary resources and benefits so that they may concentrate on their treatment plan without worrying about how they are going to financially support themselves and their families.

We must also recognize the impact of our veterans' injuries on their spouses and families and ensure that we improve the support systems that our sailors, soldiers, airmen and women rely on most. Many spouses struggle with the tremendous amount of increased responsibility assumed when a spouse is injured. Caregiver burnout, social isolation, and in some cases secondary post-traumatic stress will affect the entire family, and we need to ensure that these caregivers have the necessary services and benefits to make it available to them and their families. Our government needs to commit resources to research new and innovative treatments and to quickly adopt learning best practices, whether they are from our own research or that of allied countries who are achieving success in fields of rehabilitation, both physical and psychological.

Programs and services need to be flexible and adaptable to adjust to the special needs of each veteran and to the changes in their requirements at each stage of life. It is our duty to ensure that, no matter where our veterans and their families are in their lives, our government upholds the social covenant to ensure the injured and their dependents are cared for by the grateful nation for which they offered to lay down their lives to protect. Again, I thank you for having me here with you this week and for all of the wonderful hospitality. Thank you. God bless. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The Royal British Legion is the United Kingdom's leading service charity. They provide practical care, advice and support to current U.K. military members, veterans and their families. Its leader attended the Duke of York's Military School in Dover and served in the British Army for nearly 25 years.

Please welcome the national chairman of the Royal British Legion, John Crisford. *(Applause)*

Greetings: John Crisford
National Chairman, The Royal British Legion

Good morning. Mr. National Commander, honored guests, fellow Legionnaires, I bring you warm greetings from our president, Vice Admiral Peter Wilkinson, Royal Navy, and from all members of the Royal British Legion. We also send our grateful thanks for the wonderful summer that you've sent across the pond this year. It is the best one we've had for 18 years. So thank you and please keep it up.

The Royal British Legion helps serving members of our Armed Forces, ex-servicemen and women, our veterans, their families and their dependents all year round. Welfare is at the heart of everything we do. We work with all political parties, campaigning to improve the lives of all service personnel past, present, and future. We are one of the U.K.'s largest membership organizations. We have over 300,000 members and another 700,000 people who actively show their support for the work that we do.

We are recognized in the United Kingdom as the guardians of remembrance, and we safeguard the memory of those who have given their lives for our freedom. Through remembrance, education, and many events held around the country, we organized the annual Poppy Appeal, remembering those who have made the ultimate sacrifice and raising money to help those in need today. Last year we collected £40 million, a lot of it during the three-week period in November. *(Applause)*

Currently we're three years into our five-year Change Program. This will see the Legion helping more people, not just spending money on a new refrigerator here or a reclining chair there but by signposting veterans to other services which are available to them, by helping them to manage their money better and by offering widows and spouses a legal shoulder to lean on when they are going through the traumatic grieving processes that ensue following a death or following life-changing injuries sustained in battle zones like Afghanistan and Iraq or post-traumatic stress disorder sustained in the Falklands and from the Balkan campaigns. We're also giving kids the chance to go on holiday with their parents at one of their seaside break centers following extended separation in Afghanistan.

Before I go, I want to share something with you about the town of Hunstanton in Norfolk where I live. Yes, I know there is a Norfolk in Virginia. When I sit at home looking out of the window of my house, I look across the 22-mile estuary, which is known as the Wash, and can see the tower church, St. Botolph's Church in Boston. That's Boston in Lincolnshire, not the one in Massachusetts.

Now, I want to tell you about a 22-year-old United States airman who rescued 27 people from their wrecked homes in Hunstanton after raging seawater reached the town's sea defenses 60 years ago this year. His name was Reis Leming. And despite not being able to swim, he battled through high tides that had hit the wooden fabricated homes on the beach road. And when the flood struck, many of those trapped were U.S. service families living off base in our town. Thirty-one people did not survive, including 16 Americans. Speaking in 2003, Mr. Leming said, "Scared? I was frightened to death. It was bitterly cold and there came a time when I realized that I, too, was probably not going to survive. Everything was out of control and I wondered at times, What the hell am I doing here?"

Totally exhausted after hours of battling the raging torrents during the night and with his survival suit torn and filled with water, Mr. Leming eventually collapsed, suffering from severe hypothermia. Nine days later Mr. Leming was awarded the George Medal. He was one of the quickest-ever recipients of the award and it was made before he headed home to the United States. The George Medal was instituted on the 24th of September, 1940, by King George VI, the father of our beloved Queen Elizabeth. And the

medal is awarded to persons performing acts of bravery in or meriting recognition by the United Kingdom.

A new Reis Leming street sign was unveiled by his widow, Kathy, supported by her children last year. Reis was going to come to Hunstanton to do the honor himself, but alas he passed away just a few days before he was due to fly in from Oregon. Michael, his son, was wearing his father's flying jacket, said, "The outpouring of love and respect is tremendous. It's quite an honor to be here." Kathy said, "It is just amazing to me that this community values him in the way that they do. This is the normal man that I've lived with for 40 years. I have come here, and I see his name everywhere. I'm just so proud."

Today we think of many men and women coming home from Afghanistan, and their wives and their loved ones, moms and dads, are just so proud of their husbands and wives, sons and daughters coming home in one piece. But we're equally proud of those who remain for life and those who pay the supreme sacrifice.

The Royal British Legion has been on active service for 92 years now, and it looks like we're going to be on active service for another 90 years, caring for those who are returning from today's war zones. Be sure of one thing: We will be there for them. We will always remember them. Thank you for listening to me, and thank you for Reis Leming. *(Applause)*

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

Greetings: Hans Song, Deputy Secretary General
Veterans Affairs Commission, Republic of China

Thank you, commander, for your very detailed introduction about Veterans Affairs in Taiwan. I'm Hans Song, deputy secretary general, bringing you greetings on behalf of the VA and all the 1.3 million veterans and their dependents plus the minister whose capacity and position is equivalent to Secretary Shinseki, the VA head, in Taiwan.

Just like what the national commander introduced, it was some almost 60 years ago, 1953, we invited the advisers from The American Legion to help us establish our veterans service system. And one year later, in 1954, November 1, we formally established our system, and we call that Veterans Affairs Commission. Based upon the blueprint of the U.S. VA service system, we found our construction and found our structure for services. We provide the home care for those who do not have families to look after them everywhere in Taiwan, which is a very small place. Every city and every county we set up one veterans home. And we also provide medical care around those cities and counties. Nearby the veterans homes, we set up hospitals. In these hospitals we provide free medical care for our veterans and discounted charge for their dependents.

In addition to those, for the younger retirees, we provide educational assistance in which we provide our scholarship and educational subsidies. Also we provide training and job opportunities. So just like the United States, but there's a slight difference because the national background is different in Taiwan than from the United States, so the difference is natural. All in all, I'm here to bring our appreciation and respect to the assistance and support The American Legion has rendered us in the past 50-some years.

I just mentioned almost 60 years ago we had the assistance from your advisers from your very esteemed organization, and just almost ten days ago on August 18 I took my

new colleagues to donate a memorial stone to the Punchbowl National Cemetery, in which that's the very first one representing the Republic of China on Taiwan, to show our respect of the fallen heroes of the United States veterans and military. *(Applause)* So that represents the interaction and cooperation between our two countries and our two organizations has been on every year, and there will be more years to come.

This morning I'm here to bring you information about how we are working and serving the veterans by the instruction of our president who took office in 2008. And the two themes or the pillars of his policy is, number one, to improve the situation or the relationship with the United States. And number two is improve the relationship with Mainland China. Many of you may be aware that before that year, or even before 1949, Taiwan and Mainland China, everybody else except me call China. I call that Communist China. But it's a very different place now. Because before that year, before 1949, or even before 2008, we call them enemies, and now we are working together. We invite all their visitors to come to Taiwan, and we send our businessmen to make money there. This doesn't mean that we are in peace totally. We are working that way, and this is very highly encouraged by the American government, which we appreciate very much.

So this morning I'm here to pledge our loyalty and our fidelity to the friendship that we have between us in the past so many years. I also want to urge that The American Legion, just like past so many years, you pass resolutions. I just was informed that you did again this year. Two days ago you passed resolutions in support of the Republic of China by urging your federal administration to continue to provide defensive weapons for us to defend Taiwan. Because we firmly believe in one Chinese version; that even if the world may be at peace, but if we are not prepared, we are inviting danger. Nobody wants that. We don't want to wage war, but we want to be self-defense equipped enough.

So thank you very much for allowing me, and thank you very much for supporting us in the past. We look forward to your continuous support in the future. Thank you.

Also, before I leave the podium, I want to represent my government to present a medal to your national commander for his efforts in the past years in promoting the cooperation between our two countries and our two organizations. Here I will read the citation. Citation, the certificate accompanying the award of the Order of Resplendent Banner with Cravat. Mr. James Koutz, National Commander of The American Legion, has distinguished himself by his outstanding contribution to the promotion of friendly relations and cooperation between the United States of America and the Republic of China in Taiwan. In appreciation of his meritorious assistance, National Commander James Koutz is presented the Medal of Order of Resplendent Banner with Cravat, numbered 3692, by the Government of the Republic of China in Taiwan in accordance with Article 11 of the Armed Forces Declaration Regulations.

Signed by President Ma Ying-jeou. He is the graduate from Harvard University. And premier, which is equivalent to the prime minister, Jiang Yi-huah. He is also a Ph.D. holder of the United States university. And the immediate past minister of national defense, who is the good friend of the national commander, Minister Kao Hua-chu. In Arizona, people remembered him by calling him Huachuca. *(Applause)*

See, there is a little problem. We speak Chinese in Taiwan, but when I come to America, I have to present the certificate in English first and the original version is in Chinese. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you very much, Hans.

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 Virginia Society since 1997. He was elected president general of the National Society of the Sons of the Revolution in July. Please welcome President General Joseph W. Dooley. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Joseph W. Dooley, President General
National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution

Commander Koutz, distinguished guests, Legionnaires, members of the Auxiliary, and fellow Sons of The American Legion, it is a distinct honor for me to address you here this morning. On behalf of the 31,000 members of the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, I bring you greetings. I believe previous presidents general of the Sons of the American Revolution who have addressed you were all Legionnaires. You will notice that I am wearing a pale blue cap. I suspect I am the first president general to address you who is a Son of The American Legion.

I am not eligible to join The American Legion. It is a luxury in our nation that there is no need or obligation for all of our citizens to serve in the military. I have had that luxury of not serving because of the sacrifice and dedication of men and women like you. I thank you all. And in honor of my father, a veteran of the Second World War, I have happily joined the Sons of The American Legion. I might add, I am a member of the Virginia Department Post 180, the same post that Dan Dellinger belongs to. *(Applause)*

All members of the Sons of the American Revolution are direct descendents of the heroes of the Revolution. Our ancestors were the first American veterans. I believe if they were here today, they would proudly be wearing the dark blue cap of The American Legion.

If I may borrow a phrase from Abraham Lincoln: "The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here today," but it can never forget, it must never forget what American patriots accomplished during the Revolution. But I suppose I'm preaching to the choir. You know what American patriots accomplished during the Revolution because you have dedicated your lives to preserve that same liberty for which those patriots fought, bled, and died 230 years ago.

The Sons of the American Revolution and The American Legion have much in common. We both hold in the highest regard the basic principles that form the foundation of our republic: Freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of peaceful assembly, and free and open elections. These civil liberties were not easy to achieve for the patriots of the American Revolution. They have not been easy to preserve for men and women like you and for all who have served in our nation's military since the beginning.

In the Sons of the American Revolution, we strive to let everyone know how important, how wonderful was the American Revolution and what a blessing it is to be a free people. In The American Legion, you also remind our nation that we are free and that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance.

Many members of the Sons of the American Revolution are also members of The American Legion. So if you have an American Revolutionary War patriot ancestor, let me encourage you to join us. The Sons of the American Revolution look forward to our continued partnership with The American Legion to protect the freedom that was earned by our forefathers and foremothers and to hand that heritage on to our children and grandchildren. We know that The American Legion stands with us in this quest.

Now it is my pleasure to make a special presentation to National Commander James Koutz. Commander Koutz, in recognition of your accomplishments as a patriotic leader in this nation, it is an honor and a pleasure to present to you the Sons of the American Revolution's Distinguished Patriot Award. This award is presented only once during the tenure of a president general. It is presented to an American citizen for outstanding service and patriotism to our country. Thank you, sir, for your leadership. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Our next guest served in the U.S. Navy from 1969 to 1974 and is a veteran of the Indiana National Guard. His decorations include the Vietnam Service Medal with three stars. In 1971 he joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 3281 in New Albany, Indiana, where he maintains a Gold Legacy Life Membership. He is also a member of The American Legion post Bonnie Sloan Post 28 in

New Albany, Indiana. He was elected to lead the VFW at its 114th National Convention last month in Kentucky. Ladies and gentlemen, I don't think it has ever been done before: Two national commanders from the same state, two national commanders from the same district, both of us from Indiana and the 8th District. Please welcome the national commander-in-chief for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Mr. Billy Thien. *(Applause)*

Greetings: William Thien
Commander-in-Chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars

Thank you so much, commander. I certainly appreciate that warm welcome. We bring you greetings from the Veterans of Foreign Wars United States, Kansas City office, and also the Washington, D.C., office.

Commander Jim, national officers and good American Legion members, he is right. There is a possibility back some time in history that maybe there was a commander-in-chief and a national commander from the same state, but I don't think from the same district. Let me say, I'm a 32-year proud member of Post 28, New Albany, Indiana.

I want to thank The American Legion for all you do for the veterans and troops, certainly for their families. You know, I get the magazine, and I enjoy getting it and reading it. I enjoy getting the monthly updates and I can see all the great things going on. And I can tell you this: That the success under the commander's leadership, and certainly with your participation of Operation Comfort Warriors, certainly a great program and certainly going to help all of our veterans.

Let me just say to the incoming commander: I pledge to you this year to give you support, and I look forward to working with you and The American Legion on all these important issues that confront our veterans and our families today and certainly our military. You know, when we stand together, the VFW and American Legion in particular, but all veteran service organizations, we can do much more. Combine just these two organizations, over 5 million members. Over 5 million members. Congress listens to 5 million members. We have to stay together. We have to stay together.

I'm very impressed by the list of speakers you have for your convention here. I'm proud of each and every one of you for what you do each and every day. I'm proud of you. It takes heart. You got heart. That's what makes you special and unique. Special and unique. Because you give of yourselves, your time, your money, your energy, to make life better for veterans and their families, certainly our active duty and reserve components. So God bless you. Keep up the great work. And thank you so much for allowing me to be here. Thank you.

And just a little token of our esteem for certainly the leadership the commander has brought to The American Legion, but this is really for everybody; your commander is just going to hold on to it for a while. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: 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 this morning is the president of NALPA, John Thompson of Nebraska. *(Applause)*

Greetings: John E. Thompson, President
National American Legion Press Association

Commander, Legionnaires, delegates, and distinguished guests, good morning. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the 95th National Convention of The

American Legion on behalf of the members of the National American Legion Press Association.

In 1922, National Adjutant Lemuel Bolles had a vision to create the National Press Association for The American Legion. This year, 2013, NALPA celebrates 90 years of facilitating communications of the aims, achievements, news, and events of The American Legion, and now all levels of The American Legion family. This is through newsletter publications, websites, and social media. And I might mention that social media is a new class that we have this year, and I would encourage anybody that has a web page or you do Twitter or anything else that you might consider entering in our competition.

The NALPA's mission is to promote The Legion's organizational goals by encouraging the exchange of ideas, promoting the development of local communications, and advancing professional development. We are comprised of editors, contributors, webmasters, site administrators, bloggers, public relations officers, historians, and supporters who encourage the exchange of ideas, share expertise, and promote communication, and annually we 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 programs and ideals of The American Legion to our members and also to our communities.

On behalf of our executive director, Mike Duggan, our newly elected president, Pat Rourk of New York, 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. We can also be found on the Internet and Facebook. Thank you very much for your attention. Have a great convention and safe trip home. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The American Legion played a vital role in the creation of the original GI Bill and the passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. As such, it is crucial that The American Legion work hand-in-hand with veterans on campus and organizations like the Student Veterans of America. Our next guest is a Marine Corps veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He left active duty in 2008 and earned a bachelor's degree at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Please welcome the executive director of the Student Veterans of America, Michael Dakduk. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Michael Dakduk, Executive Director
Student Veterans of America

Thank you. Thank you for being here today. I want to thank Commander Koutz and the other leadership here in The American Legion. I just saw some familiar faces, like Peter Gaytan who I work with in Washington, D.C., on a regular basis.

Student Veterans of America began a short six years ago, in 2008, when there was a movement for the new Post-9/11 GI Bill. Back then Student Veterans of America was organized on roughly 20 college campuses. Fast forward to today, we're on over 850 colleges and universities throughout the nation. *(Applause)*

The wonderful thing is, is we haven't grown or done so much great work alone. We've done it with the help of The American Legion, not just on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., fighting for improved benefits for military veterans and their families in higher education, but also at the community level. Just like you, we have our student veteran groups all throughout the nation and globally. You have thousands of posts. We have hundreds, and we'll likely be on a thousand by the end of this year.

We need your posts and our chapters to work together. Like the Pacific Palisades post, who I visited, and the work they're doing with Santa Monica College where we have a Student Veterans of America chapter. They donated over $80,000 to the student

veterans on that campus to support them with academic counseling and academic supports. That's just one example. There are many other examples of American Legion posts working with our SVA chapters. So we need to continue that effort, continue to work together. Because you all have been doing this for over a century, and we can learn from you.

So I want to thank you for all the support that you have provided student veterans from 1944 and the folks that have used the original GI Bill, those folks that are using the Post-9/11 GI Bill and other VA education benefits today. I look forward to a continued partnership with The American Legion for years to come. Thank you so much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Our next guest is a Vietnam War Navy veteran whose roots run about as deep as anyone's in The American Legion. He is a member of the Theodore Roosevelt American Legion Post in New York, and for a good reason. Theodore Roosevelt IV is a great grandson of the 26th President of the United States and grandson of Theodore Roosevelt Jr., both who are recipients of the Medal of Honor. Theodore Roosevelt Jr., is also known as the founder of The American Legion and the author of many of our organizational values. Theodore Roosevelt IV shares those values. Last year he was appointed to serve as chairman of The American Legion's 100th Anniversary Honorary Committee. An investment banker for Barclays of New York City, he has gladly given his time and limitless energy to The American Legion legacy as its first century draws to a close and to its vision as its second century begins. Please join me in welcoming Theodore Roosevelt IV. *(Applause)*

Address: Theodore Roosevelt, IV
Chairman, 100th Anniversary Observance Honorary Committee

Commander, thank you for those extremely generous words. Thank you, Legionnaires. Standing before you this morning, with considerable trepidation, I'm reminded of a great speech and a short speech I heard at a change-of-command ceremony at the Naval Amphibious Base in Coronado.

Most of you remember change-of-command ceremonies. They were interminable, and they always took place on the hottest day of summer. And if you were an officer, you had to scurry around and borrow a sword you might use once more in your career or go to the post and get another one. Well, this one unfolded as expected. The outgoing CEO, he talked for 43 minutes. We were wilted in the sun. The incoming CEO looked us over and said, "I despise cowards and detest bullshit." Turned around and sat down. *(Laughter)* We were delighted and let out a yell that could be heard across the bay.

Now, on the eve of our centennial, and I fear I will not be as brief as he was, it is appropriate to reflect on our origins. Ninety-five years ago a value proposition was struck between a group of World War I veterans and the nation under whose flag they'd fought. They were tired. Many were wounded. Some had been gassed. But they were devoted to each other and to the families of those who would not come home from the war or who would come home from it changed. They decided to form a grassroots organization, veterans serving veterans, veterans serving communities, veterans serving young people, veterans serving America. That was their vision. It was ambitious. It was optimistic.

The Legion's founders believed that the key to success for this new veterans organization was equality. You checked your rank at the door. If you took the oath of enlistment during wartime and served honorably, you were eligible for membership in The American Legion, regardless of where you served, your gender, or race. Your socioeconomic or political standing were irrelevant. What was relevant to The American Legion then remains so today. It is the value of service above self.

You should be proud and hold your heads high that the formative principles of The American Legion, the welfare of veterans, families, young people, our military and pride

in the country, have endured. Those principles endured through multiple wars, multiple generations, and ten decades of global change. Their vision has produced a legacy. Through a pure grassroots democracy, veterans and members of The American Legion family have forged some of the most profound changes our nation has ever known.

The American Legion spent its first decade lifting up those who have served our nation and delivered them a good agency, the Veterans Administration, and today is working hard to make it better. VA healthcare and benefits earned by those who served in uniform and by families who sacrificed along with them were the product of a value system that could come from no other body than The American Legion. That mission has continued as our troops came home, or did not, from World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, Panama, Granada, Lebanon, Desert Storm, and the Global War on Terrorism.

The grassroots democracy of The American Legion has provided opportunities for scores of young people, as you saw earlier this morning, from baseball players to Boy Scouts to children afflicted with disease or haunted by abuse, through programs that are now woven into the fabric of our nation: Boys State, American Legion Baseball, the Child Welfare Foundation, the Legacy Scholarship.

The grassroots democracy of The American Legion has been a voice of support for our Armed Forces on Capitol Hill and in the backroom of posts where for decades care packages have been filled and sent to the men and women serving at distant duty stations. In times of national disaster, hurricanes, wildfires, tornados, and a recent super storm, The American Legion has stepped up with hearts and hands to help those in need. The American Legion has succeeded for nearly a century because it is based on a philosophy of individuals leading themselves and others, working hard to do what's right in service for our country.

As the 100th Anniversary Committee has looked back on The Legion's history, a remarkable fact came to light. In the very first year of its existence, The American Legion chartered no fewer than 5,400 local posts nationwide, and beyond that are still operating today. I do not know where that ranks among the most successful franchises in American history, but I have to believe few can match it.

The 100th Anniversary Committee, led by Past National Commanders Bob Spanogle, Dave Rehbein, and Paul Morin along with about two dozen Legionnaires who have distinguished themselves by putting service above self, has formulated plans to celebrate the coming milestone according to one important mantra: Everything The American Legion is and does starts at the local post. Individuals leading themselves and working hard to do what's right for the country.

It was a local post that started Boys State. It was a local post that produced American Legion Baseball. It was a network of local posts nationwide that provided the evidence necessary to connect Agent Orange exposure to adverse health and disease linked to service in Vietnam. It was a local post that started The American Legion Riders, which has conducted innumerable acts of support for veterans and families following 9/11. That is why the national committee has focused its anniversary plans on achievements and continuing work of the Legion's nearly 14,000 posts.

A new interactive website in development and on display at this convention offers the platform for those local posts to gather, document, and share their legacies of service in words, photos, and videos. A paper-based workbook will also be available so that all can share their stories regardless of Internet availability or computer expertise. This is not a scrapbook experience. It is a model for other volunteer service organizations to follow. This collection of American Legion post accomplishments will serve as the world's largest repository of great ideas and good deeds that have made our nation a better place.

In addition to the national centennial website and other media developments coming soon, the 100th Anniversary Committee is working on a documentary film that addresses just one accomplishment in the Legion's legacy, albeit an important one, the GI Bill of Rights, originally known as the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944. Handwritten by Harry Colmery of Kansas and written into legislation by Warren Atherton of California,

both World War I veterans and past national commanders of The American Legion, the GI Bill is often credited, rightfully so, for fueling a half century of prosperity in our nation.

The original drafters of the bill, as well as the pen F.D.R. used to sign it, are treasured artifacts of The Legion's first century housed at National Headquarters in Indianapolis. The GI Bill is not just a footnote in history for The American Legion. The Legion is as involved today with the 21st century GI Bill as it was when a small group of members made their way to a cabin in Georgia to fly a congressman back to Washington in the night to cast the deciding vote that would bring the original GI Bill out of committee.

The American Legion has steadfastly advocated for better and more effective GI bills through the century and was integral to the creation and passage of the Post-9/11 version, passed in 2008, which is successfully helping thousands of young veterans and their families today. The GI Bill story is more than a legislative accomplishment. It is a parable that illustrates the American Legion's vision. It is a story that spans nearly a century, from the World War I Legionnaires who brought it into existence to the Iraq-Afghanistan generation using it today. Now I'd like to show you a trailer of that film in production. ... *At this time the delegates viewed a video. (Applause)*

That's poignant and powerful history, and you should be proud of it. Among those interviewed for the film trailer you just saw, former Indiana governor and current Purdue University President Mitch Daniels, an American Legion Boys State and Boys Nation alum who speaks about the GI Bill's influence, not only for veterans but for our nation as a whole. Featured in the film are a number of Americans who benefited from the GI Bill along with a Vietnam War veteran and Legion member, former U.S. Senator Jim Webb of Virginia, architect of the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Former Governor Mitch Daniels is one among many prominent Americans who agreed to join the American Legion's 100th Anniversary Honorary Committee. The full committee is still coming together, but I'm pleased to report that commitments have already been made from a number of distinguished Americans including an Olympic Gold medalist, a Medal of Honor recipient, a former network television anchorman, and a prominent four-star general. The common thread among all Honorary Committee candidates is that at some point in their lives The American Legion, typically a local post, made differences for them. We will ask these prominent Americans to lend their voice and prestige and wisdom to the celebration as The Legion considers the future for its legacy, a vision for the second century.

In the coming four years, as the war winds down, nearly one and a half million men and women of the U.S. Armed Services will separate from the military. They return to civilian life with multiple needs and interests, just as the Doughboys did at the end of World War I. Like those that came home before them, these post-9/11 veterans are turning to The American Legion. They are learning that The Legion can provide help and understanding like no one else.

Recently, I met with a young veteran who started a nationwide nonprofit program to coordinate high-intensity physical fitness activities: long distance runs, bicycle rides, swimming events, and other outdoor experiences for those who served in the recent war zones. It's called Team Red, White & Blue, and it has already begun making connections with local American Legion posts.

The purpose of the group, and its growing membership of nearly 20,000 veterans, is to help the new generation make the transition from combat life to civilian life by helping them establish roots and connectivity in their new communities. This young veteran told me that Team Red, White & Blue honors and respects The American Legion and looks forward to opportunities for connection with the nation's largest veterans organization. There are other such groups of post-9/11 veterans who are turning to The Legion for guidance, encouragement, and welcome. I am utterly convinced that much can be gained through such collaborations.

The young veterans who are starting American Legion posts on college campuses, using their GI Bill benefits right now, are of the same spirit. They have many options but are finding concrete support from The American Legion and all that it stands for.

With the centennial website I mentioned earlier, there is a place for local posts to share their initiatives and ideas to better serve the 21st century veteran and his or her family. This is the vision portion of the anniversary committee's work. It will ask the question: What will your 200th anniversary legacy be?

If you've not seen the website or talked with national staff about its futures and other opportunities to tell your centennial story, past, present and future, please, please visit the booth outside the convention hall this week to learn more. The vision you have for The American Legion today executed by members working through their local post will build a legacy future generation that we'll celebrate in 2118 and 2119.

Thank you. Thank you for keeping the vision of my grandfather and his fellow veterans alive and flourishing over the past 96 years. It is an honor to serve as chairman of your 100th Anniversary Honorary Committee. May God bless you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: I now call on National Adjutant Daniel S. Wheeler of the Department of Virginia to issue the Call For Convention.

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

By the authority of the National Executive Committee, the 95th Annual National Convention of The American Legion is hereby called to meet in Houston, Texas, August 27-29, 2013. The convention business sessions will be held in the George R. Brown Convention Center, Hall A, first level.

Purpose

The Annual National Convention is the 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 By-laws, and for the transaction of such other business as may be brought before it.

On Thursday, August 29, at 12:00 o'clock noon of the final session or at the conclusion of all other business of the National Convention, whichever first occurs, officers for the ensuing year will be elected, these being the National Commander and five National Vice Commanders, in that sequence.

Representation

Representation in the Convention shall be by department and in accordance with the provisions of the national constitution Section 3, Article V:

"…each department shall be entitled to five delegates and one additional delegate for each 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, (July 29, 2013), and whose registration fees as fixed by the National Executive Committee for its total authorized delegate strength have been paid, and to one alternate for each delegate."

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

Delegates to the National Convention shall be accredited in writing to the National Adjutant in the number and manner prescribed by Article V, 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/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

Committee: Americanism, one delegate; Children & Youth, one delegate; Constitutional Amendments, one delegate; Credentials and Internal Affairs, Credentials and Other Internal Matters, one delegate; Membership, one delegate; Economic, Employment & 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 & Civil Preparedness, one delegate; Law & Order, one delegate; Marine, one delegate; Military, one delegate; Naval, one delegate; Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, Claims & Ratings, one delegate; Hospital and Medical Services, one delegate.

Signed James E. Koutz, National Commander; attest Daniel S. Wheeler, National Adjutant.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you very much, Mr. Adjutant. I now declare the 95th Annual National Convention of The American Legion to be regularly convened.

National Commander's Report to Convention
James E. Koutz, Indiana, National Commander

Houston, we have a problem. But the problem isn't centered here in our nation's fourth largest city. It's a lack of leadership coming from our elected officials, those that we, the American people, sent to Washington, D.C., to represent us. They are failing our troops, they are failing veterans, and they are failing the American people. The fault is bipartisan, and blame lies both within Congress and Executive Branch.

On June 6, I had the honor of representing all veterans of the United States at ceremonies commemorating the 69th anniversary of the D-Day invasion at Normandy. Unfortunately, I felt rather lonely while receiving the gratitude of the French people. Because of budget cuts, there were no U.S. military units there. No flyovers. Not even a small honor guard to carry our flag at St. Mere Eglise. Not only was this disrespectful to the 9,387 Americans who were laid to rest at the Normandy American Cemetery, but it

also sends a message to the world that the U.S. government and, most importantly, our military are closed for business.

The American Legion has been warning for years now about the adverse impact sequestration and draconian defense cuts would have on our nation's ability to remain strong. A previous secretary of defense even labeled sequestration a "crazy doomsday scenario." Surely our national leaders would never allow such a thing to happen, people reasoned, when they included this triggering mechanism into law as an incentive for the government to find other ways to balance the budget.

Well, the incentive didn't work and our military is suffering. But The American Legion believes in other incentives, benefits and quality-of-life programs that are designed to keep good men and women in the military as opposed to chasing them out.

During World War II, our Legion predecessors were told by many in Washington that the GI Bill was unaffordable and would break the Treasury. We heard similar arguments against the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Yet time doesn't allow me to even list the magnitudes of CEOs, senators, doctors, and ordinary Americans who told us they owe their success to the education and other benefits obtained by what has been called the greatest legislation ever passed by Congress.

Keeping a strong VA health care system, protecting TRICARE and paying fair military pensions are not golden handouts designed to make anyone rich. They are reasonable benefits that are earned through years of service and sacrifice. These are incentives that I call "The Anti-Sequestration," intended to encourage young men and women to defend America and keep America strong. Anyone who believes that these benefits are too generous is certainly welcome to visit their local military recruiter and sign the dotted line. *(Applause)* A career in the military might change their way of thinking, unless, of course, they have already let that opportunity pass by and are trying to increase the burden on those who served in their place.

Getting back to the Normandy commemoration, one reason why I take the slight by our military so seriously is because in the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion we promise to "preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars."

I served in Vietnam as a soldier and later returned there as your national commander. I vowed never to forget my friends and fellow veterans who never made it home. That's why I took great offense last spring when a network reality show disrespected the legacy of what we did there. To the show's credit, they did issue an on-air apology the following week, but it did show the power and the influence of The American Legion.

The American Legion is trying to make life better for veterans and their families. Through programs like Operation Comfort Warriors, the Family Support Network, Temporary Financial Assistance, the National Emergency Fund, the Legacy Scholarship Fund, and our partnership with Soldier's Wish, we are having a real impact on thousands who have served and sacrificed for our great nation.

I am also proud of the people in this room and members of The American Legion family from around the world. When I became national commander, I asked you to donate $500,000 to Operation Comfort Warriors during my year in office. Your generosity surpassed even my expectations, and during the spring NEC meeting, I increased the goal to $750,000. We passed the original $500,000, and in a few moments when I receive more presentations, I believe that there is a good chance that we will pass the $750,000 goal. *(Applause)* We plan to announce the final fundraising figures sometime tomorrow after everything has been tabulated.

One of my most enjoyable tasks as national commander has been delivering gifts like recreational equipment, electronics and gift cards to various wounded warrior units. One of the many things that sets our program apart from others is that we always ask the units to provide a wish list so we can get them what they truly need and want. It's just a small token of appreciation to those who have already sacrificed so much on our behalf.

Our gratitude to the newest generation of veterans is one reason that The American Legion sponsors veterans' job fairs around the country. We understand and appreciate the skills and training required to succeed in the military. Not only is this a service to the veteran seeking a job, but it is a huge benefit to the employers that need good, dedicated and smart workers.

We show our gratitude to veterans through the outstanding work conducted by our 2,600 accredited service officers across the country. The disability claims backlog is still unacceptably high, but recent indications are that it is finally going in the right direction and substantial progress is being made.

Most veterans will tell you that by helping their families, you are helping the veteran. Nobody understands this more than The American Legion Riders, who have had tremendous growth and success since they were founded 20 years ago. Between 2006 and 2012, they have raised more than $3.5 million in scholarship money as part of the Legacy Run. And as you saw during this morning's presentation, the 2013 Legacy Run was another outstanding success. *(Applause)*

One thing I noticed during the Legacy Run was the sea of motorcycles displaying small American flags. They were riding with Old Glory because they are proud of Old Glory. They know that is the symbol of the greatest country on earth and it is the flag that our veterans fought under. Once again it is time to remind Congress that desecrating the flag is simply wrong, and The American Legion wholeheartedly supports a flag protection amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Please call on your congressional delegation to support House Joint Resolution 47 and Senate Joint Resolution 17 so we can give Old Glory the respect and protection that she deserves. *(Applause)*

The American Legion has always believed in service first. But the only reason that we are able to operate such outstanding programs and influence public policy is through membership. It takes a strong membership pool to operate American Legion Baseball, which just broke another record by hosting a paid attendance, in Shelby, North Carolina, of 104,726 spectators during its five-day World Series. *(Applause)*

In 2019 The American Legion will celebrate its 100th birthday. What better way to mark The American Legion centennial than with an all-time high in membership. It is an ambitious goal and it won't happen if we don't bust our tails recruiting and retaining members. While it's true that many members of the World War II generation are joining Post Everlasting, our eligibility window for the War on Terrorism extends back to the beginning of the Gulf War, August 2, 1990. That's 23 years and counting. Countless Reserve and Guard units have been activated during that period. We are in the middle of the longest membership eligibility period in the entire history of The American Legion. The eligible veterans are out there; we just need to sign them up.

We have a solid five-year membership plan developed to help us accomplish our goals. It includes strategies such as creating brand awareness, communication, training, leadership development, post development, revitalization, recruiting and retention. Visit legion.org and call our Membership division if you need more information about practicing these strategies. Most importantly, get out and ask people to join. If you ask for a reason to join, tell them that you're inviting them to a holiday party. The holiday is Veterans Day. And as I've been saying all year, every day is Veterans Day! Thank you all so very much and God bless. *(Applause)*

I will now be accepting Operation Comfort Warrior donations on the stage. Those presenting checks will please proceed to the microphone, announce the amount and donor, and go to the front on the floor for a photograph. I now ask National Vice Commander John Neylon to assume the duties at the lectern.

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

Operation Comfort Warriors Donations

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NJ): Thank you, commander. The American Legion would like to make a special presentation for Comfort Warriors. It shows a combination between what departments can do when you work together. This is on behalf of a veteran that was severely injured and Michigan and New Jersey stepped forward. So with that we'd like to thank the commander for the opportunity to have this privilege. We'd like to introduce our state commander, Tom Brown, and for the presentation. Thank you.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER BROWN (MI): Thank you, commander. In July last year a young nurse in New Jersey, Dana Phelps, was working at Walter Reed. She met this courageous young man, and she felt like she had to do something for him. She went to her post, Post 390, in New Jersey, and they raffled off a motorcycle and raised $15,000 for young Travis Mills from Vassar, Michigan. And we wanted to show our appreciation to both the post and to the Department of New Jersey. At this time, we want to present these plaques to New Jersey's state commander, Eugene O'Grady. Also, commander, I'd like to notify you that we raised $11,000 for Comfort Warriors in the state of Michigan.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NY): Mr. Commander, the delegation from the great Department of New York would like to donate $1,400 for Operation Comfort Warriors.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NY): Mr. Commander, on behalf of Peekskill American Legion Post 274 located in Westchester County, from the great Department of New York, we'd like to present this check in the amount of $4,600.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Commander from the National Association of Department Service Officers, helping the American veterans from the past and the present, and we will be there for the future, $500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Mr. Commander, I have two checks to present, first from FODPAL, Foreign and Outlying Departments of American Legion, a check for $250; second, I have a check from the Department of France, a check for $353 to Operation Comfort Warriors. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (TX): During one of our department training sessions, I auctioned off an American flag, and we raised $150 for that flag during the department training session in Killeen, Texas. And I also have a second donation from American Legion Post 305, the Woodlands, Texas, $100.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (TX): On behalf of Missing Man Post 667, Universal City, Texas, $50.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (DE): In addition to all the checks that you received during your recent visit to Delaware, C.K.R.T. Post No. 7 in Harrington, Delaware, would like to present you with a check for $2,500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ND): The American Legion Department of North Dakota is proud to have raised $5,600 for Operation Comfort Warriors.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WI): Thank you, Department of Wisconsin, for your contribution of $4,247.15.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WA): The great state of Washington has already turned in over $7,500, and, commander, we have another check of $8,558 donations.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MO): From the Show-Me state of Missouri, we added to what we've already given this year $26,572.02 plus two off-track wheelchairs that are capable of going anywhere in the woods with guns and fishing equipment and everything else where they can go out and go by themselves.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MO): In addition, commander, from the Past Post Commander's Club Department of Missouri, $2,523.59.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AZ): The great state of Arizona has already sent in most of their contributions, but from my post, Fountain Hills, Arizona, I have a check for

$1,270. And, Commander Koutz, I hope that $2 I found on the floor backstage puts you over the hump.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (CT): Commander, from the great state of Connecticut, we may be small, but we give you a check today for $2,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): Department of Ohio Charities, Inc., donates another $10,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): Commander, from the Department of Ohio, we ran a special project. We started out that we want to get $10,000, but the DEC said I didn't ask for enough money, so I'm here to present you a check on behalf of the Buckeye State for $15,607.70.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): Commander, from American Legion Post 382 in Bluffton, Ohio, $1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ID): Commander, on behalf of the Department of Idaho, we donate $893.77.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ID): Commander, on behalf of the first Western Regional Romp sponsored by Pocatello Post 4 and Blackfoot Post 23 in Idaho, we have a check for $1,500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IN) : Mr. Commander, on behalf of American Legion Post 6 at Kokomo, Indiana, I'm proud to present a check for $1,370 to Operation Comfort Warriors.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IN): Commander, on behalf of The American Legion Kenneth N. Dowden Wayne Post 64, we have $15,000 for you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IN): Commander, from your post, Boonville American Legion Post 200, we have a check for $1,500. And then from the 8th District, your district, Department of Indiana, we have another $1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IN): Mr. Commander, from The American Legion Post 147 of Jasper, Indiana, $1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WY): Mr. Commander, the Department of Wyoming is honored to support Operation Comfort Warriors, your project, with a check for $8,500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (PA): Commander Koutz, on behalf of the great Department of Pennsylvania, home of Past National Commanders Ron Conley and Dominic DiFrancesco, it gives me great pleasure to present a check for Operation Comfort Warriors, for $47,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MI): Commander, on behalf of the Pinckney Memorial Post 419, Department of Michigan, we are proud to present to Operation Comfort Warriors, as much as theirs, not quite, but $750. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IN): Commander, on behalf of Elberfeld Post 351 in the great state of Indiana, where you love to come over and watch IU ballgames on Saturday afternoon, we'd like to donate to Operation Comfort Warriors $1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MN): Commander, from the great state of Minnesota, we'd like to add to our pile $1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (SD): Pierpont Post 99, South Dakota, $500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MS): Commander, from the great state of Mississippi, we'd like to present a check for $3,200.

DELEGATE SILVESTRI (MA): Steve Silvestri, Department of Massachusetts, a check for $5,757.13, bringing the Massachusetts total to $16,875. America strong.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HOLLAND (SC): Mr. Commander, James Holland, national vice commander from the great state of South Carolina. Last month I went for a little walk along Coastal Highway 17 and 21 in South Carolina, the cities of Myrtle Beach, Georgetown, Murrells Inlet, Charleston, Beaufort, and Bluffton, and I have total of $2,500 in checks. *(Applause)*

... National Commander Koutz resumed the Chair.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The American Legion is fortunate to do business with many outstanding corporations. Whether it's supporting our organization through membership dues or purchases through Emblem Sales, we understand that the revenue that you provide us needs to be responsibly safeguarded. We insist that our associates provide us with excellent value and accountability. One such corporation that I am proud to associate with is Fifth Third Bank. The $111 billion diversified financial services company operates 15 affiliates with 1,232 full-service banks mostly in the Midwest and Southeastern United States. With us today is the senior vice president and sales manager of Fifth Third Bank from Indianapolis, Indiana, Nancy Martin. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Nancy Martin
Senior Vice President and Sales Manager, Fifth Third Bank

Good afternoon. I bring greetings from the crossroads of America and Indianapolis, Indiana, where I have the pleasure of both living and working. I'm truly humbled to be here today, and I want to thank each and every one of you for your debt of service to our country.

I work with a team of partners who are incredibly lucky to work with your national treasurer, George Buskirk, and his staff under the leadership and direction of Dan Wheeler, your national adjutant, at the national office in Indianapolis Indiana. As longstanding partners with The American Legion, we are happy to further our partnership by providing financial assistance to your initiatives.

In 2012 we donated $10,000 to Operation Comfort Warriors, an incredible program helping vets. Additionally, in honor of Veterans Day last year, we launched a program called Honoring Our Vets, where we raised both awareness and dollars to benefit Operation Comfort Warriors. I'm pleased to tell you that in a three-week period through donations from both our associates and our customers we raised $4,400. The bank matched those donations, for a total of $8,800, all for Operation Comfort Warriors.

Because that program was met with such great success in our community, we're expanding the Honoring Our Vets program this year to create more awareness and to raise more money for Operation Comfort Warriors. Today, I'm pleased to be here to make our 2013 donation of $10,000 to Operation Comfort Warriors.

On behalf of all the employees of Fifth Third Bank, I want to thank you for your partnership. And, most of all, I want to thank you for your service to our country. Good afternoon. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: For the purpose of introducing our next guest, I now call on Mark Ochsenbein of Tennessee.

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

DELEGATE OCHSENBEIN (TN): Thanks, commander. Before I introduce our next speaker, I would like to give a quick shout-out to the Department of Tennessee who was number one in membership. Congratulations to Past Department Commander Mike Hammer, Dean Tuttle, George Harper, and Carl Levi.

Well, I tell you, it's a great honor and privilege to introduce our next guest speaker, Chief Warrant Officer 4 (Retired) Mike Durant. It makes it extra special for me because I've known Mike for 20-plus years having also served in the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment.

Mike entered the United States Army in August 1979, and later in his career he entered into the Warrant Officer Course followed by flight school at Fort Rucker, Alabama. After several assignments Mike was selected to join the coveted 160th Aviation Group (Airborne), which is now known as the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne).

After selection and training, Mike was assigned to D Company, 1st Battalion of the 160th where he eventually performed duties as a flight lead and as a standardization

instructor pilot. Mike is also qualified in MH-60 Alpha, Lima, and Kilo models. He's a Huey pilot. And for the Vietnam-era guys, he also knows how to fly the Loach Aircraft OH-6.

In 1993 a United Nations humanitarian relief effort to distribute food in Somalia was threatened by a Somali guerrilla force. The United States sent special mission units to apprehend Somali guerrilla leader Mohamed Aidid. During a raid on a suspected guerrilla hideout, Mike's Black Hawk helicopter, Super64, was shot down by a rocket-propelled grenade, ensuing the Battle of Mogadishu or better known as Black Hawk Down. Mike became a prisoner of war and underwent a terrifying 11-day ordeal of captivity. During his time of captivity, Mike was shot and his battered face was shown on all news channels and featured on the covers of *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*.

Mike is now the president and executive officer of Pinnacle Solutions, Incorporated, an engineering and services company based in Huntsville, Alabama. In 2008 Mike was inducted into the Army Aviation Association Hall of Fame and is this year's National Veteran Owned Business Association Vetrepreneur of the Year. His awards include the Army Distinguished Service Medal, the Distinguished Flying Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster, Bronze Star with Valor Device, Prisoner of War Medal, the Army Commendation Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters, and numerous other awards.

Mike is the author of the New York Times bestseller, *In Company of Heroes* and *The Night Stalkers*. Mike and his wife Lisa have six children. Now, let me say as Mike has been a member of The American Legion for 21 years, longer than I have, he is with Post 233 out of Clarksville, Tennessee. And a special note for his wife, she was a pilot in the Army. She's a parachutist. And he was never a parachutist, so he has not jumped out of a plane, but she has. Legionnaires and friends, please join me in giving a warm American Legion welcome to a fellow American Legionnaire, to one of our nation's national heroes, Mike Durant. *(Applause)*

Address: Mike Durant, President, Pinnacle Solutions, Inc.
The Real "Black Hawk Down"

Thank you very much. I really appreciate Mark pointing out the fact that I didn't go to airborne school and my wife did. You know, that's a great intro in front of a bunch of vets. It is truly an honor to be here today. It's hard to believe, but the 20th anniversary of Somalia is approaching this October. And I still have the opportunity to share this story with a lot of people, but there is no better audience than this. We're all cut from the same cloth. We all understand the sacrifices of military service. Most of us have been there and done that. I'm truly honored to be here today to share this story with you.

As Mark mentioned, I did start a company five years ago, and one of the things that I've tried to do is actually take all the incredible lessons that we all learn through our experiences in the military, whether we were serving or associated with someone who did serve, the leadership lessons, the work ethic, the culture, all of those things that make our military great and try to apply them in a commercial venture, if you will. It has been interesting to see how it has all played out. It's actually going rather well. I think the employees and the staff really like it. We do have a pretty good percentage of those employees who are veterans. I think the number is somewhere around 65 percent. But for the ones who never did serve, I think they really do feel like they are a true part of a special organization because we've brought a lot of that culture that comes along with being a military veteran into our company. I'm quite proud of that.

So what I'm going to do today is actually talk you through a little bit of what I believe it takes to be successful, whether it's a military organization or a company or, quite honestly, with six children, raising a family. A lot of the same fundamental principles apply there as well, and then talk to you about Somalia. Because for many of you, you've probably never heard me explain my perspective on what happened there that

day. With any luck, you'll pick up a few things that you were not aware of along the way. So, again, thank you so much for inviting me to share this story with you today.

The first slide that I always have put up there is the crew of Super64. Now, I'm the guy all the way to the right, no wrinkles, no gray hair, with the sunglasses on, if you are wondering who is that in the photo. But that's the crew that I was flying with and the aircraft I was flying in Somalia when I was shot down. For those of us who have shared experiences like that, you know as well as I do how closely tied we were as a team, as a crew, and as an unit. In fact, we reached the point where I didn't have to tell Ray Frank, my copilot, what I was going to do and he didn't have to tell me what he was going to do. We pretty much knew each other well enough that it went without saying. That's where you want to be. In terms of training and readiness, that's the level you want to attain if you are going to go out there and try to take on some of these difficult things.

As I said a moment ago, the same is true in business. It is no different. If you're operating as well as you can, you're operating as a single entity, not a bunch of individuals trying to do their own thing. You're operating collectively in support of a single mission that everyone truly understands. So it is absolutely effective. There's no question about it.

When you think about Somalia, most people, as soon as the word "Somalia" comes out, you probably think of maybe a mission in an overall strategic initiative that didn't quite go the way we wanted it to, and I could not argue that point. It is absolutely true. So you've got to then wonder, well, what went wrong and how did we end up in that situation. I'll get into a little bit of that today, but I can tell you honestly, and not just because I'm in the photograph, but the blame does not rest at this level. At the tactical level, we were trained, we were ready, we were proficient, and we were executing two standard day-in and day-outs. I'm very proud of the job the guys that are in this photograph did as well as all the customers we supported and the rest of the folks in the organization as well.

There is no question about it. These missions were difficult. I was blessed to be able to serve in a special operations unit. You know that takes an already great military capability and maybe tweaks it just a little bit, adds some equipment, adds some capabilities to address some very specific missions. But, you know, that's a Black Hawk just like the Black Hawks that are flown in the Army. It has a few extra things on it, but it is a basic right-off-the-line great piece of equipment that everybody else in the Army flies also. It is another thing that I think we should be quite proud of and quite pleased with ourselves on, is the quality of the equipment that we put out there in the field. It's not all perfect, but it is sure pretty darn good. And certainly when it comes to talking about the Black Hawk itself, an amazing piece of equipment.

We all know that the difference maker really is people. That's why that image to me is so important, that we start out with that photograph of the crew, because without those great people serving in this those organizations in my generation, today's generation, and generations before, we could not do the things that our military does. And that's really almost as far as you need to go. If you've got those great people, you can make very difficult things seem almost easy.

But it really does take a little bit more than great people, and we can't take that for granted. I want to touch a little bit on what I think it takes for mission success, again, whether you're coaching a football team, whether you're trying to run a business, or whether you're trying to take on a difficult military operation.

So it is truly people first. They are at the top of the list. There is nothing more important than having great people. I think any of us who are part of an organization recognize that. The organization's success will live and die on the quality of those people. Our military succeeds because we're able to recruit and, more importantly, retain those great people. We don't keep them in for a couple years. You know, the good ones stay for a career. That's why we can do the amazing things we can do with our military.

I put leadership second. Most people would put it at the top of the list, but I put it second. And it's there for a couple of reasons. Number one, I don't think it is the most important thing. I do think it is secondary to the people in the organization. And the second reason I have it in that position on the chart is that great leaders in my mind are those servant leaders, the people that I worked for that recognized it wasn't about them, it was about the unit, it was about the mission and it was about taking care of their people. Those were the people that I wanted to go to war for, those are the people that I would have made sacrifices for, and to me those make the greatest leaders. I have a lot of respect for those true servant leaders, and it's a reason why it is number two on the list.

The other thing that we should be very thankful for, those of us who are associated with the military, is our true appreciation of leadership. Most civilian organizations, they don't touch on leadership until people reach a point in their careers where they are actually assigned a position of responsibility. Most managers in corporate America get no leadership training until they are one. They're literally in a position where they have people reporting to them and now suddenly they've got to go figure it out. For those of us who have been in a military, we were indoctrinated in this whole notion of how important leadership is from the day we walk through the door. We started to appreciate what our role was in supporting the leadership and how important it was to the overall success of the organization.

So we've got a huge advantage there, and I think it is one reason why hiring veterans is such a good thing to do, because they intuitively understand the importance of leadership, they respect the chain of command, they know why it's important, and it's just one less thing you've got to teach them about how to get things done within your organization. So hire vets is absolutely a big concept that I support, and I truly believe it is a two-way street; that it goes both ways. It will benefit the organization as much as it does the individuals.

The next thing on the list is resources. This is really the culprit in Somalia. You can have great people with great leaders, but if we don't give them the things they need to get their jobs done, they are going to eventually face a challenge that they cannot overcome. It takes resources. It does not matter what the nature of the organization is, resources are critical to the long-term success of any organization. As I get into the story of Somalia a little bit, you'll understand more about why I say that is the culprit when it comes to that part of the story.

Tactics is next. You know, tactics is not a word that we use in industry. We use the terms "processes" and "procedure." But it's the same thing. It is the "how" part. You take the people, you take the mission, you take the leadership, and now you figure out how do we take all these pieces and apply them to the challenge. I mean, that's tactics. In business, it is processes. But in either case it's the most powerful thing we all have, because a lot of those other things are pretty difficult to change. But in terms of how we do business on a day-to-day basis, it is very, very flexible. It is one of the things that everybody in the organization has to look at constantly. The leadership has to constantly evaluate are we doing things the smartest way we can, the most effective way we can so we're producing the greatest results at the end of the day with the same set of tools that everybody else started with. It can really be a game changer, and it is certainly an area that I think we all need to focus on as we do some self-analysis and figure out are we really performing at our absolute best.

The next thing is training. We all recognize the importance of training. I was an instructor pilot for years. I always thought that if I ever reach the point where I walk out to the aircraft and I think I know everything there is to know about aviation, I better stop flying. Because you can learn every day. You got to understand that it truly is a lifelong process. You gain experience and knowledge with everything you do. If you go into it with an open mind, you will truly be better, you know, at the end of each and every day and at the end of each and every mission for having that attitude.

Then the last thing is planning. There is no substitute for great planning. When we go off and try to do things that we've not put a little bit of thought into is when we tend to get in trouble. We have to be very deliberate in our strategic planning and our tactical planning as well, but we got to understand what we're going to do and not just expect with a moment's notice that we can go out there and execute things that we are not prepared for nor have we put a plan in place for.

I'll tell you, having spent time in the special operations world, I have never seen planning done at that level. There were missions that we had planned for five years that were sitting on the shelf. We'd tune them every now and then, we'd go out and practice them when we needed to, that we ultimately executed. And we were ready to do it because we had put that effort into planning up front and we were prepared as we could be when the call came for us to go down range.

Now, you might be wondering what this photograph is. I talked to a lot of different audiences, and maybe two years ago I'm somewhere in California, with a group of investment folks, and somebody raises their hand, obviously not a crowd this large, and says, "Why are those helicopters being towed?" *(Laughter)*

I thought I better start over because I just spent ten minutes talking about things that are obviously above this person's head. You're in that difficult situation where how do you not insult this person and explain what's really going on here. But it shows you we understand our military. We understand what we do. We understand the equipment. You probably all understand everything I spent the last ten minutes talking about. But a lot of people out there in America do not. It gives me a lot of satisfaction knowing that in a small way, I'm out there trying to educate some of these people about what does it take to be successful in our military and what are the things we do take into consideration before we take on some of these very difficult tasks. If you don't know, they're being refueled. And we've been doing this in the Army for about 30 years. It is just another example of this very out-of-the-box thinking and the support of our civilian and military leadership to put these resources into place and create game-changing capabilities that we can call upon in the future when they're needed most.

So let's talk Somalia a little bit. If you understand all this stuff and you have had hundreds of years to prepare your military, how do you go to a place like Somalia and end up with what, as I mentioned earlier, most of us view as not necessarily mission success? Well, a little background first. Somalia is the Horn of Africa. The capital city, Mogadishu, is about 800,000 people, so it's a pretty good-sized town. It's no Houston, but it's probably roughly the size of Nashville, Tennessee, I suppose.

Somalia had been in a civil war, and it imploded. They destroyed everything. I would expect that in the '50s it would almost be a place where you would go on vacation. It looked very sophisticated, very advanced from a civilized society perspective. They had universities, soccer stadiums, heavy Italian influence and European influence. It was a thriving urban environment.

But, as we all know, when the struggles begin, it tends to bring all those great things to their knees, and that's exactly what happened in this particular case. The Somalis destroyed the city itself and much of the outlying areas. The schools were shut down. There's no government. There's no police force, no military, no jobs. People are living on the street literally by what they can barter for, if they're fortunate enough to have some land to try to grow some food, but it is survival in an urban environment at pretty much its lowest form as we know it. To make things worse, they were in a multi-year drought. It went three years without raining. In that drought 300,000 people died of starvation. That is widespread suffering on a biblical scale. There are not very many natural disasters in modern history where that many people lost their lives as a result of it.

So something we should be very proud of as Americans is we don't sit by and allow this kind of suffering to occur. We take action. We donated money. We donated shelter, food, talent, logistics, all the things that are needed in these desperate situations. Unfortunately, because of the civil war, none of this goodwill makes a difference. All of

the food is having to be protected in caches in the city. We can't get the distribution points opened up so they can get out to the people who need it, so the starvation continues.

In December of 1992, it reached a point where our civilian leadership here in the United States recognized we've got to take some more decisive action here, and they employed our military. This one scene may ring a bell. This is the occupation, if you will, where our troops are coming to shore, primarily Marines on the initial entry. They are coming through the surf, and as they approach the beach, it's a nighttime amphibious assault, and waiting for them on the shore is the world's media. Most people remember that scene as a pretty unique situation. Fortunately it was a benign environment, meaning not a lot of resistance from the Somalis, so our troops were able to roll in and occupy the city pretty much unencumbered. Very fortunate really in terms of certainly for the media had they been caught in the crossfire, and for both sides knowing that the mission was accomplished with a minimal use of force.

So the mission is an absolute success. Unfortunately, we decided back here in the States that after about six months that that success needed to be built upon. So we changed the scope of the mission, and that is where we again start to get in trouble. We make these left turns in terms of what we're trying to accomplish and we don't go back and do that deliberate planning I spoke of earlier to truly get our arms around what is it going to take to go off and do what it is we think we need to do at these various places in the world.

The leadership decided that we were going to get into nation building. We all know, certainly after ten-plus years in Iraq and Afghanistan, the challenges involved in those types of initiatives. It's culture changing, and cultures don't change in days. They don't change in weeks. They don't change in months. I think most people would agree they oftentimes take generations for cultures to truly change. So when we get in the business of nation building, we ought to go in with our eyes wide open because it is not a very easy thing to do.

As with all grand strategies, somebody has to turn that into reality. We've all been at the bottom of the food chain in our military careers. The leadership certainly has the authority and the latitude to decide what they want to do, but at the end of the day, it's the sergeant major and the platoon leaders and the people at the point of the spear that have to turn it into reality. So in this case, the leadership on the ground, the tactical leadership, decides the best way to start this process in motion is to disarm the city of Mogadishu. We are going to disarm the city of 800,000 people. That is the right first step, but it was also a very difficult thing to take on. This is a very large city.

So on the positive side we have the support of many nations at this point, so it becomes a UN-led, multi-national force, which is good. The less we have to depend on our own resources, the better. However, in a situation like Somalia where it is literally a street fight, it's very difficult to utilize forces from different nations who don't use the same equipment, don't use the same tactics, don't speak the same language. It is very difficult to operate together. You can do operations with a multi-national force when you can geographically separate everybody, but when you're trying to fight all in the same grid square, it's a pretty difficult thing with a multi-national force.

So this mission was unfortunately, if you look back at it now, almost doomed from the beginning. In June of 1993, about six months after our initial occupation, there are 24 Pakistani peacekeepers out there supporting this initiative. They are literally knocking on doors, demanding that the Somalis give up their weapons. As you all know, people are people, and you will encounter people who will cooperate, you will encounter people who you can influence into cooperating, and then you will encounter some people who just won't cooperate.

On this particular day they encountered the third group, and they are ambushed and slaughtered in the street. As those of you who have served in combat know, the people that we tend to fight don't care about the rules. They understand the Geneva Convention

is out there, but most of them don't subscribe to it, they don't respect it, and they don't comply with it for sure. That is absolutely true of the Somalis. They did not care what's right or wrong; they cared about winning. So they slaughter all 24 of these Pakistanis. They don't take any prisoners. It is intended to strike fear into the hearts of their adversaries, and in many cases, it does. For those of us who are trained and disciplined in the U.S. military, it tends to not have such a dramatic effect, but it certainly does on a worldwide opinion.

So the UN, in response to this atrocious act, decides they're going to find who's responsible and bring them to justice, and this fellow Mohamed Farrah Aidid is felt to be probably behind it. And he, if you want to give him maybe more credit than he's due, could be described as the Osama bin Laden of Somalia. He is in charge of the largest clan. He is the most anti-American leader in the country, and he in all likelihood is behind this massacre.

So the hunt for Mohamed Farrah Aidid begins. When these events transpire, what happens back here in the States within our military, and certainly within our special operations community, is we start to look at these situations and start to put together those contingency plans so that in the event we do get called we're as prepared as we can be when we get the order.

Unfortunately, in this case, it took 90 days for us to get the order. And the reason it took 90 days is our leadership was briefed that the chance of success of going into Somalia and capturing Mohamed Farrah Aidid was 1-in-4, 25 percent. Now, most leaders won't commit to a risky venture like that, and that's the right decision. You don't want to put people in harm's way if the best you can hope for is a 1-in-4 chance of success unless it's absolutely critical that you execute.

In this case it wasn't critical, so our leadership decided not to go. The unfortunate thing that created is we lost the opportunity to catch our enemy by surprise, and we all know how important that is. If we can catch our enemy unaware and make them believe we're not going to do what we do, we've got a much greater chance of success. It is a very decreased probability of success when they have opportunity to prepare.

So Aidid has 90 days to prepare, and you don't have to be a genius at avoiding capture to do a few simple things, which is what he did. He went underground. He had doubles. He never slept twice in the same place. He would only let a couple of people know where he really was. A lot of people thought they knew where he was, but, in fact, he was fooling them just like he was everyone else. So it makes a guy who is fairly easy to track down and capture at the outset very, very difficult to track down and capture later on.

Sound familiar? I mean, same thing happened, you could argue, with Osama bin Laden. When he was less concerned about us going after him, he tended to expose himself a little bit more. When he realized that the manhunt was on, he put all those protective measures into place, and once that's done, it is very difficult. It's still possible, as we proved, but it's very difficult, takes a lot longer to be successful.

The other thing that we really failed at here in terms of strategic handling of this situation is our leadership decided that we had been there long enough and wanted to start withdrawing the force. So we went from a high of 28,000 U.S. troops to less than 1,500. Now, 1,500 people is not a very large force to try to do all the things that this task force had assigned to it. When I say 1,500, I'm talking about everybody. I'm talking about the support people, the leadership. The entire military presence by the United States of America was a total force of 1,500. They also withdrew the AC-130s and they took out all the tanks, the armored personnel carriers, the things you want to be in if you're going to travel in a city where there is a threat present. It really unfortunately took away a large part of our probability of success.

Then the final thing that the delay created was the longer we stay somewhere, the more our enemy has an opportunity to prepare themselves and to adapt to our tactics and adapt to the changes that are occurring on the battlefield. We have to seize that initiative.

We have to be decisive. We've got to do those things early on in the process when the time is right so we can take advantage of that element of surprise that we certainly lost here.

We finally did deploy toward the end of August, and we launched a number of missions very successfully over about the next six weeks. They would all be on this graphic of the city if I were to show them all to you, but there is not much point in that. A couple of things that are key here, though, is we're living on the airfield in the lower left part of that image. We don't want to be there, because living on that airfield does two things to us. Number one, it exposes us to the threat. We all know how important force protection is. If I'm living from here to the back of this hall away from the enemy, it is very difficult to protect me from that threat, and that is, in fact, what we were doing. We were that close to enemy territory, so it was very easy for them to watch us, it was very easy for them to drop mortars on our heads. In fact, the 18th member of Task Force Ranger who was killed on October 4 is killed by a mortar because we are that close to enemy territory.

The other thing that's not quite so easy to see, if you're not really in tune with tactical operations, is by putting us right there, we completely lose the element of surprise. If we try to spin up 20-plus helicopters and go into the city for an assault mission, the enemy is going to get a good 10 to 15 minutes notice that we're coming because they're watching the airfield. We wanted to be out on a ship, we wanted to be out in the Indian Ocean, which is right there off the coast. Had we done that, we would have had force protection for sure and we would have retained that element of surprise. We no longer would have given the enemy ten minutes notice that we were coming. As soon as they realized what was happening, we would have been on them. So the decision to put us there at that airfield further crippled our commander's ability to execute this mission successfully.

If you are familiar with the story, and most I think who are associated with the military are, and if you've read Mark Bowden's book *Black Hawk Down*, you know all about the withdraw from the target the following day and the movement through the city and how all that transpired. If you can see it, all the way to the upper right of that image is a place called the Pakistani Stadium. That's where those American soldiers are actually extracted the following day after that 18-hour battle is over. And then you can see a couple of black squares there near the middle of that image. That's the target area. It's also where two of our Black Hawks are shot down, one of those being mine.

What most people don't know, though, is that five Black Hawks are shot down total, to give you some insight into the amount of fire that the enemy decided to place on us this particular day. The reason our two get all the attention is we end up in enemy territory whereas the other three are able to make it back to the airfield.

But leading up to that mission we had tremendous success, and it's one of the things that I've been most impressed about with regard to our operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, is that we have been doing this for a long time, yet our troops in the field have not reached the point where they're complacent, from what I can tell, whatsoever. They are owed a great deal of our respect for that, because when you have been doing something for that long and doing it as well as they have, it's easy to start to let your guard down. That's when things that otherwise might not be detrimental to your unit start to occur because you aren't paying as much attention as you might have been at one time.

But during that six-week period, we had three day missions, three night missions, very little resistance on the part of the enemy. Although they knew we were coming, they really didn't know what we were going to do once we got to the target. So we were able to keep them on their heels a little bit over the initial missions, and we had great success and a lot to show for it. In a couple of cases we had bad intelligence, but intelligence on the battlefield, even today with all the technology we have, is very, very difficult. It is never perfect, and we've got to recognize that going in on these missions that what we think is present or capable on the battlefield is probably not exactly what we think, and

we have to understand that when we build our planes and be able to adapt to those changes on the fly.

During that six-mission period, we captured, I think, 26 individuals, including the number two guy on the list, a guy named Osman Atto, that the UN wanted apprehended almost as bad as Mohamed Farrah Aidid himself. We didn't lose any aircraft, and we didn't lose any soldiers. To me, that was an amazing success rate considering what we were up to.

Toward the end of September, the situation started to change. The enemy became even more aggressive, and they started to shoot these rocket-propelled grenades at the aircraft. They had been around for a while. We knew what they were. They are a 1950s vintage weapon. To us they are probably throw-away, but to a force like this, they're precious. They're very important to them. It's probably one of the most capable weapons that they have. So initially they are not utilizing these things against us, but once they realize how we're operating in the target area, they start to bring these RPGs out and shoot them at us. If you're not familiar with what it is, it is exactly what it is called, it's a grenade on the end of a rocket. It doesn't have a guidance system. It is rudimentary. But against a helicopter, if you are up close, or certainly against an unarmored vehicle, it is a very effective weapon.

If you see in the image there, a helicopter in the target area hovering over a building is actually much more vulnerable than a ground vehicle because we have little to no armor. There are a lot of vulnerable points on that aircraft. The Somalis recognize that and they start to shoot them at us. To give you some idea of how much they adapted to the change in mission, from the first few missions where they shot zero RPGs at us total to the mission where I'm shot down where they shot 125 at us, it gives you some clear indication of there was a deliberate change of strategy there in how to employ the RPGs.

The first aircraft shot down was not ours; it was from another organization. When we saw what happened to this aircraft, we realized those RPGs were a significant threat. And what you've got to do when you see those changes occurring on the battlefield is figure out what do we need to do to counter this change in the situation.

What we would have typically done if we lose an aircraft, we've been doing it for 50 or 60 years, is send in a search and rescue bird, a recovery aircraft to get that crew and those passengers out. In most situations that is absolutely the right answer, but in this particular case, when you are in an urban environment, a city, and you have an aircraft shot down, the likelihood of the threat being right there is very high. So sending in another helicopter to replace the first one is probably not the greatest idea. Our leadership recognized that and decided that we needed to do something different. We scratched our heads a little bit, we tried to figure out what is the right solution, and the conclusion was the right solution is to use a tank. If you are trying to do search and rescue on a mountainside, if you are trying to do search and rescue at sea, if you are trying to do search and rescue in the jungle, the tank is not your solution. If you are in a city and you're less than two miles away from your forward support base, it probably is the perfect solution.

So we sent the request for a tank up the chain of command, and as much as I hate to say it, that request, making it all the way to the secretary of defense's office, came all the way back down denied. It wasn't denied because we didn't have tanks. As you all know, we have thousands of tanks around the world. It was denied for political reasons. It was denied because we had begun to withdraw the force, and to put resources back in would send a bad message to the American people. I'm here to tell you, that is the unforgivable sin. And I got to say that if you ask me, was there a lesson learned from Somalia, which quite arguably should have been learned in Vietnam, it's all about resourcing the commanders on the ground.

I do believe in our most recent conflicts we've done a better job on both sides of the aisle in making sure that our people in harm's way have probably not everything but most of what they need to get their jobs done. It is our obligation as American citizens, and

certainly our civilian leaders' obligations, to do everything within our power to make sure those resources are provided. *(Applause)* Thank you. Thank you very much. We cannot put people in harm's way and then not have the wherewithal and the political will to resource them appropriately so they can get the job done.

So not only was it the tanks that were not provided, but the aircraft carrier was not provided. And for those of you in the Air Force out there, this lovely machine, the AC-130 gunship that we had wanted desperately, it had been in Somalia previously, was denied as well. So the lesson learned, from my perspective on Somalia, is this: The commander in the field is always right and the rear echelon is always wrong unless proven otherwise. *(Applause)*

I do believe we have learned that. People ask me that all the time. Probably not 100 percent. But I do believe we have learned that. Quite frankly, although we did lose great Americans there, if that's what it took to set us up for success in these recent conflicts, I think all of those families and those who sacrificed their lives would be glad to know that they contributed in that way.

So October 3 rolls around, and we know we don't have everything we need. I'm a flight lead mission planner. I'm in the operations center with the general. I'm right there as these decisions are being made. I can assure you we recognized the threat. We did not go into this mission thinking this would be a walk in the park. We understood the things you see on that slide. It's daytime; we don't want to go in the day. It is in the worst part of the city; that's where all the threat happens to be located. We can't land the aircraft, and we've done this six times before. All of those things are significant risks that we did address. I will tell you that I think all of us felt comfortable enough. None of us felt comfortable, but we felt comfortable enough walking out of that room that we could go off and execute this mission. And we launched. We confirmed that two of the personnel that we were after were, in fact, present at the suspected meeting place, and we launched the force.

Everything was going well for about the first 40 minutes until we lost our first Black Hawk helicopter, shot down by a rocket-propelled grenade. That bottom photograph is what remains of that aircraft. Interesting coincidence, that aircraft was actually just recovered. A commercial company went into Somalia and extracted what was left of that aircraft. It's going on display at the Airborne & Special Operations Museum in Fort Bragg. In fact, *60 Minutes* is doing a special on it. I will be down there in a couple of weeks to give my personal insight into seeing that wreckage for the first time.

Losing that aircraft was a game changer. When that aircraft went down, now suddenly we've got troops in contact at the target. We've got a ground convoy trying to get there. We have survivors at a crash site. We've still got to wrap up this mission. We knew that things now had suddenly gotten complicated.

After that aircraft is shot down, we lose another aircraft. The search and rescue bird goes in doing what we just spoke about a minute ago, and, as we would have all speculated, that aircraft is shot down as well. So I get the call from my commander to go back in and replace that first lost aircraft. Now, I had already gone in once. And my job initially was to drop off 18 Rangers in the target area. So that top photograph is actually my landing zone. People often ask what did the terrain look like that day. Someone had a wind-up camera in their pocket, took it out and took a quick photograph of our LZ. In fact, you can see the helmets of the troops on the lower left part of that top image. As far as we know, it's the only image that they took that day. They were pretty busy for the next 18 hours. But it gives you, again, a firsthand look of what did the terrain look like on that particular day.

The reason I'm going back into the target is the commander wants me to replace that first bird shot down, and it was providing fire support for the troops on the ground. As we all know, when you're in contact, there's no such thing as too much fire support. So anything you can bring to bear on the enemy is going to be good for the troops on the ground, so we're going to go in and we're going to provide some additional firepower

with the mini guns we have onboard the aircraft. We make it around the target about three times when this happens.

... At this time, the delegation viewed a video clip from the movie Black Hawk Down.

So for those of you who have seen the movie, that is a clip from *Black Hawk Down*. The second most popular question is how accurate was the movie. I tell people it was accurate enough. Hollywood is never going to create a feature film that is focused on accuracy. It's not a criticism of them. They make it to make money. But in general they did a pretty good job of telling the overall story, so in the end I think most of us are pretty happy with the way it turned out. This image here is actually the real crash site. You can see what's left of the aircraft.

Now, again I mention how amazing that Black Hawk helicopter is. What happened to us is we were hit by a rocket-propelled grenade in the tail. In a single-rotor helicopter, when you lose the tail at low airspeed, low altitude, it's about as worse a situation as you can be in because the tail is designed to counteract the torque of the engines and transmission of the aircraft and you end up in a flat spin. That's in fact what happened. The spin was so violent it really amazed me, quite honestly. I was flying the aircraft but I would probably more accurately describe it as riding the aircraft at that point, because the spin is so violent that all you can see is brown earth below and blue sky above, just the horizon line. All I was doing is trying to keep the aircraft from flipping upside down.

Now, the way you stop that spin is to shut the engines off. You don't have to be a pilot to know shutting the engines off is not a great thing to have to deal with either, but it at least stops the spin and then you can hopefully get the aircraft under control and on the ground. We were still spinning and falling in a semi-controlled state when we hit on the ground. But we hit on the wheels, and that's what I was trying to focus on and it's the only reason I'm here today. All the great technology in that aircraft absorbed the impact; although, the impact was still severe. I broke my femur on the edge of the seat and crushed vertebrae in my spine and was knocked unconscious. My copilot, Ray Frank, had similar injuries. So it was a very significant impact.

But no post-crash fire. It's one of those things that we learned from Vietnam, that the post-crash fire really is the cause for most fatalities. The design of these aircraft today prevents that in almost all cases. In fact, when I regained consciousness, it is as though someone had shut the helicopter down. It is sitting there, blades stationary, because all the fuel lines broke off. But they self-seal. They don't pour gas all over the place. So it is essentially a shut-down aircraft. Fortunately, as I soon discovered, we were all alive. But we are in a very desperate situation because, again, I mention the multiple things the commander is already dealing with, now he has another crash site with more injured personnel and no resources to address the problem.

There is a helicopter flying overhead with two Delta Force commandos onboard. Their names, I'm sure, will be familiar to you, Randy Shughart and Gary Gordon. They see movement on the ground. It was, in fact, me pushing a piece of debris out of the cockpit. They got on the radio and they asked the commander for permission to be dropped off. Initially the commander said no. He knew he had limited resources, and he did not want to send Randy and Gary in there, thinking that there was nothing that two soldiers could do to save us. But they were persistent, and, as the story goes, on the third request spoke directly to him on the radio and said, "Look, if you don't let us in there, these guys are going to get overrun. We've got to be in there now." He finally agreed that they understood the risks, and he gave them permission to go in.

So they made their way up alongside the aircraft. The first time I saw them they were standing right next to me. I didn't know them personally, but I did know them from this mission. In my mind, it's over. There is a rescue force here, we're going to get loaded up, and everybody will make it out of here okay and it will be over. What I didn't know is it would take eight more hours for the next American to make it to our crash site and we were on our own.

So we fought for as long as we could. The fire fight probably lasted 15 or 20 minutes. Randy and Gary lost their lives in the process, as did the rest of my crew. Somehow fortune was with me that day. I was on the opposite side of the aircraft from where the main attack occurred. I don't think the Somalis knew I was there. By the time they realized I was there, things had settled down a bit and they recognized the fact that I was worth more to them as a live prisoner than I was as another American fatality and they took me into captivity.

Captivity, which should come as no surprise, is a very, very difficult and challenging thing for any American and any of our allies. We are victimized, quite frankly, by these people who are very angry. They are very anti-U.S. at this point and they try to take it all out on us. They broke my cheekbone, my nose, my eye socket. They shot me the next day in captivity. They were threatening me all night. Then they asked me the following day if I would make a video.

Initially I said no because I really didn't want obviously to be captured on film doing something I didn't want to do, but I also realized that if they show up with a camera there is nothing I can do to stop them. So I decided that I would just do what I had learned in survival school. Remember that whole training thing I mentioned earlier? Well, survival school is one of those things you don't think you're ever going to use, but when you need it, you need it more than anything you ever knew in your life. Fortunately I had been. I was one of the select few. The techniques and the tools that they gave me in that course came out to be very valuable in this very situation. Here's what ends up airing on international television. ... *At this time, the delegation viewed a video clip.*

What was amazing to me after learning about that video is that it was actually shot by a CNN subcontractor in Somalia, and he somehow got it to Atlanta within a matter of minutes. About 30 minutes or so from the time that video was shot, CNN aired it in 127 countries. This was 20 years ago. So it just gives you some insight into the speed at which technology can impact our current conflicts. It is absolutely the biggest game changer that we've had to face in the last several decades.

As was mentioned in the intro, I was released after 11 days. I was released really because of one thing, and that is the president sent a former ambassador to Somalia, Robert Oakley. He had credibility with the Somalis. It is absolutely essential that we have credibility when we're dealing with organizations and nations and different factions around the world. We've got to do what we say and say what we do. This guy had credibility. When he went in and met with them, he said, "You have two choices. You can let him go within 48 hours or not, and if you choose not to, we will figure out where he is eventually, and when we do, we're coming with everything we got."

When Robert Oakley made that statement, the carrier battle group was back, the AC-130s were back, the tanks were back, all the things that we had asked for that were denied suddenly were brought back into theater because now we had a bonfire to put out instead of a small ember that we were trying to deal with. We've got to be decisive. We've got to act when the time is right. When we don't act when the time is right is when situations get out of control and become much more difficult to deal with.

Now, all of us who have served in combat understand the challenges. We all behave differently. I think for some at least from the outside don't appear to be affected at all; others are affected in profound ways. I don't have all the answers here. All I can tell you is it definitely affected me. I lost my crew. I lost half my platoon. My career was over. I didn't know if I was going to lose my leg. It was a pretty traumatic experience for me. But I got through it all because, number one, our military takes care of our own. We absolutely do that. We have gotten so good at that, and I think it's a big part of why we still have no issues whatsoever filling the ranks in an all-volunteer force. We can never, ever deviate from taking care of our own. That is one of the most essential things that we do. *(Applause)*

But the recovery is multifaceted. I'm about to wrap up, but I want to tell you a couple quick stories here. I'm a believer in those four primary parts of an individual.

Number one, it is physical. Obviously you got physical injuries, you got to fix them. The amazing thing we have today again is the technology, the things that we can do to patch people up, prosthetic devices, whatever it takes. We can get it done, and it is just absolutely incredible what is out there and being provided for our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines.

The psychological piece I touched on earlier. Not quite as straightforward. We're still, I think, challenged by that. I think a lot of it goes undetected. A lot of people separate from service and go off on their own and they're still affected. All I can say is if we have an opportunity as an organization or as individuals to continue to help those who need that assistance, it is our duty as Americans to continue to provide that inasmuch as we can. Because many of them need it and don't even know it, and we've got to do what we can to make sure it's there for them when required.

The professional piece. I have not talked to a wounded warrior who didn't say he or she wanted to go back to their unit. That ought to make us very proud. These people are beat up, they're injured, and they want to go back and serve with the people they served with before. It ought to make you swell with pride. It is one of the greatest things about our country.

The last thing is the spiritual journey. For me it had its ups and downs, but in the end I re-embraced my faith and I put aside questioning why on earth something so horrible could happen when we were trying to do such a noble thing and rationalized it by deciding that there's a reason that I don't understand, I may never understand, and I don't need to understand. I'm not in charge. I'm here to do what I'm supposed to do.

One quick story about the physical piece. In a lot of ways, these are all tied together. The military told me I'd never fly again, and I decided that it's who I was. It was my identity. If there was any way I could do it, I wanted to find a way back in the cockpit. So I decided that I would prove I should be allowed to fly by running the Marine Corps Marathon. I had a femur rod pulled out in January of 1995, and I decided I'm going to run this 26-mile race in October of 1995.

Initially, I think most people thought there's no way it's going to happen. But as I started to train and I started to feel better and I started to make progress, the psychological benefits of that were profound. It was as though a great weight were being lifted from my shoulders. I can still tell you the first day I ran a mile. I can tell you the first day I ran an eight-minute mile. Then as the summer's coming along and I'm starting to run greater distances, I realize I need to set some goals. I can't just say I'm going to go run this thing. So I decided I'd set five goals. Goal number one: Finish. No matter what you take on in life, you have got to finish. If you don't finish, I hope you left it all out on the field, because there is no excuse for quitting. There is an excuse for changing direction and there's an excuse for changing strategy, but there is no excuse for quitting. You've got to persevere.

Goal number two is I had to beat Oprah Winfrey. Oprah Winfrey ran this race in '94. So there is no way that I'm going back to my special operations unit and say that Oprah beat me in a race. The race is in Washington, D.C. I would have taken the Metro if I had to beat Oprah. *(Laughter)*

I had to beat my regimental commander. We all know how that goes. Everybody wants to beat the CO. I wanted to beat him. I wanted to beat my personal best. And then my fifth goal was to qualify for the Boston Marathon. In the end I made four out of five of those goals. I beat my personal best, I beat the commander and I beat everybody else that went there. But I missed qualifying for Boston, unfortunately, but I definitely left it all out there on the track. I ran it in 3 hours and 37 minutes. When I put my request for waiver up through the chain of command, every leader between me and the Pentagon endorsed it, and I got back in the cockpit and flew five more years before I was ready to retire. *(Applause)*

So, in conclusion, it comes back to this: If we're going to be successful, all of these pieces have to come together. We can't shortchange our troops in any of these areas. I

truly believe in my heart we shortchanged our troops in Somalia with the strategic resources, and the outcome is obvious. Would we still have lost people? Probably. Would we still have lost aircraft? Probably. But we would not have lost the numbers that we did and it would not have created a situation where the public was outraged and the civilian leadership decided to throw away everything we had accomplished over that 12- and 15-month period. And I, quite frankly, still believe that we are recovering from this day.

So if we are going to go forward and do these things, the politics, we got to separate it from the tactical operations. We've got to somehow divide those two in half. We've got to make sure that the decisions we make in support of our commanders are not tied to political decisions, they are tied to what is right for winning the battle on the ground. *(Applause)*

The media, we've got to figure out how to deal with it because it really leads us around by the nose a lot. I'm not criticizing the media. They have a job to do. But whatever they report on is pretty much whatever we're going to do. Trust me, if there was no reporting on weapons of mass destruction in Syria today, we wouldn't even be thinking about going there. But it's in the news and somebody has got to do something about it. So I don't know how you handle it. All I can tell you is it really drives a lot of the decisions that we make on a daily basis. And then the last thing, which I spoke to in the marathon, we got to overcome adversity no matter what comes our way. We can't quit. We got to press on, change course, jump over it, go over it, whatever it takes, but by no means ever give up. Thank you so much for inviting me here today. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER RAE: Mr. Durant, on behalf of National Commander Koutz, I would like to thank you for your service and your sacrifice. I would like to present you with the Commander's Coin, and after 20 years in The American Legion, I would like to give you a diamond pin for your membership. *(Applause)*

MR. DURANT: Thank you. It's not as good as Airborne Wings, but it's pretty good.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER RAE: Thank you, sir. Maestro, give us some music, please. ... *At this time, a musical interlude was played.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER RAE: The Chair recognizes Brett P. Reistad of Virginia, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules
Brett Reistad, Virginia, Chairman

The National Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules met on Sunday, August 25, 2013, in the Hilton Americas in Houston, Texas. There were 42 delegates to the Committee present and 12 guests in attendance.

Following the preliminary activities to officially organize the Committee, the Chairman and Secretary were duly elected. I, Brett Reistad, a delegate from the Department of Virginia, was elected Chairman. John Lenotte, a delegate from the Department of Massachusetts was elected 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 Chairman and Secretary to make technical corrections to the Committee Report, as necessary and appropriate. The final unanimously approved motion authorized the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules.

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

On September 10, 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.

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

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER RAE: I heard a second. Is there any discussion? All those in favor so indicate by the usual sign. Any opposed? The Report of Legislation and Rules is adopted. The Vice President will be here momentarily. Maestro, can we have some traveling music for a moment? *... At this time, a musical interlude was played.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER RAE: We have a short delay. The Chair recognizes Larry Besson of Illinois, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs, for the purpose of making a report.

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

Commander, fellow delegates to this 95th Annual National Convention, 43 members and guests of the Section on Credentials and Other Internal Matters met at 9:00 a.m., August 25, 2013, in Room 351, Level Three, in the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston.

Larry J. Besson from Illinois was elected Chairman and George West from New Hampshire was elected Secretary.

It was regularly moved and seconded and carried to accept the Delegate Strength Report as reported by the National Adjutant certifying membership 30 days prior to the 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 Convention:

To wit, 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 29, 2013); and one alternate for each delegate.

In addition, in accordance with Section 3, Article VII, members of the National Executive Committee which 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.

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 with their respective Departments.

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

In accordance with the membership report certified to the Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs by the National Adjutant on August the 25th and in accordance with Article V of the National Constitution, the voting strength of the 55 Departments is 2,663, allocated as follows:

Alabama	30	Montana	19
Alaska	14	Nebraska	44
Arizona	54	Nevada	18

Arkansas	23	New Hampshire	27
California	126	New Jersey	62
Colorado	33	New Mexico	20
Connecticut	30	New York	144
Delaware	18	North Carolina	55
District of Columbia	8	North Dakota	24
Florida	142	Ohio	125
France	9	Oklahoma	29
Georgia	59	Oregon	29
Hawaii	9	Pennsylvania	196
Idaho	18	Philippines	7
Illinois	112	Puerto Rico	11
Indiana	103	Rhode Island	12
Iowa	63	South Carolina	33
Kansas	44	South Dakota	28
Kentucky	35	Tennessee	38
Louisiana	35	Texas	93
Maine	30	Utah	16
Maryland	71	Vermont	20
Massachusetts	54	Virginia	63
Mexico	7	Washington	40
Michigan	91	West Virginia	29
Minnesota	97	Wisconsin	72
Mississippi	24	Wyoming	13
Missouri	57		

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 and seconded that the Committee Chairman and Secretary be authorized to make technical changes to the resolutions reported out of this committee to ensure proper wording and form without changing the substance or meaning of the resolutions.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BESSON: Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and regular delegate from the Department of Illinois, I move to adopt my report. ... *Second.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER RAE: I heard a few seconds. Is there any discussion? All in favor indicate by the usual sign. All opposed? The report of the Credentials and Internal Affairs, Section I, is adopted. Thank you. The chair recognizes Ken Danilson of Iowa, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Finance, for the purpose of making a report.

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

39 members met at the George R. Brown Convention Center at 9 a.m. on Sunday, August 25, 2013 in Houston Texas. 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.

Treasurer Buskirk then recommended that the national dues be set at $13.50. A motion from Bill Barbknecht (Minnesota) was made that the 2015 per capita dues remain at $13.50. Philip Dorsey (Maryland) seconded the motion, and it was adopted by unanimous vote.

The Chairman then recognized James H. Hall (New Jersey), chairman of The American Legion Magazine Commission for a report on the Magazine.

Chairman Danilson reported that the 2012 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 2012 total assets decreased approximately $3 million to $134 million. Membership and DMS revenue increased 2.2% during 2012. Total revenue for 2012 increased approximately $2.2 million and total expenses increased approximately $2.7 million.

A motion was made by Paul Morin (Massachusetts) to refer **Resolution #55 (Philippines) entitled "Foreign Department Travel Costs"** to the National Finance Commission. Bill Barbknecht (Minnesota) seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous vote.

George Lussier (Virginia) moved to empower the Chairman and Secretary to write and/or amend the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Finance. Alan Lennox (California) seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous vote.

As there was no further business, the meeting recessed, subject to the call of the chair at 9:45 a.m.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DANILSON: Mr. Commander, as a duly elected delegate from the great cyclone, tall corn state of Iowa, I make a motion to adopt this report. ... *Second.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER RAE: I heard the second. Is there any discussion? All in favor indicate by the usual sign. Any opposed? The report of Finance is adopted.

We are pleased and honored to have with us on stage Patty Shinseki who today was presented the Woman of the Year Award by The American Legion Auxiliary. National Auxiliary President Peggy Thomas selected Mrs. Shinseki for the Auxiliary's highest honor because of her untiring work in support of military families, and she is also a member of The American Legion Auxiliary. *(Applause) ... At this time, a musical interlude was played.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER RAE: Ladies and gentlemen, please take your seats. The vice president cannot come on stage as long as anyone is standing.

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, the national commander of The American Legion, James E. Koutz. Ladies and gentlemen, the vice president of the United States, Joe Biden. (Applause)

Address: The Honorable Joe Biden
Vice President of the United States

Thank you very much, commander. Thank you all. Thank you all very, very much for the honor of being able to address you today. And let me begin by thanking Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee for allowing me a passport to come into her district. And, commander, thank you for the opportunity of being with you today. And, Peter, you've done an incredible job as executive director. It seems every time we turn around, we're asking you for some help like all the help you've given us on the backlog, and thank you very much.

And I understand some of my Delaware guys and women are here. Where is Jim Brady? How are you all doing over there? Good to see you. Like old home week.

Let me begin by telling you the primary reason I've come and bring greetings from the president, it's to say thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Not only thank you for your service and your sacrifice, but your continuing unwavering commitment to this

country and to your fellow veterans. Because of the people in this hall, the United States has been able to provide security to the American people and defend human dignity around the world by enforcing certain absolutely incontrovertible acceptable standards of international behavior. And we do so because national security has strengthened. We hold accountable those who violate international norms that are the foundation of global security and ultimately American security.

There is no doubt that an essential international norm has been violated. Violated. Chemical weapons have been used. Everyone acknowledges their use. No one doubts that innocent men, women, and children have been the victims of chemical weapons attacks in Syria. And there is no doubt who is responsible for this heinous use of chemical weapons in Syria, the Syrian regime. For we know that the Syrian regime are the only ones who have the weapons, have used chemical weapons multiple times in the past, have the means of delivering those weapons, have been determined to wipe out exactly the places that were attacked by chemical weapons. And instead of allowing UN inspectors immediate access, the government has repeatedly shelled the sites of the attack and blocked the investigation for five days.

At President Obama's direction, all of us on his national security team have been in close touch with our foreign counterparts. The president believes, and I believe, that those who use chemical weapons against defenseless men, women, and children should and must be held accountable.

No one, no one knows better the depths of this country's commitment to universal principles than The American Legion, the very people we've asked in the past to defend those principles. What a remarkable group of women and men you are. What a remarkable group of Americans in this room today. As I look out, I see the faces of veterans, wars going back to World War I, Korea. And the gun fell silent 60 years ago, Vietnam, the Gulf War, Somalia, Bosnia. And many of you, like my son, have served in either Iraq or Afghanistan. You're all part of a fabric stitched together, generation after generation, of women and men who have risked their lives and shed their blood for this nation. You are the very spine, the muscle, the sinew, the heart of this great nation.

And yesterday I had the honor of being with Staff Sergeant Ty M. Carter as he received the Medal of Honor for his courageous actions in Afghanistan. *(Applause)*

Ty's an ordinary young American who did extraordinary things. He's one of 12 recipients of the Medal of Honor from his generation of warriors. He's an exceptional representative of the best trained, most capable group of warriors literally in the history of the world. That is not hyperbole.

The sacrifices of his generation, the 9/11 generation, have been borne by few, but have been enormous. Since 9/11, 3.5 million young men and women from every state, region, religion, race, ethnicity have joined the United States military knowing with virtual certainty that they would be deployed to fight in either Iraq or Afghanistan. And 1.7 million of these warriors have been deployed like many of you to the scorching sands of Iraq or the harsh terrain of Afghanistan. And many of them, like Staff Sergeant Ty Carter, were deployed more than once. As a matter of fact, unlike any other war, more than one-third of this 1.7 million troops have been deployed multiple times.

In the over 20 trips I've made to Iraq and Afghanistan, I've met with literally hundreds of these brave warriors, and they all have one thing in common. No matter how many times deployed, and I've met folks who have been deployed five and six times in theater, they have one thing in common: They never, never, never complain.

In my many visits to field hospitals in Iraq and Afghanistan, military hospitals in Landstuhl, Germany, Brooke Army Medical Center and Walter Reed and other hospitals around this nation visiting critically wounded warriors, I always ask them, and you've had the same experience, I always ask them the same exact question when I leave. No matter how badly injured they are, I get the same answer. I say, "Soldier, Sailor, Marine, Airman, can I do anything for you?" And without fail, everyone who can speak virtually

says, "Mr. Vice President, can you get me back to my unit? Can you get me back to my unit? I've learned a lot, Mr. Vice President. I can help." *(Applause)*

I keep a card in my pocket. Every single day, 6:00 in the morning, my national security advisor calls the Pentagon because I want to know the exact, the exact, number of killed in action. The exact number of wounded. The exact number. Not generically. Not an estimation. Because for every one of those fallen angels, for every one of those wounded, there's an entire family wounded as well, an entire family devastated as well.

In Iraq and Afghanistan there have been 6,624 fallen angels, men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice creating Gold Star families that never, never, never, never wished for that honor. 51,407 have been physically wounded, including the only number I don't have an exact number for, the number of amputees. Over 1,600, among the highest percentage of any war ever fought in American history.

And these are only the seen, observable wounds, those God-awful unseen cost of war. More than a half a million troops have come home with hidden wounds, in many cases just as profound, just as dramatic, just as consequential to them and their families as the visible wounds. PTSD. Traumatic brain injury.

We still have 60,000 warriors in Afghanistan. And today 60,000 families, multiples of that number, are doing what I watch my wife do every day and what you did every day and your family did every day when you were deployed, two, five, ten, twenty times a day, muttering that silent prayer: Please, God, please, God, please, God, keep her safe. Please, God, protect him. You know it. You felt it. You've been there. And over this weekend you lost three more angels in Afghanistan. And three more wounded.

This war is not over. We cannot forget. It's not just the sacrifices of our warriors, it's the sacrifices their families are making, the missed weddings, funerals, birthdays, Christmases, Thanksgiving. These families are warriors as well, and they deserve, just like our warriors, respect, attention, and admiration. They're not looking for anything special. But it matters. It matters to them, and you know it, that all the world around their families is going on normally, but at least there's a tacit acknowledgment of what they're going through.

The Delaware guys know there's an outfit called Boots on the Ground that my wife is a part of in Delaware. She said, "You know, only 1 percent of the population's fighting these wars, but 99 percent of the population owes them something." She says, "Just one, just one simple act of kindness." *(Applause)*

My daughter-in-law does not forget the day we had that snowstorm two and a half years ago in Delaware and she went out, when she went to go get her car out to go teach, and the driveway was shoveled. She saw a neighbor just walking away down the street. Didn't say a word. Just shoveled her driveway. Just one simple act of kindness.

No one knows better than all of you assembled in this hall that the words written by the English Poet John Milton are absolutely right. He wrote, "They also serve who only stand and wait." They also serve. You remember. There wasn't a time you were gone when your mom, your dad, your brother, your sister, your husband, your wife, your kids weren't thinking about you, affecting everything that they did. Well, folks, the fact is that it's not just our warriors, it's their loved ones.

Some of you heard me say repeatedly, I know the folks in Delaware have, we have a lot of obligations as a nation. We have a lot of obligations as a government, obligations of the poor, the disadvantaged, the elderly, our children. But we only have one sacred obligation, only one truly sacred obligation, and that's to equip and support those who we send to war and care for and protect them and their families when they return from war. That's the only truly sacred obligation. *(Applause)*

Which leads me to the second point I want to make to you, and that is The Legion knows better than almost any other organization or individuals in all of America the nature of that obligation. That's why you were formed in 1919. It's the essence of your existence, dedicated, "to concentrate and sanctify our comradeship by devotion to mutual

helpfulness." That's your raison d'être. That's what you brought to the table. That's what you've delivered to generation after generation of warriors.

You've kept the commitment. You constantly battle over the years with the American government, the American people to keep faith with our military and their families. It hadn't always been easy, but you've always been there, always fighting, fighting for the victims of Agent Orange in Vietnam, fighting for to maintain the Veterans Administration budget, fighting to fund our veterans hospitals, fighting to keep the system from being turned into a voucher program. Fighting to assure that veterans would always have the benefit of the doubt over their government.

And as those of you from previous generations know, those of you who fought and sacrificed at Vietnam, you know that almost half the wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan would have died had they been wounded in Vietnam. But because of advances in medicine, transportation, the golden hour, they've lived, but they're living, over 16,000 of them, with grievous wounds that are going to require care, the best care available for the rest of their lives. 16,000 critically wounded with an average life expectancy of another 35 years.

You say, Joe, why are you bringing that up? Well, guess what? Our work, our obligation, our commitment is just beginning. It has to last a long time with the same intensity. For you know better than any group of Americans have experienced that when the parades are over, when the streets are renamed, when these two wars have faded from memory, the obligation, the requirement still remains, still continues. The obligation to provide amputees with the most advanced prosthetics as long as they live. The obligation to provide the best medicine and any breakthroughs available no matter what it costs as long as they live.

That's where you come in. You've never forgotten. You've never let America forget. You have been America's conscience. But you know most of all what these wounded warriors, like many of you who suffered wounds, demand. They're not looking for handouts. They're not looking for favors. They're looking for respect and to be treated with dignity. That's what we owe them. *(Applause)*

I'll not go into detail, but there's a thousand little things where they're robbed of their dignity, where they're inadvertently treated with a lack of respect. That's why President Obama changed the law at our nation's airports ending the demeaning process of intrusive screening of wounded warriors. They demand respect and to be treated with dignity.

By the way, I want to thank you for your resolution on the disabilities treaty. When it's presented, as I understand it may be, to all of you out there, I sincerely hope you will pass it. Once again, The Legion is leading the way. It matters. It matters for the dignity and respect of those with lifelong wounds. Because of you, the burden has been shifted to the government, not on the warriors, to prove that his or her PTSD is a consequence of war, not just those in Iraq and Afghanistan, but finally, finally, finally to all Vietnam veterans as well. *(Applause)*

I served in Congress a long time, and you fought and I fought with you to protect veterans suffering from traumatic brain injury. You succeeded in shifting the burden of proof to the government, not the individual. And finally you fought to address Agent Orange over these years. We've responded finally by providing $4.5 billion in retroactive benefits so far to 166,000 veterans and their survivors who were wrongly excluded in the past. *(Applause)* But it didn't happen by accident. It happened because of your loud, organized, and consistent voice. You helped break the silence. You're helping break the silence now in the unseen wounds of war.

One of the most moving parts of yesterday, I've been to many Medal of Honor ceremonies in my career. One of the most moving aspects of yesterday's ceremony was not just the recounting of the incredible heroic actions on the part of Ty, but he stood there proud, handsome, and straight and looked out and fully acknowledged that he suffers from PTSD. Fully acknowledged that he's battling. And the process helping to lift the perceived stigma, reaching out to thousands of his fellow veterans who need help,

because you're all trained, you're all trained not to complain. Not to admit. It's written into your DNA that you don't ask for help because you have bad dreams, because you have panic attacks, because you can't remember.

Yesterday, it's the first time I remember of all the ceremonies I've attended where a young man, the bravest among us, said: I'm not ashamed. I need help. And God willing, with your help, that will propel thousands upon thousands of veterans coming home to seek the kind of help they need. The suicide rate is incredibly high. We're responding by adding $100 million in new research on PTSD and traumatic brain injury and by increasing the VA mental health budget by billions of dollars.

Because of us reaching back with your help to pick up those in previous wars, there's been a backlog created for those needing help. We're making headway. We've hired an additional 1,600 mental health professionals. We're reaching out with your help in leadership to identify and treat those unseen wounds before they develop into the tragedies of domestic abuse, addiction, homelessness, suicide.

And, again, you know it's not easy asking for help, because all of you are warriors. You're told to suck it up. As I said, it's in your DNA. It's not in your DNA to say: Hey, I need help. But they do need help. There's no shame in asking. Nothing but honor in saying: This occurred as a result of my service to my country. And our military is stepping up that message, unlike it did in the Vietnam generation or even generations after that.

After a year in Iraq my son came home, and I thought my wife was going to go and climb the chain-link fence and barbed wire at Fort Dix to see him. But they're not released, as you well know now, because they were there for five days being debriefed. Part of the debriefing is to go to each one of these warriors and say: Look, pal, you having a problem? You having bad dreams? You find you wake up with the sweats? You're reliving this. To convince them. To convince them that there is no shame. There is no shame in seeking help, not only for themselves but for their families. *(Applause)*

This is something that we've never done before, and your military is leading the way. A lot of you all came home. There was no one at the airport saying good job, come on over here, let me give you a hug.

I had the honor of listening to President Obama speak at a Memorial Day Tribute at the Vietnam Memorial last year. What moved me, because I guess I'm of that generation, most anybody over 60 almost, was when he said, and the response from those of you there was electric, he said, "Welcome home. Welcome home. Welcome home." And thousands stood, many with tears in their eyes, and clapped.

Because of you we haven't had to do this with this generation of warriors. We're getting better at appreciating the warriors as they make the difficult adjustment to everyday life. We're identifying, treating more of those unseen wounds. The president and I are determined, along with you, The Legion, and other veterans organizations, we're determined that this nation understand and appreciate these warriors as they make the adjustment, the difficult adjustment to everyday life, everyday life. Even if they have not been wounded. Even if they have not seen great carnage. The battle rattle is a lot different than being home. It takes time. I know you all know it better than anyone.

But to meet our obligations to these troops, we have to do more. We have to finally modernize, which has never been done, the computerization of all military and health records, modernize our benefit system. We also have opened 66 new community-based outpatient clinics and a medical center in Las Vegas, the first major new VA hospital in 17 years with your help and other veteran service organizations. *(Applause)*

We're working overtime with the VA over the past five months. Because of your help, we've turned the corner and reduced the backlog by 20 percent. And Secretary Shinseki has said, "We will not leave this problem for the next secretary to solve." And he's a man of his word. And with your continued help, we'll eliminate this backlog by 2015 and make sure it never happens again. Never happens again. *(Applause)*

Folks, I hear some of my colleagues in the Congress saying now: I hear Biden, but that all costs money. Damn right it costs money. But guess what? We only have one sacred obligation. It's the first among our obligations. And that is to spend the money needed to provide the care. That's why we've increased the VA budget by more than 40 percent. Now, look, you know as well as I do our obligation doesn't stop for providing the best medical care available, but also requires to help out in everyday lives of returning veterans, and that means jobs and education. And the president said, I think eloquently, "No veteran who fought for his country should have to come home and fight for a job." *(Applause)*

Tomorrow the deputy secretary of labor will be here to go into much greater detail on these initiatives. But we fought this battle together before on behalf of veterans and those with disabilities, and I was proud to work with you nearly 40 years ago in the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act and Rehabilitation Act to help ensure employment opportunities and equal rights for veterans and people with disabilities. That's why today I'm proud to announce that we are strengthening the law by updating the rules to make sure employers do more to recruit, hire, promote qualified veterans, wounded warriors, and other people with disabilities. It's good for veterans. It's good for our contractors. It's good for our country. And we should not make any apology for veterans preference! None! No apology! No apology needed! *(Applause)*

Michelle and my wife, Jill, have made no apology pushing corporations to hire more veterans. We make no apology for pushing for automatic certification of veterans who have certified skills in the United States military or pushing for their spouses when they move from state to state to keep their licensure so they don't have to go through a whole range of new tests. These men and women are the single best-trained generation this nation has ever, ever, ever produced. We need make no apology! *(Applause)*

If you can keep the supply lines open through insurgent territory, you sure in hell can manage a business supply chain! If you can command a platoon, you can manage a staff! If you can negotiate with local tribal leaders to build local utilities in the hills and mountains of Afghanistan, the deserts of Iraq, then you can help rebuild the infrastructure of small towns and big cities back here at home! If you're held responsible for billions of dollars of sophisticated equipment, you can handle billions of dollars of responsibility in corporate America! *(Applause)*

Ladies and gentlemen, this generation of heroes, this generation of heroes, deserves to be part of the bright American future. We're on the cusp in this country, nothing to do with your government, of phenomenal breakthroughs in science, technology, and education. Within the next five years it's probable we'll find cures for many cancers. We're going to find ourselves in the position to find new materials, lightweight materials, allowing us to travel at higher speeds and safer rates. We're going to find ourselves with breakthroughs that our generation has never ever, ever, ever contemplated. And all Americans, those who sacrificed the most are entitled to reap the benefits of these breakthroughs and be part of it. *(Applause)* So, folks, as I said before, only 1 percent who fought these wars but 99 percent of the rest of us owe them.

Let me conclude by saying that my wife, Jill, based on the experience of two of our grandchildren, my deployed son's children, who were then almost five and almost seven, and they lived with us a long part of the time, watching their experience, she realized as she travels all across the country meeting with military families that it's hard to explain to kids sometimes what's happening. She's a professor. She wrote a children's book and dedicated the proceeds to scholarships for the Children of the Fallen. She was encouraged to write it because like all of you every night you put the kids to bed, now your grandkids to bed, you say your prayers with them. Our tradition is the end of the prayers we say with the kids: God bless Mommy, God bless Daddy, God bless the family, et cetera. She finished and got up and started walking out of the kids' room. Little five-year-old said, "Nana, Nana you forgot." She said, "Forgot what, baby?" Said, "Forgot God bless our troops." God bless our troops. God bless all of you for what you do for them. And, God

willing, we will do right by them because of you. Thank you very much. *(Applause) ... At this time, a musical interlude was played. ... National Commander Koutz resumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you very much, Peter. The meeting will now come back to order. National Emergency Fund donations will be collected after the membership awards tomorrow. We will also collect for the Child Welfare Foundation after the Children & Youth report tomorrow. Ladies and gentlemen, if you'll please rise. Legionnaires, please join me in a salute to the flag of the United States of America. Hand salute. One! Two! ... *The delegates rose and rendered a salute to the Colors.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The time now is 3:14 p.m. Please get here early tomorrow as the prelude will begin at 7:30 a.m. followed by a magnificent musical performance by the group "Seven" beginning at 8 a.m. The convention will now stand in recess until 8:30 a.m. tomorrow. ... *At 3:14 p.m., the Convention was recessed to reconvene the following day, August 28, 2013, at 8:30 a.m.*

PROCEEDINGS
SECOND DAY

Wednesday, August 28, 2013

Call to Order
James E. Koutz, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The Convention will come to order. Sergeant-at-Arms.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS PULIDO: Please face the Colors and salute by the numbers. One. Two. ... *At this time the delegation rose and rendered a salute to the Colors.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you. For the invocation, I call on National Chaplain Ronald Derrick of Idaho. Ladies and gentlemen, please uncover.

Invocation
Ronald Derrick, Idaho, National Chaplain

Almighty God, as we've just been blessed, the music, the inspiration to stir our souls, we, indeed, are a part of that mighty voice for freedom. We ask that You would continue to give us the strength to go forth in the adversities we do face, Father, that that voice, that chorus will not be done away. We ask Your protection now upon those who this day defend that mighty voice, and we give You the praise in all that has taken place for we know that although we cannot see the results, You are definitely in charge. And to You we give the glory and the praise this day. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chaplain. Ladies and gentlemen, please remain uncovered and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States.

Pledge of Allegiance

... At this time the delegation recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Cover. The Convention is now in session. Because of a scheduling conflict, we are going to present a couple of awards for the Employers of the Year right now. The rest of the employer awards will occur later today.

Presentation: Employer of the Year Awards for Hiring Veterans
Small Category
CIAN, Inc., Peoria, Illinois

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The company with 50 employees or less that did an outstanding job of hiring veterans in 2012 and is recognized as the Employer of the Year is CIAN Center, Inc., from Peoria, Illinois. Accepting the award is the company president, Steve Hope. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans for 2012 presented to CIAN Center, Incorporated, Peoria, Illinois, for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 95th Annual National Convention, Houston, Texas. (Applause)

Medium Category
CAS, Inc., Strategic & Homeland Defense Division, Colorado Springs, Colorado

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The Employer of the Year Award in the 51-200 category goes to CAS, Incorporated, Strategic & Homeland Defense Division, in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Accepting the award is the company's vice president, William Laramore, and his wife, Cheryl. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: "The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans 2012 Presented to CAS, Incorporated, Strategic & Homeland Defense Division, for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 95th Annual National Convention, Houston, Texas." (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: 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 2013 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year is a U.S. Army veteran and a member of the Nash County Sheriff's Office in Middlesex, North Carolina. She has worked narcotics, patrol, general investigations, specialized investigations in juvenile crime and sexual exploitation of minors and served as a school resource officer in Southern Nash High School. During her first undercover operation, she built cases on approximately 77 street-drug dealers. She also participated in an operation with a neighboring sheriff's office that led to the arrest and prosecution of 28 child predators. She is a member of American Legion Post 110 in Nashville, North Carolina. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm round of applause to Deputy Miste M. Strickland. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: "This is to certify that The American Legion has bestowed the title of The National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year to Miste M. Strickland for Outstanding 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 reflect great credit upon yourself, the Nash County Sheriff's Department of North Carolina, and law enforcement officers everywhere. Presented by The American Legion at the 2013 American Legion National Convention in Houston, Texas." (Applause)

Presentation: 2013 National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year
Deputy Miste M. Strickland
Nash County Sheriff's Office, Middlesex, North Carolina

Good morning, fellow Legionnaires. First I'd like to thank National Commander James Koutz, National Executive Committeeman Jerry Hedrick, Department of North Carolina Commander Patricia Harris, Past Department Commander Bill Richard, Department Adjutant Frank Stancil and my American Legion Post 110 Commander Larry Womack for this opportunity, as well as each member in my American Legion post and the Nash County Sheriff's Office for their support.

I would also like to recognize and thank each veteran that is in this room as well as the soldiers that are actively serving to keep this great nation free. God bless the U.S. soldier, and God bless The American Legion. Let it continue to be the voice of veterans.

Most importantly, I could not do this job without the love and support of my family. My husband Tim and my children Casey and Parker, they are my rock.

It is an honor, and I'm truly humbled to stand before you and accept this award. I am privileged on a daily basis to serve my community as a deputy with the Nash County Sheriff's Office in North Carolina. Law enforcement is my passion and it is what God has

chosen me to do with my life. This vocation is not just a job, it is a much higher calling, and each officer knows the risk he or she takes when they put on the uniform. We as the sheepdogs in our community without hesitation will lay down our lives to save others. Ambush killing of our law enforcement brothers and sisters is on the rise, so we must pray for continued safety for each LEO as they perform their daily duties.

We must also continue to pray for our soldiers, the leaders of this country, and we must never, never stop fighting to bring our POWs home. I pray daily for Bowe Bergdahl and his safe return. Again, thank you for this award. It is my privilege to represent Post 110 in the state of North Carolina as the National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. God bless this great nation, and God bless our freedom. Never, ever take it for granted. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: In June, 19 firefighters lost their lives while battling a wildfire in Arizona. A few months earlier, 11 other brave firefighters died during a fertilizer plant explosion in West, Texas. It is a dangerous profession full of heroes. Just as members of The American Legion answered our nation's call during time of war, America's firefighters answer their community's call during time of emergency. Our 2013 American Legion Firefighter of the Year is the deputy chief of the East End Mahoning Township Fire Department in Danville, Pennsylvania. She has been instrumental in establishing a training summer camp and junior fire prevention program for kids. For at least 10 straight years, she has achieved the top slot for the firefighter responding to the highest volume of calls. And, on top of all that, she is a volunteer. Ladies and gentlemen, please extend a warm welcome to Deputy Fire Chief Leslie Young. *(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 Leslie Young 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 Bravest. You reflect great credit upon yourself, the East End Fire Company of Pennsylvania and firefighters and emergency medical technicians everywhere. Presented by The American Legion at the 2013 American Legion National Convention in Houston, Texas."

Presentation: 2013 Firefighter of the Year
Deputy Chief Leslie Young
Mahoning Township Fire Department, Danville, Pennsylvania

Good morning. I would first like to say thank you to all the veterans for your service to our country. Without your great sacrifice, I would not be able to stand here before you today to accept this prestigious award. I would also like to thank Commander James Koutz, and the National Law and Order Committee as well as my own post, Danville American Legion Post 40, and specifically my commander, Dean Von Blohn, for nominating me for this award. I'm very humbled to receive this award and that they believe that I'm deserving of this distinction.

Sixteen years ago when I became a firefighter, I never expected that I would receive this type of recognition. In fact, I was kind of tricked into becoming a firefighter. You see, there was this countywide drill, and it was a mock tornado that wrecked a school. I wanted to observe because I wanted to see what my husband and the other firefighters actually did on emergencies. The deputy chief at the time said, "Sure, you can observe, but you have to wear firefighter gear." So I went to "observe" with gear that was slightly too big and boots that were slightly too small. But I didn't get to observe. They put me to work rescuing and triaging people, and from that moment on I was hooked. But I was still

a little skeptical and I was adamant that I would never, ever enter a burning building. Well, it didn't take long for that to change, and it's something that they still tease me about today.

Throughout my life, there have been many people who have helped me become the person and firefighter I am today. Two of those people could not be here today. They are my parents, Louis and Marie Karl. They deserve much of the credit. They have instilled the morals and values in me that want me to help people through firefighting.

I want to say thank you to Chuck Eyer, Todd Gibson, Sam Hunsinger, Lloyd Craig, and Bob Fiegles. These are just a few of the names at my fire department who have mentored and trained me and helped me move up through the ranks from exterior firefighter to deputy chief.

However, there is one very special firefighter who has had the most influence on making me the firefighter that I am today, and that is my husband Kevin. Seeing his dedication to the company and watching the integrity with which he works at emergencies has made me want to do this 16 years ago and today still. He's always been there to mentor, encourage, and support me. In fact, my very first interior fire attack was on a line with him inside the building. Because of our work schedules, we don't normally get to spend a whole lot of time together, so training and fire calls are how we get to spend our time together sometimes. So thank you, Kevin, for all that you've done for me and for all that you've helped me to become.

And one last item before I go. I would like to take a moment to remember those firefighters who have made the ultimate sacrifice. This year has been an especially tough year for firefighters across the nation as we have 75 line-of-duty deaths already this year.

There were several incidents this year that have taken multiple lives at one single incident. Engineer Operator EMT Robert Bebee, Firefighter EMT Robert Garner, Captain EMT Matthew Renaud, and Probationary Firefighter Anne Sullivan of the Houston Fire Department lost their lives battling a hotel fire here in Houston on May 31. Thirteen firefighters were also injured in this incident and are still recovering. Rest in peace, brothers and sisters, and thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you very much. I would now like to call our five national vice commanders to join me on the stage for our next presentation, which will be given by Bron Mogenis, trustee for the Chapel of Four Chaplains Foundation, and the department commander of the District of Columbia, Jonathan Booth.

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 interethnic understanding.

The medallions are being presented by Bron Mogenis, trustee, Chapel of the Four Chaplains, and D.C. Department Commander Jonathan Booth and awarded to National Commander James E. Koutz, National Vice Commander Jeanette Rae, National Vice Commander John E. Neylon, National Vice Commander Glenn A. Hickman, National Vice Commander James H. Holland, and National Vice Commander David R. Hall.

Presentation: Chapel of Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion
Bron Mogenis, Trustee, Chapel of Four Chaplains Foundation
Jonathan Booth, District of Columbia Department Commander

MR. BRON MOGENIS: Good morning. Commander Koutz, honored guests, fellow Legionnaires, ladies and gentlemen, this will be the first time that I'm taking about a minute time to talk a little bit about myself. My name is Bron Mogenis, as indicated, and I have two hats this morning that I'm wearing: one is past department commander and the other one is I represent the Foundation of the Chapel of Four Chaplains in Philadelphia.

I'm very proud to do this to such an honored group. I consider all you folks out there my heroes. A little bit about myself as to why I'm so proud to do this. I came to this country when I was 13-years-old, couldn't speak English, no money, and I spent the first few months on Ellis Island. Never did I dream at that time that I would one day be a part of this fine group. Never did I dream that I would graduate from four different universities. Never did I dream that I would become a special agent of the FBI. Following that, never did I in my wildest dreams think that I would be representing this country as a diplomat.

So this is why I think this country is so great, because you can come here and as long as you have the desire, the willingness to reach high and the effort to undertake that, this country is the greatest country in the world. And I wanted to say that's why I'm so proud to stand here before you. No tradition of American society is more precious to, or characteristic of, our culture than that of our voluntary reaching out to neighbors in need. Such selfless service is part of both our civic and our religious heritage. It is for this reason, the self-service, it's not what rank you achieved, how many positions you have held, it is your self-service. It's what did you do in addition to what your office required? What did you do regarding the wounded warriors? What did you do to the veterans that need your help?

This is the thing that qualifies people for this presentation receiving the Honor Bronze Medallion of the Chapel of Four Chaplains. Of the 35-some recommendations I made, not a single one has been rejected that went to The American Legion. The Chapel of Four Chaplains is a nonprofit organization and it is founded on the manifestation of our heritage, that of four chaplains who, after giving their lifejackets to soldiers who had none, linked arms with one another and went down with the USAT *Dorchester* after it was torpedoed on February 3, 1943, when everybody thought the war was over.

This historic event began at torpedo junction, the U-boat infested icy water of the North Atlantic during World War II. On January 23, 1943, the USAT *Dorchester*, an old coast steamer, quickly pressed into service, left New York Harbor bound for Greenland. The *Dorchester* was escorted by three Coast Guard cutters: two patrolling the flanks, the third was about 3,000 yards behind. Most of the men were seasick and green with nausea.

I had the honor and the opportunity two years ago to talk to a survivor. What he described is sort of unimaginable. The weather was bitterly cold, gale-force winds. Ice began building on the deck, slowing the *Dorchester* to 10 knots. Moving among them were four Army chaplains: George Fox, Alexander Goode, Clark Poling, and John Washington. The chaplains talked and listened to the men, soothing their apprehensions, offering encouragement, sharing jokes, and they brought solace to a situation that seemed impossible through the eyes of the viewer.

On February 2, 1943, the *Tampa* sonar detected the presence of a submarine. She dropped back and swept the periphery of the convoy but failed to position the submarine. The captain ordered the men to sleep in their clothing with lifejackets close at hand. They were only 150 miles from Greenland and they thought when daylight would come they would have air cover.

It was just after midnight February 3, 1943, an enemy submarine fired a torpedo. The missile exploded in a boiler room destroying the electric supply, releasing suffocating clouds, a steam of ammonia. Many aboard died instantly. You can picture a thousand men running around with the ship sinking rapidly.

Taking on water, began to list to starboard. Overcrowded lifeboats capsized. Rafts drifted away before anyone could reach them. The men clung to the rails, frozen with fear, or to go to plunge into the dark water. The testimony of the survivors tells us that the sole order came from the four chaplains who walked around, joked with people, and when they exhausted the supply of lifejackets, they gave away their lifejackets to the people that didn't have one. These four men of God had given away the only means of saving themselves. That's self-service at the highest level.

The chaplains gathered together and led the men around them in prayer and hymn, linked their arms together. And as the slant of the deck became severe, they were seen with armed links in brotherhood. Their heads bowed, they sank beneath the waves. It was the only heroic act. There were only a fewer survivors.

Today as these many years have gone by, the Chapel of Four Chaplains serves the memory of these brave men and carries their message of faith and cooperation and selfless service to every part of the country.

To recognize and encourage volunteerism, brotherhood, and sacrifice among Americans, as the example that I gave, the Chapel, under President Truman, established a Legion of Honor program. The Bronze Medallion is an award given by the Chapel after the commission reviews what is recommended with the exceptional self-service. Today it is my privilege to give this award to the following recipients. And, by the way, holders of this award are a number of presidents, including President Truman, President Eisenhower, President Kennedy, George Walker Bush, and a number of luminaries such as Bob Hope, Mickey Rooney, so they are joining a great, great list of honorable people.

Today the award will be given to National Commander James Koutz and the five national vice commanders: Jeanette Rae, Western; John E. Neylon, Northeast; David R. Hall, Central; James H. Holland, Southeast; and Glenn Hickman, Midwest. *(Applause)*

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. That concludes my award.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you very much, commander and Mr. Mogenis. The man who has served as our national chaplain this year is a truly dedicated man of God. He is a member of American Legion Post 20 in Rigby, Idaho, and an Army veteran who served during the Vietnam War. A retired mail clerk and printer for Bonneville County, Idaho, Chaplain Ron is married to Bird Derrick and has three children: Timothy, Andrew, and Dayna Sue. He is a minister at the Ashton Christian Fellowship. It is an honor for me to present a Certificate of Appreciation marking his year of service as national chaplain to Ronald L. Derrick. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: "Certificate of Appreciation, Presented to Ronald L. Derrick, National Chaplain of The American Legion, 2012-2013. Given in recognition of faithful and honorable service to The American Legion."

Certificate of Appreciation
Ronald Derrick, Idaho, National Chaplain

I'm a blessed man. To think how great this country really is that a redneck preacher from Idaho, who 50 years ago was a foster child, could stand before you today in this position is an honor and is truly humbling. Thank you all for your acceptance and your friendship, and may God bless each and every one of you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chaplain. Appointed by President Obama to serve as the 12th director of the Selective Service System on December 4, 2009, our next guest was previously the Soldier and Family Assistance Program manager of the United States Army's 5th Recruiting Brigade. He is a retired U.S. Air Force Reserve lieutenant colonel and a former chairman of Bexar County, Texas, Veterans Committee. He is also a Legionnaire from Post 2 in San Antonio. Ladies and gentlemen, the director of U.S. Selective Service System, Mr. Lawrence G. Romo. *(Applause)*

Address: Lawrence Romo
Selective Service Director

Thank you, Commander Koutz and the American Legion, for inviting me to speak today. I am one of you. I'm a very proud member of Alamo Post 2 from San Antonio, Texas, as is my 84-year-old dad. I've always been impressed with the stellar dedication our Legion members who are serious about serving our military, veterans, and their families. I salute you wholeheartedly, your service to our great country and your continued service to members of the Legion. Never to be overlooked or underestimated, our loved ones, our spouses, and family members, as they also serve us providing encouragement and cheerful support as we work on Legion efforts. As the largest veteran service organization, it is fitting that we lead an extensive, meaningful, and necessary support to the active, the reserve components and the defense civilian workforce contributing today.

Veterans and family members, the voice of The American Legion is the major force to get this done. I've seen the Legion's Washington, D.C., office in action and I've observed its staff ensuring each and every day to obtain the robust military and veteran benefits and keep them protected. To ensure this is accomplished at the local level, local posts must have a strong veterans service officer to help guide veterans to the benefits they have earned and deserve.

I have been involved in the American Legion for 15 years, having once served as the post's second vice commander. I enjoyed my involvement with the Americanism program, the Oratorical competition, and the Junior ROTC Awards program and the Boys State nominations. I've enjoyed working with the Auxiliary, a critical part and real backbone of any post. The Auxiliary will tell you that, too.

Communication and teamwork do ensure success. While I was an officeholder, this is why we did so well. I just went to San Antonio on a break in April and was very proud to participate at Post 2 with the Alamo Honor Flight sendoff of 83 World War II veterans from the greater San Antonio area to Washington, D.C., to visit the World War II Memorial. It was a great send-off. Thank you, American Legion, for who you are and what you do for America.

In 2009, President Obama selected and the Senate confirmed me as the 12th director of the Selective Service System. I'm truly honored to serve as the subcabinet member in the administration, and I made my federal agency a model civilian organization exhibiting strong ethics and moral behavior. This is the key reason why we receive the 2011 Most Improved Small Federal Agency Award from the Partnership for Public Service based on the national Annual Federal Employee Survey results. I expect us to do well again this year on the survey. As long as I am assigned, I will ensure that the federal government works at our agency. We must make the federal government work. That's why we're up there.

Selective Service is still a very inexpensive insurance policy for deterrence, and our budget is the same budget as we had in the early 1980s. Our friend and honored patriot, Tom Bock, Tom is out there with Colorado, former national commander, best stated why we need Selective Service. I will paraphrase from his article that he wrote a couple of years ago. We hear all the time that only 1 percent of our population actually serves the United States Armed Forces. When you think about it, that's pretty sad. After all, we all enjoy the freedoms that the United States citizenship guarantees. Yet, we rely upon that 1 percent as a volunteer force to protect us.

We have a standing national resolution here in The American Legion titled Retention of the Selective Service System. This resolution addresses Selective Service System as an inexpensive insurance policy in a still dangerous and uncertain world, look at what's happening in Syria now, against underestimating number of military needed to fight and win in future crisis. All of this is still valid. With the close of the War in Iraq,

and Afghanistan, for that matter, and the planned drawdown of our standing military, the need to preserve this historic link between the all-volunteer military and the society at large becomes more important.

On a daily basis, Selective Service directly supports the all-volunteer military recruiting effort as a part of the draft registration program by informing our young men they can serve today in the United States Armed Forces. Additionally, the budget for Selective Service is a minuscule $22 million annually. Actually, Selective Service is one of the nation's best national security bargains. It is the only time-proven means of mobilizing America's manpower for a significant crisis in a timely, orderly manner.

Selective Service and its program of draft registration for our America's 18-year-old men ensure that any future draft, if needed, would be fair and equitable. Since 1980 our nation's young men have overwhelmingly complied with the requirement to register. At least 90 percent of our men 18 to 25 are registering. With the help of California we're going to get 100 percent.

In testimony before Congress on Selective Service, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said: You know my view, it is that we ought to maintain the registration aspect because particularly as we go through these budget cuts, particularly as we go into the future, if we face, you know, one of those surprises, if we face one of those crisis that suddenly occurs, we've got to have some mechanisms in place in order to be able to respond.

But I think we always have to be ready for that possible contingency in the future if we suddenly have to face an unexpected event. It is extremely important that we as an organization and especially all of us as veterans who have served our country in the military remind Congress to continue Selective Service and its registration program at its current level. Thanks again for inviting me. God bless The American Legion, God bless our military, veterans and their families, and God bless the United States of America.

Now one last important item of business for me. I'd like to present now the Selective Service Honored Patriot Award to Commander James Koutz. Commander Koutz, please join me. I'm going to read this here. This is our Honored Patriot Selective Service Award presented to James E. "Jim" Koutz, national commander.

"In grateful appreciation for the proactive service of The American Legion to all military, veterans, the United States Armed Forces, and our communities, your longtime support of the Selective Service System and its national programs witness publicly not only to your patriotic values but also to the sacrifices of veterans and their loved ones have made on behalf of our great nation." Signed by me. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you very much, Larry. At its May 8-9 meeting in Indianapolis, the National Executive Committee passed Resolution No. 30 titled "Soldier's Wish Project." The resolution authorized an exciting new relationship between the nonprofit organization Soldier's Wish and The American Legion. When our two great organizations work together, it is the veterans who win. Please turn your attention to the video monitors to see exactly what I mean. ... *At this time the delegation watched a video. (Applause)*

Address: Kevin McDugle,
Executive Director, Soldier's Wish

Hello, I'm Kevin McDugle. I'm the executive director for Soldier's Wish. I'm a proud Marine of eight years, a drill instructor at Parris Island, South Carolina, and a Legion member from Oklahoma.

We're very proud that we have a number of Legion members on our board. And I want to say thank you. For the last several months we've traveled this country. We've had the opportunity to serve those who have served our country, to find those in Sturgis and Oshkosh and a number of other places who've served and we could say thank you. And

I'd say thank you by handing out The American Legion Coin and saying "Welcome home." I get the privilege as a volunteer for this organization to look in the eyes of the Americans who served us to say thank you.

Our goal is to meet the unmet needs. There are a number of organizations that help our heroes. We're not in competition with them. We stand alongside of them. I don't believe you can ever have too many that are serving our heroes. And I'm here to simply say thank you for your part.

When I went to Washington, D.C., this week to the Medal of Honor ceremony, we got to stand with The American Legion and honor those heroes with Ty Carter. Ty Carter got to bring in his family, and we were able to fly in some of those who fought in combat with him because they wanted to be there but they couldn't afford to go. The American Legion was able to provide a meal for them and their families at Post 24 in Alexandria, where General Washington once served. And it was an honor to be there with them.

On my way out, Medal of Honor recipient Sal Giunta shook my hand, and he said, "I want to thank you, because some people serve overseas, they serve in combat and they come back never to serve again." He said, "Others serve and then come home and continue to serve." And he handed me his Medal of Honor coin, and it wasn't for me and Soldier's Wish, this coin was for Soldier's Wish and The American Legion for continuing to serve this great country.

Thank you so much for your service and continuing to serve. *(Applause) ... At this time the delegation watched a video. (Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The American Legion and the VA both agree that the backlog of undecided veterans benefits claims must be reversed. One important part of that solution is the fully developed claims process. Please turn your attention to the monitor to see the progress we are making so far. ... *At this time the delegation watched a video. (Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: 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 Veterans Affairs on January 21, 2009. As secretary, he has promised to end homelessness among veterans, a daunting but important goal. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm American Legion welcome to the Honorable Eric Shinseki. *(Applause)*

Address: The Honorable Eric Shinseki
Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Well, good morning, Legionnaires. It's good to be here with you in Houston. Jim Koutz, thanks for that kind introduction. But, more importantly, thanks for your leadership of the Legion family and for your lifelong commitment on behalf of veterans and serving them so well.

Let me also acknowledge Chairman Miller; the Legion leadership; Dan Wheeler, your national adjutant; Peggy Thomas, auxiliary president, and Peggy, let me just thank you personally for the very kind demonstration yesterday of presenting an award to my wife for the Woman of the Year. Both Patty and I are honored by the recognition. Chris Huntzinger, commander of Sons of American Legion. And Peter Gaytan, your executive director. And let me express here my personal thanks to Peter and all the leadership for standing with this secretary in all the things we're trying to do to take better care of veterans.

Legionnaires, fellow veterans, VA colleagues, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I'm honored to be here. Last month marked the 60th anniversary signing of

the Korean Armistice. Now, you don't have to be much of a student of history to know what we asked of the young men and women who went to fight there on very, very short notice. Or how magnificently they fought. So I'd like to take just a second this morning to recognize our Korean veterans and thank them for their duty. You saved a nation. You provided all of us sterling examples of service and sacrifice. So let me invite our Korean war veterans, if able to, to stand so we can show you our respect, our thanks, and our admiration. *(Applause)*

Thank you very much. When I was appointed in January 2009, I said that we would move quickly to get as much done in the time we had available. I needed help to take on some tough issues, issues like increasing the access of veterans to VA benefits and services. I wasn't satisfied that we had outreached enough and contacted enough veterans. Tough issues like eliminating the backlog and disability claims. The work here goes on, and I'll give you an update here later in my remarks. And then finally mobilizing our national initiative to end this thing called veterans homelessness in America. I couldn't figure out a good reason why any veteran should be homeless in this great and powerful country.

So those three things, access, backlog, and homelessness, became the three major challenges we took on. I asked for your support then; you gave it to me, and you continue to do so today. Four and a half years since January 2009, the Legion's advice and assistance, the support of other veteran service organizations, the leadership of the president, have enabled some significant achievements.

First of all, the VA's budget has grown by $40 billion. More than two million additional veterans are enrolled today in VA. I talked about access and outreach. More than two million additional veterans enrolled in VA today. A net increase of 62 new community-based outpatient clinics gives us today a total of 827 CBOCs nationwide. That's more than one new clinic open each month every month for the last 55 months.

We have also opened our 151st VA medical center, a new state-of-the-art facility in Las Vegas, Nevada, our first hospital in 17 years. More than 10,800 caregivers have been trained to care for our most seriously injured post-9/11 veterans. More than a million veteran and family member students have received educational training and vocational training through our education assistance programs. An average of 113,000 veterans a year have been laid to rest at our national cemeteries, and today nearly 90 percent of all of our veterans have a burial option within 75 miles of home. Veterans homelessness was reduced by 17 percent between 2009 and 2012, and we expect another reduction when the latest tallies are released for 2013.

Last year 70,000 veteran home mortgage holders, 70,000 of the 1.4 million home mortgage holders, defaulted on their home loans but were kept from being foreclosed and evicted because VA staff got in there and worked out best arrangements, lowering payments, extending payment periods, worked those arrangements out with the appropriate financial institutions. But we weren't able to save everybody, and so the work goes on, how to do this better. But 70,000 veterans were kept in their homes last year.

Then, finally, we fielded a new automated claims system at all 56 regional offices. VBMS it's called, Veterans Benefits Management System. We are now transitioning out of paper. We've been in paper for decades. Some would say we've been in paper for centuries. We're now transitioning out of paper and into digital processing.

Well, those are our accomplishments. Those are our accomplishments. Momentum is up. Your support has allowed us to focus on what was best for veterans. Now I'd like to spend the rest of my time focusing on four important issues I think we all ought to be cited on. The first is the health care law; the second is a Disabilities Treaty the third is mental health; and the fourth is the backlog, and I'll close with that.

First, health care law, that's about to go into effect. Veterans have put their lives on the line for this country, and they deserve to know how this law applies, what choices

they will have in health care options, and so I'll make six quick points. Then I'm happy to follow up with anyone who has additional questions.

First, the law is designed to provide health care for as many Americans as possible. Second, VA wants all veterans to receive quality health care that improves their health and their well-being. Three, all veterans enrolled in VA, currently enrolled in VA, do not have to take any additional steps. VA health care meets the requirement of the new law. Four, veterans not enrolled in VA health care can apply for enrollment at any time. And my invitation is, give us a good look, I don't think you'll be disappointed. Five, veterans and family members who are not eligible for VA health care and who do not have employer-provided health insurance, they should go to the marketplace, the new marketplace, which opens on 1 October, to get coverage under the new law. That's the intent. Then, six and last, I'll close where I began, ensuring veterans receive quality health care is a fundamental obligation of VA. We intend to help veterans understand their options as this new health care law is implemented in the coming months. And our website is the point of contact here, or one of our phone numbers.

Next, ratification of Disabilities Treaty is important to our nation's five and a half million disabled veterans. Here in the United States the Americans With Disabilities Act protects all those with disabilities from discrimination and helps to provide equal opportunity, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency. However, in other countries what we have here isn't always available. The Disabilities Treaty will help other countries reduce barriers that affect the disabled, including our newest and youngest disabled veterans, many of whom travel overseas for work, for study, and for leisure. Importantly, ratifying this treaty enables disabled Americans the same protections abroad as we have here at home.

Now, I served roughly ten years in Europe as a disabled soldier, still on active duty but disabled, following my tours in Vietnam, learning to walk again and learning to run again, trying to convince the Army that I could continue to serve, and I was fortunate enough to do that, but learning to adjust to a new reality. I recall the absence of aids for the disabled in many places where I served, things we take for granted here: ramps, automatic door openers, elevators in buildings, other devices that are commonly available here. This is not a partisan issue. Former Senator Bob Doyle, a distinguished combat veteran of World War II, has supported ratification of this treaty and doing so would keep faith with generations of disabled veterans who have served this nation faithfully and with distinction. So I ask for the Legion's support in ratifying an important treaty that seeks to enable disabled veterans, disabled Americans, but including our disabled veterans to travel abroad safely and with dignity. *(Applause)* Thank you, thank you.

Third, mental health. More troops are surviving combat today, and after 12 years of combat their injuries are serious and their issues complex. Many combat veterans carry with them the baggage of war. That's my euphemism for PTS, post-traumatic stress. That could include anxiety, increased irritability, a sense of numbness, flashbacks, feeling depressed. PTS. Most of us are able to work through PTS on our own with the help of strong families and other support mechanisms, but some of us end up with a "D," the disorder, PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder.

Unlike PTS, which most veterans can transition out of on their own, PTSD requires professional help. At VA we know that when we identify PTSD and we treat, people get better. So whether it's PTS, PTSD, TBI, traumatic brain injury, or even depression, all are treatable if we're able to connect with those veterans in need of help. Veterans dealing with these issues are not damaged goods, and that's my line with every employer I speak with. They're fully capable of living productive lives. What they need are jobs; education, which we provide through our education assistance program; quality health care, which we provide as well. What they don't need is being ostracized for seeking help. They deserve a real shot at joining the middle class so they can help all of us rebuild our economy.

Mental health staff levels have also increased to keep pace with veterans' needs. A year ago the president directed the hiring of 1,600 additional mental health professionals. VA has exceeded that goal and is now hiring 800 peer support specialists to augment those clinicians, and we intend to have that completed by the end of this year. We're probably at about the 500 mark moving towards that 800 final target for hirings.

Following the president's national mental health summit in June and the White House's conference on mental health needs for veterans and military families in July, at the president's direction VA is now hosting local mental health summits at each of our 151 medical centers nationwide, broadening the dialogue between clinicians and stakeholders in those communities. The first summit was held last month in San Francisco, and all 151 summits will be completed by October.

One of our most successful efforts you know about. It's called our Veterans Crisis Line. DoD, Department of Defense, knows that as the Military Crisis Line. Same number, same trained VA mental health professionals answering the phone 24 hours a day, seven days a week to deliver optimal care to whoever calls in. Since start-up in 2007, over 890,000 phone calls have been taken across the Veterans Crisis Line, calls from anyone needing assistance: veterans, their families and friends. Importantly, 30,000 of those callers were rescued from suicides in progress because our mental health providers, not 911 operators, mental health professionals, were on line and ready and able to help. *(Applause)* 30,000. 30,000. That's about two Army divisions worth of people. That's what that means.

So here's the bottom line. With strong leadership from the president, we continue to improve access to mental health services. The president's budget requests between 2009 and 2014 have increased over that time by nearly 57 percent. Just to peg that, for 2014 alone the president's budget request is nearly $7 billion for VA mental health. We remember Vietnam. We are committed to never allowing that to happen to another generation of veterans, and that's our commitment. *(Applause)*

Finally, the backlog. Let me be clear up front. No veteran should have to wait to receive earned benefits. The claims backlog is a decades-old problem, and my guess is if I were to go and do research here, this has probably been an issue for a century. We committed to eliminating the backlog, not reducing, not better managing, but eliminating the backlog. No claim over 125 days, 98 percent accuracy the first time through on our work. We've said all along that it would take time for us to put together the plan and resource it to solve this correctly, and we have done that. We're not going to leave this for another secretary and another president to wrestle with. The president wants this fixed, and we're on track to eliminate the backlog in 2015. We developed a plan, as I said, and over the past four and a half years have been able to resource it. We're executing that plan today. The first thing we did was we decided it was important to take care of some unfinished business from previous wars, and so we made three major decisions.

First, three new diseases attributed to Agent Orange exposure, primarily for Vietnam veterans, 40 years. The next was nine new diseases associated with Gulf War illness. Gulf War ended 20 years ago. And the third major decision was service-connected PTSD for combat veterans from all of our wars. PTSD is as old as combat itself. It was time. Let's make these decisions and allow veterans to be able to file claims against those disabilities. So when you take care of unfinished business in this way for veterans of previous wars, you know, that's increasing access, but you also expect a number of disability claims to go up. That's logical.

At the same time, we predicted, because of that surge in claims being submitted, that the backlog portion of our inventory, any claim over 125 days, that would also grow. We predicted that three years ago. We testified to these projections before the Congress when we announced those decisions three years ago. But it was our way of expanding access and taking care of some unfinished business.

In February of 2010 I testified before the House Veterans Affairs Committee that, "The volume of compensation and pension-related claims has been steadily increasing." Reaching a goal of no claim over 125 days will become even more challenging because of the additional claims we expect to receive related to veterans' exposure to Agent Orange. Adding Parkinson's disease, ischemic heart disease, B-cell leukemia to the list of presumptive disabilities is projected to significantly increase claims inventories in the near term, even while we make fundamental improvements to the way we process disability claims. That decision alone, about 250,000 claims were added to our inventory overnight. But we went with it. The decision was the right thing to do then. It's the right thing to do today. I wouldn't change that decision one bit. Others may revisit those decisions, I will not. *(Applause)*

We also promise, however, as we anticipated this growth in claims, we also promised to develop an automation system that would help eliminate this very idea of backlog in claims. We don't need to have that as part of our lexicon. And we have done that as well. As I mentioned earlier, it's taken us two years to develop, but we've now fielded this thing called VBMS, Veterans Benefits Management System. It's fully fielded to all 56 of our regional offices. We are six months ahead of schedule on fielding.

We projected three years ago that the backlog would grow, peaking sometime this year in 2013, but then it would begin to recede. This was our projection of three years ago. Those projections were funded by Congress, and we have been executing that plan. The backlog as projected is beginning to decline. On 25 March 2013 it hit the high watermark of a little over 611,000 claims. That's a huge number. Yesterday, the backlog fell to below 472,000 claims. *(Applause)*

Now, look, folks, while the number is important, the drop is equally important. What that means is the backlog has come down 140,000 claims in the last 155 days. By the end of 2013, claims more than a year old will be out of the system and we'll be focused on takedown of that backlog by the end of 2013, so that leaves us two years to finish the job we promised four years ago that we would end in 2015. Barring any changes in the entitlements, I put a caveat out there, if there's another Agent Orange decision to be made, you know where I stand on those things. So barring any entitlements, this number is a number we're focused on. This number will continue to fall, and VA remains committed to eliminating the backlog in 2015.

Finally, let me close and share a short story from the Korean War. I mentioned last month the 60th anniversary the signing of the Armistice for great Americans who went off and did very, very difficult missions.

This short story is about a fellow from Pueblo, Colorado. His name is Jerry Murphy. Jerry Murphy graduated from college in 1951, just in the middle of that crisis. Jerry volunteered to join the Marine Corps coming out of college and in a few short months found himself commanding a rifle platoon in combat in Korea. In February 1953, Murphy's platoon was the reserve element for his company's coordinated attack against a fortified hill, heavily fortified hill. During the initial assault, most of the company's officers and NCOs were killed or wounded. The leaderless company was stranded on the hilltop, continuing to be battered by determined enemy forces.

Jerry Murphy sensed something was not going well. He immediately seized the initiative to go to the aid of fellow Marines. On the objective the numbers of dead, dying, and wounded were staggering. Murphy rallied the survivors in the midst of still a raging gunfight, began evacuating the wounded, and organized the orderly withdrawal of his force under fire. He carried many of the wounded out himself. Then he stayed behind and manned a machine gun to cover the movement of the company.

Once they were out of the beaten zone, Murphy then takes a small group of volunteers back up on the hill to just make sure there are no Marines left there. Wounded twice, he refuses medical attention until he had accounted for every Marine and then led his rescue party to safety. Jerry Murphy was the last man to leave that bloody hilltop. For

voluntarily risking his life to serve his fellow Marines, Second Lieutenant Jerry Murphy was awarded the nation's highest award for valor, the Medal of Honor.

Jerry Murphy came home and then served with VA for 23 years as a counselor, as a director of Veterans Services in New Mexico. And when he retired from VA, he volunteered for another eight years at the Albuquerque VA Medical Center. That medical center is now named after Jerry Murphy. *(Applause)*

When Jerry Murphy died in 2007, he was buried not in his dress blue uniform but in his VA volunteer's jacket as he had stipulated. First and last a selfless servant, Jerry Murphy was dedicated to the well-being of others. Devotion to fellow Marines led him time and again back to that hilltop in Korea. And then he lived the rest of his life that way. We have over 100,000 veterans working for VA. Not all of them are Jerry Murphys, but for the most part all of them have Jerry Murphy's heart and his instincts.

VA's accomplishments will always be delivered by our good people who work hard every day to do the right thing for our nation's veterans. But we have this in common, The American Legion and VA, good people devoted to serving veterans. We have work to be done. Nobody's going wobbly. Nobody's taking a knee. Veterans are counting on us to deliver, and we're going to deliver. God bless The American Legion. God bless those who serve our nation in uniform and have served our nation in uniform. May God continue to bless this great country of ours. Thank you all very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Our next speaker is chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, which is responsible for authorization and oversight of VA, the second largest department in the federal government. Since winning a special election for his Florida congressional seat in 2001, he quickly established himself as a strong advocate for veterans, supporting positive changes to concurrent receipt and requirements for greater data sharing between military and veterans clinics. He is also a strong supporter of the Defense Department and the Global War on Terrorism. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the Honorable Representative Jeff Miller. *(Applause)*

Address: The Honorable Jeff Miller
Chairman, U.S. House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Thank you very much, commander. It is great to be here in Houston, Texas, home to the state having 1.5 million veterans, kind of like my home state of Florida, and I say hello to my colleagues and good friends from Florida that I had a chance to meet with a little earlier. It's great to see you. *(Applause)*

Commander Koutz, I say thank you for all of your hard work, your dedication, your leadership in the past year, your continued service to not only this nation but to the veterans of this nation as well. I also want to say, as the secretary has already said, thank you for what all of you continue to do every day on behalf of those who have worn the uniform of this country.

You know, nearly a century ago now, in 1919, when your organization was formed, we had a pretty unresponsive government, a bureaucracy that was not helping to provide the benefits that the veterans of this nation had earned for their service. But now, 94 years later, I would say that our government has come a long way in its treatment of veterans, but the issue is that there is still a whole lot more work that remains to be done.

That's why organizations such as The American Legion are so important both in the country and on Capitol Hill as well. You provide guidance and a voice to those that in many cases left so much behind on the battlefield. Whether it was your efforts in helping our government create the U.S. Veterans Bureau back in 1921 or just as recently as the 112th Congress, our last Congress, you were very helpful in helping us pass a host of initiatives that were designed to better serve and protect our veterans. It was the Legion's support and its counsel that helped make these crucial bills the law of the land. That's

why I come here today as the chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs to tell you a little bit about the priorities of the 113th Congress which is ongoing right now.

Over the last six months, Republicans and Democrats, we probably are the most bipartisan committee on Capitol Hill, but we have all worked together to execute a comprehensive legislative and oversight agenda that has really has two overarching goals: Helping veterans while approving accountability and efficiency at the Department of Veterans Affairs. You just heard from the secretary about what the department is trying to do as they serve the veterans of this nation. On the legislative front, our committee has already passed 13 bills out of the committee, and in those 13 bills were 50 different pieces of legislation. Highlights of our legislative agenda include issues like putting veterans funding first.

Right now in a time where you hear about government shutdowns and you hear about things like continuing resolutions, the VA should not have to worry nor should the veterans of this country worry whether or not their funding will come in a timely fashion. The Congress moved quickly a couple of years ago to put a lot of the VA budget on a two-year budget, but we left about 17 percent that's not on a two-year budget. I think it's critical that we put 100 percent of the VA budget on a two-year cycle so, when we have things like we're about to have when we return to Washington in about ten days, that we don't have a C.R. that affects your funding nor the threat of a government shutdown that would affect your funding as well. *(Applause)*

The GI Bill Tuition Fairness Act would actually expand educational opportunities for veterans by allowing them to attend any state institution around the country at an in-state rate. When you wore the uniform of this country, you did not just represent your home state; you represented all 50 states. So we're asking states to join us, and many have, by offering in-state tuition to our veterans. We think that it is a good way for states to say thank you for those that went forward into service for this nation.

We're carrying a bill that helps solve, as the secretary has already said, what continues to be VA's most challenging and persistent problem, the backlog. You can describe it a hundred different ways, but it is a huge mountain that has over time gotten to a point where it almost looks insurmountable. So we have established a piece of legislation that basically puts a framework in place that uses the VA, VSOs, the veterans community in helping the VA to solve that backlog that exists out there. I want the VA to hit their goal of removing the backlog that exists out there by 2015. I know that is a goal that you share as well, and I certainly hope that the president shares it as well.

Now, some say that since VA has made progress in chipping away at the backlog we should stop leaning so hard on the Department of Veterans Affairs in getting them to eliminate it. Look, the over half a million veterans that are still out there in a backlog situation would probably disagree with removing the pressure from VA. Now, some have criticized our task force by saying it's adding an undue burden, an additional burden for VA to accomplish while they're trying to reduce the backlog, but I say this: Think about it. Government bureaucrats under both republican and democrat administrations created the backlog. So it's only natural to solicit help from leaders outside of VA, those in the private sector and the VSO community, to help solve this problem.

Under the bill, the task force would provide recommendations for improving VA's claim-processing operations within 60 days of its first meeting and then continue to work with VA as they try to reduce that backlog. Now, to those that are skeptical about this approach, consider this, VA leaders have been promising to reduce the backlog since the first term of George W. Bush, and look where we are today. Again, we're all pulling for VA to hit that goal of 2015. But I say that by establishing a backlog task force we can find a commonsense way of making sure that they meet that goal of 2015. But let me tell you this, legislation alone is not going to solve the problem that exists out there today. It will take collective effort from the administration, from Congress, from veterans service organizations like The American Legion and the American people.

With that in mind, we're calling on President Obama and his administration to take a few steps to help us achieve these goals. The first step centers on leadership at the top. President Obama has got to become personally involved in ending the backlog, just as members of Congress on both sides of the aisle and many in the VSO community have implored him to do on multiple occasions. We all know that the backlog predates the Obama administration, but that's all the more reason that we're going to need the president's help if we're going to solve the problem.

Now, the president did take time a short time ago to talk to veterans about the backlog that currently exists, and I commend him for doing that. But, in listening to the president's speech, I was struck by what he did not say, by what he did not talk about. He made no reference to the oft-cited 2015 goal that the department has set for itself, even though he is the only person with the power to make sure that VA lives up to its word. And the president did not pledge, he did not pledge, to ensure that VA and DoD work together to finally have one joint individual health electronic record, even though there's near unanimous consent that such a step would, in fact, help shrink the backlog.

As commander-in-chief, President Obama is the only person in position to hold DoD and VA leaders directly accountable, and his involvement and his personal leadership is essential to solving these critical problems. We've asked for the president's help in addressing these issues. And I would say that part of the problem is contributing to the backlog as well as an emerging pattern that exists out there today of preventable deaths and lapses in care at VA medical centers across this country, VA's long and well-documented history of failure to hold poorly performing executives accountable.

Consider a few recent examples. After persistent management failures led to a deadly Legionnaires' disease outbreak in the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, the VA Pittsburgh director received a perfect performance review, and the regional director overseeing VA Pittsburgh was rewarded with a $63,000 bonus. Despite three patient deaths, VA's Inspector General link to widespread mismanagement, the former Atlanta VA Medical Center director received $65,000 in bonuses over four years. And a VA health official in New York pocketed nearly $26,000 in bonuses while overseeing chronic misuses of insulin pins that potentially exposed hundreds of veterans to blood-borne illnesses.

These are but a few instances of what seems to have become standard operating procedure at VA. Management failures that border on the criminal accompanied by rewards rather than consequences or accountability. Now, the vast majority of the 300,000 employees at VA are dedicated and are hard-working. They deserve better than to have the reputation of their organization dragged through the mud by a bunch of executives too busy patting themselves on the back to take responsibility for their own incompetence. Both Republicans and Democrats on our committee stand united. We stand united against this pattern of rewarding failure. That's why we've approved legislation that would ban VA executive bonuses for five years. *(Applause.)* Until we have complete confidence, complete confidence, that VA is holding executives accountable rather than rewarding them for their mistakes, no one should get a bonus, period.

Commander Koutz, I know you have been very engaged in the issue of VA bonuses, and I appreciate your leadership. But we can't change VA's culture on our own. Believe me. For years Congress has tried in vain to compel VA leaders to implement meaningful steps to hold poorly performing managers accountable. Unfortunately, the department officials seem more intent on protecting and rewarding failing executives than sending a powerful message that substandard care for veterans will not be tolerated. *(Applause)*

That's why we've asked the president to help us end the culture of complacency among some in VA and replace it with a culture of accountability through every corner of its organization. VA executives who fail in their jobs should not get bonuses. They should be disciplined or fired. *(Applause).*

We're also calling on the Department of Veterans Affairs to be more transparent with Congress. A major part of that is providing information when we request it. Currently VA is sitting on nearly 100 requests for information made by both Republicans and Democrats from our committee, and some of these requests are over one year old. The leisurely pace with which VA has responded to these requests, and in some cases not even responding at all, is a major impediment to the basic oversight responsibilities of the committee on which I chair. When the department drags its feet in providing information requested by your Congress, it inhibits our ability to ensure that America's veterans are receiving the care and the benefits that they earned.

So a few months ago my good friend and ranking Democrat on the committee, Mike Michaud, and I decided to let everybody know just how difficult it has been for us to engage with VA in a transparent conversation. We set up a website called "Trials in Transparency" to keep a running record of information requests that VA has yet to answer. You deserve a VA that sets the standard for openness, for honesty, and for transparency. When the department fails to do so, the public needs to know about it. That's why we established that website, "Trials in Transparency."

Finally, while we're talking about honesty, it's well past time for VA to develop an honest plan to get veterans bearing the invisible wounds of war the mental health care that they need. Most veterans seeking mental health care wait an average of 50 days, 50 days, before receiving an evaluation. That figure amounts to thousands of our veterans in need today. It takes courage for a veteran to stand up and ask for help. They deserve more than simply to be told to stand in line.

In the last six years, VA's mental health care staff and budget have grown by nearly 40 percent, and the secretary alluded to that earlier. Unfortunately, these significant increases have not resulted in significant performance increases, because for the past 12 years an average of 18 to 22 veterans take their lives every day in this country. It is not enough that the veterans suicide problem isn't getting worse, it isn't getting much better either. That means there's more work for us to do when Congress returns on improving veterans mental health care. In order to truly maximize mental health care access for today's veterans, VA has got to embrace an approach to care delivery that treats veterans where and how they want, not just where and how VA wants to provide the care. That's why I'm working on draft legislation that would give veterans in need access to mental health care treatment whether those services come from VA or outside the system in the private sector. Some have said that this could undermine VA's health care. But this isn't about supplanting VA's health care system; it's about supporting its system. Furthermore, expanding access to mental health services for veterans in need is a good thing, whether it comes from the Department of Veterans Affairs or it comes from somewhere else.

Though our nation is approaching the end to more than a decade of war, the fight to ensure you and your brothers- and sisters-in-arms get the care and benefits you have earned is not. Breaking VA's benefits backlog, expanding access to veterans mental health care, and changing the culture at VA is not going to be easy. But the fact is we owe it to the men and women who braved bullets and bombs over there to make sure that it's done right here. So the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs is united in this cause. I ask for your help. Please join us. God bless you, God bless our veterans, and God bless the United States of America. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Our next guest was nominated to be deputy secretary of labor by President Obama on February 23, 2009. Prior to joining the department, he served as a law professor at the New York Law School and as director of its Labor and Employment Law programs. He also served for seven years in the Labor Department during the Clinton administration. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Deputy Secretary of Labor Seth Harris. *(Applause)*

Address: Seth D. Harris, Deputy Secretary
United States Department of Labor

Well, good morning, American Legion. Thank you for that generous introduction, Commander Koutz, and thank you to all the national vice commanders who are here this morning. Thank you to the executive director and leadership for this generous invitation. Thanks all of you, thanks all 2.4 million members of The American Legion for continuing your fight for veterans, for transitioning servicemembers, and for military families.

In the 1920s, when the federal government needed to create a cabinet agency that was dedicated to veterans, you were there. When the greatest generation returned from Europe and the Pacific after beating back fascism, ready to power the largest economic boom in American history, you were there. When thousands of brave men returned from Vietnam and received a welcome unbecoming their sacrifices, you were there for them. And today when thousands of men and women are demobilizing from Iraq and Afghanistan, ready to lift our nation with their energy and their courage and their ingenuity, well, here you are. Your unwavering commitment to American veterans, servicemembers, and military families gives deep meaning to the word "service" in veterans service organization.

Let me say the Labor Department is proud to be your partner. It is truly a privilege to be here with you today. Let me say that honor is made even greater by the fact that I get to follow a colleague and friend, Secretary Eric Shinseki, at this podium. Ric Shinseki is an American hero. He has taken on the toughest, most intractable problems the Department of Veterans Affairs has ever seen, and he has done it with a calm and cool commitment to America's veterans that I deeply admire. And he's getting it done. Ric Shinseki improves the lives of America's veterans each and every day, and I want to thank him for his outstanding service to America. *(Applause)*

Let me also acknowledge Chairman Jeff Miller of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. Let me say veterans employment is not a partisan issue. It's not a political issue. As the vice president said yesterday, it is a sacred obligation that we all owe. We appreciate the opportunity to work with Chairman Miller and the House Veterans' Affairs Committee on veterans employment.

Let me finally say what a pleasure it is to be back in Houston. I started my career here working for the Seafarers International Union. It was here in Houston that I got my education in how to fight effectively for working men and women. You couldn't find that education in any textbook. Let me just say, though, is there any more humid place on this planet than Houston, Texas, in August? I guess the Amazon Rainforest was booked.

Now, the president and the vice president, not to mention the first lady and second lady, have said over and over again that this administration's commitment to veterans must match the ideal that this organization has lived up to for 90 years. We owe a great debt to America's veterans, and we must get about the business of repaying that debt. And jobs are an important part of that repayment.

So one of the first executive orders the president signed was to make the federal government a model employer of veterans. And since he signed that order in 2009, the federal government has added almost 300,000 veterans to its employment roles. Last year nearly 30 percent of all newly hired federal employees were veterans, and this year that number is 35 percent. *(Applause)*

But the federal government can't do it alone. We've also asked the business community to do the right thing, and they've responded. In 2011, the president challenged business to train and hire 100,000 veterans and military spouses. And then he showed how serious he was by asking his wife and Dr. Jill Biden, the vice president's wife, to lead the Joining Forces initiative and to work with the private sector to put veterans to work. Since that time, private sector employers hired 290,000 veterans, nearly three times

President Obama's original goal. And companies have committed to hire or train another 435,000 veterans and military spouses over the next five years. *(Applause)*

Now, the Labor Department is engaged in similar efforts. We're partnering with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce through the Hiring Our Heroes initiative. Since its launch in March 2011, Hiring Our Heroes has been able to help more than 100,000 veterans and military spouses find meaningful employment. President Obama proposed the Returning Heroes and Wounded Warriors tax credits and got Congress to pass them. These credits create incentives for businesses to hire veterans: $5,600 for an unemployed veteran, $9,600 for a wounded warrior. In January, the president got Congress to extend those tax credits through the end of this year, and now what he wants to do is to make those veterans employment tax credits permanent so that every business owner, every one, will know the value that our country places on getting veterans back to work. *(Applause)*

So we're creating hundreds of thousands of job opportunities for veterans. But we must also make sure that veterans are fully prepared to succeed in those jobs. You and I know that the United States has the best trained, most skilled military this planet has ever seen. But it's not always easy to translate military credentials and training into civilian credentials and licenses.

So in February Mrs. Obama urged all 50 governors to push for legislation that would facilitate credentialing and licensing for veterans, and so far 38 states have passed laws that take barriers out of the way that keep servicemembers and veterans from earning state licenses, especially for emergency medical technicians, paramedics, commercial drivers, and licensed practical nurses. The president also established the Gold Card initiative, ensuring that all post-9/11 veterans are eligible for free services aimed at jump-starting their careers at the Labor Department's American Job Centers across the country. The vets get six months of intensive case management, assessments and career counseling.

All of those efforts and the hard work of Legionnaires across the United States is making an impact. Just recently the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the unemployment rate for veterans is way down. It was 8.3 percent in 2011. It was 7 percent in 2012. For post-9/11 veterans, the unemployment rate went down from over 12 percent to below 10 percent. As of last month, veterans unemployment was down to 6.4 percent, a full percentage point below the national average. And the unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans is about the same as the national average for all veterans, finally. So, yes, unemployment is better for America's veterans. But we cannot proclaim success until every veteran who wants a good middle-class job has the skills and opportunity to get one. *(Applause)* So this administration is going to continue clearing pathways into the middle class for every veteran.

The Labor Department's Veterans' Employment and Training Service is the lead government agency dedicated to veterans employment. Let me say, we take that responsibility very, very seriously. To assist veterans in finding employment, we give every one of them priority of service at our 2,600 American job centers around the United States. Within the job centers, there are two principle staff positions that serve veterans, the Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialist, we call them DVOPS, and the Local Veteran Employment Representative, we call them LVERs. Many of you know your local DVOPS and your LVERs in your communities.

DVOPS help veterans with disabilities and other significant barriers to employment to overcome those barriers and to get jobs. LVERs conduct outreach to employers to increase employment opportunities for all veterans. But as Vice President Biden has often said, don't tell me what your priorities are, show me your budget and I'll tell you what your priorities are. That's why the president's budget request for next year includes $38 million more for 500 more DVOPS in American job centers across the United States. And it includes another $50 million dedicated to invention and innovation to find new models that will help us to move veterans and military spouses and Guard and Reserve

members into employment. But we're not waiting for Congress to pass a budget, because you can grow old in Washington waiting for Congress to pass a budget.

The Department of Labor has already launched some online tools, including one that we call "My Next Move for Veterans." This online resource allows veterans to put their military occupational specialty into the computer and to find civilian occupations for which they're already very well qualified. There is information about salaries and apprenticeships and education and training programs and links to area job openings. But here's the thing. Many servicemembers who signed up right out of high school have never had to look for a civilian job. So in cooperation with our partners at the Defense Department and the Veterans Affairs Department, we've completely overhauled the Transition Assistance Program. That's the program that helps transitioning servicemembers get ready for civilian life, including getting ready to look for a civilian job. Congress made TAP, as we call it, TAP, mandatory in the VOW to Hire Heroes Act. And we committed ourselves to making sure the TAP program works well for every single transitioning servicemember and every spouse that wants to be served.

In the Labor Department's completely resigned TAP employment workshop, transitioning servicemembers learn resume writing. They learn job search techniques. They learn how to make career decisions, and they learn about current labor market conditions and where the jobs are. It provides them with tools to help them translate their military skills and training to meet civilian licensing and credentialing requirements.

We served over 160,000 transitioning servicemembers and spouses last year, and we're going to keep track of them. We're going to encourage them to go visit our DVOPS and LVERs in the American job centers, and we will do everything we can to make sure they get the skills and credentials they need to build a civilian career that will support a middle-class lifestyle.

President Obama, Secretary Shinseki have made clear that no veteran anywhere in the United States should be homeless, not one. Secretary Perez and I agree with that completely. We are committed to helping to wipe out veterans homelessness once and for all. *(Applause)*

The Labor Department's Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program is the only nationwide program focusing exclusively on employment of veterans who are homeless. And it's very successful. More than 60 percent of the homeless veterans that we served in the HVRP program, including homeless women veterans and homeless veterans with families, are placed into jobs, and the overwhelming majority end up staying in those jobs.

But let me say, we're not just using traditional, on-the-ground services to get veterans to work. We're also using social media to get the word out. Over the first eight months of this year, DoL hosted four Twitter town halls. How many people in the room are on Twitter? Come on. Oh, there's not many. Not many. Well, wait a minute. When I tell you how we're using Twitter to help veterans get jobs, you're all going to want to sign up for Twitter.

So we use the hashtag, #VetsJobsChat. And the Labor Department and more than a dozen veterans service organizations, including your American Legion, answer questions from veterans and employers about veterans employment. So we send them to online tools like My Next Move for Veterans. We tell them about programs that are being run in partnership with The American Legion and other VSOs. We provide contact information so that veterans can find their local American Legion job center, find their local DVOP and their LVER. Our last session in July was focused on veterans with disabilities. One million people viewed that veterans jobs chat. The next one is scheduled for September, and we're going to focus on student veterans.

If you'll help us, we'll do it every month. Every single month we'll put out more and more and more information about veterans and how they can get jobs. So if you're not on Twitter, sign up. Ask your kids or your grandkids because they're on Twitter. But if you

are on Twitter, follow us at @usdol. Follow The American Legion at @americanlegion. You can even follow me at @sethharrisdol.

So we've made some important strides in reducing veterans unemployment. And we've implemented policies and changed our systems to do even more. But barriers remain. Over one million, one million, of our nation's veterans don't have health insurance. Let me say that again, because I don't think people understand this. One million American veterans do not have health insurance. And there are still more veterans who could be working but are afraid that they will lose Medicare or Medicaid if they take a job or they earn too much. That's wrong, and we cannot allow it to continue.

Now, President Obama's health care reform legislation is a big part of the solution. The passage of the Affordable Care Act means that veterans, including veterans with disabilities, can look for work knowing they will have access to affordable health care options whether their employers provide it or not. Employers will be able to hire veterans and veterans with disabilities without fear that they will be denied coverage by their health insurance providers because the era of discrimination based on preexisting conditions, that's over and it's over forever.

That's why I don't want to leave this stage without talking about how we must work together to make the president's health care law a continued success. On October 1, the new health insurance marketplaces will open. That's where everyone can find health insurance in their home state. So when you go home and you're talking to a fellow veteran, which I know you all do every day, and you find out that that veteran doesn't have health insurance, send that veteran to www.healthcare.gov. That's where they can look at all of the health insurance plans available in their state, compare them, make apples-to-apples comparisons, and they can enroll in the best plan right on healthcare.gov. If they can't afford health insurance, subsidies may be available for them.

So, please, include healthcare.gov as a link on your website. Post it up in your local Legion hall. Engage your communities. Tell your employees. Use your grassroots networks. Use your social media networks if you have them. Every veteran in America deserves the best health care available, but we can only make that happen with your help.

Now, another persistent barrier to veterans employment is unfair stereotyping of veterans that sometimes too often leads to discrimination in hiring. So just yesterday, right here at this podium, Vice President Biden made an announcement that was so important that he made me repeat it again. He ordered me to repeat it again. And let me just tell you, when Joe Biden tells you to do something, you better do it. So here we go.

Yesterday the vice president announced a final Labor Department regulation that's going to require the companies that do business with the federal government to establish annual hiring goals for veterans. Federal contractors are going to have to set goals and they're going to have to work hard to achieve those goals.

But we also know that many veterans are challenged by disabilities incurred either during service or acquired thereafter. So the Labor Department also announced a second rule yesterday that requires contractors to set hiring goals for people with disabilities, including veterans with disabilities. Again, federal contractors are going to have to set goals and they're going to have to work hard to achieve those goals.

These rules are necessary because veterans hiring and disabilities hiring don't just happen. It takes work. It takes a sustained commitment. It takes a plan. It takes employers reaching out to Joining Forces and the U.S. Department of Labor and The American Legion. It takes breaking down barriers and putting aside prejudices and old ways of thinking. It takes goals and specific dedicated efforts to meet those goals.

Now, I realize that the lunch hour is approaching and any wise speaker doesn't mess with that, let me just say, so I will just close by saying this. Earlier this month I took a summer vacation with my family. We spent time in Maryland and Delaware and New Jersey and New York. We drove through all of those states. And in so many towns, even if the town was little more than one main road and some farmland, we saw an American

Legion hall. They're so ubiquitous that sometimes you don't even notice them. They're just there. Meeting places for generations of men and women who have given everything they had to this country. These Legion halls are woven into the fabric of these towns, just like The American Legion has been woven into the fabric of this country for almost a century.

No matter where in the United States a veteran sees The American Legion emblem, he or she knows it is a safe place, a place to talk about problems, to figure out who in town is hiring, or just to get a hot meal or a cold beer. That's where the struggle to put veterans to work is going to be won. That's where we can spread the word about health care for every veteran. That's where we can ensure that every veteran gets the respect and the opportunity they deserve. On behalf of Secretary Perez and the Labor Department, I want to say again we are grateful to be your partner and we look forward to many, many more decades of working together to make America better and to help veterans get to work. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: When The American Legion chose USAA to be its preferred provider of insurance and financial services in 2010, the decision was studied closely, but it was an easy one. After all, the two organizations had 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. USAA, also founded by veterans, holds strong to its mission of facilitating the financial security of military families and its core values of service, loyalty, honesty and integrity.

Before joining USAA in 1994, Major General Joe Robles had a decorated 28-year Army career. He rose 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 a "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. *(Applause)*

Address: Major General (Ret.) Josue 'Joe' Robles
President and Chief Executive Officer, USAA

Thank you for that kind introduction, Commander Koutz, and good morning, fellow Legionnaires. I bring you warm greetings from more than 25,000 USAA employees who come to work every day to serve servicemembers, veterans and their families. I truly believe that the way a nation honors and cares for its military veterans reveals the character of that nation, its priorities, and its values. The very existence of The American Legion for almost a century tells me what I need to know about the character of the American people. We at USAA were so proud three years ago to become the preferred provider of financial services to The American Legion, and we have been honored to work alongside you in the cause of increasing the hiring of veterans and military spouses.

As our commitments wind down in Iraq and Afghanistan, more of our servicemembers are streaming home and returning to civilian life. In fact, between 2011 and 2016, some one million veterans will take off their uniforms. I'm sure that many of you have vivid memories of your own journeys back to civilian life. As you know, it's not always seamless switching careers and integrating into a completely different world full of new variables. This adjustment can be especially tough for those that return home with wounds both visible and unseen.

Todd Nelson was an Army master sergeant who spent 19 years in the U.S. Army. A suicide blast in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 2006 critically injured Master Sergeant Nelson. Since his medical retirement, he has had 40 reconstructive surgeries. That's right, I said 40 surgeries. But beyond the incredible physical obstacles, Todd Nelson also faced many of the same adjustments that other veterans face. He's had to overcome. Listen to what he told our new employee orientation class recently back at USAA. Would you please run the clip. ... *At this time the delegation watched a video. (Applause)*

I'm happy to say that today Master Sergeant Nelson is a USAA employee. Todd helps lead USAA's effort to recruit other wounded warriors, and he does an absolutely terrific job.

Of course, military service can also be a family affair. We cannot forget that the spouses of servicemembers have their own career challenges. Christy Johnson is a senior member service advisor at USAA who followed her Army husband from permanent change of station to permanent change of station. Christy told us this: No one really wants to hire you when your resume is three pages long and you change careers every two to three years or so. For all the Christys and Todds out there, the opportunities seem to be getting a little brighter lately, as you heard the secretary say. In recent months we have seen an impressive mobilization of organizations in both the public and private sectors to hire veterans and military spouses.

Like The American Legion, USAA has become an active member of the U.S. Chamber's Hiring Our Heroes initiative as well as the White House's Joining Forces Initiative. Seeing to it that it is a smooth transition into the work world is especially close to home in our company at USAA. That's because more than half of the separated veterans that have recently separated happen to be USAA members. So we have the opportunity to talk with them every day and learn about their hopes and their fears and their questions.

I'm happy to say that making veteran hiring a national priority is already paying off. At the end of last year, unemployment among post-9/11 veterans was around 10 percent. Today it's just above seven percent and hopefully getting better. More and more employers are discovering that veterans make great employees. They are trustworthy, hard working, and mission oriented. They are great followers and even better leaders. You all know that better than I do.

This year at USAA we upped the ante on our hiring goals. Our goal for 2013 is that 30 percent of all new hires will be a veteran or a spouse of a veteran. As a matter of fact, since 2005, we have hired 7,300 veterans or spouses of veterans at USAA. *(Applause)*

Thousands of other organizations around the country are setting their own hiring goals, and it's having a real impact. The biggest danger today is that we in the private and public sectors let veteran hiring move back to the back burner. The truth is, we still have a lot of work to do. Hiring veterans and military spouses is only step one. Step two involves helping them find the right job and the right careers to leverage their skills and experience. If you talk to recent veterans like we do all the time, many will tell you that they often take the first job they can find to help make ends meet. They tell of going through two or three jobs before they find the right fit. This nomadic experience can sap their confidence and take a toll on their families.

At USAA our approach to veterans is essentially to hire them, connect them, and develop them. One of the ways we have done this is the creation of developmental programs made up entirely of veterans. An example would be our Combat to Claims program or the Junior Military Officer Career Development program. In these programs, veterans start together as a cohort. They train together and can turn to one another when they need help adjusting to civilian marketplace or workplace.

We also give our veterans access to mentors and people who have already gone down the paths they're about to embark in. We even have an online veteran community called the VetNet that lets veterans and military spouses discover professional

development opportunities or just connect socially with one another. What all this indicates is that hiring a veteran or military spouse is the easy part. Helping them discover a promising career requires more effort, but it is absolutely well worth it.

We've come a long way since the days of Vietnam when many returns veterans were met with, at best, indifference. I certainly remember clearly, like it was yesterday, back in 1970 I returned from my tour in Vietnam to attend college, and finish my degree at Kent State University, just a couple of days after the killing of the students there by the National Guard. A couple of young women walked up to me because I was in uniform, I was assuming I had to wear my uniform for the first part of my orientation there, and a couple of young women came up to me, reached behind them, smiled a little bit and said, "Hey, soldier boy," and threw a balloon right in my chest with paint in it.

Today veterans are more likely to get a hearty handshake and a "Thank you for your service." But true appreciation demands more than words. It demands action on all of our part. With the help of organizations like The American Legion, we have been mobilizing as a nation to help ease the transition of recent veterans. But we should not and cannot rest on our laurels. There is much more work to be done giving our veterans and spouses the kind of career opportunities they deserve. How we persevere in these efforts speaks volumes about our national character.

Thank you for your leadership in helping our veterans towards a successful transition. Thank all of you for the work you do to support veterans and their families in our communities. God bless America. Duty first. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: I now call on National Vice Commander David Hall to assume the duties at the lectern. ... *At this time National Vice Commander Hall assumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HALL: At this time I call on Past National Commander Fang A. Wong of New York to present the Plaque of Appreciation to the president of the National Convention Corporation of Indiana, National Commander James E. Koutz.

Presentation: Plaque of Appreciation to the City of Indianapolis, Indiana Host City of the 2012 National Convention

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Good morning delegates to the 95th National Convention. It certainly is a pleasure to be able to stand before you this morning and also a great honor to represent this great organization to present as a token of our appreciation to the 94th convention city, Indianapolis, Indiana, and also to the president of the National Convention Corporation.

You know, Mr. Commander, you mentioned yesterday that it is certainly a unique feature that this year the national commander of The American Legion and also the commander-in-chief of the VFW came from the same district, from the same state. So you thought that was very neat. After listening to that, I did a little research. I also would like to share with you some unique things from the 94th and 95th National Conventions.

In 1996, it was my first ever National Convention, held in Indianapolis. 2012, I got kicked out as your national commander at the next Indiana convention. Not that I feel badly about it. You are the first one elected from the same state in the last 30 years. But this one is really neat. Last year was also the first time, probably not the last time, that the Legacy Run actually started away from Indianapolis, traveled from the great Empire State of New York all the way to our National Headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana. I suppose it will happen again in another four or five years.

But this one you are going to love. We have someone that wanted to be national commander so bad that he actually organized the National Convention Corporation, took charge of the corporation and made sure that he get elected as the national commander. I don't think that will ever, ever happen again. *(Applause)*

The last thing I would like to share with you, Mr. Commander, this will probably be the only time, I think it will probably be the only time, that we will hand the plaque from the junior past national commander to the soon-to-be junior past national commander. I'm very happy to do that. Congratulations, sir. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you, Commander Wong. I am truly proud of the great job Indianapolis and Indiana did in hosting last year's National Convention. I was not just happy about how the election turned out, but the demonstration of hospitality shown by so many of my fellow Hoosiers. And just as significantly, we are proud to be the home city of the National Headquarters. Thank you all so very much. ... *National Commander Koutz resumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: 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. ... *At this time National Vice Commander Hall assumed the Chair.*

Report: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section III of Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs) Denise H. Rohan, Wisconsin, Chairman

Forty-one members of the Credentials and Internal Affairs Committee Section III (Membership) considered four resolutions which originated from the Departments of Colorado, North Dakota and Washington. Of these four resolutions, one was approved, two were referred, and one was rejected.

Michael Strauss of South Carolina nominated Denise H. Rohan of Wisconsin as Chairman. It was seconded by Kenneth Mueller of Texas. The motion to close nominations was made by Michael Strauss of South Carolina and seconded by Kenneth Mueller of Texas. Both motions carried.

Ken Mueller of Texas nominated Gerald Goetzinger of South Dakota as Secretary. It was seconded by Randy Bain of Idaho. The motion to close nominations was made by Thomas Goodin of Missouri and seconded by Emery McKimmy of Kansas. Both motions carried.

Carl McGee of Louisiana made a motion that the Chairman and Secretary be authorized to sign the report of the Committee. The motion was seconded by Norm Schollett of Michigan, motion carried.

Dave Hilliard of Ohio 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 Resolutions. The motion was seconded by Elmer Palmer of Montana, motion carried.

Approved Resolution

Resolution No. 4: Include Gender in The American Legion Membership Records
Origin: Colorado
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section III)

WHEREAS, The American Legion was chartered to ensure all veterans receive the benefits and services to which they are entitled; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, in September 2011, hired a Women Veterans Outreach Coordinator to manage women veterans programs of The American Legion; and

WHEREAS, This position will help identify women veterans best practices and challenges and is working with the departments to establish Women Veterans State Coordinators to oversee women veterans programs in each state; and

WHEREAS, The adoption of American Legion Resolution No. 45, titled Women Veterans, dated October 17-18, 2012, reaffirms The American Legion's commitment to female veterans; and

WHEREAS, The methods and tools to capture the gender-specific data required by coordinators to effectively reach female Legionnaires do not exist; and

WHEREAS, Furnishing this information will be optional; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That the national organization of The American Legion instruct their IT Division to add a gender field in The National American Legion membership database to track gender.

Referred to Standing Committee on Membership and Post Activities

Resolution No: 14: (ND) **Enhance Membership Application Website**
Resolution No: 21: (WA) **Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Cards**

Rejected Resolution

Resolution No: 22: (WA) **Restructure Direct Membership Solicitation Program**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ROHAN: Mr. Commander, as a duly elected delegate to this Convention from the Department of Wisconsin, I move for the adoption of this report. ... *Second.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HALL: I believe I heard a second. Is there any discussion? All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed? The report of Credentials and Internal Affairs, Membership is adopted.

... National Commander Koutz resumed the Chair.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: It is now time for membership awards. The departments and individuals who will be joining me are being recognized on stage today for their outstanding membership efforts in 2013.

We are continuously building relationships with our active duty and Reserve military components and the National Guard. Through our Reconnect program and activities such as Student Veterans of America, The American Legion Riders, Operation Comfort Warriors, assistance through the Family Support Network, Soldier's Wish and many others have expanded the opportunity for The American Legion to fulfill the promises of our Four Pillars. Couple all of this with our continued commitment of service to veterans, their families and our communities through our district revitalizations and you can clearly see why The American Legion's growth potential is unlimited.

During the past spring meetings, the NEC implemented our strategic plan on sustained membership growth. It is important for us to follow this plan to build the foundation for this year. Priority number five focuses on membership recruiting and retention, so we need to keep in mind that we cannot grow with new members if we do not remain engaged with our existing members. Retention must be a priority in increasing our membership. Membership gives The American Legion its strength because, as we know, there is strength in numbers. So today we would like to recognize a few departments and individuals for their efforts in membership.

I now ask that National Vice Commander Glenn A. Hickman assume duties at the podium and that the national vice commander assigned to each department from their regions, join me as we congratulate those hard-working Legionnaires.

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

Presentation: Department Membership Awards

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HICKMAN: As the third priority in the strategic plan for sustained membership growth, it is important to revitalize existing posts to promote growth within The American Legion. So our first award is being given to two individuals who have taken this to heart by conducting district revitalizations within their respective departments.

Past National Commander Marty Conatser and Department Commander Paul Sanford have made a commitment to conducting revitalizations on a regular basis. They are to receive a post development and revitalization pin and a plaque for these efforts. Please join me in congratulating these two Legionnaires. *(Applause)*

Fourteen departments have exceeded their membership goal for the 2012-2013 membership year. This is an accomplishment we have not seen in over ten years, since Past National Commander Ray Smith's year in 2000-2001 where this many departments performed at this level.

A plaque is being presented to the following department commanders: Tennessee, Armand M. Hammer; Georgia, William H. Lienhop, Jr.; Florida, Arthur L. Dudley, II; Utah, William L. Dunlap, II; North Carolina, Bill G. Richard; Texas, Daniel A. Corbin; New Mexico, Robert B. Jaramillo; Colorado, James M. Gates; Philippines, Joseph Carsley; Delaware, James M. Brady, Jr.; Rhode Island, Cory Bates; Arizona, Kenneth L. Dowse. (*Cheers and applause)*

These next four departments have just recently achieved 100 percent of their membership goal. They continue working membership even after their target dates were completed. They are receiving a certificate onstage and their shadowbox will be mailed to them as soon as we receive it: Oregon, Robert E. Huff; Idaho, Arthur L. Gimpel; Virginia, Isaac S. Lelley; Michigan, Thomas G. Brown.(*Cheers and 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 a one-hundredth of a percentage point in this categories. This year we have a winner in each of the five categories in the Race to the Top competition.

Please join me in welcoming these District Commanders to the stage:

Category 1, District 1, Thomas J. Florez, Department of Colorado.

Category 2, District 7, Michael J. Christensen, Department of Colorado.

Category 3, District 3, Patricia E. Liddell, Department of Georgia.

Category 4, District 9, John C. Arant, Department of Georgia. *(Applause)*

The following District Commander is going on his second straight year as a Race to the Top winner. Please join me in welcoming this back-to-back winner to the stage: Category 5, District 6, Robert D. Kiley, Department of Florida. *(Cheers and applause)*

These district commanders are being presented a new Legion cap, a polo shirt, a shadowbox, and a check for $200.00. We sincerely appreciate your hard work and dedication. Thank you. ... *National Commander Koutz resumed the Chair.*

Presentation: National Recruiter of the Year

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Now, this leads me to the most prestigious membership award. This year's National Recruiter of the Year is Edgar J. Johnson, Department of Georgia. *(Cheers and applause)*

He recruited 724 new members into The American Legion. This is his first time earning the title of National Recruiter of the Year. I am sure this will not be the last time that we will be presenting Mr. Johnson with an award. Will National Vice Commander Jeanette Rae please assume duties at the lectern.

... *At this time National Vice Commander Rae assumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER RAE: Commander Koutz is presenting one new Legion cap, a shadowbox plaque, and a polo shirt and a ring signifying that Edgar earned the title of National Recruiter of the Year for the 2013 Membership Year.

Edgar, can you make it a second time? And is there someone in the audience who is up to the challenge of dethroning Edgar? Remember, all you have to do is just ask, and they will join. Congratulations, Edgar. We hope that you continue to recruit more members into our great organization. *(Applause)*

DELEGATE JOHNSON (GA): It really feels nice to be amongst heroes. First of all, giving thanks to the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. If it wasn't for Him, it wouldn't have been possible for me to do what I achieved.

Second of all, I would like to thank the state of Georgia, the greatest state in the nation, from the bottom of my heart. I love you guys. *(Cheers and applause)*

When I was sitting at the table last night with Billy, Billy said, "Edgar, you gotta get up and just say a couple of words." And I thought about it. I said, "Ever since I found out that I was Recruiter of the Year, I left my speech on my computer."

So after the banquet last night, after having a nice time with the Temptations, I went back to the room. I wrote up another speech. Nobody told me how long the speech was supposed to be, so I figured 30 minutes would be okay. *(Laughter)* But after all the speakers before me, being backstage, you can hear, wow, they've still been up on the stage for quite a while. So I kind of jotted down a couple of notes, and then I left the notes in the back as I was coming out. *(Laughter)*

But one of the things I want to say is I really wish my mom could have been here with me today, because she's my inspiration. She gave me the ability to talk, to speak to people, to know how to treat everybody. And without her and the way she raised me, I'm a proud product to say she did a great job.

I figured out I did 724 members. It wasn't an easy task. Like I said in my speech that I had written up, it was 724 pages, and I said that will be too long, trying to remember every name that I recruited into this great organization. But I do want to thank the staff of the National Headquarters for the job they did. I felt like a king getting emails saying it's especially for a VIP. The only thing I got mad about, I didn't have a little plastic thing around my neck. But Matt told me that this badge right here would do better than that plastic invitation. So I am just delighted for having this opportunity just to be a VIP.

The question was asked whether or not I think I want to be back here next year. Man, if I get treated this way for this year, man, next year should be much better. But I don't want to take up everybody's time, but I just want to let everybody know I enjoyed myself by being here, everyone from the different states, you had an opportunity just to speak to. My wife didn't make it this time because she asked me what would she be doing. Although she's from the Auxiliary, I told her you'll probably be in classes also, and she said she didn't want to go because her main focus was on going shopping.

But I would be remiss if I didn't identify several members from Post 267, the greatest post in Georgia, the largest post in Georgia, that helped me achieve this goal. In every post you always have someone to take care of all the notes and everything you do, you've got special events. And they always told me that. I used to ride the bus. Before I do anything else, I was a bus rider when I joined The American Legion eight years ago. So they told me that I rode that little small bus because I didn't know what you were supposed to do in The American Legion.

So as each year went by I achieved different things. The first year we had the Gold Brigade, and the Gold Brigade former adjutant told me, say just come on over, you're going to be a Gold Brigade next year anyway. I did that. And so I graduated from being on the bus to becoming a bus driver. And as becoming a bus driver, you gotta have somebody to ride the small bus. So those small bus members are our historian and also the Children & Youth Committee, was Sarah Anderson. Sarah, would you stand? *(Applause)* Also we had to have somebody else to be — we had one blonde in our group.

She was a Race to the Top winner. She was also our district commander. She was also the service officer for the post, and that was Pat Liddell. *(Applause.)*

I would not be here today, other than my mother, if it wasn't for the best adjutant there is in this organization. Charlie Knox, you are the best one in Georgia. Adjutant Wheeler, you're the best in The American Legion. But to me the one that I know of, the one I communicate with every day, is Hazel B. Taylor, the best adjutant in Georgia. *(Cheers and applause)* And last and foremost is my commander. Commander Vickie Smith-Dikes, made sure we communicate each day. *(Applause)*

And to all those who serve, I tried to keep it under five minutes, but I think I went over, and before I go, the commander of the Southern Bloc breakfast this morning, is he in the audience? Well, if he's not here, would somebody let him know he owes that $20 that he was taking from everybody this morning, to the committee that he was taking it up for, from the National Recruiter of Georgia, who was not recognized for being the National Recruiter of this great organization? *(Cheers and applause)*

And again I want to thank everyone from the bottom of my heart for accepting this award. I appreciate everyone who served, for those troops that are far and near, and also for this great nation, the United States of America, thank you very much. *(Applause)*

... National Commander Koutz resumed the Chair.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Well, thank you very much. And before we go any further, let me say that I hope you all noticed this stage was full of membership award winners this morning, something that hasn't been happening since 2000-2001 under Past National Commander Ray G. Smith. So I hope next year in Charlotte that we have to make the stage a lot bigger, because that means membership will be bigger. Thank you. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Consolidated Post Reporting 2012-2013

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: 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 last fall, I used the data from this report as part of my testimony. For the 2012-2013 membership year, our response rate was 64 percent with 8,693 posts reporting out of 13,560. As you can see, we need to improve in our reporting so we can truly show what The American Legion is doing in our local communities.

A certificate was mailed to the departments who met the challenge of a 75 percent response rate this year. Those departments were Alaska, Arizona, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Ohio and West Virginia. 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. Will National Vice Commander John Neylon assume duties at the podium for the reading of the winners.

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

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER NEYLON: Arthur L. Dudley II, Department of Florida. Arthur L. Wilson, Department of Missouri. James D. Carlisle, Department of Montana. Jim Sidel, Department of Nebraska. Robert E. Huff, Department of Oregon. Cory Bates, Department of Rhode Island. Stanley D. Garland, Department of Vermont. Isaac S. Kelley, Department of Virginia. Wayne W. Jensen, Department of Wisconsin. Keith R. Davidson, Department of Wyoming. *(Cheers and Applause)*

... National Commander Koutz resumed the Chair.

Presentation: National Emergency Fund Awards

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you all very much. Before we announce our NEF award winners, I ask that those who plan to present NEF donations please gather in the backstage area. The National Emergency Fund is perhaps one of the most visible ways we demonstrate our "devotion to mutual helpfulness" to our fellow Legionnaires. Please watch this video and see a great example.

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: I don't know how many times I have heard longtime Legionnaires mention that they just now heard about 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 $751,147 to American Legion Family members and 18 American Legion posts for disasters experienced. We also raised $233,469 and currently have $2,838,668 available for those in need. It is great to know that when an American Legion member needs help, the Legion Family will step up and give without reservations. 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. *(Applause)*

Those department commanders who met or exceeded my NEF challenge by per capita in their respective categories based on membership size and amount raised will be presented a plaque. We have four department commanders being recognized today. At this time, we will present their plaques. Will National Vice Commander David Hall assume the duties at the podium for the reading of the winners.

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

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HALL: There were four department commanders who met and exceeded the NEF challenge by per capita and they are, as follows: Jan D. Larson, Department of Maryland. Kenneth L. Dowse, Department of Arizona. Herbert J. Pettis, Jr., Department of Louisiana. Kent S. Webber, District of Columbia. *(Applause)*

Six departments were sent a certificate for meeting their per capita challenge of 100 percent, and they were: Department of Georgia, Department of Mississippi, Department of New Mexico, Department of Nevada, Department of Rhode Island, and the Department of Wyoming.

Congratulations and thank you for your hard work in 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. We take care of our own when they need help. *(Applause) ... National Commander Koutz resumed the Chair.*

Presentation: National Emergency Post Excellence Awards

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Before we move on from the NEF Awards, there is one more category to present. Our newest award, the National Emergency Post Excellence Award, recognizes those posts that, when a natural disaster strikes their community, went above and beyond to provide assistance to the community with meals, temporary shelter, and work areas for first responders.

Since most of our posts are uniquely placed in communities and since the National Emergency Fund is one of our most visible ways we demonstrate our "devotion to mutual helpfulness," we are recognizing them with a plaque. Today five American Legion posts

will be receiving this recognition. Will National Vice Commander James Holland assume the duties at the podium for the reading of the winners. ... *At this time National Vice Commander Holland assumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HOLLAND: There are four posts that are being recognized for their work in their communities after a natural disaster. They are: Babylon Post 94 in Babylon, New York. Broad Channel Post 1404 in Broad Channel, New York. Marseilles Post 235 in Marseilles, Illinois. And Synexpuxent Post 166 in Ocean City, Maryland. Receiving an honorable mention is the Northport Post 694 in Northport, New York. I know that every one of these posts, and those posts that were not recognized because we did not know about them, deserve a round of applause. *(Applause)*

At this time I would like to ask those departments that would like to present checks for the National Emergency Fund to come forward and make presentations now.

DELEGATE VAN PATTEN (NY): Mr. Commander, during my term as department commander last year, I took on the NEF as my project. Little did I know at the time it turned out to be the right one. On behalf of the Department of New York and all those posts that were affected by Sandy, I'd like to make this donation of $37,248.

DELEGATE KILE (WV): On behalf of the Southern Bloc, the best caucus in The American Legion consisting of 17 departments, it met this morning on the third floor and we collected $6,531. Of that amount, $3,266 goes to the Emergency Fund; $3,265 goes to Operation Comfort Warriors. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NJ): From the great Department of New Jersey, I would like to say thank you to the NEF and especially Jack Querfeld and Dave Elmore. We had over 275 Legion Family members that were displaced during the storm, and over $301,000 was handed out to them through the grants of the NEF. We also had nine posts that sustained major damage. As you have seen on the video, unfortunately in New Jersey we had to live it firsthand. I'd just like to say that there were so many Legionnaires that came up that when they did find out about the program, this money came in a timely manner. I want to say thank you to Adjutant John Baker for New Jersey and the coordination that was done with the national staff. We are internally grateful. We're stronger than a storm. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ND): The Department of North Dakota is donating $1,350 to the NEF fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (DE): Small state of Delaware is presenting $3,550.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): Department of Ohio Charities, Inc., donates $10,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (SD): Department of South Dakota, $100 to the NEF.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MO): From the Department of Missouri to the National Emergency Fund, $27,600.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (VT): From the Green Mountain State, the Department of Vermont donates $2,000. We have a late $500 for the commander's OCW project as well.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WY): Department of Wyoming is very pleased to present a check for an additional $1,000 today. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NH): From the Department of New Hampshire, $1,600.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AZ): John Ivens Post 42, Department of Arizona, $1,000.

DELEGATE DEZURIK (MN): The Department of Minnesota, an additional $1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IA): The Department of Iowa would like to donate an additional $1,000 to the fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (PA): From the great Department of Pennsylvania, home of Past National Commanders Ron Conley and Dominic DiFrancesco, it's my pleasure today to give a check to NEF for $54,474.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AZ): We've been taught that when you receive, you try to give back, so the Department of Arizona has a check for $3,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (FL): On behalf of the great state of Florida, we donate $5,000 to the NEF.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (KS): The Department of Kansas has a check for $3,029 for Operation Comfort Warriors that we didn't have with us yesterday, so I'm turning that in now. *... At this time a musical interlude was played.*

... National Commander Koutz resumed the Chair.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you very much. Total collected for NEF, $158,092.90. *(Applause)*

The next speaker is here with greetings from Texas' United States Senator John Cornyn. This individual established the senator's Southeast Texas office after Senator Cornyn was elected in January of 2003. He manages a region of 24 counties along the Texas Gulf Coast that includes over 7 million of the senator's constituents and important entities such as the Texas Medical Center, the Port of Houston, the NASA Johnson Space Center, and the largest concentration of petrochemical operations in the world. I would ask you give a warm welcome to U.S. Senator John Cornyn's Regional Director for Southeast Texas Jay Guerrero. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Jay Guerrero
Regional Director for Southeast Texas, Office of Senator John Cornyn

Hello. It's my honor to be with you here today. Senator Cornyn sends his regards in terms of the Convention this year, and he sent me here with this letter to pass on his greetings.

Dear friends: I regret that I cannot be with you today, but it's my privilege to send greetings as you gather in Houston.

To each veteran present, thank you for your service. Since its congressional charter in 1919, The American Legion has served the needs and interests of millions of our nation's veterans. At the same time, it has also facilitated contributions by Legionnaires after return to civilian life, not only to their fellow veterans but to their communities across this great nation. The success of this organization, our largest wartime veterans service organization, is demonstrated by its decades of service and its millions of lives that it has impacted.

Every generation of Americans has been blessed by the service and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform. Today our veteran community includes a wide range of men and women who have served our country with distinction. This includes members of the greatest generation, heroes who stormed the beaches at Normandy and the South Pacific to liberate millions from tyranny. It also includes those who defended freedom in Korea and Vietnam, as well as our current generation of heroes who have fought terrorism in Afghanistan, Iraq, and around the world.

Here in Texas we're privileged that so many of these brave men and women have chosen to call our state home, home to 15 major military installations and nearly 2 million veterans. Indeed, as Texans, we are grateful for the bravery our men and women in uniform and the countless sacrifices they have made to defend the freedoms we hold dear.

As Americans, we hold a solemn obligation to do all we can to honor our veterans and their family members. As you all know, for many the challenges they face arise only after they leave the battlefield, from delays in health care and other claims to challenges in finding jobs once they return from service. Our veterans today need our support more

than ever. I send my thanks to The American Legion for what you are doing to support these heroes and honor the legacy of the many who have gone before them.

In the Senate you may be certain that I am committed to doing the same, and I will continue to work to eliminate the unacceptable VA claims backlog and provide incentives to employers across this country to hire veterans. May God bless you now and always, United States Senator, Texas, John Cornyn. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Ladies and gentlemen, before we go forward, I asked you to raise a half a million dollars for Operation Comfort Warrior, and you did that. I asked you to raise $750,000 for Operation Comfort Warrior, and you did that. I didn't ask you to raise a million dollars, but you did that. The total for Operation Comfort Warriors turned in as of right now, $1,119,227.58. *(Cheers and applause)* Thank you very much. Comfort items for our soldiers, wounded, seriously ill and injured will be provided for years to come.

The Chair recognizes Harold 'Dale' Barnett of Georgia, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Economic, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committees on Employment and Veterans Preference and Other Economic Matters
Harold D. Barnett, Georgia, Chairman

Seventy-seven (77) members of your Committees on Employment and Veterans Preference and Other Economic Matters met at 9:00am on August 25, 2013, in the George R. Brown Convention Center, Room 361, Sections D & E, Level Three, Houston, Texas, 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 Gerald Sheard (NJ), Secretary; James Fratolillo (MA), Chairman of the Other Economic Matters Committee and Dennis Tipsword (IL), 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)
James Fratolillo (MA)
Gerald Sheard (NJ)
William Christoffersen (UT)
Wendall Sandell (PA)

The 11 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..... 10
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved..... 0

Referred to the Standing Commission 0
Received and Recorded 1
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 11 resolutions referred to the Standing Economic Commission will be made to the National Executive Committee and to the Adjutant of the Department concerned.

Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
Approved Resolutions or Approved with Amendment

Resolution No. 66: Enforcing Veterans Preference Hiring Practices in Federal Civil Service
Origin: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, The Congress of the United States has passed legislation giving veterans who are disabled or who serve on active duty in the Armed Forces during certain specified time periods or in military campaigns are entitled to preference over non-veterans both in federal hiring practices and in retention during reductions in force; and

WHEREAS, Federal agencies are required to provide a fool-proof way for applicants to state their veterans' preference and human resource personnel and hiring managers are required to consistently and accurately apply veterans' preference in hiring but fail to do so on one or both counts; and

WHEREAS, Manual application processes and hiring practices, along with the lack of accountability for recruitment outreach to the veteran community are no longer acceptable in the federal sector and have proven to be ineffective and used as a way around veterans' preference; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion restate its commitment to ensure that veterans' preference is consistently and accurately applied in federal civilian recruitment, application and hiring; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion monitor the hiring and recruitment practices of federal agencies when it has been brought to our attention that veterans applications and candidacy are not being fairly handled by the agency; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek and support any legislative or administrative proposal that will mandate the use of automated recruitment, hiring and retention system that safeguard against hiring malpractice in the application and the hiring process.

Resolution No. 68: Federal and State Incentive for Employers to use Veterans Preference
Origin: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, America's men and women returning home from military service are encountering financial challenges, which include a weakened economy, high unemployment, and a lack of affordable housing; and

WHEREAS, Many companies are receiving state and federal grants, tax credits and subsidies to build their businesses; and

WHEREAS, There must be more incentives for companies to hire veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion support legislation that would give state or federal grants, tax credits and/or subsidies to employers who utilize veterans' preference within their hiring practices.

Resolution No. 71: Support Hirepurpose to Assist Veterans with Career Guidance and Employment Opportunities

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

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

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, As of July 2013, the total number of unemployed veterans is roughly 702,000 (166,000 of them are Post-9/11); and

WHEREAS, Annually, the Department of Defense discharges approximately 160,000 service members; and

WHEREAS, Many transitioning servicemembers and veterans are not aware of relevant career opportunities available to them or their own potential capabilities in high demand industries; and

WHEREAS, Hirepurpose is an online interactive career guide that matches veterans, transitioning servicemembers, and spouses with high demand careers in the industries that will define America's 21st century workforce; and

WHEREAS, Through Hirepurpose, job seekers are able to make smarter choices about where to live, what to study, and what careers to pursue; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion support Hirepurpose through co-hosting industry events and providing on-going media outreach for the purpose of identifying education, training and career paths for servicemembers, veterans and their spouses.

Resolution No. 73: Support Verification Improvements for Veterans' Business within the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense

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

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

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense is the nation's largest purchaser or goods and services; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense rarely meets their Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) contracting goal as set by the Small Business Administration; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is authorized under the Veterans First program to enter into contracts first with Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSBs) and then with Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSBs); and

WHEREAS, Congress has made findings that VA has entered into contracts pursuant to the Veterans First program with companies that were not legitimate SDVOSBs or VOSBs; and

WHEREAS, Pursuant to recent legislation, VA has implemented a formal verification process which companies must undergo prior to being found eligible to participate in the Veterans First contracting program; and

WHEREAS, VA has not created a formal appeals process for those small business owners who have been denied VA verification; and

WHEREAS, The VA lacks expertise in determining control and ownership requirements in small businesses; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion applauds the VA's attempt to ensure every small business verified is in fact eligible to be a SDVOSB; however, the process has become too cumbersome to navigate for many legitimate veteran small business owners; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion recommend the streamlining and improvement of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) verification of Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses (SDVOSBs) and Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSBs) interested in participating in the Agency's Veterans First Contracting Program; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion endorses VA's efforts to ensure that contracts awarded pursuant to the Veterans First Program are awarded to companies that truly are entitled to receive these contracting benefits; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion endorses efforts to create a formal appeals process for contesting an initial denial decision; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports legislation that calls for the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Small Business Administration to share responsibilities for the verification of Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses and Veteran-Owned Small Businesses; and this responsibility should be divided accordingly to each agency's expertise and record of past performance; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion endorses the implementation of a program comparable to Veterans First Contracting Program within the Department of Defense.

Resolution No. 74: Support Legislation to Increase Telework (Telecommuting) Opportunities for Service-Disabled Veterans and Military Spouses

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

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

WHEREAS, U.S. veterans must have the opportunity to assure their own financial security and that of their families; and

WHEREAS, The option to telecommute (to work from home or another off-site location) is critical to achieving financial security for service-disabled veterans who cannot commute or work at a traditional worksite every day because of their disabilities; and

WHEREAS, The option to hire telecommuters is critical to achieving financial security for veteran entrepreneurs whose service-connected disabilities compel them to run their businesses from home and who do not have enough space at home to employ on-site staff; and

WHEREAS, The option to telecommute is critical for spouses of service-disabled veterans who need workplace flexibility to manage both care-giving and job responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, The option to telecommute is critical for spouses of service members on active duty who need telework to prevent repeated unemployment as they move with their service members from base to base; and

WHEREAS, Some states maintain a tax rule commonly referred to as the "convenience of the employer" rule; and

WHEREAS, A state that applies this rule forces nonresidents who choose to telecommute some or most of the time to an in-state employer to pay taxes, not just on the part of their income they earn when they work in the state, but also on the part they earn at home, in a different state; and

WHEREAS, Many telecommuters are double taxed under this rule, because they must pay taxes to their employer's state on the wages they earn at home even though their home state can tax the same wages; and

WHEREAS, Even telecommuters who live in states with no income tax (and who are, therefore, not double taxed) are still penalized as a result of the rule, because, notwithstanding the fact that they chose to live in an income-tax free state, and notwithstanding the fact that they may pay uncommonly high sales tax or other taxes in their home state – they must still pay income tax, to their employer's state instead of their own, on the wages they earn at home; and

WHEREAS, The telework tax penalty imposed by the convenience of the employer rule can eliminate the option of telecommuting for service-disabled veterans and military spouses by making the determination about where they owe taxes unduly complex and confusing; and

WHEREAS, The telework tax penalty can eliminate the option of telecommuting for service-disabled veterans and military spouses by making telework unaffordable; and

WHEREAS, The telework tax penalty reduces the number of telework positions available to service-disabled veterans and military spouses by creating undue complexity and confusion for small businesses regarding where they must withhold for interstate telecommuters, driving up compliance costs, and, as a result, making telework prohibitively expensive for these businesses; and

WHEREAS, The telework tax penalty drives up compliance costs for service-disabled veterans who own home-based businesses, making it prohibitively expensive for them to hire the off-site workers they need; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion strongly support federal legislation that would eliminate a steep tax barrier to telework and increase telework opportunities by prohibiting states from taxing the compensation that nonresident individuals earn when they are physically present outside the state and from applying a "convenience of the employer" rule or any similar rule.

Committee on Other Economic Matters
Approved Resolutions or Approved with Amendment

Resolution No. 44: Veteran Education Debt Forgiveness
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
(As amended)

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 Post-9/11 GI Bill is a very good educational benefit and in most cases will cover most if not all of the education expenses for veterans going to school; and

WHEREAS, In some cases where veterans pick a very expensive school and their benefits may not cover all expenses, or a veteran has used up their maximum months of benefits, or a veteran has gone beyond their delimiting date; and

WHEREAS, In these cases they may take out a student loan to assist them in covering expenses; and

WHEREAS, Through no fault of their own they may later be rated permanently and totally disabled for VA compensation benefits; and

WHEREAS, Under Title 34 of the CFR's Part 682, Subpart D 682.402, veterans may have their education loan discharged if they receive such a rating; and

WHEREAS, Under Section 61(a) (12) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 this discharge of indebtedness is considered fully taxable; and

WHEREAS, This is extremely unfair to have one part of the government forgive a debt and then have another part of the government tax the amount forgiven, placing an extreme hardship on the veteran; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion support legislation to amend the Internal Revenue Code, Section 61(a) (12), to not consider a discharged debt taxable when a veteran is rated permanently and totally disabled.

Resolution No. 67: Student-Veteran Return-On-Investment Education Outcome
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The American Legion over the past several months, has been encouraged by the growing recognition within Congress of the need to make basic, but critical, information about the return on investment in higher education available to student-veterans; and

WHEREAS, Student debt and college costs are reaching new heights, and the public is increasingly questioning the benefit of a college degree; and

WHEREAS, Information about the value of specific degrees will allow those directly affected by higher education, students, families, taxpayers, policymakers, institutions, and employers, to make informed decisions; and

WHEREAS, Federal taxpayers spend more than $150 billion a year on federal financial aid, $30 billion on GI Bill benefits, and $1 billion on military tuition assistance and students, states, and employers spend billions more, yet we cannot get answers to basic, fundamental questions; and

WHEREAS, With significant federal investment in programs and institutions, policymakers should demand better information about the effectiveness of higher education; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That Congress is urged to embrace outcomes-focused data systems that produce information which enable stakeholders to make informed decisions; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to pursue systems that provide timely, contextual, and actionable data necessary to calculate "return on investment" measures, but also to inform continuous improvement within higher education institutions and training programs, as this information is vital to ensure transparency, accountability, and alignment which are all critical pieces of the efforts to improve the outcomes of our education and workforce development systems.

Resolution No. 69: Support the Name Change of the Homeless Veterans Outreach Award
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The American Legion is dedicated to the cause of ending veteran homelessness; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that 62,619 veterans are currently homeless; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has consistently supported budgetary allocations concerning funding of homeless veterans programs; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes that more funding is needed in order to properly assist homeless veterans in their reintegration into the civilian workforce and self-sufficiency; and

WHEREAS, In November 2012, Michael Guty, a 92 year old World War II veteran, gave an $800,000 donation to La-Flamme Kusek Post 15 in Jewett City, Connecticut; and

WHEREAS, The money will be invested into Post 15's endowment, which funds The American Legion Veterans Housing Inc. (ALVHI); and

WHEREAS, ALVHI is an expansive homeless veterans housing project founded by Connecticut Legionnaires; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion change the name of the Homeless Veterans Outreach Award to the Michael Guty Homeless Veterans Outreach Award, due to Mr. Guty's generosity and commitment to helping homeless veterans successfully transition from homelessness back into the civilian workforce and self-sufficiency.

Resolution No. 70: Support the Development of Veterans On-The-Job Training Opportunities
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, In years past there have been special employment initiatives for employment of veterans; and

WHEREAS, The Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA) was one, and the other was the Veterans' Job Training Act (VJTA); and

WHEREAS, These programs were designed to provide financial incentives for employers to hire certain categories veterans; and

WHEREAS, These were highly successful programs because employers were able to defray some costs associated with training eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, There have been numerous changes to GI Bill benefits making it easier for veterans to obtain higher education and even a license or certification; and

WHEREAS, GI Bill benefits can be a useful tool to help employers defray the costs of training of veterans by developing an on-the-job training program thereby benefiting both the veteran and employer; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion support the development and implementation of on-the-job (OJT) training programs for eligible veterans in the public and private sectors; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support the development of joint projects to enhance OJT opportunities for eligible veterans through any GI Bill benefit.

Resolution No. 72: Support and Strengthen the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act
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 members of the United States military called to active duty by duly authorized and issued orders and their immediate family; 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 servicemember 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 Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That Congress be urged to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) to include protections for members of the Armed Forces, and their families, 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.

Received and Recorded Resolutions

Resolution No. 40 (NY)**: Support Local Post Vendors to Buy American**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BARNETT: Mr. Commander, I, Dale Barnett as a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of Georgia to this Convention, move for the adoption of this report. ... *Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: We have a motion and a second. Any question? No question. All in favor say aye. All opposed? Motion carried.

Our next speaker, the Honorable Al Green, represents the 9th Congressional District of Houston, Texas. It is a distinct honor to have him share with us his vision of assisting the great veterans of our nation. Congressman Al Green was born in New Orleans, Louisiana. He graduated from the Thurgood Marshall Law School at Texas Southern University here in Houston, Texas. After co-founding the law firm of Green, Wilson, Dewberry and Fitch, he was elected to the position of justice of the peace.

Congressman Al Green is currently serving the 9th Congressional District of Texas in the House of Representatives. Since arriving in Congress, Congressman Al Green has sponsored more than 14 veteran-related bills, including but not limited to: Housing Fairness Act; Homes For Heroes Act; HAVEN Act; Transportation For Heroes Act; supporting the goals and ideals of National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Week; Veterans, Women, Families with Children and Persons With Disabilities Housing Fairness Act; Veterans Homeless Prevention Act.

Congressmen Al Green has also supported veterans issues by co-sponsoring over 140 bills in Congress. Congressman Al Green proudly serves on the Committee of Financial Service as the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. I ask that you give a warm welcome and expression of gratitude from The American Legion to the Honorable Congressman Al Green. *(Applause)*

Address: The Honorable Al Green
U.S. House of Representatives, 9th Congressional District of Texas

Thank you so very much for that wonderful introduction. After such a splendid introduction, I assure you I can hardly wait to hear myself speak. And I probably better

be good. Let me thank the commander, National Commander Mr. Jimmie Koutz, for his kind words. And I happen to know that this is his last day on the job, and I want you to know that while this is his last day on the job, we will still remember him because I am going to make sure that we place in the record of Congress that he did serve, we're going to talk about his tenure in office, and we are going to let the world know that he did a great job. Would you give him a big expression of appreciation, please. Let's us show him some Texas-sized love for all the years of service that he has rendered to us. Thank you so very much. *(Applause)*

Dear friends, I want to thank each and every one of you, all 14,000 posts, all 2.4 million for your 94 years of service. I think 94 years of service to the men and women of our military and, indeed, to our country merits a special expression of appreciation. Can we hear it, please, for 94 years of service. *(Applause)*

Now let me take just a brief moment and thank some persons who are not here. You know of whom I speak. These are persons who go to distant places. And many of them, dear friends, don't always return the way they left. These are the persons who serve us in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and in many other distant places. And I always tell people regardless as to how we feel about the various wars, we ought to want every one of our persons in uniform to come home safely. Please, let's give them a special expression of appreciation, the people who serve us in our military. Somebody might want to stand up simply because of who they are and what they do for us. If they're willing to stand up for us in Afghanistan, we can stand up for them here today. Let's hear it for them, please, the people who serve us. *(Standing applause)*

I have to share this very brief vignette with you, national commander. While traversing in another state, I lost my way. I was trying to find a certain venue, and I in looking for this venue passed by a VA hospital. When I looked over to my right, there was a sign in front of the VA hospital. The sign in front of the hospital caused me to have an epiphanous moment. The sign read, "Come in and see the price of freedom." Come in and see the price of freedom.

If you go into a VA hospital, you will see the price of freedom. And it won't be silver, it won't be gold. It will be people who are patriotic who have no longer an arm that they can hug a loved one with, may not have a leg that they can chase a ball with a child with. These are people who have given much to us, and these are people that we must respect and show that we care for them every day that our country exists. I assure you, we must give our veterans the respect that they've earned. Let us make sure that we do this by and through our actions in Congress. We have to do it. *(Applause)*

I want you to know that the verdict is in, and if there was someone who had some doubt prior to the verdict coming in, there should be no doubt, none in my mind, that what happened at Fort Hood, Texas, with Nidal Hasan was an act of terrorism. It was an act of terrorism. It ought to be treated as such. It is time for those families who have suffered to be properly compensated for the suffering that they have endured and for the loved ones they have lost. It is time for us to compensate the families. *(Applause)*

I want you to know as well that I honor people who have served us in many of our wars. I honor persons who went to Okinawa, in the last part of World War II, it was the last battle. I honor Mr. Delbert Belton, and I say to you without question, reservation, hesitation, or equivocation: We cannot allow those who can survive battles like Okinawa to come back to the United States of America and meet an untimely death at the hands of someone on the streets of this country. Those who are involved in this, regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, regardless of circumstance in life, they must be punished to the fullest extent that the law allows. We cannot allow it to happen. *(Applause)*

We must do all that we can to take care of our veterans. It we can spend a trillion dollars, and this is what we've done recently, if we can spend a trillion dollars to put them in harm's way, we can spend whatever it takes when they get back to this country to make sure that they have the best health care that the world can provide, make sure they get the

best housing that we can afford, and make sure that every one of them has a good job so that they can take care of their families. This is the least a grateful nation can do. *(Applause)*

And when I say "take care of their families," I indeed mean their families. Because when we send one of our military people abroad, when we put them in harm's way, that family is in harm's way as well. That family is there with them in spirit. I'm just going to ask if you are a family member, not a veteran, but if you are a family member of a veteran, would you stand at this time, please. We owe you an expression of appreciation. All family members of veterans, would you kindly stand, please. Please stand. There's one. Here's some. Here's some over here. Here are family members. Let's give them a hand, please, and thank them for supporting our veterans. *(Applause)*

Now, what are we doing in Congress, quickly? We did pass Homes For Heroes. Homes For Heroes was a holistic approach to dealing with veterans who find themselves living on the streets of life. It affords them more than a place to shelter. It affords them the opportunity to go from a shelter to a home, to go from a shelter to a home to a job, to have the kind of opportunity that we expect them to have when they come back to this country. I am proud to tell you that it passed the House of Representatives overwhelmingly, and I'm proud to tell you that it has been picked up in other pieces of legislation, because we should never see a sign being carried by someone on the street that reads, "Veteran, homeless, need help." We must get every veteran off the street and into a place that they can call home. This is our mission. I know it is your goal. Let's move forward together to get all of our veterans into a place called home. *(Applause)*

Some of our veterans need the homes that they have rehabbed so that they can utilize them. They need countertops lowered. They need bathrooms re-modified so they can use them effectively. Friends, we have a bill, the HAVEN Act. Passed the House, passed the Senate, went to conference committee, and a strange thing happened. It disappeared. But I will not give up, and I am proud to tell you that the Federal Home Loan Bank has a HAVEN grant that they are giving to veterans to rehab their homes. Let's continue to fight to make sure every veteran not only has a home but can use that home the same way I use my home, and let's give a special expression of appreciation to the Federal Home Loan Bank of Dallas for their HAVEN Act grants. Let's give them a special expression of appreciation. HAVEN grants. HAVEN grants. *(Applause)*

Now I want to mention two more things, then I'll close. We discovered that there are veterans who die, many of them are penniless. They're paupers. Not the kind of thing that I would have happen to a veteran. When they die, they don't have anyone to afford them money for clothing for a proper burial. They don't have money for transportation so that they can get to a proper burial venue. As a result of this, we have concluded that we are going to sponsor a bill that will be styled "Burial with Dignity for Our Heroes." No veteran ought to have to have people trying to scrape up money for a decent burial. It's time for the United States of America to cover the burial for every veteran that dies. They have earned the right to a decent burial, and we must fight for it. *(Applause)*

The next time you come to Houston, Texas, my hope is that we will have passed our legislation styled "Transportation for Heroes." You might note that all of this legislation ends in "Heroes." We are pushing a piece of legislation that will allow every veteran to ride on a transportation system that is subsidized with your tax dollars. If it is subsidized with your tax dollars, I believe veterans ought to be able to get a discount. The bill allows veterans to get the same discounts that senior citizens get, that persons who have some handicap may get, and that is a 50 percent discount off of peak-hour fares. Every veteran ought to get to ride a transit system at a reduced price. *(Applause)*

Finally, friends, notwithstanding all that I've said, I sincerely believe that, in my heart, on a bad day it is good to live in the USA. On a bad day, it is great to be an American. On a bad day when your spouse wants to divorce you, it is good to live in the USA. On a bad day when your dog that you've reared from a pup wants to bite you, it is

good to live in the USA. On a bad day, when your dog wants to bite you and your spouse wants to leave you, thank God you live in the USA. On a bad day, it is good to live in the USA. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Let's keep fighting for our veterans. I hope to see you at your 95th Convention. I hope that all will continue to go well for you. God bless you. Thank you for allowing me to be with you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: On a bad day, it is good to live in the USA. I like that. On November 10, 2004, our next guest was taking direct fire from pointblank range while battling for a structure in the war-torn city of Fallujah, Iraq. Through desperate fighting in very severe conditions, he engaged and destroyed five enemy combatants and alleviated the clear and present danger posed to his platoon. Later in the battle, with ammunition scarce, our guest led his men to victory over an enemy in close hand-to-hand combat. He was awarded the Silver Star for his action. After returning from Iraq, the former staff sergeant with the Army's 1st Infantry Division co-founded Veterans for Freedom and authored the book *House to House: A Soldier's Memoir*. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome David Bellavia. *(Applause)*

Address: David Bellavia
Silver Star Recipient, Second Battle of Fallujah

Thank you so very much. I only wish that Congressman Green could show some more passion, you know? So subdued. A little boring. That guy was jumping all over the place. It makes me want to do pushups and slap a terrorist. That's what I feel like doing right now. God bless you, Congressman Green. Thank you.

And thank you to The American Legion not only for being relevant today as you were when you were instituted but for having the ethos, look around right now. Do you see those garrison caps? We live in a black beret world, and you wear those garrison caps. That sends a message, doesn't it? It sends a message that America is still the shining city on the hill. That America is still worthy of any sacrifice. Let me remind you that there are people that look at America today and look at our veterans as either victims or criminals. While we are debating what color ACU pantyhose we want to give to men like Bradley Manning in prison, we forget that there are men and women today that serve with unspeakable and unquestionable honor that ask for nothing from their government other than the opportunity to serve.

This is an all-professional, all-volunteer Army, and we're out there every single day, Marines, soldiers, airmen, National Guard troops, and we don't get the headlines. In a way it is a compliment to the valor and the service of this generation, because there are so few bad apples that when one does present itself, it's such an oddity that it becomes headline news. I'm humbled and I'm touched to see that Congressman Green sees Fort Hood for what it actually is. It would be nice if some of his peers in Washington also saw that. *(Applause)*

I would also like to remind you that as we create almost a turnstile in Guantanamo Bay right now with some of these terrorists who have the audacity to order their submarines with olives and honey as Mark Seavey has pointed out in some of his blog posts. He was at the Khalid Sheikh Mohammed trial. We have seen in our infinite wisdom that some of these terrorists are no longer a threat to the American population. They are only a threat to the American servicemen and women.

I would ask that same standard be shown to some of the men and women we have in Leavenworth right now, like Michael Behenna. Mistakes are made in the fog of war. Mistakes are made and sometimes we don't always live the Army values. But if we're going to allow some of these terrorists to be released back into the wild like the catch and release program, then we should do the same with some of our men and women who have made some errors in judgment and look to see that if you have served five, seven

years of solitary confinement, you're looking at right now some of these men and women that are in Leavenworth are actually going to serve less time than some of our "high-profile", criminals that have sold our secrets or given away our secrets.

It is absolutely tragic, and I encourage The American Legion to continue pressure on this administration to treat all of the veterans that we have in Leavenworth with the same standard that we're showing unapologetic terrorists, some of which have returned to the battlefield in Afghanistan to spill more blood. I would ask that the same standard be shown to the men and women who have made mistakes in Leavenworth. You can hold your applause for that. It is only fair. *(Applause)*

When I came home from Iraq, I was walking through the Atlanta airport in my DCUs, and as we were walking through, we got a standing ovation. I was grabbed by two gentlemen and, by the way, mental note, when a kid comes back from combat, don't grab him from behind. Give him a little space. All right? These two men grabbed me from behind and I felt some water on my neck, and I turned around and there are two Vietnam veterans. And they were crying. And they told me: Welcome home. And they said three words I never expected to hear from another veteran. They said, "I love you." No disrespect to the World War II generation. My grandfather is a proud World War II veteran, a Silver Star, a Bronze Star recipient from Normandy. He has set a standard that we hope we've met and achieved in Iraq and Afghanistan today.

But let me tell you a little something about what I consider to be the greatest generation. I think the greatest generation is an 18-year-old kid who can't even spell the country he was drafted to serve in. I think the greatest generation is a young man who's separated only months from becoming the homecoming king and is told to go fight a war overseas that he didn't ask for, he didn't vote for. And while some of his peers cheapened that service and honor, while he is serving in some of the most dangerous zip codes in the world, those same peers thought they were a little too good for service. So while he was serving in the mean streets of South Vietnam, sometimes Laos and Cambodia, they were in the mean streets of Winnipeg and Vancouver, British Columbia. They decided to burn those draft cards while other people went and carried the burden of liberty and freedom. The greatest generation would turn on the radio and be told that they were baby killers by popular culture. They were told by Hollywood that they were ignorant and fools for doing what their country asked them to do. In my opinion, the greatest generation is the generation that stood shoulder-to-shoulder and protected Iraqi veterans and Afghanistan veterans from the same unwashed, ignorant masses that choose to put the soldier behind the foreign policy. *(Applause)*

The greatest generation is a generation of veterans who was treated with dishonor and shame and made sure that their sons and daughters would never be treated the way they were treated. *(Applause)*

It's because of that I want to tell all you Vietnam veterans if you're able to stand, stand up right now. If you served in the Vietnam conflict and you never lost a battle, never lost, took one step backwards when the enemy was facing you down, I say to you, "Stand up, welcome home, we love you. Right back at you." *(Applause)*

We weren't born to fight. We weren't born to kill. We actually weren't even born to lead. We were born to follow until we had the opportunity to learn to lead. Just like we cannot be afraid to shoot in battle, we can't be afraid to speak when we come home. Right now The American Legion has not fallen trap to some of these other veteran organizations that have been hijacked by political action committees and special interest groups. You have held yourself above the fray and stayed committed. And that is, by the way, an honor to not only the officers of The American Legion but the membership of The American Legion. *(Applause)*

There is even some Democrats here, I heard. There's no party when it comes to service to your country. There is no religion. There is no ethnicity. I served next to people from all walks of life. I served next to Muslim Americans. When that flag was on our

shoulder, we were one unit together. We walk outside that door it is a world of racism and bigotry, and together we stood uniformed regardless of political ideology or religion and we stood for what America can be, what America must be, and what America is.

So I ask you today, if you are in Washington, D.C., or in a statehouse, we are not a social petri dish in the United States military today. There are standards. There is a uniformed culture. The military has made mistakes just like America has made mistakes. We've owned our mistakes. We've acknowledged the bigotry and hatred of the past, and we are ever vigilant of being a better, more proficient, more deadly military. Because our military avenges us. It defends us. It protects us.

It is crucial that we don't try to take social experiments that make us all feel good and infuse them into the military structure today. You get honorable stories of valor and sacrifice and you intertwine it with things that become a circus sideshow, individuals who want to be called different names. We want to go back to Abu Ghraib, we think back to in 2004. I was in Iraq, I was walking around, and one day I went to an Iraqi leader in a town, and they're ready to crack open a Diet Coke and buy a pair of Levi jeans. They loved us. Then one day we went on patrol and they weren't so happy to see us. It turned out that was the week that those Abu Ghraib photos came out.

People ask all the time, as a veteran of the Iraq war, how do you feel about the unit that was responsible for the atrocities that occurred at that prison? The Geneva Convention wasn't broken at Abu Ghraib. The Army standard was broken at Abu Ghraib. We conduct ourselves, we hold ourselves far higher than the rest of the world does. And Abu Ghraib, while you had horrible atrocities going on with prisoners, you had soldiers being impregnated by platoon sergeants. Did I miss that in the regulations somewhere? That seems to have fallen off the ethos and the warrior standard. Alcohol was drank on a daily basis. Drugs were taken. This is about accountability. The Army has created a system, the Marine Corps has a system where we can police ourselves. And when Congress starts to come in and adjudicate values to us, you almost have to take a step back and say, Excuse me, Washington, why don't you take care of yourself. *(Applause)*

Let us do what we do. Let me tell you something. Post-traumatic stress, I'll tell you what, if I hear another person call PTSD a disorder, post-traumatic stress a disorder, think about this for a second. A Marine gets shot in Iraq, he doesn't have multiple gunshot wound syndrome. The kid got shot. Why are we calling post-traumatic stress a disorder?

Combat is incredible. You see some of the most ghastly and ghoulish things you could imagine. But there are also things that we see in combat that we never expect to see anywhere else. We see love. We see sacrifice. We see the grace of God. We see people that can't even agree in areas that grew up not around people of other ethnicities, people of other demographics, people of economic backgrounds, and you see them bleed for each other as the brothers that God intended us to be. *(Applause)*

I don't wish combat on any one of you, but I fall on my knees and I pray every night that you could understand what that feeling is like, to know that that kid from South Carolina or that woman from Carlsbad, California, looks at you and the equality of the fact that you're just a guy with a flag on your shoulder. If we stand together and we're unified, people ask me all the time, you know, what is it like to serve with the best of your generation? Until you get a draft, you don't have the best of the generation, do you? You get every American lined up. You give me a situation like World War II where everyone has skin in the game. Today when a casualty notification team comes around the corner, every mother in their homes doesn't fall to her knees wondering: Is it me? We know exactly when the casualty notification team comes around the corner, we know exactly what house it is, because 1/10th of 1 percent of us are fighting this fight. And in World War II and in Vietnam and in Korea, when the military came down the street, everyone stopped. Everyone's throat got tight and everyone wondered: Is it me?

We need to feel that we can talk to each other in a peer group. I know The American Legion has partnered with some of the greatest charities out there for soldiers, and we

appreciate that. But don't tell us that there isn't a stigma with post-traumatic stress when the first time you mention you have post-traumatic stress you are out of a line unit. The first time you mention you have post-traumatic stress, you're given medication on the battlefield, medication that masks some of the very signs that we can manifest. These are our symptoms that these kids are having. If you give them antidepressants, if you give them all this medication and send them back out to the battlefield, you are not helping them at all. They need to talk. They need to have the clinicians prepared and ready.

God bless Secretary Shinseki. I wouldn't want his job. But I certainly wouldn't want to have the intestinal fortitude to look at all of you and do a victory lap on this stage like he did. We have some major problems in the VA. It's not broken, but we can fix it. But for the love of God, sir you let us handle the homelessness. Let's worry about some of these guys every day. The suicide numbers that we have, the victimization that we have, come on now. There is a better way that we can institutionalize post-traumatic stress awareness. How about we psychologically profile people before they join the military? Combat is a horrible thing. But there are times that people are coming into a combat zone that could be almost receptive to having more issues in the combat environment. You need a background check to be in the intelligence field. But we don't need an inkblot test to carry a rifle? Let's find out what is wrong with these kids if they have problems before we knowingly put them into harm's way. *(Applause)*

The last thing I want to talk to you about is my friends at the NFL. American Legion, I got an idea here. We spend tens of millions of dollars because we have to protect Peyton Manning's brain. The NFL spends millions and millions of dollars about post-concussion syndrome. Well, you know, the last time I checked, traumatic brain injury and post-concussion syndrome are almost interchangeable, are they not? But yet NASCAR has a H-harness for their drivers. NASCAR has the ability to make sure that if a rollover on any one of their vehicles should occur that we can protect the head, we can protect the neck. We know that the NFL has developed mouth guards that are patent pending that they won't share with the DoD. I would love to take a Buffalo Bills football helmet and throw some Kevlar on that if that could save 70 percent of our men and women coming home from traumatic brain injury. Hey, Commissioner Goodell, let's worry about high hits to the head and let's get you down in front of a subcommittee and make sure that if you have technology that can save the noggin' of Peyton Manning, you're doing for Private Joe Snuffy. All right? The least you could do. *(Applause)*

I want to thank you for writing the letters that you write, getting on the phones and doing the things that you're doing for our returning veterans. I want to remind you, in closing, that we can focus on the negative all day. I can go three hours on the dysfunction of the Veterans Administration. But the fact of the matter is that there are good patriots and good people that work at the VA. The institution isn't corrupt. The institution is overburdened. It was never meant to be a place where you can get a home loan and an education grant and you could go to also get your knee operated on. It is a system that has been asked to do more than it's capable of doing. If we spend as much time trying to help and trying to fix as we do complaining and talking about the victims, I think we can make a difference.

Let me remind you when you were back in uniform. There were times when you were outnumbered and outgunned. It would have been great to have a photon pack and a propeller on your head and a backpack and a laser weapon. You didn't have it, did you? You fought with the weapons and the equipment that your government sent you to fight with. Today there's no magic pill to these answers. But instead of complaining, instead of writing letters, find the individuals who are speaking about change, positive change. Get behind a message that is about empowerment of veterans and people who serve.

Let me tell you something. Every problem we have in the city, every problem we have in the country, the answer to it lies in our military. Those SAT scores are going lower and lower and our ASVAB scores are going through the roof. You want to hire a

veteran, he's going to show up on time, she's going to show up with a haircut, and I guarantee you there is a spit-shine to those shoes. We can fix this country again. And just like we were asked to defend liberty, it will be veterans who bring America back to greatness. You are the reason for that. Thank you very much, American Legion. God bless you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Well, I had my application ready, but he is already a member of New York. What a great gentleman.

Now it is time to extend special recognition to an employer for its 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 already recognized the small and medium business employers of the year this morning. This award is for the Large Employer category of 200-plus employees, and it goes to L-3 STRATIS of Fayetteville, North Carolina. Accepting the award are Operations Manager Jerry J. Johnson and Senior Vice President and General Manager Nick Smith. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Employer of the Year Award
for Hiring Veterans, Large Category
L-3 STRATIS, Fayetteville, North Carolina

ANNOUNCER: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans 2012 Presented to L-3 STRATIS, Fayetteville, North Carolina, for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 95th Annual National Convention, Houston, Texas.

Presentation: American Legion Local Veterans
Employment Representative of the Year Award
Bobby Bryant, Stillwater Workforce Center, Stillwater, Oklahoma

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: 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 to the Local Veterans Employment Representative for 2012 goes to Bobby Bryant of Stillwater, Oklahoma. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Local Veterans Employment Representative of the Year 2012, presented to Bobby Bryant for your outstanding service to the veterans of the State of Oklahoma.

Presentation: Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year Award
Jerome A. Billups, Job Service North Dakota, Fargo, North Dakota

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The American Legion is also proud of the men and women who work on behalf of disabled veterans seeking employment. This year I am happy to present the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) of the Year Award to Jerome A. Billups of Fargo, North Dakota. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year 2012 Presented to Jerome A. Billups for your outstanding service to the veterans of the state of North Dakota.

Presentation: Enhance the Lives of Disabled Persons Award
Gil Sosa, Precinct 2 Harris County, Highlands, Texas

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: When the Employer Awards Program was established in 1947, its purpose was to recognize employers across the country who had established outstanding records in the employment and retention of the disabled. In doing so, we are able to educate employers and the general public about many positive aspects of hiring disabled persons and thereby increase their employment opportunities. The award goes to Gil Sosa of Highlands, Texas. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Disabled 2012 Presented to Gil Sosa of Highlands, Texas, for an exceptional record in the employment of Disabled Persons.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: On behalf of every veteran in America, I extend to you our congratulations and say those words all workers love to hear, "Thank you for a job well done." We're certain you will keep hiring and assisting veterans. Please tell other businesses about the reliability and work ethic of veterans. No veteran should be in need of a job. Thank you and congratulations. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Employment Service Local Office Award
Ottawa One Stop Center, Ottawa, Illinois

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: 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 Ottawa One Stop Center, Ottawa, Illinois. Accepting the award is Office Manager Nancy Curran. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award to the Outstanding Employment Service Local Office of the Year 2012 is presented to Ottawa One Stop Center, Ottawa, Illinois, for outstanding service to the veterans of the state of Illinois.

Presentation: Homeless Veterans Outreach Award
Craig Tillman, Homeless Veterans' Task Force Chairman
The American Legion of Department of Michigan

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The charge of The American Legion is to serve veterans and their families. This includes helping our homeless vets as they're trying to re-enter society as productive, self-supporting citizens.

I am honored to present the Homeless Veterans Outreach Award to one department of The American Legion that goes above and beyond the call of duty in helping our homeless. That department is Michigan. Accepting the award is Homeless Veterans' Chairman Craig Tillman. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National 2012 Homeless Veterans Outreach Award is presented to The American Legion Family Department of Michigan for an exceptional effort toward the elimination of homelessness amongst veterans.

Presentation: Employer of Older Workers Award
AARP Foundation – SCSEP, South Atlanta, Georgia

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The American Legion strongly believes that older workers are a valuable economic resource of proven skills, stability, and experience. We also encourage employers to hire and retain older workers in the workforce. 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 the AARP Foundation in Atlanta, Georgia. Accepting the award is AARP Project Director Jerome Webb. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Older Workers 2012 is presented to AARP Foundation, Atlanta, Georgia, for an exceptional record in the employment of older persons.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you all again for your dedication to employing our veterans. Before we hear the next report, would all those who want to present donations to the Child Welfare Foundation please gather back stage. The Chair recognizes Dennis Boland of Florida, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Children & Youth, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Dennis R. Boland, Florida, Chairman

Good afternoon. The Convention Committee on Children and Youth met on Sunday, August 25, 2013 at 9:00 a.m. in the George R. Brown Convention Center, Room 350, Sections D & E. The meeting was organized by electing delegate Dennis Boland of Florida as Chairman and delegate Donald Suchy of Nebraska as Secretary. There were 48 members of the committee present.

No resolutions were received for consideration. The Committee was briefed on the important work of the National Commission on Children & Youth.

A motion was made and seconded to allow the Committee Chairman and Secretary to sign the report on behalf of the committee. A voice vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BOLAND: As a duly elected and registered delegate for the Department of Florida, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: You've heard the motion. Is there a second? ... *Second* Any discussion? All in favor say aye. All opposed? Motion carried.

Presentation: Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: I now have the pleasure of presenting the Garland D. Murphy, Jr., Award to the department that raised the most money in the Child Welfare Foundation during the past program year. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to present this award to the Department of Florida. *(Cheers and applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The Garland D. Murphy, Jr., Award presented by the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to The American Legion Department of Florida for the program year 2012-2013. 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.

Presentation: U. S. 'Udie' Grant Legacy Award

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: 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 Florida. *(Cheers and applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The U.S. 'Udie' Grant Legacy Award presented by the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to the Department of Florida for the program year 2012-2013 in recognition of Outstanding Support for The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. We thank you.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BOLAND: Commander, as president of the board of directors for the Child Welfare Foundation, it is indeed an honor to present you with a diamond lapel pin from the Child Welfare Foundation. Congratulations for your support this year to the Child Welfare Foundation, commander. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Boys Nation is a factory for American leadership. It helps mold young men into patriotic and knowledgeable business leaders, public servants, educators, and perhaps most important proud citizens. For more than 25 years, Marymount University has been an integral part of this great program. With us today is an accomplished scholar who became the sixth president of Marymount University in July 2011. He has a bachelor degree in science from the University of Wyoming and a masters and a Ph.D. from the University of Missouri at St. Louis. It is an honor for me to present a certificate of appreciation marking the great service Marymount has provided to The American Legion Boys Nation program. Please welcome Marymount University President Matthew Shank. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The American Legion Certificate of Appreciation presented to Marymount University. With our sincere "Thank you" for more than a quarter century of loyal, faithful and dedicated service and support to The American Legion Boys Nation program, "A Week That Shapes a Lifetime," by playing a leading role in the wholesome development of tomorrow's informed and responsible citizens who have gained a much deeper understanding and appreciation of our form of federal government. Presented this 28th day of August, 2013 by The American Legion 95th Annual National Convention, Houston, Texas.

Address: Matthew D. Shank, Ph.D., President
Marymount University

Good afternoon, and thank you. It's an honor to be here with you. Like many others, I want to thank The American Legion for your service to our country, the work that you've done, currently do, and will do in the future.

For those of you who are not aware of Marymount University, it's located in beautiful Arlington, Virginia. We are just six miles from our nation's capital. We have the honor of being the only comprehensive Catholic university in the commonwealth of Virginia. Classes just started yesterday, so I'm very happy to be here today. *(Laughter)*

We're enrolling approximately 4,000 students now at Marymount. We're especially proud of our diversity and boast that we are the third most diverse university in the south, with students from all over this great land of ours and all over the world.

One of the things that I'm most proud of as president of Marymount is our commitment to veterans and their families. We have a growing and thriving student veterans association and have been named a Yellow Ribbon school for consecutive years.

We strive to be military friendly, and I personally vow to help the military that are at Marymount University and their families succeed. *(Applause)*

I just learned this morning, when reading the Legion's annual report, that you now have Legion posts on several college campuses and universities. I didn't know that before today, but I will work to have an American Legion post at Marymount University. I think it would be a great thing for our campus and a great thing for the university. *(Applause)*

Now, Marymount, as you've heard, is being recognized for our partnership with Boys Nation, and we have been proud of that partnership since 1986. So 27 years we have been hosting the boys of this great land of ours. Like The American Legion, we believe that educating the youth of today will be the key to a bright future tomorrow. Marymount is pleased to share this passion with all of those that participate in Boys Nation. You are truly shaping the leaders of tomorrow. At Marymount we have a phrase: Together we do great things in the world and for the world. We very much consider The American Legion part of the Marymount family and want to continue that partnership for as long as you will have us.

On a personal note, I hold a very special place in my heart for The American Legion. I see Missouri out there. I grew up in St. Louis and participated in American Legion Baseball for four years, Thoman-Boothe in St. Louis, Post 318. I will never forget what that Legion post has done for me personally, so I want to thank all of you for all the programs that you do. *(Applause)*

Please keep up the great work. And, again, thank you for bestowing this honor on Marymount University and our community. God bless you all. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: We're now going to take donations for the Child Welfare Foundation. Please come up, give your name and how much it is on the stage, and we'll get a picture right over here.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BOLAND (FL): Mr. Commander, this is on behalf of Diane Thibodeau, a $500 check in memory of her husband Dick from Florida.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (DE): Commander, the small state of Delaware presents you with a check for $1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NH): Commander, the Department of New Hampshire has a check for $2,266.61.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (CT): Commander, the great state of Connecticut has a check for $2,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IA): Commander, Sergy Post 98, Clarinda, Iowa, gives an additional $100 to make their total over $1,000 for the year.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IA): The Department of Iowa would like to add $1,000 to the Child Welfare fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MO): On behalf of the great state of Missouri, we want to give an additional $250 to bring us over $23,000 donated to children fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WY): Department of Wyoming is proud to present a check for $1,000 today.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): From the Buckeye State, Department of Ohio Charities, Inc., we want to donate $15,000 to Child Welfare.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NE): From the state of Nebraska, Go Cornhuskers, $2,600 *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The Chair recognizes 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

Forty-three members of your Convention Committee on Americanism met at 8:30 a.m. on Sunday, August 25, 2013, in the Hilton Americas Houston, Lanier Grand Ballroom E, Level Four, Houston, Texas to discuss matters of Americanism-related resolutions assigned to the committee.

The committee organized by electing Joseph Caouette (NH), Chairman; Darrell Bishop (OH), Vice Chairman; and Charles Tucker (GA), as the Secretary.

The committee discussed seven 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 Bill Moore (KY) 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.

Seven resolutions were considered with the following disposition:

Approved Resolutions

Resolution No. 65: Spirit of Liberty Foundation Freedom Bell Honoring Our Armed Forces, Past, Present and Future
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The Spirit of Liberty Foundation's Freedom Bell was cast by the Verdin Company Foundry of Ohio on June 6, 2013 "To Honor the Members of our Armed Forces – Past, Present and Future"; and

WHEREAS, The Freedom Bell has fifty stars around its rim representing each state and is embossed with the official seal of each branch of the Armed Forces in the order of their founding and has already been displayed to large crowds at several locations, including the historic Independence Hall in Philadelphia on Flag Day 2013 and aboard USS Midway in San Diego harbor on July 4, 5, 6, & 7, 2013; and

WHEREAS, The Foundation has plans for the Bell to visit Ground Zero, the U.S. Military and Naval Academies, the U.S. Capitol and other sites across America with its final resting place to be at the Pentagon Memorial 9/11 Garden; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion National Organization proudly commends the Spirit of Liberty Foundation for its noteworthy and patriotic "Freedom Bell Honoring all Members of America's Armed Forces – Past, Present and Future"; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, This commendation is done at no cost to The American Legion and withholds all grants of authority to use The American Legion's name and/or trademark without specific authority, except in fair-use reporting of this resolution.

Approved As Amended Resolution

Resolution No. 5: Saluting America School Program
Origin: Colorado
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The Saluting America, Honoring Military Service: Past & Present program was developed by top educators, including Colorado's Cherry Creek School District Associate Superintendent Dr. Scott Siegfried, in cooperation with Pueblo's Center for American Values; and

WHEREAS, This program educates and instills a strong sense of patriotism in America's youth and raises awareness of America's cherished values and honors the sacrifices made by our nation's active military and veterans; and

WHEREAS, Many of today's youth have little or no connection with the military, and, therefore, no frame of reference for the bravery and sacrifices these individuals make to protect our freedoms; and

WHEREAS, The Saluting America Program offers an educational curriculum and school activities designed to honor and remember these veterans and active military personnel, as well as emotionally engage and educate students on the sacrifices made to protect the freedoms we enjoy today; and

WHEREAS, The program implemented by the Cherry Creek Schools during Veterans Day week in 2011 and 2012 was a huge success, involving more than 50,000 students along with staff, parents and community members including Colorado Legionnaires in the various program elements, and tens of thousands of tribute cards have been distributed to veterans and the active military; and

WHEREAS, The Saluting America Program elements are designed to provide teachers with all the components needed to implement the program with minimal effort on their part and at no cost; and the 2013 program is the precursor to a multi-school district program designed as the template for statewide and nationwide Saluting America Programs; and

WHEREAS, To help plan and execute Saluting America 2013, the following partners have committed to assist The American Legion in various roles: In honored Glory, Inc., Cherry Creek School District, The Daniels Fund and 9NEWS with more partners and sponsors to be added as they join in participation; and

WHEREAS, The Saluting America Program is a natural fit and extension to the existing American Legion program "Veterans in the Classroom", and American Legion posts and departments could find a benefit in sharing and promoting the Saluting America project with their local school districts; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That we commend the Saluting America Program for the educational curriculum and school activities that it offers to instill in youth a sense of patriotism and awareness of America's cherished values, and honors the sacrifices made by our nation's active military; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, This commendation is done at no cost to The American Legion and withholds all grants of authority to use The American Legion's name and/or trademark without specific authority, except in fair-use reporting of this resolution.

Referred to Standing Commission on Americanism

Resolution No. 29 (MD)**: December 7 be Established as a National Holiday (Consolidated with Resolution No. 7** (WY)**; Resolution No. 54** (WV)**)**

Resolution No. 49 (IL)**: Rescind Resolution No. 46, Fall 2011 National Executive Committee (Consolidated with Resolution No. 12** (SC)**)**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN CAOUETTE: As a duly elected and registered delegate for the Department of New Hampshire, I move the adoption of this report.

… Second

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: You've heard the motion and seconded. Any questions? All in favor say aye. All opposed? Motion carried. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Child Welfare Foundation collection just a minute ago, total: $26,016.96. *(Applause)*

Having completed the adoption of the Americanism Report it is now appropriate to announce the winners of two Americanism awards.

Presentation: Frank N. Belgrano, Jr. Trophy

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The Frank Belgrano, Jr., Trophy is given annually to the Department rendering the most outstanding service during the 12-month period beginning August 1 to the Boys Scout of America program. This year's winner is the Department of North Carolina. *(Cheers and applause)*

Presentation: Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy is given to the department within the United States documenting the greatest activity in operating The American Legion School Medal Program. The winning department shows what can be accomplished by an active and involved American Legion. The winner is the Department of New Mexico. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy is given to the department that achieves the most outstanding results in conducting Americanism programs. These programs advance 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 New York. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy is awarded to The American Legion Department of New York in recognition of the most outstanding Americanism program. Presented at the 95th National Convention of The American Legion, Houston, Texas, August 27 - 29, 2013. Signed James E. Koutz, National Commander, and Joseph Caouette, Chairman of The American Legion National Americanism Commission.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: 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 Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs)
Larry J. Besson, Illinois, Chairman

Forty three members of the Credentials and Internal Affairs Committee, Section II, elected Larry J. Besson of Illinois as Permanent Chairman, and George West of New Hampshire as Secretary, and considered twenty-two resolutions, eighteen of which originated with Departments of The American Legion and four which were created by the

committee. Of these, five were approved; one was approved as amended; six were referred; six were received and recorded and four were rejected.

Approved Resolutions

Resolution No. 16: National Desert Storm and Desert Shield War Memorial
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)

WHEREAS, The over 500,000 U.S. Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines who dutifully answered the call to serve our country in uniform from August 1990 through March of 1991, bravely and aggressively expelled Iraqi Forces from the kingdom of Kuwait, and in so doing, liberated that sovereign nation from extreme violence, occupation, and tyranny; and

WHEREAS, Over 300 of those brave men and fifteen women served and died as a result of their commitment to freedom and democracy and the above stated goals; and

WHEREAS, H.R. 503 introduced by Congressman David (Phil) Roe TN-1 seeks congressional authority for approval to construct a Desert Shield/Desert Storm War Memorial on federal land to forever remember the significance of Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm for not just our current citizens but for future generations of Americans and citizens from around the globe; and

WHEREAS, The National Desert Shield/Desert Storm War Memorial, located in Washington, D.C., will commemorate the service of those 500,000 plus U.S. servicemembers who served our country honorably throughout this campaign, as well as memorialize the over 300 Americans who paid the ultimate price in pursuit of this just cause; and

WHEREAS, The National Desert Shield/Desert Storm War Memorial Association will bear all of the burden of raising 100 percent of the proceeds for The National Desert Shield/ Desert Storm War Memorial through private sources and donations, with the goal date for the completion of the memorial to be in the year 2016 in order to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion will endorse and support building the National Desert Shield/Desert Storm War Memorial, without financial obligation on behalf of the national organization, as a lasting tribute to the bravery, courage, commitment, service, and sacrifice exhibited by the members of our Armed Forces living and deceased; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion will publicize the status of the memorial to departments, posts and members so they might decide on an individual basis if they choose to support the campaign to build the National Desert Shield/Desert Storm War Memorial to honor and remember the veterans who answered the call to serve in this epic and pivotal event in United States and world history.

Resolution No. 61: 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 95th National Convention has been held in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013; and

WHEREAS, There has been a spirit of cooperation and friendship along with mutual helpfulness evidenced by the Legionnaires of Texas, the officers of the Convention

Corporation and the department, and by the officials and the people of Houston, Texas; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That we express our deep appreciation to the Department of Texas, Governor of Texas Rick Perry; Mayor Annise D. Parker; the city of Houston, Texas, including the fire department, police department, and other public safety officials, and to the 2013 American Legion National Convention Corporation of Texas, John D. Morris, President, around this nucleus has been built the moving force that provided for every necessity that made for a successful and enjoyable convention.

Resolution No. 62: Change Internal Revenue Rules in Counting Sons of the American Legion Membership at the Post Level as Outlined in Section 501(c)(19) of the US Code

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 American Legion continues to be focused on the basic principles outlined in the Preamble to the National Constitution and By-Laws developed ninety-five years ago, words that are held aloft on four main pillars of service and advocacy for veterans and their families: a strong national security, taking care of all veterans, promoting patriotism/Americanism and mentoring youth; and

WHEREAS, For the benefit of the community, state and nation, The American Legion has developed programs and activities to support these pillars such as, honor guards, burial details, Operation Comfort Warriors, The American Legion Baseball, The American Legion Oratorical Contest, The American Legion Boys State and Nation, Junior Shooting Sports, transportation for veterans to VA hospitals, blood donation, Child Welfare Foundation, the Legacy Scholarship Fund, and assistance in obtaining veterans benefits, among many others; and

WHEREAS, The Sons of The American Legion is a national program of The American Legion whose membership consists of non-political, civic-minded male descendents of members of The American Legion or military personnel who died while serving during an American Legion qualifying war period to assist The American Legion membership in fulfilling their obligations to veterans, nation, state, community and families in these four pillars; and

WHEREAS, The Sons of The American Legion members augment the members of The American Legion in active participation and outstanding support with the above programs and activities in communities throughout this country since 1932; and

WHEREAS, Many members of the Sons of The American Legion eventually become eligible for membership in The American Legion after honorable military service during a wartime period; and

WHEREAS, The provisions of Section 501(c)(19) of Title 26 of the US Code lists the type of organizations which includes The American Legion that are exempt from federal taxation unless denied under section 502 or 503 and is quoted as follows:

" (c) List of exempt organizations…….

(19) A post or organization of past or present members of the Armed Forces of the United States, or an auxiliary unit or society of, or a trust or foundation for, any such post or organization—

(A) organized in the United States or any of its possessions,

(B) at least 75 percent of the members of which are past or present members of the Armed Forces of the United States and substantially all of the other members of which are individuals who are cadets or are spouses, widows, widowers, ancestors, or lineal descendants of past or present members of the Armed Forces of the United States or of

(C) no part of the net earnings of which inures to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual……..”; and

WHEREAS, Recently there have been cases that the Internal Revenue Service has been auditing individual posts and threatening to revoke tax exempt status of The American Legion posts due to significant annual increases in enrollment of the Sons of The American Legion program or otherwise greater than the 75% stipulation; and

WHEREAS, This calculation is based on individual posts and since the population of eligible descendants of The American Legion eligible members are not evenly distributed across the United States and may be unevenly clustered in certain regions of the country; and

WHEREAS, The fairest and most equable calculation should not be based on each post but rather on the percentage of the national organization or in other words the Sons of The American Legion program membership cannot exceed 75% of the total The American Legion membership at the national level; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion seek an amendment to Section 501(c)(19) of Title 26 U.S. Code by the 113th Congress to either remove the minimum percent of veterans in the post or to provide clarifying language that the minimum percentage be based upon the aggregate enrollments based on the entire national organization of the veterans service organization rather than on a local community-based post.

Resolution No. 63: Correction of Internal Revenue Service Audit Manual
Origin: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)

WHEREAS, In 2011 the Internal Revenue Service adopted a revised Exempt Organizations Examination Guidelines (Audit Manual); and

WHEREAS, Chapter 4 deals with veterans organizations; and

WHEREAS, Section 4.76.26.1 spells out a definition of war veterans which does not match dates given to The American Legion by the United States Congress and which provides for two separate dates for the Vietnam War as follows:

(3) A war veteran is a person who served in the Armed Forces of the United States during the following periods:

April 21, 1898, through July 4, 1902;

April 6, 1917, through November 11, 1918;

December 7, 1941, through December 31, 1946;

June 27, 1950, through January 31, 1955;

February 28, 1961, through May 7, 1975, in the case of a veteran who served in the Republic of Vietnam during that period; August 5, 1964, through May 7, 1975, and

August 2, 1990, and will end on the date prescribed by Presidential Proclamation or by law; and

WHEREAS, Having two sets of dates for the same conflict makes for an impossible accounting process; and

WHEREAS, Various conflicts have been omitted; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That the United States Congress rectify the problems with Chapter 4.76.26.1 of the Internal Revenue Service Exempt Organizations Examination Guidelines so it shall provide:

(3) A war veteran is a person who served in the Armed Forces of the United States during the following periods:

- **April 21, 1898, through July 4, 1902;**
- **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, to the date of cessation of hostilities;**

which dates have already been approved by the United States Congress for The American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Resolution No. 64: IRS Audit Manual on Sons of the American Legion Eligibility
Origin: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)

WHEREAS, In January 2011 the Internal Revenue Service adopted a revised Exempt Organizations Examination Guidelines (Audit Manual); and

WHEREAS, Chapter 4 deals with veterans organizations; and

WHEREAS, Section 4.76.26.2.2(2)b. pertains to the counting of ancestors and lineal descendants of veterans which impacts on our program of The Sons of the American Legion because it restricts it to two degrees of consanguinity is stated as follows:

Auxiliary Units

(1) Auxiliary units or societies are corporations or associations formed to support the purposes and activities of a post composed of veteran members. An auxiliary may be separately organized from the post after receiving a charter from their national parent organization.

(2) An organization may be exempt under IRC §501(c)(19) as an auxiliary unit or society of a veterans' post or organization if it meets the following requirements:

a. It is affiliated with, and organized in accordance with the bylaws and regulations of, a veterans' post or organization described above.

b. At least 75% of its members are veterans, spouses of veterans, or related to a veteran within two degrees of consanguinity (i.e., grandparent, brother, sister, grandchild, represent the most distant allowable relationships).

c. All of its members are either members of a veterans' post or organization described above, or spouses of a member of such post or organization, or are related to a member of such post or organization within two degrees of consanguinity.

d. No part of its net earnings inures to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual; and

WHEREAS, Article IV, Section 1 of the National Constitution of the Sons of The American Legion as approved by the National Executive Committee of The American Legion states eligibility as: All male descendants, adopted sons and stepsons of members of The American Legion, and such male descendants of veterans who died in service during World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, and the Persian Gulf War, during the delimiting periods set forth in Article IV, Section l, of the National Constitution of The American Legion, or who died subsequent to their honorable discharge from such service, shall be eligible for membership in the Sons of The American Legion; and

WHEREAS, The provisions of Section 501(c)(19) of Title 26 of the US Code lists the type of organizations which includes The American Legion that are exempt from federal taxation unless denied under section 502 or 503 and is quoted as follows:

"(c) List of exempt organizations

(19) A post or organization of past or present members of the Armed Forces of the United States, or an auxiliary unit or society of, or a trust or foundation for, any such post or organization—

(A) Organized in the United States or any of its possessions,

(B) At least 75 percent of the members of which are past or present members of the Armed Forces of the United States and substantially all of the other members of which are individuals who are cadets or are spouses, widows, widowers, ancestors, or lineal descendants of past or present members of the Armed Forces of the United States or of

(C) No part of the net earnings of which inures to the benefit of any private shareholder or Individual……..”; and

WHEREAS, Recently there have been cases that the Internal Revenue Service has been auditing individual posts and threatening to revoke tax exempt status of The American Legion posts due to significant annual increases in enrollment of the Sons of The American Legion program or otherwise greater than the 75% stipulation; and

WHEREAS, The Manual of Examination Guidelines should be amended to follow the definition in the US Code which permits all lineal descendants of past or present members of the Armed Forces without restriction on degree of consanguinity; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That the United States Congress rectify the problems with Chapter 4.76.26.2.2(2)b. of the January 27, 2011 Internal Revenue Service Exempt Organizations Examination Guidelines so it shall provide for: at least 75 percent of the members of which are past or present members of the Armed Forces of the United States and substantially all of the other members of which are individuals who are cadets or are spouses, widows, widowers, ancestors, or lineal descendants of past or present members of the Armed Forces of the United States and that all of its members are either members of a veterans post or organization who are related to a member of such post or organization.

Approved as Amended

Resolution No. 50: Increase Income Tax Deduction for Volunteer Mileage
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The standard tax deductible IRS mileage rates for 2012 tax returns that were due 15 April 2013 are 55.5 cents per mile driven is allowed for business purposes, 23 cents per mile for medical or moving purposes is the allowance, 14 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations is allowed; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is recognized as a charitable organization; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is recognized as one of the largest charitable non-profit service organizations nationally and the largest veterans organization in the world; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is congressionally chartered; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is required to report to Congress on its activities as compounded from each post’s Consolidated Post Report; and

WHEREAS, The vast majority of service organization members are on minimal income or/and in senior age fixed pay brackets; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion shall sponsor legislative support in establishing the higher deductible mileage allowance of 55.5

cents per mile driven for members involved in their program and community activities.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Internal Affairs

Resolution No. 8 (NE)**: American Legion Riders Chapter Certificates**
Resolution No. 9 (NE)**: American Legion Riders Membership Roll Call Certificates**
Resolution No. 13 (ND)**: Post Submission of Narrative Reports**
Resolution No. 17 (AZ)**: Additional Names to be Added to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial**
Resolution No. 20 (DE)**: Revise POW/MIA Remembrance**
Resolution No. 37 (NJ)**: POW/MIA Flag Up-Close Ceremony**

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 6 (WY)**: Endorsement of G. L. "Jake" Jacobs for National Vice Commander**
Resolution No. 15 (NC)**: Endorsement of Tierian "Randy" Cash for National Chaplain**
Resolution No. 24 (WI)**: POW/MIA Forever Stamp**
Resolution No. 35 (MI)**: Endorsement of David J. Mennel for National Commander of the Sons of the American Legion**
Resolution No. 53 (PA)**: Endorsement of Rev. Dr. Ted Kelley for National Chaplain**
Resolution No.58 (MO) **Endorsement of Richard A. Heigert for National Vice Commander**

Rejected

Resolution No. 11 (KY)**: Male Spouse Eligibility in the Sons of the American Legion**
Resolution No. 36 (NJ)**: Coast Guard Enlisted Memorial**
Resolution No. 51 (MO)**: Legislative Action for Resolution No. 15, 2010 National Executive Committee**
Resolution No. 56 (FR)**: Friends of the American Legion**

It was regularly moved, seconded and carried that the Committee Chairman and Secretary be authorized to sign the Committee report on behalf of the Committee.

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

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: You heard the motion and second. Any question? All in favor say aye. All opposed? Motion carried. The Chair recognizes The Honorable Vincent Gaughn from 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. Gaughn, Illinois, Chairman

National Commander James Koutz, National Adjutant Dan Wheeler, National Judge Advocate Phil Onderdonk, Jr., National Officers, friends and guests, brother and sister

Legionnaires, this is the report of the Committee on Constitutional Amendments to the 95th National Convention of The American Legion, Houston, Texas, August 27, 28 and 29, 2013.

The Committee on Constitutional Amendments met at 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 25, 2013, in Room 339, Sections A & B of the Hilton Americas, Houston, Texas. Committee Liaison Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. (MD) called the roll and announced that 39 members of the Constitutional Amendments Committee were present. The following report was authorized by the members and is hereby submitted to this Convention.

The meeting was opened by Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. (MD), who acted as temporary chairman. He stated a quorum was present and proceeded to the first order of business, which was the election of a permanent chairman and secretary.

Vincent M. Gaughan (IL) was elected Chairman and Cathy J. Gorst (WI) was duly elected Secretary. Thereupon they assumed their respective places.

Copies of all the Resolutions, the Report of the Standing Committee, the National Constitution and By-Laws and the Uniform Code of Procedure for the Organization of National Conventions of The American Legion, which include the Standing Rules of Convention, were made available to all members of the Committee.

The Chair called upon Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., National Judge Advocate, to give a summary background report on the resolutions assigned to the Committee, which was done.

A motion was made by Lloyd Woods (ME) and seconded by Richard Perry (AZ) that all members of the Standing Committee on Constitution and By-Laws who were present at the meeting, but not actual delegates to the Convention Committee be seated with voice but no vote. The motion was carried by the members.

The Chair announced that he is in agreement with the Report of the Standing Committee on the Constitution and By-laws which is attached to this report.

The Chair then stated, based upon the National Judge Advocate's report to the Committee regarding the requirements for consideration of resolutions to amend the Constitution of The American Legion and the report of the Standing Committee, he would rule out of order those resolutions which do not meet those requirements.

Resolution No. 1 (NEC) was considered. The Chair announced that this resolution is in order.

James Johnson (LA) made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 1 (NEC), seconded by Mike Stelacio (PA). The motion carried unanimously.

Resolution No. 1: Amendment to National By-laws, Article I, Sections 5 and 6
Origin: Resolution No. 2 (NEC) May 2013
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments

WHEREAS, The Centennial Task Force for the Future has reviewed the structure of The American Legion National Organization and recommends some changes; and

WHEREAS, Article I, Sections 5 and 6, of the National By-laws, currently reads:

Section 5. The National Executive Committee shall appoint, upon nomination by the National Commander, a National Finance Commission to be composed of seven (7) members. Of the seven members appointed following the National Convention (1945) at which this amendment is adopted, two shall be appointed to serve for a term of one year, two shall be appointed to serve for a term of two years, and three shall be appointed to serve for a term of three years; thereafter each succeeding appointee shall serve for a term of three years or until removed by the majority vote of the National Executive Committee. The National Commander and the National Treasurer shall be ex officio members of said commission and the National Adjutant shall be ex officio secretary of the said commission. The National Finance Commission shall be charged with the preparation of the yearly budget and the handling of funds under that budget, and such

other duties as shall be prescribed by the National Executive Committee, subject to the approval of the National Executive Committee.

Section 6. There shall be 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, National Security Commission.

The commissions shall consist of such number of members of The American Legion as the National Executive Committee may from time to time determine. Appointments to such commissions shall be made by the National Executive Committee upon nomination by the National Commander. The National Executive Committee is empowered to assign duties and responsibilities to all standing commissions and committees and to group standing committees with commissions for the purpose of efficient supervision and coordination of activities.; and

WHEREAS, The National Executive Committee has reviewed these changes and submits to the National Convention that it recommends amending the National By-laws, Article I, Sections 5 and 6; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That Article I, Sections 5 and 6, of the National By-laws, be amended to read as follows:

Section 5. The National Executive Committee shall appoint, upon nomination by the National Commander, a Finance Commission to be composed of seven (7) members. Of the seven members appointed following the National Convention (1945) at which this amendment is adopted, two shall be appointed to serve for a term of one year, two shall be appointed to serve for a term of two years, and three shall be appointed to serve for a term of three years; thereafter each succeeding appointee shall serve for a term of three years or until removed by the majority vote of the National Executive Committee. The National Commander and the National Treasurer shall be ex officio members of said commission and the National Adjutant shall be ex officio secretary of the said commission. The Finance Commission shall be charged with the preparation of the yearly budget and the handling of funds under that budget, and such other duties as shall be prescribed by the National Executive Committee, subject to the approval of the National Executive Committee.

Section 6. There shall be the following standing commissions: Americanism Commission, Convention Commission, Finance Commission, Internal Affairs Commission, Legislative Commission, Media & Communications Commission, National Security Commission, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission, Veterans Employment & Education Commission.

The commissions shall consist of such number of members of The American Legion as the National Executive Committee may from time to time determine. Appointments to such commissions shall be made by the National Executive Committee upon nomination by the National Commander. The National Executive Committee is empowered to assign duties and responsibilities to all standing commissions and committees and to group standing committees with commissions for the purpose of efficient supervision and coordination of activities.

Resolution No. 2 (NEC) was next considered. The Chair ruled said resolution is in order.

Mike Christenson (CO) made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2 (NEC), seconded by Richard Perry (AZ). The motion carried unanimously.

Resolution No. 2: Amend Article VI, Section 1 of National By-laws
Origin: Resolution No. 3 (NEC) May 2013
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments

WHEREAS, National By-laws, Article VI, Monies and Collections, Section 1, requires all national, department and post officials handling American Legion monies to be properly bonded for twice the average annual amount handled; and

WHEREAS, Article VI, Monies and Collections, Section 1, of the National By-laws which currently reads, "All National, Department and Post officials handling THE AMERICAN LEGION monies shall be properly bonded with a good and solvent bonding and surety company, as surety, to cover double the average amount of money handled in a single year. In case of delinquencies in the payments of amounts due Department or National Headquarters, action shall be taken at once by the proper officials to bring about a speedy and complete settlement. The bonds provided by national officials shall be approved by the National Judge Advocate and the National Executive Committee, and those provided by the Department officials shall be approved by the Department Judge Advocate and the Department Executive Committee, and those provided by the Post officials shall be approved by the Post Legal Officer and the Post Executive Committee, or such other official or officials as the Department may designate." does not conform to the Charter of The American Legion; and

WHEREAS, Bonds have become exceedingly difficult to obtain and expensive; and

WHEREAS, The modern method of protecting organizations and corporations is to purchase fidelity/crime insurance to cover the risk which insurance is considerably cheaper and easier to administer; and

WHEREAS, The National Executive Committee has reviewed these changes and submits to the National Convention that it recommends amending the National By-laws, Article VI, Monies and Collections, Section 1; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That in order to conform with the Charter of The American Legion, the National By-laws, Article VI, Monies and Collections, Section 1, should be amended to read:

All national employees and volunteers handling all American Legion monies and negotiable instruments shall be covered by fidelity/crime insurance in an adequate amount as desired by the Finance Commission and said fidelity/crime insurance policy(s) shall be approved by the National Treasurer, National Judge Advocate, and Finance Commission.

Resolution No. 18 (CA) was next considered. The Chair ruled Resolution No. 18 (CA) is out of order. Charles G. Mills (NY) made a motion to adopt the ruling of the chair, seconded by Vincent D'Andrea (RI). The motion carried unanimously.

Resolution No. 19 (CA) was next considered. The Chair ruled Resolution No. 19 (CA) is out of order. A.J. Murdock (KY) made a motion to affirm the ruling of the chair, seconded by Cecil Phillips (SC). The motion carried unanimously.

The Chair 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 Convention Committee. James Johnson (LA) made the motion and it was seconded by Frank A. Porter (MD). The motion carried unanimously.

Mike Stelacio (PA) made a motion to recess, subject to the call of the Chairman. The motion was seconded by A. J. Murdock (KY). The motion carried unanimously.

The Chairman then thanked the Committee for its contributions and a productive meeting. The meeting was then declared in recess pending a call from the Chairman of the Committee.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN GAUGHN: Mr. Commander, as a delegate to the 95th Convention of the American Legion, I move the adoption of this report. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: You've heard the motion and seconded. All in favor say aye. Opposed? Motion carried. Thank you. It was carried by more than 2/3 of the vote. Thank you.

Our next speaker was elected the 34th U.S. senator from Texas and is a passionate fighter for limited government, economic growth, and the Constitution. A former solicitor general for the state, he helped Texas achieve a number of landmark legal victories including keeping "Under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance and defending the Texas Sexually Violent Predator Civil Commitment law. Elected to the Senate in 2012, columnist George Will described him as, "Good as it gets." He is a fierce champion of the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms. Please extend a warm welcome to senator Ted Cruz. *(Applause)*

Address: The Honorable Ted Cruz
United States Senate

Thank you, commander. What a great, great pleasure and privilege to be with each of you this afternoon. Welcome to Texas. *(Applause)*

God bless the veterans of the United States of America. God bless the 2.5 million members of The American Legion. Thank you on behalf of a grateful nation for your service, for your dedication and for the inspiration and example you give to every American.

I want to talk to you this afternoon about liberty. Liberty as it relates to our veterans. You know, we have seen in recent days the IRS, sadly, targeting The American Legion. We have seen the IRS demanding of American Legion posts that they keep records on the veterans who are members of each post. And, indeed, we have seen posts in Texas, including one in Round Rock, fined $12,000 by the IRS for not keeping records on our veterans. That's wrong. It is fundamentally wrong. Let me be clear. The IRS has in its ability to stop doing that right now today. They should take the fines and return the fines to The American Legion posts so they can put it to good work of making a difference. The IRS has no business demanding that of The American Legion. And I will tell you what I think is the simplest and best solution to far too much power in Washington. We should abolish the IRS. *(Applause)*

That will only happen if there is a groundswell from the American people, a groundswell limiting the power of Washington and empowering every American so that we can fill out our taxes on a simple flat tax, a postcard. *(Applause)*

Let me talk about another kind of liberty, a liberty every bit as important as our liberty to speak out, our liberty to be free from government intrusion and supervision from the IRS, and that's religious liberty. This nation has such a tremendous history and legacy of our Founding Fathers, fled oppression, fled religious persecution all over the world, coming here so that each of us might seek out God with all of our heart, mind, and soul, free from government oppression.

I'll tell you one of the great honors of my life has been representing each and every one of you. When I was in private practice, I had the great honor of representing The American Legion before the United States Supreme Court defending the constitutionality of the Mojave Desert Veterans Memorial. *(Applause)*

As you know, that memorial was erected over 75 years ago to honor the men and women who gave their lives in World War I and the ACLU sued seeking to tear down that monument. Sadly, the Court of Appeals agreed and ordered that 75-year-old monument to our veterans torn down because they said that you could not gaze on the image of a cross on public lands. Well, I was proud along with my friend Kelly Shackelford to represent The American Legion and the VFW and to go before the U.S. Supreme Court standing for the veterans of this country. And thanks to our Constitution, thanks to your dedication, we won 5-4. *(Applause)*

I was also proud to represent The American Legion in litigation against the VA here in Houston when the VA implemented a policy that said volunteers at the funeral of a serviceman or servicewoman who had lost his or her life defending our nation could not say to the grieving family, "God bless you." The VA tried to muzzle the families and loved ones, and I was honored to represent The American Legion filing litigation against the VA. And their policy was so indefensible, they decided to abandon it, settle the lawsuit and restore the liberty of our veterans. *(Applause)*

You know, recently, national news was made when an Air Force chaplain in Alaska was reprimanded, was disciplined because he wrote a blog that had the temerity to observe there are no atheists in foxholes. Setting aside the simple truth of that observation, a truth that the men and women in this room can attest to from personal experience, the history of that remark is really quite remarkable and it is indicative of how we've seen our liberties undermined.

That remark can trace its lineage to a president of the United States by the name of Dwight D. Eisenhower who it might be noted had some passing familiarity with the Armed Services. In particular, that phrase, "There are no atheists in foxholes," can be traced to a 1954 speech that President Eisenhower, of course, a former five-star general, gave to The American Legion. In fact, in the course of that speech, he described a story that is a powerful and compelling story in terms of knowing the lineage of that phrase. It is known as the story of Four Immortal Chaplains.

It was in World War II the *Dorchester* was hit with three torpedoes from a German submarine. On that ship, the *Dorchester*, were four chaplains, two who were Protestant, one who was Catholic, one who was Jewish, and they were putting life vests on everyone as the boat began to sink. They realized they didn't have enough life vests, and those four chaplains, each of them removed their life vest and gave them to another passenger to save their lives. You know, as I describe, they didn't ask when they were passing out those life vests whether the person that was receiving the life vest, whether they were a Christian or a Jew or an atheist; they simply sacrificed for others. As the ship went down, those four chaplains stood arm-in-arm singing hymns, four chaplains from different faiths, sacrificing for their fellow men and women.

How far have we come when invoking the words of the president of the United States, of a five-star Army general, celebrating the traditions and the power of God almighty has become cause for reprimand in the United States military? What a sad, sad testament. I'll tell you, in the Senate I was very proud to introduce and to get passed in the Armed Services Committee two amendments to protect the religious liberty of every member of our Armed Forces. *(Applause)*

In 2011, Walter Reed Hospital banned patients and visitors from having Bibles. Thankfully that policy was rescinded when attention was drawn to it. But we need to be absolutely clear that the servicemen and women, the soldiers and sailors and airmen and Marines who step forward to defend our nation, don't check their constitutional rights at the door when they step forward to defend us. And the federal government has no business whatsoever asking any member of our military to give up their religious liberty to seek out the Lord God almighty with all of their heart, life, and soul. *(Applause)*

You know, there was a time not too long ago where these concepts were viewed as simple common sense. It wasn't radical or extreme. No one would be surprised at the funeral of a member of the military to see volunteers consoling the suffering and saying "God bless you." No one would be surprised to see chaplains speaking out and ministering. No one would be surprised to see Bibles at a hospital. I think we need to get back to those principles of common sense. *(Applause)*

I want to close with another bit of history about another chaplain. A chaplain in World War II, who in 1944 when Patton was bogged down with interminable rain and the rain needed to stop for the Third Army to be able to go forward, and so Patton

commissioned Army Chaplain James O'Neill to write a prayer to stop the rain and to enable the U.S. Army to have success killing the enemy.

Chaplain O'Neill drafted the following prayer:

Almighty and most merciful Father, we humbly beseech Thee, of Thy great goodness to restrain these immoderate rains with which we have had to contend. Grant us fair weather for battle. Graciously hearken to us as soldiers who call upon Thee that, armed with Thy power, we may advance from victory to victory and crush the oppression and wickedness of our enemies, and establish Thy justice among men and nations.

Now, General Patton ordered that prayer to be printed, 250,000 copies of that prayer, and he distributed them in the Third Army. General Patton explained his views at the time, and he said, "These rains are that margin that hold defeat or victory. If we all pray, it will be like plugging in on a current whose source is in heaven. I believe that prayer completes that circuit. It is power."

Days after that prayer was distributed and the soldiers prayed, the rains lifted. The American Army was able to advance and deliver crushing blows to the German Army. Can you imagine a military commander uttering such words today? Even being allowed to think such things? We're a nation who was founded on the principle embodied in our declaration that we hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal and endowed not by a king, not by a queen, not even by a president, but by our Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

That is our shared legacy. It is our liberty. It is what each of you stood up to fight to protect, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, our fundamental liberties as Americans, and it's what we need to be vigilant every day, protecting the religious liberty, the freedom of every American. Thank you and God bless you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you so very much, Mr. Cruz. The Chair now recognizes Ralph Bozella of Colorado, 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
Ralph P. Bozella, Colorado, Chairman

Eighty members of your Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation met at 9:00 a.m. on August 25, 2013, in Hilton Americas Houston Hotel, Ballroom of the Americas, Section D, Level Two, Houston, Texas 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 Commander to act as temporary chairman. Jacob B. 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. Ralph P. Bozella (CO), 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; Michael Cassidy (MA), Chairman of the Claims and Rating Subcommittee and John Hickey (IN), Secretary; Ralph P. Bozella (CO), Chairman of the Hospital and Medical Services Subcommittee and Keith Davidson (WY), Secretary.

Subcommittee liaison assignments were as follows: Verna L. Jones (NC), Director, and Lori Perkio (MT), Assistant Director for Claims, National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division to Claims and Rating and Jacob Gadd (DC), Deputy Director for Health Care and Roscoe Butler (DC), Assistant Director for Health Policy, National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division to Hospital and Medical Services.

As has been the custom for over sixty years of 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 Ralph P. Bozella, Chairman of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and was composed of the following Department Service Officers:

REGION 1 – Milton A. Willis Jr. (VT)
REGION 2 – Michael S. Lacy (TX)
REGION 3 – Cajun A. Comeau (NC)
REGION 4 – Jeffrey L. Burth (ND) (Absent)
REGION 5 – Kelly L. Ackerman (MT)

The Convention Committee recommended that such a Committee be appointed for this purpose to serve the Ninety-Fifth National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation.

The 16 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.....6
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved.....0
Referred to the Standing Commission 1
Received and Recorded 6
Rejected 3

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 (1) resolution 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. 42: Department of Veterans Affairs Provide Service Dog Allowance
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recognizes the sacrifice made by service men and women who become disabled while serving their country and grants compensation for these injuries; and

WHEREAS, VA has also established additional benefit programs for severely disabled veterans such as Special Adapted Housing Grants and Automobile Allowances; and

WHEREAS, VA has an annual clothing allowance for veterans who must wear prosthetic or orthopedic appliances which tend to wear out their clothing; and

WHEREAS, The current annual clothing allowance changes from year to year and is currently set at $753; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans who are blinded or have other special disabilities are issued either Seeing Eye Dogs or Service Dogs; and

WHEREAS, The VA covers all needed veterinarian services these dogs may require; and

WHEREAS, There is no current additional benefit to cover the cost of general grooming or feeding of these dogs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion strongly supports legislation to issue an annual Dog Maintenance Allowance to all service-connected disabled veterans who are furnished, through the Department of Veteran Affairs, either a Seeing Eye Dog or Service Dog.

Resolution No. 75: Automatic Enrollment
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, As the war in Iraq has come to an end, and with the drawdown of troops in Afghanistan, as well as the automatic spending cuts imposed on the Department of Defense (DOD) by sequestration, has and will continue to result in waves of servicemembers being forced out of the military; and

WHEREAS, The need continues to exist to fully automate enrollment at a service member's point of transition from the DOD healthcare system to ensure that veterans do not fall through the cracks and receive their earned Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care benefits; and

WHEREAS, Servicemembers and their families are easily overwhelmed when dealing with the bureaucracy of multiple departments, but with automatic enrollment, service members and veterans will be provided with timely, accessible and immediate enrollment and care within VA; and

WHEREAS, Automatic enrollment will assist in assuring veterans are provided with the immediate access and use of VA facilities, creating a seamless transition from DOD to the VA health care system; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion urges Congress to enact legislation to direct automatic enrollment of servicemembers separating from the Department of Defense (DOD) active duty, guard or reserve under other than dishonorable conditions into the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) patient enrollment system under title 38, United States Code, section 1705; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That DOD provide the contact information of a transitioning veteran to VA whereby the veteran would be pre-enrolled until such time that the veteran contacts the VA to activate their enrollment in VA's patient enrollment system; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That if a servicemember does not choose to enroll into VA's patient enrollment system, such person can opt out of enrolling by providing a notice to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs of their decision to decline enrollment.

Resolution No. 76: Reinstate Enrollment of Priority Group 8g Veterans into the Department of Veterans Affairs' Patient Enrollment System
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, section 101, defines a veteran as a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released there from under conditions other than dishonorable; and

WHEREAS, The VA Health Care Eligibility Reform Act of 1996, Public Law 104-262, required the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to establish an annual patient enrollment system and created 7 distinct priority groups; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 104-262, further required the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to manage the enrollment of veterans in accordance with the 7 priority groups; and

WHEREAS, On January 23, 2002, Congress enacted Public Law 107-135, the VA Health Care Programs Enhancement Act of 2001, which created an additional priority group, priority group 8; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 104-262, further established a Geographic Means Test (GMT), which is based on a veteran's family annual household income, utilizing the income guidelines established by the Department of Housing and Urban Development low income criteria under 42 United States Code 1437a (b) for the area in which the veteran resides; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 104-262, further requires all veterans whose income is above the VA means test threshold for Priority Group 5, but within the GMT income guidelines, to be enrolled in priority group 7; and

WHEREAS, Veterans not eligible for enrollment in priority groups 1 through 7 are enrolled in priority group 8; and

WHEREAS, On January 17, 2003, VA suspended enrollment of additional veterans in priority group 8, which resulted in a lost opportunity for VA to generate additional first party copayments; and

WHEREAS, Based on data obtained from VA, at the end of Fiscal Year 2012, VA estimated there are 6.9 million veterans ineligible to enroll in the VA health care system because of VA's income restrictions; and

WHEREAS, VA has not conducted a feasibility or cost analysis to determine the cost or impact of reinstating enrollment of Priority Group 8g veterans; and

WHEREAS, Starting January 2014, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) will require that all Americans have medical insurance; and

WHEREAS, Unless VA reinstates enrollment of priority group 8g veterans, many priority group 8g veterans that are determined to be ineligible to enroll in VA's patient enrollment system may be forced to purchase health insurance through the Health Insurance Marketplaces established by the ACA; and

WHEREAS, Once an ineligible veteran is forced to purchase health insurance offered through the Health Insurance Marketplaces, The American Legion is concerned that these veterans may never return to the VA health care system; and

WHEREAS, VA would lose out on an opportunity to bring copay required veterans back into the VA health care system, which would result in a loss of millions of dollars that could be used to support the delivery of health care to our Nation's veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion urges the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to conduct a feasibility study to determine the impact and cost of reinstating the enrollment of priority group 8g veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the VA promulgate regulations to reinstate the enrollment of priority group 8g veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to ensure VA's appropriation is adequate to reinstate enrollment of priority group 8g veterans.

Resolution No. 77: Advance Appropriations for All of the Department of Veterans Affairs' Discretionary Accounts
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion supported the 2009 passage of the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act which ensures sufficient, timely and predictable funding for veterans health care by authorizing funding of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical programs one-year in advance; and

WHEREAS, Current proposals before Congress considers expanding advance appropriation to include the following discretionary programs within the Department of Veterans Affairs:

(1) VA Construction, Research, and Information Technology

(2) National Cemetery Administration; and

(3) Veterans Benefits Administration; and

WHEREAS, With the federal budget and appropriations process continuing to break down, as evidenced by stalemates over debt ceilings, sequestration and proposed government shutdowns; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion urges Congress to authorize advance appropriations for all Department of Veterans Affairs' discretionary appropriations accounts, particularly for Veterans Benefits Administration operations, construction, research, and Information Technology.

Resolution No. 78: Oppose any Reductions to the Department of Veterans Affairs' Budget Due to Sequestration
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The failure of the bipartisan Congressional Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction, or "supercommittee" in 2011 resulted in automatic spending cuts, known as "sequestration", which took effect in 2012; and

WHEREAS, In an April 23, 2012 letter to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) made it clear that "all programs administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), including Veterans' Medical Care, are exempt from 'sequestration' under provisions of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985"; and

WHEREAS, According to the Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report on "Budget 'Sequestration' and Selected Program Exemptions and Special Rules", "the Budget Control Act (BCA) requires that $109 billion in spending – divided equally between defense and nondefense must be reduced in FY 2014 (and each subsequent fiscal year through FY 2021) – with lowering the discretionary spending limits by about $91 billion and sequestering $18 billion in nonexempt mandatory spending"; and

WHEREAS, The lowering of discretionary spending limits or sequestration will have a detrimental impact on VA's budget and ability to properly care for and treat our nation's veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion oppose any effort through the Administration, members of Congress or Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) proposal, policy or law to reduce VA's budget due to sequestration; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to enact legislation to provide a permanent exemption for VA's Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration and National Cemetery Administrations' mandatory and discretionary programs.

Resolution No. 79: Veterans Discounts on Federally Funded Public Transportation
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Currently, transit systems whom are recipients of the Urbanized Area Formula Grants are required to provide discounted rates to senior citizens and disabled persons; and

WHEREAS, In accordance with Section 101 of Title 38, United States Code (U.S.C.), the term "veteran" means a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released there from under conditions other than dishonorable; and

WHEREAS, Title 49, Urbanized Formula Grants, requires the development of transportation policies and programs that contribute to providing fast, safe, efficient, and convenient transportation at the lowest cost consistent with those and other national objectives, including the efficient use and conservation of the resources of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Section 5307(d)(1)(D) currently states that elderly and handicapped individuals, or an individual presenting a Medicare card issued to that individual under title II or XVIII of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 et seq., 1395 et seq.), will be charged during non-peak hours for transportation using or involving a facility or equipment of a project financed under this section not more than 50 percent of the peak hour fare; and

WHEREAS, There is a wide disparity of travel discounts available to veteran riders of public transportation, and offering a uniform discount policy will encourage more veterans to use public transportation; and

WHEREAS, By virtue of their service and sacrifices for this nation, veterans should be offered the same discounts offered to other recognized groups; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion urge Congress to amend the Urbanized Area Formula Grants in Section 5307(d)(1)(D) of title 49, United States Code (U.S.C.) to include the term veteran as defined by section 101 of title 38 U.S.C, which would allow veterans to be charged the same rate for non-peak hour transportation using or involving a facility or equipment of a project financed under this section that is not more than 50 percent of the peak hour fare.

Referred to Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

Resolution No. 41 (NY)**: Service Officers Participation in the Transition Assistance Program**

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 39 (NY)**: Dependency Indemnity Compensation Time Requirement**
Resolution No. 43 (IL)**: Include World War II Veterans in Priority Group 6 for Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care**
Resolution No. 45 (IL)**: Means Test for Married Veterans**
Resolution No. 46 (IL)**: Extend the Presumptive Period for Service Connection for Gulf War Veterans with Undiagnosed Illness**
Resolution No. 47 (IL)**: Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans**
Resolution No. 48 (IL)**: Designate United States Air Force C-123K Transport Aircraft as Agent Orange Exposure Sites**

Rejected

Resolution No. 23 (WA)**: In-State Licensure of Department of Veterans Affairs' Health Care Providers**
Resolution No. 26 (TX)**: Two Year Look Back for Claims**
Resolution No. 38 (NY)**: Control of Local Government Veterans Files**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BOZELLA: Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered delegate to this Convention, I move for the adoption of this report respectfully submitted. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: You have heard the motion and the second. Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor indicate by the usual sign. All opposed? Motion carried. The report of Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation is adopted.

Presentation: William F. Lenker National Service Trophy

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: With the adoption of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation report, it is time 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 2012-2013 program year the trophy is awarded to the Department of Michigan. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Okay, I want to read totals on all donations received. First one, Operation Comfort Warrior: $1,119,227.58. American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund ride: $764,033.71. National Emergency Fund: $158,092.90. And the Child Welfare Foundation: $26,016.96. Thank you all very much. *(Applause)*

Legionnaires, please rise and salute the flag of the United States of America. Hand-salute by the numbers. One! Two!

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The time is 2:10 p.m. The Convention will stand in recess until 8:30 a.m. tomorrow. Thank you all so very much.

... At 2:10 p.m., the Convention was recessed to reconvene the following day, August 29, 2013, at 8:30 a.m.

PROCEEDINGS
THIRD DAY

Thursday, August 29, 2013

... At 8:30 a.m. the delegates assembled for the third day of the 95th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had.

Call to Order
James E. Koutz, Indiana, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Ladies and gentlemen, as we begin our program, please join me in a round of applause for Pete Ole, 36 years he's been playing for us. *(Applause)* The convention will come to order. Sergeant-at-Arms.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS PULIDO: Everyone rise and face the colors. By the numbers. One! Two!

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: For the invocation I call on Ron Derrick from Idaho.

Invocation
Ronald Derrick, Idaho, National Chaplain

Let us pray. Most holy God, You are a God who changes not. You are the same yesterday, today, and forever. Today we will have a change in leadership but not in mission nor purpose. We will assemble together for You in this great nation, to care for the widows, orphans, and those who bear the scars of battle, to ensure that justice, freedom, and democracy prevail. This we will do with Your guidance, Your wisdom, and Your blessing, amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you, Chaplain Ron.

Pledge of Allegiance

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Ladies and gentlemen, please remain uncovered as National Sergeant-at-Arms Al Pulido leads us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

... The delegates stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The convention is now in session. You know I feel like a man on death row. I only have a few hours left. But, you know, you all just amaze me. Operation Comfort Warriors, we're still getting checks. We're still getting cash. Thank you all so very much. *(Applause)*

Presentation: The American Legion Fourth Estate Award
James E. Koutz, Indiana, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: We begin this morning by recognizing outstanding achievement in journalism that had a positive impact on our communities. The American Legion Fourth Estate Award is difficult to earn. It is a testament to the demanding nature of competition and the quality of entries. Not only do the reports have to be informative and entertaining, they have to provide a tangible benefit to society.

Being honored in the Broadcast Category is KITV-TV in Hawaii. Producers Pamela Young, Rex Von Arnswaldt, and Gary Sprinkle tell a story of hope, faith and courage in a

one-hour documentary about the life of Marianne Cope, a late 19th century nun known for her charitable work and care for the Hawaiian islands. On October 21, 2012, Sister Cope was canonized as a saint by the Vatican. Please turn your attention to the video monitors.

... At this time a video clip presentation from "Enduring Grace" was played for the delegation. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Accepting the award from KITV is producer Pamela Young. *(Applause)*

Broadcast Category
KITV-TV Honolulu, Hawaii

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The 2013 Fourth Estate Award for outstanding achievement in the field of journalism is presented to KITV News for a documentary by Pamela Young, Rex Von Arnswaldt and Gary Sprinkle on the life of Marianne Cope, her canonization and work in leprosy settlements in the mid-1800s, 'Enduring Grace.' Presented at the 95th National Convention, August 29, 2013, Houston, Texas.

MS. PAMELA YOUNG: Mahalo! Of the more than 8,000 people sent to Kalaupapa diagnosed with leprosy, only 17 remain. And so in choosing to honor this program, you honor each one of them. They are our living treasures. They represent a dark part of our history, but they're also a beacon of light for a future without prejudice and without fear.

Thank you so much for hosting us. I was saying earlier I've heard more accents here than I have in my whole life. This morning I learned the proper way of how to say North Carolina, and yesterday I learned how to say Texas. *(Laughter)* The city I'm from is pronounced Honolulu, not Honolulu. And it's Hawaii, if you're speaking to a Hawaiian, but you can say Hawaii. And you are all welcome. Thank you so much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The Fourth Estate Internet/New Media Award goes to a repeat winner, Alex Quade, a freelance war correspondent. She won in 2012 and she is being recognized for her video report "Chinook Down," which was produced for the New York Times Online. Her short documentary revealed the full story and human toll behind a WikiLeaks headline of a helicopter shot down by a missile in Afghanistan, which killed all onboard. Here is clip of that great piece.

... At this time a video clip presentation from "Chinook Down" was played for the delegation. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Accepting the award is correspondent Ms. Alex Quade. *(Applause)*

Internet Category
Ms. Alex Quade, Freelance Reporter, Fayetteville, North Carolina

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: 2013 Fourth Estate Award for outstanding achievement in the field of journalism is presented to Alex Quade, Freelance Reporter, for a special video report following a 5-year investigation which revealed the full story of a military helicopter shot down in Afghanistan, 'Chinook Down.' Presented at the 95th National Convention, August 29, 2013, Houston, Texas.

MS. ALEX QUADE: Thank you, Commander Koutz and The American Legion. It is an honor to be back with you. I started out as a whippersnapper at Girls State a long time ago, and you guys have kept me honest over the years. *(Applause)*

Thank you. What you didn't see in that report is that, yes, I was embedded with those guys long term. And, yes, I was supposed to be on that helicopter. So by the grace

of God and because at the very last minute they decided to do a chalk change, seven people were killed on that helicopter, and it is my duty to continue to tell their stories.

After 15 years of covering war zones, hostile environments and special operations forces on combat missions, I have witnessed some things that you all as veterans know. Qualities such as courage, strength, compassion, loyalty and bravery know no gender, no race, and no age. Thank you again for this honor. I will continue to tell the stories of our troops. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: This year's Print Category award goes to another repeat winner, *USA Today*. The nation's newspaper conducted a 14-month investigation of more than 460 forgotten lead factory sites. The series of articles by reporters Alison Young and Peter Eisler, titled "Ghost Factories," drew calls for action from seven U.S. senators and has led the EPA to re-examine health risks at the sites. More than a dozen states launched their own investigations and several sites have already been targeted for clean-up. Accepting the award is reporter Alison Young. *(Applause)*

Print Category
Ms. Alison Young, USA Today, Mclean, Virginia

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: 2013 Fourth Estate Award for outstanding achievement in the field of journalism is presented to "USA Today" for a series of investigative reports by Alison Young and Peter Eisler of 460 forgotten lead factory sites. The in-depth probe brought about Congressional action that led to remediation. Presented at the 95th National Convention, August 29, 2013, Houston, Texas.

MS. ALISON YOUNG: On behalf of the entire *USA Today* "Ghost Factories" team, thank you for this wonderful award. In a day and age when news and newspapers are facing lots of challenges, *USA Today* made a tremendous commitment investing time in what was a really unique and mammoth project. We investigated 460 individual sites all across the country. It involved all kinds of digging into records and spending a lot of time in archives.

Our editors at *USA Today* took a tremendous leap of faith signing off on a proposal for myself and Peter Eisler, simply reporters, to obtain training to use very sophisticated x-ray analyzers that cost $41,000 apiece and travel across the country testing soil in the neighborhoods around these former factory sites that have been long forgotten. But the impact has been tremendous, and that's why those of us who do investigative journalism do this, is to hopefully make the world a better place.

As you've heard, the EPA is reassessing these sites. Many of them are scheduled for cleanups, and some of them are already being cleaned up. The inspector general of the EPA is investigating the EPA's handling of the health risks posed by these old factory sites. And on a very personal level, this series has empowered families across the country to take direct actions to protect their families and their children from the lead in the soil in their yards. Like most of us, when we think of lead poisoning, we think about paint. We don't think about the yards where our children play in.

So thank you very much for this honor. We greatly appreciate it. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Our next guest is an Eagle Scout and is the recipient of numerous Scouting awards including the Silver Beaver, Silver Antelope, Silver Buffalo, Distinguished Eagle Scout and Order of the Arrow Distinguished Service Awards. He has been involved with the Boy Scouts of America for more than 39 years. He is the founder of Tico Perez Solutions, a consulting firm specializing in business, government and marketing solutions. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm welcome to the national commissioner of the Boy Scouts of America, Tico Perez. *(Applause)*

Address: Tico Perez, National Commissioner
Boy Scouts of America

Well, good morning, and what an honor to be here. I thank you for the kind introduction, the warm reception, and, most importantly, the opportunity to address this great convention this morning. I am both honored and humbled to have the opportunity to address a group of true American heroes.

So first and foremost, on behalf of myself, my national board, and our almost four million members of the current Boy Scout family, I want to say thank you. Thank you for your continued service to America. What you have done and what you continue to do in your daily lives and through the Legion is nothing short of extraordinary, not only the military service in your past and present, but your commitment to developing the youth of America through your youth programs, especially your partnership with the Boy Scouts of America, is superb.

The American Legion is one of our longest and oldest partners, and we are very, very proud of that relationship. In fact, The American Legion charters 2,553 Scouting units across America serving 68,154 young people. Now, if you do the math, that's about 30 kids per unit. So you're not simply starting units, you have high-performing Scouting units developing the Scouting program all across the country.

And in all humility, you couldn't have picked a better partner to join in your youth development mission. We are your first and your oldest partner. We share common values. We teach our kids that words like "honor" and "duty" and "service" and "sacrifice" and "discipline" are not punch lines to current jokes but, rather, they are watchwords. They are watchwords upon which they can build their lives. We teach them to live by a code, a Scout Oath and a Scout Law and a filter through which to make the difficult decisions they have to face. You see, we teach that; you live that. You, the Legion and your members, are living examples of what and who we want our young people to become.

I believe that Scouting is the single most important youth movement in the history of America. We have over 100 million Scouting alumni. We were awarded over two million Eagle Scout Awards in our 105 years, and we have almost four million Scouts and Scouters active today. In fact, I want to take a quick second and see how Scouting has really impacted this community. Let me just ask by a show of hands: How many of you in the room are or were involved in Scouting in some point in your life? Okay, that would be everyone. How many of you are currently involved in scouting today? That is more than half of you. How many of you have an Eagle Scout member in your family? Hundreds. And how many of you yourselves are Eagle Scouts? It's extraordinary. It is an extraordinary relationship that we have with the Legion, and that is why our relationship is so strong.

It comes down to our roots. You see, we really came on the scene at the same time, the Scouts and the Legion. We were formed in 1910; you were formed in 1919. But it was World War I that really brought us together. At that time Scouting was just getting started, but the war got Scouting deeply involved in our service to America and in the American culture. West Point immediately recruited all Eagle Scouts to come and join in the 19-teens. And at the height of the war, the Boy Scouts of America had more men and boys in uniformed service on behalf of this country here at home than we had overseas.

We were running paper drives. We were collecting peach pits for the gas masks. We were doing bond sales well beyond the limits of expectations of our young boys. Our kids were trying to fight the war at home through victory gardens and rubber drives and whatever we could do.

We moved into World War II, and at that time we did the same thing. We had been attacked on our shores, so we populated all the military academies. Our boys enlisted and went overseas. We ran more victory gardens. We sold more war bonds. We monitored

the coasts for enemy planes. We've got maps and charts and grids of what every plane looks like and how to communicate. We ran messages back and forth to relief centers. And we partnered with the Legion then to serve our returning veterans and those who were here defending our country.

Together, the Legion and the Boy Scouts make heroes. Through my years in Scouting, I've watched our young men go from the ranks of Cub Scout to commander, from Boy Scout to sergeant major. Those were the mean ones, by the way. *(Laughter)*

At the height of our engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan, I found myself shipping dozens of shoeboxes to young men and young women deployed all across America, young men who I've known since they were seven and eight years old in little blue uniforms, now leading men into battle overseas.

And our young men and our young women still dominate academy enrollments across America and all the Armed Forces. Frankly, our National Jamboree is a prime recruiting ground for the Armed Forces. At that location, the Armed Forces headquarters and displays are often the most popular things we do.

And speaking of our National Jamboree, which just occurred, we were thrilled that National Commander Koutz was the first VIP to tour our Jamboree property last month. And from what I've been told, the commander knows the place now. Evidently we hiked him for seven, eight, nine hours, up and down hills. We even put him on our Big Zip, which is our three-quarter-of-a-mile zip line, 152 feet high across a river that achieves speeds of 68 miles an hour. I was told he didn't even yell. Commander, that's the story and we're sticking to that. Just so you know. *(Laughter)*

At our new Jamboree and High Adventure facility in West Virginia, the Boy Scouts took a bold step. We took a bold step in creating a new Jamboree site and rolling out a new fourth High Adventure base to serve our young people. Our site in West Virginia is 10,600 acres, and so far we've invested well over $300 million in our development in our program, and we have a long way to go. This Jamboree was our introduction of our new cutting-edge hair-on-fire High Adventure that we want to use to challenge our young people to test themselves, to push themselves to try their limits and stay in Scouting.

We had over 40,000 Scouts and Scouters and staff participate in over two weeks at the Jamboree, and our kids had the time of their lives. And they experienced the best High Adventure property on the face of the Earth. They grew into men. We also conducted the largest service project in the history of America. Every day at the Jamboree a group of our units went out somewhere in West Virginia and conducted service, and over an eight-day period we did over 1.2 million hours of service to the West Virginia state and communities. *(Applause)* Our young people believed that that was the best part of their Jamboree. And in their after-actions, many and many of them have said so.

Although the numbers and the property and our investment in the property are interesting, and believe me, I could talk about that all day, I'm thrilled to brag that we have the second largest and best shooting sports facility in America, 1,100 shooting stations. Think about that. We have the best archery field in America. We have more zip lines than anywhere in America. We have the best outdoor climbing facility in America. The second best mountain biking trail in America. The largest skateboard park on the planet. We paved a facility the size of the deck of an aircraft carrier to use as a skateboard park, to get these young people engaged and involved with us. We have the third best BMX track facilities in the country. And, frankly, we're situated on the New and the Gauley Rivers, which is the best white water on the planet. This new facility is a Disneyland for outdoor adventure. It is the most phenomenal facility on this planet. And, yet, that wasn't what was so exciting about this Jamboree.

What was exciting about the Jamboree this year was the spirit that was there. The enthusiasm of our young people evidencing the strength of our continued Scouting movement. It was palpable. It was palpable. If you care about Scouting, and since every

one of you has been involved, I know you do, you could not help but to be moved. In fact, if you would have had the opportunity, and let me ask, many of you were there, did anyone here attend the Catholic service at that Jamboree? A couple of you. Let me just share what I saw.

It was pouring rain. It had been pouring rain. It was torrential. The field was muddy, and there were thousands of young people sitting out there waiting on services. We were backstage with the bishop, and we were talking about the rain and should we call it and should we not call it. As we looked out, there were thousands of young folks sitting, waiting to worship. If you looked up on the hill, what you saw were thousands more walking down in the rain, water pouring off the brims of their hats, coming out to do their duty to God. It was extraordinary. I've got to tell you, I can be a bit of a sap sometimes. I get emotional at these things. But I truly thought to myself at that moment, you know, we're going to be okay. America is going to be okay. It was extraordinary. *(Applause)*

So between our new summit facilities and our other programmatic changes, new merit badges in robotics and simulation and sustainability, just to name a few. The Boy Scouts are focused on continuing to develop quality programming and relevant programming to this next generation of young people. We provide cutting-edge adventure coupled with cutting-edge merit badges and programs, all built on the foundation of character. We're moving forward together, the Legion and we, to create heroes, not only on the battlefield, but also at home. Heroes in their families, heroes in our companies, and in each of our communities. By establishing relationships with our young men, one-on-one, showing them the example of your lives, we change their lives and their communities.

My favorite story, and each of us has one in Scouting, is when I was going to an elementary school in Orlando, Florida, and I was trying to encourage my law firm to fund the Scouting program at that school. We had 70 young boys in this very difficult housing project community who were involved in Scouting, and we needed a little bit of money to buy uniforms and get them active and involved.

I took the managing partner of the firm with me, and we went out. We were going to meet with the principal. We were going to talk about Scouting and what it did and how it impacted children. We were going to talk about the increased test scores, the discipline in the classrooms, and the changes in their lives. And we didn't have to do any of that.

As we were walking up to meet at the principal's office, a young boy, third grader, eight years old, came up to us, and he was in his Cub Scout uniform, purely happenstance, so we stopped to talk to him. We asked him where the principal's office was. He gave us directions, and my managing partner at the time said, "So you're a Cub Scout?" He said, "Yep." Said, "Do you enjoy Cub Scouts?" And the next words out of this young boy's mouth changed my life, and it sold the deal. He looked at this 65-year-old wealthy lawyer and said, "All the other boys in the third grade do drugs, but I don't because I'm a Cub Scout." It was extraordinary. *(Applause)* We didn't have to have that meeting with the principal. That meeting was over before it began.

Our boys grow to be men of character. Our boys live by a creed, the Scout Oath and the Scout Law. And when they're done with us and with you, they understand their duty to God, their duty to their country, and their duty to their families. We, the Legion and Scouting, live by a set of values. As I look around, there are very few organizations left like us, organizations which provide unfettered, unconditional, unlimited, and apolitical service to America.

So on behalf of the Boy Scouts of America, my national board and my four million members, again, I thank you. Thank you for what you do for America, thank you for what you do for Scouting. God bless the Legion, God bless the Boy Scouts of America, and God bless America. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you very much, Tico. He talked about zip line. The heavier you are, the faster you go. And this fat boy, he flew down the zip line. *(Laughter)* But I tell you, it's kind of amazing. If you ever get around West Virginia, around the Beckley area, go look at that. He used my words there, it is the Disney World for the Boy Scouts. Looking out over that acreage, it was 40,000 tents for those Boy Scouts, all of them the same color. It was something to see. If you ever get a chance, go down and check out that place.

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 25, 2013, 42 delegates assigned to the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations met in the George R. Brown Center, Indiana. Mr. Randall Fisher (KY) was elected Chairman and Dennis Duggan (MD) was appointed Secretary.

At this meeting, motions were approved authorizing the committee chairman and secretary to make technical corrections to the resolutions reported out of the committee to ensure proper wording and form without changing the substance or meaning of the resolutions and to sign the report on behalf of the delegates. A total of six resolutions were assigned to the convention committee on foreign relations. The Committee approved two of the resolutions as written, three resolutions were received and recorded, and one was consolidated.

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 U.S. 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. 80: Ratify Disabilities Treaty
Origin: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, American servicemembers 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 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to ensure equal opportunity for all people with disabilities in the United States; and

WHEREAS, In 2008, President George W. Bush reaffirmed support of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by signing into law the ADA Amendments Act; and

WHEREAS, The United States has been the leader on access and equality for all people with disabilities, including disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Disabilities Treaty) supports equal treatment and non-discrimination for people with disabilities in access to rehabilitation, employment, educational opportunities and community living; and

WHEREAS, President Barack Obama signed the Disabilities Treaty on July 26, 2009; and

WHEREAS, As of August 15, 2013, 156 countries, including the United States, have signed the Disabilities Treaty and 133 countries have ratified it; and

WHEREAS, The United States must ratify the Disabilities Treaty because it embodies the principles of the ADA and reinforces our leadership in the promotion of opportunities for disabled veterans, servicemembers, and their families with disabilities to travel, study, work and serve in the world community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion urges the Senate to provide its advice and consent to allow the United States to ratify the Disabilities Treaty.

Resolution No. 59: Security of Overseas Embassies
Origin: Ohio
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The United States has 294 embassies and consulates distributed around the globe; and

WHEREAS, Many of these embassies and consulates are located in countries that are hostile towards our culture and way of life; and

WHEREAS, The soil on which they occupy is sovereign territory of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The men and women who serve our country by representing us in these locations deserve the highest level of security we can offer; and

WHEREAS, In the wake of the recent murder of our ambassador to Libya and three other Americans in Benghazi, Libya on September 11, 2012, marking the first United States ambassador death to a violent act since 1979; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That the United States government review, and if necessary, take measures at all United States embassies and consulates to ensure the safety and security of all United States diplomatic personnel against our enemies and terrorists; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the American people receive a full accounting of the events that occurred in Benghazi on September 11, 2012, from the highest level of government within The United States of America.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 31 (MD)**: POW/MIA Policies**
Resolution No. 32 (MD)**: Taiwan Defense Arms Sales**
Resolution No. 33 (MD)**: Taiwan Straits Dialogue**

Consolidated

Resolution No. 3 (AK)**: Taiwan Straits Dialogue and Defense Arms Sales (Consolidated with Resolution No. 32 (MD))**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN FISHER: Commander, as a duly elected delegate of this convention, I move that we adopt this report. ... *Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: I've heard the motion and second. Is there any discussion? All in favor indicate by the usual sign of aye. All opposed? Motion carried. The report of Foreign Relations is adopted.

The chair recognizes G. Michael Schlee of Maryland, chairman of the National Convention Committee on National Security, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on National Security
G. Michael Schlee, Maryland, Chairman

At 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 25, 2013, 219 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security initially met in the George R. Brown Convention Center, Room 351, Level Three. Mr. G. Michael Schlee (Maryland) was elected Chairman and Mr. E.C. Toppin (North Carolina) was appointed Secretary.

Two ad hoc administrative committees were appointed:

General Security Ad Hoc	Douglas C. Haggan, Chairman (France) Robert H. Fuelling, Secretary (France)
Conservation of Natural Resources	E.C. Toppin, Chairman (North Carolina)

Following the joint session, the following convention committees met, held elections and dealt with the resolutions assigned to them:

Aerospace	Robert C. Weyenberg, Chairman (Wisconsin) William Bryant, Secretary (Virginia)
Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness	Charles E. Kruger, Chairman (Minnesota) Mel Goslar, Secretary (Iowa)
Law and Order	George E. Wehrli, Chairman (Florida) James Chapman, Secretary (Virginia)
Merchant Marine	Charles F. Moreland, Chairman (Florida) Charles P. Powell, Secretary (Virginia)
Military Affairs	Leo F. Malloy, Chairman (Massachusetts) Andrew Johnson, Secretary (D.C.)
Naval Affairs	William B. Goede, Chairman (Minnesota) James Whitfield, Secretary (Missouri)

At 10:00 a.m., Sunday, August 25, 2013, the delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Security reconvened in the George R. Brown Convention Center, Room 351, Level Three. Reports of all Convention Committees were read and their recommended actions on resolutions considered. A total of 9 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, France

Approved

Resolution No. 30: Support Fight Against Cyberspace Threats
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security Committee

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; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, 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. 34: National Defense Funding
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Since its founding, The American Legion has been at the forefront in advocating for a strong national defense; and

WHEREAS, The primary function of the federal government is to ensure the security of the American people; 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, Weakness invites aggression from those who believe the United States is either unwilling or unprepared to fight; and

WHEREAS, America's adversaries should have no doubt as to our resolve and means to respond with overwhelming force to grave threats to our security; and

WHEREAS, Today, more than ever, the world looks to America's greatness and strength for leadership in an increasingly dangerous and unstable world; and

WHEREAS, Yet, at a time when the United States faces unprecedented foreign policy and security challenges, our military must deal with $500 billion in pending automatic across-the-board sequestration cuts in addition to cuts to the defense budget totaling $487 billion over the next decade that have already been enacted; and

WHEREAS, These drastic cuts to the defense budget threaten to severely damage the readiness of our armed forces, which have already reported dangerous deficiencies in training, maintenance and operations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion, in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion urge Congress and the Administration to cease all efforts to reduce the defense budget from its current level, and to fully fund the Department of Defense in order that our military is unquestionably capable of carrying out its essential missions.

Conservation of Natural Resources Committee
E.C. Toppin, Vice Chairman, North Carolina

Referred to Standing Commission

Resolution No. 60 (OH)**: Scrap Metal Exports**

Aerospace Committee
Robert C. Weyenberg, (Wisconsin)

Approved

Resolution No. 25: NASA Funding
Origin: Wisconsin
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States opened manned space exploration in space by landing on the moon; and

WHEREAS, As long ago as 1969 a plan was presented to send humans to Mars within 12 years; and

WHEREAS, President Nixon's Space and Task Group concluded, "NASA has the demonstrated organizational competence and technology base, by virtue of Apollo success and other achievements to carry out a successful program to land man on Mars within 15 years"; and

WHEREAS, All that is lacking is the will to carry out the mission; and

WHEREAS, President Kennedy challenged the nation to send a man to the moon in 1962; and

WHEREAS, Within eight years the first human walked on the moon; and

WHEREAS, Since that time we have successfully sent a robotic mission to Mars; and

WHEREAS, Machines alone are not as capable as humans; and

WHEREAS, The words of President Kennedy remain with us; "We set sail on this new sea because there is new knowledge to be gained and new rights to be won"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion supports funding for NASA that enables the United States of America to return to its rightful place as a world leader in manned exploration of space.

Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness Committee
Charles E. Kruger, Chairman, Minnesota

No Resolutions

Law and Order Committee
George E. Wehrli, Chairman, Florida

No Resolutions

Merchant Marine Committee
Charles F. Moreland, Chairman, Florida

No Resolutions

Military Affairs Committee
Leo F. Malloy, Chairman, Massachusetts

Approved

Resolution No. 27: Reclassify Fort Hood Shooting
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 57 (MA))

WHEREAS, On November 5, 2009, Nadil Hasan entered the Fort Hood Soldier Readiness Processing Center, took a seat at an empty table, bowed his head for several seconds then suddenly stood up, shouted "Allah Akbar" and opened fire, spraying bullets at soldiers in a fanlike motion before taking aim at individual soldiers; and

WHEREAS, During the course of the shooting, 12 soldiers and 1 Army civilian employee were killed and 32 other individuals were wounded in the incident; and

WHEREAS, Nidal Hasan targeted soldiers in uniform and it is the worst shooting to have taken place on an American military base; and

WHEREAS, Investigation before and after the shooting discovered e-mail communications between Nidal Hasan and an al-Qaida leader, Anwar al-Awlaki, who had been monitored by the NSA as a security threat; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense and federal law enforcement agencies have classified this as an act of workplace violence and have declined to categorize it as an act of terrorism by militant Islamic religious convention; and

WHEREAS, Senator John Cornyn introduced the Fort Hood Victims and Families Benefits Protection Act (S.316) in the 112th Congress, but no legislative action was taken; and

WHEREAS, This legislation would have ensured that the victims of the Fort Hood massacre and their families are entitled to the very same benefits that are afforded to Americans who have been injured in overseas combat zones and the families of those who have been killed in action; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion urge that the Fort Hood massacre should be re-classified as an act of terrorism and the soldiers killed and wounded on November 5, 2009 should be awarded all honors and benefits due to battlefield combat; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Fort Hood Shooting be re-classified to that of an Act of Terrorism against an American military base; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports legislation that provides victims and families of the Fort Hood shooting with the same benefits that are afforded to Americans who have been injured in overseas combat zones and families of those who have been killed in action.

Resolution No. 28: Commend Arlington National Cemetery Managers and Staff
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security Committee

WHEREAS, Arlington National Cemetery (ANC) is our Nation's most sacred shrine representing the embodiment of the sacrifices that were made to uphold our country's ideals and freedoms; and

WHEREAS, Arlington National Cemetery attracts more than 4 million visitors a year; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion was dismayed and disheartened by the deplorable scandals documented in the 2010 US Army Inspector Agency's Report of Investigation regarding the mismanagement of Arlington National Cemetery; and

WHEREAS, The improper handling of remains; loss of accountability of cremated remains; unmarked gravesites; unintended double burial of remains; and the failure to notify next-of-kin of the trans-internment of remains and millions of dollars wasted in botched information technology contracts were recounted in the IG report; and

WHEREAS, Over the last three years, The American Legion has observed a change in leadership, attitude, and the management approach that has transformed the culture of the ANC staff from complacency and disorganization to accuracy and accountability while maintaining dignity, honor, and respect throughout their solemn work each day; and

WHEREAS, Management and staff have successfully installed major modernization implementations and improvements since investigators revealed widespread problems at the cemetery; and

WHEREAS, Digitized records that allow cemetery visitors to look-up burial sites online and improved internal operation procedures are noteworthy accomplishments of the management team who took responsibility for ANC in 2010; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion, in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion commends the managers and staff of Arlington National Cemetery for the vast improvements in procedures and operations made since the US Army Inspector Agency's Report of Investigation was published three years ago.

Approved with Amendment

Resolution No. 10: Medal of Honor for James P. Simons
Origin: Kentucky
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The American Legion Highland Post 201 Department of Kentucky has among its members a highly distinguished and decorated U.S. Army Aviation veteran by the name of Captain James P. Simons (Ret) having served with Troop A 1st of the 9th Battalion 1st Calvary Airmobile Division; and

WHEREAS, During his tour in South Vietnam from 6/1966 to 6/1967 Lt. Simons was averaging 143 flight hours per month for 10 months totaling 1,430 flight hours in hostile enemy territory as a helicopter scout pilot in a HO-13 unarmed aircraft; and

WHEREAS, Lt. Simons' conspicuous bravery above and beyond the call of duty is a credit to the U.S. Army and the nation, and for his actions he was awarded the following: Aviator Badge; Vietnam Service Medal; National Defense Service Medal: 3 Purple Hearts; Air Medal with Twenty Four Oak Leaf Clusters; Vietnam Campaign Medal with Device 60; Two Overseas Bars; Bronze Service Medal; Distinguished Flying Cross and the Distinguished Service Cross and was Honorably Discharged in January 1968; and

WHEREAS, After searching archives it is obvious helicopter pilots were rarely awarded the Medal of Honor during the time frame Lt. Simons was in South Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, At that time in 1966 we were ramping up our commitment to South Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, When the Medal of Honor (MOH) was awarded to helicopter pilots it was generally after their discharge; and

WHEREAS, Helicopter pilots with conspicuous bravery Captains Ed Crandall and Bruce Freeman were awarded the MOH in 2003 and 2011 for participation in the Battle of the Ia Drang Valley dated 14 November 1965; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion Highland Post 201 believes Captain James P. Simons Distinguished Service Cross and his record should be reviewed and reconsidered as an upgrade or an additional award to the Medal of Honor; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion Department of Kentucky at its Department Convention held June 28-29, 2013 in Louisville, Kentucky voted to approve and support this resolution and request it be submitted to The American Legion national organization for consideration during its National Convention to be held August 23-29, 2013 in Houston, Texas; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Houston, Texas, August 27, 28, 29, 2013, That The American Legion supports efforts to award the Medal of Honor to Captain James P. Simons.

Referred to Standing Commission

Resolution No. 52 (PA)**: Modify Battlefield Helmet**

Naval Affairs Committee
William B. Goede (Minnesota)

No Resolutions

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 Minnesota
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: No Submission
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 New Mexico
Category VI - less than 10,000 members
Post & Individual Participation: Department of Alaska

Many of our Departments participated in the ROTC Awards Program this year. A total of almost 4,000 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 Utah. 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 duly elected and registered delegate to this Convention from the Department of Maryland, I move the adoption of this report. ... *Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Heard the motion and second. Is there any discussion? All in favor say aye. All opposed? Motion carried. The report of National Security is adopted.

I would now call on my family, which Vickie is already up here. Before we get into the next order of business, let me just say thank you. Thank you for giving me such a great year. *(Applause)* From the election in Indianapolis, Indiana, to the victory party on the Lanai deck at the Sheraton. I have been to the White House three times to meet with the president, probably something that's not been done before. What an opportunity that was for me and The American Legion, because the president called me there to talk to me. And on a special day, Veterans Day, having breakfast with him and Michelle Obama and Vice President Biden and his wife, Dr. Jill Biden. The next trip going to the White

House after inauguration was on February 28, the day before the big word "sequestration." The word they still like to use today and no excuse for it.

After that we went to 47 departments, 12 countries, including the Far East, Europe, and a trip that I will never forget to Vietnam. When I was elected, I told you I wanted to go to Vietnam and find out firsthand how things were going with JPAC and trying to find our remains of our missing in action. We were there six days, two days at each digging site. And understanding that the first digging site we went to had just opened up three days, the third day when we got there, we landed by helicopter and then drove up through the jungles, only the third day digging at that site.

Ladies and gentlemen, JPAC and the Vietnamese are working hard. They dig with picks and shovels and plastic buckets. They have homemade shaker screens. They do it in the rain. It doesn't bother them a bit. Nine hours a day digging, sifting. They get ten minutes for lunch. These villagers are all hired by JPAC to help them.

The first site we went to, like I said, was in the third day of digging. While I was there, I was sifting through dirt and found pieces of aircraft, pieces of parachute cord, pieces of parachute, and some clothing. I understand now from somebody that has been here this week that their neighbor was informed that this pilot was her brother. So that means that they have found remains at this first crash site that we went to. That's what we were looking for, to find remains.

The second crash site we went to we couldn't go by helicopter because of weather. So we drove two hours and 45 minutes to get to the bottom of the mountain. My aide and I hiked for an hour and 45 minutes through jungles, through creeks, leeches falling on your back, your hat, just like it was when we were there before. But once we reached that crash site, I never saw so many people working, digging. It was into the side of a mountain that this plane had crashed, and these two missing in action, this is the second time they were at this dig site, and they haven't found any remains yet. But I found while I was there pieces of instrument panel off the aircraft. But this plane had hit the side of the mountain so hard that pieces of the plane are on the other side of the mountain. The only way that they can probably find remains is, because the creek at the bottom is their drinking water in this Vietnamese village, the United States would have to get okay to reroute this creek, and maybe that's where these remains are at. So they're working on it very hard to try to get this done, because we cannot interfere with their drinking water.

But as we met with the Vietnamese officials, they asked us of some things that we would like for the United States to do. Every day some child is going out there touching something shiny in these fields and getting blown up. They think it is something they can play with, and it's not. It is unexploded bombs, land mines. They're asking for the United States' help to get this cleaned up. We flew into Hanoi. We went straight to Senator John McCain's cell. We got to tour his cell. His uniform is still hanging there. What an experience for your commander, going back to Vietnam.

I want to thank you for electing me your national commander. Thank you for everything you've done for me. How can I say more about Operation Comfort Warriors? Now we can take care of our wounded, ill, and severely injured soldiers for a long time. But I hope that Operation Comfort Warriors doesn't end this afternoon. I hope that we keep it going. Because, after all, ladies and gentlemen, we're going to have wounded, ill, and severely injured soldiers for a long time. All you have to do is read the newspaper and what's going on in the world today. I'll do everything I can to help keep funds coming into Operation Comfort Warriors if the next national commander that's elected here today will ask me to do. It's very important that we keep this going.

So, again, let me say thank you so much. Thanks to Boonville Post 200. Thanks to the 8th District of Indiana. Thanks to the Department of Indiana. And last, but not least, thanks to you, the people that elected me national commander last year in Indianapolis, Indiana, at the 94th National Convention. What a ride it has been. As I said before, you get past national commanders that come up to you and tell you, "Hey, it is going to be the

fastest year of your life," and they're right. It seems like only yesterday we were having a victory party when it was 104 degrees up on the Lanai deck at the Sheraton.

I want to thank the national staff and especially Debbie Andrews, the commander's secretary. All the national staff works very, very hard. They probably don't get "thank you" enough. They're the ones that make this convention happen. They put it all together. They put the conferences together. So next time you see a staffer, say "thank you."

To my wife, it is going to be good to come back home, and tomorrow night we're going to be at the river. *(Laughter)*

But let me say thank you. Thank you for all you do. I have many, many friends. I have met thousands and thousands of friends this year. And I will never forget you. The hospitality in every department, all 47 departments, and I'm sorry to the three we didn't get to make, but the trip to Vietnam was probably part of that. Thank you for a hospitality that you give my aide and I, because it was outstanding. And the many, many, many gifts. My truck can't hardly even fit in the garage because there are so many boxes that I haven't even got to be home to open yet, gifts from you all. But thank you for all that. And to finish you up, remember, in The American Legion, every day is Veterans Day! Thank you all so very much and God bless. *(Standing applause)*

Thank you. Would my national vice commanders please come forward. You have represented me well during these past 12 months with your devotion to this great organization and with much sacrifice on your part. As a token of my appreciation, I would like to present each of you with a gift. Ladies and gentlemen, give a big hand to all five national vice commanders. *(Applause)*

I now call on the national historian, sergeant-at-arms, chaplain, and my aide to come forward. You have each played important roles in the success of our organization during the past year. I salute you for your service. Please accept these gifts as a token of my appreciation. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER NEYLON: Commander Koutz, good morning. This morning I have the honor to represent your five national vice commanders as we present you a gift of appreciation. We thank you for your leadership and for allowing us to travel the nation to spread your theme of "Every Day is Veterans Day" and to promote your programs of membership and Operation Comfort Warriors.

Mr. Commander, it was at the Washington conference that we first discussed and agreed upon your gift, purchasing it only weeks later. However, Mr. Commander, we have no box to open, no box to carry home; only an envelope. However, Mr. Commander, due to sequestration, the envelope doesn't contain your gift. *(Laughter)* However, it does contain the description of your gift and a date when you may expect to receive it.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Two tickets to NASCAR racing, DRIVE4COPD 300 and the Daytona 500 race February 22 and 23. Thank you so very much. *(Cheers and applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER NEYLON: Commander, we hope that when you get this it's going to exceed all your expectations. Thank you very much for a wonderful year. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: He's right, sequestration, nothing in there. But I understand how race tickets go. You don't get them today; you get them closer to when the races come. Next we have a few words from our National Adjutant Dan S. Wheeler. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, if I may, could I have the national judge advocate, national treasurer, and your three executive directors join me?

Commander Koutz, it has been an honor and a privilege to serve with you. Every one of your 285 staff members admire you for your dedication, your sincerity, your fairness, and the fact that you are a 100 percent veterans advocate every single day, every

hour of the day and every minute of the hour. You gave everything you had during this one year. You had 365 days worth of a distance run, and we admire you for that.

Also, this $1.1 million that you single-handedly raised for Operation Comfort Warriors will help many, many, many veterans with the comforts they need during their convalescence, and we will always tell them as we present this that this comes from the money that you raised during your year when every day was Veterans Day. So you are going to have a little more time on your hands after today. You might have a lot in Houston since you don't have a checkbook or credit cards anymore. *(Laughter)*

You have been on a roll all year collecting funds, doing Legion work, being the voice of The American Legion, the voice of America's veterans. We imagine you will continue to roll around the country in that huge motor home of yours, and the Mighty Koutz Mobile has been a fixture outside the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and other racetracks for a number of years. We thought that you might need some additional equipment for it. So we took up a collection, and we have here a $1,500 gift card from Camper's World so that you can get a few amenities for your Koutz Mobile. And now that Vickie retires and she'll join you, it will be even prettier. Thank you so much for a great year, commander. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: National Vice Commander John Neylon, will you please take the gavel and preside over the next order of business.

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

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)

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER NEYLON: After serving this past year as national vice commander, I am honored to represent all members of The American Legion in presiding over the next order of business. This is the time when we present the Colors to National Commander James E. Koutz, 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 to present the Colors.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Will the delegates to this National Convention please rise. 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.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Commander Koutz, on your watch, our nation's wounded warriors had no better friend. You have brought Operation Comfort Warriors to new levels. You have consistently warned about the foolishness of Washington cutting our national defense. You have been a strong leader for The American Legion during a time when the nation faces great challenges. Even the disability backlog, a problem that has plagued VA for years, has been heading in the right direction thanks to ideas provided by The American Legion during your year in office.

You have traveled throughout the world and these colors have traveled with you representing The American Legion and the United States of America. They have traveled with you proudly and you'll go down in history as one of the greatest national commanders at this given time. You have lived up to your own motto that every day is Veterans Day, and we thank you for that. Commander, your colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Color Guard, retire my Colors. Hand Salute. Two! *... At this time the delegation stood and rendered a salute to the Colors*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: You may be seated. Thank you, Commander Comer. You and so many other past national commanders have been a treasure of knowledge and example on how to represent The American Legion as a national commander. I only hope to 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. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER NEYLON: I now call on Past National Commander Richard M. Pedro to present the plaque to our outgoing commander.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER PEDRO: Commander, will you join me. You have been a great champion for our veterans, their families, and The American Legion. You have led us with class and professionalism. Indeed, you have been a model of Hoosier values and you have made your department, the Department of Indiana, proud. I am very proud to present to you the plaque which attests to your election to the high office of national commander of The American Legion for the year 2012-2013. It is given in appreciation of your dedicated leadership and in recognition of your devoted service to God and country, and in token of the high esteem of your fellow Legionnaires. It is presented this 29th day of August, before the delegates assembled at the National Convention in Houston, Texas. Congratulations, Commander Koutz. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you so much, Past National Commander Pedro. Your wise counsel has been truly valued by me. There have been so many wonderful people that I have met over this past year and so many Legionnaires, Auxiliary members and Sons that have made this an unbelievable year for me. I thank you for your support. Even though my year is winding down, I am extremely excited about the activities and programs that The American Legion family members are going to continue to do for their communities because they know, whether I remind them or not, that every day is Veterans Day. Thank you. *(Applause)*

... National Commander Koutz resumed the Chair.

Special Order of Business: Election of National Officers

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: We have come now to a special order of business, the election of national officers. National Judge Advocate Philip Onderdonk, 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 are as follows:

Rule 15: Final sentence: Election of National Officers shall be by roll call.

Rule 17: Prior to the election of National Officers, the National Commander shall appoint, subject to approval of the convention, a judge of election and such number of tellers as he deems necessary, provided that the total tellers so appointed shall be an odd number. In a contested election, each candidate going to the ballot shall be entitled to one teller of his choice.

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 the votes of the convention, except in the election of National Vice Commanders.

Rule 21: In a contested election for National Vice Commanders, balloting shall continue until (a) majorities and (b) pluralities are established for one or more candidates under the following provisions:

If, on any ballot taken, less than five candidates receive the necessary majority to elect, the candidate or candidates receiving a majority vote shall be declared elected and a new ballot shall be taken for the remaining number of places to be filled, the candidate

receiving the lowest number of votes on the preceding ballot shall be disqualified; except should two candidates remain to fill one place, a new ballot shall be taken.

Rule 22: The convention will nominate and elect a National Commander and five National Vice Commanders, in this sequence.

Rule 23: At the conclusion of balloting on National Vice Commanders, each Department Chairman shall deliver a written ballot to the tellers. Such ballots shall be in the hands of the tellers before communication is made to the National Commander for announcement of the results.

Mr. Commander, that completes the reading of the rules pertaining to the election of national officers.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: As chairman of this Convention, I now appoint as judge of the election, Hugh R. Dagley II, adjutant of the Department of Indiana. And as tellers of the election, Dale D. Chapman, adjutant, Department of Virginia; David W. Salak, adjutant, Department of Nebraska; and David Kurtz, adjutant of the Department of Wisconsin. Will the judge and the tellers of the election please come forward.

While they're coming forward, Vickie, would you please come over here. You know, it's been a great year, but this lady has been home doing everything for me, working, making money. Thank goodness. She has done everything for me. You know, I have only been home about six times since last August. But I'm coming home now. We're going to have some fun. We're still going to do great things for The American Legion, and I know she will still be very active in The American Legion Auxiliary. But I want to say thank you, honey, for everything you have done for me. Thank you. *(Applause)* Thank you very much.

National Adjutant Daniel S. 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. Adjutant Wheeler.

[The national adjutant calls each department in turn.]

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN FRAZIER (AL): Mr. Commander, my name is Willis Frazier. I am the chairman of the delegation from Alabama. Roll Tide, Roll. Mr. Commander, Alabama yields to Virginia.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KELLEY (VA): Mr. Commander, Ike Kelley, chairman of the delegation from Virginia. Mr. Commander, I request that the Chair recognize George C. Lussier, Jr., for the purpose of a nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The Chair recognizes George C. Lussier, Jr.

DELEGATE LUSSIER (VA): National Commander Koutz, National Adjutant Wheeler, national officers, past national commanders, delegates, alternates, members of The American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion, and guests, for the past week we have worked to set the course for not just the coming year but for years to come. Now with our work complete, it is time to elect a new commander, another who will have the honor, privilege, and opportunity to lead this great organization for one year. It is with a great deal of pride and humility that I stand before you to place in nomination the name of Virginia native Daniel M. 'Dan' Dellinger to serve in that position.

After earning a B.A. in criminology from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Dan served as an infantry officer and company commander, assigned to the 80th Division U.S. Army Reserves during the Vietnam war, separating at the rank of captain. Upon returning to Virginia, he started and operated a construction management/general contracting firm specializing in commercial, institutional, and industrial construction and renovation. He ran his business for the next 20 years before selling it and retiring to devote his entire energy to serving as department commander in 1999-2000.

After a successful year as commander, because of his reputation in construction management, he returned to the workforce accepting a position with the Chamberlain

Construction Corporation as a senior project manager where he remained until a few short weeks ago. In 2010, he was appointed by President Barack Obama to serve on an interagency task force dealing with federal contracting opportunities for small businesses.

Dan joined The American Legion in 1982 and a few years later the Sons of The American Legion. He has spent the last 30-plus years as a very active member of both. While many of you know him from his activities at the national level where he has served on numerous national committees and commissions, with over ten years as chairman of many of those same assemblies, he always made time to remain active at his post, district, and department. He continued until this Legion year to serve his post and district as judge advocate, as chairman of the Department of Internal Affairs, as Legion Rider adviser, on the Boys State board of directors and Boys State master of ceremonies. Because of his hard work and dedication, he was awarded an honorary life membership by his post in 1990 and again recognized in 1998 with a paid-up-for-life membership from the Department of Virginia.

For those who have had the opportunity to serve with Dan, I'm certain you know he is a can-do individual and born leader, and his leadership is not limited to The American Legion. He served Vienna, Virginia, as a councilman for three terms; as vice mayor; on Historic Vienna, Incorporated, board of directors; on the board of Architectural Review; and on the Vienna Host Lions board of directors. Many in Virginia are quick to share experiences after working with Dan, and the following are a few of their comments.

"Dan is a doer who is not afraid to roll up his sleeves and get his hands dirty when necessary. He has proven to be a leader who is unpretentious, even-tempered, and level-headed." From another, "Dan is one who not only serves as a mentor but also as a wise counsel to many needing solid direction and advice." Another added, "When Dan was district commander, his pristine leadership led to my desire to do all I could do to one day serve as district commander. Through his mentoring this became possible, as did the opportunity for me to serve as a department commander." I could continue with comments from many more, but we all echo the same comments.

Dan Dellinger is a Legionnaire who displays a sincere love of our great organization, an individual who makes you strive to do more, encourages you on your journey, then he walks the talk with you. Through his encouragement, positive feedback, and unselfish mentoring, you will achieve many positions of great responsibility. He leads by example, and you cannot help but want to follow in his footsteps. Making sure our veterans and their families are able to get the help and benefits they need and deserve is a task that is second nature to Dan Dellinger.

Today as we begin a five-year journey and beyond to reach a record in total membership by the Legion's centennial in 2019, I can think of no better person to begin the process. Dan's campaign motto, "Building for tomorrow today," is more than just a motto. To Dan, it is his guiding principle.

As the National Membership and Post Activities chairman for two years, Dan believed in you, and you came through. Now he is ready to take up a new challenge, a challenge to create a culture of growth. He knows with our help everything is possible. He knows to succeed we need input from our members. Without input from our membership and without including their input in our planning, there will be no commitment. Without commitment we will not grow, and grow we must. Grow with members who are younger, grow with members who have different ideas and needs than we, but ideas and needs that must be heard, met, and shared. To attract these younger members, The American Legion needs to be seen as a resource, a resource more than a fraternity.

So now, Commander Koutz, and delegates to this 95th Annual Convention of The American Legion, as a duly registered delegate from the Department of Virginia, it is my pleasure, honor, and privilege to place in nomination for the high office of national commander of The American Legion the name of a good friend, mentor, and outstanding

Legionnaire, Virginia's favorite son, Mr. Daniel M. 'Dan' Dellinger, and I so move. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Now roll call will continue by our national adjutant.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DIAZ (AK): Mr. Commander, I'm Alvin Diaz, the chairman of the delegation from Alaska. Mr. Commander, Alaska yields to Wisconsin.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN RYNES (WI): Mr. Commander, Ken Rynes, chairman from the delegation from Wisconsin. Mr. Commander, I request the Chair recognize Denise H. Rohan for the purpose of seconding the nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The chair recognizes Denise H. Rohan.

DELEGATE ROHAN (WI): Thank you. National Commander Koutz, National Adjutant Wheeler, national officers, past national commanders, delegates, American Legion Family members and guests, I come before you to speak not only of a great Legionnaire but to also speak about a great family man.

Dan Dellinger and his wife, Margaret, live on Park Street in Vienna, Virginia, and together they raised two children, Scott and Anne. Now, I'm sure they have a normal family life in their home on Park Street where Dan taught his children what it means to be an American. As a father and a veteran, he instilled in each of them a sense of individual obligation to their community, their state, and their nation.

To that end, Dan, Margaret, Scott, and Anne, like all of us, have another home. And that home, that other home, is the Dyer-Gunnell American Legion Post 180 on North Center Street in Vienna. Their home has since extended across the state of Virginia and then continued to spread across this nation, and in that other home you find the rest of his American Legion family.

Dan's entire family has been involved with The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary, the Sons of The American Legion, and The American Legion Riders for over 32 years. Dan's wife, Margaret, has served in many positions at all levels of The American Legion Auxiliary to include unit, district, and department president, National Executive Committeewoman, national vice chairman of Children and Youth, Legislative, and National Security. Their daughter, Anne, has served as the Department of Virginia's junior sergeant-at-arms and son, Scott, has served as the Department of Virginia's vice commander, chaplain, and sergeant-at-arms. Dan and his whole family knows what it means to serve their veterans, their families, their communities, and our great nation.

Dan is a veteran who stands for God and country. Over the last several years you have seen Margaret lovingly standing by her husband's side, giving him her full support as he pursued his dream to be the leader of the nation's greatest veterans service organization. Dan has the love and support of his entire family as he follows that dream.

So, it is with great pleasure that as a duly elected delegate from the Department of Wisconsin that I second the nomination of Daniel M. 'Dan' Dellinger for the high office of national commander. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: I now call on the national adjutant for continuation of the roll call.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DOWSE (AZ): Mr. Commander, my name is Kenneth Dowse, chairman of the delegation from Arizona. Mr. Commander, Arizona yields to Montana.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CARLISLE (MT): Mr. Commander, Jim Carlisle, chairman of the delegation from Montana. Mr. Commander, I request that the Chair recognize Mervin G. Gunderson for the purpose of seconding the nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The chair recognizes Mervin G. Gunderson.

DELEGATE GUNDERSON (MT): National Commander Koutz, National Adjutant Wheeler, national officers, past national commanders, fellow delegates, and

Legionnaires, it gives me great personal pleasure to give the second to the nomination of Daniel M. 'Dan' Dellinger for the distinguished high office of commander of The American Legion.

I have known Dan for many years. Over that time, I have had the opportunity to watch a dedicated Legionnaire take his impressive leadership skills and hone them to perfection. The last couple of years I had the pleasure of crossing paths with Dan as we visited several departments together. That experience gave me a perspective of Dan that made me realize the great potential we blue cap Legionnaires will embrace as we follow Dan's leadership this coming year.

Dan has continuously shown his leadership skills through all of his post, department, and national assignments. He consistently worked with the members of the offices and commissions he headed to ensure the Legionnaires serving with him had the opportunity to express their desires. Yet, the direction Dan gave always exemplified the best interests of The American Legion. The leadership Dan provides encourages the officers and blue caps to become part of the team. "Team" is more than a word for Dan. It is a commitment he utilizes in all his endeavors.

As we move into the new Legion year and pursue our membership goal for 2019, it is extremely important we build on what has been accomplished. We must strive to exceed our membership goals within each department. We will never accomplish our goal of 3 million members without a concerted team effort. We need the entire Legion Family on board to meet our goal. We need all of us working together as a team.

At the same time, we need a leader who has the proven experience of utilizing the team concept, a leader who has continually shown he is capable of accomplishing team-oriented goals. The leader we need must be able to stimulate all Legionnaires to get the word out about the great accomplishments of The American Legion. The leader has to guide by example. He must have earned the respect of department leadership. Our leader must be a worker who will engage all Legionnaires to make our organization even stronger. That leader is here today and willing to take the helm. That leader is Dan Dellinger. Mr. Commander, as an authorized delegate from the "Big Sky" state of Montana, I proudly second the nomination for Daniel M. 'Dan' Dellinger as commander of The American Legion. *(Applause)*

... At this time a demonstration of support ensued.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The adjutant will continue the roll call.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AR): Arkansas supports Dan M. Dellinger for national commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (CA): California seconds the motion.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (CO): Colorado rocks! Home of the Denver Broncos and Past National Commander Tom Bock. We second the nomination for Dan Dellinger for national commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (CT): We support Dan Dellinger.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BRADY (DE): Mr. Adjutant, Jim Brady, delegation chairman for Delaware. We second the motion for Dan Dellinger for national commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (DC): The District of Columbia seconds the nomination of Dan Dellinger, our neighbor.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DUDLEY (FL): Florida, Al 'Gunner' Dudley, a duly elected delegate to the Convention. Florida casts second nominations for Dan Dellinger of the great state of Virginia.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (FR): Mr. Adjutant, Department of France seconds the nomination of Dan Dellinger for national commander 2013-2014.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ROLLINS (GA): Lynne Rollins, a duly authorized delegate, delegation chairman for the great state of Georgia, cast our 59 votes for the gentleman from Virginia, Dan Dellinger.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN (HI): As the delegation chairman from the "Aloha State" of Hawaii, we are proud to cast our votes for Daniel Dellinger.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN (ID): As a delegate chairman from the great state of Idaho, the "Gem State," I cast all delegate votes for Dan Dellinger.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IL): Illinois, the land of Lincoln, casts their votes and seconds the nomination of Dan Dellinger for national commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IN): Indiana, home of National Commander Jim Koutz and the Indianapolis Colts seconds.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IA): The tall corn state of Iowa pledges our support to Dan Dellinger for national commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (KS): Kansas seconds the nomination.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER COFFMAN (KY): Randall Coffman, National Executive Committee, Department of Kentucky, home of the last two men's NCAA basketball champions and proud host of the 99th Annual Convention of the world's greatest veterans organization, proudly seconds the nomination of Dan Dellinger from Virginia for the high office of national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN PETIT (LA): Herbie Petit, delegation chairman, home of the New Orleans Saints, great food, music and southern hospitality, seconds the motion for Dan Dellinger, national commander. Thank you.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HARGREAVES (ME): John Hargreaves, chairman of the delegation from the great state of Maine, home of the magnificent moose, delicious lobster, and majestic pine tree, casts its support for Dan Dellinger.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN VOGT (MD): I'm Gary Vogt. I'm from the great state of Maryland. Maryland, we are home of the 2015 National Convention. And Maryland has the crabs, and we want to give them to you. *(Laughter)* Maryland unanimously supports the nomination of Dan Dellinger for national commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MA): Massachusetts, the great "Bay State," home of Past National Commanders John 'Jake' Comer and Paul Morin casts all its votes for Dan Dellinger for national commander. Boston strong.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MX): Mexico seconds the nomination for Dan Dellinger.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BROWN (MI): Tom Brown, the great state of Michigan, home of Tom Cadmus, past national commander, the Detroit Tigers, Detroit Lions, and the bankrupt city of Detroit *(Laughter)* casts all of its votes to Dan Dellinger.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN PANKAKE (MN): Don Pankake, delegation chairman from the state of Minnesota, proudly seconds the nomination for Dan Dellinger.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MS): As a duly authorized delegate from the state of Mississippi, we proudly second the nomination of Dan Dellinger for national commander. Go Rebels!

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MO): "The Show-Me State" of Missouri, the home of Harry S. Truman, first Legionnaire president, and also the home of Past National Commander Joe Frank and the soon-to-be world champion Cardinals, we support the nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SIDEL (NE): I'm Jim Sidel, delegation chairman from the "Cornhusker State" of Nebraska, we second the nomination for Dan Dellinger for the high office of national commander of The American Legion.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NV): Nevada, the most mountainous state in the union seconds the nomination of Dan Dellinger.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NH): Mr. Commander, New Hampshire casts all 27 delegates from "The Granite State" to Dan Dellinger from Virginia.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN (NJ): Mr. Adjutant, as a delegation chairman for the great department of New Jersey, we second the nomination of Dan Dellinger for the national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JARAMILLO (NM): Robert Jaramillo, delegation chairman from New Mexico, we cast our 20 votes for Dan Dellinger.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN VAN PATTEN (NY): Tim Van Patten, delegate chairman from the state of New York, we second the nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN RICHARD (NC): Bill Richard, delegate chairman, the Department of North Carolina, home of The American Legion World Series in Shelby and the host of the 96th National Convention in Charlotte, we cast our 55 delegates for Dan Dellinger.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ND): Department of North Dakota casts its 24 delegates for Dan Dellinger, Department of Virginia.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): On behalf of the Ohio delegation, we cast all support and all votes for Dan Dellinger.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BENGE (OK): Wes Benge, commander of Oklahoma, home of the Oklahoma City Thunder, Big Red OU, all our votes are going to Dellinger.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OR): Oregon casts all its votes for our friend Dan Dellinger.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CLEVELAND (PA): Bill Cleveland, delegate chairman of the great Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, seconds the nomination of Dan Dellinger.

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT SCHRAUBEN (PI): Chris Schrauben from the Department of Philippines. We second the nomination for Dan Dellinger.

DELEGATE VARGAS (PR): Edwin Vargas from Puerto Rico. We do our best. We cast all our votes for Dan Dellinger.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (RI): We cast all delegate votes for Dan Dellinger.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MITCHELL (SC): Gary Mitchell, delegation chairman for the great state of South Carolina casts all votes for Dan Dellinger for commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CALLIES (SD): Mr. Chairman, I'm Delegation Chairman Byron Callies from the great state of South Dakota, the Rushmore State, birthplace of American Legion Baseball, where it was hotter this week than in Houston, proudly seconds the nomination of Dan Dellinger of Virginia for the high office of national commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (TN): Mr. Chairman, Tennessee casts all votes for Dan Dellinger. Thank you.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CORBIN (TX): Mr. Chairman, Dan Corbin, chairman of the delegation from Texas, home of the 2013 Southeastern Conference national football champions, Texas A&M University Aggies, and the Big 12 Football Champions for 2013, the Texas Longhorns, home of Past National Commander John Brieden, proudly seconds the nomination of Dan Dellinger.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DUNLAP (UT): Mr. Chairman, Bill Dunlap, delegate chairman from Utah, the home of the Legion legend Bill Christoffersen, seconds the motion to Daniel Dellinger.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GRAY (VT): Mr. Chairman, Richard Gray, chairman for the "Green Mountain State," Department of Vermont, home of Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream, seconds the motion of Commander Dan Dellinger for national commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WA): Washington, the great state where the rivers roar and the eagles soar, casts the unanimous ballots for the national commander. Dellinger, all 40 votes.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN NICHOLSON (WV): West Virginia, Frank Nicholson, department commander and delegate chairman, home of Past National Commander Miles Epling, we cast all 29 votes for Dan Dellinger.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WY): Wyoming, home of American Legion Peak, which rises 13,205 feet above sea level in the beautiful Wind River Range of Wyoming, proudly seconds the nomination of Dan Dellinger for the high office of national commander. Thank you. *(Cheers and applause)*

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: That completes the roll call. There is one nomination for national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: I now recognize from the floor microphone one.

DELEGATE MASOWICK (OH): Mr. Commander, Steve Masowick, delegate from Ohio. 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 Daniel M. Dellinger be elected national commander by acclamation.

I will now make the first motion: Mr. Commander, I move that we suspend the rules of this Convention pertaining to the election of the 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 KOUTZ: There is a motion before us to suspend the rules of this Convention pertaining to the election of the national commander and the nomination and election of national vice commanders, which rules shall be automatically reinstated at the conclusion of the election of the national vice commanders. Is there a second? ... *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. All opposed? Motion carried. I now recognize from the floor microphone two.

DELEGATE SEBBEN (IA): Mr. Commander, Jerry Sebben, delegate from Iowa. Mr. Commander, I move that nominations for the office of national commander be closed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: We have a motion that nominations for the office of national commander be closed. Is there a second? ... *Second.* Hearing a second, the motion to close nominations is a non-debatable motion and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saying aye. All those opposed. Motion carried. I now recognize from the floor microphone one.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SANFORD (KS): Mr. Commander, Paul Sanford, past department commander and delegation chairman and delegate from the Department of Kansas. Mr. Commander, I move that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention and that Daniel M. Dellinger be elected national commander by acclamation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Is there a second? ... *Second.* 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 Daniel M. Dellinger be elected national commander by acclamation. All those in favor of this motion signifying by saying aye. Those that oppose? Motion carried. I now call on the national adjutant.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, as national adjutant, I cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention for the election of Daniel M. Dellinger as the national commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: I declare Daniel M. Dellinger elected national commander of The American Legion. *(Cheers and applause)*

Will the sergeant-at-arms assist the new national commander of The American Legion to the platform. Alternate NECman Thomas Saunders from the Department of Virginia will escort him to the stage. (*Cheers and applause)*

The Chair recognizes Past National Commander John P. 'Jake' Comer for the purpose of administering the oath of office to the new national commander of The American Legion.

Administering the Oath of Office to the National Commander

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Commander, raise your right hand and repeat after me: I, Daniel M. Dellinger, do solemnly pledge myself, to perform faithfully and impartially the duties of the office of 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. *(Applause)*

Ladies and gentlemen, the 2013-14 National Commander of The American Legion Daniel M. Dellinger. *(Cheers and applause)*

Acceptance Speech: Newly Elected National Commander
Daniel M. Dellinger, Virginia

Thank you. Thank you very much. I am truly humbled and grateful for this opportunity. First, I would like to thank National Commander Koutz for his leadership and dedication and successes this year. Thank you, sir. *(Applause)*

Next I would like to thank NECman George Lussier for his nominating speech and to Denise Rohan and Merv Gunderson for their seconding speeches. I would like to thank Past National Commander Jake Comer for administering the oath of office and his invaluable guidance over the years. I wish to thank all the other PNCs for their support and guidance leading up to today.

Next, I would like to recognize my family. First of all, my wife. When she was department president, her theme was "Angels walk among us." Well, to me, she is the biggest angel of all, someone who has supported me over the years on this journey. My partner, my friend, my wife, Margaret. I love you, dear. Thank you.*(Applause)*

Next my son, Scott. He's not one of the dynasty guys, but, he's a 30-year member of the SAL, and I want to apologize for dragging you to all those post meetings and making him throw darts with me. But we did win one year, so, thank you. And also his friend Kathryn. Next my daughter, Anne, a 25-year member of the Auxiliary. She has been very special to me over the years, and she actually likes Brunswick stew from all the traveling we did through Virginia. And her friend David. Please rise. *(Applause)*

I'm fortunate today to have some more family members. My sister Sandy Thompson from Monroeville, Alabama, is here with us. My sister Pat and her husband, Randy Dravis, from Ontario, Canada. *(Applause)*

Everyone knows that you don't get to this position without the help of many friends. I would like to recognize and thank them at this time. Some are here today, but some have either not been able to be here or have gone before us. First of all, a gentleman who 32 years ago signed me up in The American Legion, who unfortunately is not able to be here, a World War II veteran, Ken Shaffer in Virginia, and if he's looking, God bless you and thank you. Next, three individuals who are no longer with us but guided me along the path as I got to this position. They are Past Department Commanders Claude Swanson, Eddie Dentz, and Roger Messier. I know they're looking down on me today and smiling. But I am fortunate today to have Bettie Messier, Roger's wife, with us and her sister Mary Jack. Thank you. With them here, it feels like he is here today. *(Applause)*

Next, Past Department Commander Charlie Powell and chairman of our Finance Committee. Charlie, thank you for your support over the years, being a great friend and my roommate at Boys State. I would like to recognize a truly southern lady, Past National

President Peggy Thomas, who served the Auxiliary very well this year, and also Past National President Anna Gear for her support over the years, who cannot be with us.

Next, my campaign manager, George Lussier, and his wife, Bobbie. *(Applause)* I cannot tell you how many hours he's dedicated to my campaign to make sure it was perfect, but he did an outstanding job. Thank you.

Next, our NEC-elect, Tom Saunders, and his wife, Mary. Thank you. *(Applause)*

My very capable campaign treasurer and soon-to-be Virginia's Alternate NEC Mike Mitrione, who also served as one of my hospitality team captains along with his wife, Joanie. *(Applause)* Bob and Janet Renner, who were also captains. *(Applause)*And Gerald Rhodes, who took care of the refreshments, and his wife, Mary. *(Applause)*

I would like to thank Department Adjutant Dale Chapman and our headquarter staff for their great support during the year. In addition, I'd also like to thank Ron Miuszewski, who was my fundraising chairman, and Department Commander Linden Dixon, who was in charge of logistics. Thank you, gentlemen.

Next, Team Virginia. The Legionnaires, the Auxiliary, and Sons of The American Legion of my great department. I don't know how I'll ever repay you. I know I owe a lot of IOUs. Thank you very much. *(Applause)* And finally to my post, members of Post 180, if you would please rise. Thank you to the Legionnaires, the Auxiliary, and Sons of The American Legion for helping me along this path.

I'd also like to thank and congratulate National President Nancy Brown-Park and Sons of The American Legion Commander Joe Gladden on their recent elections. I promise we will work together as a Legion family this year as we promote the four pillars of our great organization. And, of course, The American Legion Riders will continue to play a vital role in our great organization.

We, The American Legion, the nation's largest veterans organization, have rich traditions and 95 years of storied history. But is that enough as we move towards our 100th year anniversary and beyond?

Just as our country has evolved since 1776, we must continue to evolve. Two years ago, at the beginning of my campaign, I chose a slogan: "Building for tomorrow today." With my background in construction, I know you need a good set of plans and a solid foundation if you're going to build a structure to last. We have a rock-solid foundation in The American Legion, our 95 years of service to our veterans, our communities and our nation. So what we need now is a plan to get us to that next level and above.

Through the actions of the National Executive Committee and this Convention body, we have passed resolutions that have set in motion the changes we need to stay relevant as we continue to serve our servicemen and women and our veterans. There is a change in the air, a new culture of growth in membership. One is desperately needed if we are to continue to grow our programs and membership. Taking care of those under our charge of the four pillars.

Some voices in media say we are a dying organization. I disagree. In looking at the faces in this audience today, I think you do, too. The other part of this is that if we're going to grow, we need to step it up. We need everyone in this construction team to lend a hand and build our membership back to its all-time high. We have requested at the national level that every department formulate a five-year plan and beyond to grow our membership back to its all-time high. We will be using this plan to monitor our growth as we move towards this 100th anniversary and beyond.

In order to reward those who sign up new or expired members this year, for five new or expired members, any Legionnaire, Auxiliary member, or Sons of The American Legion can receive a distinctive hat pin. And anyone that signs up 15 new members will receive a challenge coin. It's the first time a challenge coin has been issued for membership.

In 2001-2002, I was fortunate enough to be the National Membership chairman. We made our goals each year, but it wasn't me; it was you. It was everyone in this audience

and everyone around this country that bought into the plan and worked hard to achieve the goals. We can and will do that again this year. *(Applause)*

We are a grassroots organization, and we will continue to take our message to Capitol Hill to advocate for our servicemen and women, our veterans, our communities, and national security issues. The national commander's testimony before the Joint Veterans Affairs Committee is scheduled for September 10, 2013. I will report on the hours donated, the monies raised and expended to support our veterans and our programs. But unfortunately the numbers will not depict the true picture of who we are. Only 57 percent of all posts last year submitted their consolidated post report. I've already had discussions with most of the department commanders requesting their assistance in obtaining 100 percent reporting this year. Remember, post commanders, the job is not done until the paperwork is filed. I will continue to reinforce this message as I travel through departments this year.

I would like to thank Commander Koutz for his advocacy and leadership in raising over $1 million for Operation Comfort Warriors. *(Applause)* We will continue to raise money to assist our wounded service members returning from battle bearing the scars of war.

Recently we've also seen many dramatic natural disasters challenging our veterans and our families here at home. We have expended three-quarters of a million dollars in aid this year from the National Emergency Fund alone. We need to raise funds to guarantee that if a deserving and qualified veteran needs assistance, monies are available for their use. My commander's project will be to raise $1 million for the National Emergency Fund. That is a very lofty goal, but it's only 50 cents per member. We can do it. Given the recent tornadoes in Oklahoma, Hurricane Sandy and other hurricanes, and the deadly wildfires in the western states, the question is not if a natural disaster will hit, but when and where. So I encourage you to support fundraisers for this most worthy cause. In addition, I will ask The American Legion Riders again to spearhead our efforts to raise money for the Legacy Fund.

The National Executive Committee at its spring meetings passed a resolution based upon the Centennial Task Force recommendations and approved by this convention to amend the national bylaws, which allows this organization to evolve and continue to be relevant.

Think back to when the Economic Commission was elevated from committee and the great work that has come out of that action, especially the fight for credentialing and licensing, the work, the promotion of job fairs, and our advocacy to alleviate the homelessness of our veterans. Their new name under this new restructuring will be the Veterans Employment & Education Commission. The restructuring as outlined in the resolution I am sure will have the same wide-reaching effects on how we take care of business in caring for our veterans, our communities, and our nation.

You've heard the administration assert that the backlog on claims was and is continuing to be reduced. We are and will continue to monitor this issue. It's not about how many as much as about how accurate the claims are. We will continue to educate our service officers to ensure we maintain our degree of accuracy in preparing fully developed claims. We will continue to visit VA hospitals to ensure all veterans receive the best care possible under the System Worth Saving.

Another one that changes this year is the merging of the PR and Magazine Commission into the Media & Communications Commission. It is critical that we use all methods of communication and social media as we get our message out to the American public. If you've heard me speak, you've probably heard me say, "We're the second best kept secret other than the Masons." We must strive to reach all veterans and inform them of their rights and what our great organization has to offer them and their families.

I'm very excited about the opportunities before us as we start building for tomorrow today. I look forward to working with each and every one of you, along with all the other

members of The American Legion Family, as we promote and grow our great organization. Again, thank you for your vote of confidence as we move into our 96th year. May God bless you all as you return to your homes, God bless our troops everywhere, and God bless these great United States of America. Thank you. *(Applause)*

First Lady Presentation

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: 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. Dellinger on behalf of all the first ladies of The American Legion.

MRS. LUDWIG: Margaret, on behalf of us former first ladies, it is my pleasure to welcome you as our newest first lady.

MRS. DELLINGER: Thank you. *(Applause)*

MRS. LUDWIG: Congratulations, and enjoy your year.

MRS. DELLINGER: Thank you. I'm sure I'll do everybody proud.

MRS. LUDWIG: I'm sure you will.

Election of National Vice Commanders

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you, Mary. I now recognize microphone two.

DELEGATE HARRIS (NC): Mr. Commander, Patricia Harris, delegate from North Carolina. Mr. Commander, since the rules of this Convention have been suspended, I move that nominations for the office of national vice commander be made from the floor of this Convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: There is a motion before us that nominations for the office of national vice commander be made from the floor. Do I hear a second? ... *Second.* Hearing a second, the motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor say aye. All those opposed. Motion carried. I will now entertain nominations for the offices of national vice commander from the floor. I now recognize microphone one.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KENNEDY (CO): Mr. Commander, Carol Kennedy, chairman of the delegation from Colorado. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize Tom Bock for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: I now call on microphone number one. Now call on Past National Commander Tom Bock.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER BOCK: Commander Koutz, past national commanders, distinguished guests, fellow Legionnaires, my name is Tom Bock, past national commander of The American Legion and an authorized delegate to this 95th National Convention of The American Legion. I rise to place in nomination for national vice commander a fellow Legionnaire that many of you already know. In 2005 and 2006, he was aide to one of the best-ever national commanders *(Laughter)* and traveled throughout this organization supporting American Legion programs.

Douglas W. 'Doug' Wooddell served honorably in the United States Air Force from 1966 to 1969 as a member of a ground crew working on F-4 phantoms in Eglin Air Force base, Florida, and Southeast Asia and Korat, Thailand.

Doug joined Paul C. Beck Post 23 in Aurora, Colorado, in 1981. He served in nearly every post office including three separate terms as post commander. Doug served The American Legion in Colorado at the district and the department levels as well. He served as department junior vice and senior vice commander, and in 1997-1998 he was the department commander of Colorado.

On the national level, Doug served on the VA&R Commission as chairman of the National Cemetery Committee for the past five years. He served on the National Security Subcommittee on Law and Order, VA&R Claims and Ratings and Hospital and Medical Services National Convention committees.

He is a member of ANAVICUS and a graduate of The American Legion Extension Institute. Doug is a member of the Sons of The American Legion Squadron 23 and has been awarded the Post Legionnaire of the Year and Dual Member of the Year two consecutive years.

Doug and his wife, Julie, have been married 47 years, have two daughters, Amy and Shari, and one son, Casey. The entire Wooddell family is an active American Legion family. He is a master plumber, retired from the University of Colorado on the Anschutz Medical Center, the home of the new proposed, hope-to-be-completed-soon VA hospital in Denver. And he has been a true friend. You will not find a more dedicated and committed Legionnaire in this entire organization. Doug sacrifices it all.

So I'm proud to place the name of Douglas W. 'Doug' Wooddell in nomination for national vice commander 2013-2014. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: I now call on microphone two.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN TRICE (IN): Mr. Commander, Ed Trice, chairman of the delegation from Indiana. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize Darrell Hansel for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Darrell Hansel.

DELEGATE HANSEL (IN): Thank you, commander, for this opportunity to place into nomination the name of an outstanding Legionnaire from the great state of Indiana, a man we believe will serve with distinction as national vice commander. He is a 45-year member of Aaron Scisinger American Legion Post 178 in Garrett, Indiana, and has served as department commander from 2009 to 2010. In addition to overseeing the complex activities of one of the largest departments in the Legion, he undertook an ambitious fundraising program to provide transporters to VA facilities across the state. His goal was four. He delivered twice that number of the $10,000 vehicles.

It is that kind of determination and leadership that he has applied throughout his Legion career. Since 1973, he has served continuously as an officer or committee member at his post. In 1985, he was elected district commander following several years of service to his district, including adjutant, chaplain, vice commander, sergeant-at-arms, and membership chairman. Following his years as a district leader, our nominee began the march through the ever-increasing responsible positions for the department, culminating in his election as department commander. Along the way he served as chairman of all four department commissions, northern vice commander, and in leadership capacities on many department committees and special activities.

As a radar man in the United States Navy from 1965 to 1969, he served aboard the USS *Bonhomme Richard* and subsequently the USS *Long Beach*, the Navy's first nuclear-powered surface ship. Stationed off the coast of North Vietnam, the *Long Beach* scored the first-ever shoot down of an enemy aircraft by missile.

Delegates, fellow Legionnaires, it gives me great pleasure to place into nomination for the high office of national vice commander the name of an outstanding Hoosier Legionnaire, Robert E. Newman. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: I now call on microphone one.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN RICE (ND): Mr. Comander, Dave Rice, chairman of the delegation from North Dakota. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize NECman Curt Twete for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Curt Twete.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER TWETE (ND): Commander Koutz, distinguished members on the dais, Legionnaires, Legion family, friends and

guests, it's my pleasure to nominate the name of a Legionnaire who has been an active leader in his community, working with youth, serving on the FHA board and as a 4-H leader. He gained his eligibility through his involvement in North Dakota National Guard during the Vietnam era.

This Legionnaire is active in his church, to include serving on the council as both a member and as its president. This as well as other boards and community activities keep him very, very busy. In addition, he has served on most every position in his local Legion post. On the state level, he is a past department commander, is serving as a director on The American Legion Foundation, the North Dakota Veterans Foundation board, and many district and region positions. On a national level, he most recently served on the Convention Commission.

North Dakota's candidate is an active farmer, farming with his son and grandson. He and his wife, Virginia, have raised a daughter and a son and are the proud grandparents of five grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

We in North Dakota are proud to put forth a candidate for national vice commander, and it is my distinct honor to nominate my friend, Legionnaire Wayne Satrom, to serve 2013-2014 as national vice commander. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: I now call on microphone two.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN O'GRADY (NJ): Mr. Commander, Gene O'Grady, chairman of the delegation from the great Department of New Jersey. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize Past Department Commander Joe Gugliuzza for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Joe Gugliuzza.

DELEGATE GUGLIUZZA (NJ): Commander Koutz, fellow delegates, good morning. I come before you today to enter into nomination for the high office of national vice commander, William A. Rakestraw, Jr., from the great Department of New Jersey.

Bill has been a longtime friend and mentor not only to me but to many other Legionnaires in the Department of New Jersey. Bill was born in DuBois, Pennsylvania, and he entered the United States Army in 1953, serving in both Korea and Japan. After discharge from the Army, Bill returned to Pennsylvania, staying there for a short time. He then moved to Central Jersey where he found work in a glass manufacturing plant. Soon thereafter, he went to work for the United States Postal Service where he continued to work until his retirement several years ago.

Bill joined American Legion Post 346 in Neptune and has been a member there for 39 years. Bill has held almost every elected and appointed position in the post and in 1987 was elected post commander. He joined the Monmouth County Executive Committee and was elected county commander in 1987. Bill also served as Department Executive Committeeman from Monmouth County for one year plus three three-year terms.

I met Bill in 1994 and knew immediately that Bill was a true Legionnaire, ready to work hard for the organization, to serve as a mentor, counselor, and mediator if necessary. Bill's wisdom and understanding of the organization gave him a unique ability to communicate ideas to those who sought his counsel. Bill has never been hesitant to correct a person in need of correction or offer advice to those who seek it. Bill has no problem telling you if you are wrong, but he will support you to the end if you are right.

Bill is a longtime member of the Department of New Jersey Convention and Finance Committees. He is also a trustee at Jersey American Legion Boys State. Bill is also a member of the Department-revised Legion Committee. This important committee's purpose is to recommend to the Department Executive Committee or Department Convention Committee proposed plans for the improvement of the organization of The American Legion Department of New Jersey. Bill's input into this committee is invaluable.

Bill was elected to the high office of ANEC in 2001 and served two terms. In 2005, Bill was elected to the high office of National Executive Committeemen for the Department of New Jersey and served two terms. While at national, Bill served as the liaison for the National Security and Finance Commissions, and Bill was subsequently appointed to the Subcommittee on Resolutions. He is currently serving as a member of the National Security Commission.

Whatever position or office Bill has served, he serves to the best of his ability with interest, pride, and enthusiasm. We the members of The American Legion Department of New Jersey are very proud of Bill and his accomplishments.

Commander Koutz, as a duly elected delegate to this Convention from the Department of New Jersey, I proudly enter into nomination for national vice commander our candidate and favorite son, William A. Rakestraw, Jr. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: I now call on microphone one.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CORBIN (TX): Mr. Commander, Dan Corbin, chairman of the delegation from Texas. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize John Morris for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: John Morris.

DELEGATE MORRIS (TX): Commander Koutz, fellow delegates to this 95th Annual American Legion Convention, it is, indeed, an honor for me to come before you today to nominate a fine Legionnaire for the office of national vice commander of this great organization. His name is Paul Dillard, a hard-working and dedicated Legionnaire who has proven many times over his worthiness to serve in this position.

Paul is a United States Navy veteran who served honorably during the Vietnam era. He is a self-employed insurance agent and a native Texan. He is a 36-year Paid-Up-For-Life member of The American Legion. Paul is a family man. His wife, Donna, is very, very active in The American Legion Auxiliary. They have two sons, William and Jonathan, both members of the Sons of The American Legion.

Paul has served The American Legion in many capacities. Just to name a few, he served as a post commander for 14 years. Can you believe that? I can. District Commander he served for the great state of Texas 1988-1990. He served as department sergeant-at-arms 1983-1984. He served as department commander 2007-2008 and alternate executive committeeman 2012 to present. And many other department commissions and committees. Paul has also been active on the national level serving on several commissions and committees.

In addition to his many Legion activities, Paul remains very active in his local community including having served as president of Whitesboro Chamber of Commerce, Texoma Association of Life Underwriters, Two Way Special Utility District, and Anderson Industries Credit Union.

Mr. Commander, it is with great pride that I place in nomination the name of Paul E. Dillard for the high office of national vice commander of The American Legion for the year 2013-2014. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: I now recognize microphone two.

DELEGATE SILVESTRI (MA): Mr. Commander, Steve Silvestri, delegate from the Department of Massachusetts. Mr. Commander, I move that nominations for the office of national vice commander be closed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: We have a motion that nominations for the office of national vice commander be closed. Is there a second? ... *Second.*

Hearing a second, the motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saying aye. All opposed? Motion carried.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The Chair recognizes microphone one.

DELEGATE FOLK (NY): Mr. Commander, Margaret Folk, 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 Douglas W. Wooddell,

Colorado; Robert E. Newman, Indiana; Wayne D. Satrom, North Dakota; William A. Rakestraw, New Jersey; and Paul E. Dillard, Texas, be elected national vice commanders by acclamation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: We have a motion that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this Convention and that Douglas W. Wooddell of Colorado; Robert E. Newman, Indiana; Wayne D. Satrom of North Dakota; William A. Rakestraw, Jr., of New Jersey; and Paul E. Dillard of Texas be elected national vice commanders by acclamation. ... *Second.* Hearing a second, the motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saying aye. All Opposed? Motion carried. I now call upon the national adjutant.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, as national adjutant for The American Legion, I cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention for Douglas W. Wooddell, Robert E. Newman, Wayne D. Satrom, William A. Rakestraw, and Paul E. Dillard for the offices of national vice commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: I declare Douglas W. Wooddell of Colorado, Robert E. Newman of Indiana, Wayne D. Satrom of North Carolina, William A. Rakestraw, Jr., of New Jersey, and Paul E. Dillard of Texas 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.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: At this time I am honored to swear you into your newly elected office as a national vice commander. I know you will uphold the trust that has been placed in you by the comrades who nominated and supported you and the Convention delegates that elected you. I trust you will fulfill every obligation required of you. I challenge you to familiarize yourselves with the duties of your office and carry them out with the same spirit from which The American Legion was founded.

The welfare, success and integrity of this great organization depends 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 that there is no rank as we all serve as equals. We 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 that serve and will serve: The rehabilitation of all disabled veterans and care to 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 hands and repeat after me.

… At this time the national vice commanders were administered the oath.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Congratulations, national vice commanders. Ladies and gentlemen, let's have a big round of applause for your newly elected national vice commanders. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Colors to Incoming National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: I now call on Past National Commander Butch Miller to present the Colors to our incoming national commander.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Commander. Fellow delegates, Legionnaires, and distinguished guests, please rise for the presentation of our

National Colors by the Color Guard of Post 472 of Houston, Texas, to National Commander Daniel Dellinger. ... *At this time the colors were presented.*

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Hand Salute. Two!

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

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: National Commander Dan Dellinger, please join me here at the podium, please. You stand before this Convention having received the unanimous vote of this conference in your ability to represent not only Legionnaires but also all American veterans in the coming months. As a veteran, I know that you will take up this challenge, as we all have in the past, and do so much better. You have served The American Legion in numerous capacities over the years. You have the experience and knowledge to lead the American Legion. I know, and these delegates know, you are the right man to carry this great organization forward in coming years. May the Colors that we present to you be a source of inspiration and pride. National Commander Dellinger, God bless you, God bless our American Legion as you lead us in this upcoming year. *(Applause)*

Color Guard, please return the Colors of the National Commander of The American Legion to post. Hand Salute. Two!

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: 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 a 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 California and holds the Auxiliary's motto of "Service Not Self" as her guiding principle by actively volunteering in her community of Palm Desert with the Auxiliary and other organizations.

Eligible for membership through her father, World War II Army Air Corps veteran Richard D. Brown, she is also eligible through the service of her husband, Jim Park, a Navy veteran of the Vietnam War. A 65-year member of the Auxiliary, she has held numerous positions at every level of the organization. She has a background as a retail buyer and currently owns a sales and marketing company.

Please give a warm American Legion welcome to National President of The American Legion Auxiliary Nancy Brown-Park. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Nancy Brown-Park, California, National President American Legion Auxiliary

National Commander, delegates and guests, this is a dream come true and an honor for me to be here today to greet you from The American Legion Auxiliary. I am a 65-year member. I was four days old when my mom and dad signed me up, so I come from a true Legion family. My dad was a post commander and my mom served as a department president.

My theme this year is "Pass it on." I really believe that it's time that we pass on the legacy of this organization to the next generation of volunteers. If we don't, who will be here to serve this generation of men and women serving in the military?

I'm excited to continue to build the bond between The American Legion, the Sons of The American Legion, and the Legion Riders. Together, we can all accomplish our goals. And we have a goal to reach a million members by the year 2019. So, Commander Dan, I'm excited to work with you and with Margaret. It's going to be a great, wonderful year. We will do great things together, I know. So thank you very much.

And I would like to just quickly introduce you to my husband, Jim Park, who is a Vietnam veteran and my rock who's been with me all the time. *(Applause)* Thank you very much for letting me be here and letting me address you. Have a wonderful convention. And, Dan, safe travels as you crisscross America. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you very much, National President Nancy Brown-Park. The man chosen to lead the Sons of The American Legion is a 23-year member of Squadron 130 in Perry Hall, Maryland. Eligible for membership through his father's World War II Army service and his grandfather's World War I Army service, he has served as a squadron commander, detachment commander, national vice commander, national commander's aide, and in many other offices at the squadron, district, detachment, and national levels. He is the owner of Gladden Tax & Accounting Services and a 1983 graduate of the University of Baltimore. He is married to Bobbie Gladden and the father of three sons, Justin, Jake, and Joshua. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion Joseph W. Gladden. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Joseph W. Gladden, National Commander
Sons of The American Legion

Thank you very much. I do want to say it is an honor to be here today, and I first want to congratulate the officers of this past year for an incredible job. I look forward to serving with National President Nancy and National Commander Dan. I also want to thank all the veterans that are currently serving across this world and have served in the past.

When I was 10, my father passed away. I didn't grow up in a Legion family, so I never really knew what the Legion was all about until I joined this organization. I truly believe it's because of The American Legion that I understand what my father's service is all about to this country, and I want to thank The American Legion for that opportunity. I can't think of a place that I would rather be than being part of The American Legion and The American Legion Family.

I am a dual member. I'm a Legion Rider as well back at my post, and I am very proud of that. This coming year my two projects are going to be the Legacy Scholarship Fund. What higher cause can we have to help the children of our fallen soldiers? So as this year goes on, I'm looking to raise $250,000 for that project as we ride across America to raise money.

My second project and major project is going to be membership. We have to do more to help The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary get members, let alone the Sons of The American Legion. We have been very fortunate. We keep hitting all-time highs every year, but The American Legion and The American Legion Auxiliary have not been, and we, the Sons, are here to help you with that. I will be implementing a plan this year where I'm going to be asking everyone, and that everyone includes everyone sitting in this audience, to do a family tree. Go back and find out who is the first person eligible for The American Legion, and then draw your family tree up there finding all the members of your family.

And then, most importantly, let's identify who is a member of The American Legion and, more importantly, who is not a member of The American Legion and let's make it our goal to get our whole family to be a part of this organization. If everyone did that, we would hit that three million member mark very easily, The American Legion Auxiliary would probably hit two million members, and the Sons would probably hit about five million members. So I challenge all of you to take that up.

I want to say to Dan, I look forward to serving with you this year. You've been a great inspiration to me over the last 2 1/2 years as you've traveled this country. President

Nancy, I want to say I look so forward to traveling with you. I want to thank you for the opportunity this morning to sing for you. I hope I didn't embarrass you and I hope I made you proud.

But I just want to say thank you again and God bless America, God bless The American Legion, And God bless The American Legion Family. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Commander Gladden, please remain with us for a few minutes. Also National Commander Dellinger and National President Brown-Park, please join us. *(Applause)*

Ladies and gentlemen, National Commander Dellinger, National President Brown-Park, and Sons of The American Legion National Commander Gladden, our dynamic leadership team for the upcoming year. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Just a reminder that the Post-Convention NEC meeting will occur in the Convention Center, Room 360, immediately following adjournment. All the new national officers are to attend.

Is there any further business to come before this convention? Hearing none, please uncover as the outgoing national chaplain, Ron Derrick, offers the benediction.

Benediction
Ronald Derrick, National Chaplain

I would ask, please, if Commander Jim and Commander Dan would join me for the benediction.

Let us pray. Almighty God, a benediction signifies both an ending and a charge to go forth. Thank You, O Lord, for Your blessings upon this Convention and the leadership of Commander Jim this past year. We pray for Your continued guidance, strength and blessing as we go forth into the new year with Commander Dan. And we stand now in service to You, O God, and this great nation. May we depart now in Your grace, peace and mercy. In Your most holy name I pray. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Sergeant-at-Arms, retire the POW/MIA flag. *... At this time the POW/MIA flag was retired.*

Retirement of Colors

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The Color Guard will retire the flag of the United States. The delegates will stand and hand salute on my command. Hand Salute! Two! *... At this time the delegation stood and rendered a salute to the Colors.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: The time is 11:45. I am now history. I served you well. *(Laughter and applause)*

I now declare this 95th Annual National Convention of The American Legion adjourned, *sine die*. Thank you. *(Applause)*

... At 11:45 a.m., the 95th Annual National Convention of The American Legion was adjourned.

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: The Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders

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: Chad Billingsley – 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: Mike Shawaryn, Post 72, Brooklawn, NJ (33 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: Brooklawn Memorial Post 72, Brooklawn, NJ

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: Robert Busse, Post 28, Petaluma, CA (14 RBI's)

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: Petaluma Post 28, Petaluma, CA

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: Anthony Harrold, Post 72, Brooklawn, NJ

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: Brooklawn Memorial Post 72, Brooklawn, NJ

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: Joe Barth Coaches: Dennis Barth, Michael Brown, Josh Copskey, William Gore, Steve Mondile and Michael Rucci, Post 72 Brooklawn, NJ**

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: **Robbie Podorsky, Post 81, Gonzales, LA**

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: **Walla Walla High School JROTC, Post 32, Walla Walla, WA – Sarah Jameson, Caitlyn Lasseigne, Allison Jurgensen, Andrew Jenkins**

Precision Individual: **Rachael Schoenrock, Homestead 4-H, Post 27, Beatrice, NE**

Sporter Team: **Franklin County High School AFJROTC, Post 6, Rocky Mount, VA – Cody Ashby, Jonathan Gove, Brantley Santrock, Michael Barton**

Sporter Individual: **Rachael Schoenrock, Homestead 4-H, Post 27, Beatrice, NE**

The American Legion Baseball "Slugger" Trophy: Plaque is presented to recipient, or designated representative, by appropriate official upon the conclusion of The American Legion Baseball World Series.
RECIPIENT: **Anthony Harrold, Post 72, Brooklawn, NJ (.529 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 New Mexico**

The American Legion Baseball "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: **Anthony Bender, Post 28, Petaluma, CA (28 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 Missouri**

Francis M. Redington Sportsmanship Award: Awarded annually to the athlete competing in The American Legion Junior Air Rifle National Championship who best exemplifies good sportsmanship and fair play.
RECIPIENT: Casey Lutz, Post 113, Meridian, ID

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 New York

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): 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. 2013 – Gary D. Bell, Steve Ramin, Bobby J. Gokey, Robin E. Ruch, Donald C. Stout, Harold N. Fuschs, William H. Bechtel, Edward C. Crowe, John Sanchez, James E. Spiess, Robert C. Johnson, Miles W. Donahue, Donald Southworth, Donald L. Ellison, Roy W. Douglass, Rod Reifsteck, Barbara Stewart, William A. Funtenatto, Michael J. Kushnierek, Dr. Troy L. Bishop, Larry Stacy, Roger D. Marshall, Dennis W. Mulvaney, Mark Wassum, John J. Young (as of 10/16/2013)

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: Mr. Tom Clark, Educator, Lake Central High School, St. John, Indiana

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): Clarence Morrow

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 Rhode Island and Nebraska

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): 2012 Winners
Category I L-3 STRAITS, Fayetteville, NC
Category II Strategic & Homeland Defense Division, Colorado Springs, CO
Category III CIAN, Inc., Peoria, IL
Note: The 2013 National Employer of Veterans Award Recipient(s) will not be announced until 2014 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): 2012 Winners
LVER of the Year: Bobby Bryant, Stillwater Workforce Center, OK
DVOP of the Year: Jerome A. Billups, Forgo, ND
ES Office of the Year: Ottawa One Stop Center, Ottawa, IL
Note: The 2013 National Employment Service Award Recipient(s) will not be announced until 2014 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)
2012 Winners Precinct 2, Harris County, Highlands, TX
Note: The 2013 Enhance the Lives of Disabled Persons Award Recipient will not be announced until 2014 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)
2012 Winners AARP Foundation, South Atlanta, GA
Note: The 2013 National Employer of Older Worker Award Recipient will not be announced until 2014 National Convention.

National DEPARTMENT History Contest Awards: Awarded annually at the Fall Meeting of the National Executive Committee to those contestants entered in the National Department History Contest having submitted the One-Year History *Narrative* or *Yearbook* of the Department which best meets the standards established for that particular competition.
RECIPIENT(s): Department of Pennsylvania (One-Year Narrative History)
Department of North Carolina (One-Year Yearbook History)

National POST History Contest Awards: Awarded annually to those contestants entered in the National Post History Contest deemed by a duly authorized panel of judges to have submitted the One-Year History of the Post which best meets the standards established for the competitions.

RECIPIENT(s):

Pony Express Post 359, Saint Joseph, MO	**(One-Year Narrative History)**
Bella Vista Post 341, Bella Vista, AR	**(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): General Jing-Ling Tseng (Ret)

Distinguished Public Service Award: Awarded annually by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the Commander's Advisory Committee at the time of the annual Washington Conference. It may be awarded to one or more person(s) of the United States Congress.

RECIPIENT(s): Senator Jim Webb (VA)

The Arthur D. Houghton Sons of The American Legion Trophy: Awarded annually to that Detachment of Sons of The American Legion in each of five membership categories (I – 200-1,000 members; II - 1,001-3,000 members; III - 3,001-6000 members; IV – 6001-12,000 members; V – 12,001 or more), each of said Detachments attaining the greatest percentage of increase over previous year's membership when compared with all Detachments in its category.

RECIPIENT(s):	**Category I**	**Detachment of Montana**
2013	**Category II**	**Detachment of Louisiana**
Winners	**Category III**	**Detachment of Iowa**
	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**	**Department of Florida**
	Category II	**Department of Michigan**
	Category III	**Department of Georgia**
	Category IV	**Department of North Carolina**
	Category V	**Department of Tennessee**
	Category VI	**Departments of Rhode Island & Utah *(tied)***

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 Minnesota

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 2013**

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: **Edgar J. Johnson, Department of Georgia**

North Carolina Trophy: Awarded annually to the Department, not included among the several state Departments or the Department of the District of Columbia, attaining the highest percentage of membership as of March 31, over its preceding year's membership.
RECIPIENT: **None awarded for 2013**

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 Tennessee**

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 Zebulon J. Hanley**

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 Tyler Vieira**

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 Frank Joseph Osborne**

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 Drew Long**

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 Michael DeLong**

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 Minnesota
Individual Participation:	Department of Minnesota

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: None Submitted
Individual Participation: None Submitted

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 New Mexico
Individual Participation: Department of New Mexico

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: Deputy Miste M. Strickland, Nash County Sheriff's Office, Middlesex, NC

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: **Deputy Chief Lisa Young, Mahoning Township Fire Department, Danville, PA**

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, Utah.**

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 – USA TODAY, McLean, VA**
Internet – Alex Quade, Freelance Reporter, Fayetteville, NC
Broadcast – KITV-TV, Honolulu, HI

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: **Robert (Bob) Woodruff, ABC World News**

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): **Samsung North America**

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 Edwin Garcia**
	Navy:	**IT2 Komlan Agbagba**
	Marine Corps:	**Sgt Man T. Chan**
	Air Force:	**SSgt Beau Vore**
	Coast Guard:	**PO2 Shawn Pugmire**

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: **American Legion Band of Greater Kansas City, Missouri, Post 21**

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: **American Legion Band of Greater Kansas City, Missouri, Post 21**

William F. Lenker National Service Trophy: Awarded annually to that State Department of The American Legion excelling in welfare work for war veterans, providing the membership of that Department shall be no less than 80% of the membership of the preceding year.
RECIPIENT: **Department of Michigan**

The American Legion 94th Annual Report

FOREWORD

The American Legion continued to have a strong year under the leadership of National Commander James E, Koutz, Indianapolis, Indiana. 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

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
Jimmie L. Foster, Alaska
Fang A. Wong, New York
Richard M. Pedro, New York
James E. Koutz, Indiana

National Executive Committeemen

Willis Frazier, Alabama
James E. Pisa, Alaska
S. Paul Griffin, Arizona
James V. Bynum, Arkansas
Alan C. Lennox, California
Neal L. Thomas, Colorado
Richard W. Anderson, Connecticut
Larry J. Marcouillier, Delaware
Arturo Rivera, D.C.
Robert J. Proctor, Florida
John H. Miller, France
Charles F. Wessinger, Georgia
Andrew W. Johnson, Hawaii
Thomas E. Mattice, Idaho
Luis V. Gonzalez, Illinois
W. Darrell Hansel, Indiana
John J. Ross, Iowa
David O. Warnken, Kansas
Randall Coffman, Kentucky
Charles D. Aucoin, Louisiana
Paul A. L'Heureux, Maine
David E. Winpigler, Maryland
Michael E. Cassidy, Massachusetts
Michael D. Wood, Mexico
Thomas G. Holzgen, Michigan
Raymond DeZurik, Minnesota
Robert E. Gosa, Mississippi
Charles W. Goodin, Missouri
Elmer W. Palmer, Montana
Jerry Landkamer, Nebraska
Dale R. Salmen, 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
William K. Balser, Ohio
Warren D. Wilson, Oklahoma
Charles E. Schmidt, Oregon
Richard A. Coccimiglio, Pennsylvania
Herbert J. Scholten, Philippines
Edwin Vargas, Puerto Rico
Normand G. Vadnais, Rhode Island
John E. Palmer, South Carolina
Paul A. Evenson, South Dakota
Charles R. Dornan, 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
William R. Wright, III, Wyoming

Alternate National Executive Committeemen

Hardwick Olin Hall, Alabama
Harold Pawson, Alaska
Richard W. Perry, Arizona
Gene McVay, Arkansas
Robert C. Brown, Jr., California
(vacant), Colorado
D. Joseph Jackson, Connecticut
Kenneth G. Whitman, Delaware
Warren N. Cuffee, D.C.
Dennis R. Boland, Florida
H. Ownby, France
Charles E. French, Georgia
Marvin R. Siegfried, Hawaii
William Stevens, Idaho
Larry W. Moore, Illinois
Paul I. Steward, Indiana
Bruce C. Feuerbach, Iowa
Elgin Wahlborg, Kansas
Randall Fisher, Kentucky
Harold D. Burson, Louisiana
Brenda D. Dearborn, Maine
Elbert D. White, Maryland
Steven M. Jimmo, Massachusetts
Mark A. Walker, Mexico
John H. Skinner, Michigan
Marland A. Ronning, Minnesota
Steve Sweet, Mississippi
Kenneth J. Goth, Missouri
David M. McLean, Montana
William D. Crosier, Jr., Nebraska
Ronald L. Michalski, Nevada
William R. Roy, Jr., New Hampshire
Daniel E. McCole, New Jersey
Felix M. Trujillo, New Mexico
Stanley H. Clark, New York
Coley A. Hunsucker, North Carolina
Robert L. Krause, North Dakota
Robert J. Kimball, Ohio
William E. Lonkerd, Oklahoma
Richard Clark, Oregon
Robert C. Miller, Jr., Pennsylvania
John M. Hunt, Philippines

Carmelo Gonzalez, Puerto Rico
Daivd A. Golde, Rhode Island
Cecil F. Hennis, South Carolina
Philip C. Anderson, South Dakota
Alvin R. Brown, 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
Terry E. Miller, 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
Jeanette Rae, Nevada

I was elected Vice Commander, Western Region at National Convention held in Indianapolis, IN August 23-30 2012. Immediately after election I attended the NEC and the subsequent meeting where we were introduced to the National Headquarters Commission Directors and received a binder with contact information.

September 10-17, 2012 I attended training in Indianapolis. We received detailed briefings from all the Commission Directors and participated in media training. I then called all new District Commanders in the 13 Departments making up the Western Region. Calls were not made to the 2 foreign departments. Many District Commanders had never had the opportunity to speak to a National Officer previously and were thankful to be recognized.

September 30 – October 3, 2012 I attended additional training at National Headquarters, Washington D.C. office. We also attended National Commander Jim Koutz's Testimony before Joint Session of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees.

October 13-18, 2012, I attended the fall meetings in Indianapolis, IN where I attended the VA&R Commission meetings, attended & addressed NEC.

October 26-28, 2012 I attended Dept of Montana Fall Conference where I was asked to be keynote speaker at Commander's banquet. I talked about membership and Operation Comfort Warrior (OCW).

November 3, 2012 I attended the Dept of NV District 1 EC meeting. I addressed the attendees and talked about membership and OCW.

November 9-10, 2012 I attended Dept Nevada DEC meeting hosted by my home Post 12, Reno, NV.

November 12, 2012 I marched in the Veterans Day Parade downtown Reno, NV.

November 13-15, 2012 I participated in the Dept of Arizona membership revitalization in Phoenix. I also assisted as a Service Officer during the event when the scheduled Service Officer was tied up elsewhere.

January 8, 2013 I was a judge at Post 30, Sparks, NV Oratorical Contest.

January 11, 2013 – I attended Representative Amodei Veteran Town Hall meeting held in Fallon, NV.

Jan 12, 2013 I attended the Nevada Office of Veterans Services Legislative Summit to outline the Veterans Legislative agenda for the upcoming Nevada Legislative session.

January 19-22, 2013 I attended the Inaugural Ball hosted by The American Legion, honoring our Nation's Heroes; Medal of Honor Recipients held in Washington D.C.

January 25-27, 2013 I attended Dept of Wyoming mid-Winter meetings where I was keynote speaker at the Commander's banquet. I spoke on membership and OCW.

February 1-3, 2013 I attended Dept of Washington Mid-Winter conference. I was asked to be keynote speaker. I showed the OCW video and spoke about OCW and membership.

February 8-10, 2013 I attended Dept of Utah Oratorical Contest in Salt Lake City. I addressed the attendees and contestants after the contest speaking on the importance and impact of this contest.

February 22-27, 2013 I attended the Washington Conference, Washington D.C.

March 15-18, 2013 I attend Dept of Colorado District Revitalization. We made numerous calls at Dept Headquarters on March 16. On March 17 we held an in-person event at one of the Denver Posts where I assisted veterans in-person in addition to making phone calls.

March 20, 2013 I attended the Veterans Day at the Nevada State Legislature. I was asked to sit on the floor with State Senator Black.

March 22-26, 2013 I visited the Marines injured in the training accident at Hawthorne Army Depot while they recovered in Renown Hospital. I purchased and delivered comfort items to six Marines on behalf of Operation Comfort Warrior.

April 1, 2013 I was selected as Veteran of the Month by Governor Sandoval – State of NV. I was presented the award by Caleb Cage, Director of the Nevada Office of Veterans Services at a staff meeting at the VA Medical Center Reno, NV.

April 5-7 2013 I attend Dept of Oregon DEC where I was asked to be Keynote speaker at the Commander's banquet. I talked about membership and OCW. I also attended train-the-trainer training for the LEAD courses and was certified as a trainer.

April 27, 2013 I participated in the continuation of Dept of Nevada District 1 Revitalization calling numerous previous American Legion members to convince them to renew their membership.

April 29, 2013 I attended Representative Amodei Veteran Town Hall meeting in Carson City, NV.

May 26-28, 2013 I attend the Air Force Academy Graduation events where I presented the Academic Achievement Award.

June 4, 2013 I attended the in-brief presented by VA&R Director for the ROAR visit to the VA Regional Office in Reno, NV.

June 6, 2013 I attended Senator Heller's veteran leadership round table to discuss issues in the state of Nevada.

June 11-13, 2013 I attended Dept of Mexico Convention where I was asked to speak to the attendees about where our membership dollars go. I visited the orphanage and boys school for the deaf that the Post in Puerto Vallarta supports.

June 20-23, 2013 I attended Dept of Arizona annual Convention. As keynote speaker at the banquet I spoke on membership and OCW.

June 27-30, 2013 I attended Dept of New Mexico annual Convention. As keynote speaker at the banquet I spoke on membership and OCW.

July 11-14, 2013 I attended Dept of Idaho Dept annual Convention. As keynote speaker at the banquet I spoke on membership and OCW.

July 29, 2013 I met with Senator Heller Northern NV representative, Glenna Smith and answered questions about the Affordable Care Act and its impact on veterans.

July 31, 2013 I attended an address by Secretary Shinseki to leadership of Nevada Veteran Service Organizations regarding the state of claims backlog at the VA Regional Office Reno, NV.

August 14, 2013 I will attend the Nevada Office of Veteran Services Green Zone Summit where their findings and conclusions of meetings over the past 18 months will be presented.

August 23-29, 2013 I will attend The American Legion National Convention to be held in Houston, TX.

The Western Region met its membership challenge this year with enthusiasm. We took on the motto of "The West is the Best". Five departments achieved and surpassed 100% of goal. All but one department achieved over 90% of goal. Overall, the Region placed second compared to the other four Regions with a total of 99.349 percent of goal; the highest the Western Region has ever achieved.

I am proud to have served The American Legion in this prestigious capacity this year. I thank The American Legion membership to have placed this trust in me. I look forward to continued service to The American Legion, the heroes of our great Nation and my country.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
John E. Neylon, New Hampshire

I'm honored to have been elected, and for the opportunity to serve the American Legion, as National Vice Commander, for the year 2012 – 2013. It's an honor received by few, and one, for which I'm very appreciative. I'm thankful for the support of my family, and that of the American Legion Families of New Hampshire, the Thirteen Departments of Northeast Region, and our National Organization, it has been my honor to represent each of you. My wife and I thank you for your courtesies and friendship, and for the hospitality extended to both of us this during this past year, we will never forget!

Following my election at the American Legion's 94th Annual Convention, I briefly returned home to prepare for a very busy and exciting year. While there, I proudly wore my new cap for the first time, attending several events scheduled to coincide with 9/11. My activities began with New Hampshire's annual, 24-hour, POW/MIA vigil, and ended with a Legacy Fund, "Boot Drive" conducted by my granddaughter, where on that day, she raised $1,500 for the Legacy Scholarship Fund.

My orientation began in Indianapolis, and included hundreds of phone calls to the County and District Commanders of the northeast, and ended in Washington, DC, with the National Commander's Capitol Hill testimony. I can't possibly name all of the individuals that contributed to my success, but I must thank Jennifer Norton for keeping me informed and on schedule, Public Relations for preparing me, Sean and Michelle for setting the tone on membership, and all of the directors and staff members in Indianapolis and Washington, for their courtesies, knowledge and support, each of which contributed to a wonderful year. You made a promise, and you delivered, this is the best year ever!

Before traveling to Indianapolis for the Fall Meetings, I returned to New Hampshire, to participate in a "Hiring our Heroes" job fair, and several department functions, before ending the month in Pennsylvania, participating in their American Legion College. The college was well organized, with a record number of participants from each area of The American Legion Family, many attending for the first time.

November began in New Hampshire, with my attendance at several post and district functions, including Veteran Day Ceremonies, and the presentation of a new post charter, at the New Hampshire State Prison. Remaining in New England, I traveled to Rhode Island and Massachusetts, promoting the National Commander's theme of "Every Day is Veterans Day", and his program priorities of Membership and Operation Comfort

Warriors. The Rhode Island visit began with a membership roundup, and a veteran benefits open house. Additional highlights included attendance at the Department Commander's Homecoming, and the honor of serving as keynote speaker before a large gathering of Gold Star Families, veterans and friends, on Veterans Day.

Massachusetts provided an excellent forum for membership, a highly productive Department Executive Committee Meeting, and the Department Commander's Homecoming. "Operation Comfort Warriors", the project of both the National Commander, and the Department Commander, highlighted the visit and featured donations, supplemented by raffles and sales, benefiting "Operation Comfort Warriors" with thousands of dollars.

The pace dramatically increased during December, featured by a "Bronze Star" presentation, to a WWII Veteran of my post, and with travel to the Departments of Delaware and Kansas. The Bronze Star presentation wasn't any too soon, as our WWII hero passed, just weeks after receiving his award.

The Delaware visit began on December 7th, with an "Attack on Pearl Harbor" presentation, by Past National Commander Rick Santos, to residents of a local "Easter Seals" home. Following his presentation and introductions, we departed for several days of membership roundup; post visitations, a Department Executive Committee Meeting, and the honor of my serving as keynote speaker at a testimonial banquet for retiring Department Service Officer, Robert McBride.

Arriving in Kansas for membership training and revitalization, I was greeted by the Department Commander and 50 volunteers, many who remained throughout the weekend. Thanks to the efforts of the local post, we recorded an early morning radio interview, promoting American Legion programs and membership, the free services of American Legion Service Officers, and a free luncheon. The recorded interview and roundtable discussion was replayed every 30 minutes, for three days, and the services provided throughout the weekend. Our recruiting and revitalization efforts paid off handsomely, with hundreds of transfers, new members, and ultimately, new posts.

The New Year began in New Hampshire, with my attendance at a banquet for National Auxiliary President, Peggy Thomas, and was soon followed by visits to the Departments of Maine and Connecticut, before ending with a post membership & revitalization event in New Hampshire. Maine provided a Mid-winter Conference, post visitations and an Executive Committee Meeting, while Connecticut provided a Mid-winter Conference, and Executive and Past Department Commander Meetings. Of key interest was Connecticut's aggressive plan to utilize unused roadside billboards to showcase The American Legion's brand, with hopes of increasing service to veterans and their families, and membership for The American Legion.

February featured New Hampshire's Oratorical contest, and the annual Washington Conference, and ANAVICUS breakfast. Preceding New Hampshire's Oratorical Contest, I was honored to present the James F. O'Neil ANAVICUS Scholarship Award, to Lyndsay Robinson, a junior at New Hampshire's, St. Anselm College, who only weeks later, would address attendees at the Washington breakfast. At the conclusion of our breakfast, we visited New Hampshire's Congressional Delegation, delivering, and discussing The American Legion's Legislative Priorities for 2013.

Returning to New Hampshire, I attended several post meetings, before venturing into Vermont for their Department Oratorical Contest, and several post visitations. Continuing my travels, I returned to Connecticut; visiting several posts, touring a Sikorsky Helicopter facility, and attending the Department Commander's Testimonial.

April began with several post installations, and a testimonial dinner for the New Hampshire Department President, before departing for Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Pennsylvania featured Membership and Executive Committee Meetings, along with the Department Commanders Testimonial, while New Jersey conducted an American Legion College. The New Jersey College was well attended, providing many opportunities to

discuss membership, the National Commander's theme, and his priority programs, with members of the American Legion Family, including Legion, Auxiliary, Sons and Riders.

The pace heightened in May, with Spring Meetings in Indianapolis, followed by the National Commander's Homecoming, and visits to the District of Columbia and Maryland, and to the U.S. Naval Academy for their annual Awards Ceremonies.

Each visit concentrated on the future of the American Legion, beginning with the Spring Meetings, and the unveiling of a 5-year plan for growth of The American Legion. The District of Columbia and Maryland provided post meetings and elections, Executive Committee Meetings, and a Department Convention, all concentrating on the future. The future was no brighter, than at the U.S. Naval Academy's Colors Parade and Awards Ceremonies, where more than 4,200 Midshipmen, and women, participated. The highlight of my visit, was presenting an American Legion Award to Midshipman Michael DeLong, who the following day was commissioned Ensign DeLong, and who since that day, has become a member of The American Legion.

As June arrived, I presented an award at our annual Junior R.O.T.C. Dining Out Ceremonies, participated as a guest speaker at the unveiling ceremonies of a new memorial at the NH State Veterans Home, cooked for, and attended New Hampshire Boy's State Graduation Ceremonies, and attended Department Conventions in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and New Jersey. And, in July, along with British, Canadian and New Hampshire Riders, I participated in the Third Annual, Allied Veteran Memorial Ceremonies at the New Hampshire State Veterans Cemetery, two Fourth of July Parades, and Department Conventions in Delaware and New York.

August began with travel to Indianapolis for the American Legion's 50th annual, National Membership Workshop, and as I prepare for my third year as Department Membership Chairman, I'm confident this new training will help The American Legion to stop the slide, and start the climb! Transitioning from membership to baseball, I attended the American Legion State Baseball Tournament in Concord, New Hampshire, and the Northeast Regional Baseball Tournament in Middletown, Connecticut.

It has been my pleasure to serve, and to visit the Departments of the Northeast, and to visit with their American Legion leaders past, present and future. It has been a learning experience I will long cherish, and one, where I hope to have contributed nearly as much as I have received. I am honored to serve The American Legion, and it's my wish, to continue in service to America's Largest Wartime Veteran's Organization for many years to come. For God and Country, I thank all!

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Glenn A. Hickman, Ohio

Serving as one of the five National Vice Commanders has been truly a pleasure and an honor. I would like to say thank you to the Great Department of Ohio for endorsing me. With all the floods, snow storms and tornadoes I was still able to visit all eight of the departments I was assigned.

This has been truly a year I will never forget, especially with all of the help from National Headquarters staff. I would like to thank my national staff liaison member Matthew Herndon for all the help in the Midwest Region which is made up of Ohio, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Nebraska.

The summary of my travels and activities for the year 2012 – 2013 are as follows:

September 2012
11 – 17 Orientation, and training at Indianapolis Headquarters
October 2012
1 – 3 Orientation, training and tour at Washington Headquarters
3 National Commander's testimony before Senate Veterans Affairs Committee
15 – 18 Fall Meetings of National Executive Committee in Indianapolis
25 – 28 Department of Missouri Fall Conference

November 2012
12 – 17 Department of Iowa Membership Round Up
30-Dec 2 Department of Minnesota Membership Promotion
December 2012
9 – 13 Department of Kansas Membership Round Up
25 VA Hospital Chillicothe Ohio Pass out gifts to veterans
January 2013
11 – 13 Department of Nebraska Membership Round Up
18 – 22 Presidential Inaugural Swearing-in ceremony, Washington DC
February 2013
1 – 3 Department of North Dakota Mid-Winter Conference
8 – 10 Department of South Dakota Mid-Winter Conference
15 – 17 Department of Ohio Membership Round Up
22 – 27 Washington DC Conference
March 2013
1 – 5 Department of Missouri Membership Round Up
April 2013
21 – 23 National Commander's visit to Ohio
May 2013
5 – 9 Spring Meetings of National Executive Committee, Indianapolis
10 – 12 National Commander's Homecoming
17 – 19 Department of Kansas Convention, Topeka
27 Memorial Day Service at Greenlawn – Guest speaker
June 2013
9 – 11 Department of Ohio Buckeye Boys State
13 – 15 Merchant Marine Academy Awards Ceremony
27 – 30 Department of Ohio Convention
July 2013
12 – 14 Department of Iowa Convention
August 2013
22 – 30 National Convention, Houston, Texas

It has been a privilege and an honor to serve as National Vice Commander of the Midwest Region in 2012-2013. I would like to thank all those that extended their hospitality and friendship to me during my term of office.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
James H. Holland, South Carolina

I have completed a very rewarding and fulfilling year as National Vice Commander. After the 2012 Annual Convention I traveled to Washington, DC and Indianapolis, IN. There all five National Vice Commanders were given extensive briefings. The briefings were very comprehensive and given by the Division Directors and their staffs.

In October I traveled to several American Legion Posts meetings, a District meeting and The Department Executive Committee meeting in my home Department. In each case I talked to them about the importance of communicating with the community to let them know what we do. I also talked about membership and the mission of Operation Comfort Warriors and the National Commanders financial Goal.

October 15-18, 2013. I attended The American Legion Fall Meetings in Indianapolis, IN. There I was able to meet with all twelve of my Department Commanders. We discussed membership, Operation Comfort Warriors and Department Officers training.

October 26-28, 2013. I attended the Fall conference of The American Legion Department of Georgia in Duluth, GA. I addressed the Department Executive Committee

and the general membership. I also participated in an event recognizing the winners of their Children and Youth Programs.

November 11, 2012. I participated in the Greenwood, SC Veterans Day Parade and gave the Veterans Day Speech. The next day I traveled to Beaufort, SC where I participated in their Veterans Day Parade and a ceremony at the Beaufort National Cemetery.

December 11, 2012. I traveled to Sacramento, CA and was there for four days working membership as a member of the National District Revitalization Team.While there I also participated in a Christmas Wreath laying ceremony at the Sacramento Valley National Cemetery.

January 3-5, 2013. I visited The American Legion Department of Florida. There I met with District and Regional officers and visited several Posts in Vero Beach, Fort Pierce and Port ST. Lucie where I visited the National Navy UDT-SEAL Museum.

January 18-20, 2013. I visited the Department of Louisiana at their Mid-Winter Conference in Alexandria, LA. I addressed the Department Executive Committee and the general membership. I also met with the Past Department Commanders.

February 1-2, 2013. I visited the Department of Tennessee for their Mid- Winter Conference in Nashville, TN. I addressed the Department Executive Committee and the general membership, and met with the Department officers.

February 24-27, 2013. I attended the National Washington Conference. I attended all the sessions presented by The National Security Commission and the State Department reception. I visited members of my Congressional Delegation and presented them with the concerns and issues of The American Legion.

May 6-9, 2013. I attended Spring Meetings in Indianapolis, IN and met with Commanders and Adjutants from my region that had attended the meeting.

May 10-11, 2013. I Attended the National Commander's Homecoming in Boonville, IN.

May 20-22, 2013. I visited the United States Coast Guard Academy to present The American Legion Award. The American Legion Award is presented annually to a graduating cadet who has excelled in athletics. The award was presented to 1/c Tyler J. Vieira.

May 26-27, 2013. I visited Washington, DC for Memorial Day. On Monday, Memorial Day, I attended a White House Breakfast Reception honoring Gold Star Mothers. Immediately after the breakfast I was taken to Arlington National Cemetery where I watched the President lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and deliver his Memorial Day Address.

After the Arlington National Cemetery Wreath Laying Ceremony I participated in the Vietnam Memorial Day Observance at The Wall. I was on the dais during the ceremony and toward the end of the ceremony I laid The American Legion's wreath at the wall along with representatives from other veteran service organizations.

May 31, 2013. I attended The American Legion Department of South Carolina Annual Convention in Greenville, SC where I presented the Department's Teacher of The Year award to Paul D Johnson of Lexington, SC.

May 31 -June 2, 2013. I attended The American Legion Department of Georgia Willie Pitts Jr. Memorial Reunion in Marietta, GA . I was the keynote speaker.

June 6-9, 2013. I attended The American Legion Department of Florida Annual Convention in Orlando, FL. I met with Department officers, Past Department Commanders and was keynote speaker for the convention.

July 12-14, 2013. I attended The American Legion Department of Texas Annual

Convention in Irving TX. I met with Department officers and was keynote speaker for the convention.

July 16-August 2, 2013. I walked along US Coastal Hwy 17 and US Hwy 21 soliciting funds for Operation Comfort Warriors. I stopped in Myrtle Beach, Murrells

Inlet, Georgetown, Charleston, Beaufort and Bluffton. In each city I tried to visit American Legions Posts, Golden Corrals and Wal-Marts. I raise a total of $2,521.00.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
David R. Hall, West Virginia

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as The American Legion National Vice Commander for the year 2012-2013. I have represented the Central Region which includes the states of West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin and Michigan. I thank the Department of West Virginia for the support in getting me this opportunity of a lifetime. I have enjoyed it more than words can express. I also thank everyone at National Headquarters who assisted me in any way; especially Jennifer Norton and Marti Wooden. I could not be honored any more than I am to have served under National Commander Jim Koutz. His concern and compassion for the veterans and his determination to get them everything that they want and deserve through Operation Comfort Warriors' astounding donations simply proves that" Every Day is Veterans Day"

September 10th through the 17th I returned to Indianapolis for orientation. I met the national staff and what their responsibilities are. We were trained on how to conduct interviews with the media and learned the views of The American Legion on various issues in the news at that time. I contacted every District Commander in my region. I introduced my self, and expressed appreciation for their service to our organization and offered my assistance to them in any way needed. September 22nd I participated in a "Veterans Appreciation Day" ceremony in Pomeroy, Ohio.

October 3rd completed our additional training in Washington D.C. where we met the D.C. staff and attended the National Commander's testimony before the House Joint Services Committee on Veterans Affairs. October 13th through the 18th I attended the fall meetings of the National Executive Committee in Indianapolis where I gave an oral report about myself. October 26th through the 28th I attended the Fall Conference of The Dept. of Virginia held at Williamsburg, VA.

November 2nd through the 4th I was in Madisonville, Kentucky where I walked in the largest Veterans Day parade in the state. November 11th I spoke at the New Haven, West Virginia Veteran's Monument Park. November 16th through the 18th I was in Carbondale, Illinois for the Egyptian Past Commander's Club banquet where I was the guest speaker. We also visited the VA Hospital as well as The Haven where I was given an honorary membership.

December 7th I participated in a "Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day" ceremony in Mason, West Virginia.

January 2013 the 10th through the 18th I was in the state of Illinois where we travelled the entire state in a Membership Caravan. The 19th and 20th I attended the Mid-Winter Conference in Madison, Wisconsin. The 25th and 26th I attended the Mid-Winter Conference in Louisville, Kentucky for membership promotion.

February 8th and 9th I attended the Dept. of West Virginia Mid-Winter Conference for the purpose of promoting membership. The 24th through the 27th I was in Washington, D.C. for the spring meeting where I met with the West Virginia legislators and also toured The Pentagon.

March 18th National Commander Koutz enjoyed breakfast, prepared by my home post Auxiliary Unit 140, in New Haven, WV. I joined Commander Koutz in visiting other Posts in WV, along the Ohio River. The evening of the 18th we enjoyed dinner at Huntington, WV Post 16 celebrating The American Legion Birthday where I conducted the POW/MIA Remembrance Ceremony. The 19th we visited several other Posts in the state and had dinner at Ceredo/Kenova Post 93 at their birthday dinner.

April 5th through the 7th I attended the Dept. of Indiana Spring Conference in Indianapolis, IN

May 6th through the 9th I attended the Spring Meetings in Indianapolis, IN The 10th and 11th I was in Boonville and Evansville, Indiana for National Commander Koutz's homecoming. The 23rd through the 25th I travelled to West Point, New York to the Military Academy to present The American Legion Award. May 27th I participated in Memorial Day ceremonies at local war monuments and I was a guest speaker at a ceremony in Pomeroy, Ohio.

June 9th I was the guest speaker at the opening session of Mountaineer Boys State in Jacksons Mill, WV. The 10th I was the guest speaker and conducted the POW/MIA Remembrance Ceremony at Rhododendron Girls State in Wheeling, WV. The 15th through the 17th I was the guest speaker at the Father's Day event held in King, Wisconsin. We visited the VA Nursing Home where we joined in a parade through the facility and attended a picnic for veterans and their family. The 27th through the 29th I returned to Louisville, Kentucky for the Dept. Convention. There, I was awarded the highest honor awarded by the Commonwealth of Kentucky, a Kentucky Colonel, Kentucky's ambassadors of good will.

July 4th I walked in the parade in New Haven, WV and Mason, WV. I also was the guest speaker at the dedication of a new veteran's monument in Mason, WV. The 6th I walked in the parade and participated in the flag raising at the Independence Day celebration in Rutland, Ohio. The 11th through the 13th I was in Huntington, West Virginia for the Dept. Convention. The 18th through the 21st I was in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin for the Dept. Convention

August 2nd I was honored to be the guest speaker at Beckley, WV Post 32 for their 93rd birthday celebration.

Membership is not where I hoped it would be but this has been one of the most rewarding times of my life. It has been an honor to serve under Commander Koutz and beside the other National Vice Commanders John Neylon, Glenn Hickman, James Holland and Jeanette Rae. I also express deep appreciation to the Departments of Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Virginia, Wisconsin and West Virginia for the hospitality, friendship, the gifts and wonderful memories of this past year. I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to have served this great organization. It truly has been an honor and a privilege that I will never forget.

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL CHAPLAIN
Ronald Derrick, Idaho

On August 30th, 2012, I was appointed National Chaplain of the American Legion for the 2012-2013 year at the post-convention DEC meeting following the conclusion of the 94th Annual American Legion convention held in Indianapolis, Indiana.

My first duty was to preside over the Chaplains' Conference held September 27-30. My theme was "Be All That You Can Be, By Being Who You Are."

Presentations were given by Past National Chaplains Larry Volnick (MI) and Daniel Seehafer (WI). Bringing greetings were Joseph Couette, National Americanism Chairman, and Jill Druskis, Director of Americanism C&Y Division. Auxiliary National Chaplain Rose Marie Hack (MO) presided over one of the split-out groups and assisted in the Memorial Service on Sunday. Catholic and Protestant worship services were also held on Sunday morning.

During the Fall Conference in October in Indianapolis I fulfilled the duties of the office of chaplain by offering the invocation and benediction at various meetings.

Returning to the Great State of Idaho, I participated in various Legion activities around the state. I was guest speaker at the Hillcrest High School Veterans' Day program in Idaho Falls, Idaho. I also had the privilege of participating in a Viet Nam veterans' memorial, speaking at several civic groups and teaching a group of Cub Scouts the proper way to retire a U.S. flag.

January, 2013, was the Idaho Mid-Winter Conference. National Commander James Koutz was the distinguished guest. My duties included that of the state/national chaplain, offering invocations and benedictions.

In February I attended the Idaho State Oratorical contest in Boise, Idaho, followed by attending the Washington, D.C. Conference. Being guest chaplain and giving the opening prayers for both the U.S. Senate and House was truly a humbling experience. Again, I offered prayers during the various American Legion meetings.

In May I attended the Spring Meetings in Indianapolis and also the Commander's Homecoming in Evansville, Indiana, and a "get-together" at his home post, Post 200 in Booneville, Indiana.

In July I attended the State Convention of Idaho, serving as state/national chaplain. Janette Rae (NV) Western States National Vice-Commander was guest speaker. Attending the American Legion Boys Nation at Marymount University was indeed a privilege. What a great program. I presided over a Memorial Service and, along with National Commander Koutz, assisted with the laying of a memorial wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery. Words cannot describe the event. It truly was a spiritual moment for me.

The 95th Annual American Legion convention will be held in Houston, Texas, August 24-30, 2013. I will participate in various activities/meetings, among which will be the Chaplain's Breakfast, and the Patriotic Memorial Service.

It has been an honor to serve as National Chaplain during the past year. Space does not permit a full accounting of all that has transpired. My prayer is that I have fulfilled the duties of my office faithfully, in service to my God and Country.

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIAN
N. Larry Rozier, North Carolina

It has been a privilege and a great honor to be the National Historian during the year 2012 – 2013 for the world's largest and most respected veterans organization, The American Legion. I would like to thank Commander James Koutz for this appointment as this been the highest achievement of my life.

My first task as National Historian was to oversee the judging of the post and department histories in the National History Contest. A special thanks to the historians for their many hours of hard work on preserving the histories of The American Legion.

A deep appreciation and thanks to Howard Trace, Director of the Library and Museum and library staff member Lynda Lydick, the historian's liaison for their valuable knowledge. Two members of the National Association of Department Historians of The American Legion (NADHAL), who deserve recognition, are Delfo Barabani and Charemon Dunham. Delfo Barabani, Massachusetts, a past National Historian, coordinated the tabulation of the scores during the judging contest and Charemon Dunham, South Dakota, a past Department Historian, conducted the orientation and training seminar for the new Department Historians. There were 26 instructors and judges for the contest.

There were eleven department entries and thirty-six post entries for judging in the four categories of the National History contest for the year 2012 – 2013.

Results of the One-Year Department Narrative History Contest are:

First Award Plaque, Department of North Carolina
Second Award Plaque, Department of Maine
There were no other participants in this category.

Results of the One-Year Department Yearbook History Contest are:

First Award Plaque, Department of Ohio
Second Award Plaque, Department of North Carolina
Third Award Plaque, Department of Georgia
Honorable Mention, Department of Florida

Honorable Mention, Department of Missouri

Results of the One-Year Post Narrative History Contest are:

First Award Plaque, Marshall S. Sayner Post 341, Bella Vista, AR
Second Award Plaque, Pony Express Post 359, Saint Joseph, MO
Third Award Plaque, Frank E. Booma Post 6, Portsmouth, NH
Honorable Mention, Audie L. Murphy Post 336, San Antonio, TX
Honorable Mention, Dwight Cowles Post 370, Overland Park, KS

Results of the One-Year Post Yearbook History Contest are:

First Award Plaque, Adams Township Post 553, Toledo, OH
Second Award Plaque, Charles S. Hatch Post 79, Berwick, ME
Third Award Plaque, Alois-Dreikosen Post 469, Marathon, WI
Honorable Mention, Julius L. Shryer Post 430, Durant, IA
Honorable Mention, Frank B. Barlett Post 7, Buckhannon, WV

As Historian, I have received requests by phone and e-mail for information on the past history book contest and questions about the upcoming contest in October 2013. I have, also, received requests for general information on several subjects. I would encourage historians and others interested in post and department history contests to read the history section of the *Post Officer's Guide & Manual of Ceremonies*.

At the Fall and Spring Meetings, I was fortunate to participate in the 100th Anniversary Observance Committee. Items and ideas will be on display at the National Convention in Houston that the committee has worked on this past year.

It is with pleasure to host the National Historian's Luncheon with more than 60 in attendance, during the National Convention in Houston on August 24th at the Hilton Americas. Judith H. Allton, Curator in Astromaterials Acquisition & Curation Office at NASA's Johnston Space Center will give a presentation on NASA.

It has been a great honor to serve as the National Historian with Commander James Koutz and his team. We should remember what Commander Koutz has said, "Every Day is Veterans' Day."

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE
P. B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

Contracts

The following two hundred twenty-two (222) contracts have been reviewed or prepared:

(1) Articles of Agreement by and between The American Legion and The AmericanLegion National Convention Corporation of Ohio, Inc., covering the convocation of the 2016 Convention of The American Legion in the City of Cincinnati, State of Ohio, 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 2013.

(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.

(16-17) 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)

(18) 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.

(19) A Service Agreement by and between The American Legion and Budget Truck Rental, LLC for truck rental discount program.

(20) Maintenance Agreement by and between The American Legion and Comtech Group for the IBM Software subscription for the AS400 and RS6000 computer software.

(21) Maintenance Agreement by and between The American Legion and City Wide of Indianapolis for structural and environmental services (cleaning) at the Geiger facility.

(22) A Contract by and between The American Legion and Communications Products, Inc. for software upgrade for the existing server running Windows

Server.

(23) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Voice Data Systems, LLC, for Nortel CS1000 Telephone System.

(24) Maintenance and Sales Agreement by and between The American Legion and Ikon Office Solutions, Inc. for equipment maintenance.

(25) 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.

(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 Fundamentals Company, Inc. to provide a fundraising opportunity through the sale of magazine subscriptions for Legion members and their families.

(36) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Bulkley Dunton Publishing Group for the purchase of paper to The American Legion.

(37) 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.

(38) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Swift Trip, LLC, Legion Family Travel. Discount travel services for Legion members and their families.

(39) 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.

(40) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Reader’s Digest Association to help utilize the DMS Program.

(41) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and AT&T to upgrade the internet services to the Geiger facility.

(42) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and OfficeMax for

discounted office supplies and print and document services for Legion and SAL members.

(43) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and RoadCare Plus for a discount, full-service roadside assistance program for Legion members.

(44) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Honeywell Building Solutions for integrator and/or digital video manager software products.

(45) 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.

(46) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Bowe Bell and Howell, the service provider for the cutters in the Geiger facility lettershop.

(47) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Michael Peterson for his CD/DVD developed for The American Legion Family.

(48) 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.

(49) 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.

(50) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Anchor Software, LLC, software used for mass mailings.

(51) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Travel Leaders provides travel management services and travel reservation fulfillment.

(52) 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.

(53) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and VDS, an upgrade and maintenance support to the Avaya phone system.

(54) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and TWTelecom for internet circuit upgrades.

(55) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Xerox for CF 495 Printer and maintenance services and deliverables of their products.

(56) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and AT&T for mobile device and service plan discounts.

(57) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and HearPO a discount program provider for hearing services and products for Legion/SAL members, their families and Legion employees.

(58) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and @mire, inc. for work on the Digital Archive used by the Legion Library.

(59) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and PrideStaff SW Houston for temporary staff used by Emblem Sales at the 2013 national convention.

(60) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and West Point Association of Graduates United States Military Academy for advertising in their newsletter.

(61) A Cosponsorship Agreement by and between The American Legion, U.S. Small Business Administration, Syracuse University Institute for Veteran and Military Families and Veterans Infosource Project aba Women Veterans Business Center for an entrepreneurial course for “HEROES” to be held in conjunction with its annual conference in Houston, TX for women veterans and military families.

(62) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Brinks Service for armored car services for the 2013 National Convention.

(63) An Agreement by and between The America Legion and AdMate Software System for software for the magazine division.

(64-70) Agreements by and between The American Legion and Sheraton Indianapolis City Centre for guest room commitment for the Legion Membership and Post Activities 2013, the National Membership Conference 2013, Service Officers School 2014, Spring NEC Meetings 2015, Fall NEC Meetings 2015, Spring NEC Meetings 2016, Fall NEC Meetings 2016.

(71) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and SIRVA Worldwide, Inc. for a market plan to promote Legion programs on the Legion website.

(72) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Motel 6 LLC to promote a member discount program on the Legion website.

(73) An Agreement by and between American Legion Baseball and Crowne Plaza, Philadelphia-Cherry Hill for accommodations during the Mid-Atlantic Region Legion Baseball.

(74) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Cleveland County ALWS Baseball, Inc. for the baseball tournaments.

(75) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and International Cruise and Excursions Gallery, Inc. d/b/a Government Vacations Rewards for a discount travel service for our members.

(76) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Creative Street Media for the 100th Anniversary Media-Magazine Division.

(77) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Military Advantage, Inc. (Military.com) for exchanging editorial content for mutual postings on respective websites.

(78) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and DBA Patriot Promotions to organize and operate the Warrior Appreciation Night (WAN).

(79) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Galt House for accommodations for the Kentucky Derby.

(80) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Nancy Hays Entertainment, Inc. to provide entertainment for the National Commander's Banquet at the 2013 National Convention.

One hundred-forty-two (142) 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.
Alliance for Audited Media
Analytics IQ. Inc.
ASC (The College Board)
Asendia USA
Audit Bureau of Circulations
Avis and Budget Car Rental
Bankers Life & Casualty Company
Beta Graphics
Business Mailing Center
Careington International

Caremark, LLC Confidentiality
CD-COM Systems Midwest, Inc.
CES Mail Communications, Inc.
Class B, 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
Cross Country Lending, Inc.
Daily Freeman Journal
Database 101
Datagraphic
Data-Mail, Inc.
Dayton Technologies
DMRA
Easy Purl, Inc.
E H Direct
Edge Direct
Entiera
Epsilon
Equifax Direct Marketing Solutions, LLC
E-Target Media
Fahlgren Mortine
Fair Isaac Corporation
First National Bank of Omaha
Fiserv Solutions, Inc.
Focus USA
Freedom Graphic Systems
Fry Communications, Inc.
Fulfillment Xcellence, Inc.
FXI
G E Financial Assurance
Gallagher Benefit Services
Global Card Services
GMAC
Goldleaf Data Corporation
HearPO Corp
HNE Printers/Daily Reporter
Hutchinson Company
info USA, Inc.
Instant Web, Inc. DBA (IWCO)
International Cruise & Excursions, Inc.
International Data Management
Itasca Marketing
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.
LTC Affinity Direct
Magnet Direct
Mail Computer Services Direct
Mail Manager
Mailing Services of Pittsburgh
Mainstreet Media
MCS Direct
Media 1, LLC
Merkle, Inc.
Metropolitan Technologies, 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
Torrington Telegram-Wyoming
Transamerica

TransAmerica Affinity Services, Inc.
Transcom
TransContinental Direct
Travalution, LLC
True North Companies
US Monitor
V12 Group
Valid UDA, Inc.
Valley Printworks
Ventura Printing
VERTIS
Veterans Online, LLC
Virtual DBS
Vision Printing & Graphics, LLC
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. The trial court has ruled the parties must consult about a settlement. Department of Defense now wants to sell the monument to the highest bidder.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSTEES
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 expected a settlement. It did not happen. The judge, without briefing, totally reversed his position, so the case continues. We, like the plaintiffs and the other amici are filing further briefs. We have petitioned the judge to unseal the file and are negotiating with Prudential on this.

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 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA

THE AMERICAN LEGION,

Civil Action No._____

Plaintiff,

v.
JURY TRIAL DEMANDED
LEGION RIDERS USA VETERANS
MOTORCYCLE ASSOCIATION, INC.
AND JACK E. ADAMS

Defendant.

This is a trademark case. The defendants are American Legion Riders. They are using an unapproved patch with the emblem of The American Legion and have for years. They claim it was approved by someone in the Department.

Once we got proof, a cease and desist letter was sent. The individual defendant took great umbrage and sent a letter counterattacking. The post commander, the next day, sent a letter disowning Adams' letter. Since then, Adams and his friends have left the post and incorporated the Riders chapter using the defective patch and name without permission. Suit was filed seeking an injunction compensatory damages, punitive damages cost and attorney's fees. We have won. The corporation was dissolved and defaulted. Adams is to pay $4,500.00 toward our attorneys fees. The group that was incorporated is protesting paying the rest even though they defaulted. We have won and have a judgment for $56,000.00 in fees that is probably uncollectible.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA
INDIANAPOLIS DIVISION

THE AMERICAN LEGION,

Plaintiff,

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

vs.

CURTIS HAMM and CAROLYN HAMM,

Defendants.

This case has not yet been filed. It grows out of a situation at Post No. 117 in Pendleton, Indiana. The Riders of the post sponsored a motorcycle run to raise funds for those motorcycle riders killed and injured in an auto accident by an intoxicated police officer. A series of pictures were taken of the ride and they were put together in one poster with a picture of the American Legion Riders Emblem in the center. This poster was hung in Post No. 117. At a later time, Curtis Hamm, an SAL member of the post, and his wife got into a dispute with the post and the post commander and Mr. Hamm was expelled.

The Hamm's then filed suit in Hamilton County, Indiana, claiming the poster was theirs because they claimed they paid to have it made. There is evidence he donated the poster to the post.

The post and post commander defaulted in the case because they did not believe the Hamm's were serious. The court ordered the poster turned over to the Hamm's.

At this point the National Headquarters learned of the situation and referred the matter to outside counsel for trademark action, because the Hamm's have no right to the American Legion Riders emblem. This is not a "first sale" situation because the picture of the Riders emblem was not purchased from the Legion; a picture was made and copied without permission.

The post and post commander obtained counsel and opposed the default which was lifted by the Hamilton County Court. The court further ordered for the parties to resolve the situation by April 30, 2013. All counsel had been furnished with the draft of our complaint. At this point, the court ordered the case transferred to Madison County, Indiana, where the post is located and venue is proper.

The hearing is now scheduled for August 20, 2013, but will likely be postponed. If necessary, we will file to protect the emblems of The American Legion and the American Legion Riders.

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF NEW MEXICO

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Civil Action No. 1:12-cv-01173-JCH-KBM
Plaintiff,

v.
Jury Trial Demanded
LEGION RIDERS CHAPTER ONE
OF NEW MEXICO, INC.,

Defendant.

This is a lawsuit against a group of American Legion Riders that have tried to become independent and still use the name and emblem. The case is in the Discovery phase with Interrogatories Request for Admissions and Document Production pending. The defendant so far has not engaged in Discovery. The trial has been scheduled for June 16, 2014.

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLORADO

Civil Action No. 1:13-cv-01606-WYD-KLM

THE AMERICAN LEGION and
AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY,

Plaintiffs,

v.

COLORADO COLUMBINE GIRLS STATE, INC.,

Defendant.

The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary have sued Columbine Girls State Corporation in Colorado for misuse of the name and emblem of the American Legion Auxiliary and Girls State. The defendant is supposed to be a subsidiary of the department, but was trying to become a rival corporation and acting independently in violation of trademark law. The complaint has been served. The Girls State Corporation is defending on the basis that they have the "right" to use the emblems.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA

STEVEN HEWETT,

Plaintiff,

v.

CITY OF KING, NORTH CAROLINA,

Defendant.

THE AMERICAN LEGION AND
AMERICAN LEGION POST 290
OF KING, NORTH CAROLINA,

Intervenors.

This is another veteran's memorial case. The City of King, NC built a flag plaza and flew the Christian flag. The plaintiff wants this stopped and to destroy the statue of the veteran kneeling next to a cross.

The American Legion is an amicus on behalf of the kneeling veteran statue only. Discovery is proceeding.

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 898 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 48 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 246 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 2012 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 2012 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.

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
Jeffery O. Brown, Indiana, 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, 2012 through May 31, 2013

Incoming Letters and parcels (distributed to Divisions for processing).....1,212,500
Incoming Parcels 2,048
Outgoing Letters/Parcels (Exclusive of National Emblem Sales).....11,280,443

Freight and Express
June 1, 2012 through May 31, 2013

Out – Cartons.....7,564
Out – Pounds 103,009
UPS – In 1,926
UPS – Out..... 6,129

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.

Material continues to be added to the Digital Archive. Important additions among the 400 items added this year include back issues of *The America Legion Magazine* from 2003 to 2010 and suggested speeches from the 1920s through the 1950s. Visits to the Digital Archive increased in its second year by 40 percent over the first year, and the number of unique visitors increased by almost 45 percent over the same period. Rescinding of outdated resolutions continues and the current number of active resolutions is now below 2,400.

Conservation work was done on the painting of Victor Keene by Wayman Adams which is on display in the Emil A. Blackmore Museum. Work included removing the glazing from the painting, light cleaning of the painting and touch ups to the frame.

A number of researchers made extensive visits to the Library. Areas of research involved drum and bugle corps, Pershing Hall, WWI memorials in France, the Korean War, Americanism programs, and the development of veteran identity.

Bulletins, Reports, etc. Received and Filed 2,814
Books, Pamphlets and *The American Legion Magazine* cataloged..... 264
Items Microfilmed 8,254
Correspondence Written by National Historian 485
Correspondence Written by the Librarian.....1,418
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Mailed 807
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Received 407

Significant Gifts to the National Headquarters Library

Donated by Gordon L. Ewell, author: "*Gordy-isms"* and *A Lifetime at War*

Donated by Duane E. Hodgin, author: *WWII: Duty, Honor, Country – The Memories of Those Who Were There*

Donated by Barbara Cahoon, author: *History of Orleans Post #308 1932 – 2012* (Orleans, Massachusetts)

Donated by Mr. Robert A. Ireland, First Vice Commander Post 174, Willits, California: December 19, 1924 issue of *The American Legion Weekly*

Donated by Mr. Joseph A. Regina, Second Vice Commander, Post 1634, West Babylon, New York: Book on *Veteran's Day* compiled by the 10 grade class at West Babylon High School

Donated by Thomas P. Jones: *89th Division Summary of Operations in the World War*, 1944 and *The Story of the Second A.E.F.*, 1927

The following books were donated by The National Association of Department Historians of The American Legion (NADHAL): *Big Week: Six Days that Changed the Course of World War* II by Bill Yenne; *Blackhorse Riders* by Phillip A. Keith; *Churchill and Sea Power* by Christopher Bell; *Cold Days in Hell* by William C. Latham; *For Crew and Country* by John F. Wukovits; *The Hopkins Touch* by David L. Roll

Donated by Paul Norton: *The American Legion Weekly* – October 20, 1922

Donated by Henry J. Frank: 1956 and 1959 Manual of Ceremonies; Post Handbook, twenty-fifth edition

Donated by Robert L. Morrill (NY): *Lafayette In America During and After the Revolutionary War; New York State: The Battleground of the Revolutionary War and FDR: The Other Side of the Coin*, all written by Past National Commander Hamilton Fish.

Significant Gifts to the National Headquarters Museum

Donated by Mr. Frank Drezek: Letter written by Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. dated August 5, 1920 to Mr. J. C. Neil

Donated by Rebecca J. Rogers: Five American Radio Relay League postcards dated 1927

Donated by Joseph R. Eastburn: Signal flag kit, ammunition belt, olive shirt and uniform jacket and trousers all from WWI

Donated by Peter Halferty: First Day of Issue cancelled envelopes with stamps, dated 1969-1970 – American Legion stamps; POW/MIA stamp; Disabled American Veterans stamp

Donated by Betty J. Otto-Kretzer: Materials related to the activities of Page T. Otto in The American Legion and Antietam Post No. 236 in Sharpsburg, Maryland. Donation cover several years and include pins, medals, paper documents, programs, etc.

Donated by Henry Legare, Jr.: Photograph of Annie Maxwell Curtin in her American Legion uniform, circa 1930
Donated by Brenda H. Smith: 1930's American Legion Uniform
Donated by Shannon Wells: American Legion School Award Medal
Donated by James Rorabaugh: Membership card and receipt – Louise Elizabeth LeClair who served in WWI with the American Expeditionary Force
Donated by Thomas P. Jones: The American Legion National Convention scrapbook with post cards, 1927
Donated by Allison Rogers Haft: Five American Legion membership pins; two Masonic pins; one National Service Military Training Camps Association pin; and three unidentified pins
Donated by Margaret A. Sells: Sons of The American Legion medal; photograph of Donald Reed; and 1939 Department of Ohio Convention medal

JOHN H. GEIGER OPERATIONS CENTER (G.O.C.)
Richard D. Holmes, Indiana, Executive Director

The five areas of responsibility located at the Geiger Operations Center are Administration, Emblem Sales, Fundraising, Information Technology, and Membership Support Services.

Administration is responsible for overall leadership and activities of the divisions located at the G.O.C., which includes, but isn't limited to, financial management, setting priorities, building maintenance, and warehouse activities.

Emblem Sales is responsible for providing logo merchandise to The American Legion Family in support of the organizations' programs and activities, and is responsible for protecting The American Legion's federal trademark. Emblem Sales has total annual sales in excess of $10 million.

Fundraising is responsible for finding and securing donors who are willing to support the causes, projects, and programs of The American Legion. Fundraising is also responsible for the administration of our growing department guaranteed fundraising program. The fundraising division also serves as the liaison for our very successful relationship with USAA and for many other long term financial relationships.

Information Technology (IT) is responsible for the selection and procurement of the software and hardware used by National Headquarters staff. IT maintains the telecommunications infrastructure that connects the two Indianapolis, IN offices with our facility in Washington, D.C.

IT is responsible for the computer system which houses the national membership database as well as keeping this database updated with changes to the membership.

Membership Support Services is responsible for our Direct Membership Solicitation (DMS) program which brings in approximately 170,000 new members each year; our Direct Renewal Program which is mailed or emailed to the entire membership of The American Legion, and our membership discount program.

The Print and Production area, which currently supports Fundraising and Membership Support Services, prints all membership cards, renewal notices, and any campaign supporting the department guaranteed fundraising program; and it prepares and processes in excess of 10 million pieces of outbound mail each year.

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 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 2012-2013 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 78 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 78-year history, the program has graduated well over 1,820,000 young men.

Every year, each Boys State selects two outstanding graduates to represent them at American Legion Boys Nation. In 2013 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. Simeon Walker Toronto of Andover, Minnesota was elected President and Zachary Faircloth of South Carolina, was elected Vice President of the 2013 session of American Legion Boys Nation.

High School Oratorical Contest

The American Legion has awarded over three million dollars in college scholarships since 1938 to high school students participating in its annual High School Oratorical Contest.

Each contestant must give a prepared oration on some phase of the United States Constitution, giving emphasis on the duties and obligations of a citizen to our government. The prepared oration must be the original effort of each contestant, taking not less than eight 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 76th Annual National Oratorical Finals Contest was held at Indianapolis, Indiana, in April 2013. The three finalists were: First place – Aggie Rieger, Kansas City, Missouri; second place – Elizabeth Scannell, Goose Creek, South Carolina; third place – Rachel Schartz, Humboldt, South Dakota.

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 Birminham, Alabama,

in June 2013. Nearly 200 elite speech and debate students and coaches provided contact information to The American Legion seeking information on the 2013-2014 Oratorical Contest. American Legion Oratorical Contest program manager Colin Short served as a judge in the NFL's Original Oratory category and in the Original Oratory category national final.

Boy Scouts of America

The American Legion charters 2,553 Scout units in communities across the country involving 68,154 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 Mark Chmielewski of Salem, Connecticut, as its 2013 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 Chandler Burke, Dallas, Texas; Jonathan Chapman, Germantown, Tennessee; and Travis Thornburgh, New Virginia, Iowa.

In addition, an estimated 8,000 certificates honoring new Eagle Scout recipients are distributed annually.

Over 535 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

There are currently seventeen departments that offer a Junior Law Cadet Program: Arizona; Connecticut; Delaware; Illinois; Kansas; Massachusetts; Michigan; Minnesota; Missouri; Nebraska; North Carolina; Ohio; Pennsylvania; South Carolina; South Dakota; Vermont; and Virginia.

Promotional materials and a website have been made available at www.legion.org/juniorlaw, providing information for departments to adopt and publicize the program. Departments are 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 1,250 active clubs with almost 15,000 young people participating annually.

The 23rd Annual Junior Air Rifle National Championship was conducted August 6-11, 2013 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 1,514 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 2013 winners were Rachel Martin of Peralta, New Mexico (Precision) and Alan Rodriguez from Phoenix, Arizona (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 2013-2014, awarded ten $5,000 scholarships to recipients in six states to assist in furthering their education. This brings their cumulative total for the past 53 years to 892 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 2014-2015 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 18,000 copies of the DVD have been sold since its debut in early 2005.

Additionally, over 65,000 copies of the publication *Let's Be Right on Flag Etiquette* and more than 100,000 copies of the pamphlet, *Flag of the United States -- How to Display It, How to Respect It* are distributed annually to schools, organizations and individuals. This information is sent at little or no cost to all who request it.

The American Legion continues publication of *Our Country's Flag*, an educational comic book for use in elementary schools. Well over one million copies have been distributed since the booklet was introduced in 1988. The educational booklet, *I Pledge Allegiance*, published in May 1995, is also for use in elementary schools. *Our Country's Veterans* was added to The American Legion's list of educational publications in 2005.

The American Legion continues its campaign to protect the United States Flag from physical desecration. All 50 state legislatures have passed memorializing resolutions in support of a constitutional amendment to give Congress the authority to enact flag protection laws. Working with other organizations of the American Legion-founded Citizens Flag Alliance, The American Legion shepherded a flag protection Constitutional amendment through the House of Representatives six times in the past seven Congresses. In June of 2006, The American Legion spearheaded the drive for the amendment in the U.S. Senate, coming within one vote of passage there. The legislation has been introduced in the 113th 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.

Operation Comfort Warriors

The American Legion Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW) program supports wounded, injured, and ill service members and their families during times of recovery and transition and any other time of need. The program fills in the voids of comfort and recreational items that do not show up as a line item on any military or hospital budget spreadsheet. While the care in our military hospitals and transitional units is second to none, the little things can make a big difference. OCW provides things such as loose fitting clothing to ease the pressure on a wound or pool tables and electronic dart boards to offer some distractions and camaraderie building.

Much of the equipment donated is to empower our service members to engage in positive activities that will enhance and expedite their recovery and return to their original duty stations or to transition home better prepared. Some of the equipment donated has included canoes and kayaks, fishing gear, paddle boards, baseball and softball equipment, weights and resistance bands, as well as art supplies and pottery equipment. OCW has also help establish photography and musical therapy programs and different facilities. Our goal is to support service members in any manner we can in their process and to increase their likelihood of better outcomes.

Operation Comfort Warriors has provided support to service members and or the facilities at; Bethesda Naval Hospital (MD), Landstuhl Regional Medical Center (Germany), Joint Base Lewis McChord (WA), Fort Hood (TX), Fort Bragg (NC), Camp Lejune (NC), Portsmouth Naval Hospital (VA), Fort Carson(CO), Fort Drum (NY), Fort Stewart (GA), Tripler Army Medical Center (HI), Marine Corp Air Ground Combat Center (CA), Fort Campbell (KY), Fort Riley (KS), Camp Pendleton (CA), Fort Gordon(GA), Fort Bliss (TX) MEDEVAC point Afghanistan, Brooke Army Medical Center (TX), Navy Medical Center San Diego (CA), VAMC Indianapolis (IN), VAMC Minneapolis (MN). This is not an all inclusive list, rather a sampling to demonstrate the outreach efforts of the program.

Family is an enormous part of the process for our wounded, injured, and ill service members. OCW provides outing to amusement parks such as Six Flags Fiesta Texas where the service member is encouraged to bring their spouse and children or significant other to the outing and enjoy the day away from the hospital and recharge themselves with some fresh air and fun activities. OCW also hosts quarterly dinners in Washington DC in which we bring 15 or so patients and their families out to a steak dinner typically held at the National Press Club. Along with the steak dinner we have door prizes for just the patients to show our appreciation for their service and sacrifices.

The most important detail about Operation Comfort Warriors is that 100% of all donations go to support the wounded, injured, and ill service members. All administrative, marketing, and travel expenses are paid for by The American Legion, not donations. The program has received well over $1 million in donations and has donated well over $600,000 so far. We purchase items and outings based upon information from the facility or unit; we do not simply show up with a bunch of random stuff. OCW staff completes extensive outreach efforts with the facilities and installations to find how we can specifically help them in their missions and how we can support their particular programs. There are no one-size-fits-all solutions for our wounded, injured, and ill service members; there should not be a one-size-fits-all approach in our support of their service and sacrifices.

American Legion Baseball

American Legion Baseball marks its 88th season in 2013. Almost 79,000 players on 4,000 teams participated in this American Legion Americanism youth activity during the past year. The 2012 George W. Rulon American Legion Baseball Player of the Year Emerson Gibbs, from New Orleans, Louisiana. Emerson is attending Tulane University.

The American Legion Baseball World Series was held August 16-20, 2013, 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, 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
Richard D. Smith, Indiana, 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
Michael Buss, Iowa, Deputy 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) American Legion departments and posts effort to enhance classroom learning by offering schools a registry of veterans willing and able to assist in the classroom as stated in the Veterans in the Classroom program (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 17-23, 2013.

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 died while on active duty on or after September 11, 2001. The fund provides "American Legion Legacy Scholarships" to the children in addition to their governmental entitlements for education. Fund raising activities are ongoing with an initial goal of 20 million dollars established to fund this scholarship. Other scholarship programs include the American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program; Eagle Scout of the Year; American Legion Baseball Leadership Scholarship; and the Samsung American Legion Scholarship. Through these scholarship programs, The American Legion National Headquarters 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 25,000 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.

Thomas Clark, an educator at Lake Central High School, St. John, Indiana, received the 2013 American Legion National Education Award in recognition and appreciation for his dedication to the families of deceased veterans, for the history project about veterans that he implemented to enable students to gain an in-depth understanding of the impact of serving our nation in our Armed Forces, and his utilization of veterans in the classroom as promoted in The American Legion's Veterans in the Classroom program.

The American Legion believes that the citizens of this country should be dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in the entire realm of intellectual endeavor; that our people should recognize those persons who have developed their intellectual abilities to the fullest extent; that teachers should enrich their knowledge, particularly in the field in which they teach and that scholarship assistance to deserving students should be expanded.

Such an educational program will fulfill the dreams of the past, the aspirations of the present and the needs of the future. The American Legion supports such a system of education and believes that the vitality of our democratic way of life is dependent upon such schools.

AMERICANISM COMMISSION
Executive Section

Joseph E. Caouette, Rollinsford, New Hampshire - Chairman
Larry L. Price, Redfield, South Dakota - Vice-Chairman
Robert B. Craig, Lincoln, Nebraska - Commander's Representative
Eugene Thompson, Marseilles, Illinois – Consultant
Steve M. Tatro, Dunkirk, Maryland – Consultant
James W. Oxford, North Carolina - Consultant

COMMISSION ON CHILDREN & YOUTH
Dennis R. Boland, Florida, Chairman
Jill K. Druskis, Nebraska, Director

The American Legion has been a staunch supporter for the children and youth of our nation since our founding in 1919. Our commitment to our nation's children continues to be a paramount concern for the 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 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 commend sound organizations and facilities that provide services for children and youth.
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.

2012 - 2013 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 2012 - 2013, 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. The American Legion recognizes that the community is an important part of our American way of life and encourages Legion posts to become involved in local children & youth programs that benefit children living within their own communities. Local post's efforts with Children's Miracle Network (CMN) Hospitals underscores this mission. CMN Hospitals raise critically needed funds for 170 children's

hospitals, which treat 17 million children annually in the United States and Canada. These hospitals treat children with all types of afflictions and injuries, rendering service based on need, not the ability to pay. They annually provide $2.5 billion in uncompensated charity care and are committed to turning no child away.

Children's Miracle Network Hospitals are dedicated to ensuring that 100 percent of local donations made stay in the community in which they were raised to benefit children treated at participating hospitals.

The Commission commends American Legion departments and posts who work with and support their local CMN-affiliated children's hospitals to benefit the health and well being of our nation's children. This was made possible only through the dedicated efforts of Legion family members throughout this nation who have embraced this program and are committed to assisting children in their communities.

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 Ronald McDonald House Charities Pop Tab Collection Program may be found in many Legion posts throughout the country to benefit participating Ronald McDonald Houses. 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, ages 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, many American Legion departments and posts work 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. Working with Operation: Military Kids enable Legion family members to harness the benefits of our well-established and successful children and youth programs primarily at local levels to assist 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 2012 – 2013 program year, the program aided 1,892 children with $930,538 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 2012 – 2013 program year. At National Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28 – 30, 2012, the following resolutions, here summarized, were approved.

Support Funding For All Drug Trafficking Prevention Programs: Res. 258-2012. 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.

Oppose Any Attempt to Weaken Present Laws Governing Penalties for the Production, Sale and Distribution of Pornographic or Obscene Materials to Minors: Res. 254-2012. 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. 250-2012. 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, and 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. 264-2012. 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. 251-2012. 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. 257-2012. 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. 256-2012. The American Legion realizes that in today's society there is no place for communicable disease for which there is a vaccine. Despite available vaccination programs, several childhood diseases breakout annually. We believe that the state and federal governments should provide sufficient funding so that indigent families with children can receive the necessary immunizations against all communicable diseases.

Urge The President and Congress To Establish "National Family Week": Res. 265-2012. 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 2012 – 2013 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 90 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, 2012 through May 31, 2013 and combined with these reports.

During the reporting period, The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation recorded $769,321 in donations from members of The American Legion Family and individuals across the country. During the same period, our Temporary Financial Assistance program expended $930,538 in grants to 1,892 children of veterans. For the 2012 – 2013 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 $15,754,532 in expenditures and contributions to benefit the children of America.

Children & Youth Literature

During the 2012 - 2013 program year, 153,741 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 1,953 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 James E. Koutz 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

Dennis R. Boland, Florida – Chairman
Elmer Fuhrhop, Ohio – Chairman Emeritus
Donald Suchy, Nebraska – Vice-Chairman
Kenneth C. Hylton, Indiana – National Commander's Representative
Raymond G. Johnson, New York – Consultant
Robert M. Johnson, Maryland – Member
Peggy Moon, Minnesota – Member
Jon K. Marsh, Oregon – Member
Denver R. Phelps, Sr., Illinois - Member
Gary W. Gifford, Maryland – Member
Patricia A. Harris, North Carolina–Consultant
Herbert J. Petit, Jr., Louisiana – Member

Table No. 1

Region and Department	Reporting Legion	Temporary Financial Assistance by National	Contributions to Child Welfare Foundation by Posts and Units	Direct Aid from Posts, Units and Departments	Contributions to Other Child Serving Agencies by Legion and Auxiliary	Other Expenditures for Children by Legion and Auxiliary	Department Administrative Expense by Legion	Total Number of Children Served by Legion	Total Aid Legion Lines 3 thru 8
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
REGION 1									
Connecticut	51%	$0.00	$7,351.75	$4,250.00	$30,267.00	$37,050.00	$17,636.00	11,130	$96,555
Maine	56%	$0.00	$62.92	$7,914.00	$13,742.00	$46,034.00	$7,965.00	23	$75,718
Massachusetts	33%	$2,204.12	$7,731.00	$6,317.00	$34,940.00	$41,796.00	$1,875.00	1,193	$94,863
New Hampshire	85%	$0.00	$3,173.80	$42,179.00	$37,076.00	$513,589.00	$5,045.00	13,251	$601,063
Rhode Island	100%	$0.00	$125.00	$28,575.00	$22,500.00	$28,244.00	$3,450.00	5,386	$82,894
Vermont	97%	$3,162.18	$1,765.00	$38,444.00	$35,530.00	$50,449.00	$4,740.00	542	$134,090
TOTAL:	**55%**	**$5,366.30**	**$20,209.47**	**$127,679.00**	**$174,055.00**	**$717,162.00**	**$40,711.00**	**31,525**	**$1,085,183**
REGION 2									
Delaware	62%	$0.00	$375.00	$12,050.00	$3,475.00	$26,353.00	$1,700.00	6,093	$43,953
D.C.	45%	$500.00	$1,090.00	$250.00	$941.00	$255.00	$0.00	3	$3,036
Maryland	82%	$6,125.91	$540.10	$123,528.00	$151,229.00	$211,528.00	$13,210.00	9,019	$506,161
New Jersey	40%	$5,539.75	$925.00	$85,907.00	$91,343.00	$89,193.00	$12,477.00	3,885	$285,385
New York	67%	$4,475.00	$23,327.02	$553,463.00	$382,295.00	$746,754.00	$136,422.00	203,805	$1,846,736
Pennsylvania	53%	$13,783.01	$872.76	$119,246.00	$180,259.00	$484,043.00	$47,348.00	109,461	$845,552
Virginia	99%	$56,149.32	$3,704.75	$149,961.00	$165,124.00	$1,245,189.00	$29,389.00	21,686	$1,649,517
West Virginia	93%	$18,134.66	$470.00	$23,443.00	$12,615.00	$90,267.00	$14,820.00	6,363	$159,770
TOTAL:	**64%**	**$104,707.65**	**$31,304.63**	**$1,067,848.00**	**$987,281.00**	**$2,893,602.00**	**$255,366.00**	**360,315**	**$5,340,109**
REGION 3									
Alabama	26%	$4,422.91	$15,612.89	$10,234.00	$13,320.00	$30,574.00	$845.00	308	$75,009
Florida	96%	$82,835.74	$60,735.90	$189,268.00	$134,550.00	$247,078.00	$16,240.00	34,015	$730,708
Georgia	85%	$10,759.33	$825.10	$93,050.00	$105,963.00	$219,925.00	$24,877.00	13,283	$455,399
Kentucky	73%	$20,827.52	$2,029.50	$20,750.00	$58,487.00	$76,469.00	$5,510.00	1,381	$184,073
North Carolina	47%	$36,253.47	$2,119.38	$28,226.00	$17,645.00	$82,026.00	$9,120.00	5,487	$175,390
South Carolina	45%	$6,137.84	$3,108.83	$11,281.00	$9,612.00	$15,153.00	$8,920.00	658	$54,213
Tennessee	56%	$2,258.38	$292.07	$15,788.00	$15,560.00	$50,625.00	$8,906.00	1,122	$93,429
TOTAL:	**62%**	**$163,495.19**	**$84,723.67**	**$368,597.00**	**$355,137.00**	**$721,850.00**	**$74,418.00**	**56,254**	**$1,768,221**
REGION 4									
Arkansas	26%	$1,556.13	$505.17	$18,009.00	$8,733.00	$19,189.00	$1,648.00	976	$49,640
Louisiana	36%	$2,270.91	$849.37	$30,400.00	$19,078.00	$72,014.00	$11,334.00	882	$135,946
Mississippi	26%	$5,819.80	$5,404.67	$4,700.00	$9,975.00	$8,950.00	$884.00	58	$35,733
Oklahoma	31%	$121,601.11	$68.00	$3,508.00	$16,290.00	$35,067.00	$17,069.00	956	$193,603
Texas	59%	$23,198.33	$4,280.29	$207,335.00	$144,315.00	$330,892.00	$34,801.00	11,595	$744,822
TOTAL:	**40%**	**$154,446.28**	**$11,107.50**	**$263,952.00**	**$198,391.00**	**$466,112.00**	**$65,736.00**	**14,457**	**$1,159,745**
REGION 5									
Illinois	40%	$36,512.77	$3,773.79	$39,990.00	$35,009.00	$211,123.00	$11,211.00	1,266	$337,620
Indiana	56%	$96,322.10	$4,779.63	$84,917.00	$103,643.00	$89,419.00	$18,160.00	6,110	$397,241
Michigan	8%	$870.00	$1,580.55	$131,147.00	$30,918.00	$87,472.00	$46,690.00	6,475	$298,678
Missouri	97%	$30,554.06	$2,069.05	$26,976.00	$46,545.00	$97,230.00	$10,757.00	2,052	$214,131
Ohio	80%	$6,232.00	$20,870.00	$129,841.00	$185,370.00	$371,230.00	$38,672.00	1,003,305	$752,215
Wisconsin	99%	$10,498.51	$12,182.13	$91,197.00	$26,429.00	$153,168.00	$18,653.00	4,445	$312,128
TOTAL:	**62%**	**$180,989.44**	**$45,255.15**	**$504,068.00**	**$427,914.00**	**$1,009,642.00**	**$144,143.00**	**1,023,653**	**$2,312,012**
REGION 6									
Iowa	63%	$14,734.75	$2,803.16	$18,423.00	$27,554.00	$99,597.00	$11,977.00	2,276	$175,089
Kansas	64%	$11,195.04	$23,460.10	$14,213.00	$17,724.00	$79,118.00	$11,547.00	999	$157,257
Minnesota	78%	$3,281.30	$3,597.50	$224,610.00	$144,756.00	$369,136.00	$43,591.00	40,165	$788,972
Nebraska	100%	$3,719.49	$1,571.00	$21,846.00	$13,586.00	$62,598.00	$14,505.00	3,135	$117,824
North Dakota	57%	$327.56	$600.00	$96,530.00	$38,937.00	$54,468.00	$3,914.00	1,891	$194,777
South Dakota	62%	$1,000.00	$732.70	$9,825.00	$15,997.00	$57,467.00	$3,266.00	612	$88,288
TOTAL:	**72%**	**$34,257.14**	**$32,764.46**	**$385,447.00**	**$259,554.00**	**$722,384.00**	**$88,800.00**	**49,078**	**$1,522,207**
REGION 7									
Arizona	79%	$75,187.96	$5,055.68	$58,296.00	$70,570.00	$93,273.00	$21,936.00	4,214	$324,319
California	69%	$31,800.39	$8,303.00	$110,730.00	$87,009.00	$393,315.00	$30,025.00	15,665	$659,182
Colorado	38%	$10,735.03	$2,767.22	$11,124.00	$24,411.00	$24,403.00	$5,852.00	835	$79,292
Hawaii	14%	$0.00	$126.90	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0	$127
Nevada	49%	$15,520.09	$5,177.00	$10,717.00	$4,420.00	$54,157.00	$1,300.00	3,157	$91,291
New Mexico	49%	$7,158.69	$1,879.46	$37,895.00	$53,239.00	$77,605.00	$14,701.00	4,177	$192,478
Utah	18%	$13,901.64	$100.00	$863.00	$225.00	$5,631.00	$410.00	11	$21,131
TOTAL:	**56%**	**$154,303.80**	**$21,409.26**	**$229,625.00**	**$239,874.00**	**$648,384.00**	**$74,224.00**	**28,059**	**$1,367,820**
REGION 8									
Alaska	75%	$0.00	$936.65	$38,045.00	$23,450.00	$175,860.00	$10,150.00	260	$248,442
Idaho	75%	$18,642.83	$2,515.04	$4,131.00	$16,033.00	$18,547.00	$3,618.00	631	$63,487
Montana	99%	$5,034.36	$1,039.88	$6,125.00	$20,166.00	$17,044.00	$6,585.00	207	$55,994
Oregon	96%	$30,684.63	$1,719.66	$15,485.00	$5,798.00	$37,856.00	$3,310.00	984	$94,853
Washington	58%	$72,429.56	$10,585.24	$4,610.00	$20,829.00	$83,671.00	$3,102.00	17,479	$195,227
Wyoming	92%	$2,668.36	$5,271.00	$2,854.00	$7,050.00	$6,640.00	$556.00	3,075	$25,039
TOTAL:	**81%**	**$129,459.74**	**$22,067.47**	**$71,250.00**	**$93,326.00**	**$339,618.00**	**$27,321.00**	**22,636**	**$683,042**
REGION TOTALS:	**62%**	**$927,025.54**	**$269,841.61**	**$3,019,466.00**	**$2,734,532.00**	**$7,518,754.00**	**$770,719.00**	**1,565,967**	**$15,236,338**
			0						
FOREIGN			**0**						
France	25%	$0.00	$100.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0	$100
Mexico	22%	$0.00	$0.00	$450.00	$1,500.00	$4,375.00	$0.00	208	$6,325
Philippines	9%	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$500.00	$0.00	50	$500
Puerto Rico	3%	$3,512.34	$0.00	$450.00	$1,825.00	$8,475.00	$100.00	258	$14,362
TOTAL:	**10%**	**$3,512.34**	**$100.00**	**$900.00**	**$3,325.00**	**$13,350.00**	**$100.00**	**516**	**$21,287**
GRAND TOTALS:	**61%**	**$930,537.88**	**$269,941.61**	**$3,019,366.00**	**$2,737,857.00**	**$7,532,104.00**	**$770,819.00**	**1,566,503**	**$15,754,532**

TABLE #1 REPORTING PERIOD: JUNE 1, 2012 - MAY 31, 2013

Child Welfare Foundation by National Legion	$8,479
Child Welfare Foundation by Auxiliary	$2,500
Child Welfare Foundation by 8/40	$20,916
Child Welfare Foundation by Individuals	$6,425
Bequests to Child Welfare Foundation	$3,028
C.W.F. by Sons of The American Legion	$453,559
Total	**$494,906**

TABLE NO. 2
EXPENDITURES FROM NATIONAL TEMPORARY AID FUNDS TO DEPARTMENTS ACCORDING TO YEARS

	1926-45	1946-65	1966-85	1986-95	1996-2005	2006-2012*	June 2012 - May 2013	Grand Total
Alabama	29,181.33	51,167.06	76,790.45	152,617.32	137,824.69	69,122.05	4,422.91	521,125.81
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	246,786.91	75,187.96	860,525.81
Arkansas	33,873.20	25,962.22	2,881.07	55,004.98	16,181.61	14,841.66	1,556.13	150,300.87
California	30,106.15	16,026.45	1,550.00	7,559.00	30,034.44	135,520.38	31,800.39	252,596.81
Colorado	41,621.11	22,618.11	1,395.00	12,205.83	17,592.15	101,732.77	10,735.03	207,900.00
Connecticut	1,854.00	440.00	450.00	1,192.00	7,971.56	24,578.43	0.00	36,485.99
Delaware	2,035.00	1,000.00	475.00	2,635.00	8,497.64	4,491.00	0.00	19,133.64
DC	2,570.00	1,203.50	600.00	26,136.75	2,319.00	2,010.51	500.00	35,339.76
Florida	33,341.28	25,520.50	2,530.00	27,060.88	64,469.81	216,200.52	82,835.74	451,958.73
Georgia	69,894.07	86,084.42	4,865.00	8,498.51	12,861.80	31,864.97	10,759.33	224,828.10
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	170,059.96	18,642.83	425,147.88
Illinois	30,220.79	4,343.53	10,525.73	92,128.56	276,545.19	103,686.36	36,512.77	553,962.93
Indiana	31,850.08	9,066.40	2,920.00	126,545.18	173,400.66	150,038.17	96,322.10	590,142.59
Iowa	17,493.08	587.00	3,928.45	13,782.47	227,865.82	110,179.90	14,734.75	388,581.47
Kansas	20,766.80	42,064.35	8,923.00	9,241.54	16,291.60	18,436.29	11,195.04	127,918.62
Kentucky	23,843.50	45,527.90	64,854.96	44,238.66	12,445.22	121,793.67	20,827.52	333,531.43
Louisiana	23,400.50	38,454.30	3,395.00	7,340.45	33,897.24	3,292.35	2,270.91	112,050.75
Maine	3,618.94	1,910.26	2,676.55	15,912.00	22,305.05	15,627.26	0.00	62,050.06
Maryland	5,887.00	3,390.57	3,383.00	4,770.00	31,620.94	12,904.83	6,125.91	68,082.25
Massachusetts	2,754.50	455.00	150.00	4,650.00	18,888.67	14,931.34	2,204.12	44,033.63
Michigan	23,895.33	33,281.24	15,346.82	14,012.24	52,676.66	51,534.01	870.00	191,616.30
Minnesota	8,610.77	23,322.79	11,940.33	137,579.21	89,538.19	32,710.76	3,281.30	306,983.35
Mississippi	40,293.63	63,254.14	117,892.56	51,214.88	84,261.79	48,047.70	5,819.80	410,784.50
Missouri	53,073.08	47,799.64	11,056.00	17,969.51	38,984.13	100,517.01	30,554.06	299,953.43
Montana	5,414.25	1,668.85	1,575.30	38,571.40	57,913.91	64,589.20	5,034.36	174,767.27
Nebraska	18,470.10	17,795.68	17,531.06	3,373.25	759.49	4,349.51	3,718.49	65,997.58
Nevada	585.00	766.00	7,272.00	995.00	16,818.94	18,696.01	15,520.09	60,653.04
New Hampshire	4,250.50	4,941.50	0.00	53,557.79	12,610.00	18,697.24	0.00	94,057.03
New Jersey	8,995.53	1,946.00	4,478.00	55,576.20	53,194.60	34,266.18	5,539.75	163,996.26
New Mexico	20,074.30	53,098.74	58,723.89	111,071.87	49,262.39	14,907.29	7,158.69	314,297.17
New York	7,887.54	4,803.00	1,150.00	33,784.24	83,432.27	34,599.54	4,475.00	170,131.59
North Carolina	46,597.50	81,019.60	9,740.00	20,750.18	68,774.55	145,295.08	36,253.47	408,430.38
North Dakota	26,017.45	11,788.21	5,771.32	6,499.40	11,426.94	10,119.47	327.56	71,950.35
Ohio	23,930.43	5,116.25	11,613.89	11,357.65	13,289.44	58,237.32	6,232.00	129,776.98
Oklahoma	40,458.05	65,406.47	88,956.03	156,914.96	203,764.51	138,528.57	121,601.11	815,629.70
Oregon	1,250.50	13,750.15	24,595.95	42,465.83	14,796.00	104,928.70	30,684.63	232,471.76
Panama	675.00	534.00	600.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,809.00
Pennsylvania	22,847.41	651.00	19,204.85	38,183.37	29,380.12	90,604.72	13,783.01	214,654.48
Puerto Rico	17,057.00	57,754.00	55,499.50	43,420.00	11,100.00	9,078.81	3,512.34	197,421.65
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	59,041.55	6,137.84	179,774.94
South Dakota	42,430.27	16,362.05	725.00	30,686.38	5,358.30	0.00	1,000.00	96,562.00
Tennessee	31,144.77	54,613.20	20,604.30	56,068.79	36,561.35	65,189.51	2,259.38	266,440.30
Texas	35,373.50	47,392.43	26,714.50	7,884.74	31,484.75	154,228.26	23,198.33	326,276.51
Utah	11,125.48	3,248.00	3,396.00	12,014.42	14,034.34	13,742.38	13,901.64	71,462.26
Vermont	1,824.50	9,251.50	0.00	4,925.00	6,004.26	4,539.26	3,162.18	29,706.70
Virginia	45,310.31	28,037.78	17,836.00	31,930.40	66,509.94	191,730.53	56,149.32	437,504.28
Washington	3,378.00	427.50	625.00	66,884.89	511,131.69	504,996.84	72,429.56	1,159,873.48
West Virginia	27,629.98	11,395.94	3,460.00	17,750.68	40,628.59	34,791.11	18,134.66	153,790.96
Wisconsin	15,891.96	8,067.25	9,878.00	16,242.78	74,327.21	67,127.30	10,488.51	202,023.03
Wyoming	8,180.00	1,993.00	1,350.00	979.00	13,746.91	22,886.71	2,668.36	51,803.98
Other Depts	560.00	173.50				0		$907.00
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**	**$3,676,397.77**	**$930,537.88**	**$12,849,309.03**

*Includes June 2012 - May 2013

**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	9	11	152	176
July	0	0	6	3	4	120	133
August	0	2	0	11	15	124	152
September	0	0	2	8	9	154	173
October	0	1	2	5	9	159	176
November	0	0	12	3	15	128	158
December	0	0	3	8	7	145	163
January	0	0	6	1	6	121	134
February	0	2	13	4	6	56	81
March	0	0	6	6	7	39	58
April	0	0	2	12	12	133	159
May	0	0	17	12	27	273	329
Totals	0	5	73	82	128	1604	1892
Percentage	0.00%	0.26%	3.86%	4.33%	6.77%	84.78%	100.00%

TABLE #3 REPORTING PERIOD: JUNE 1, 2012 - MAY 31, 2013

Table No. 4

Printed Material Furnished Upon Request
During Period June 1, 2012 through May 31, 2013

	Total
8&40 Nursing Scholarship	2,800
American Legion & Children's Miracle Network - Brochure	6,399
American Legion Child Welfare Foundation	6,320
American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation	22,651
Annual Children & Youth Program Piece	6,559
Children & Youth Department Chairman's Guide	150
Family Support Network	9,949
Gateway Drugs	9,425
Make Halloween a Safe and Fun Night - Brochure	26,651
National Family Week	6,069
Play It Safe	7,808
Serving America	8,550
Serving Communities	9,500
Serving Veterans	7,775
TFA Applications	465
TFA Brochures	12,249
Warning Signs -- Suicide Prevention	8,468

Citations:

Annual Children and Youth Citations	1,628
Certificate of Meritorious Service	47
National Achievement Award	19
Special Children & Youth Citation	259
TOTAL	153,741

AMERICAN LEGION CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION, INC.
Dennis R. Boland, Florida, President
Jason R. Kees, Illinois, 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 twelve 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 2012, the Board of Directors approved grants to 20 non-profit organizations in the amount of $734,220 for projects to be completed in calendar year 2013. The organizations and amounts are as follows:

American Legion Child Welfare Foundation Grants

American Academy of Pediatrics of Elk Grove Village, Illinois, was awarded $12,180 for their project "Connected Kids."

Childhood Leukemia Foundation of Brick, New Jersey, was awarded $60,000 for their project "Hope Binders."

Children's Organ Transplant Association of Bloomington, Indiana, was awarded $43,050 for their project "Bowling for Life."

CureSearch for Children's Cancer of Bethesda, Maryland, was awarded $25,500 for their project "Childhood Cancer Care for the Whole Patient: CureSearch Webinar Series."

Darkness to Light of Charleston, South Carolina, was awarded $45,486 for their project "Helping Military Families Prevent Child Abuse."

Diabetes Education & Camping Association of Huntsville, Alabama, was awarded $40,000 for their project "D-Source: The New and Improved Website of U.S. Diabetes Camps."

Huntington's Disease Society of America of New York, New York, was awarded $30,000 for their project "Talking to Your Children about Huntington's Disease Handbook."

Immune Deficiency Foundation of Towson, Maryland, was awarded $48,500 for their project "The Little Zebra – A Children's Storybook."

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation of New York, New York, was awarded $39,500 for their project "Type One – The Teen Years."

Mercy Flight Southeast, Inc. of Leesburg, Florida, was awarded $17,394 for their project "Project Outreach SE USA 2012."

National Autism Association of Attleboro Falls, Massachusetts, was awarded $58,000 for their project "Big Red Safety Box Program."

National Center for Learning Disabilities of New York, New York, was awarded $45,000 for their project "LD Navigator for Pediatric Healthcare Professionals."

National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association of Seattle, Washington, was awarded $40,000 for their project "Ready, Set, Raise! I am for the child tools and training for grassroots activation."

National Exchange Club Foundation of Toledo, Ohio, was awarded $24,530 for their project "Believe in the Blue 2013 – What do I do when my child…?"

National Marfan Association of Port Washington, New York, was awarded $25,000 for their project "KidZone Online Community Space."

Our Military Kids of McLean, Virginia, was awarded $60,000 for their project "Strengthening the Our Military Kids Brand."

Spina Bifida Association of Washington, DC, was awarded $45,000 for their project "Educating Children with Spina Bifida on Health Issues They are Facing."

SuperSibs! of Palatine, Illinois, was awarded $16,210 for their project "SuperSibs! SibSPEAK Website."

The National Children's Cancer Society of St. Louis, Missouri, was awarded $15,870 for their project "Moving Mountains."

US Sportsmen's Alliance Foundation of Columbus, Ohio, was awarded $43,000 for their project "Trailblazer Adventure Program – Blazing an Outdoor Trail."

During the 2013 - 2014 contribution year, donations exceeded $769,320 with over $453,559 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 enhance the lives of children. 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 5, 2013, 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 Jason R. Kees (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
Bridget A. Robinson, CMP, Georgia, Director

The 94th annual National Convention of The American Legion convened in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 24 – 30, 2012. National Commander, Fang A. Wong, of New York called the National Convention to order at 8:30AM on Tuesday, Aug. 28, 2012 welcoming Legionnaires to Indianapolis and thanking them for their continuing service to our Country and to our veterans. The 94th annual National Convention began with the Honorable Andre Carson, U.S. House of Representatives, addressing nearly 6,000 American Legion Family members on Tuesday morning. Later in the day, the Honorable Mitch Daniels, Governor, State of Indiana; Major General R. Martin Umbarger, Adjutant General, Military Department of Indiana; the Honorable Eric K. Shinseki, Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; 2011–2012 Department Commander of Indiana, Michael J. Miller and James "Jim" E. Koutz, President of the 2012 National Convention Corporation welcomed Legionnaires to the National Convention. Other guest speakers addressing the 94th National Convention of The American Legion were Lt. Gen. Claude Kicklighter U.S. Army, retired, Director, DoD Vietnam War 50th Anniversary Commemoration; Bob Mazzuca, Chief Scout Executive,

Boy Scouts of America; Marine Corps Lt. Col. Joseph Gallagher, Senior U.S. Military Observer, United Nations Truce Supervision Organization; Josue "Joe" Robles, President and CEO, USAA; Tim Felt, Past Pipeline Committee Chairman, American Petroleum Institute; Nancy Huber, President and CEO, Fifth Third Bank; and Major General Karl Horst, U.S. Army, U.S. Central Command, CCDC-COS, Office of the Chief of Staff. Mr. Jose Rene "J.R." Martinez served as the master of ceremonies for the superb opening.

There were many highlights during the 2012 National Convention, but four events conducted at the National Convention deserve special mention. On Friday, Aug. 24 the Color Guard Contest took place the first day of convention, a change from previous years when it was held on Saturday morning. The number of color guard units grew significantly from 12 performances in 2010 and 2011 to 19 performances in 2012. Spectator attendance also rose to an all-time high of 500 people. The Patriotic Memorial Service, featuring The ManualAires, and the annual parade, both held on Sunday, Aug. 26 were attended by nearly 2,000 and 4,000 American Legion Family members respectively. On Tuesday, Aug. 28, the National Commander's Banquet for Distinguished Guests was held at the Indiana Convention Center. The banquet featured Grammy-nominated country music artist, Michael Peterson, as the entertainment and was attended by over 2,300 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 2012. 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.

Future conventions and dates:

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
Julian E. Weisler, Texas, 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 assisted with credentials, agendas and other details of the National Convention.

ECONOMIC COMMISSION
Harold D. Barnett, Georgia, Chairman
Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, 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, 2012, through June 30, 2013. 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, Administrative Assistant Jasmine Davis, and Administrative Assistant Doris Grooms

National Economic Commission

*Employment Committee
*Veterans' Preference Committee
*Awards Subcommittee
*Small Business Task Force Advisory Board
*Homeless Veteran Task Force Advisory Board

2012-2013 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 25, 2012, in the Indianapolis Marriott, Indiana Ballroom, Section G, 1st Floor, Indianapolis, Indiana, in conjunction with the Ninety-Fourth Annual National Convention. A report on that meeting was made to the National Executive Committee on Monday, August 27, 2012. 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 16-17, 2012. A complete report on that meeting appears in the Digest of Proceedings of the National Executive Committee, October 2012.
(3) At the 53rd Washington Conference, on Monday, February 29, and Wednesday, February 27, 2013 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 6-7, 2013, 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 8-9, 2013.

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, 2012 to July 31, 2013, on matters pertaining to the National Economic Commission:

- On September 20, 2012, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on "Veterans' Employment and Training Service's Transition Assistance Program."
- On March 19, 2013, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Contracting and the Workforce Committee on Small Business, and Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, House Committee on Veterans

Affairs' on "Challenges Facing Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business."

- On April 10, 2013, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans Affairs' on various pieces of legislation regarding "Training, Employment and Education."

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 2012 in the Employer of Veterans Awards Program.

The Commission's Awards Subcommittee met to select the following National winners:

Large Employer: L-3 Stratis, North Carolina
Medium Size Employer: CAS, Incorporated, Strategic & Homeland Defense Division, Colorado
Small Employer: Cian Center, Inc. Illinois
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: Bobby Bryant, Oklahoma
DVOP of the Year: Jerome A. Billups, North Dakota
Employment Local Office: Ottawa One Stop Center, Illinois
Other Awards

Employer of the Disabled: Gil Sosa, Texas
Employer of Older Workers: AARP Foundation, Georgia
Homeless Veterans Outreach Award: The American Legion Department of Michigan

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 chairpersons to assist individual veterans in finding employment. Their post 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 an Education Roundtable on Sunday, February 24, 2013, in the Georgetown Room, Concourse Level, at the Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C., to discuss communications, disconnects, and cultural gaps that are impediments to veterans graduating on college/university campuses across the country. Those sentiments were among the major themes that emerged from a Legion-sponsored Veterans Education Symposium on February 24. The two-hour discussion among representatives of student veterans organizations, educational institutions, The American Legion, and fellow advocates began with progress reports on the ongoing, state-by-state legislative struggle to persuade schools to grant in-state tuition rates to non-resident veterans and service members. All agreed that the presence of knowing advocates such as the Student Veterans of America (SVA) chapters on campuses was important, if not essential, to bridging the gaps between student-veterans and their fellows at school. Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) such as The American Legion can serve the student veteran community well, too, it was agreed, by helping to "educate the educators."

Since it helped author the original GI Bill in the 1940s, The American Legion has been by service members' sides as they pursue college educations. Most recently, the organization has moved onto college campuses around the country, developing posts for veterans who are coming home from overseas and looking for the camaraderie they enjoyed in the military. One of the most recent locations for this movement is Hodges University in Florida, where a group of student-veterans have started Post 397, which uses as its home the school's two joint campuses – one in Naples and the other in Fort Myers. It has since gained around 30 members – a mixture of students, faculty, staff and alumni of the school. Those members are eying bright plans for the post's future – all of

them focused on rejuvenating the camaraderie that they knew in the military but say is lacking in the civilian world.

The second has been Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), where student-veterans have founded University Veterans Post 360. The post currently has around 40 members. Post 360 was founded a little over a year ago, when membership representatives from the Department of Indiana reached out to veterans on the school's campus. Rich Brown, from the department's 11th district, gave a presentation to veterans at IUPUI. Kim Mezger, an Air Force veteran, was in attendance. Mrs. Mezger found the presentation intriguing; consequently, she thought a Legion post on campus would be a good fit for IUPUI because of its commuter nature and the large number of veterans who attend. At that point, Mrs. Mezger started conversing with the Department of Indiana about founding a post.

Credentialing

During The American Legion's 94th National Convention, the Economic Commission held a credentialing roundtable that was widely attended by government officials, private stakeholders, leading experts, and credentialing bodies to educate and seek the assistance of The American Legion on a state-by-state initiative to introduce, advocate, and support state legislation that would assist veterans to obtain their credentials in critical professions (i.e., CDL, EMT, etc).

To continue the dialogue on military credentialing, the National Economic Commission of The American Legion hosted a Credentialing Roundtable on Monday, February 25, 2013, in Columbia Room 10, Terrace Level, at the Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C. The Roundtable 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 Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), to better recognize military training and experience.

After winning passage of several important credentialing bills on the federal level, The American Legion has turned its focus to state legislatures, pushing for states to consider similar measure that allow military training and skills to fulfill requirements for professional certifications. Largely, the efforts have yielded great results, as 37 states have either passed credentialing legislation or are currently considering it. In all, 37 credentialing bills have been signed into law, and another 85 are in various stages of consideration in state legislatures around the nation. The American Legion's advocacy efforts from the national staff and Legionnaires within each department has scored noteworthy victories in several states, where credentialing legislation was introduced and quickly passed by a wide majority. In Indiana, a law that will make military medic training "civilian equivalent" of training required to earn an emergency medical technician or paramedic license takes effect July 1, 2013. And in Arizona, a similar bill, will allow for military medic training to fulfill requirements for becoming a License Professional Nurse.

Other credentialing wins for the Legion have come in Georgia, where veterans' licensing applications will receive "special consideration" from a licensing committee charged with giving waivers for military skills, and in Maryland, where Legionnaires helped introduce and pass legislation of a measure that allows military training, education, experience to count for certification qualifications. The Maryland bill also requires state universities to honor relevant military training and education for college credits.

Presently, we are working to pass credentialing legislation in active sessions in six different states. In California, both the Senate and House are considering bills to ease certification requirements, and in Ohio measures that will make it easier for military truck drivers to gain Commercial Driver's Licenses currently sit in the both of the state's

chambers. New Jersey is also in the mix, with two separate laws: one that will allow military training and education to count for credits at state institutions, and another that makes it easier for veterans with medical training to gain an EMT certification. Similar bills are currently working their way through assemblies in Florida and Texas. Legionnaires in the above mentioned states are encouraged to call their state legislators and urge them to vote in favor of all veterans credentialing legislation that is presented to them. In all states, Legionnaires are urged to lobby their lawmakers to introduce and pass credentialing legislation.

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. From January 1, 2013, to July 31, 2013, The American Legion has conducted over 60 Job Fairs with the Chamber under the Hiring our Heroes Initiative. This year, The American Legion has planned to participate in 150 Job Fairs under the Hiring Our Heroes 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 -those who face employability barriers and those who are job ready. DOL-VETS gives priority service to all veterans, with the highest priority afforded to disabled veterans. VETS also focuses on the special attention to military personnel preparing to separate from active duty.

DOL-VETS programs include the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) program, which VETS funds through state employment 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.

As of July 2013, the total number of unemployed veterans is roughly 702,000 (166,000 of them are Post-9/11). The American Legion understands that, with an overall unemployment rate at 7.7 percent for Post-9/11 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 the President on November 21, 2011, authorized the creation of a new TAP and mandated that all service members, with limited exceptions, must 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 veterans 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 GPS pilot programs at all Department of Defense (DOD) sites, and contingent upon funding, 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. Furthermore, 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 62,700 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 Administration requested $38 million for Fiscal Year (FY) 2014, a $2 million increase over the final, sequestered funding level in FY 2013. 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 $3,414,000 of funding for NVTI in FY 2014.

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) funding has been cut due to the lack of utilization. The administration has not asked for additional funding for this program in FY13 and FY14. There are thousands of veterans available for work, but they lack marketable, technological skills, especially for jobs that exist in the Information Age economy. The problem is clearly a lack of adequate funding. Veterans are the only participants in this program. VWIP works off of three year grants. Five grants awarded in 2010 will end June 30, 2013, and twelve grants awarded in 2012 will end June 30, 2015. VWIP needs to be funded and reinstituted and the budget baseline needs to be increased to allow VETS to train eligible veterans in all 50 states as opposed to just the twelve states where VWIP is still in existence.

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 gvernment 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 $41,838,000 for Program Management that encompasses USERRA and Federal Administration in FY 2014. The addition of $5,521,000 from the FY13 budget will allot for the increase of 17 more full time employees, modernizing information technology systems, pilot programs and improvements to oversight and monitoring to Federal Administration and USERRA Enforcement.

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.

Veteran Entrepreneurship

The National Economic Commission Small Business Task Force sponsored their Annual Mid-Winter Conference Small Business Development Workshop and Seminar Series on Tuesday, February 26, in Georgetown Room, Concourse Level and Wednesday, February 27, in Georgetown Room Concourse Level and Monroe Room, Concourse Level of the Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C. Approximately 50 veterans and service-disabled business owners participated in this event. Veterans traveled from as far away as North Carolina, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York as well as Maryland and Virginia.

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.

The second day of the small business training program was the “nuts and bolts” session covering the specifics of preparing business proposals, filing proper paperwork, and generally navigating the government contract procurement process. More time was given to recent developments and up-coming legislation that would affect small business. Staff members from the offices of Senate Small Business Committee, Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, House Small Business Committee and House Veterans' Affairs

Committee, explained current and proposed federal legislation affecting Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSB) and Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSB) and the requirements imposed upon government agencies to do business with them. Attendees were afforded liberal question-and-answer opportunities throughout the workshop.

The free two-day workshops included representatives from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Freedom Bank, Superior Bank, U.S. Export-Import Bank, The Millennium Group, Vets GSA, LLC, Clark Construction, Patriot Loan Bank, The BPI Strategy Group, Skyline Ultd. Inc., congressional representatives, along with federal agencies, which included, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Small Business Administration (SBA), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of Health & Human Services (HHS), Department of State, Department of Defense Logistic Agency (DLA), U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and the General Services Administration (GSA).

In addition, Representative Michael Fitzpatrick (PA) spoke to the National Economic Commission during the Small Business Workshop on Wednesday, February 27, about reintroducing H.R. 1392, Fairness to Veterans Act that he initially sponsored and introduced in April 2011. The bill gives veterans the same contracting preferences as every other diverse group in federal contracting. The bill gives a contracting preference and priority first to a veteran small business, and it ensures that contracts be awarded only to qualified veteran small businesses who have the necessary skills and commercial licenses to perform the work that the government needs. Fitzpatrick has been working closely with The American Legion's Small Business Task Force to ensure the bill is an innovative, administratively convenient contracting tool so that doing business with veterans is the cheapest, easiest, and fastest way to do business for the federal government. As Fitzpatrick prepares to reintroduce the legislation to the 113th Congress, he feels confident the bill will pass.

Lastly, it was a consensus with the veteran business owners at the workshops that the VETS First Program, which states that veterans will be first for contracting within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), is not being properly managed by the VA's Center for Veteran Enterprise (CVE). The principal purposes for CVE are to communicate information about the verification process; to assist veteran business owners in registering their business in the Secretary's database of veteran-owned small businesses (VOSBs) and to provide a vehicle for VA contracting officers to easily identify service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses (SDVOSBs) and VOSBs for procurement opportunities. There are veteran and service-disabled veteran business owners that have been doing business with the VA for years that are being denied through the verification process. The substantial amount of documents that VA requires a small business owner to upload is cumbersome and intrusive. Many veteran business owners are questioning VA's reasoning that the requisite documentation actually establishes ownership and control. Veterans who have been denied in this verification process are in limbo, losing money, while they wait for a final decision on their verification status.

The American Legion is working with the Small Business Administration (SBA) and the VA to improve the process, revise the verification program's regulations, while continuing to provide counseling services to America's veteran entrepreneurs. Now is the time to fix the process and to find the proper balance between the requirements for the growth of small business and the requisite threshold for obtaining verification status.

Home Loan Guaranty Program

VA's Home Loan Guaranty program has been in effect since 1944 and has afforded approximately 20 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 time or subsequently 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 22, 2013, in the Jefferson West Room, Concourse Level, Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C. The Roundtable had experts from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD), National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV), National Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH); Friendship Place, and Community Solutions. Speakers included Charles Selby, Program Analyst, VA; Linda Charest, Base Realignment and Closure Coordinator/HUDVet, Office of Special Needs Assistance Program, HUD; John Driscoll, President/CEO, and Matt Gornick, Policy Director, NCHV; Jordan Press, Director of Federal Policy, CSH; Geoff Millard, Director of Special Projects, Friendship Place, and Jessica Venegas, Director of Strategic Partnership, Community Solutions.

During the Roundtable it was noted that VA and HUD reported 62,619 homeless veterans on a single night in January 2012 (2012 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress). VA is taking 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.

In addition, 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.

Furthermore, 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 million. Among other matters, classes were taught on how to successfully engage the homeless veteran issue in the local community and how to successfully execute a Stand Down. Lastly, 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.

Lastly, 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 $2,124,991 for 2012. 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 2013 National Convention Program and the 2013 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 Revenue Enhancement Committee
American Legion Emblem Committee

American Legion Overseas Graves Decoration Trust

EMBLEM SALES COMMITTEE
Alvan T. Fuller, Massachusetts, Chairman
Richard B. Keith, Indiana, Director

The American Legion emblem is the exclusive property of the National Headquarters. The sale of the emblem, emblem pins, merchandise carrying the emblem and other items of organizational equipment is the responsibility of the National Headquarters in Indianapolis. The following tables show gross sales, net earnings, etc., for the entire calendar year 2012 and for the first six months of 2013.

January 1 to December 31, 2012
(12 months)

Gross Sales	*$11,871,268*
Cost of Goods Sold	*6,413,786*
Overhead	*3,728,930*
Operating Profit	*1,728,552*

Total number of 2012 orders processed was *101,433*

January 1 to June 30, 2013
(6 months)

Gross Sales	*$6,554,322*
Cost of Goods Sold	*3,420,994*
Overhead	*1,953,421*
Operating Profit	*1,179,907*

Total orders processed for first 6 months of 2013 was *56,613*

REVENUE ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE
Walter W. Ivie, Texas, Chairman
William A. Pease, Indiana, Director

Assigned to the Finance Commission, the purpose of the Revenue Enhancement Committee is to explore and recommend to the Commission various activities, strategies and opportunities for bringing revenue into The American Legion in order to enhance the organization's ability to achieve its mission.

Insurance / Affinity Programs

The Committee provides oversight for insurance plans currently, and previously, offered by The American Legion. Funds from the sale of insurance products support national programs in the areas of veterans' affairs and rehabilitation, Americanism and children & youth.

United Services Automobile Association (USAA):

In November of 2010, The American Legion launched a partnership 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 provide 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.

Since the program began, over 80,000 American Legion family members became active members of the United Services Automobile Association (USAA) earning the Legion approximately $11.2 million. New credit card activations bring the total number of credit cards activated since inception of the program in November, 2010, to 50,170 and the number of active credit cardholders continues to grow.

The American Legion and USAA executed a 5-year contract extension in April 2013 which provides substantial benefits for departments. Additionally, USAA agreed to donate $175,000 a year for five years for designated program sponsorships. This amounts to $875,000 in donations that stretch the national budget and enhances our premier programs.

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, Direct Response Insurance Administrative Services, Inc. (DRIASI), 7930 Century Blvd, Chanhassen, MN 55317; 1-800-621-0393.

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.

Collectively, relationships with Marsh, Union Fidelity and Mutual of Omaha earned The American Legion $727,034 in 2012. The staff continues to research other insurance products to offer to members, posts, departments and to explore affinity/corporate relationships.

Non-member Fundraising

The American Legion's active non-member donor file is giving approximately two times per year with an average gift of $14.42. This year, The American Legion has mailed nearly 2,200,000 acquisition appeals resulting in acquiring more than 46,000 new donors and more than 37,000 non-donors. Our current cost to acquire is our historical best at $8.64 per donor, which is more than $3.50 per donor below previous years.

As in 2012, our acquisition schedule is front loaded in the year to maximize the return we can achieve from these new donors in the current year. Should there be a significant increase in these results, we can make a late year adjustment to the schedule to capitalize on any positive change which would continue to positively impact the donor file with new names at a lower cost.

Our donor campaigns continue to perform well. Year to date through our house mailings, The American Legion has received its total investment back, plus a net increase of 78%. This represents a return of $1.78 for every dollar spent. The overall non-member donor program is expected to move beyond the breakeven point by the end of the 2013 cycle.

Major Gifts & Planned Giving

Roughly fifteen-thousand prospects receive issues of *The Pillars* newsletter twice a year. The newsletter explains "Why it is important to give to The American Legion", and illustrates "How these donations help" veterans and their families. All newsletters contain business reply cards to make it easier for interested recipients to respond to the

information in the newsletter. In addition, reminder cards are mailed to reinforce the information about the great things The American Legion does to help our veterans, our active duty members, and their families.

The 2013 American Legion Charity Golf Classic was held on June 24th at The Fort Golf Course in Indianapolis and netted $25,000 to benefit Operation Comfort Warriors. New this year, the event featured the chance to win a car through hole-in-one competitions. In addition, a special website designed to allow interested parties to obtain information and register for the event online was made available to participants.

Gift Acceptance Policy & Procedures

The American Legion solicits current and deferred gifts from individuals, corporations, and foundations to secure our future growth and missions. To promote both consistency and transparency, the Gift Acceptance Policy & Procedures guide was drafted to govern the acceptance of all gifts received by The American Legion for any of its programs or services and provide guidance to prospective donors and their advisors when making gifts to the organization.

It is noted in the guide that acceptance and documentation of gifts is under the supervision of the Finance Commission of American Legion through designated staff to maximize the value of gifts to the Legion, while minimizing the costs and risks to the Legion associated with those gifts. The primary staff responsible for the supervision of gifts will be the Acceptance Committee of American Legion Charities, Inc. Questions regarding interpretation of the Policy should be directed to the National Treasurer of The American Legion as a member of the Acceptance Committee. In his absence, the other members of the Acceptance Committee are available to respond to questions of interpretation. The other members of the Acceptance Committee are the National Adjutant, The National Judge Advocate, and the Director of the Finance Division.

The procedures also describe the types of assets that The American Legion will accept and the guidelines to be observed by its staff in accepting and documenting the donation of those assets. This policy and procedures guide was reviewed and approved by both the Revenue Enhancement Committee and the Finance Commission.

Combined Federal Campaign

The Committee continues the process to include of The American Legion Charities as one of the nonprofit organizations listed in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). According to Federal Regulations, the committee determined that the earliest opportunity for The American Legion Charities to be eligible to submit an application would be the fall of 2013. However, we are targeting the fall of 2014 for inclusion in the 2015 Combined Federal Campaign.

Once The American Legion Charities meets the established eligibility criteria and is approved for inclusion in the Combined Federal Campaign, it will apply to join the Independent Charities of America and/or the Military Family and Veterans Service Organizations of America (one of ICA's sub-federations). This should provide additional opportunities to participate in a variety of workplace giving campaigns.

Sponsorship Opportunities

The American Legion prides itself on its unparalleled service to veterans, families and their communities. Today, financial and in-kind support is even more critical as the investment needed to sustain and expand our services continues to climb. Like other nonprofits across the nation, The American Legion is pursuing more sophisticated business relationships with the for-profit sector, in the form of event, program and project sponsorships. These mutually beneficial business agreements provide an important marketing venue for businesses and an opportunity for them to align themselves with the mission of The American Legion. In turn, the Legion is able to enhance, sustain and develop new programs, events and projects.

Three general assumptions shape the acceptance of all sponsorships: 1) The American Legion will solicit and accept support only for projects and activities that are consistent with the organization's mission; 2) Acceptance of sponsorships must enhance, and shall not impede, The American Legion's ability to act in the best interest of its members at all times; and 3) The American Legion's name, emblem and other intangible intellectual assets must be protected at all times.

The American Legion welcomes sponsorships as an opportunity to enhance our services as long as the sponsorships are consistent with Legion policies and reaffirm the Legion's mission and core services.

Department Fundraising

The ultimate goal for the Department Fundraising Program is to provide a comprehensive program that mails all member fundraising campaigns for all departments. Departments would receive a guaranteed amount of income from these campaigns, to be paid to them in quarterly installments. In addition, they would receive any income generated from their campaigns in excess of the guaranteed amount. This program aims to maximize those funds raised for departments while achieving a breakeven for the national organization.

Participation in the department fundraising program continues to grow. Thirteen departments have opted into the guarantee program. This equates to a total of 52 campaigns, as compared to 37 campaigns in 2012.

Benefits of this program include:

- Guaranteed minimum income for departments
- Consistent message to members
- Reduced risk of over-mailing
- Protection of member lists & data
- Efficiencies of scale (as quantities go up, costs go down and net income increases)

Campaign results remain strong for labels and all-occasion cards. Costs for department label programs remain unchanged. The American Legion was able to take advantage of quantity savings in the all-occasion cards to offer lower costs for this program. There has been a noted increase in the number of departments utilizing our package for their sweepstakes mailings. The package is full-color and is attractively priced.

In order to provide greater value to those departments not yet enrolled in the guarantee program, the division continues to offer a discount on the print and production costs if the department participates in two or more campaigns. In addition, the program is constantly looking for ways to diversify its portfolio and continues to test and evaluate new packages to boost revenue for departments.

Donation Website

Thanks to the team effort of division personnel, working with our web developers and programmers, a major re-design of the donation pages on legion.org has been completed. New features include - recurring giving, corporate sponsorship, memorial and/or honorary giving, donate now button, workplace giving, matching gifts and donation FAQs. The website address (accessible through The American Legion's homepage) is www.legion.org/donate.

100 Year Anniversary

Looking ahead to The American Legion's 100th year anniversary, staff has identified a number corporations (i.e. - PepsiCo, The Ford Motor Company, Cummins, ConAgra, Saks, Inc., Flowers Food, Novartis Pharmaceuticals) headquartered throughout the United States that share 1919 as their Founding Year. We are developing strategies and

acquiring points of contact to actively pursue relationships with these corporations to benefit The American Legion.

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, 2013

The Ninety Fourth Annual National Convention in Houston, Texas, 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, Houston, Texas
August 28-30, 2012

Resolution No. 8: Taiwan Straights Dialog
Resolution No. 75: Social Security Survivor Benefits for Non-Resident Foreign National Spouses and Dependents
Resolution No. 76: Securing Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenal
Resolution No. 77: Middle/East Gulf States Foreign Policies
Resolution No. 78: POW/MIA Policies
Resolution No. 79: Vietnam Human Rights
Resolution No. 80: Support for Foreign Exchange Education Programs
Resolution No. 81: The American Legion Global Trade Polices
Resolution No. 82: Policy on Africa
Resolution No. 83: The American Legion Foreign Policy Objectives
Resolution No. 84: Central America's Democracy Promotion
Resolution No. 85: The American Legion's Policy on the United Nations
Resolution No. 86: The American Legion's Policy on Veteran's Mail at Overseas Embassies
Resolution No. 87: Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC)
Resolution No. 88: The American Legion's Support for World Press Freedom
Resolution No. 89: Enhanced Funding for USAID
Resolution No. 90: Expand Foreign Service Officer Corps
Resolution No. 91: Secure National Borders Against Illegal Drugs
Resolution No. 92: Policy on Cuba
Resolution No. 267: Taiwan Defense Arms Sales

National Executive Committee Meetings
October 17-18, 2012

Resolution No. 19: Rescinding obsolete resolutions dealing with Foreign Relations

National Executive Committee Meetings, Fall 2012

An executive session of the Foreign Relations Commission met on October 15, 2012 in the Circle Center 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 the following resolution: Rescinding Obsolete Resolutions Dealing with Foreign Relations.

After the commission conducted a thorough analysis of the proposed resolution and engaged in lively discussion on the issue at hand, the commission reached a consensus and made unanimous recommendations to the National Executive Committee (NEC) to recommend the resolution.

The business meeting also included a recount of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office's (DPMO) progress and future plans to meet the goal of 200 annual identifications by 2015, mandated by the 2010 National Defense Authorization Act. The Commission also discussed what led to JPAC accounting teams withdrawing their efforts to enter North Korea earlier this year and what can be done in the future to ensure that those missing north of the DMZ are accounted for.

On Tuesday, October 16th, 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 Roey Gilad, Consul General of Israel to the Midwest, United Service. Mr. Gilad gave an in-depth presentation on the importance of the U.S. and Israel relationship.

The Foreign Relations Commission thanks National Commander James Koutz and the distinguished members of the National Executive Committee for their continuing support.

Washington Conference, 2012

The Foreign Relations Commission met in a joint session along with the National Security Commission on February 25th and convened for its business session on February 27th during the 53rd Annual Washington Conference at the Washington Hilton, Washington, D.C. The following report is a summary of those sessions:

Joint Session, February 25th

The National Security Commission, met in a joint session with the Foreign Relations Commission. The commissions were honored to welcome Past National Commander (PNC) Clarence Bacon, PNC Jake Comer, PNC Tony Jordan and PNC Fang Wong. The Joint Session included presentations by three guest speakers: Ambassador of Israel Michael B. Oren; Dr. Chrisanne Gordon, chairwoman, Resurrecting Lives Foundation; and Thomas Donnelly, resident fellow and co-director of the Marilyn Ware Center for Security Studies, American Enterprise Institute.

Ambassador Oren began the program discussing the bond between America and Israel in four key areas – spirituality, government, military and commercial. "Since 1948, the spiritual connection between Israel and America has been very deep," he said. The fact that Israel is a democracy also solidifies the bond. Israel is the only functioning democracy in the entire Middle East. "We have assured rights. We have a representative government. We have a separate judiciary. We have a declaration of independence which draws its language directly from the U.S. Declaration of Independence."

Ambassador Oren continued "Israel is the only country in the Middle East that has a memorial for 9/11. It's the only country in the Middle East that has a memorial for John F. Kennedy. We have a memorial for Martin Luther King in Jerusalem, and we actually commemorate Martin Luther King Day in Israel. We have not one, but two exact replicas of the Liberty Bell." A military alliance that took shape in the 1960s is, "greater and deeper than any military alliance America has had with any foreign nation in this post-World War II period," he said. That includes the selling of U.S. arms to Israel, as well as a strong working relationship between the intelligence communities in both countries.

Ambassador Oren concluded by stating, "We are in a profoundly unstable period in the Middle East. There is turmoil throughout our entire region. In the face of all of this chaos, there's one country that is stable, that is secure, that has a citizens' army... that's larger than the British and French armies combined. We have a robust economy. We have a democracy that has never known a second of non-democratic rule. And we are a

country that is unequivocally, unreservedly, unabashedly pro-American. You will never see an anti-American demonstration in the streets of Israel. Israel is not just America's ally. Israel is America's ultimate ally, and we're going to stay that way."

In her discussion, Dr. Gordon reported that over 2 million service personnel have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001, – many with multiple deployments. The signature wound of these conflicts, affecting an estimated 25% of those deployed, is Traumatic Brain Injury. (TBI) That would mean that close to 500,000 of America's service personnel and Veterans would be suffering from the effects of TBI. "We are now beginning to gather scientific evidence that the nearly 20% of those service men and women also have a form of brain injury that is designated as Post Traumatic Stress (PTS). Often, the two conditions coexist," Dr. Gordon said.

This has led to a huge influx of patients for the Veterans Administration and the Tricare system. These patients present with complex neurologic issues, Dr. Gordon explained, the complications of which, if untreated, are visible to the entire community. Untreated Traumatic Brain Injury most often leads to substance abuse an estimated 80% of the time. In addition, a patient with a TBI is at risk for unemployment, incarceration, and even suicide. These neurologic issues require complex treatment involving rehabilitation teams consisting of physical medicine specialists, neurologists, psychologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists and social workers along with vocational counselors.

Unfortunately, the necessary number of TBI experts are not available in the vast majority of VA centers and military medical facilities, and with recent budget cuts, they will not be developed anytime in the near future. It is only by joining the resources of the community with the military and Veterans Administration that we can begin to control this epidemic. "The military accounts for only 1% of our nation's population," she said. "It is time that the 99% of us in the civilian world join them in the reintegration process."

Dr. Gordon's pledged that she will continue work at identifying the at risk military personnel through faith-based initiatives, in educational institutions, and through the law enforcement and the justice system to assure that our nation's military members are given an opportunity for rehabilitation through cognitive retraining, substance abuse counseling, and educational and employment initiatives.

The Joint Session concluded with Mr. Donnelly's presentation on the Budget Control Act and looming sequestration. Policymakers must thoughtfully consider the real impact of the tremendous cuts DOD has already made under the current administration. And Congress must consider what it means to our national security and our role in the world, he said. It must also be contrasted with the prioritization of spending seen in other parts of government over the same period.

Afternoon Joint Session/POW/MIA Update, February 25th

The expert panel on the POW/MIA issues was comprised of Johnie E. Webb, Deputy to the Commander for External Relations and Legislative Affairs; Major General (Ret.) W. Montague Winfield, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) and Director of the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office; and Ann Mills-Griffith, Chairman of the Board, National League of Families.

Mr. Webb discussed the challenges faced by Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and DPMO to operate under the constraints presented by sequestration while simultaneously meeting the mandate of the 2010 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which states that JPAC and DPMO will increase the number of remains accounted for to 200 persons per year by 2015. In addition, Mr. Webb explained the need for an increased budget to fund equipment and personnel that will be needed to excavate missing persons from difficult to reach areas within Laos and Vietnam. He explained that the new 136,000 sq. ft. JPAC facility being constructed at Joint Base Hickam-Pearl Harbor is at 35% and is scheduled for completion in 2014. The facility is

needed to house the increase in personnel as JPAC expands to meet the 200 IDs per year mandate.

Mr. Winfield provided an overview of the many offices that are part of the DoD's accounting community as well as updates on their increased efforts. DNA matching is performed at Dover AFB, DE, where over 20,000 family reference samples are stored and used. He expressed the benefits of membership for family members of MIAs who submit samples, and urged the spreading of this message to as many family members as possible.

The panel discussed the progress of the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission. Despite the Russian government identifying its new co-Chairman and commissioners, access to archives of WWII, Vietnam, and current conflicts has not yet been granted to the U.S. 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. To move forward, the next step is for a charter to be signed by the U.S. Executive Branch.

Approximately 73,000 Americans are still missing worldwide from WWII. DPMO is conducting extensive research to identify loss sites for these individuals in addition to investigation and recovery operations in Europe and throughout the Pacific (island nations, Papua New Guinea, China, etc.). Most recently, DPMO has been working to get access to loss sites in Burma, India, and the Philippines. DPMO is also working with the Army on a multi-year project to digitize WWII records on 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 27th

Foreign Relations Commission Chairman Randall Fisher led the Commission's business session in two sections: 1) an update on leading priority projects at the D.C. office, and 2) a presentation by Doctor Jennifer A. Davis, Defense Intelligence Agency.

Doctor Davis, Professor at the Defense Intelligence Agency's National Intelligence University and Ph.D. in Child Soldering, provided the Commission with a very informative briefing on the issues of human trafficking throughout the world and drug trafficking into the U.S. Human trafficking generates $31B annually with an estimated 17,500 persons trafficked into the U.S. each year. Drug trafficking, the Commission was briefed, results in over 400 tons of drugs being brought into the U.S. each year, the majority of which (cocaine) is smuggled using semi-submersibles. The briefing pointed out that while the security of our land borders is certainly important to maintain, our waters are where the fiscally able smugglers find the greatest success.

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 2013

An executive session of the Foreign Relations Commission met on May 6, 2013 in the Circle Center of the Sheraton Hotel to discuss current foreign policy issues pertaining to the vital interests of the United States.

Randall Fisher, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Commission, opened the business session and welcomed attending members of the commission and members of the committee.

The business meeting included a recount of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office's (DPMO) progress and future plans to meet the goal of 200 annual identifications by 2015, mandated by the 2010 National Defense Authorization Act.

The commission proceeded by evaluating the effect of furloughs on the Joint Prisoners of War and Missing in Action Accounting Command (JPAC) excavation teams. The commission then reviewed H.R. 1520: The POW/MIA Accounting and Recovery Support Act of 2013. Representative Stephen Lynch (D-MA) introduced this bill on April 12th, to give flexibility to civilian personnel working in support of Department of Defense (DoD) efforts to account for missing U.S. personnel. The measure would not exempt these DoD civilians, but would ensure that field operations can legally be scheduled and implemented. Without this exemption, field operations would have to be halted, due to the earlier stated requirement for affected civilians to take one furlough day per week. Since all, or nearly all, field investigations and recoveries are longer than one week; any scheduling would have been deemed illegal and would not go forward.

The meeting also included a thorough analysis of the issue and engaged in lively discussion on the issue at hand, the commission then reviewed and discussed the related topic of the National Commander's upcoming visit to JPAC excavation sites throughout Vietnam. In addition, the visit will include meetings with Vietnamese Veterans Service Organization leaders and diplomats. The trip will provide a closer examination of the challenges excavation teams face and how The American Legion can better support their efforts.

On Tuesday, May 7th, 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 Bob Feferman, Outreach Coordinator for the advocacy group United Against Nuclear Iran (UANI). Mr. Feferman gave an in-depth presentation on the importance of preventing Iran from fulfilling its ambition to obtain nuclear weapons.

The Foreign Relations Commission thanks National Commander James Koutz 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, and commemorative activities. The commission also monitors legislative and other regulatory activities that potentially affect Legion posts and departments, recommending appropriate courses of action.

The commission has five standing committees assigned to it for supervision and coordination: Trophies, Awards and Ceremonials; Resolutions Assignment, Constitution and By-Laws, National Commander's Ad-Hoc Committee on American Legion Riders

and Membership & Post Activities. The latter has separate reporting responsibilities to the National Convention and the National Executive Committee.

The Internal Affairs Commission also provides program guidance for the following programs:

Sons of The American Legion

For the 39th consecutive year, the Sons of The American Legion (SAL) are at an "All Time High" in membership. The SAL closed its membership at the end of 2012 with a record 353,295 members. This number represents a 1.4% increase over the previous year. A total of 31 Detachments achieved 100% membership.

Membership in the SAL for 2013 is expected to surpass that of 2012 and give them another "All Time High" for 2013 prior to National Convention.

The SAL continues its support of several American Legion programs and is heavily involved with support to our nation's veterans in the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Services (VAVS) program. In 2012, the SAL provided over 362,257 volunteer hours in VA homes and hospitals. Donations in cash and goods to these veterans exceeded $5,085,600 nationwide. Other projects include Americanism programs of which $2,092,795 was donated along with 602,431 hours of service. This was remarkable considering only 30% of the Squadrons submitted reports. The Sons have raised over $453,559 in the year 2013 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 SAL has 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 a major program and an integral part of The American Legion family, the Sons continue to serve and provide assistance to posts and their communities.

The American Legion Riders

The National Executive Committee established The American Legion Riders (ALR) as a national program in October 2007 to be supported and administered by the posts and departments. The American Legion Riders Ad Hoc Committee which is appointed each year by the National Commander makes recommendations to the Internal Affairs Commission concerning all matters of the ALR program.

The ALR committee provides recommendations for ALR program training, provides training instruction when invited by the departments and provide significant guidance for the planning and execution of The American Legion Legacy Run each year. Of particular importance to the Committee is the establishment of program protocols adhering to federal rules regarding The American Legion's trademarks and the proper supervision provided to the ALR programs by the posts.

Members of the ALR Committee also act as liaisons within each of the five national vice commander regions to provide information and support to the departments and posts.

The ALR Committee meets when called by the Internal Affairs Commission either in person or by teleconferencing.

This program is organized by chapters in some 1,400 American Legion posts and has 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 10,000 miles and collecting nearly $3,600,000 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 Niagara Falls, NY to the convention city of Indianapolis, IN raised $724,524 for the Legacy Scholarship Fund.

National Emergency Fund

From January 1, 2012 through August 1, 2013, The American Legion provided $764,287 in grant monies to Legion and SAL members, as well as American Legion posts. During the same period, the National Emergency Fund received donations totaling $203,535.

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 National Emergency Fund is unique and members know they can turn to The American Legion for immediate financial assistance without payback. Through the generosity of Legion and Sons of the American Legion 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 2012-2013 reporting year, sixty-five percent of posts reported some activity.

Throughout the reporting year American Legion post members volunteered 844,445 hours in assisting veterans at VA Hospitals; they donated $2,575,331 in emergency aid; 51,804 Legionnaires gave over 88,659 pints of blood; events covered through different media outlets totaled 167,970; they performed 117,151 funeral honors at a cost of $2,823,910; they sponsored 2,211 American Legion baseball teams at a cost of $6,333,884; Legion posts sponsored 2,179 Boy Scout units for a cost of $1,723,685; through various school assisted programs they spend $6,198,946; they presented 30,751 American flags; performed 3,790,758 community service hours while spending $3,890,512 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 Assistance and other various activities totaled $13,910,680.

The National American Legion College

Each November, 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 their departments and selected by a selection committee. In 2012, we had 55 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 American Legion College was reinstated in 1998, we have graduated 602 Legionnaires ready to assume leadership at various levels.

Leadership Education and Development

The American Legion's national organization exists to support its individual members, their families, all veterans and service members, and their communities. The functions at the national level – including membership, communications, training, finance, archives and legal support – serve as foundations for the volunteer leadership. Since "membership in The American Legion is membership in the National Organization of The American Legion by affiliation with posts," it is essential that members fully understand the programs and practices of The American Legion.

To help educate and provide support for departments, counties, districts and local posts, national headquarters staff has organized and coordinated Leadership Education and Development (LEAD). In 2012-2013, we provided training in 23 departments. The program is a one-day, eight-hour training session designed to provide instruction to departments, county, district and post members. Department leaders are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity.

There are 25 classes available. From those, departments may choose any combination that totals at least eight hours of instruction. National staff experts will cover a wide range of topics relevant to the operations of The American Legion. All training can be conducted in conjunction with current planned department functions such as winter, district, county or department conferences and conventions. A cap/lapel pin has been developed and will be presented to each participant that has completed, at the minimum, eight hours of LEAD training.

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 ten Presidents of the United States, several United States Senators and Congressional representatives, cabinet members, 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, 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 H. 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 2.3 million members worldwide.

Membership

Final 2011 membership 2,403,295
Final 2012 membership 2,364,870
2013 membership as of July 29, 2013 2,305,063

50th Annual National Membership Workshop

The 50th Annual National Membership Workshop convened in Indianapolis on August 2-3, 2013, 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 concludes, 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 2,000 American Legion posts in the past 17 years. Many departments have succeeded in revitalizing posts without any direct assistance from National Headquarters staff. Whether departments request field assistance or just send members to the training workshop, positive results follow if they adhere to guidelines.

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION
Brett Reistad, Virginia, Chairman
Louis Celli, Massachusetts, Director

This report covers activities of the National Legislative Commission from August 11, 2012 through August 15, 2013. 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 5 National Executive Committee liaisons.

To further assist the Commission in its work, the National Executive Committee created the National Legislative Council in 1975, composed of Legionnaires whose judgment and advice are respected by their Members of Congress. There is one council member for each Member of Congress. A Council Chairman heads the Council, and is assisted by a Vice Chairman in each Department. The Chairman, Vice Chairmen and general membership of the Council are appointed by the National Commander upon recommendation by the Departments.

The professional staff of the Commission (the Legislative Division) concentrates on implementing the legislative mandates of The American Legion; these mandates are expressed in resolutions adopted at the annual National Convention and by the National Executive Committee at each of its regularly scheduled meetings. The Legislative Division is located in Washington, DC and consists of the director, two deputy directors, an assistant director, an assistant director/grassroots coordinator, one administrative assistant, 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, 2nd Session

When fiscal year (FY) 2013 began on October 1, 2012, none of the 12 constitutionally required appropriations measures had been passed by Congress. As a result, Congress passed and the President signed Public Law (PL) 112-175, a continuing resolution (CR) which provided temporary funding – at FY 2012 levels – for the entire federal government until March 27, 2013. This action essentially pushed final action on FY 2013 appropriations onto the incoming 113th Congress.

Americanism

Since their introduction in 2011, House Joint Resolution (HJ Res.) 13 and Senate Joint Resolution (SJ Res.) 19 – flag protection legislation –failed to garner a great deal of support in the 112th Congress. After being assigned to the House and Senate Judiciary committees, no hearings were held on either bill. The House measure had 91 cosponsors, while the Senate bill had 37 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

A number of Legion-supported programs were funded by PL 112-175, the continuing resolution for the first half of FY 2013. Among them were programs of the Department of Justice. These included:

- $8.1 billion for the FBI; $2.0 billion for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA);
- $1.2 billion for the U.S. Marshals Service;
- $1.1 billion for state and local law enforcement assistance;
- $1.1 billion for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF); and,
- $262 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 by The American Legion since its creation in 1974.

Economic

The President enacted PL 112-171 on August 16, a measure which amends the Aviation and Transportation Security Act. It requires the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to comply with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act when carrying out certain personnel decisions with respect to the employment of air transportation passenger and property screeners.

Funding for DOL programs relating to veterans was contained in PL 112-175, signed by the President on September 28. Six month funding for the Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) is in the measure, totaling $263 million. Specific accounts include:

- $165 million for state administration grants;
- $35 million for federal administration costs;
- $9 million for the Transition Assistance Program (TAP);
- $2.4 million for the National Veterans' Training Institute;
- $38 million for Homeless Veterans' Assistance Programs; and,
- $14 million for Veterans' Workforce Investment Programs.

On October 19 the President signed PL 112-196, the *Military Commercial Driver's License Act of 2012*. The bill allows active duty military, military reserves, National Guard, active duty United States Coast Guard, or Coast Guard Auxiliary service members to earn their commercial driver's licenses in states where they are stationed. This allows service members to utilize their military training for possible future civilian jobs.

On January 10, 2013 President Obama signed into law PL 112-249, the *Improving Transparency of Education Opportunities for Veterans Act of 2012*. This legislation will improve the ability of GI Bill users to choose the school that best meets their educational needs. It would:

- Require VA to create a comprehensive policy that would meet this goal by informing veterans about their eligibility for educational counseling by creating a centralized complaint database on schools,
- Require State approving agencies to better communicate with accrediting agencies,
- Require VA to link to certain performance-related data points on the College Navigator and other appropriate Web sites, and
- Identify commercially off-the-shelf available software that would assist students in choosing a school and software that would evaluate their readiness to attend postsecondary education.

The measure would also require states to take military training into account in awarding licenses to work as medical technicians and other trades, thus speeding up

service members' transition to civilian life. It would also require *per diem* payment recipients under VA's Homeless Grant and Per Diem Program to certify compliance with the Life Safety Code or the International Fire Code and other relevant fire safety and building codes. It would also require VA to include an accounting and evaluation of the safety and accessibility of facilities used to provide programs for homeless veterans in the annual report on assistance to homeless veterans.

Under the provisions of PL 112-260, the *Dignified Burial and Other Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2012* – outlined in greater detail below – the Secretary of Labor is directed to provide the Transition Assistance Program to veterans and their spouses at locations other than military installations in at least three and up to five states selected by the Secretary based on the highest rates of veteran unemployment. The measure further requires a report from the Labor Secretary to Congress for any year in which such training was provided, and a one-time report from the Comptroller General on such training. These provisions will be in force during the two-year period beginning on the date of enactment of this act.

On January 14, 2013 the President signed PL 112-271, the *Clothe a Homeless Hero Act*. This measure directs the Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security (Transportation Security Administration) to transfer unclaimed clothing recovered at airport security checkpoints to the local airport authority or other local authorities for donation to charity – including local veterans' organizations or other local charitable organizations – for distribution to homeless or needy veterans and their families. It also authorizes the Assistant Secretary of TSA to enter into agreements with airport authorities for disposing of such clothing.

Foreign Relations

Under PL 112-175, appropriations for the Department of State and Foreign Operations programs for FY 2013 were kept at the same level as appropriated in FY 2012. Specific areas of interest to The American Legion include:

- $8.1 billion in assistance to Global Health Programs, which includes aid to fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and influenza;
- $3.1 billion in military assistance to Israel;
- $1.6 billion in economic and military aid to Egypt;
- $984 million for international narcotics control and law enforcement;
- $850 billion in counter-insurgency aid to Pakistan;
- $660 million in economic and military aid to Jordan; and,
- $627 million in assistance for nations of Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia.

Internal Affairs

On January 14, 2013 President Obama enacted PL 112-272, the *World War I Centennial Commission Act*. This bill establishes 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 recommendations for Congress and the President for commemorating the centennial of World War I.

National Security

FY 2013 funding for the Departments of Defense (DOD) and Homeland Security (DHS) was contained in PL 112-175, the "Continuing Appropriations Act of 2013." This measure funded DOD and DHS operations at the same level of funding as the FY 2012 budget until March 27, 2013. DOD received about $520 billion for its operations, while

DHS programs were funded at $40 billion. Further funding will be required for the balance of the fiscal year during the upcoming 113th Congress.

On January 2, 2013 the President signed into law PL 112-239, the *National Defense Authorization Act for 2013*. This measure authorized $552.2 billion for base DOD programs and an additional $88.5 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations, for a combined $640.7 billion. This amount is $1.7 billion above the President's request, while it begins to address future budget reductions required by the upcoming sequestration. This document is a blueprint for DOD spending, and also contains a number of policy statements.

Some of the law's provisions include:

- A 1.7 percent pay increase for all military personnel, as well as extending bonuses and special pays for service members;
- A rejection of the President's proposal to increase some TRICARE fees and establish other fees. It does include a modest increase in TRICARE pharmacy co-pays in 2013 and a cap on pharmacy co-pays starting in 2014 that would allow fees to rise by no more than the annual retiree COLA. Further, it includes a 5-year pilot program that requires TRICARE for Life recipients to obtain refills of maintenance drugs through TRICARE's mail-order program;
- A cap on the number of troops that can be separated from the Army and Marine Corp in a single year;
- A provision requiring the Armed Forces to accommodate the moral principles and religious beliefs of service members and chaplains and restricts adverse personnel actions because of those beliefs;
- New regulations and procedures for combating and prosecuting sexual assault within the military;
- A requirement for DOD to develop a comprehensive policy on the prevention of suicides by members of the military;
- Continued support for a national missile defense, as well as missile defense cooperation with key allies;
- A continued prohibition against the transfer of Guantanamo Bay detainees to U.S. facilities;
- Restoration of funding for at least 3 Navy cruisers that were scheduled for retirement, but each had at least 10 more years of service life;
- Authorizing full funding for 50 AH-64 Apaches, 59 UH-60 Blackhawks, and 44 CH-47 Chinook helicopters;
- Authorizing full funding for 29 F-35 Lightning II fighter planes, 26 F-18 E/F Super Hornet aircraft, and V-22 Osprey aircraft;
- Increasing the authorized multi-year procurement of DDG-51 *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyers from 9 up to 10 vessels;
- Increasing the authorized multi-year procurement of *Virginia*-class submarines from 9 up to 10; and,
- Stopping the retirement of 26 C-5A aircraft, until the Air Force completes a comprehensive study of air mobility requirements. It would further require the Air Force to maintain an additional 32 C-130 or C-27J tactical airlift aircraft.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

On October 5, 2012 President Obama enacted PL 112-191, the VA Major Construction Authorization and Expiring Authorities Extension Act of 2012. The major provisions of this measure include:

- Authorization for construction of a mental health building at the VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Seattle, WA, with a price tag of $222 million;
- Authorization for construction of a spinal cord injury center at the VAMC in Dallas, TX, in the amount of $155 million; and

- Authorization for renovation of the surgical suite and operating rooms at the VAMC in Miami, FL, for an amount totaling $41 million.

Further, P.L. 112-191 provided a one-year extension of authority for VA to:

- Operate a VA Regional Office in Manila, Republic of the Philippines;
- Provide treatment, rehabilitation, and certain other services for seriously mentally ill and homeless veterans;
- Provide housing assistance for homeless veterans;
- Continue the Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans; and,
- Continue the performance of medical disability examinations by contract physicians.

On November 27, President Obama enacted PL 112-198, which provides a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) of 1.7 percent for veterans. The traditionally non-controversial bill was held up in late September by an unnamed senator who subsequently removed the hold on this bill. The veterans COLA affects several benefits, including veterans' service-connected disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses and children. The government projects over 3.9 million veterans and survivors will receive compensation benefits in this fiscal year. The COLA is designed to offset inflation and other factors that lead to the rising cost of living over time. The COLA rate matches the annual increase provided to Social Security recipients and is based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index.

On January 10, 2013 the President enacted PL 112-260, the *Dignified Burial and Other Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2012*. This measure would:

Authorize VA to furnish a casket or urn of sufficient quality for a dignified burial for the burial in a national cemetery of a deceased veteran when VA is unable to identify such veteran's next of kin, and sufficient resources for furnishing such casket or urn are not otherwise available. It also prohibits the furnishing of such casket or urn in the case of a veteran convicted of a federal or state capital crime.

Direct VA, with respect to the interment, funeral, memorial service, or ceremony of a deceased veteran at a national cemetery, to ensure that: (1) the expressed wishes of the next of kin or other agent of such veteran are given deference when determining whether such service affects the safety and security of the cemetery and its visitors; (2) all appropriate public cemetery areas may be used by the family for contemplation, prayer, mourning, or reflection; and (3) during such service, the family may display any chosen religious or other symbols.

Require VA, in the case of a deceased veteran with no apparent next of kin and without sufficient resources to cover funeral and burial expenses, to ensure the entity responsible for the body prior to transportation to a national cemetery for burial notifies the VA as to whether such veteran was cremated and steps taken to ensure that such veteran has no next of kin.

Direct VA to cooperate with veterans service organizations to assist entities in possession of unclaimed or abandoned human remains in determining if any such remains are the remains of veterans or other individuals eligible for burial in a national cemetery. It also requires VA, upon a positive determination with respect to any such remains, to provide for and cover the transportation costs and funeral expenses of such veteran or individual.

Treat Clark Veterans Cemetery in the Republic of the Philippines as a permanent military cemetery in a foreign country for purposes of the purview of the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC). It also directs ABMC to restore, operate, and maintain such Cemetery in cooperation with the government of the Republic of the Philippines.

Direct VA to report to the congressional Veterans' Affairs committees on VA compliance with industry standards for caskets and urns.

Direct VA to establish and maintain an open burn pit registry for members deployed in a contingency operation in Iraq or Afghanistan who may have been exposed to toxic chemicals and fumes caused by open burn pits used for disposing solid waste, include in such registry information necessary to ascertain and monitor the health effects of such exposure, develop a public information campaign to inform eligible individuals about the registry, and periodically notify such individuals of significant developments in the study and treatment of conditions associated with such exposure. It further requires VA to contract with an independent scientific organization to develop reports assessing the effectiveness of actions taken to collect and maintain information on the health effects of such exposure, and submit such organization's initial and follow-up report to Congress.

Authorize VA to transport individuals to and from VA facilities in connection with vocational rehabilitation, counseling, examination, treatment, or care.

Extend through FY 2016 the current $90 limit on a VA pension paid to veterans residing in nursing homes when their nursing costs are paid through title XIX (Medicaid) of the Social Security Act.

Extend through 2016 the report requirement for the Special Committee on Post-Traumatic-Stress Disorder.

Require the principal office of the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC) be in the metropolitan area of Washington, DC, but allows the CAVC to sit any place within the United States. It also requires judges in active service on the CAVC to: have their official duty station at the principal office; and reside within 50 miles of such metropolitan area. It provides an exception for recall-eligible retired CAVC judges.

113th Congress, 1st Session

The First Session of the 113th Congress convened January 3, 2013. Major issues on the agenda for both chambers revolved mainly around sequestration and its effects on the Departments of Defense (DOD) and Veterans Affairs (VA). To date, The American Legion has participated in twelve congressional hearings during the First Session.

On April 10, the Obama Administration released its budget request for the FY 2014 federal budget, including VA. This proposal includes $63.5 billion in discretionary funding – an increase of 8.5 percent over FY 2013 amounts – to include medical programs to provide high-quality health care for veterans and research for conditions and diseases that affect these veterans. Some of the major areas of emphasis the President has made an integral part of VA's FY 2014 budget include:

- $799 million to provide specialized medical care for veterans in new or renovated facilities;
- $155 million for the Veterans Benefit Management System, designed to reduce the processing time and the claims backlog, facilitate quality improvements through rules-based calculators that provide claims processors better capabilities to assign accurate service-connected evaluation, and automate claims tracking;
- $136 million to continue implementation of the Veterans Claims Intake Program, a continuing development of the digital, paperless system which VA has been working on for some time;
- $104 million for the new Transition Assistance Program entitled "Transition GPS" (Goals/Plans/Success);
- Funding to allow VA to open three new cemeteries in Saint Augustine and Tallahassee, FL and Omaha, NE; and,
- Funding for VA to further assess and develop efficiencies and successful practices by analyzing the delivery and reimbursement of health care within other Federal health programs, such as Defense Health Programs and Medicare. This assessment will help to drive future innovation as VA strives to

continually improve health outcomes, quality of care, and access to services while responsibly managing public resources.

On April 11 and 15, The American Legion testified before the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs committees respectively, giving its views on VA's FY 2014 budget request. The testimony also re-emphasized the VA budget request presented by National Commander Koutz last October. The American Legion will continue to monitor the FY 2014 budget process.

Americanism

On May 22, 2013 Representative Spencer Bachus (AL) introduced House Joint Resolution (HJ Res.) 47, a flag protection constitutional amendment for the 113th Congress. It has been assigned to the House Judiciary Committee. The measure currently has 17 cosponsors. A Senate companion measure, SJ Res. 19, was introduced on June 13, with 21 current cosponsors. The American Legion will continue to seek passage of a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag because it is the right thing to do. Let "We the People" decide.

Children & Youth

On July 17 the House Appropriations Committee by a voice vote approved HR 2787, a measure to fund the Departments of Commerce and Justice and Science programs for FY 2014. A Senate companion measure, S 1329, was approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee the following day by a 21-9 vote. The Department of Justice (DOJ) would receive $26.7 billion in funding for the upcoming fiscal year under the House measure, but $28.5 billion from the Senate. Several of the DOJ accounts are of particular concern to The American Legion. Some of the funding amounts for selected accounts include:

- $8.4 billion for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the Senate bill, $8.0 billion in the House version;
- $2.5 billion for state and local law enforcement and crime prevention grant programs in the Senate version, $1.9 billion in the House measure;
- $2.4 billion for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in the Senate measure, $2.3 billion in the House bill;
- $1.2 billion for the U.S. Marshals Service in both measures;
- $1.2 billion for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) in the Senate version, $1.1 billion in the House measure; and,
- $279 million for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) in the Senate bill, $196 million in the House version.

These measures are still in the preliminary stages of the legislative process.

Economic

On May 21 the House of Representatives passed HR 1412, the *Improving Job Opportunities for Veterans Act of 2013* by a vote of 416-0. Introduced by Representative Mike Coffman (CO), HR 1412 would build on an existing – yet little known and under-utilized – on-the-job training program that allows veterans to use educational benefits earned through their military service to learn a trade or skill by participation in an approved apprenticeship or on-the-job training program. The measure now goes to the Senate for passage.

On June 3, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee approved HR 357 – *the GI Bill Tuition Fairness Act of 2013* – sending the measure to the full House of Representatives for further action. It addresses a concern of The American Legion, namely, that out-of-state veterans enrolled in schools are charged substantially higher tuitions that are not completely covered by GI Bill education benefits.

Introduced by House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Jeff Miller (FL), and the committee's Ranking Member Mike Michaud (ME), HR 357 would require public institutions of higher education that are approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs to charge veterans tuition and fees at the in-State tuition rate. This proposed bill would correct an unfair and widespread financial burden for America's veterans. Under current rules 40,000 student veterans have to pay the difference between in-state tuition, which is covered by the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and out-of-state tuition if they are attending school as a nonresident.

On July 11 the Senate Appropriations Committee approved S 1284, the FY 2014 spending bill for the Departments of Labor (DOL), Health and Human Services (HHS), and Education. The vote to pass the measure was 16-14. The DOL budget contains funding for veterans' programs under the Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS). S 1284 would provide a total of $300.5 million for VETS programs, an increase of $36.6 million above current year funding amounts. The major VETS accounts will be funded as follows:

- $203.1 million for the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program, which is responsible for funding Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOPs) representatives and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) in each state;
- $41.8 million for federal administration costs;
- $38.2 million for programs of the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP);
- $14 million for the Transition Assistance Program; and,
- $3.4 million to fund the National Veterans' Service Training Institute (NVTI), which is responsible for training the state DVOPs and LVERs.

Foreign Relations

On July 25 the Senate Appropriations Committee approved S 1372, the appropriations bill for the Department of State and Foreign Operations programs for FY 2014, by a recorded vote of 23-7. The House Appropriations Committee approved a companion bill, HR 2855, on July 24 by a voice vote. Specific areas of interest to The American Legion include:

- $8.4 billion in assistance to Global Health Programs, which includes aid to fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and influenza in the Senate bill, $8.2 billion in the House version;
- $3.1 billion in military assistance to Israel in both measures;
- $1.5 billion in economic and military aid to Egypt in both bills;
- $919 million for international narcotics control and law enforcement in the Senate measure, $555 million in the House version; and,
- $660 million in economic and military aid to Jordan in both bills.

National Security

Under the provisions of PL 113-6, the *Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act for FY 2013* – signed by the President on March 26 – the military construction accounts would receive a total of $10.6 billion. This amount includes $1.65 billion for family housing projects, with another $927 million slated for military medical treatment facilities. It further appropriates $536 million for the 1990 and 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) programs.

Other provisions in the law address Department of Defense (DOD) funding for the balance of the fiscal year. DOD appropriations include $518.1 billion in the base budget and $87.2 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations. The base budget is $2 billion above the President's request. Defense spending includes:

- *Health:* $32.7 billion for DOD health and family programs, including $135 million for TBI and psychological health research. Overall, the legislation includes $1.31 billion for health care research. The legislation prohibits DOD from implementing new TRICARE enrollment fees and limits how much money can be transferred into private sector care.
- *Personnel:* $127.5 billion for military personnel and pay accounts, including a 1.7% pay raise for uniformed personnel. The funding is $3.6 billion below FY 2012 (due to the reduction in authorized end strength previously announced).
- *Operation and Maintenance:* $173.5 billion ($1.4 billion below the President's request).
- *Research and Development:* $70 billion; although $2.5 billion below last year's spending level, it is still $521 million above the President's request.
- *Procurement:* $100.4 billion.

According to the House Appropriations Committee, savings were found in a number of ways, including $4 billion in rescissions of unused prior-year funding, $515 million for unjustified Army growth funding, and $500 million for excess inventory of spare parts and secondary items.

On June 3 President Obama signed PL 113-12, the *Stolen Valor Act of 2013*. The bill passed the House of Representatives on May 20 by an overwhelming vote of 390 to 3. Two days later, the full Senate passed the legislation by unanimous consent.

This law makes it a crime for individuals to knowingly benefit from false statements about receiving certain military awards and decorations. Rep. Joe Heck (NV) – a fellow Legionnaire – introduced the bill in January, right after the start of the new Congress. Senators Dean Heller (NV) and Jon Tester (MT) introduced the Senate companion bill (S 210) which had 22 co-sponsors.

The original Stolen Valor Act of 2005 (PL 109-437) made it a crime to lie about military service and awards, but it was overturned by the Supreme Court on June 28, 2012. Based on the Court's ruling, Rep. Heck's legislation should be constitutional because it focuses on those who seek to benefit from misrepresentations of military service and awards. His more narrowly-focused law states, "whoever, with intent to obtain money, property, or other tangible benefit, fraudulently holds oneself out to be a recipient of a decoration or medal shall be fined under this title, imprisoned not more than one year, or both."

The new law covers issues such as lying to receive veterans or health care benefits, lying to obtain a government contract to be awarded to a veteran, or lying to get a job reserved for a veteran.

Military Construction funding for FY 2014 is contained in HR 2216, the Military Construction and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) spending measure, which passed the House of Representatives on June 4 by a 421-4. A Senate companion measure was approved by the Appropriations Committee on June 20 by a 23-6 recorded voted. Military construction accounts would receive $9.9 billion from the House measure ($1.05 billion below the President's budget request) and $10.7 billion in the Senate bill ($733 million more than the House-passed total). Some of the specific accounts addressed include:

- $7.6 billion to fund active duty military construction, including operational, training, and research facilities, barracks, schools, hospitals, and clinics, in the Senate bill, while the House measure would allocate $7.5 billion;
- $1.54 billion is requested for family housing construction and privatization projects in the House measure, $1.53 billion in the Senate bill;
- $693 million for reserve component construction, including readiness centers, training facilities, and related construction necessary for the training and administration of the reserve components in the Senate bill, $676 million in the House version;

- $451 million for the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) account in both bills;
- $240 million to fund the U.S. share of joint U.S.-NATO military facilities in the Senate bill, $200 million in the House version; and,
- $123 million for chemical demilitarization construction in each bill.

On June 6 the House passed HR 2217, legislation to fund the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for FY 2014. The vote was 245-182. On July 18, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved its version of the DHS spending measure by a recorded vote of 21-9.

The House bill would set DHS spending at $38.9 billion, a decrease of $618 million over last year's totals, and $35 million less than the President's request. The Senate measure would allocate $44.9 billion for DHS programs.

Funding for programs of interest to The American Legion under these bills includes:

- $12.7 billion for U.S. Customs and Border Protection in the House bill, $12.4 billion in the Senate version;
- $10.1 billion for the U.S. Coast Guard in the Senate version, $9.7 billion in the House bill;
- $7.3 billion for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) in the Senate version, with $7.2 billion in the House bill;
- $5.4 billion for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in the House, while the Senate would appropriate $5.1 billion to this account;
- $1.6 billion for the U.S. Secret Service in both bills;
- $1.5 billion for state and local grant programs for "first responders" in both measures;
- $821 million for U.S. Air Marshals (included under TSA) in both versions; and,
- $259 million for the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in both bills.

On July 24 the House of Representatives passed HR 2397, FY 2014 Defense Appropriations bill by a vote of 315 to 109. On August 1, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved S 1429, companion legislation to HR 2397 by a vote of 22-8. These measures provide funding for our country's national security needs plus funding for health and quality-of-life programs for service members and their families.

The House bill provides $512.5 billion in non-war funding, $5.1 billion below FY 2013 and $3.4 billion below the President's request. However, this is $28.1 billion above the current level caused by sequestration spending cuts. The bill includes $85.8 billion in funding for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO). The Senate version provides $510 billion in non-war spending – $2.2 billion less than the President's request and $9.5 billion below FY 2013 funding amounts. It also includes $87 billion to fund OCO accounts.

Some of the major funding proposals include:

- $178.6 billion for Operations and Maintenance in the Senate bill, which provides for operating and maintaining the armed forces, $175 billion in the House measure;
- $129.6 billion for Military Personnel in the House bill, which includes pay and allowance, training, bonuses and incentive pays, and health and retirement benefits, while the Senate bill would provide $129.1 billion;
- $98.4 billion for Procurement accounts in both measures, allowing DOD to provide the troops with the best weapons and equipment possible; and,
- $66.4 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, while the Senate version would fund these accounts at $65.8 billion.

Some specific accounts funded include:

- $33.6 billion in Defense Health Program costs in both measures;

- $15 billion for Navy shipbuilding ($14.4 billion in the Senate version) to procure 12 Navy ships including 1 DDG-51 *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyer and advanced procurement for 2 SSN-774 *Virginia*-class attack submarines in both bills;
- $5.1 billion for 29 F-35 Lightning II (formerly the Joint Strike Fighter) aircraft, with an additional $1.8 billion in continued RDTE costs, with the Senate assigning $3.2 billion for 19 F-35s;
- $2.2 billion for 73 UH-60 Blackhawk, 31 UH-72A Lakota, and 28 CH-47 Chinook helicopters in the House measure, while the Senate bill would procure 65 Blackhawks and 20 Lakotas;
- $1.6 billion for 18 MV-22 and 3 CV-22 Osprey aircraft in the House measure, while the Senate bill only provides $231 million for the 3 CV-22s;
- $1.5 billion for the National Guard and Reserve Equipment account in the House bill, $1 billion in the Senate version;
- $1.1 billion for chemical agents and munitions destruction in both measures;
- $1 billion for drug interdiction and counter-drug activities of DOD in both bills; and,
- $528 million for the Cooperative Threat Reduction program, which secures and dismantles weapons of mass destruction and their infrastructure in former Soviet states, in both versions.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

On May 21, the House of Representatives by a voice vote passed HR 570, the *American Heroes* COLA *Act of 2013.* It now heads to the Senate for consideration and passage. If enacted, HR 570 would increase the annual cost-of-living rate and would go into effect on December 1, 2013. 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. The measure would also phase out after 5 years a provision which would round down a veteran's disability benefits to the next lowest dollar.

On June 4, the House of Representatives approved HR 2216, the FY 2014 funding measure for Military Construction programs and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and related agencies. The vote was 421-4. The bill would fund VA operations at $147.6 billion, an amount $338 million below the President's request and $13.7 billion above the current year's funding totals. Total VA mandatory funding is $84.5 billion, with discretionary spending set at $63.1 billion.

On June 20, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved its version of HR 2216 by a vote was 23-6. The bill would fund VA operations at $149.1 billion, $31 million below the President's request, yet $13 billion above the current year's funding totals. A total of $84.6 billion will go to mandatory programs – compensation and pension, insurance, and VA housing – while discretionary programs will receive $63.4 billion.

The chart below indicates VA's medical care accounts with FY 2014 VA discretionary funding, the President's proposed FY 2015 advance appropriations for the medical care accounts, and the funding amounts passed by the House and Senate Appropriations committees.

	Final FY 2014 Advance Approps. P.L. 113-6	President's FY 2015 VA Advance Approps.	HR 2216, FY 2015 House Proposal	Draft bill, FY 2015 Senate Proposal
Medical Services	$43.6 billion	$45.0 billion	$45.0 billion	$45.0 billion
Medical Support & Compliance	$6.0 billion	$5.9 billion	$5.9 billion	$5.9 billion
Medical Facilities	$4.9 billion	$4.7 billion	$4.7 billion	$4.7 billion
Medical/Prosthetic Research #	$582 million	$586 million	$586 million	$586 million
Total Medical Care	***$55.1 billion***	***$56.2 billion***	***$56.2 billion***	***$56.2 billion***

This account is *not* included in the advance appropriations calculations.

The chart below presents discretionary funding for non-medical VA programs, showing FY 2013, the President's FY 2014 proposal, and the funding amounts passed by the House and Senate Appropriations committees.

	Final FY 2013 VA Approps. P.L. 113-6	President's FY 2014 Budget Proposal	HR 2216, House FY 2014 Proposal	Draft bill, FY 2014 Senate Proposal
National Cemetery Administration	$260 million#	$250 million	$250 million	$250 million
General Operating Expenses – VBA	$2.2 billion	$2.5 billion	$2.5 billion	$2.5 billion
Information Technology	$3.3 billion	$3.7 billion	$3.7 billion	$3.7 billion
Major Construction	$739 million#	$342 million	$342 million	$342 million
Minor Construction	$607 million	$715 million	$715 million	$715 million
State Homes Construction Grants	$85 million	$83 million	$83 million	$85 million
State Cemetery Construction Grants	$46 million	$45 million	$45 million	$46 million

These figures include supplemental/emergency funds passed earlier this year.

Other accounts in the measure which interest The American Legion include:

- $77 million for the American Battle Monument Commission (ABMC) in the Senate bill, $72 million in the House version;
- $35 million for the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims in both measures;
- $71 million for Arlington National Cemetery in both bills; and,
- $68 million for operations, maintenance, and the capital plan for the Armed Forces Retirement Home in both versions.

On June 14 the House of Representatives passed HR 1960, the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2014, by a recorded vote of 315-108. The bill contains an amendment which was originally contained in HR 1729, the *VA Claims, Operations, and Records Efficiency (CORE) Act*. The language of the amendment is intended to address the VA claims backlog.

Sponsored by Reps. Ann Kirkpatrick (AZ) and Mike Coffman (CO) and supported by The American Legion, the VA CORE amendment would direct the Secretary of Defense to make the service treatment records, personal records, unit records, and medical records (service records) of each member of the Armed Forces available to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs in an electronic format. It would also provide post-

discharge or release timelines for such availability. It would further require each service record provided to include a DOD certification of the record's completeness.

On August 1 the House Veterans' Affairs Committee held a markup hearing to approve a number of veteran-related bills for further action by the full House. Among the measures approved, all by voice vote, were:

- **H.R. 813**, the *Putting Veterans Funding First Act of 2013*. This measure would require advance appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) discretionary accounts. These accounts include: Medical and Prosthetic Research; the National Cemetery Administration; Native American Veteran Housing Loan Program; general operating expenses; information technology systems; the Office of the Inspector General; major and minor construction projects; and grants for the construction of state extended care facilities and veterans' cemeteries. It would require the VA secretary to submit to Congress an annual Future-Years Veterans Program that details estimated expenditures and proposed appropriations for the department for the current and four succeeding fiscal years. Additionally, it would direct the VA secretary to conduct a quadrennial review of the department's strategy for meeting the needs of veterans and the resources required to do so. It would require that the first review be conducted no later than FY 2017 and be coordinated with the Future-Year Veterans Program. It also would require the quadrennial review to identify emerging trends or issues that could affect the VA or veterans community in the 10 years following the time period covered by the review.
- **H.R. 1443**, the *Tinnitus Research and Treatment Act of 2013*. This legislation would direct the VA secretary to recognize tinnitus as a mandatory condition for research and treatment by VA's Auditory Centers of Excellence. Additionally, it would direct the VA secretary to ensure VA facilities conduct research into the prevention and treatment of tinnitus, including the effectiveness of certain treatments, the causes in the veteran populations and the underlying links between tinnitus and hearing loss among veterans.
- **H.R. 1804**, the *Foreign Travel Accountability Act*, would require the VA secretary to submit a semiannual report to the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs committees on business-related foreign travel by VA employees. The bill would require reports to describe the purpose, destination, duration and cost of each instance of foreign travel, as well as the name and title of each employee included in a VA foreign trip. It would also require VA to report instances of travel that were paid for or reimbursed by people or entities that are not affiliated with the federal government, regardless of whether the destination is inside or outside the United States. The bill would establish a deadline for VA to submit a report on business-related travel. A report would be due within 60 days after the 180-day period covered by the report. As amended, the bill would require the VA secretary to report all incidences of infectious diseases that are diagnosed at a VA health facility to the appropriate state entity. The amendment would impose fines on VA facilities that fail to report cases of infectious disease at the same rate as a non-federal medical facility located in the same state. It also would allow a state to file a civil lawsuit against the department to recover that penalty.
- **H.R. 2011**, the *Veterans' Advisory Committee on Education Improvement Act of 2013*. This bill would extend the Veterans' Advisory Committee on Education by two years until Dec. 31, 2015. The committee advises VA on how to improve educational and job training programs. This measure would also expand the committee's membership to include veterans of military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.
- **H.R. 2072**, the *Demanding Accountability for Veterans Act of 2013*, would clarify the accountability of the VA secretary to the VA inspector general. The bill would require the IG to notify Congress if the VA secretary has not made significant

progress by a specified date in responding to a public health or safety report issued by the IG. It would require the VA secretary to submit to the IG a list of managers responsible for addressing a specific report within 15 days of notification. The bill also would require the VA secretary to notify each manager of their inclusion on such a list within seven days and direct managers to resolve outstanding issues, as well as provide counseling and a mitigation plan to managers. The measure would direct the VA secretary to withhold any bonuses or performance awards from managers who are responsible for unresolved issues related to an IG report on public health or safety. Further, H.R. 2072 would provide for budgetary scoring; it would allow the VA secretary to transfer a veteran for whom VA is required to provide nursing home care to a medical foster home at the expense of VA. This authority would exist for a three-year period beginning Oct. 1, 2014. Also, it would require veterans' homeless shelters and facilities that provide services to homeless veterans that receive *per diem* federal funds to submit documentation to VA that certifies compliance with relevant building, fire and safety codes. Additionally, it would extend until Oct. 1, 2018, loan guaranty fees for housing loans to veterans, and would extend until May 31, 2017, the authority of the VA secretary to obtain income information from the Treasury secretary or the Social Security commissioner for use in evaluating applications for benefits.

- **H.R. 2189** would establish a 15-member commission to evaluate the backlog of disability compensation claims within VA. Commission members will be appointed by the House and Senate leadership, the President, and the VA and DOD secretaries. At least seven of the commission members must be members and one must be an employee of the Veterans Benefits Administration. The bill would direct the commission to examine the current process used by VA to evaluate claims and appeals, as well as provide an analysis of the most effective means to resolve all pending claims. As amended, it would direct the VA secretary to consider an individual's resources that were recently disposed of for less than fair-market value when determining the eligibility of such individuals for a pension. It would require VA to pay disability compensation for medical conditions as they are individually adjudicated. It further would clarify methods for validating certain service considered to be active service by VA. Additionally, it would require the Defense secretary to review the logs of each ship known to have operated near Vietnam from 1962 to 1975, determine which ships operated in the territorial waters of Vietnam at that time and provide the information to the VA secretary. The VA secretary, in turn, would be directed to make the unclassified information obtained from DOD publicly available.
- **H.R. 2481** the *Veterans G.I. Bill Enrollment Clarification Act of 2013*, would codify the election requirements for veterans to receive education assistance under the Post 9/11 Assistance program. As amended, the bill would establish the Veterans Economic Opportunity Administration within the Department of Veterans Affairs. The administration would be responsible for overseeing programs related to vocational rehabilitation and employment programs, veterans' housing loan programs, veterans' small business programs and educational assistance programs. The substitute amendment would create the position of under secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity to oversee the administration. It would also extend through FY 2018 an authorization of $50 million per fiscal year for homeless veteran reintegration programs. It would extend until Oct. 1, 2018, loan guaranty fees for housing loans to veterans, and would clarify foreclosure and mortgage refinancing protections for veterans.

The President on August 9 signed into law PL 113-26, the *Formerly Owned Resources for Veterans to Express Thanks for Service Act of 2013* or, more simply, the *FOR VETS Act of 2013*. The *FOR VETS Act of 2013* was introduced by Rep. Dan Benishek (MI).

This legislation will add veteran services to the list of eligible uses for surplus federal property offered to not-for-profit groups through the Federal Surplus Personal Property Donation Program. When federal agencies no longer need property like office supplies, furniture and motor vehicles, the surplus items are eligible to be donated to public service organizations for education or health care related services. In 2010, Congress added veterans service organizations to the list of eligible organizations. However, under current law veteran service organizations cannot receive surplus property to use toward the full range of services they provide to veterans.

On August 9, President Obama signed into law PL 113-27, the *Helping Heroes Fly Act*. This measure would update the Wounded Warriors Screening Program established in 2005 to let disabled veterans and severely injured service members request expedited screening from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). The bill would direct the assistant secretary of Homeland Security for TSA to develop ways of easing airport screenings. Nothing in the bill would prohibit more security screening of a service member if law enforcement officials deemed it necessary. As amended by the Senate, the bill would not allow expedited screening for family members accompanying the veterans and service members. Under the amendment by Sen. Mark Pryor (AR), family could still contact the TSA to make arrangements for the military personnel covered by the program. The Senate passed the amended bill on August 1, with the House agreeing to the Senate version on August 2.

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, 2013.

National Convention, Indianapolis, Indiana
August 28-30, 2012

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, Chairman (France) Leroy Thorton, Secretary (Maryland)
Conservation of Natural Resources	E.C. Toppin, Chairman (North Carolina)
Aerospace	Robert C. Weyenberg, Chairman (Wisconsin) Cliff Griffiths, Secretary (New Jersey)
Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness	Charles E. Kruger, Chairman (Minnesota) Larry Eary, Secretary (Texas)
Law and Order	George E. Wehrli, Chairman

	(Florida) Harvey Daggett, Secretary (Connecticut)
Merchant Marine	Tom Schottenbauer, Chairman (Minnesota) Charles Powell, Secretary (Virginia)
Military Affairs	Leo F. Malloy, Chairman (Massachusetts) Marty Rhyne, Secretary (Virginia)
Naval Affairs	William B. Goede, Chairman (Minnesota) James Casey, Secretary (New York)

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 the Internal Security Within the United States
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: National Security Committee

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 Investments in the U.S. Defense Industry
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: National Security Committee

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 1990's and the continuing decline in the 2000's 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 further

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: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee

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 further

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: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee

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 Program
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: National Security Committee
(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: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee
Submitted by: National Security Committee

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, "Grey 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; now, 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, North Carolina

Approved

Resolution No. 145: Support Domestic Energy Production
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: National Security Committee

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 60percent 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: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee
(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.

AEROSPACE COMMITTEE
Robert C. Weyenberg, Wisconsin

Approved

Resolution No. 70: Support for the United States Air Force
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: National Security Committee

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

Origin: Iowa

Submitted by: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee

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; 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: National Security Committee
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 164 (WI), Resolution No. 165 (WI), Resolution No. 166 (WI), Resolution No. 168 (WI), and Resolution 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 further

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: National Security Committee
(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, No other weapon platform has more significantly transformed the way the U.S. military wages war in recent years; 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 America'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, Minnesota

Approved

Resolution No. 19: Fully Enforce Immigration Laws
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee
(Consolidated with Resolution No.227 (Illinois))

WHEREAS, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) 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 (I.C.E.) Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) 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: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee

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 as Amended

Resolution No. 65: Support for Financial Anti-Terrorism Law Enforcement
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: National Security Committee

(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, Florida

Approved

Resolution No. 68: Second Amendment
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: National Security Committee

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 further

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, Minnesota

Approved

Resolution No. 31: Support for the Jones Maritime Act and Related Cabotage Laws
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: National Security Committee
(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: National Security Committee

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;

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 of 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 Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 12 (MT)**: Piracy Against American Flagged Vessels**

MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Leo F. Malloy, Massachusetts

Approved

Resolution No. 14: Airport Courtesy for Military Personnel in Uniform
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee

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:National Security Committee

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 service members 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 service members and military families; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress be urged to pass legislation that enables participation in pretax medical savings accounts.

Resolution No. 20: Grant Access to all Military Retirees and Their Dependents
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee

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 service members and veterans enrolled in TRICARE health system.

Resolution No. 24: Oppose Tricare Fee Increases
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: National Security Committee

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 Organization at Discharge
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee

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 service members; 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 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 membrs 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 DOD, VA and NIH
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee

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 service members 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: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee

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 service members 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 service member.

Resolution No. 60: Handling of Military Remains
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee
(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

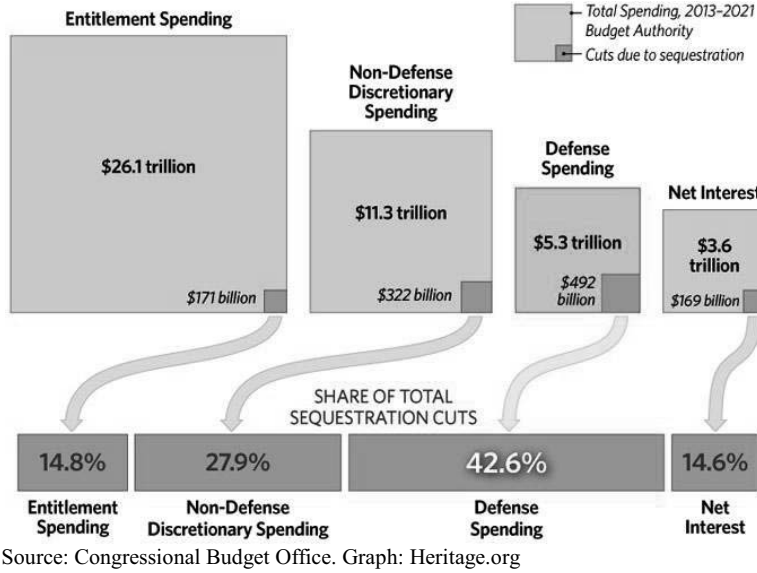
WHEREAS, Without a proactive effort by Congress to protect the Department of Defense, their budget will be reduced by more than $1 trillion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By 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

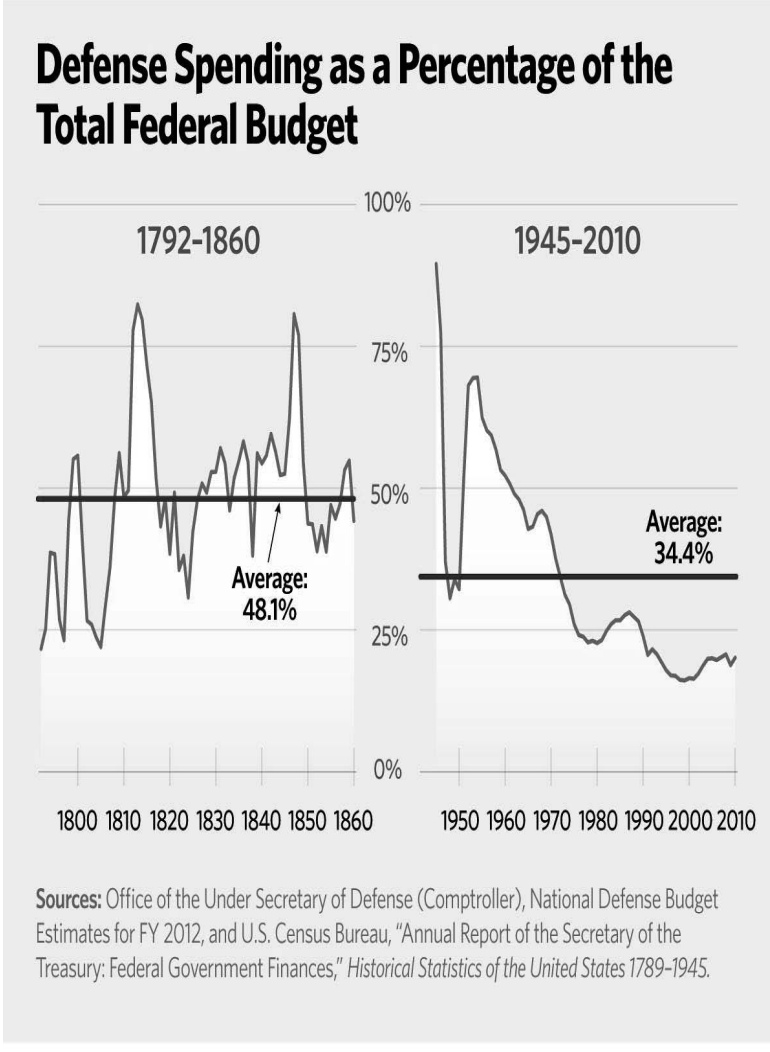
Budget Control Act Sequestration Would Hit Defense Hardest

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.

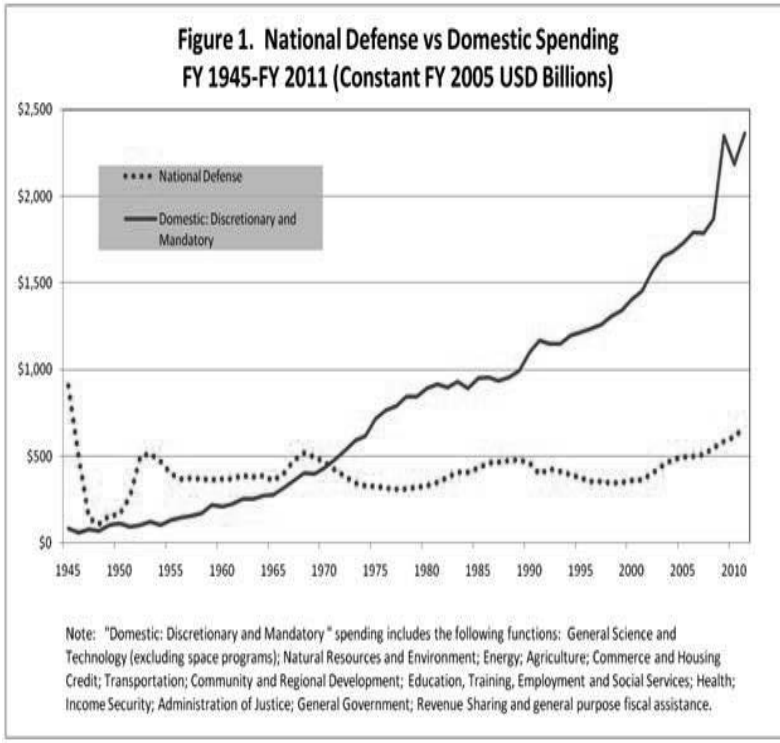


Source: Congressional Budget Office. Graph: Heritage.org

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: National Security Committee

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.67: Support for the American Battle Monuments Commission
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: National Security Committee

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. 66: Support for Legislation Prohibiting Hate Speech at Military Funerals
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: National Security Committee

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 service members killed in combat to be at least one week; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress prohibit the planning for, or conduct of, protests aimed at a specific member of the military or the related family within the one mile radius of activity pertaining to funeral services, procession, and internment for a period of one day before and one day after the official mourning period.

Resolution No. 71: Support for Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: National Security Committee

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 [this clause is unclear and should be dropped]; 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: National Security Committee

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 vigors 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: National Security Committee
(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 service members have been killed in Iraq and 37 have been killed in Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, A number of female service members are suffering from what is termed the "signature wounds" of service in Iraq and Afghanistan – Post Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injury; and

WHEREAS, Congress, in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, Section 596, mandated the creation of the Military Leadership Diversity Commission (MLDC), whose report has been delivered to the President, the Secretary of Defense and Congress on March 15, 2011; and

WHEREAS, Recommendation 9 of the MLDC states: "DOD and the Services should eliminate the 'Combat Exclusion Policies for women,' including the removal of barriers and inconsistencies, to create a level playing field for all qualified:

a. Women in career fields/specialties currently open to them should be immediately able to be assigned to any unit that requires that career field/specialty, consistent with the current operational environment;
b. DoD and the services should take deliberate steps in a phase approach to open additional career fields and units involved in "direct ground combat" to qualified women;
c. DoD and the Services should report to Congress the process and time-line for removing barriers that inhibit women from achieving senior leadership positions"; and

WHEREAS, The President of the United States, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on receiving the MLDC, March 15, 2011, made public statements in favor of the elimination of the "combat exclusion clause" for women; and

WHEREAS, The Congress and the courts have held that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which ensures all individuals are treated equally before the law with respect to civilian employment, does not apply to the military profession, no less than seven major Supreme Court decisions are distilled in these words from Goldman v. Weinberger;

[T]he military is, by necessity, a specialized society [separate] from civilian society…'The military must insist upon respect for duty and a discipline without counterpart in civilian life,' in order to prepare for and perform its vital role…The essence of military service 'is the subordination of the desires and interests of the individual to the needs of the service.'; and

WHEREAS, Some countries have repealed "combat exclusion policies" in recent years, while others such as the Soviet Union and Israel have maintained their "combat exclusion policies"; and

WHEREAS, Retired Army General Norman Schwarzkopf, former Commander of Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm, spoke for many Americans when he declared, "Decisions on what roles women should play in war must be based on military standards, not women's rights"; and

WHEREAS, 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: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee

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 defence (BMD) capability to pursue its core task of collective defence; 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: National Security Committee

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: National Security Committee
Submitted by: National Security Committee
(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 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 Standing Commission on Economics

Resolution No. 51 (TX)**: Improve Transition Assistance Program**

Referred to Standing Commission on Internal Affairs

Resolution No. 13 (MT)**: Establish Cyberspace Joint Ad Hoc Committee**

NAVAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
William B. Goede, Minnesota

Resolution No. 72: Support Full Funding and Resourcing for the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: National Security Committee
(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 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: 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 the past year 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.

Mr. Commander, as a Delegate to this Convention from the Department of Maryland, I move the adoption of this report.

National Executive Committee Meetings, Fall 2012

An executive session of the National Security Commission met on October 15, 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 13 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, and Past National Commander David K. Rehbein of Iowa. 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 13 resolutions.

After review and discussion, eight resolutions are recommended by the commission for approval: Piracy Against American Flagged Vessels; Military Honors Detail Stipend; National Guard Patriot Academy; Clark Veterans Cemetery; Standardize Care for Recovering Warriors; Military Services Authorized Strength; Enhancements to Integrated Disability Evaluation System Process; and Develop Joint Department of Defense/Department of Veterans Affairs Rehabilitation Capability.

The recommended action on five additional resolutions is contained in Addendum A of this report.

Director John Stovall gave an in-depth presentation on the current status of the questions surrounding the upcoming defense budget. In terms of the Defense Budget, the specter of sequestration is looming over the military, the government and the entire economy unless Congress and the Administration take action now. The Defense Department is facing disastrous additional cuts of $500 billion. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta has said these additional cuts would be "devastating" to the military.

An additional resolution was drafted, coordinated with our Legislative Commission and approved by the commission for your consideration which strongly opposes the devastating cuts of sequestration and urges that we -- The American Legion – energize our plan to counter this threat to our national security. We firmly believe that "kicking the can down the road" is no way to provide for the common defense.

This resolution reiterates the American Legion's support for a fully funded military, and demands that Congress stop any further cuts to the defense budget. This is a vitally important issue that affects every aspect of our national security.

To get more excellent information on the budget and the state of the military today, I strongly encourage you to watch online the 2012 national security symposium, which was held during this year's national convention. Symposium speakers include defense budget expert Mackenzie Eaglen from the American Enterprise Institute; Marine Lt. Col. Joseph Gallagher III; former House Armed Services Chairman Ike Skelton; and Vice President of Military Programs at Allison Transmission, retired General Ed Dyer.

To view it, simply go to www.legiontv.org, click on the "on demand" tab and select "watch" for "symposium event." A copy of the edited dvd of this symposium is available to each of you to assist in your support of the efforts to keep American strong and avert the crippling effect of sequestration on our defense and our men and women in harm's way.

The commission also discussed concerns over reports that numbers of absentee ballot requests from servicemembers are down by 70 percent since 2008. In response, The American Legion is urging the Department of Defense (DoD) to step up its efforts in the final weeks before Election Day to get out the vote among its troops. We applaud National Commander James Koutz for his strong statements on behalf of our fighting men and women published last week. The National Security Commission echoes the National Commander's words when we say "There is no reason why our troops – serving far from home and in harm's way – should be denied their right to vote because of failures in the military bureaucracy."

On Tuesday, October 16, the National Security and Foreign Relations Commissions met in joint session at the Circle Center Conference Room of the Sheraton Hotel in

Indianapolis. We received a briefing on US-Israel relations and security cooperation from the Consul General of Israel to the Midwest Roey Gilad.

In a separate session, the National Security Commission reviewed the new resolution (Protecting the Defense Budget) and heartily recommends its approval by this august body.

The National Security Commission thanks National Commander James E. Koutz, our NEC Liaison 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 25th and convened for its business session on February 27th during the 53rd Annual Washington Conference at the Washington Hilton, Washington, D.C. The following report is a summary of those sessions:

Joint Session, February 25th

The National Security Commission, met in a joint session with the Foreign Relations Commission. The commissions were honored to welcome Past National Commander (PNC) Clarence Bacon, PNC Jake Comer, PNC Tony Jordan and PNC Fang Wong. The Joint Session included presentations by three guest speakers: Ambassador of Israel Michael B. Oren; Dr. Chrisanne Gordon, chairwoman, Resurrecting Lives Foundation; and Thomas Donnelly, resident fellow and co-director of the Marilyn Ware Center for Security Studies, American Enterprise Institute.

Ambassador Oren began the program discussing the bond between America and Israel in four key areas – spirituality, government, military and commercial. "Since 1948, the spiritual connection between Israel and America has been very deep," he said. The fact that Israel is a democracy also solidifies the bond. Israel is the only functioning democracy in the entire Middle East. "We have assured rights. We have a representative government. We have a separate judiciary. We have a declaration of independence which draws its language directly from the U.S. Declaration of Independence."

Ambassador Oren continued "Israel is the only country in the Middle East that has a memorial for 9/11. It's the only country in the Middle East that has a memorial for John F. Kennedy. We have a memorial for Martin Luther King in Jerusalem, and we actually commemorate Martin Luther King Day in Israel. We have not one, but two exact replicas of the Liberty Bell." A military alliance that took shape in the 1960s is, "greater and deeper than any military alliance America has had with any foreign nation in this post-World War II period," he said. That includes the selling of U.S. arms to Israel, as well as a strong working relationship between the intelligence communities in both countries.

Ambassador Oren concluded by stating, "We are in a profoundly unstable period in the Middle East. There is turmoil throughout our entire region. In the face of all of this chaos, there's one country that is stable, that is secure, that has a citizens' army... that's larger than the British and French armies combined. We have a robust economy. We have a democracy that has never known a second of non-democratic rule. And we are a country that is unequivocally, unreservedly, unabashedly pro-American. You will never see an anti-American demonstration in the streets of Israel. Israel is not just America's ally. Israel is America's ultimate ally, and we're going to stay that way."

In her discussion, Dr. Gordon reported that over 2 million service personnel have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001, – many with multiple deployments. The signature wound of these conflicts, affecting an estimated 25% of those deployed, is Traumatic Brain Injury. (TBI) That would mean that close to 500,000 of America's service personnel and Veterans would be suffering from the effects of TBI. "We are now beginning to gather scientific evidence that the nearly 20% of those service men and women also have a form of brain injury that is designated as Post Traumatic Stress (PTS). Often, the two conditions coexist," Dr. Gordon said.

This has led to a huge influx of patients for the Veterans Administration and the Tricare system. These patients present with complex neurologic issues, Dr. Gordon explained, the complications of which, if untreated, are visible to the entire community. Untreated Traumatic Brain Injury most often leads to substance abuse an estimated 80% of the time. In addition, a patient with a TBI is at risk for unemployment, incarceration, and even suicide. These neurologic issues require complex treatment involving rehabilitation teams consisting of physical medicine specialists, neurologists, psychologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists and social workers along with vocational counselors.

Unfortunately, the necessary number of TBI experts are not available in the vast majority of VA centers and military medical facilities, and with recent budget cuts, they will not be developed anytime in the near future. It is only by joining the resources of the community with the military and Veterans Administration that we can begin to control this epidemic. "The military accounts for only 1% of our nation's population," she said. "It is time that the 99% of us in the civilian world join them in the reintegration process."

Dr. Gordon's pledged that she will continue work at identifying the at risk military personnel through faith-based initiatives, in educational institutions, and through the law enforcement and the justice system to assure that our nation's military members are given an opportunity for rehabilitation through cognitive retraining, substance abuse counseling, and educational and employment initiatives.

The Joint Session concluded with Mr. Donnelly's presentation on the Budget Control Act and looming sequestration. Policymakers must thoughtfully consider the real impact of the tremendous cuts DOD has already made under the current administration. And Congress must consider what it means to our national security and our role in the world, he said. It must also be contrasted with the prioritization of spending seen in other parts of government over the same period.

Wednesday Session (Business Meeting) February 29th

National Security Commission Chairman G. Michael Schlee began the meeting by welcoming guest speaker Colonel Robert C. Carpenter, Infantry/Army Acquisition Integration.

As the Army grapples with budget austerity and prepares for future operations beyond Afghanistan, the Army has been utilizing a technology-implementation plan known as Network Integration Evaluations (NIE). This a cost-efficient way to quickly modernize the force, Colonel Carpenter said.

The Network Integration Evaluations, or NIEs, which have already yielded enhanced network capabilities for select brigade combat teams deploying to Afghanistan, are now adapting to encompass scenarios posed by other theaters and the regional alignment of forces, as well as joint and coalition operations.

The NIEs are a cornerstone of the Army's network modernization strategy to keep pace with rapid technology growth and deliver proven and integrated capabilities into the hands of the Soldier.

Joseph Grassi, deputy director, concluded the meeting by discussing the planning processes underway for 2013 National Security Commission Pre-Convention Trip. Mr. Grassi anticipates visiting The U.S. Coast Guard Station in Galveston, Texas or the U.S. Marine Corps base also located in Galveston.

National Executive Committee Meetings, Spring 2013

An executive session of the National Security Commission met on May 6, 2013 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 three resolutions.

National Security Commission Chairman Schlee opened the meeting and welcomed National Commander James Koutz of Indiana, Past National Commander Clarence

Bacon of Maryland, Past National Commander Tony Jordan of Maine, Past National Commander Miles Epling of West Virginia, and Past National Commander Bob Spanogle of Michigan. 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 three resolutions. The resolution entitled Mischaracterization of Discharges for Servicemembers with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a joint resolution between the National Security Commission and the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commission. Brian Bertges, VA&R assistant director reported the results of the VA&R Commission's deliberations on this resolution. The National Security Commission concurred and recommends the resolution for approval.

After more review and discussion, the remaining two resolutions are also recommended by the commission for approval: Support Veteran Status for National Guard and Reserve Servicemembers; and Secretary of Defense Directive for a Zero-Tolerance Policy on Sexual Assault.

Director John Stovall addressed the commission and described his experience serving the organization over the last 18 months. He explained how he has been positively influenced and inspired by Legion members and that he always welcomes input when it comes to ideas on how to improve national defense, the quality of life of servicemembers and conveying our message to the Administration, Congress and the Department of Defense.

Chairman Mike Schlee offered his insight on the matter of sequestration and reminded the commission that under current law, the U.S. Department of Defense faces major automatic spending cuts over the next 10 years. America's civilian and military leaders have warned of the impending perils of sequestration, including Secretary of the Army John McHugh who said the effects of this fiscal policy would be irresponsible and devastating. Former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta has said sequestration "…would have a devastating effect on not only national defense but I think on the rest of the country. It's totally unacceptable."

General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said if sequestration were to be implemented, "we would not any longer be a global power" and "in my personal military judgment, formed over 38 years, we are living in the most dangerous time in my lifetime right now, and I think sequestration would be completely oblivious to that, and counterproductive." He added, "I will tell you that I am prepared to say that sequestration would pose unacceptable risk." Furthermore, Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond Chandler said the current budgetary situation has far-reaching impacts on the Army, and the lives of its members. At a recent congressional hearing on quality of life in the military he said, "The magnitude of today's fiscal uncertainty has grave consequences for our soldiers, civilians, and families."

Chairman Schlee encouraged the commission to continue their scrutiny of the sequestration policy and their demands on Congress to take action to ensure that the Department of Defense is fully funded. In light of sequestration, He raised concerns regarding the ongoing downsizing of the Army to 490,000 (down 72,000) by 2017 and the Army National Guard/Reserve to 558,200 (down 5000). The sequester also involves cutting eight Army brigade combat teams (pending further review) and requests two new base closure rounds by 2015. Furthermore, according to recent military news reports, there are ongoing plans to reduce the size of the Marine Corps from 202,100 today to 182,100 by 2017. He also took time to recognize the 40th Anniversary of the all-volunteer force including the successes and challenges of the military over the last four decades. In addition, the meeting included a discussion on the issue of awarding Purple Hearts to those wounded during the November 5, 2009 terrorist attack at Fort Hood. Concerns over legal issues were raised and the commission will continue to monitor this matter.

Deputy Director Joseph Grassi shared the plan for this year's Pre-Convention Trip with the commission. This year the commission will visit the Coast Guard Command Center in Houston and the Coast Guard station in Galveston, Texas. The trip will include a homeland security briefing from the Captain of the Port, guided tour of a Coast Guard Cutter, search and rescue briefing, and air station tour featuring MH-65 Dolphin helicopters and discussion led by pilots and crew. Mr. Grassi will be sending invitations and more details on the Pre-Convention Trip to commission members in the coming weeks.

On Tuesday, May 7, 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 session and welcomed Past National Commander Joseph Frank of Missouri and Past National Commander John Brieden of Texas. The commissions received a briefing on Iranian nuclear weapons proliferation by Mr. Bob Fefernan, outreach coordinator, United Against a Nuclear Iran (UANI). This organization is a not-for-profit, non-partisan, advocacy group that seeks to prevent Iran from fulfilling its ambition to obtain nuclear weapons. UANI was founded in 2008 by Ambassador Mark D. Wallace, the late Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, former CIA Director Jim Woolsey and Middle East expert Dennis Ross. UANI's private sanctions campaigns and state and federal legislative initiatives focus on ending the economic and financial support of the Iranian regime by corporations at a time when the international community is attempting to compel Iran to abandon its illegal nuclear weapons program, support for terrorism and gross human rights violations.

The National Security Commission thanks National Commander James E. Koutz, our NEC Liaison Dave Warnken and the distinguished members of the National Executive Committee for their continuing support.

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; 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 94th 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 2012 through June 2013, 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, 2012 through June 15, 2013, many Departments of The American Legion actively participated in the Blood Donor program. The leading departments included Ohio, Maryland, Georgia, Washington, 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.

American Legion Departments, Posts and individual citizens have been responsive to the Legion's Crime Prevention and Fire Protection/Prevention programs. 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.

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 Chief Paul Doucette of Bennington, Vermont was named as the 2012 National Law Officer of the Year and was presented with the honor at the 94th National Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana.

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. Lt. Tom Christensen, a 24-year veteran of the Waukegan, Illinois was named as the 2012 National firefighter of the Year and was presented with the National Firefighter of the Year Award at the 94th National Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana.

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 94th 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 94th 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, Maryland, Minnesota and Montana. The American Legion presented over several thousand ROTC Medals to ROTC students in 2012.

Naval Affairs Committee
William B. Goede, Minnesota, Chairman

Guided by resolutions adopted at the 94th 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 American Legion 5-year membership plan approved this year includes significant engagement of marketing brand awareness and communications technologies at all levels of the organization. PR Commission staff is working closely with all commission staffs to develop strategies, media products and training utilities to enhance membership recruiting from the post to department operations. The PR Tool Kit which contains products and materials that harness new communications methodologies already serves as a centerpiece for Legion public relations efforts at all levels of the organization and remains accessible to every Legionnaire on the Internet. From radio/television spots to high definition digital outdoor sign files which can be customized with local post information, all PR toolkit items are available for download and customization.

The American Legion Patriotic Holiday PSA radio and television packages received extensive airplay across the country on Memorial Day, Independence Day, Veterans Day, and Flag Day. Produced after numerous requests for the product by broadcasters, the spots were written and produced to be used for years to come. The educational spots portray the meaning and history of these important commemorative holidays.

Commission staff once again supported the Boys Nation program in Washington DC, by providing hometown media outreach in addition to live video streaming of three events and daily video productions highlighting events throughout the week. Staff also coordinated a special tribute from President Clinton to the 2013 Boys Nation delegates in honor of the 50th anniversary of his attendance in 1963.

The American Legion Amateur Radio Club has grown over the airwaves to more than 1,500 licensed members who are Legionnaires, Sons of The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary members. The headquarters station in Indianapolis commemorated the 94th anniversary of our organization with station operations on March 15, receiving congratulatory messages from radio amateurs across the country and the world. Hundreds of commemorative certificates were provided to stations contacting K9TAL, the call sign of the headquarters station. The ARRL promoted the event via its national magazine and website as did the Amateur Radio Newsline Service which is broadcast on amateur radio repeaters in cities across America. There are more than 700,000 licensed "hams" in the United States. A similar operation was conducted on Veterans Day. The club was established to conduct special-event operations on The American Legion Birthday, Veterans Day, etc.; operate in SKYWARN radio nets during severe weather; promote emergency communications and disaster assistance to emergency management/DHS offices at all levels and promote the art and science of amateur radio among youth.

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. There are now nearly 800 subscribers to the daily updates.

Awards

At the 53rd Washington Conference, The National Commander's Public Relations Award was presented to ABC News Correspondent Bob Woodruff. After being seriously wounded by an IED while reporting in Iraq, Mr. Woodruff formed the Bob Woodruff Foundation which has awarded millions of dollars of assistance to veterans suffering from Traumatic Brain Injury, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other disabilities associated with their wartime service. His work as an ABC News reporter has highlighted the challenges faced by disabled veterans and their families.

The American Legion Fourth Estate Award was presented at the 95th National Convention in Houston, Texas, to USA Today, freelance war correspondent Ms. Alex Quade, and television station KITV in Honolulu. This was the second consecutive award for Ms. Quade in the New Media category.

The Future

The Public Relations Commission met for the last time during the October meetings in Indianapolis. In 2014, it will be replaced by the Media and Communications Commission, combining the current Magazine and Public Relations Commissions.

THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE COMMISSION

James H. Hall, New Jersey, Chairman
Jeff Stoffer, 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 2.3 million with an overall readership of more than 3.5 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 485,000 subscribers per week and an open rate of 31 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 more than 16,000 households per month with news and information relevant to officers in the organization. It is also now available in digital form as an e-newsletter with more than11,000 subscribers.
- The Dugout e-newsletter, in support of American Legion Baseball, has a subscriber list of more than 31,000.
- The Legislative Update e-newsletter reaches nearly 15,000 subscribers per week.
- 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 14 Facebook pages with a combined weekly reach of more than 100,00, a Twitter following of more than 22,000, 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 31,000 subscribers.
- The American Legion Veterans Career Center e-newsletter provides information about job fairs and career events. 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 also works in mobile media, having developed The American Legion Claims Coach smartphone app, 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.
- In addition to these media initiatives, The American Legion Magazine Division plays an active role in the development and delivery of brochures and documents for the organization, as well as non-traditional media design and delivery, such as parade floats and convention exhibits.
- The division's media program also includes outside media outreach and press events management in Washington.

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 $11 million is paid print and electronic advertising revenue. Other monetization streams include online donations, online membership, e-

merchandising, registration fees and cost savings through the conversion of print products to digital, but those streams flow to other divisions.

The American Legion Magazine Division strives to produce media that matches the organization's mission, as expressed through its resolutions, constitution and values, including a dedicated web platform on the issue of VA hospital construction, a new website dedicated to honor and remembrance and an interactive site to enable American Legion posts to express their stories as the 100th anniversary of the organization draws near. *The American Legion Magazine* also spent many of its pages in 2012 and 2013 honoring the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the Vietnam War, with a range of articles, photos, interviews and essays that traced the arc of the war. The division also worked closely with Internal Affairs and Membership & Post Activities to develop a fresh strategy for membership recruitment in print and online.

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,"How We Help," and guides to fulfilling national programs like Operation Comfort Warriors and the National Emergency Fund at the local level. The division is also responsible for many speeches, press releases, posters and other forms of media.

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION

Ralph P. Bozella, Colorado, 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, 2013.

The Ninety-fourth Annual National Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana, 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:

2012 National Convention
Indianapolis, Indiana

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
93	Strategic Capital Investment Planning (SCIP) Program	MD
94	The Department of Veterans Affairs Pharmacy Benefits	MD
95	Environmental Exposures	MD
96	Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans	MD
97	Protection of Religious Rights and Ceremonies at National Cemeteries	MD
98	Provide the Department of Veterans Affairs the Ability to Purchase Medications Located Outside The United States	MD
99	Increase The Transparency of the Veterans Benefits Administrations (VBA) Claims Processing	MD
100	Oppose Legislation Authorizing Legion Accredited Representatives to Develop Claims Directly on Behalf of the Department of Veterans Affairs	MD
101	Clarification Of Service in Vietnam for the Purpose Of Agent Orange Presumption	MD
102	Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCS)	MD
103	Exempt Purple Heart and Medal Of Honor Recipients From VA Prescription Co-Payments	MD

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
104	Gulf War Illnesses	MD
105	Support Presumption Of Service Connection For Hepatitis C	MD
106	Disability And Death Pension Program	MD
107	Recognize Operations In Lebanon (1958), Grenada (1983), and Panama (1989-1990) as Period of War for Department of Veterans Affairs Pension Purposes	MD
108	Request Congress Provide The Department of Veterans Affairs Adequate Funding For Medical and Prosthetic Research	MD
109	The Department of Veterans Affairs Mental health Services	MD
110	Department of Veterans Affairs Life Insurance Program	MD
111	Open-Ended Presumptive Period For Undiagnosed Illnesses For Gulf War Veterans	MD
112	Oppose Any Reduction of Eligibility Criteria for Department of Veterans Affairs Per Diem Payments to State Veterans Homes	MD
113	Amend The Eligibility Requirements and Extend The Eligibility Time Period For Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance	MD
114	Radiation Exposure	MD
115	Extend Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Mortgage	MD
117	All Veterans Receive “Wartime” Benefits For Active Military Service Between February 28, 1961 and August 5, 1964	MD
118	Revisions of Work-Rate Standards for Department of Veterans Affairs Adjudicators	MD
119	Veteran Treatment Courts	MD
120	Include World War II Veterans in Priority Group 6 for Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care	MD
121	The Department of Veterans Affairs Nursing Home Capacity	MD
122	Prostate Cancer Research and Treatment	MD
123	Support Legislation to Place Mariner Medal recipients in Priority Group 3 for The Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care	MD
125	Means Test for Married Veterans	MD
126	Veterans Receive Same Level of Benefits	MD
127	Service Dogs for Injured Service Personnel and Veterans With Mental Health Conditions	MD
128	Designate United States Air Force C-123K Transport Aircraft as Agent Orange Exposure Sites	MD
129	The Department of Veterans Affairs Enhanced-Use Leasing	MD
130	Vet Center Expansion to Rural Communities	MD
131	State Veterans Home Extended Care Facilities Grant Program	MD
132	The American Legion Policy on State Veterans Home Inspection	MD
133	Support Medicare Reimbursement for The Department of Veterans Affairs	MD
135	Opening the Federal Supply Schedule for Pharmaceuticals to Medicare and Medicaid	MD
136	The Department of Veterans Affairs To Develop Outreach and Peer to Peer Programs for Rehabilitation	IA
162	Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Integrated Service Networks	WA
172	Dependency and Indemnity Compensation Benefits to Surviving of Former Prisoners of Was	GA
173	Allow Beneficiaries to Retain Some of Their Benefits While in Medicaid-Covered Nursing Homes	GA
174	Extend the Filing Period of an Appeal Notice to the Court of Veterans Appeals for Veterans Claims	GA
175	National Cemetery Administration	GA
176	State Veterans Home Per Diem Reimbursement	GA

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
178	Department of Veterans Affairs Disability Compensation	GA
179	Amend Title 38, United States Code, to Increase the Special Monthly Compensation (K) Award	GA
180	Assured Funding for VA Medical Care	GA
181	The Department of Veterans Affairs Dental Care	GA
182	Presumptive Conditions for Former Prisoner of War	GA
183	The Department of Veterans Affairs Role in National Emergency Preparedness	GA
193	The Department of Veterans Affairs to Provide Interim Benefits for Pending Claims Over 90 Days	NY
196	Co-Payments and Enrollment Fees for Priority Group 7 & 8	MI
197	Tobacco-Related Disabilities	MI
198	Exempt Certain Income for VA Pension Rate Determinations	MI
199	Agent Orange	MI
200	Exempt VA Benefits and Services from Pay-Go Previsions	MI
212	Increase Maximum Coverage under the Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance	IL
222	Extend Eligibility for National Cemetery Administration Medallion	IL
224	Department of Veterans Affairs Service-Disabled Life Insurance	IL
225	United States Census to Include Veterans Information	IL
226	Automatic Waiver for Over-Payments of $300 or Less	IL
234	Oppose Lump Sum Payments for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Disability Compensation	IL
235	Add Agent orange Component to Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) 4.16	IL
237	Urn Markers Provided by the National Cemetery Administration	IL
285	Traumatic Brain injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Programs	VA&R
286	Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Involvement in the Department of Homeland Security	VA&R
287	Indiana-Ohio Center For Traumatic Amputation Rehabilitation Research	VA&R
288	Department of Veterans Affairs to Include and Treat Family Members of Veterans with Illnesses and Injuries	VA&R
289	WWII Veterans Hospital and Medical Entitlements	VA&R
290	The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) Means Test	VA&R
291	The Department of Veterans Affairs to Receive Private Hospital Documentation Within One-Year of Services	VA&R
292	Eliminate the Requirement that a Veteran Had to Serve in Vietnam to be Eligible for Wartime Benefits	VA&R
293	Veterans Transportation System (VTS) & Benefits Travel	VA&R
294	Department of Veterans Affairs Rural Healthcare Program	VA&R
295	Military Sexual Trauma (MST)	VA&R

National Executive Committee Meeting
October 17-18, 2012

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
34	Department VA Voluntary Service Coordinators	VA&R
35	Coalition to Salute America's Heroes	VA&R
36	Encourage All Posts of The American Legion to Appoint or Elect a Post Service Officer and maintain an Active Service Program	VA&R
37	Department of Veterans Affairs Child Care Program	VA&R
38	Legislation to Provide Reporting, Tracking, and Action Dealing	VA&R

	with Sexual Assaults at Department of Veterans Affairs Facilities	
39	Women Veterans Strategic Plan	VA&R
40	Extended Hours & Weekends For Veterans' Health Care	VA&R
41	Dependency and Indemnity Compensation	VA&R
42	Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record	VA&R
43	Veteran Coding on Driver's License	VA&R
44	Decentralization of Department of Veterans Affairs Programs	VA&R
45	Women Veterans	VA&R
46	Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Non-VA Care Programs	VA&R
47	Prevent Exploitation of Veterans And Family Members Applying for Aid and Attendance	VA&R

National Executive Committee Meeting
May 9-10, 2013

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
22	Rescinding Non-Legislative Resolutions from The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission	VA&R
23	National Cemetery Administration Headstone Appearance	VA&R
24	Congressional Budget Office Scoring on Department of Veterans Affairs Leasing	VA&R
25	Oppose Lowering of Cost-Of-Living Adjustments	VA&R
26	Mischaracterization of Discharges for Servicemembers with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Military Sexual Trauma (MST)	VA&R
27	Licensed Professional Mental Health Counselors and Marriage and Family Therapists	VA&R
28	Agent Orange Presumption for Service In Southeast Asia Since 1975	VA&R

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission Meetings

Members of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission held four meetings during the period August 26, 2012, through May 5, 2013.

The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee met on August 26, 2012, during the National Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana 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 17-18, 2012, 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 17, 2012.

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission met for the 89th consecutive year in Washington, DC, on February 27, 2013, in conjunction with the 53rd Annual Washington Conference.

Annual National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference

The 90th Annual Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Conference was held at the Washington Hilton Hotel in Washington, D.C. on February 25, 2013.

National Vice-Commander Glenn A. Hickman (OH) presented The American Legion Volunteer of the Year Award to Loren Minnix (IN). Conferees were addressed by Allison A. Hickey, Under Secretary for Benefits, Veterans Benefits Administration; Robert A. Petzel, M.D., Under Secretary for Health, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs and Steve L. Muro, Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, National Cemetery Administration, United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

A Women Veterans Panel discussed challenges facing women veterans at VA medical centers, especially cultural challenges. The panel's experts included Dr. Betty Moseley-Brown, VA's Associate Director of the Center for Women Veterans, Cathy Wiblemo, Director of the House Subcommittee on Health; R. Michael Suter, American Legion System Worth Saving Task Force member and Vice Chairman of National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission; Verna Jones, Director of Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, and Roscoe G. Butler, American Legion National Field Service Representative for the Health Policy Unit.

Culture challenges facing women veterans is an issue that VA is concerned about, such as how its employees treat women veterans when they come in for benefits and services. To help women know that the VA is a place for them to receive quality care, it has created a few public service announcements on its website titled "The Right Place." One features a group of culturally diverse women veterans standing in line at a VA help desk, and one woman asks, "I hear I can get good care here. Am I in the right place?" The VA staff member replies, "Yes, we are ready and you're in the right place." Another PSA features a woman in a VA waiting room who says, "Please, don't call me Mr."

During American Legion System Worth Saving site visits, the task force learned that VA has to change its culture. When women veterans go into these clinics, they are looked upon as spouses. A lot of women veterans either don't know they're a veteran or don't want to admit it for some reason. The question now being asked in a few VA facilities that I have been to is not 'Are you a veteran', but 'have you served in the military?' That is part of that cultural change VA needs to get into to make sure that women veterans are at home in the VA medical center as the men are. Additional challenges for women veterans that were discussed included privacy issues with exam and waiting rooms, gender-specific care, mental health care and homelessness. VA is doing a lot to improve the physical structure of its medical centers, but when research is conducted that asks women veterans how they want the facilities to be set up, "33 percent of them say they want to be in the waiting room with those same comrades that they served with. There's another 33 percent that prefer to have a separate waiting room, but then there's another 33 percent that are ready to take whatever the facility has. Unfortunately, you can't have it all three ways at a facility, so facility directors under VA leadership are really taking a look to find out what their veterans want in their area.

The Legion's System Worth Saving site visits gather information on what benefits each medical center provides to women veterans, the quality of care being provided and the challenges women veterans face.

Additionally, a volunteering session met in the Jefferson Room, Concourse level, Washington Hilton from 1:30-2:45 pm on Monday, February 25, 2013. Panel was convened to discuss challenges and opportunities regarding volunteering. The panel's experts included Laura Balun, Director VA Voluntary Service Office; Rachel Roberts, a VISTA serving Habitat for Humanity International in the Government and Advocacy Office working on Habitat's veteran initiative, "Veterans Build"; Joe Schaefer, VA&R member from the Department of Texas; Jacob Gadd, Deputy Director of Healthcare, and Warren J. Goldstein, Senior Field Service Representative Health Policy Unit for The American Legion.

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Legislative Activities

The VA&R Division participated in a total of fifteen (15) hearings. Please refer to the following table for more information about the content and timeline of the hearings:

Date	Topic	Person Involved	Testimony
Sept. 14, 2012	VA Fee Basis: Examining Solutions to a Flawed System	Jacob Gadd	Oral & Written

Dec. 4, 2012	Wading Through Warehouses of Paper: The Challenges of Transitioning Veterans Records to Paperless Technology	Rich Dumancas	Oral & Written
Feb. 13, 2013	Honoring the Commitment: Overcoming Barriers to Quality Mental Health Care for Veterans	[None]	Written
Feb. 27, 2013	Electronic Health Records U-Turn: Are the VA and DOD Headed in the Wrong Direction?	Jacob Gadd	Oral & Written
Mar. 6, 2013	Waiting for Care: Examining Patient Wait Times at VA	Roscoe Butler	Oral & Written
Mar. 13, 2013	Sexual Assaults in the Military	[None]	Written
Mar. 20, 2013	Focusing on People: A Review of VA's Plans for Employee Training, Accountability, and Workload Management to Improve Disability Claims Processing	[None]	Written
Mar. 20, 2013	VA Mental Health Care: Ensuring Timely Access to High-Quality Care	[None]	Written
April 16, 2013	Pending Legislation	[None]	Written
May 9, 2013	Pending Legislation	[None]	Written
May 21, 2013	Pending Legislation	[None]	Written
May 22, 2013	Expanding Claims or Exploiting Statistics? An Examination of VA's Special Initiative to Process Rating Claims Pending Over Two Years	[None]	Written
June 18, 2013	Why Are Veterans Waiting Years On Appeal? A Review of the Post-Division Process for Appealed Veterans' Disability Benefits Claims	[None]	Written
June 27, 2013	Assessing VA's Capital Investment Options to Provide Veterans' Care	[None]	Written
June 28, 2013	Pending Legislation	Verna Jones	Oral & Written
July 9, 2013	Pending Legislation	Jacob Gadd	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, offer the following pamphlets:

- The American Legion Guide
- Women Veterans – Identifies Risk, Services, and Prevention
- What to do before a Veteran Dies – A Guide to Pre-Planning
- Veterans Serving Veterans – A Summary on The American Legion Volunteer Program in the Community
- Agent Orange Benefits & Program – A guide for Vietnam Veterans and their Families
- Gulf Ware Era Benefits & Programs – A guide for Veterans and their Families
- Welcome Home – Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation New Dawn
- Know Your Benefits

- Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Handbook

The handbooks and pamphlets, as well as those in regards to the Department of Veteran Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program are also distributed at seminars, conferences, and Department Conventions. Supplies of these and other VA&R pamphlets are maintained at The American Legion headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana and distributed upon request through The American Legion Washington Headquarters at 1608 K Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20006. Shipping is complimentary and requests can be made by calling Headquarters directly at 202-861-2700 or by email at Wkennedy@legion.org.

2013 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, and Glenn Powers, Department of Veterans Affairs Deputy Undersecretary for Field Programs for the National Cemetery Administration on February 25, 2013 in the International Ballroom West, Concourse Level Washington Hilton Washington, D.C.

Currently, the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) maintains 131 National Cemeteries, 20,000 total acres, and 3.2 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.

FY 2014 NCA Budget Request

The budget for FY 2014 has not been released

Burials

In 2012, NCA performed 118,160 total burials, processed 354,573 applications for headstones and markers, and furnished 7,470 Medallions and 719,094 Presidential Memorial Certificates. NCA continued development of five new national cemeteries in 2012 to serve veterans in Colorado, Florida, New York, and Nebraska.

Interments in FY 2013 are expected to be about 120,000, a 13 percent increase from FY 2009. The total number of graves maintained is also expected to increase during the planning time frame from almost 3.0 million in FY 2009 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 2012, nearly 90 percent of veterans lived within 75 miles of a national or state veteran's cemetery that had available gravesites for the first interment of either casketed or cremated remains. In 2011, NCA amended its policy for establishing new national cemeteries to serve areas of the country in which 80,000 or more veterans lived within a 75 mile service area. This policy change led NCA to begin work on five new national

cemeteries in the areas of: Western New York; Central East Florida; Southern Colorado; Omaha, Nebraska; and Tallahassee, Florida. NCA is also establishing five new columbarium-only facilities to better serve veterans in Alameda, California; Los Angeles, California; Indianapolis, Indiana; Chicago, Illinois; and, New York, New York. NCA is establishing new National Veterans Burial Ground to serve veterans in eight states that are not currently served by a national cemetery and have unserved rural populations. These states include Idaho, Maine, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. New state and tribal veterans cemeteries funded through VA's Veterans Cemetery Grants Program that are expected to begin burial operations in 2013 include: Mobile, Alabama; Yurok Tribe, California; Aguadilla, Puerto Rico; and, Rosebud, South Dakota.

Customer Satisfaction

In 2011, the University of Michigan 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 national cemeteries, five columbarium-only cemeteries in urban areas and eight National Urban Burial Grounds in rural locations. The Committee also discussed Arlington National Cemetery and how the NCA was assisting with training employees, providing assistance with operations and providing oversight.

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 Legion's recommendation is for the Department of Veterans Affairs to establish a mechanism that would annually review and adjust the burial allowance. This does not seem to reflect Public Law 111-275 which was enacted on October 13, 2010. Public Law 111-275 provides for an annual increase in the burial and plot allowances beginning in FY2013 based upon the Consumer Price Index.

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 204 cases. She has reviewed 96 cases and submitted written reports on 37 of these cases. The research and medical opinions provided by the Medical Consultant have resulted in numerous grants and remands for additional development.

Additionally, the Medical Consultant has conducted numerous one-on-one medical training sessions for the Appeals and Special Claims Unit staff this year and has also conducted presentations at the Indianapolis Department Service Officer School, the Washington DC Service Officer training, as well as, the New York State Service Officer Training.

Government Life Insurance, Pension & Debt Management Activities

The United States Government, acting through the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), directly administers four life insurance programs for veterans of the World War I, World War II and Korean War periods, as well as two special on-going programs for

veterans in certain service-connected disabled categories. These programs are administered under the titles of United States Government Life Insurance (USGLI) for World War I era veterans, National Service Life Insurance (NSLI) for World War II era, Korean War era and Service-Disabled veterans (SDVI - Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance), and Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI) for totally disabled veterans who are approved grants for specially adapted housing purposes by the DVA. The USGLI and NSLI programs currently have some 949,000 policies in force as of May 31, 2013, with a combined life insurance coverage of some $ 11.6 billion dollars. NSLI processes some 100,000-120,000 claims annually in addition to a very high number of other policy transactions as the program's policies are individual in nature and are composed of diverse plans of insurance. The VMLI program insures some 2436 veterans with approximately $295 million dollars of coverage in force. Currently these programs are operated out of the VA Insurance Center in Philadelphia, PA. The National Association of Insurance Commissioners approved the use of the 2001 Commissioners Standard Mortality Table as the new mortality standard for life insurance. Since the law allows the VA Secretary to set the mortality table for the VMLI program, VA began using the 2001 table, rather than the previous 1958 table, effective October 1, 2006. This reduced premiums for the program an average of 37 percent.

In addition to the life insurance programs directly operated by the DVA, the Department also has supervisory authority and responsibility over two other major government life insurance program issues. These are the Servicemember's Group Life Insurance (SGLI) and Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI) programs. These programs have provided insurance protection, since 1965 and 1970 respectively, to active duty and reserve military personnel (SGLI), spouses and dependents, and to separate veterans and to retired and separated reservists (VGLI). The SGLI and VGLI programs are administered by the Prudential Insurance Company at a center in Roseland, NJ (the Office of Servicemembers Group Life Insurance – OSGLI), with all administration and other program expenses being paid by the policyholders from a portion of their insurance premiums, save for the extra hazard mortality experience of wartime periods when general tax revenues take over. These insurance issues are solely group Term insurance without dividends, disability benefits, or diverse types of permanent plans with equity values such as the individual policy contracts contained in the DVA's directly administered program. On May 31, 2013 SGLI provided some 5.59 million active duty and reserve personnel, spouses and dependents with more than $ 1 trillion dollars of life insurance coverage, while VGLI covered some 428,000 veterans with insurance in excess of $ 64 billion dollars. Of these policy accounts the OSGLI center in Roseland, NJ maintains only VGLI, with the various military service departments maintaining the rest. The OSGLI center processes between 2500-3500 death claims annually with minimal other transactions due to the very limited nature of the coverage as group term insurance only. Currently, claims arising from military operations in the Middle East and Central Asia are processed in less than two business days from the time the last required document is received at OSGLI. In 1992 VGLI became lifetime renewable instead of the single five year term previously in effect. The amount of VGLI a veteran can hold cannot be in excess of the amount of SGLI he or she held in service. In 1997 Retired Reservists, instead of being insured under the SGLI program until age 60 or the receipt of their first retired pay check, were merged into the VGLI program to allow them the option of retaining their coverage as long as desired. Reservists leaving reserve service without the amount of time needed for full retirement may be covered under VGLI if desired. In addition, veterans are now permitted to convert their SGLI/VGLI insurance, in partial amounts at different times or in whole, to a private plan of insurance with a participating commercial insurance carrier as they leave service, or at any time they are in the VGLI program, without having to wait a stipulated period as was previously the case. Effective April 1, 2001 those entering active duty were automatically covered for a full $250,000 under SGLI as authorized by Public Law 106-419, and members of the Individual Ready

Reserve who have volunteered for assignment to a mobilization category were also made eligible for SGLI coverage under that law. . In addition, Public Law 107-14 authorized other program enhancements to the SGLI program, effective November 1, 2001, which allows up to $100,000 in spousal coverage on a paid premium basis, and provides $10,000 free life insurance coverage for a member's children. These dependent coverage's still cannot, at present, be carried over into the VGLI program and cannot be doubled in the case of both parents being in service. However, while the member's SGLI is in force, spousal coverage can be converted to a private plan of insurance with a participating commercial company upon written application in the same manner as a VGLI policy may be so converted. The American Legion insurance unit presented supporting testimony at that time on these legislative changes as they improved greatly the range of financial options available to veterans in these programs, not only at the time of their separation from service, but in later years as their life situation changed as well, and as they permit the SGLI and VGLI programs to more effectively compete with private insurers who have the privilege of excluding applicants as desired and who may, in the case of certain military associations, be co-located on military bases.

New SGLI legislation was enacted in May 2005. Public Law (PL) 109-13, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Tsunami Relief of 2005, was signed into law May 11, 2005 and contained provisions for increases in the Dept. of Defense (DOD) Death Gratuity, for increases in the amount of maximum coverage under the Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program, and for a new SGLI group policy rider for Traumatic Injury Protection. The SGLI Traumatic Injury Protection Rider became effective December 1, 2005 and currently provides over $232 billion dollars in traumatic injury coverage as per a published schedule of losses caused by such physical injuries. On November 26, 2008 VA issued new regulations as a result of extensive reviews to expand the TSGLI schedule of losses and the time period involved. Additions to the TSGLI schedule included expansion of definitions for total and permanent loss of sight, hearing, speech, and various types of paralysis. Other additions included certain types of amputation, limb salvage, facial reconstruction, burns, injuries resulting from authorized use of controlled substances and traumatic brain injury effects. Effective September 1, 2005 regular SGLI coverage was automatically increased to $400,000 from the previous $250,000, and is the current maximum amount of SGLI coverage permitted. Servicemembers electing lesser amounts must do so in $50,000 increments. Spousal and dependent coverage was not impacted by the legislation. The Act specified certain spousal and beneficiary notification requirements for members changing beneficiary designations or electing lesser amounts of coverage. The Act also provided for the group traumatic injury insurance rider to be attached to the group coverage provided under SGLI, the premium cost of which to the insured was to be $1.00 per month. This injury protection ranges from $25,000 to $100,000 in accordance with a disability schedule which has been published and which is composed of a list of physical traumatic injuries involving significant loss of use of physical or mental abilities caused by such injury. Coverage under this rider began December 1, 2005. A retroactive provision for qualifying injuries (Iraq and Afghanistan service) from October 7, 2001 to the effective date was also provided for. The Secretary of Defense certifies to the SGLI center the individuals qualifying for retroactive payments. Public Law 111-275, enacted October 13, 2010, expanded this provision to include TSGLI coverage for all covered losses incurred on active duty regardless of location to be effective October 1, 2011. Servicemembers must be covered by SGLI to have this rider, and for members insured under SGLI the rider is mandatory. Rider coverage ceases on midnight on the date the member separates from the uniformed service. No retroactive period was contained in the legislation for the $150,000 SGLI increase, but this was addressed through the Dept. of Defense's Death Gratuity benefit instead, as insurance underwriting requirements did not permit new coverage increases to be applied retroactively.

On September 30, 2005 the SGLI enhancement Act of 2005 (PL 109-80) was enacted which made permanent the increase in the maximum allowable SGLI regular coverage from $250,000 to $400,000, and which included various spousal notification requirements for beneficiary changes. This last requirement, for an insured married at the time of making a beneficiary election, that the Secretary of Defense notify the insured's spouse should the insured at any time take action to either reduce the amount of coverage or to name a beneficiary other than the insured's spouse, did not meet with the support of The American Legion. It has historically been the belief of The American Legion that this type of fundamental insurance benefit is a special contract between the service member (or veteran in the case of veteran's coverage) and the federal government, and is a matter personal and sacrosanct to those who serve (or have served) the nation in uniform, and that an insured's beneficiary information should not be released to third parties without the consent of the insured. Such spousal notification, however, does not affect a member's right to elect or change his/her beneficiary designation or amount of SGLI coverage at any time.

Further legislative changes in the SGLI program included PL 109-163, enacted January 6, 2006, which authorized the payment of an allowance to service members serving in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom for an amount equal to the premium of $150,000 of SGLI coverage, affording them $150,000 of free SGLI coverage provided they did not decline such coverage, and PL 109-233 enacted June 15, 2006. PL 109-233 extends the duration of SGLI coverage from one to two years for service members who are totally disabled upon the date of their separation from active duty or reserve status, effective upon the date of enactment for members released before October 1, 2011. Service members who were released within one year of the enactment date were also eligible for this extended coverage period. Public Law 111-275, enacted October 1, 2010, makes this extension permanent. This legislation also provided the Secretary of Veterans Affairs the sole authority to determine the period of time between the date of a traumatic event and the date a member suffers a qualifying loss for all losses under the Traumatic SGLI (TSGLI) program. The law also removed the previously existing statutory requirement that quadriplegia, paraplegia, or hemiplegia occur within one year of the traumatic injury. For all losses this period has now been extended to two years.

The American Legion's National VA&R insurance unit at the Philadelphia, PA center had initiated and worked with the DVA insurance management staff to provide added protection to those veterans leaving service in a totally disabled and life threatening status, to attempt to ensure these veterans do not lose coverage (as happens periodically) due to misunderstanding certain requirements of the SGLI to VGLI transfer system stemming from inconsistencies in the manner these are explained to them as they out process from various military facilities, or failing to respond in a timely manner to initial insurance invitations and premium billings, etc. Recommended safeguards included such items as automatic coverage and premium deduction start-ups from military retired pay or DVA disability compensation, policy liens for past due premiums, and closer contacts between the SGLI/VGLI administering office and veterans in this category. DVA insurance management completed a staff study through the military service departments, the Defense Manpower Data Center, DPC Austin and OSGLI on the methods such individuals can be identified, and has created an Outreach program to contact by telephone and with additional letters veterans in this class, and advise them of their VGLI options as needed. Currently, separating service members who have been discharged on disability retirement at a rating of 50% to 100% by their branch of service are contacted. Of those contacted by phone, over 80% apply for either the SGLI Disability Extension (free coverage for two years) or VGLI coverage's. In June 2011 the VA Insurance Center opened a formal, fully staffed Outreach Center in Philadelphia to expand these operations. An on-line SGLI/VGLI manual is available to all military out processing centers and veterans to ensure these have immediate access to correct

information concerning the requirements for veterans being separated to convert their in-service SGLI coverage to VGLI coverage, and in February 2004 a detailed Insurance Needs Calculator was added to the VA Insurance website, for veterans to use to assess their life insurance needs and compare VGLI coverage to other insurance options. The Calculator includes VA, Social Security and military benefits in the final assessment. VGLI policyholders also have the ability now to access their policy information through the VA website as well, using passwords and policy information. In 2002-2003 both VGLI and SGLI premiums were reduced; VGLI an overall 40% from 1998 levels, and a 19% reduction for SGLI premiums effective July 1, 2003 with a simultaneous reduction in SGLI spousal rates as well. Effective July 1, 2006, however, a slight increase in SGLI basic premium rates from the previous rate of 6.5 cents per month per $1,000 of coverage to one of 7 cents per month per $1,000 took place due to program costs. Also effective July 1, 2006 premium rates for dependent SGLI coverage were reduced for all age groups by an average of 10%, reflecting a better than forecasted claims experience in the Family SGLI program portion. A further premium rate decrease took effect on July 1, 2008 for both the SGLI (to $26 monthly for full coverage from $28 monthly) and VGLI programs (for veterans aged 30 to 64). In addition, a premium rate decrease for Family SGLI coverage of 8% for all age groups took place effective July 1, 2010. For all programs the Department of Veterans Affairs administers and/or supervises some 6.56 million insurance policies for military personnel, spouses, dependents and veterans, with a total in-force coverage of over $ 1.34 trillion dollars.

In the SDVI program many disabled veterans annually continue to take advantage of the new supplemental Service-Disabled insurance provided in the legislative changes of 1992, whereby now an additional Supplemental $30,000 of coverage may be purchased by those veterans having a basic Service-Disabled policy and who become totally disabled before age 65. This option has a limited time period of one year from a grant of premium waiver and if application is made before age 65. The American Legion VA&R insurance office continues to maintain a special notification system for those veterans who choose The American Legion as their representative and who are applying for Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (SDVI) coverage to ensure they are informed as early as possible of these additional benefits. The notification system has been expanded to include compilation of a database of those qualifying for Supplemental coverage and the release of additional reminder notifications to them prior to expiration of their Supplemental insurance option. This is particularly needful as the current DVA system may be faulty in communicating information on benefits such as disability premium waivers and supplemental coverage to veterans who may qualify for it, and who may very well be in life threatening (and therefore time constrained) conditions. A special activity was initiated in this benefit area in 2004 and continued afterward by the VA Compensation and Pension Service to address concerns that many service-connected disabled veterans were not being informed enough on the program. A mailing on SDVI notification was included with the annual cost-of-living increase letters, reaching approximately 2.3 million veterans in 2004-2005, resulting in many thousands of new applications being received. This continues with insurance invitations being sent out on virtually all ratings actions. SDVI applications have also been made available on the VA's Insurance website through an Autoform program whereby applications can be made, saved, printed for mailing or submitted electronically as desired. This new tool became active March 5, 2004.

The DVA Insurance Center continues their on-going effort to provide better service and program enhancements to their veteran policyholders by periodically updating their computer and communication systems, both as part of the overall DVA area networks and through the Internet, and placing ever more records and transaction activities, previously done on paper, into their on-line computer systems. Beginning in summer 2001, the DVA Insurance Center accelerated a planned program of transforming their insurance operation into a wholly computerized system no longer utilizing any paper

insurance files, but using imaging technology instead to replace paper files with electronic ones. The impetus for this was to create space in the Philadelphia Regional Office and Insurance Center for one of the three regional Pension Centers which have been organized to assist in the reduction of the national backlog in compensation and pension cases. The insurance system, known as VICTARS (Veterans Insurance Claims Tracking and Response System) permits on-screen display of all file documents that would previously have been maintained in a paper insurance folder, and gives VA insurance specialists the ability to input and process claims, transactions and responses to inquiries with far greater speed than any earlier system used to date, and to maintain a full history of such in the policyholder's new electronic file. Currently, over 6 million images are available to insurance specialists via their desktop computers. All previous paper insurance folders (over 2.5 million) have been retired to a nearby Federal Records Center, but are still available for recall as may be needed on certain cases. This accomplishment has resulted in savings of some $1 million annually. Insurance services are further augmented by automated assistance and call routing facilities added to a toll free number (800-669-8477). Faxed correspondence claims, and transaction requests are acceptable for VA Insurance purposes. Additionally, in accordance with the federal initiative to have all or most government disbursements done by Direct Deposit (Electronic Transfer of Funds) the VA Insurance Center has completed actions for the direct deposit of monthly insurance installment awards to beneficiaries and those policyholders receiving monthly annuities. All monthly insurance award/annuity payments are by electronic transfer of funds to these insurance payees. In this vein, all policy loans, dividend refund and cash surrender payments are also sent to an insured's bank account if VA benefits are or were on direct deposit, or if an insured is paying premiums by automatic deduction from a checking account, unless requested otherwise. New settlement claim forms for death settlements contain blocks for beneficiaries to include bank information for EFT payment. As with the VGLI program, NSLI/SDVI policyholders may now also access their account information through the VA's insurance website with a PIN number, and perform certain transactions such as policy loan applications. For VMLI there is now also an on-line Insurance Needs Calculator, similar to that for VGLI, available as well.

Public Law 111-275, the Veterans Benefits Act of 2010, has made the following changes in government insurance programs for veterans and active duty personnel.

Effective October 1, 2011, the maximum amount of life insurance coverage permitted under the Supplemental Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance program (SDVI) increased from the present limit of $20,000 to a new maximum of $30,000. Supplemental SDVI is available to veterans who are approved for a basic SDVI policy ($10,000 maximum), who qualify for a disability waiver of premiums on the basic policy, and who make an application for Supplemental insurance before age 65 and within one year of the date of notification by the VA of the disability premium waiver. Totally disabled veterans who meet the qualifying criteria can therefore be able to have a maximum of $40,000 coverage in force.

Also effective October 1, 2011, the Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI) program increased in coverage from the previous $90,000 limit to a new maximum of $150,000. On January 1, 2012 this increased further to $200,000 in the amount of coverage permitted.

Additionally, six months from the date of enactment of PL 111-275, those veterans under age 60 who are insured under the Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI) program have an opportunity once every five years, beginning on the one year anniversary of the date of entry into the program, to purchase further VGLI coverage in the amount of $25,000; the overall amount of coverage held, however, cannot exceed $400,000; the maximum allowed by law for Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI).

Lastly, as mentioned earlier, the legislation also provided for an expansion of Traumatic Injury SGLI (TSGLI) coverage for the retroactive period of October 7, 2001 to

November 30, 2005 provided by Public Law 109-233 for servicemembers incurring covered losses in Operations Iraqi Freedom and/or Enduring Freedom. Public Law 111-275 expanded TSGLI coverage for covered losses for the retroactive period for all such losses incurred on active duty, regardless of location. The effective date of this expansion was also October 1, 2011.

Additionally, the loss of a dominant hand is added to the TSGLI schedule of covered losses by this legislation.

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Service Units:
DVA Insurance Center at Philadelphia, PA and St. Paul, MN DMC Center

The American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission Staff at Philadelphia consists of a Chief of Insurance Activities/Insurance Representative and a Pension Benefits Representative. An associated office at the St. Paul center has one Supervisor/VA&R Representative and a Pension Benefits Representative, plus a National Staff Pension Representative has also been added at the VA Regional Office in Milwaukee, WI, which also has a VA Pension Center as well as Philadelphia and St. Paul.

The Chief of Insurance Activities/Insurance Representative must have a thorough knowledge of government life insurance laws, regulations, and transaction and adjudication procedures, and be able to analyze them correctly in order to properly represent insured veterans and their beneficiaries. The Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Director and other interested personnel are kept informed on policy matters, changes in DVA administrative procedures and all related areas to include new legislative initiatives. NSLI re-open periods for service-disabled and non-service disabled veterans with increased face value coverage's continues to be an American Legion legislative effort. Coordination has also been effected with the DVA Pension Center management in both Philadelphia, St. Paul and Milwaukee for the creation of a system whereby the national VA&R staff personnel can process pension inquiries from Department and Veterans Service Officers as they may require.

Daily operations involve a full range of insurance services to include the representation of insured veterans and their beneficiaries, the review of insurance case files and supporting evidence and Claims files as required, the furnishing of status reports and account assistance to insured's, beneficiaries, accredited field representatives and DVA adjudicative and accounts personnel, close liaison with Department Service Officers and other field personnel to ensure prompt and complete service, and the input to, review of, and where necessary the correction of DVA actions and records both on cases involving disability and death claims, and on those involving any of a wide variety of insurance accounting and financial transactions that occur on active and matured accounts. General insurance information and guidance is provided to field service officers across the United States, along with assistance in the preparation of insurance appeals and claims submittals. Coordination with DVA executive and program management personnel is conducted on individual cases and broad policy/administrative matters. A telephone fax capability added to the Philadelphia office has greatly expedited claims processing by enabling rapid receipt of documents needed to complete transactions and claims that would otherwise be significantly delayed due to mailing times, particularly in emergency cases. The Philadelphia office remains heavily involved in the large increase in SDVI applications beginning in 2004 and 2005, occasioned by the mass mailing of SDVI notifications to virtually all service-connected veterans mentioned earlier. Information, staff analysis, and testimony/comments for major legislative insurance benefit increases, is provided to the Director, National VA&R Commission for presentation to Congress as needed.

The St. Paul office provides similar operations, staff representation and nationwide veteran’s service in the field of DVA Debt Management nationally, and for Pension operations for the western third of the nation.

A major new addition to the Philadelphia National VA&R unit occurred effective January 2010 with the acquisition of an experienced service officer for the new role of Pension Benefits Representative, to include all necessary computer and high capacity Fax equipment. A new National Staff representative was also added to the VA Regional office and PMC in Milwaukee for the middle third of the nation as well. The mission of the PMC representatives is to assist in all VA pension, DIC, accrued benefits, burial and dual entitlement claims where The American Legion holds power of attorney.

All offices have obtained access to the new VA benefits online systems coming on board in 2013: the Stakeholders Entry Portal (SEP), the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) and e-Benefits.

As of the first part of 2013, the VA Pension Maintenance Centers had 340,123 pending cases (161,102 in Philadelphia, 117,788 in St. Paul, and 61,233 in Milwaukee). Of these, The American Legion represented 50, 780 cases (25,803 – Philadelphia, 10,952 – Milwaukee, and 14,025 - St. Paul).

For the period July 1, 2012 to end of July 2013 the following activities of The American Legion's Philadelphia, St. Paul, and Milwaukee offices were reported:

Insurance, Pension & Debt Management:
(DMC - Debt Management Center)

Letters Received: 22,402
Letters Sent: 19,572
Disability Insurance Claims: 4,302
Death Insurance Claims: 747
Insurance Folders Reviewed: 4,088
In-Force Insurance Policy Accounts Reviewed: 7,848
New Insurance Accounts – SDVI: 6,803
Telephone Contacts: 9,783
Personal Contacts: 7,706
Submittal Memorandums & Reports: 6,492
DVA Case Responses Processed: 22,767
Insurance, Pension and Debt Management Cases
Live Claims, Evidence and Other Submittals Presented: 66,200
Excludes death claims and includes policy transactions
Such as dividend, loan and premium actions plan
conversions, cash surrenders, refunds, beneficiary
changes, disability claims with related medical
and legal evidence, wills, estate documents, master
record data changes, general inquiries, debt management
and pension case claims and supporting documents.

DMC Original Claims: 623
DMC & Pension Case Audits: 16,381
DMC Debt Waiver Cases: 606
New Pension Claims 8,016
Other Insurance Transactions & Inquiries 3,566
Pension Supporting Submittals (Ongoing Cases) 14,756
Appeals 479
Other Pension Transactions & Inquiries 12,500

Claims Service

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission provide 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 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 administrative assistants, and thirteen Appeals Representatives.

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 two MEB/PEB representatives; one stationed in Washington DC (Ft. Meade, Ft. Belvoir, and Walter Reed Medical Center), 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 that have offices inside VA Regional Offices; one stationed in Winston Salem, NC and one stationed in Salt Lake, UT.

The VA Pension Maintenance Centers (PMC) process 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.

Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD)

The Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) Service Offices in Salt Lake City and Winston Salem and The American Legion has one-representative in each office. Winston Salem and San Diego VA Regional Offices handle Quick Start Claims.

BDD is a program designed to allow a Service member to submit a claim for disability compensation 60 to 180 days prior to separation, retirement, or release from active duty or demobilization. BDD can help you receive VA disability benefits sooner, with a goal of within 60 days after release or discharge. (Titles 10 and 32)

Quick Start allows a Service member to submit a claim for disability compensation 1 to 59 days prior to separation, retirement, or release from active duty or demobilization (Title 10 or Title 32). According to VA, submitting a disability compensation claim before discharge makes it possible to receive VA disability benefits as soon as possible after separation, retirement, or demobilization. The chart below reflects the VA reported processing time and is current as of May 2013.

The American Legion Representatives review on average 3,600 of claims annually. These claims typically contain five conditions each and are submitted from around the world by service-members prior to separating from all branches of the Armed Forces. Additional research was required on some cases. The offices serve as a point of contact for Veterans and Accredited Service Officers wishing to inquire about a claim, question a

rating, or submit documents in support of a claim. Many of the calls from Veterans result from their frustration with getting prompt and accurate information from the VA Assistance Line and wanting some Advocacy from the American Legion. These offices strive to provide immediate answers to questions or concerns. In cases that require further research, answers are normally provided within 48 hours. These offices work with little fanfare, but the positive effect on Veterans and their families is enormous. According to US Department of Veterans Affairs reporting documents the processing times are as follows:

VA Regional Office	Program	Processing Time FYTD (Reported May 2013)
Salt Lake	BDD	332
San Diego	Quick Start	242
Winston Salem	BDD	230
Winston Salem	Quick Start	285

Board of Veterans Appeals American Legion

This report reflects the activities of The American Legion's Board of Veterans Appeals during the period of July 1, 2012, through June 30, 2013. The Office Manager of the Appeals Unit is Patricia (Patti) Senft as of October 24, 2011 to the present.

During this period, our Appeals Representatives reviewed a total of 6,774 cases. Included in this total were 130 (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 42,578 decisions, of which 7,150 (16.8%) had American Legion representation. These decisions consisted of 1,839 (25.7%) approvals, 3,319 (46.4%) remands, 1,699 (23.7%) denials, and 293 (4.0%) others. The last category includes administrative withdrawals, vacated cases, deaths, and dismissals. These figures represent a 2.6% decrease in appeal approvals, a 0.4% increase in remands and a 1.4% increase in denials over the previous 12-month period.

As recorded in last year's report, the two most significant challenges for Fiscal Year 2012 and 2013 are 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 has made a significant push in 2013 to bring its own staff and all VSO's on-line with the VBMS system which is designed to eliminate the paper processing of claims over the long-term. The VBMS system is intended to replace all VA Legacy systems such as Virtual VA and allow for electronic adjudication of claims. This process is still in its infancy, and The American Legion BVA unit has been chosen as the VSO at the Board to test pilot the processing of appeals through VBMS. Patti Senft and her unit are working with executive leadership, training staff, case management, and VSO liaison representatives at the Board to test and implement paperless IHP processing. This will increase efficiency and improve quality and service to our veterans in the long term. There are numerous obstacles such a as security access to overcome, and milestones to accomplish. The American Legion BVA unit is ready and capable to meet these challenges head on.

Department Service Officers School

The National Organization continues to authorize the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commission to conduct training schools twice a year 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 White House, Congress, VA and other agencies that are viable resources for Veteran services participated on panels to openly discuss topics with participants.

The primary goal of this training program, which began in 1985, is to enhance the skills and effectiveness of accredited American Legion service officers. The curriculum is broken into three separate tracks depending on the level of experience of the attendee. Track 1 is for service officers with less than one year of experience. Track 2 is designed for the intermediate that have up to five years. Track 3 is for the advance students that have been advocating for Veterans for over five years. 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 or accredited representative associations.

The Departments' participation in and support for the program remains very high. During this reporting period, two schools were held; August 1 – 3, 2012 at the Sheraton City Center Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana and February 20 – 22, 2013 at the Washington Hilton in Washington, DC. Attendance was greatly appreciated with a combined number 296 service officers in attendance. The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Washington Conference took place the following week.

During the Department Service Officer School held February 2013 at the Washington Hilton, Washington, D.C., VA&R conducted a Veterans Benefits Claims Fair. The Claims Fair was held on Thursday, February 21st in conjunction with the Recruit Military Career Fair held on the Concourse level of the Washington, Hilton from 08:30 until 3:00 pm.

Service Officers from the Track 1 and 2 classes of DSO School were teamed up with Service Officers from the Track 3 training classes to assist veterans seeking VA claims assistance at the Claims Fair. This created a mentorship opportunity for new service officers to ask questions of more experienced service officers. Service Officers attending DSO School volunteered to participate in the Claim Fair throughout the day.

This was the first Veterans Benefits Claims Fair held by VA&R Division and was felt to be a great success. Approximately 30 veterans requested claims assistance. 18 actual claims were filed. Two VA employees were available to accept all completed claim forms for processing by VA. Additional VA personnel were present to enroll veterans in E-Benefits and direct veterans to the Claim Fair following enrollment.

Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service

The VAVS National Deputy Representative attended the sixty-seventh meeting of the VAVS National Advisory Committee (NAC) that was held in Cary, North Carolina during March 14th-16th. The American Legion's Deputy National Representative, Brian Bertges, also serves as a member of the NAC Executive Committee. 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 2012, The American Legion had 8,487 members that volunteered 925,204 hours of service to hospitalized veterans and those in their communities. Based on the independent sector volunteer rate of $22.14 per volunteer hours in 2012, this is a total cost saving of almost $20.5 Million to VA. The American Legion also had an additional 1,050 new volunteers added in FY 2012, unfortunately, loss 1,370 volunteers, a net lost of 320 volunteers, which resulted in a loss of 11,102 volunteer hours.

VA&R Health Care Policy Unit

The National Staff includes Jacob Gadd, Deputy Director for Health Care, Roscoe Butler, Assistant Director for Health Care, Warren Goldstein, Senior Field Service Representative, Edward Lilley, Field Service Representative, and Wanda Kennedy, Administrative Assistant.

In the beginning of 2013, the VA&R Health Care Policy Unit redefined the mission and vision for the staff. Previously, the primary focus of the Field Service Representatives was solely on the System Worth Saving program. Today, the Field Service Representatives' responsibilities expanded to other critical healthcare policy areas within the health policy unit to include issue analysis and new initiatives. With issue analysis, each Field Service Representative are designated to work with each Veterans Health Administration (VHA) staff from the Operations, Policy, and Quality, Safety, Value offices. Additionally, the Field Service Representatives are now responsible for establishing a relationship with their assigned subsection offices under their designated VHA areas in order to keep abreast of any new health care topics and initiatives that directly affect veterans. The health policy unit is also responsible for researching any new topics and initiatives that are focused on veterans' health care.

From November 2012 to April 2013, the Health Care Policy Unit conducted 15 site visits throughout the VA Medical Center system with the System Worth Saving Task Force members for the 2013 System Worth Saving Report. This past year's publication focused on Women Veterans' Health Care.

The VA&R Health Care Policy Unit continues to assist veterans with concerns or inquiries regarding health care eligibility and enrollment, third-party billing, traumatic brain injury (TBI), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicide prevention, caregiver program, burial benefits, and other health care issues and/or concerns that are 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 and http://legion.org/systemworthsaving.

The VA&R Health Policy Unit continues to serve as an advocate for service members, family members, and veterans by providing assistance with understanding and accessing their earned VA health care benefits. This assistance includes questions and/or concerns veterans have regarding their VA health care benefits, programs, services, and burial benefits.

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 since 1919, 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 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 receives a written request from the Department Commander or Department Adjutant to revoke the individual's accreditation due to death, retirement, resignation, or on rare occasions for just cause. 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 368 requests for accreditation and 123 requests for cancellation were received from the Departments and submitted to VA for necessary action. As of June 30, 2013, there were 2,907 Accredited Representatives of The American Legion with 3 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

Staff Field Assignments

Staff from the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division, including the director, deputy directors, assistant directors, and representatives from the Health Policy Unit and Board of Veterans Appeals staff attended various American Legion functions around the country including the National Convention, Fall and Spring National Executive Committee (NEC) meetings, the Annual Mid-Winter Conference in Washington, D.C., Department Conventions, Department Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) trainings, Department Seminars, Department Service Officer Schools, Department Claims training, fully developed claims assessment and training at seven VA Regional Offices, fact-finding trips, and various conferences.

The Field Service staff in the Health Policy Unit, along with the System Worth Saving Task Force visited 17 VA medical facilities which included two VA medical center quality review site visits.

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.

Four Certificates of Appreciation have been awarded during the period July 1, 2012, through June 30, 2013, for an overall total of 1,329 since the program was initiated

Citations of 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.

Thirty-Three Citations for Meritorious Service and Loyal Cooperation in The American Legion's Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Program were presented during the period July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013. Since this type of recognition and appreciation began, 5,057 citations for meritorious service have been presented.

The American Legion Auxiliary
Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Report

"If we ever end homelessness in this country, it will be with our veteran population first." Taking this quote to heart, the volunteers of the American Legion Auxiliary excelled in serving our homeless veterans and their families. Auxiliary units have always been there to assist at local VA-sponsored stand downs and, this year, they found new and exciting ways to support National President Peggy Thomas' request to concentrate on homeless veterans, especially, women veterans. Whether by providing warm clothing and supplies to homeless shelters, helping furnish transitional housing, or celebrating when a veteran moves into a home of their own, the members of the Auxiliary have been there.

National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation (VA&R) Chairman Janet Jefford is proud to report that members have worked diligently to honor, help, and support our "angel" veterans. The question "Who will be there to take care of the next generation of veterans?" is being answered as members work to fulfill the first objective of the VA&R plan: To increase the number of volunteers at VA hospitals and in Field and Home Service. The Department of Minnesota alone reported 258 new Field Service volunteers and 313 new Home Service volunteers. Unit 44 in Marquette, Mich., put a new twist on regular bingo games that are held at most VA hospitals. They turned them into bingo birthday parties, celebrating those whose birthdays fall in that month. Birthday veterans get extra money if they bingo! At the Jacobetti Home for Veterans, ALA members formed a Ladies Friendship Sewing Group with female residents, resulting in beautiful homemade quilts. Each completed quilt is then won by one of the residents.

"Soaring to New Heights" echoed in the hearts and minds of our members as they worked hard to fulfill objective two and lend comfort and support to homeless veterans and their families. Junior members of Landis Unit 146 in North Carolina joined with JROTC cadets in a "Homeless Not Helpless" project. They planned and implemented an all-night campout in front of the post, sleeping in cardboard boxes to develop empathy for homeless veterans and their families. Not only did they raise awareness, but they also collected more than 3,500 cans of food and in-kind donations totaling more than $19,000. Unit 1041 in Buffalo, N.Y., held its fifth annual Chinese auction to benefit homeless veterans, raising more than $12,000. Funds will be used not only to aid local programs, but also to begin an initiative to create a home for returning women veterans.

Healing through art therapy is the focus of the third objective, supporting our obligation as a presenting sponsor of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. Members raised $81,933 to support this program. Boston was the site of the 2012 Festival last October. Kudos to all the Auxiliary volunteers, especially to the Department of Massachusetts, for hosting a fantastic hospitality room for contestants and their families. The VA&R Committee awarded $2,800 in grants to four departments to help

fund local creative arts festivals. New York and New Jersey were first-time recipients with great successes.

To quote Wyoming's VA&R Chairman Peggy Miller, "Our units are ready to do many things. Just a call or email from a veteran, and they run to get it done. They just don't like writing reports, and that is too bad. With only about 50 percent of units reporting, the number of hours worked, dollars spent, and veterans served is staggering. One can only imagine what it would show if 100 percent reported."

In closing, here are some thoughts from Mona Shipley, Ohio's VA&R chairman. She closed her report sharing things members do that don't include statistics, but instead focus on the human side of what we do: "We have taken time to read a book to a veteran who has no hands to turn the pages. We have sat with spouses as loved ones undergo surgery. We have comforted families and rejoiced when a loved one comes home. We have made mortgage payments and supplied gifts at Christmas and Easter. We have bought groceries, cooked meals, and drove to doctor appointments. We honored our veterans at Veterans Day and Memorial Day ceremonies and dinners. We stood by our Legionnaires when they performed graveside services for a fallen comrade." We are always there when it matters. Thank you, angels, for your service.

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
National President
Peggy Thomas, Virginia

As I end my year as your national president, a year of being on the road nearly non-stop, I have to admit I am looking forward to spending some time at home. It's a familiar, comfortable place, and I know what to expect when I get there. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for our troops. Our servicemembers are coming home faced with so many new challenges, from PTSD to unemployment, and even homelessness. There is much work to be done to support our veterans and military families. I am so proud of all the Auxiliary members for their dedication in providing this support.

During the course of the year, one of the things that stood out the most to me was the impact of The American Legion Family working together. Our collective size makes us a force to be reckoned with in our local communities and in Washington, D.C. An organization our size has a lot of influence, and we need to grow membership to sustain that influence.

One of the most meaningful parts of my year as national president was visiting with veterans at VA hospitals and veterans homes. There is nothing like talking with veterans firsthand to find out what their needs truly are and how much they appreciate the work we do. Their families are also so appreciative of the Auxiliary and grateful for everything we do to serve and honor their loved ones.

I have a lot of compassion for our veterans and their children. Our servicemembers aren't paid nearly what they should be, yet they have given the best part of their lives to our country. They should be able to give their children the education they deserve. That's why I chose the Children of Warriors National Presidents' Scholarship Fund as my special project. Thanks to you, we raised a tremendous amount of money for the children of our brave warriors – double what I'd hoped!

During my travels, I heard many stories about unit membership drives and members personally reaching out to new and renewing members. I'm glad to hear it, because we must grow our membership to give our veterans and military families the support they need. The American Legion Auxiliary should be at least the size of the Legion, and we need to pull out all the stops to make that happen. A good place to start is with the 96 Legion posts that don't have an Auxiliary unit associated with them.

I would like to offer my sincere appreciation to ALA National Secretary Dubbie Buckler and my executive assistant, Tamara Shumate, for their hard work and support this year. Another huge thanks goes out to all the chairmen and officers for serving with

me this year and doing a fantastic job! In fact, the entire National Headquarters staff has been wonderful to work with.

Most importantly, I would like to thank all of you, the American Legion Auxiliary members. It was truly an honor representing you this year as your national president and seeing firsthand the wonderful work you do. You truly are angels. Please keep up the good work. Our veterans, servicemembers, and military families are counting on you.

National Vice President
Nancy Brown-Park, California

As national vice president, I am charged with the responsibility of supporting the national president. It has been an honor this year to do just that. National President Peggy's theme, "Soaring to New Heights for God and Country," has inspired us all to support our mission and to make membership our No. 1 priority.

One of the most outstanding experiences for each vice president is the opportunity to spend a week volunteering at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. This year, the festival was held in Boston, Mass. We met amazing veterans who shared their stories and experiences of how the arts helped in their recoveries. I will keep the memories for a lifetime.

My husband, Jim, and I traveled to Peggy's homecoming, and the southern hospitality was wonderful. We both learned so much about the South and its amazing history.

Mission Training followed, and I was off to Connecticut. I just made it home before Hurricane Sandy blew in. The training conducted by national volunteers was outstanding! Members left with new knowledge about ALA mission programs and had the opportunity to learn from each other.

Following the Washington DC Conference, we attended D.C. Briefings and had an opportunity to learn more about the VA system, The American Legion D.C. office, National Security, and Legion legislative priorities. In addition, we heard about the impressive work the organizations in the ALA Call to Service Consortium are doing to support our military and veteran communities.

In May, the first Department Leadership National Conference was held. The conference brought together all incoming leadership at one planning event in a time of the year that gives departments an opportunity to use the information shared by national officers, chairmen, and staff. One of the highlights of the combined meeting was the commitment to the "Race to a Million" membership campaign.

Jim and I were invited to attend the U.S. Naval Academy awards ceremony where I represented the Auxiliary in presenting an award to a midshipman.

My education included attending National Finance Committee, Long Range Strategic Planning meetings, membership planning, a NVCAF site visit, ALA Foundation Board and TAL Membership meetings, the National Commander's Testimony, awareness campaign briefings, and interacting with our National Headquarters staff.

Planning took the majority of my time this year. In November, I had the opportunity to spend time at our National Headquarters to plan for the 2013-2014 administrative year. During that visit, I met with each division and had the opportunity to learn more about them and the amazing work they do each day. In January and February, VA&R Chairman Janet Jefford and I spent many hours on the phone reviewing applications for national appointments and assigning members to serve on committees. During the Washington DC Conference, the Special Appointments Committee reviewed the selections and the appointments were finalized.

This year as national vice president was filled with so many opportunities to support National President Peggy, to learn from so many at all levels of the organization, and to plan for next year. I've learned about our history and been part of the conversation about change.

It is an exciting time to be part of the leadership of the American Legion Auxiliary.

National Secretary
Mary "Dubbie" Buckler, Indiana

In four years as part of the American Legion Auxiliary national leadership team, we again succeeded at maintaining a stellar record of clean audits in an environment of increased public and regulatory scrutiny of nonprofits. National Headquarters has managed the organization's finances well for decades. The revolutionary IRS Form 990 enacted in 2009 requires far more complex annual financial auditing and reporting. You can be proud that we manage things well at NHQ. Our financial and operations audits are A+. In the past four years, we have achieved stellar audits of our magazine and our employee benefits program. Our first-ever IT audit reports our critical processes are all good, and our first-ever A-133 federal funds audit was also A+ stellar. More than 90 percent of the budget supports mission delivery, and only one-tenth supports fundraising and administration. This is outstanding and no small accomplishment – kudos to our NHQ staff.

The ALA must "invest in itself" and wisely spend its time, talent, and money on things that position the organization to grow and flourish. These have been austere times, and we have "done more with less," cut expenses over 20 percent, and competitively lost some excellent staff members to better-paying opportunities. Our current NHQ staff is talented, experienced, and better educated than ever before. They care deeply about the ALA mission, collectively volunteering more than 100 hours and supporting our ongoing NHQ homeless veterans service project.

For the ALA to flourish, people need to know who we are, what we do, and why we matter. My priorities continue to be to improve branding, awareness, and communications; build organizational capacity; and help simplify the ALA's framework. With creative teamwork and a focus on YOU, our members, we've vastly improved resources and are working to improve even more. We revamped the magazine, combined *eNews* and *eBulletin*, and improved the www.ALAforVeterans.org website, simplifying navigation and adding more user interaction. Our marketing brand enhances the ALA's "first glance" image. We have an ALA video channel on the website with two celebrity PSAs, a marketing/membership video that departments can customize year after year, Mission Training videos, AND our new public awareness TV commercial.

We're working on additions to an ALA Department Operations Guide, similar to the ALA Girls State Program and Operations Guide adopted by the NEC. We rolled out the first chapter and are working on eight more identified by the Strategic Planning Standards teams and a department task force. And yes, it's a really big project!

While nationally, donor-giving and grants declined among members, we've generated increased donations from non-ALA members and raised more than $4 million in outside support. Through direct mail giving, we received 109,000 gifts from members and 134,000 gifts from nonmembers – one-third higher! Our new Planned Giving Guide demystifies donating. In our fourth year, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is the ALA's largest external donor, granting more than $3.2 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 serve compatible missions. The ALA has become a prominent national leader in marshaling veterans' outreach efforts across the country, earning us mention in the Congressional Record twice from appreciative recipients, and gaining the notice of President Obama who invited our D.C. office VISTA to a personal meeting with him at the White House!

Amidst all the high rating marks, the reality is that some things have to change. We reach our centennial mark in five years. The ALA's heritage and relevance can only move forward by changing with the times. Laws, regulations, and people's habits have all

changed. There are more options for how people can spend their spare time. People are joining less, and those who do join will only renew if they find personal fulfillment in belonging or because they are so proud of what an organization does that they want to financially support it.

National Treasurer
Marta Hedding, Indiana

For 2013, the organization can take pride that its budget and balance sheets are in the black. For the past decade, the organization rarely took in enough revenue to fund the budget adopted by the national governing body. Dues revenue has not covered expenses for more than 16 years, and investment income that once had covered the shortfall lost $4 million in the 2008 market drop that we'll never get back. Thankfully, after several years of aggressive budget cuts, a national dues increase of $4 annually was passed at the 2011 ALA National Convention, effective with this year's membership dues. The FY13 budget was the first truly balanced budget in a decade.

After a year of NHQ scouting and negotiating an improved member benefits program, we introduced our new partnership with Gallagher Benefit Services in October 2012, offering a vastly expanded array of benefits and discounts. Via the national website, www.ALAforVeterans.org, members can obtain and compare quotes from different companies for many products and services and can access many discounts ranging from technology to restaurant, entertainment and store coupons. Through our USAA/Auxiliary Credit Card program, we will again be able to start sharing royalties with departments.

The ALA Management Information System (ALAMIS), our national database, now serves more than 600 units online, with more being added as their departments authorize them – a huge growth in system users. Units can pull reports, update member profiles, enter leadership, and now can enter new and renewed members – and they want to be able to do even more. New functionality will continue to roll out over the next year, including a new member portal on the website tied to ALAMIS with additional "members only" features. While many are eager to pay dues online, it is fiscally prudent to wait for the vendor's package upgrade in two and a half years rather than spend $250,000 now to have a custom feature built that may not even be compatible with the software in three years.

We continue to receive requests for a Paid Up For Life (PUFL) membership payment plan. In 1995, it was discussed with department leaders and the National Finance Committee; both groups rejected the idea. In 2003 and 2009, a payment plan was again researched, and the National Finance Committee rejected it both times because the hefty cost to administer it was cost-prohibitive. To help meet members' desires, PUFL memberships can be paid by credit card – VISA or MasterCard.

Contrary to what many thought about the effect that increasing dues would have on membership, more new members have been recruited halfway through the 2013 membership year than in all of 2012, the year before the increase took effect! Nearly 56,000 new members have been added, compared to the average of 50,000 new members annually added over the last several years. This increase demonstrates that recruiting new members isn't the problem, regardless of dues amount. Retaining members, however, is another story. Of all new members recruited in 2010, 28 percent did not renew for 2011 and 2012. More than one-fourth of all new members added before the dues increase dropped out before the dues increase was even adopted. Every year, we lose about 10 percent of the new members who had joined the year before – a longstanding trend.

Why, despite the efforts of the National Membership Committee and department membership teams, isn't the ALA retaining members? While many members love our mission and strive to engage, retain and attract members to join them in "doing our mission," we also know that other members are reluctant to change, give up control, and

accept new ideas and people. For too many units, this is the norm and the primary reason our membership declines. For the ALA to grow, new members need a reason to stay. We need members who are inclusive, work together, and lead by example, demonstrating our motto of Service Not Self.

National Chaplain
Rosemarie W. Hauck, Missouri

My goal was to be more than the person who gives the opening and closing prayers. Chaplains are encouraged to provide spiritual and emotional guidance by lending dignity and respect to make a difference to hurting people. The challenge given this year was: "Be a tuned-in listener who is concerned and compassionate by showing love and kindness to all because the only way to offer a sincere prayer is to have listened to the need."

We have accomplished this goal through units and departments focusing on making a difference to members. This year, hardworking chaplains gave of themselves to their members. The main topics covered this year were Be prepared, Offer assistance in time of death, Plan and promote services on all spiritual dates, Visit sick and shut-in members, Promote church attendance, Have a memorial service, Have a Four Chaplains service, Join the email prayer line, Join the chaplain Facebook page, and prepare a prayer book for National President Peggy Thomas. Chaplains were encouraged to read and use the "Prayers and Reflections" page in the *National News* section of *Auxiliary* magazine.

Departments reported participation in memorial services, providing food to grieving families, draping charters, memorial donations, Chapel of Four Chaplains programs and donations, and the use of grace cards. Units participated in POW/MIA ceremonies, Memorial Day activities, September 11th remembrances, Veterans Day activities, and other patriotic services. Many units held memorial services at funeral homes and churches. Some units included their Juniors. One unit held a Post Everlasting Ceremony with their post.

Many states were affected by horrific natural disasters this year. Prayers and support were given to those in need. Chaplains and members bonded together to assist prayerfully, physically, and financially. A plea was placed on the chaplain Facebook page requesting chaplains to lead the way for donations to the Auxiliary Emergency Fund. I personally thank each of you for stepping up to the plate. Sadly, I report that death entered into the ranks of departments for senior and Junior members. "They have left us with the duty of carrying on toward the ultimate goal. Their death reminds us that we are traveling in the same direction, along the same way, and shall eventually arrive at the same destination."

Reports reflected a total of $7,008 donated to the Chapel of Four Chaplains and $82,105 in memorial donations. 11,026 cards were sent to military personnel, the sick or shut-in, in sympathy, or to veterans and their families. I received 27 narrative reports from department chaplains.

It has been an honor to work with department chaplains this year. "We worked together, prayed together, and served together, 'Soaring to New Heights for God and Country.'" Special thanks to departments that reported and to members who sent prayers and inspirations for National President Peggy's prayer book. Hopefully, someone was touched by the prayers and reflections in the Auxiliary magazine and on social media. May God continue to shower His many blessings upon each of you is my prayer.

National Historian
Angela S. Kilcrease, Mississippi

"Once upon a time…" – each time we hear these words, we anticipate a wonderful story that will either transform or inspire us. For the American Legion Auxiliary, our

stories are those of service, sacrifice, and dedication. Each department historian was tasked with the mission of recording the many activities that occurred during the administrative year. For most, this was a monumental feat as our Angels in Service do so much to further our mission to serve our veterans, military, and their families.

I had the great honor of working with a group of historians who truly exemplified "Angels in Service." I was proud to have received 31 mid-year progress reports and 29 year-end reports. Most of these historians are writing histories for their departments, documenting the service given, and adding to the historical path for others to follow in years to come.

Soon after the 2012 National Convention, we opened an ALA Historians Facebook group (American Legion Auxiliary Historians) and have enjoyed our online "meeting room." Social media can do much to further information sharing. It is my hope that this group will continue to interact and that new historians will join in the discussions.

Honoring Our Veterans Past, Present, and Future—how true those words are, particularly when it comes to the Historian program. Delaware Department Historian Deborah Guenther defines our history as "continuous and forever evolving." Many department historians used unique ideas to promote this important program in their neck of the woods.

Virginia's historian, Linda Alstaetter, kept a notebook of her activities to pass along to the new historian. It included ideas, timelines, and a to-do list. She also is passing along copies of her reports.

Department of Texas Historian Kathy Wons wrote a communication entitled, "Telling our Texas Story." In it, she asked unit historians to share activities, resources, and innovations in gathering their own story. Department of Illinois Historian Kathy Cisna created a form for district and division historians to use to detail activities of the department president when she visited their area. The information gathered from these forms certainly helped her write an accurate history for the department.

There are so many great stories of service and ingenuity from our department historians, but space will not allow the telling of all of them here. And, of course, I would be remiss to not commend the many unit historians who added much to our history and reporting. I thank each and every historian for your service and for helping the American Legion Auxiliary "Soar to New Heights."

Pulitzer Prize-winning author David McCullough said, "No harm's done to history by making it something someone would want to read." For us, that "someone" will be our next volunteer and/or our next leader. What we record today of Service Not Self should be the inspiration for those who will follow in our footsteps.

Central Division National Vice President
Mary Jo Berning, Iowa

The nine departments of the Central Division unfurled their wings and volunteered their time and talent to our veterans, giving generously to the National Veterans Creative Arts program, promoting programs benefiting homeless veterans, contributing to National President Peggy's project, the Children of Warriors Scholarship Fund, using technology to promote membership, and providing support to our service members and their families.

The membership chairman of West Virginia reminded members that membership is a way to say "thank you" to the veterans who sacrificed so much for our freedom. President Nancy Sundstrom's project was the Welfare Fund which raised more than $3,500 for veterans in hospitals and nursing homes.

The special project for Illinois this year was supporting homeless veterans, especially those with children. Units located shelters in their areas and donated more than $150,000 in their communities. Illinois President Patricia Sienkiewicz reported that

$15,000 was donated to the department to distribute to VA facilities working with homeless veteran programs.

Kansas implemented a mentor program this year, spearheaded by two Auxiliary members who put together many informative programs for department meetings. This proved very popular, and they plan to continue with this program. Department President Cheri Thomas reports that at Kansas' three veterans hospitals and two veterans homes, Auxiliary members volunteer their time at ice cream socials, chili dinners, Halloween parties, bingo nights, fish fries, and the very popular Christmas Gift Shop.

Michigan President Mary Anne Yunker's theme for the year was "The Sky's the Limit for Our Veterans." Holiday gift shops were held at five VA Medical Centers and two state-owned veterans homes. Michigan held six stand downs, two geared exclusively for women veterans.

The town of Henryville, Ind., had a disastrous tornado last year which gave the AEF chairman incentive to collect more than $10,000 for this program. Indiana has seven VA Medical Centers and four state hospitals where Auxiliary volunteers helped more than 10,000 hospitalized and outpatient veterans. Indiana Department President Nancy Gunning reported that nearly $30,000 was spent in their VA centers and hospitals.

President Mary Littrell of the Department of Iowa and her membership team focused efforts on membership this year and were No. 1 in the nation for many months. Junior members were involved in numerous projects, sending packages to troops, making tray favors, and collecting items for veterans homes and shelters, to name just a few. One Auxiliary unit sent 65 boxes to Camp Brown in Afghanistan. A Day of Service project, called Quilts of Valor, was held at their department headquarters to make quilts for wounded veterans.

Busy Wisconsin had a very successful year with their special project, the Homeless Veterans Grant Fund. This fund started three years ago, and more than $37,000 was collected this year. The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival received donations totaling $6,500 from Wisconsin. President Diana Sirovina reported that for the first time, members were offered a CD with all the program information.

Ohio boosted its membership with two successful membership roundups, traveling to all 14 districts in two days. The ALA Buckeye Girls State program was very successful with more than 900 girls attending. Department President Karen Peel honored all VA hospital representatives and deputies at their mid-winter conference.

Missouri Department President Laura Mosby reported that the Legion Family donated $35,000 to her project, Camp Hope, a hunting and fishing camp for combat-wounded veterans and active-duty servicemembers. Missouri members supported and volunteered their time at seven VA hospitals and seven VA nursing homes. One of their most heartwarming activities is to spend time assisting veterans at the 14 facilities during the Christmas gift shops.

Thank you, Central Division members, for your membership and for honoring our veterans because you care.

Eastern Division National Vice President
Joan Reinoehl, Pennsylvania

The Eastern Division continues its service to veterans, their families, children and youth, communities and the troops. Each department set its goal and determined the ways to achieve it. My visits to the Eastern Division departments were very informative, and it was interesting to see how each one promoted and implemented the American Legion Auxiliary mission-focused programs.

During my visit to the departments, membership was always emphasized. Every department is working hard to succeed in reaching its membership goal. As of this writing, the Eastern Division is in second place in membership. Huge congratulations to all involved!

Our members have given many hours of dedication and have been active in serving our veterans and the military. Tremendous hours and monetary donations were spent volunteering at VA hospitals and veterans homes. The Department of Connecticut members participated in three troop sendoffs, making more than 500 ditty bags to hand out along with a box of Girl Scout cookies to each soldier at deployment ceremonies. The District of Columbia Auxiliary members and The American Legion joined forces to become official sponsors of the U.S. Army National Museum. This new educational resource is for the public to view at Fort Belvoir, Va. The museum will be a national landmark to honor America's soldiers and preserve the history of America's oldest military branch. One unit from the Department of Delaware received a team medal for sending boxes of supplies, including baseball bats and toys, for children in Afghanistan. Another unit collected gently used wigs and gave haircuts to those who donated ponytails for Locks of Love on Make a Difference Day. In the Department of Maine, they are involved in Operation Tribute, giving donations for the Fund for Fallen Soldiers.

Department of Maryland Juniors have been busy this year. Their projects were Children's Cancer Center at John Hopkins Hospital, Metals for Miracles for Casey Cares (which assists families of terminally ill children and grants the children wishes), Veterans Day, Flag Day, and Memorial Day. It's good to see Juniors being active. Military children were a top priority in these projects.

The Department of Massachusetts had the honor of hosting the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Boston this year. New Hampshire had the opportunity to pay tribute to all the Vietnam veterans at the New Hampshire Guard facility where there was a celebration for them. The Department of New Jersey filled piggy banks with donations throughout the year for Child Welfare Foundation. Department of New York has their own American Legion Auxiliary College full of information regarding the Auxiliary, its programs, and how members of this great organization serve veterans and their families. The Department of Pennsylvania held leadership workshops across the state, and they co-sponsored women veteran symposiums. Rhode Island members participated in numerous troop send-offs and welcome-home celebrations. They also volunteered at Operation stand down. The Department of Vermont worked with family readiness groups and Operation: Military Kids, in addition to visiting veterans in nursing homes, hospitals, and private homes.

As your Eastern Division National Vice President, I am very proud and would like to extend a huge thank-you to the entire membership of the Eastern Division. Your service and devotion is greatly appreciated. You have worked hard to do your part for the success of all the American Legion Auxiliary programs.

Northwestern Division National Vice President
Doris Ann Werlinger, South Dakota

The Northwestern Division has been busy working the Auxiliary mission in each department. I am proud to share their many accomplishments of the year.

Wyoming: Seeing Juniors involved in the Wyoming mid-winter conference was awesome, and the opportunity for them to hear and see our veterans talk about the poppy and demonstrate how they are made was very interesting. The Juniors made homemade valentines for the veterans, which they personally presented at the meeting. The Christmas gift shop was also a big focus for the state.

North Dakota: At the mid-winter session in Minot, they displayed the different pods with examples of reports that could be given. The group performed a skit on the importance of individual involvement in a unit and what could be done to attract and retain members.

Montana: A VA service officer visited with Districts 4 and 5 and provided information about benefits for living veterans and those for a surviving spouse. One unit had balloons for sale for a balloon release on Memorial Day. They released more than

2,000 balloons in memory of veterans and active-duty servicemembers. The Christmas gift shop was a keystone event for Montana. In addition, they kept veterans' apartments in Missoula stocked with food, pots and pans, sheets, and towels so veterans could set up house while finding employment.

South Dakota: The Christmas gift shop for veterans at this state's four VA facilities is a unifying program for this department. Units across the state get involved providing gifts, monetary contributions, and volunteer hours in each facility. South Dakota ALA Girls State welcomed 430 girls. It was a great event attended by the governor, two senators, one representative, and the attorney general of the state.

Colorado: The Christmas gift shop serves veterans through the support of all units across the state of Colorado. The ALA Girls State program was well attended, and many members from Colorado attended the Washington DC Conference, visiting with their legislative representatives to discuss veterans issues.

Minnesota: The department president's special project, Baby Bundle Baskets, was an overwhelming success. More than 130 Baby Bundle Baskets and 60 Mo's bags were delivered to military parents, which were well received. Minnesota attendees at the Washington DC Conference visited their congressional representatives and talked about veterans issues in their state. President Tolzmann did her project at the Minneapolis Veterans Hospital, refurbishing the women's waiting room, which is now complete. She made visits to seven districts with National President Peggy Thomas and visited several additional units throughout the year.

Nebraska: The entire Legion Family leadership visited each district in December, meeting at central locations to pick up cookies to take to the veterans facilities throughout the region. This is a big event and is well attended by the posts and units.

I have enjoyed all of my visits to the fullest. So many wonderful things are being done for our veterans, military personnel, and their families. Our youth are also being served through Operation: Military Kids, a great program for young people.

Thank you for the opportunity to meet so many wonderful veterans, military families, and Auxiliary members. Our Juniors have big shoes to fill, and they are learning how to do it from very dedicated Auxiliary members.

Southern Division National Vice President
Shirley Fraser, Florida

It has been such an honor to be national vice president of the Southern Division. The departments have worked tirelessly on membership. It was not easy, and all departments did their very best. Virginia started at the top and stayed there, and the rest of the departments chased them. Tennessee stated that they were not going to sit in the back of the room at the national convention. As a result, they have been in the top 10 for membership all year. All departments have worked hard to find ways to raise funds for ALA mission programs. Thousands of dollars were raised for the national president's project, the Children of Warriors National Presidents' Scholarship Fund. Raffling off a beautiful handpainted picture of poppies raised $6,742 for Veterans Creative Arts in Alabama. Alabama also hosts a Junior camp where they study legislative procedures, flag etiquette, and other subjects. By passing the hat and getting Juniors involved, the Department of Kentucky raised thousands of dollars for their Healing Field, a field of flags memorializing Kentucky's servicemembers who have fallen during the War on Terror.

All departments worked hard on stand downs. It takes a lot of work and organization to make them successful, and the greatest achievement is when a homeless veteran ends up with a home and a job. In Florida, Auxiliary members raised $19,358 for the Gainesville Fisher House, which will be available for families whose loved ones are receiving medical attention at Malcom Randall VA Medical Center. They also raised

$15,575 for Operation: Military Kids, enabling more than 100 children of military families to attend camp.

In Arkansas, Auxiliary members raised $6,000 for a program called Restart For Vets Inc. Mississippi wanted residents in state nursing homes to have a cool treat, so they purchased a deluxe snow cone machine for them. Many babies were born into military families in Louisiana, and the department had five baby showers to welcome them. The baby showers are held after the babies are born, when hopefully Daddy is home to enjoy the activities.

Texas had Christmas in November, which featured food, presents, and fun for 225 active-duty military families. They were also present at the commissioning of the USS Fort Worth, filming the event to share with local elementary schools. Puerto Rico sponsors a Boy Scout troop, and they honored two scouts who achieved the rank of Eagle Scout. To show their appreciation, the rest of the troop did major repairs to the Legion post home. Puerto Rico also raised $4,500 for youth through their education and scholarship programs. Oklahoma collected money and supplies for all the people who were devastated by the terrible tornadoes.

The Southern Division can be very proud. They most certainly have been "serving our veterans and community Southern style with heart."

Western Division National Vice President
Barbara Rutherford, Washington

Thanks to our national organization and National President Peggy Thomas for giving the division national vice presidents the opportunity to travel to the states this year. I believe this has been good for the organization and has opened up communication between the departments. What a way to get the word out to many members who don't attend our national convention or conferences.

My first department visit was to Arizona, where I attended their fall meeting. I learned so much about the many hours of volunteering, and donations generated by the department, with lots of fun and fellowship.

My next department visit was to Utah, where I helped set up and work the Christmas Gift Shop. It was a very rewarding experience, and it was so moving to see how grateful the veterans and families are to the American Legion Auxiliary. I enjoyed a special lunch with the gift show volunteers and am appreciative for the opportunity to work with the veterans.

I attended Mission Training in Las Vegas, which was presented by the Auxiliary's national chairmen. I was impressed with what valuable information was given and enjoyed meeting many members from the Western Division.

In February, I visited the Department of Washington and attended their mid-year meeting. It was an enjoyable, productive time with some fabulous members of my own department.

April brought me to the Department of California during Junior Conference Weekend. It was a wonderful weekend, and after being with the Junior members of the state, I am certain we don't have to worry about the future of the American Legion Auxiliary. Our Juniors have it under control, and the members who help mentor our Juniors do such a fabulous job. My last two visits were to the Department of Oregon in June and the Department of Idaho in July, where I learned more about their hours of volunteering, donations, and programs in their departments.

I am sorry I was not able to visit every state in the Western Division and am sure that they are working just as hard on membership, and for veterans and military families.

National President Peggy wanted us to make membership our challenge for the year in speaking with our departments. As of this writing in June, the Western Division is in first place, and our division has three departments in the top ten. The Western Division is doing their part to increase and sustain membership.

I am very proud of the dedication and hard work of all the members of the Western Division and for their support in making sure all Auxiliary members give "the best from the West."

Americanism Committee
Diane Duscheck, Wisconsin, Chairman

Through the Americanism program, members of the American Legion Auxiliary have reached out to troops and their families. Deploying, active-duty, and returning troops have been shown great appreciation for their sacrifice and dedication. The Legion Family has both uplifted and supported the families of the troops. In our schools, children have had their education enhanced by learning the important lessons of civic responsibility, respect for the flag and our country, and what it means to be a veteran.

Americanism proved to be a way of life for Auxiliary members this year. Flags adorned homes, flew above bridges, fluttered from car windows, and decorated the graves of veterans laid to rest in local cemeteries. Members observed patriotic holidays and events by marching in parades and providing honor guards. Parades also provided opportunities to pass out literature on flag etiquette and to invite the public to give their worn American flags to the Legion Family for proper disposal. Flags have been presented to community leaders, businesses, nursing homes, and schools.

Get Out The Vote was promoted in communities at the beginning of the Auxiliary year as important elections drew near. Members voted, volunteered at the polls, and helped neighbors and community members get to the polls to cast their own votes. Students were able to practice civic responsibility through Kids Voting USA as the children embraced the experience of voting and choosing leaders at national, state, and local levels. For many young students, this was their first opportunity to cast a ballot for the candidates of their choice.

Deployed and deploying troops felt the hand of Americanism when Juniors sent them thank-you cards decorated with flags and poppies along with pocket flags so they could carry a piece of America close to their hearts. Welcome-home ceremonies and yellow ribbon reintegration programs embraced troops as they returned to their communities. Blue Star Banners and Gold Star Banners were handed out to family members when appropriate.

Units combined Americanism and Education programs in schools where members taught flag respect and flag folding to students, explained the meaning of the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem, and shared the background of Veterans Day and Memorial Day. Lapel pins, flag comic books, rulers, and stickers were distributed to eager students. Schools received the gift of flags so students would have flags in their classrooms as they recited The Pledge of Allegiance. America's Veterans, Our Country's Flag, and For Which It Stands DVDs were given to schools for classroom use. Students were encouraged to decorate classroom doors with patriotic posters and to participate in the Americanism Essay Contest by using the theme "What Freedom Do I Enjoy the Most?" Units also worked hand-in-hand with school staff to present certificates and medals to students who exemplified high standards of Americanism.

Auxiliary members have joined with Legionnaires to promote the Legion's Americanism programs. While the Legion sponsored programs for American Legion Baseball, the oratorical contest, and Junior Shooting Sports, Auxiliary units were ready to lend a helping hand in manning concession booths, judging contests, scoring, and supervising.

The flag amendment has been a legislative issue of the Legion Family for many years. Once again, members contacted their elected representatives in Washington, D.C. through emails, letters, phone calls, and personal visits to petition them to support the amendment to protect the United States flag from desecration.

Auxiliary Emergency Fund Committee
Ann Rehbein, Iowa, Chairman

This past year saw many of our members suffer unbelievable losses due to many disastrous events. Whether natural or caused by man, the hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, drought, explosions, and fires have caused great losses of homes, businesses, and livelihoods. The Auxiliary Emergency Fund Committee has been vigilant in sending out expedited AEF Fund Applications to those areas. Members who have lost everything no longer have quick access to records, and these expedited applications are a help, not a hassle. Their notes of appreciation show just how valuable the AEF is to our members.

The Auxiliary Emergency Fund (AEF) – a place to turn to when you need financial help. The AEF was established in 1969 with a bequest from Helen Colby Small of Burlington, Wis. Since that time, individuals, units, and departments have contributed money to sustain the fund.

The Auxiliary Emergency Fund exists to assist members in need. By promoting awareness and knowledge of the program, raising funds, and disseminating information about its application process, we can ensure Auxiliary members in need receive help. Brochures and guides are available for use on the American Legion Auxiliary national website under the resources tab. Visitors to our site can also find fundraising ideas, appreciation citations, contribution forms, and an application for assistance.

Many of us, at one time or another, have experienced a shortfall in our bank accounts, but it is usually not dire enough to force us to seek assistance from the many resources available. The AEF grant program is there for our members after they have sought help within their communities and states. It is also there for members in need of food, shelter, or utilities when a natural disaster strikes.

One of the objectives this year was for each department to increase its donations by 10 percent. Department of Maine AEF Chairman Lucille Allen writes, "When asked to serve last spring, I was disturbed by the number of members who had no idea what AEF stood for. Our first goal must be awareness! Letters were sent to all units, and an AEF pin was designed to be awarded for each $50 donation. These pins were purchased by members in memory of a special Past Department President. How proud we are to say that our goal has been met and exceeded with 47 units and 15 members responding to the call of 'sisters helping sisters!' We are proud to say we met the Auxiliary Emergency Fund's objective of increasing donations by 10 percent, for last year we sent nothing! This year we have sent in $2,215. Go Maine!"

Often those areas that have been hardest hit by a natural disaster are the ones that give back the most. The Department of Mississippi, and especially Hovious-Grayson Unit 112 in Jackson, Miss., held rummage sales, raffles, cake walks, and solicitations for personal donations for a total of $3,600. The Department of New York generously donated more than $11,000, despite being hard hit by Hurricane Sandy. A big thank-you goes to the Department of Minnesota which raised more than $12,000 by raffling gift baskets at its fall conference.

Since the Auxiliary Emergency Fund's beginning, more than $4,508,000 has been distributed to our members.

This year alone, more than $225,000 has been distributed in 27 different departments, and $134,000 in donations has been received from 48 departments. Your generous contributions will help your fellow members in need rebuild their lives and dreams.

Cavalcade of Memories Committee
Kenya Ostermeier, Indiana, Chairman

"The Cavalcade is more than a roomful of historic memorabilia – it is gathering and preserving the stories of our veterans who fought for our freedom. In Illinois, one unit

organized a veterans history project. Members interviewed their local veterans, and five court reporters transcribed their memoirs which will be archived at the Library of Congress and the State of Illinois. One interviewer was nine years old. Veterans interviewed for the project included the post commander and the aide to the congressional representative for that district. What a great tribute to our veterans."

Reports from the Departments of Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Maine, Missouri, Mississippi, Montana, and Oklahoma were submitted for the 2012-2013 administrative year, showing donations of $378 for this important program. Auxiliary units, districts, counties, and departments have been busy upgrading their Cavalcades and taking advantage of current technology to preserve their treasures. In Massachusetts, members scanned printed department history books from 1920 to 1988, put them on CDs, and distributed them at a Department Executive Committee meeting. Also provided on that same disc were scanned copies of newspaper articles from 1926 to 1932.

Oklahoma reported that units worked to rotate and refresh their displays, producing written and printed inventories, creating digital records, and recognizing veterans from the past as well as current active-duty personnel. Another unit reported working with Michael Frazier of the University of Nevada Las Vegas, a librarian who specializes in conservation and preservation, to collect veterans' histories starting with WWII veterans. This collection is to be entered on the unit's webpage after completion and will be on file for the American Legion Auxiliary. One outstanding Oklahoma unit has an active Cavalcade of Memories with framed pictures of the two servicemen for which their post was named. Their original charter is hanging on their Cavalcade wall, featuring signatures by Past National President Eliza London Shepherd (1925-1926) and Past National Secretary Lucy Boyd. Surrounding their charter are the many framed awards they have received over the years. Their American Legion Auxiliary past presidents are displayed on two walls. They have had 48 past unit presidents, and all but five have pictures. Their memorabilia cabinets hold past unit public relations materials, historical prayer books, and trophies.

Montana finished a picture collage of all Past Department Presidents who could be found. A Minnesota unit collected newspaper articles of National President Peggy Thomas' visit to their department. They had excellent coverage and pictures.

Kentucky reports that a unit has preserved commendation certificates received in plastic sleeves; has cleaned and added new pictures to their Cavalcade; has made a slide show to play during the meetings and events; and offered members the opportunity to view the virtual tour of the national Cavalcade found on the Auxiliary website. Iowa reports their Cavalcade has plaques displaying the names of all past Honorary National Junior Presidents and all past ALA Girls State governors in addition to other items.

The Preamble to our constitution calls us "to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations during the Great Wars." One way we can do this is to make sure the sacrifices of our ancestors and families are not forgotten. Maintaining those sterling memories is a duty we cannot ignore. Our Auxiliary sisters from many years ago have left a legacy of pictures, secretaries' notes, newspaper clippings, and more for us to look at, learn from, and be proud of. The Cavalcade of Memories chairman and unit historian at our post homes can work together to find and preserve these treasures. Make a display for a joint meeting for all to enjoy. Invite guests from your community to see all that your unit has accomplished through the years.

Liaison to Child Welfare Foundation
Linda Newsome, Maryland, Chairman

The Child Welfare Foundation provides grants to child-serving organizations that support everything from childhood disease education and prevention to resources and research for military families. And that is why we give year after year. The American

Legion handles the majority of the administrative costs for the foundation, so every dollar collected is entered into the trust fund to be used for grants. We want every child to know that someone cares.

In 1954, The American Legion endorsed the separate incorporation of The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Since then, the foundation has granted more than $12.6 million to nonprofit youth-oriented organizations. Grants are awarded solely for the following two purposes:

To contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children and youth through the dissemination of knowledge about new and innovative organizations and/or programs designed to benefit youth.

To contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children and youth through the dissemination of knowledge already possessed by established organizations, to the end that such information can be more adequately used by society.

At its annual meeting in October 2012, the board of directors approved $734,220 in grants to 20 nonprofit organizations for projects to be completed in calendar year 2013. These grants were awarded to support worthwhile projects and disseminate information about them to the general public and specific target groups. The following is a brief summary of the grants awarded this year:

American Academy of Pediatrics of Elk Grove Village, Ill., was awarded $12,180 for their project "Connected Kids."

Childhood Leukemia Foundation of Brick, N.J., was awarded $60,000 for their project "Hope Binders."

Children's Organ Transplant Association of Bloomington, Ind., was awarded $43,050 for their project "Bowling for Life."

CureSearch for Children's Cancer of Bethesda, Md., was awarded $25,500 for their project "Childhood Cancer Care for the Whole Patient: CureSearch Webinar Series."

Darkness to Light of Charleston, S.C., was awarded $45,486 for their project "Helping Military Families Prevent Child Abuse."

Diabetes Education & Camping Association of Huntsville, Ala., was awarded $40,000 for their project "D-Source: The New and Improved Website of U.S. Diabetes Camps."

Huntington's Disease Society of America of New York, N.Y., was awarded $30,000 for their project "Talking to Your Children about Huntington's Disease Handbook."

Immune Deficiency Foundation of Towson, Md., was awarded $48,500 for their project "The Little Zebra – A Children's Storybook."

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation of New York, N.Y., was awarded $39,500 for their project "Type One – The Teen Years."

Mercy Flight Southeast Inc. of Leesburg, Fla., was awarded $17,394 for their project "Project Outreach SE USA 2012."

National Autism Association of Attleboro Falls, Mass., was awarded $58,000 for their project "Big Red Safety Box Program."

National Center for Learning Disabilities of New York, N.Y., was awarded $45,000 for their project "LD Navigator for Pediatric Healthcare Professionals."

National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association of Seattle was awarded $40,000 for their project "Ready, Set, Raise! I am for the child tools and training for grassroots activation."

National Exchange Club Foundation of Toledo, Ohio, was awarded $24,530 for their project "Believe in the Blue 2013 – What do I do when my child…?"

National Marfan Association of Port Washington, N.Y., was awarded $25,000 for their project "KidZone Online Community Space."

Our Military Kids of McLean, Va., was awarded $60,000 for their project "Strengthening the Our Military Kids Brand."

Spina Bifida Association of Washington, D.C., was awarded $45,000 for their project "Educating Children with Spina Bifida on Health Issues They are Facing."

SuperSibs! of Palatine, Ill., was awarded $16,210 for their project "SuperSibs! SibSPEAK Website."

The National Children's Cancer Society of St. Louis was awarded $15,870 for their project "Moving Mountains."

US Sportsmen's Alliance Foundation of Columbus, Ohio, was awarded $43,000 for their project "Trailblazer Adventure Program – Blazing an Outdoor Trail."

During the calendar year 2012, donations exceeded $810,153, with more than $509,451 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 5, 2013, the following officers were elected: Dennis R. Boland of Florida, president; Peggy Moon of Minnesota, vice president; Joseph J. Frank of Missouri, secretary; and Robert S. Turner of Georgia, treasurer. Administrative personnel appointed by the board were George A. Buskirk Jr., assistant treasurer, and Jason R. Kees, executive secretary.

Under the 1969 Tax Reform Act, the Child Welfare Foundation retains its tax-exempt status. Gifts, therefore, are deductible for federal income tax purposes to the extent permitted by law, and bequests are deductible for federal inheritance tax purposes to the extent permitted by the Federal Tax Act.

Children & Youth Committee
Sharon Conatser, Chairman, Illinois

Military families come in all shapes and sizes, and with so many "volunteer" soldiers, we need to be there and make sure they are supported. The Children & Youth Committee tried to think outside the box and help give units new ideas to contact veteran and military families in their communities. The increase in volunteer hours and children served shows that the committee worked hard and that the work for our veterans and military families is never done. We need to continue to grow, share, and care for our children and youth of America.

Across the nation, our units and departments served our military families and worked tirelessly for children of veterans. Our units and departments "soared to new heights" working our mission! Operation: Military Kids (OMK) continues to be a great success in many departments. Get involved in your department and see the great things that OMK is doing!

Unit 2 in North Dakota held a Christmas party for military children in cooperation with Operation: Military Kids, providing games, face painting, crafts, and bingo. Departments held Halloween parties, Christmas parties, and Easter egg hunts. Many units involved Juniors in their activities. Units adopted military families during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays to provide much needed food items, clothing, and toys for children. Arizona made dreams come true by presenting G.I. Josh Dogs to deploying families. In Illinois, The Pillowcase Project helps deploying soldiers and their families by putting pictures of families on pillowcases to provide keepsakes for military families while deployed, at home, and on the ground. Illinois served 1,841 children by providing Christmas gifts, meals, and decorations, ensuring they experienced a warm and wonderful Christmas season. More than $9,000 was spent on this initiative.

A Christmas project called Serenity Angels was established to help homeless veterans and their families in Washington. Iowa presented educational awards to the children of veterans and active-duty military. California and Ohio put Operation: Military Kids hero packs together at their ALA Girls State sessions. In Colorado, they developed a

new fund called "Colorado Veterans Kids Fund" to serve families of veterans and active-duty military in their state.

In North Dakota, Unit 72 adopted a young boy who is the son of a deceased veteran with no remaining family living in a development center. The unit provides gifts, cards, and letters to him.

In Minnesota, "baby bundles" were given to the VA Medical Center's Women's Clinic for new mothers who are veterans. Maine raised $10,000 for the Military Family Camping event, which helps families deal with the stress and reintegration upon return from deployment.

New York supported the "Little Warriors" project at Landstuhl Hospital. Items totaling more than $6,000 were sent to the labor and delivery unit at the hospital.

This year, 16 Auxiliary Youth Hero Awards and 62 Good Deed Awards were given. Recipients included:

Skyler Lee, age 13, who collected 4,500 new and gently used coats to give community members and veterans at a stand down in Washington.

Rebecca Wiggins, age 11, started "Rebecca's Project Operation Miles of Smiles" in Illinois, which adopted and sent care packages to 25 soldiers from across the country.

Jared Minikus, age 12, sold vegetables at the local farmers market in Iowa, which he donated to the University of Iowa Children's Hospital. Jared wanted to give back to the hospital for care he received as an ALM Leukemia patient.

Gavin Brooks, age 11, jumped in the ocean to save a child during a vacation in Florida.

Alexus Osburn, age 7, saved her family when she woke up to find her family's home in Oregon full of smoke.

Our units soared to new heights serving our children and youth. Our American Legion Auxiliary will continue to help as long as there are veterans and military children! Nearly 1.3 million children were served this year through Auxiliary programs. Donations of approximately $1.5 million provided direct aid to children, and $505,000 was given to agencies that serve children, not including the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Thirty-six departments reported this year, leaving one to wonder what our numbers would be if everyone reported.

Community Service Committee
Lisa Williamson, Alaska, Chairman

Community Service by the American Legion Auxiliary can't be defined simply; it isn't black and white. When carried out successfully, it often overlaps into other programs, such as National Security, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, Public Relations, Membership and Auxiliary Emergency Fund.

American Legion Auxiliary members are "soaring to new heights" as we work on Community Service program projects that fall in line with our mission.

National objectives exceeded expectations this year, focusing on community-wide activities that aid our veterans, our military, and their families. ALA members were involved in parades, barbecues, picnics, and fundraisers throughout their communities. The Auxiliary was very visible in serving others in community-wide days of service, National Make A Difference Day, Veterans Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

All departments had units that collaborated with like-minded organizations to host events benefiting our veterans and active-duty military. The USO was a common collaborator throughout the country, from hosting Boogie Woogie Bugle Dances to the traditional USO show from Bob Hope's days. One department even put on a tasteful burlesque show as a fundraiser with another veterans organization. Partnering with Honor Flight also was a mutual project in many cases.

Several departments helped provide economic security to our veterans and military population by planning, hosting, and participating in job fairs for veterans and military spouses.

During widespread emergencies, such as Superstorm Sandy, tornadoes across Oklahoma, flooding along the Mississippi River, and the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary in Connecticut, we momentarily put aside our focus on veterans and focused our community service efforts on the broader community. Does that make us fuzzy in our focus? No! It makes us a caring, compassionate organization that others can turn to in a crisis situation. Those who received aide and those who assisted us in our volunteer efforts will remember the American Legion Auxiliary for that! (Several were likely veterans and their families to boot.)

One member in Illinois was so distressed by the Sandy Hook tragedy that she made ribbons to wear in remembrance of those who were so senselessly murdered. She gave the ribbons away at her place of work, and people began giving her money. She set up a fund for the affected families at her local bank. In the end, it may have been just a few hundred dollars, but the people who gave and the people who received knew they were sharing a bond of caring, even if they were 570 miles apart.

Departments gave generously of their money and time to offer support and assistance in all of these tragedies.

Community Service brings a smile to those who serve, but the chance for The American Legion Family and other organizations to work together toward one goal is another positive outcome.

Regardless of our contributions, together we make a difference. Working hand-in-hand with other ALA members, our entire Legion Family, and other like-minded community organizations, we can combine our skills, talents, and resources in achieving the mutual goal of completing our mission, as we soar to new heights.

Constitution & Bylaws Committee
Priscilla Imburgia, New York, Chairman

Ensuring that the Auxiliary's governance documents are up-to-date and in line with current expectations for nonprofit governance is an ongoing process that requires dedication and diligence from its members.

The Department of North Carolina's report was emblematic of exactly the committee's fundamental goal – to educate members on our organizational structure and the powers it yields. To do so puts emphasis on knowing our preamble, understanding our mission, and both grasping the operation and protection offered by our governance – the Constitution & Bylaws (C&B). Incorporating the use of a pictorial sheet, unit handbook, copies of both department and national Constitution & Bylaws, information on parliamentary procedure, policies and procedures manual and study of our Preamble gave members repeated opportunities to be knowledgeable of our mission and the difference between what is proper within the C&B and what actually belongs in standing rules.

Department of Arizona's chairman, along with the department executive and finance committees, worked hard this year to research, plan, and develop a course for the 10 districts in their department. Their work culminated with the necessary resolutions to their department C&B presented at Arizona's department convention, clearing the path for this advancement.

Although any changes to the national C&B become automatic to the departments, it is vital that each department ensure all members are knowledgeable of them. Thanks to all departments, like Nevada, that made sure their department C&B were updated with all national changes through 2012.

Common questions received on C&B refer to elections. Constraints on who may run based on what offices they have held, no nominations from the floor and numerous other restrictions are not in keeping with our constitution which states "anyone in good

standing." Did you know you could be a brand new member and run for national president? Win? Likely not. However, all are eligible.

Another frequent question relates to members no longer married to the person their eligibility is through. As long as she maintains her membership annually, she is still in good standing and entitled to continue as a member. Think of your constitution as a commanding protection for all members to enjoy equal rights. Writing your constitution to allow a few to usurp the rights of others is an abuse of power and creates classes within our membership. Our constitution calls for only two classes, senior and Junior members.

Thomas Jefferson also wrote: "Do you want to know who you are? Don't ask. Act! Action will delineate and define you." Thank you to all who served this past year on the committee and took the action to educate our members while carefully watching over construction of changes. A special thanks to the 21 departments that included reports to the national organization.

Education Committee
Kathy Dungan, Mississippi, Chairman

By providing scholarship opportunities at the national, state, and local levels, we are investing in our youth and the future of this country. Also, providing scholarships to children of military members helps ease the financial burden for their parents. By doing both this year, we were able to "soar to new heights."

Abraham Lincoln said education is "the most important subject which we as a people can be engaged in." Units and departments have been actively engaged in promoting the Auxiliary's Education Program this year by focusing on four objectives: promoting educational and scholarship opportunities for military children, educating school administrators about mental health issues facing military children, enhancing respect for the sacrifices of our military heroes among school children, and supporting veterans pursuing higher education.

Units and departments soared to new heights on the first objective! This year, $1,032,057 was awarded in local scholarships and nearly $200,000 was awarded in department scholarships for more than $1.2 million. National scholarship awards totaled $80,000. Of the 39 reports received, 32 departments awarded or contributed to scholarships. The Departments of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Florida, and California reported more than $40,000 in scholarships awarded through unit, department, and ALA Girls State scholarships. The Departments of Indiana, Maryland, and Vermont promoted adult literacy programs. Other units participated in classroom reading programs, while others tutored children at school.

Give 10 to Education is very popular, with nearly all reports indicating activity supporting this program. Items donated to schools included DVDs, dictionaries, backpacks, school supplies, hats, boots, coats, and gloves at a reported value of $96,311. The Departments of Iowa and South Dakota's projects included donating dictionaries and flags to schoolchildren. One unit in Georgia donated 10,000 books. Box Tops for Education were collected by many departments, including Massachusetts, Minnesota, South Carolina, Mississippi, Tennessee, Wyoming, Colorado, and Virginia.

American Education Week was another successful education program. Units showed their appreciation to teachers, staff, and school administrators by providing baked goods, lunches, gift cards, apples, and notes of thanks. Units reported spending $35,352 and volunteering 4,217 hours promoting Education Week. New Hampshire presented 382 thank-you cards to school personnel.

Promoting our second objective, Unit 112 of Florida offered an in-service presentation on the impact of deployment and combat stress on families and children. The session addressed the potential mental health issues of children when a family member is deployed.

Veterans in the Classroom was our third initiative. Department of Illinois' Unit 770 asked students to interview veterans about their experiences in the military. The students wrote interview reports and read them at a veterans program as the veteran stood for recognition. Many other units held veterans programs at schools and asked veterans and Legion members to speak, touching the lives of more than 14,000 students.

Our mission of supporting veterans pursuing higher education was illustrated by a unit in New Mexico that reached out to the University of New Mexico to collaborate with a Student Veterans of America (SVA) chapter. They worked to build a strong connection with the SVA chapter to support veterans on campus.

Benjamin Franklin said, "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest." This year, Auxiliary members invested much time and money educating our youth, and we are confident it was a sound investment in America's future.

Finance Committee
Nicole Clapp, Wisconsin, Chairman

The fiscal performance of the national organization for the 2012-2013 fiscal year has been positive. With sufficient revenue stemming from the dues increase adopted at the 2011 National Convention and the improved performance of our investments, we were able to initiate the new Department Leadership National Conference and underwrite the cost for three department representatives to attend, to resume department visits by the division national vice presidents, and to roll out a new event online registration system.

Your National Finance Committee is a five-member committee with each appointed member serving a five-year term. The primary role of the National Finance Committee is to develop the annual proposed budget and to review the national financial reports.

National Finance Committee members review the draft budget making any adjustments that may be desired to reflect new or changing goals. The National Finance Committee recommends a budget for the National Executive Committee's consideration and adoption. Additionally, the National Finance Committee oversees the financial policies of the organization, reviews the annual audit of the ALA and ALA Foundation, and makes fiscal policy recommendations to the National Executive Committee for action to ensure that the national organization is meeting nonprofit benchmarks and governmental mandates.

One member of the National Finance Committee is designated to serve as liaison to the ALA Foundation Board and another committee member is designated as liaison to the ALA National Audit Committee.

The fiscal performance of the national organization for the 2012-2013 fiscal year has been positive. The successful fundraising efforts by our direct mail program continued this fiscal year with three campaigns designated for the American Legion Auxiliary and one for the ALA Foundation.

Fiscal year donations as of May 31, 2013, totaled a net $237,000 -- $42,000 greater than the net guaranteed by the direct mail vendor. The analysis of 2012 direct mail donations indicated 243,000 gifts were received; of those gifts, 109,000 came from ALA members and 134,000 came from non-ALA members. Therefore, 23 percent more gifts came from donors outside the Auxiliary, a tremendous source of external support for our organization!

In fiscal year 2012-2013, the number of people applying for Auxiliary USAA credit cards continued to increase. As of June 2013, 1,326 Auxiliary USAA credit cards have been issued, and $2.7 million has been charged by Auxiliary cardholders. Based on the growth in the number of cards issued and cardholder usage, 2012-2013 royalty revenue shared with departments is expected to increase from the $12,500 of Auxiliary USAA Credit Card Program royalty revenue distributed to departments during fiscal year 2011-2012. Please consider obtaining an Auxiliary USAA credit card and charge (responsibly, of course)!

Fiscal year 2012-2013 also saw the expansion of ALA member benefits being offered through a special service agreement with Gallagher Member Benefit Services. The depth and breadth of benefits available to ALA members has been greatly enhanced by offering ALA Member Benefits for services that can be purchased at substantial savings through Gallagher Member Benefit Services. New this year is a large offering of special discounts through Abenity, a broker of discounts for ALA members from technology providers such as Apple and Sprint, national attractions such as Walt Disney World and Six Flags, and discounts for movie tickets and dining.

On behalf of the National 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 Nation Committee
Martha Corriher, North Carolina, Chairman

The 2012-2013 ALA Girls Nation Committee kept in contact with departments almost on a monthly basis, sending words of encouragement, along with ideas and challenges to help units work our Auxiliary mission. Across the country, members selected some remarkable young women to serve as delegates to ALA Girls State. Repeatedly, when communities heard the story of who the Auxiliary is and how we help our veterans and military families, most realized they were already ALA mission-minded because of some relationship, either a family member or close friend, and they wanted to help the Auxiliary and this wonderful program in any way they could.

A World War II veteran once told me, "You only get as much as you are willing to give in anything you do." He said to make sure you are doing things for the right reasons. "Number one," he said, "don't do things for self-satisfaction, but to satisfy the needs of those who need help. Two, don't expect anything in return." He said the unexpected is always priceless. That veteran is my 92-year-old father, and he has taught me well.

American Legion Auxiliary Girls State department chairmen across the country have taken flight, "soaring to new heights" with this program. They have fulfilled the challenge to incorporate at least one veteran service project into their session and continue to encourage delegates to become active volunteers for veterans and military. All departments reported on their plans with impressive results.

Illinois reported sponsoring a letter writing drive for Honor Flight veterans and also collected items to be donated to homeless women veterans and their children. Iowa raised money for the Paws & Effect Program, which places service dogs with veterans in need of assistance. Montana hosted a fundraiser for Operation: Military Kids, while Minnesota and South Dakota donated items for homeless veterans in their areas. Tennessee, Idaho, and North Carolina collected toiletries, magazines, popcorn, and personal care items for their VA Medical Centers. Indiana and Washington have made donations to Operation Comfort Warriors, while Arizona collected white socks for their VA Medical Center. Many departments are using Facebook to reach out to past delegates, asking them to share their ALA Girls State experiences so future attendees will have a firsthand account of the program. Department websites are becoming more modern and user-friendly.

Many departments reported an increase in delegates for their sessions. Indiana reported 50 more delegates than last year; Missouri reports an all-time high of more than 800 delegates. New York has had a steady increase over the past few years. South Dakota reported a double-digit increase. North Carolina had a 5 percent increase in delegates, even with a price increase. Oklahoma reported an increase in attendance due to young women so determined to attend that they found funding from various sources. Arizona and Oregon reported slight increases in their program participation.

Departments used websites, social media, school counselors, former attendees, brochures, and county, state, and craft fairs to showcase ALA Girls State and bring awareness to this important one-of-a-kind program.

Much more information was shared. These are only some of the highlights from across the country. This ALA cornerstone program is keeping our vision to support The American Legion while becoming the premier service organization and foundation of every community. You all should feel proud for providing support to our veterans, our military, and their families while shaping a positive future in an atmosphere of fellowship, patriotism, peace, and security.

Junior Activities Committee
Marie Goede, Minnesota, Chairman

The Junior Activities Committee played a pivotal role in helping the American Legion Auxiliary reach new heights in serving veterans and their families this past year. Junior Activities included, but were not limited to, recruiting, educating, volunteering, donating, and raising money. Girls were recruited and inspired to help those who protect and defend our democracy. Youth were also educated on the importance of joining and promoting future legislation for veterans and those currently serving in the armed forces. Young people volunteered and donated time to various projects, which raised money for veterans and their families.

On behalf of the American Legion Auxiliary, I am honored and privileged to provide the 2012-2013 Junior Activities national report. Once again, this past year proved to be a success story for our Junior members. All five divisions reported member involvement in a variety of creative activities that assisted and promoted the programs of the American Legion Auxiliary. Through their combined efforts, several girls faithfully served their units, districts, and departments while learning how to be a dedicated Auxiliary member.

"Soaring to new heights" best describes the efforts of the Junior members. This past year, they worked diligently, promoting American Legion Auxiliary programs. Their perseverance parallels the determination and resolve of our veterans as well as current members in the military. Clearly, these girls exemplify the true meaning of patriotism to our country. The Auxiliary can be very proud of their contributions.

Junior members in all five divisions held sleepovers, decorated Christmas trees for veterans, helped distribute poppies while learning the history of the poppy, started their own Facebook pages, visited VA hospitals, decorated placemats for Veterans Day dinners, and folded pocket flags to be sent to our servicemembers. However, each division also reported the completion of unique activities by its Junior members:

In the Central Division, Juniors in Indiana raised $1,200 for Beads of Hope. In Illinois, Juniors hosted Dancing with the Stars (our veterans). Ohio members collected photos and information on veterans and made a DVD, which was presented during a dinner in their honor.

The Eastern Division reported that New York members assembled and delivered welcome-home baskets to veterans. Girls in Maine made and distributed neck pillows to military personnel. Juniors in Connecticut baked, packed, and sent treats overseas. Members from Rhode Island honored fallen heroes by placing flags on graves in local cemeteries. Collectively, Juniors donated approximately 20,000 hours of service to their communities and veterans.

Juniors in the Northwestern Division were also busy. Nebraska Juniors utilized technology to create cards for veterans. In Minnesota, Juniors filled comfort boxes, baby bundle baskets, and Buddy Baskets. They also donated hair to Locks of Love. Colorado Juniors raised $1,123 for Relay for Life and made Sweet Dreams pillows which were sent to soldiers in Afghanistan.

Junior members of the Southern Division interviewed veterans about their service to our country and publicized it on YouTube. In addition, they handed out ink pens to veterans with the message "Thank You for Serving."

The Western Division reports that they are thankful for their Junior leadership and the assistance of their senior leaders. In Oregon, Juniors were honored to carry the colors at a National Guard Armory called the Massing of the Colors. In New Mexico, a member was given the honor of lighting the candles at the Four Chaplains Ceremony.

Junior members continue to be a vital part of our organization. I am confident that their passion and leadership will help the American Legion Auxiliary soar to new heights as they continue to demonstrate Service Not Self.

Leadership Committee
Kathy Daudistel, Kentucky, Chairman

"Good leaders are not born; they are made." Everyone has the potential to be a leader if given the right tools. The purpose of this committee is to educate members about resources available to them. Members can use these tools to increase their knowledge of the Auxiliary and to learn more about how our programs work. The more knowledge we have, the better we are able to carry out the mission of serving our veterans and their families."

Helen Keller said, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." Departments utilized this concept as they carried out leadership programs this year. Leadership is the responsibility of every member, and every member has the potential to be a leader.

By providing members with the tools and resources to become more knowledgeable about the Auxiliary and its programs and by working together, we are better equipped to carry out our mission. To help spread this knowledge, committee chairmen hosted Leadership Conferences at department, district, and unit levels for all members, including Juniors. Chairmen used Mission Training DVDs as the starting point for their conferences and added their own information to round out the discussions. The Department of Ohio included Auxiliary history pertinent to their state to make it more fun. South Dakota created an exercise to promote teamwork. Wisconsin, Maryland, and other departments used games and skits to keep the program upbeat. Chairmen also used the opportunity to include the pod aspect. For instance, when hosting a conference – they did not call it a Leadership Conference, but a Membership Development Workshop. This gave members an opportunity to learn about more than one program and showed how everything fit together. Florida and Maine held traveling workshops and were able to reach out to more than 500 members of which more than 100 members were first-time attendees. Overall, 45 departments reported that 332 workshops were held with 3,608 attendees. In addition, 52 Junior workshops were held with 230 attendees.

Leadership correspondence courses were used to teach the Auxiliary's history along with basic protocol. The Department of Kansas created a mini-course for newer members. New Mexico and other departments used smaller sections of the course and presented mini-workshops. All departments encouraged members to take the correspondence course, even if they had taken it in the past. As of June, 1,005 senior members and 41 Juniors had successfully completed the correspondence courses.

Across the nation, members were challenged to make every effort to set an example of service and be a mentor to others. Mentoring is an opportunity to share knowledge learned through years of experience and helps bridge the gap between generations. This knowledge can inspire new ideas for many generations. In Georgia, experienced members took newer members under their wings during meetings to explain the protocol and programs in place and make them feel welcome. In South Dakota and Massachusetts, units encouraged senior members to assist Junior members by having them "buddy" together. In Arizona, not only did members mentor members, but units mentored other units. This opened up a line of communication between units and also supported a team concept. Members also learned to accept diversity and utilized it to their advantage.

All departments promoted the use of available resources, including the Unit Handbook and the Auxiliary website.

The Leadership chairmen did an outstanding job to help the Auxiliary "soar to new heights." New mentoring relationships were formed, knowledge was shared, and leadership was made a priority for all members. Thank you for your dedication and hard work!

Legislative Committee
Coral May Grout, Massachusetts, Chairman

According to information from Congress, only 19 percent of the 535 combined members of the US House of Representatives and Senate are veterans. What a huge change from 1977, when 80 percent had previous military service! The ALA can augment the knowledge base that non-veteran Congress members have in the areas of education, employment, mental health, the VA struggles with demands on their services, and housing. Our many resources and member experiences are a vital source of information for Congress."

The Legislative Committee's planning process began with a series of meetings after the 2012 Washington DC Conference. Auxiliary chairmen met with the Hon. Eric Shinseki, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Because the American Legion Auxiliary's legislative program mirrors that of The American Legion, Legion officials provided the Legislative Committee and others with a listing and explanation of the legislative priorities for the 112th Congress. These were immediately distributed to committee members and departments. Several departments posted the document on their websites for members and nonmembers to read. Others added the priorities to their Facebook pages, and the American Legion Auxiliary was a part of National Commander James E. Koutz's testimony before a joint session of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. The congressional members were so very supportive of The American Legion Family.

Auxiliary members across our 52 departments embraced the legislative program and its priorities this year. Thousands of letters were sent to Washington, including several to the White House. In addition, several thousand visits were made to our congressional representatives in Washington, as well to state legislators and local officials. There were thousands of telephone calls made on behalf of our veterans, and members sent nearly 2,000 emails. Although many departments reported that their members sent letters, phoned, sent emails, and paid visits, specific numbers often were not included. So, had these been reported, the numbers for each of the above areas would have been much, much higher.

Units sponsored legislative meetings, rallies, and town hall meetings. Members of Congress were invited to speak at these venues, as well as at unit meetings. Members sponsored Candidate Nights prior to the national election. Other activities included candidate meet and greets, Get Out the Vote, a mini-Awareness Assembly, candidates' forums, and legislative breakfasts/luncheons.

Auxiliary members from most states attended the Washington DC Conference. The event provided them with opportunities to join members of The American Legion and SAL as they visited Capitol Hill to discuss the Legion's priorities with members of each state's congressional delegation.

Many unique activities took place to support the legislative program this year. In Ohio, the department chairman held a raffle. In order to be eligible for the prizes, members had to register to receive Legislative Action Alerts. In Wyoming, the legislative chairman and her committee addressed the need to vote in the national election. As a result, 90 percent of Auxiliary members in that department reported that they had indeed voted.

Thanks to the American Legion Auxiliary, several bills to help veterans and military families were developed and passed in New York, Texas, Connecticut, New Mexico, Indiana, and Hawaii. Our members had a busy and successful year as advocates for our veterans and military families, but the process is ongoing with new and continued demands each year. Your devotion to the legislative cause is most appreciated by the men, women, and children we have helped.

Membership Committee
Susan Britton, New York, Chairman

Membership is the basis upon which our organization was built. This year, our membership has made a more concentrated effort to welcome nonmembers to join us in our mission efforts within our communities. We have promoted the concept of "community" by sharing with everyone the pride we feel while assisting our veterans and military. Offering the opportunity to others to make a difference while working our activities has been rewarding and allowed us to "soar to heights" even we didn't anticipate.

For whatever reason you joined, you represent the foundation upon which the American Legion Auxiliary was built. You, as an individual member, determine the strength on which we operate. Our membership, both new and renewed, dictates how effectively we promote our mission-based programs and activities. Membership development continues to be the driving force behind securing the future of our organization. As we soared to new heights this year, our angels were charged with being part of a movement to stop the membership slide. More than 4,000 members chose to work this challenge and earned their Recruit 1 pins. Membership is up to each of us to insure that we continue strong with our commitment to serve. This effort was clearly demonstrated by the Col. Charles Young Unit 398 from New York City, which reached 240 percent of its numeric objective.

The National Membership Committee increased communication efforts within each division by holding four conference calls with membership representatives from every department. This, along with our biweekly membership newsletter, allowed us to share ideas, tips, and noteworthy items of interest to keep our membership informed.

Many new ideas paved the way to allow for our membership to creatively encourage new recruits while being involved in community-wide service projects. The talent of our membership has been demonstrated as departments shared editions of their distributed e-newsletters, utilizing unique membership themes.

A large increase in social media presence (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) has allowed for instant communication and sharing of information among members. The "personal touch," however, continues to be the dominant force in reaching out to those who have not renewed their commitment to our organization.

Many units developed close working relationships with community groups, which allowed others to see how the Auxiliary works its programs while promoting our mission. This type of community recognition was seen as Roy Unit 33 of Roy, N.M., achieved 111 percent of its goal by distributing flags aboard a parade float and holding September 11th, Veterans Day, and Pearl Harbor/USO Remembrance events.

We continued the "Honoring Their Service" buttons and received widespread accolades on how easy it is to engage in conversation while wearing these distinctive pins.

Moving forward, we must remain effective and become more determined to increase our numeric objectives if we want to continue as a dominant force as the nation's largest women's patriotic service organization. You have the power to continue that tradition of member engagement, and each of us is charged with that duty. If we are to remain a viable force for our mission, we need the member base to make it a reality. Our website

continues to make available a vast array of resource tools which promote membership recruitment, revitalization, and retention.

One sure way to encourage newer members is to promote mentoring from our seasoned members who possess a wealth of knowledge. Allowing for a positive transition to new leadership will be our best choice and keep us on the road to continued success.

National Security Committee
Mary Davis, Washington, Chairman

"Duty's claim and country's call shall be conscience for us all!" –J.L. Rentoul

We are still a country at war. Only 1 percent of the U.S. population currently serves in harm's way, and many Americans tend to forget their sacrifices. We have pledged ourselves to support our servicemembers, veterans, and their families. Our help will be needed for generations to come because of the effects of war on our troops and their families. We have the will and resources to assist in every community whenever a need arises.

The military is not about combat; it is about preserving freedom and democracy. Of those who raise their hand to pledge to serve our country, their families also, silently, and sometimes unknowingly, take that pledge. Across our nation, American Legion Auxiliary members continue to serve those families with dedication and care. Units in Florida participated in the Yellow Ribbon program and incorporated it into Bring Bowe Home, a national campaign to advance the safe and quick return of America's only known living POW, Idaho native SSgt. Bowe Bergdahl, who has been held captive in Afghanistan since June 30, 2009.

Units in Georgia paid electric bills, bought backpacks for children of Guardsmen who were deployed, and provided Christmas baskets, clothes, and toys for military families. In South Carolina, four units participated in deployment send-offs and welcome-home ceremonies and furnished "thanks for your service" cards and flag lapel pins to servicemembers. North Carolina's Yandkinville Unit 505 sent shipments of recycled phones and more than 50 phone cards to deployed soldiers. Wisconsin units participated in programs such as Hotels for Heroes and Cell Phones for Soldiers and sent handmade blankets and camouflage-patterned quilts.

Indiana Unit 28 members honored military guests by distributing yellow ribbon pins during a dinner held in the guests' honor. Ohio members attending the department mid-winter conference were introduced to special guest SSgt. Scott Royer, who brought to life his tour of Iraq with a slideshow depicting living conditions there. He also shared the emotions felt by soldiers as they opened packages received from home. Units in Delaware packed and sent 36 boxes a month to our troops. The boxes included pocket flags and phone cards. And, in Wyoming, yellow ribbons were displayed along two highways to show support for military families and honor the memory of a local fallen soldier.

The Auxiliary's National Security program also focuses on citizens' readiness and our ability to react when a crisis arises. Colorado Unit 134 has designated shelters to be used in the event of an emergency, and, along with Unit 4, created a hospital equipment loan closet. Members in Louisiana know all too well the need for staying alert and being ready to respond at a moment's notice when a crisis strikes. They constantly stay updated by studying the latest self-preparedness information available. Additionally, they sent donations to the victims of Hurricane Sandy in New York and New Jersey. In West Virginia, one member, who is CERT qualified, also serves her community as a certified weather spotter. In Kansas, a group of unit volunteers spent 700 hours conducting training at a local fire station, while another group of 182 volunteers engaged in 693 hours of storm spotter safety training. Kentucky Auxiliary members continue to undergo CERT training and expand their emergency preparedness knowledge by taking part in

specialized training offered by the Kentucky State Police Academy. As they say in the military, "Take care, and stay safe."

Past Presidents Parley Committee
Kris Nelson, Minnesota, Chairman

Past Presidents on every level mentored members, encouraging them to embrace the Auxiliary mission of offering support to veterans, military, and their families. Additionally, members were encouraged to offer special support to the women veterans in their hometowns.

Past presidents were active at every level of our organization this year. They were eager to share their knowledge and resources; they served as mentors, and they offered their encouragement and support when requested.

Past presidents volunteered to assist with installations, graduation ceremonies for Junior members, and emceeing at events.

Thousands of dollars were donated by Past President Parleys for nursing scholarships.

Department parleys reported that they took seriously the charge of supporting women veterans by remembering them on their birthdays and holidays and by hosting special events such as Christmas parties and Veterans Day celebrations.

Several parleys remembered the activated women veterans in their communities by sending them care packages and gift cards. They took care of their families in their absence in a variety of ways.

In Kansas, a unit parley adopted a single pregnant soldier who had recently returned from deployment. Gifts, attention, needed support, and financial assistance were provided to this soldier and her newborn daughter.

Units across the country selected and honored a Unit Member of the Year.

Departments selected one member from the nominations to represent them as their Department Member of the Year.

At National Convention, Past National Presidents will honor the department winners at the Woman of the Year luncheon. Another highlight at this convention will be the announcement of the five winners of Salute to Active-Duty Servicewomen.

Units encouraged and nominated female servicemembers for these prestigious awards.

Past presidents continued to serve as ALA angels as they volunteered with love and enthusiasm.

Poppy Committee
Melanie Taylor, California, Chairman

The Poppy Program has continued to be a major fundraiser for units throughout the nation. They reported an increase in poppy revenue, which allowed for increased donations to our veterans and military families. This being the first year that poppy funds could be used for active-duty military and their families, the Poppy Program has been greatly enhanced. By now allowing funds to serve active-duty military, we have opened the door and allowed units to fulfill a need when needed.

The Poppy Program continues to be a big way Auxiliary units bring awareness to their communities about the sacrifices our veterans have ultimately made.

Departments have shared the history of the poppy by not only making corsages for their ALA Girls State citizens, but also by creating table arrangements, memorial wreaths, poppy Christmas trees, leis to wear around their heads, poster boards to display while offering poppies in their communities, and even Memorial Day poppy decorated cookies.

The Poppy Poster Contest has allowed children to participate in a creative project, all while learning about Flanders Fields, the poppy, and what it stands for. The divisional winners of this year's poster contest will be displayed in upcoming Auxiliary media.

Our Juniors have supported the Poppy Program by distributing poppies as a fundraiser for their units. Money received went to help the veterans and military families in their communities.

Miss Poppy and Little Miss Poppy programs allowed Juniors members the opportunity to give back to our veterans. Across the country, these wonderful girls handed out poppies to veterans in nursing homes, attendees of post dinners and other events. They presented poppies to city council members after accepting a Poppy Declaration on behalf of their units. These girls stood side-by-side with Auxiliary members and Legion members distributing poppies in their communities during the month of May. Each Miss Poppy knows and understands the story of the poppy and the significance of the poem "In Flanders Fields."

Many again asked questions about the proper usage of the poppy funds, and they were referred to the poppy program factsheet found on the Auxiliary website and in the Unit Handbook.

Many factors impacting the Poppy Program were shared this year. Units and departments were unable to purchase veteran-made poppies from Emblem Sales due to lack of inventory. Departments were short on orders, and some departments reported having no poppy-making facilities in their states. Collectively, these concerns opened the door to revamp the Poppy Program.

The American Legion National Executive Committee on May 9, 2013, adopted a new Poppy Resolution allowing the Auxiliary more flexibility and freedom. We may now use the poppy funds not only for veterans and their families, but also for active-duty military and their families when a financial or medical need arises. This new resolution allows the Poppy Program to grow in many new and exciting ways.

Thank you, everyone, for a great year. I look forward to a refreshed and expanded Poppy Program next year.

Public Relations Committee
Trish Ward, Kansas, Chairman

Positive public relations plays a critical role in ensuring our good work is effectively communicated for the benefit of veterans, military, and their families. Encouraging a focus on traditional media while embracing new technology allows every member to contribute. Enhanced outreach, greater diversity of method, and a commitment to building relationships strengthens our position both as community partners and with those we serve.

An effective public relations (PR) effort requires diversity of method, consistency of message, and a creative spin to catch attention. Combined with a clear understanding of the need to positively promote all American Legion Auxiliary programs and events, both externally and internally, Auxiliary PR efforts nationwide revealed a myriad of opportunities to create awareness. Recognizing the challenges that face our ever-evolving media landscape, empowering the PR team and encouraging positive outreach via creative and innovative methods were two primary objectives of this year's program. Promotion of our identity, mission, and goals through positive outreach at the unit level served to elevate the knowledge of our programs and services and to initiate dialogue to better define our role as community partners and leaders in serving America's veterans, military, and their families. Focused on tradition while embracing new technology, the public relations effort enhanced, intensified, and magnified the good work accomplished every day.

Building relationships with the media helped the Auxiliary to solidify favorable community awareness, and units took full advantage of developing a network of media-

savvy friends who initiated advantageous press. Whether it was publicizing a visit from the national president or telling the story of the poppy, American Legion Auxiliary members were determined to spread the word about their activities. Facebook continues to lead the social media trend as the preferred method of communication among Auxiliary members embracing new technology. Units and departments took full advantage of this free and easy opportunity to share everything as it was happening. Beaver Falls Unit 261 in Beaver, Pa., used Facebook to highlight its unit's activities, as well as using a separate page for its Juniors with lots of helpful information, photos, and regular updates, helping ensure the information posted online was fresh and timely. Twitter enables any individual to communicate regularly about topics that are relevant and time-sensitive. Gov. Sam Brownback of Kansas tweeted, "This morning I spoke with the Sunflower Girls State about the importance of finding a mentor and being a leader." Gov. Brownback's tweet reached nearly 8,000 individuals in just seconds!

Harnessing technology while embracing tradition remained the American Legion Auxiliary's most successful PR strategy as members looked to add creativity while spreading the message. Ready for that morning cup of joe? Pat Tillman Unit 53 combined forces with Forze Coffee Co. to create "The American Legion Latte," where portions of each sale went directly to the unit's VA&R activities. Do you think baseball is just for the boys? Sikeston, Mo., American Legion Auxiliary Unit 114 sponsored its own American Legion baseball team and made sure the uniforms beared their name. Everyone knows a picture is worth a thousand words, and thanks to digital photography, special moments were captured and shared on everything from Facebook pages to newspapers worldwide.

Public relations takes many forms, and as technology impacts the way we communicate, it is critical that our members continue to embrace and maximize these opportunities while not overlooking traditional methods. As the element of time presses deeply on our busy lives, a handwritten note, volunteer event, or welcoming smile goes hand-in-hand with a solid online presence, letter to the editor, or email. Connecting with people, communicating our mission, and using all available resources are most assuredly our best public relations models for success.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee
Janet Jefford, Connecticut, Chairman

"If we ever end homelessness in this country, it will be with our veteran population first." Taking this quote to heart, the volunteers of the American Legion Auxiliary excelled in serving our homeless veterans and their families. Auxiliary units have always been there to assist at local VA-sponsored stand downs and, this year, they found new and exciting ways to support National President Peggy's request to concentrate on homeless veterans, especially women veterans. Whether by providing warm clothing and supplies to homeless shelters, helping furnish transitional housing, or celebrating when a veteran moves into a home of his/her own, the members of the Auxiliary have been there.

I am so proud to report that members have worked diligently to honor, help, and support our "angel" veterans. The question "Who will be there to take care of the next generation of veterans?" is being answered as members work to fulfill the first objective of the VA&R plan: To increase the number of volunteers at VA hospitals and in Field and Home Service. The Department of Minnesota alone reported 258 new Field Service volunteers and 313 new Home Service volunteers. Unit 44 in Marquette, Mich., put a new twist on regular bingo games held at most VA hospitals. They turned them into bingo birthday parties, celebrating those whose birthdays fall in that month. Birthday veterans get extra money if they bingo! At the Jacobetti Home for Veterans, ALA members formed a Ladies Friendship Sewing Group with female residents, resulting in beautiful homemade quilts. Each completed quilt is then won by one of the residents.

Soaring to New Heights echoed in the hearts and minds of our members as they worked hard to fulfill objective two and lend comfort and support to homeless veterans

and their families. Junior members of Landis Unit 146 in North Carolina joined with JROTC cadets in a "Homeless Not Helpless" project. They planned and implemented an all-night campout in front of the post, sleeping in cardboard boxes to develop empathy for homeless veterans and their families. Not only did they raise awareness, but they also collected more than 3,500 cans of food and in-kind donations totaling more than $19,000. Unit 1041 in Buffalo, N.Y., held its fifth annual Chinese auction to benefit homeless veterans, raising more than $12,000. Funds will be used not only to aid local programs, but also to begin an initiative to create a home for returning women veterans.

Healing through art therapy is the focus of the third objective, supporting our obligation as a presenting sponsor of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. Members raised $81,933 to support this program. Boston was the site of the 2012 Festival last October. Kudos to all the Auxiliary volunteers, especially to the Department of Massachusetts, for hosting a fantastic hospitality room for contestants and their families. The VA&R Committee awarded $2,800 in grants to four departments to help fund local creative arts festivals. New York and New Jersey were first-time recipients with great successes.

To quote Wyoming VA&R Chairman Peggy Miller: "Our units are ready to do many things. Just a call or email from a veteran, and they run to get it done. They just don't like writing reports, and that is too bad. With only about 50 percent of units reporting, the number of hours worked, dollars spent, and veterans served is staggering. One can only imagine what it would show if 100 percent reported."

I would like to close with some thoughts from Mona Shipley, Ohio VA&R chairman. She closed her report sharing things members do that don't include statistics, but instead focus on the human side of what we do: "We have taken time to read a book to a veteran who has no hands to turn the pages. We have sat with spouses as loved ones undergo surgery. We have comforted families and rejoiced when a loved one comes home. We have made mortgage payments and supplied gifts at Christmas and Easter. We have bought groceries, cooked meals, and drove to doctor appointments. We honored our veterans at Veterans Day and Memorial Day ceremonies and dinners. We stood by our Legionnaires when they performed graveside services for a fallen comrade." We are always there when it matters. Thank you, angels, for your service.

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

Report on Financial Statements
We have audited the accompanying consolidated financial statements of The American Legion National Headquarters ("Legion"), which comprise the consolidated statements of financial position as of December 31, 2012 and 2011, and the related consolidated statements of activities and cash flows for the years then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements
Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these consolidated financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America; this includes the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of consolidated financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility
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 consolidated financial statements are free of material misstatement.
An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the consolidated financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the consolidated financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the consolidated financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. Accordingly, we express no such opinion. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the consolidated financial statements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Opinion
In our opinion, the consolidated financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the consolidated financial position of The American Legion National Headquarters as of December 31, 2012 and 2011, 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.

Other Matter
Our audits were conducted for the purpose of forming an opinion on the consolidated financial statements as a whole. The consolidating statements of financial position and activities are presented for purposes of additional analysis of the consolidated financial statements rather than to present the financial position and results of operations of the individual companies, and are not a required part of the consolidated financial statements. 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 such information directly to the underlying accounting and other 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 2, 2013

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statements of Financial Position December 31, 2012 and 2011

	2012	2011
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 1,033,107	$ 2,838,169
Accounts receivable	2,993,618	2,293,985
Interest receivable	612,903	605,899
Prepaid expenses and deposits	1,405,730	1,237,649
Deferred membership expense	8,800,894	8,717,182
Inventory	2,349,567	2,433,969
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	30,818	39,165
Beneficial interest in trust	285,278	316,898
	17,511,915	18,482,916
Investments		
General	18,904,098	25,355,652
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved Funds	31,488,276	30,220,097
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership fund	22,723,445	22,505,485
Samsung scholarship fund	8,649,457	8,127,347
Building funds	5,368,173	4,717,543
Sept. 11 Memorial scholarship fund	7,602,261	6,418,584
Special account – Endowment Fund	2,335,892	2,312,288
General account – Endowment Fund	7,139,303	6,989,878
National Emergency Fund	2,898,152	2,976,891
Other	3,073,599	2,820,926
	110,182,656	112,444,691
Property, plant and equipment, net	6,422,688	6,171,871
	$ 134,117,259	$ 137,099,478
LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable	$ 1,669,375	$ 2,438,175
Scholarships payable	1,180,690	1,184,518
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	197,985	189,159
Deferred income	1,048,513	1,146,099
Deferred dues income	22,523,486	23,037,185
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	7,762,082	8,490,607
Accrued vacation benefits	1,087,919	954,722
Accrued pension expense	7,986,848	3,303,798
Other liabilities	526,569	270,603
Notes payable	1,459,498	1,678,367
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life membership	19,416,267	20,155,727
Life memberships due to state and local posts	19,548,842	20,273,978
	84,408,074	83,122,938
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	21,317,044	27,657,140
Temporarily restricted	15,618,259	13,655,967
Permanently restricted	12,773,882	12,663,433
Total net assets	49,709,185	53,976,540
	$ 134,117,259	$ 137,099,478

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statement of Activities *Year ended December 31, 2012*

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
Revenue, gains and other support				
National member dues	$ 27,057,846	$ -	$ -	$ 27,057,846
Direct membership solicitations	10,714,082	-	-	10,714,082
Member service fees income	819,246	-	-	819,246
Affinity income	2,892,210	-	-	2,892,210
Sales of emblem items	11,838,376	-	-	11,838,376
Advertising	10,462,530	-	-	10,462,530
Contributions	3,714,322	1,816,855	56,529	5,587,706
Label and printing fees	1,142,576	-	-	1,142,576
Interest and dividends, net of trustee fees of $290,339	2,021,441	840,041	62,431	2,923,913
Net realized gains	178,460	47,425	-	225,885
Other	2,183,156	-	-	2,183,156
	73,024,245	2,704,321	118,960	75,847,526
Net assets released from restriction	1,123,454	(1,123,454)	-	-
Total revenues, gains, and other support	74,147,699	1,580,867	118,960	75,847,526
Expenses				
Salaries	15,805,956	-	-	15,805,956
Employee benefits	3,947,695	-	-	3,947,695
Cost of sales – Legion	6,391,665	-	-	6,391,665
Department and magazine costs	2,307,771			2,307,771
Direct publications	12,171,401	-	-	12,171,401
Executive and staff travel	1,746,093	-	-	1,746,093
Commission and committee	1,840,983	-	-	1,840,983
Printing and postage	8,388,263	-	-	8,388,263
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,999,027	-	-	1,999,027
Office and other operating	13,577,494	-	-	13,577,494
Occupancy and usage	2,122,939	-	-	2,122,939
Special projects and programs	2,992,204	-	-	2,992,204
	73,291,491	-	-	73,291,491
Change in net assets from operations	856,208	1,580,867	118,960	2,556,035
Net unrealized gains - investments	619,224	381,425	(8,511)	992,138
Net change in PUFL	(2,154,663)	-	-	(2,154,663)
Amortization of pension loss	(1,209,526)	-	-	(1,209,526)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	(4,451,339)	-	-	(4,451,339)
Change in net assets	(6,340,096)	1,962,292	110,449	(4,267,355)
Net assets, beginning of year	27,657,140	13,655,967	12,663,433	53,976,540
Net assets, end of year	$ 21,317,044	$ 15,618,259	$ 12,773,882	$ 49,409,185

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statement 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	3,029,976	1,456,388	84,538	4,570,902
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
	71,184,367	2,276,832	159,434	73,620,633
Net assets released from restriction	1,229,423	(1,229,423)	-	-
Total revenues, gains, and other support	72,413,790	1,047,409	159,434	73,620,633
Expenses				
Salaries	15,059,423	-	-	15,059,423
Employee benefits	3,035,623	-	-	3,035,623
Cost of sales – Legion	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	1,847,304	-	-	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	2,868,107	-	-	2,868,107
	70,607,678	-	-	70,607,678
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 Cash Flows *Years ended December 31, 2012 and 2011*

	2012	2011
Cash flows from operating activities		
Change in net assets	$ (4,267,355)	$ (3,117,349)
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash from operating activities		
Depreciation expense	1,042,774	1,063,977
Loss on disposal of property and equipment	6,095	-
Bad debt expense	-	155,018
Realized gain on sale of investments	(225,885)	(298,279)
Unrealized gain on investments	(992,138)	(3,243,798)
Net change in Paid-Up-For-Life annuity	2,154,663	3,596,231
Amortization of pension loss	1,209,526	666,288
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	4,451,339	5,111,583
Contributions restricted for long-term purposes	(56,529)	(84,538)
Accounts receivable	(699,633)	661,760
Interest receivable	(7,004)	135,563
Prepaid expenses and deposits	(168,081)	(658,224)
Deferred membership expense	(83,712)	(24,623)
Inventories	84,402	66,146
Beneficial interest in trust	31,620	19,699
Accounts and scholarships payable	(772,628)	748,336
Deferred income	(4,950,243)	(2,925,603)
Accrued pension expense	(977,815)	(931,566)
Other accrued liabilities	389,163	37,778
Net cash from operating activities	(3,831,441)	978,399
Cash flows from investing activities		
Purchase of property and equipment	(1,299,686)	(543,807)
Purchase of investments	(100,791,360)	(99,542,367)
Sales and maturities of investments	104,271,418	99,370,496
Investments in affiliate (CFA)	8,347	11,757
Net cash from investing activities	2,188,719	(703,921)
Cash flows from financing activities		
Contributions restricted for long-term purposes	56,529	84,538
Payments on loan	(218,869)	(207,596)
Net cash from financing activities	(162,340)	(123,058)
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	(1,805,062)	151,420
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	2,838,169	2,686,749
Cash and cash equivalents, end of year	$ 1,033,107	$ 2,838,169
Supplemental cash flows information		
Income taxes paid, net of refunds received	-	(6,000)
Interest paid	83,688	94,961

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 ("Legion") is a national veterans organization which was declared to be a corporate body by an Act of the United States Congress on September 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% of the Legion's income is derived from membership dues (including amounts allocated for magazine subscriptions). An additional 13 - 14% is generated through advertising for the American Legion Magazine. Another significant source of income is Emblem sales, which includes the sale of apparel, jewelry, and other items bearing the American Legion Emblem. Income is expended by the Legion on several different programs including The American Legion Magazine, Emblem sales, veterans' assistance and rehabilitation, youth programs and others. The Legion's youth programs include American Legion baseball, oratorical contests and Boy's 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 inter-organizational 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 American Legion members, families and Posts.

Basis of Accounting: The financial statements have been prepared on the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with accounting standards generally accepted in the United States of America ("GAAP").

Use of Estimates in Preparation of Financial Statements: The preparation of financial statements in conformity with GAAP 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 GAAP, which requires, among other things, that the 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 and 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 its economic benefit neither expire with the passage of time nor can be removed by satisfying a specific purpose.

Cash and Cash Equivalents: Cash and cash equivalents consist of bank deposits in accounts that are federally insured up to $250,000 per financial institution. Additionally, the Legion holds funds at financial institutions which are participating in the FDIC's transaction account guarantee program. Under this program non-interest bearing and certain low interest accounts are FDIC insured in full through 2012 in addition to and separate from the coverage available under FDIC's general deposit insurance rules.

For purposes of the consolidated statement of cash flows, the Legion considers all highly liquid investments purchased with an original maturity of three months or less to be cash equivalents.

Inventory: Inventory consists of Emblem items held for sale, magazine paper and publication rights and is stated at the lower of cost or market using the first-in, first-out (FIFO) method. Supplies which are 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 thirty 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 December 31, 2012 and 2011.

Collections: The Legion owns many collectible military related items and historical documents which were not recorded as they were acquired. It is often impracticable to determine a value for collections and accordingly, the Legion has concluded that they need not be capitalized. Some of these items have been appraised for insurance purposes.

Support and Revenue: The Legion reports gifts of cash and other assets as restricted support if they are received with donor stipulations that limit the use of the donated assets. When a donor restriction expires, that is, when a stipulated time restriction ends or 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 the entities are considered to be a private foundation. The Legion is subject to income tax on unrelated business income. In 2012 and 2011, the Legion incurred no tax expense and received $0 and $6,000 in refunds.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 December 31, 2012 and 2011, management has determined that the Legion does not have any tax positions that result in any uncertainties regarding the possible impact on the Legion's financial statements. The Legion is no longer subject to examination by taxing authorities for years before 2009. 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 December 31, 2012 and 2011.

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 fund raising 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 December 31, 2012, to determine the need for any adjustments or disclosures to the audited financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2012. Management has performed their analysis through May 2, 2013, the date the financial
statements were available to be issued.

NOTE 2 - COLLECTIONS

The Legion owns many collectible military related items and historical documents which were not recorded as they were acquired. It is often impracticable to determine a value for collections and accordingly, the Legion has concluded that they need not be capitalized. These items have been appraised, or are in the process of being appraised for insurance purposes and are as follows:

	Appraisal date	Replacement value
World War I posters	2/10/2005	$ 461,769
World War II posters	3/11/2005	472,919
Military unit histories	3/18/2005	112,410
Fine art collection	10/14/2005	695,600
Firearms and uniforms collection	3/24/2006	99,950
Original GI Bill	not applicable	-
Other collections	not applicable	-

NOTE 3 - INVESTMENT IN AFFILIATE

The Legion, in conjunction with approximately 120 other organizations, has created a nonprofit corporation known as The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. (CFA) for the purpose of aiding in the campaign to secure a constitutional amendment empowering the Congress and the States to enact legislation to protect the Flag of the United States of America from physical desecration.

CFA recognized a change in net assets of ($8,347) and ($11,757) in 2012 and 2011, 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 2012 and 2011.

NOTE 4 - BENEFICIAL INTEREST IN CHARITABLE LEAD TRUST

The ALEF has been named a beneficiary of a charitable lead trust. Under the charitable trust, the ALEF is to receive quarterly distributions in the amount of $9,919 until December 2020, or until the funds of the trust are exhausted. Based on the terms of the trust and a 2.64% discount rate in 2012 and 2011, the present value of future benefits expected to be received by the ALEF is estimated to be $285,278 and $316,898 at December 31, 2012 and 2011, 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 describes three levels of inputs that may be used to measure fair value:

Level 1: Quoted prices for identical assets or liabilities in active markets that the entity has the ability to access as of the measurement date.

Level 2: Significant other observable inputs other than Level 1 prices such as quoted prices for similar assets or liabilities; quoted prices in markets that are not active; or other inputs that are observable or can be corroborated by observable market data.

Level 3: Significant unobservable inputs that reflect a reporting entity's own assumptions about the assumptions that market participants would use in pricing an asset or liability.

In many cases, a valuation technique used to measure fair value includes inputs from multiple levels of the fair value hierarchy. The lowest level of significant input determines the placement of the entire fair value measurement in the hierarchy.

The fair value of money markets and common stock are based on quoted prices in active markets. (Level 1 inputs) The fair value of U.S. Government obligations, asset backed
securities, corporate and state bonds, and municipal bonds are based on quoted market prices of similar securities with similar due dates using the market approach. (Level 2 inputs) Common stock and asset backed securities are not held by the Legion, but are held in the defined benefit plan assets which are disclosed in Note 15.

The fair value of beneficial interest in trust assets is determined using the income approach and 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)

GAAP provides additional guidance on how companies should estimate the fair value of certain alternative investments and other financial instruments, such as the beneficial interest in assets or trusts. The fair value of such investments can be determined using Net Asset Value (NAV), unless it is probable that the asset will be sold at something other than NAV. GAAP also 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, 2012, 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	$ -	$ -	$ 285,278
Money market accounts	10,436,511	-	-
U.S. government obligations	-	59,029,085	-
State and municipal bonds	-	11,980,085	-
Corporate bonds	-	28,736,975	-
	$ 10,436,511	**$99,746,145**	**$ 285,278**

	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	-
State and municipal bonds	-	8,271,091	-
Corporate bonds	-	19,261,809	-
	$ 13,038,485	**$99,406,206**	**$ 316,898**

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, 2012	$ 316,8987
Change in value of split-interest agreements	(31,620)
Ending balance, Dec. 31, 2012	$ 285,278

	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

NOTE 6 – PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT

The Legion's property and equipment, and the related accumulated depreciation at December 31, 2012 and 2011 are as follows:

	2012	2011
Washington, D.C., real estate		
Land	$ 80,000	$ 80,000
Building	5,603,402	5,257,798
Construction in progress	-	3,698
Indianapolis real estate		
Land	389,264	389,264
Building	3,879,173	3,851,186
Construction in progress	78,733	1,442
Furniture, fixtures and equipment		
National Headquarters, Indianapolis	6,824,830	6,236,955
Washington, D.C.	845,302	804,316
	17,700,704	16,624,659
Less accumulated depreciation	(11,278,016)	(10,452,788)
	$ 6,422,688	**$ 6,171,871**

Depreciation expense for the years ended, December 31, 2012 and 2011 was $1,042,774 and $1,063,977, 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% and final payment due August 1, 2018. The outstanding balance on long-term debt is $1,459,498 and $1,678,367 for 2012 and 2011.

The future maturities of the long-term debt are as follows:

2013	230,755
2014	243,287
2015	256,499
2016	270,428
2017	285,114
Thereafter	173,415
Total	**$ 1,459,498**

Interest expense was $83,688 and $94,961 for the years ended December 31, 2012 and 2011, respectively.

NOTE 8 – LEASES

The Legion has several non-cancelable operating leases, primarily for facilities, computer equipment, and copiers that expire at various dates through the year 2016. Rent expense under these leases for the years ended December 31, 2012 and 2011 was $494,582 and $498,825, respectively.

Minimum lease commitments are as follows:

2013	532,910
2014	480,205
2015	471,888
2016	427,649
Total	**$ 1,912,652**

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 2012 and 2011 was $948,840 and $906,400 respectively. Insurance coverage is included in the Legion's general insurance policy.

NOTE 9 – PAID-UP-FOR-LIFE MEMBERSHIP FUND

The National Executive Committee approved the establishment of a life membership plan available to any member of a participating department. In accordance with the plan, the assets of the Paid-Up-For-Life (PUFL) Membership Fund are included in unrestricted, board designated net assets and segregated in a trust account from which funds equal to the annual dues of life members are withdrawn for current operations each year. The trust agreement provides that the Legion has the right to withdraw part or all of the assets of the trust account and to modify or terminate the trust agreement at its discretion.

Under the terms of the PUFL program, 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 members' 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 National Finance Commission and a two-thirds affirmative vote of the National Executive Committee at two successive meetings. It is the policy of the Legion to transfer 10% of the prior year's defined net income from operations to the restricted fund. The Legion made no transfers to the restricted fund in 2012 and 2011.

The reserve fund is also designated for use by the National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee and reported as unrestricted, board designated net assets. However, earnings of the reserve fund may be used for the general operations of the Legion. The principal can be expended only by action of the Legion at its national convention, or by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the National Executive Committee in two successive meetings not less than 60 days apart.

NOTE 11 – TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

Temporarily restricted net assets are donor-restricted for specific purposes. At December 31, 2012 and 2011 the restricted purposes are as follows:

	2012	2011
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	$ 1,049,265	$ 1,084,917
Samsung scholarships	2,361,349	2,101,778
American Legacy Fund	7,601,563	6,461,292
National Emergency Fund	3,352,924	3,103,583
Boy Scouts	467,899	467,899
Operation Comfort Warriors	582,126	251,149
Others	203,133	185,349
	$ 15,618,259	**$ 13,655,967**

NOTE 12 – NET ASSETS RELEASED FROM RESTRICTION

Net assets were released from donor restrictions by incurring expenses satisfying the restricted purposes or by occurrence of other events specified by donors.

	2012	2011
Purpose restrictions accomplished		
Overseas graves decoration	$ 56,851	$ 27,657
Scholarships and grants (including relief aid)	694,017	810,435
Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation and Children & Youth programs	372,586	391,331
	$ 1,123,454	**$ 1,229,423**

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. servicemen and servicewomen participated. Income from the American Legion Endowment Fund is to be used to support the veterans affairs and rehabilitation and children and youth activities of the Legion.

At December 31, 2012 and 2011 the permanently restricted net assets are as follows:

	2012	2011
Samsung scholarships	$ 5,000,000	$ 5,000,000
American Legion Endowment Fund	7,773,882	7,663,433
	$ 12,773,882	**$ 12,663,433**

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 that is not classified in permanently restricted net assets is classified as temporarily restricted net assets until those amounts are appropriated for expenditure by the Legion in a manner consistent with the standard of prudence prescribed by UPMIFA. In accordance with UPMIFA, the Legion considers the following factors in making a determination to appropriate or accumulate donor restricted endowment funds:

(1) The duration and preservation of the fund

(2) The purposes of the Legion and the donor restricted endowment fund

(3) General economic conditions

(4) The possible effect 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 December 31, 2012:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Donor-restricted endowment funds	$ -	$ 2,402,192	$ 12,733,882	$ 15,176,074

Endowment net asset composition by type of fund as of December 31, 2011:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Donor-restricted endowment funds	$ -	$ 2,101,778	$ 12,633,433	$ 14,765,211

Changes in endowment net assets for the year ended December 31, 2012:

	Unre-stricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Net assets, beginning of year	$ -	$ 2,101,778	$ 12,633,433	$ 14,765,211
Investment return				
Investment income, net of fees	-	488,481	-	488,481
Net appreciation (realized and unrealized)	-	38,270	53,920	92,190
Total investment return	**-**	**$ 526,751**	**$ 53,920**	**$ 580,671**
New gifts	-	-	56,529	56,529
Appropriation of endowment assets for expenditure	-	(226,337)	-	(226,337)
Net assets, end of year	**$ -**	**$ 2,402,192**	**$ 12,773,882**	**$ 15,176,074**

Changes in endowment net assets for the year December 31, 2011:

	Unre-stricted	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**	**$ 14,765,211**

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: Capital appreciation (realized and unrealized) is added to the principal of the American Legion Endowment Fund and distributions are limited to cumulative interest, net of fees. On the Samsung scholarship fund, the capital appreciation is temporarily restricted and can be spent, along with the interest, net of fees, 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 Legion National Executive Committee will be 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 Legion's National Convention. Contributions to the plan are made by the Legion and other participating groups on the basis of annual actuarial valuations.

In May 2008, the Legion voted to freeze the plan effective June 30, 2008 and voted to 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 received the benefits they had earned as of June 30, 2008, but no future benefits were earned and no new employees were added. The 401(k) savings plan calls for a 100% match of the first 1% contributed by the employee and a 50% match of the net 5% contributed by the employee. Thus, the maximum matching percentage an employee will receive is 3.5%. The Legion made contributions of $387,124 and $364,833 in 2012 and 2011, 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 December 31, 2012 and 2011:

	2012	2011
Benefit obligation	$ (56,386,015)	$ (51,114,809)
Fair value of plan assets	48,399,167	47,811,011
Funded status	**$ (7,986,848)**	**$ (3,303,798)**
Service Cost	$ -	$ -
Interest cost	2,602,150	2,714,869
Actual return on assets	(3,382,597)	(1,996,724)
Amortization of prior service costs	121,085	121,085
Amortization of loss	1,209,526	666,288
Difference between expected and actual return on assets	(318,453)	(1,770,796)
Net periodic pension cost	**$ 231,711**	**$ (265,278)**
Net loss (gain)	$ 4,572,424	$ 5,232,668
Prior service cost	(121,085)	(121,085)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	**$ 4,572,424**	**$ 5,111,583**
Prepaid benefit cost	$ 14,280,033	$ 14,511,744
Accumulated benefit obligation	56,386,015	51,114,809
Vested benefit obligation	56,233,191	50,949,483
Net periodic pension cost	231,711	(265,278)
Benefits paid	2,796,599	2,785,091
Measurement date	**12/31/2012**	**12/31/2011**

Estimated future benefit payments:

2013	3,230,330
2014	3,277,184
2015	3,343,442
2016	3,421,401
2017	3,475,180
2018-2021	17,140,573

The asset investment policy is a lower risk strategy with the primary objective of preservation of capital with an emphasis on long-term growth and generation of current income to provide adequate cash flow needed for benefit

payments. The target asset allocation
is 0-20% in cash or cash equivalents, 40-70% in fixed income and 30-60% in equities. Prohibited investments include real estate investment trusts, real estate partnerships, mutual funds, private equity, hedge funds and guaranteed investment certificates.

The fair value of the Legion's defined benefit plan assets at December 31, 2012 and 2011 are as follows. See Note 5 for descriptions of inputs for each type of asset.

	Fair-Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2012, 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	$ 1,665,688	$ -	$ -
U.S. government and agency obligations	-	13,128,885	-
Asset-backed securities	-	5,623,114	-
Municipal bonds	-	2,194,986	-
Corporate bonds	-	10,697,599	-
Common stock			
Materials	695,525	-	-
Industrials	1,625,398	-	-
Consumer discretionary	1,549,771	-	-
Consumer staples	832,015	-	-
Energy	1,716,280	-	-
Health care	3,337,489	-	-
Financials	342,505	-	-
Telecommunication	1,924,469	-	-
Technology	515,346	-	-
Utilities and other	490,602	-	-
Accrued interest	220,767	-	-
	$ 16,754,583	**$ 31,644,584**	**$ -**

	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 discretionary	1,451,892	-	-
Consumer staples	754,519	-	-
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	-	-
	$ 15,152,822	**$ 32,658,189**	**$ -**

Historical returns of multiple asset classes were analyzed to develop a risk free real rate
of return and risk premium for each asset class. The overall rate for each asset class was developed by combining a long-term inflation component, the risk free real rate of return, and the associated risk premium. A weighted average rate was developed based on those overall rates and the target asset allocation of the plan.

Weighted-average assumptions	2012	2011
Discount rate	4.16%	5.25%
Expected return on plan assets	7.00%	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 December 31, 2013 are $1,707,475 and $121,085, respectively.

NOTE 16 – FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

The following represents a functional breakdown of the Legion's expenses by program and supporting services:

	2012	2011
Program services		
Veterans programs and services	$ 34,357,211	$ 33,604,636
Americanism, Children & Youth activities	4,469,397	3,958,400
	$ 38,826,608	$ 37,563,036
Supporting services		
Management and general	17,267,299	16,442,779
Member development	11,934,376	11,367,471
Fundraising	5,263,208	5,234,392
	$ 34,464,883	$ 33,044,642
	$ 73,291,491	**$ 70,607,678**

Member development includes direct response advertising expense of $8,794,493 and $8,447,032 for the years ended December 31, 2012 and 2011.

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
Consolidating Statement of Financial Position *December 31, 2012*

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Charities	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Eliminations	Total
ASSETS						
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 625,190	$ -	$ 7,592	$ 400,325	$ -	$ 1,033,107
Accounts receivable	2,993,618	28,800	1,005	38,608	(68,413)	2,993,618
Interest receivable	542,956	114	53,993	15,840	-	612,903
Prepaid expenses and deposits	1,403,991	-	1,739	-	-	1,405,730
Deferred membership expense	8,800,894	-	-	-	-	8,800,894
Due from American Legion Endowment Fund	2,000,000	-	-	-	(2,000,000)	-
Inventory	2,349,567	-	-	-	-	2,349,567
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	30,818	-	-	-	-	30,818
Beneficial interest in trust	-	-	285,278	-	-	285,278
	18,747,034	28,914	349,607	454,773	(2,068,413)	17,511,915
Investments						
General	18,904,098	-	-	-	-	18,904,098
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved funds	31,486,276	-	-	-	-	31,486,276
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership fund	22,723,445	-	-	-	-	22,723,445
Samsung scholarship fund	8,649,457	-	-	-	-	8,649,457
Building funds	5,368,173	-	-	-	-	5,368,173
Sept. 11 Memorial scholarship fund	7,602,261	-	-	-	-	7,602,261
Special account – Endowment Fund	-	-	2,335,892	-	-	2,335,892
General account – Endowment Fund	-	-	7,139,303	-	-	7,139,303
National Emergency Fund	-	-	-	2,898,152	-	2,898,152
Other	2,970,934	102,765	-	-	-	3,073,599
	97,706,544	102,765	9,475,195	2,898,152	-	110,182,656
Property, plant and equipment, net	6,422,688	-	-	-	-	6,422,688
	$ 122,876,266	$ 131,679	$ 9,824,802	$ 3,352,925	$ (2,068,413)	$ 134,117,259
LIABILITIES						
Accounts payable	$ 1,737,787	$ -	$ -	$ 1	$ (68,413)	$ 1,669,375
Scholarships payable	1,180,690	-	-	-	-	1,180,690
Accounts payable – Legion	-	-	2,000,000	-	(2,000,000)	-
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	197,985	-	-	-	-	197,985
Deferred income	1,048,513	-	-	-	-	1,048,513
Deferred dues income	22,523,486	-	-	-	-	22,523,486
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	7,762,082	-	-	-	-	7,762,082
Accrued vacation benefits	1,087,919	-	-	-	-	1,087,919
Accrued pension expense	7,986,848	-	-	-	-	7,986,848
Other liabilities	525,589	-	-	-	-	525,589
Notes payable	1,459,498	-	-	-	-	1,459,498
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life Membership	19,416,267	-	-	-	-	19,416,267
Life memberships due to state and local posts	19,546,842	-	-	-	-	19,546,842
	84,476,486	-	2,000,000	1	(2,068,413)	84,408,074
NET ASSETS						
Unrestricted	21,175,286	131,679	10,077	-	-	21,317,044
Temporarily restricted	12,224,492	-	40,843	3,352,924	-	15,618,259
Permanently restricted	5,000,000	-	7,773,882	-	-	12,773,882
Total net assets	38,399,780	131,679	7,824,802	3,352,924	-	49,709,185
	$ 122,876,266	$ 131,679	$ 9,824,802	$ 3,352,925	$ (2,068,413)	$ 134,117,259

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidating Statement 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
	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
	$ 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
Accounts payable – Legion	-	-	2,000,000	-	(2,000,000)	-
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	189,159	-	-	-	-	189,159
Deferred income	1,148,099	-	-	-	-	1,148,099
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
Consolidating Statement of Activities *Year ended December 31, 2012*

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Charities	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Eliminations	Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	$ 27,057,846	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ 27,057,846
Direct membership solicitation	10,714,082	-	-	-	-	10,714,082
Member service fees income	819,246	-	-	-	-	819,246
Affinity income	2,892,210	-	-	-	-	2,892,210
Sales of emblem items	11,838,376	-	-	-	-	11,838,376
Advertising	10,462,530	-	-	-	-	10,462,530
Contributions	5,090,025	152,924	56,529	344,948	(56,720)	5,587,706
Label and printing fees	1,142,576	-	-	-	-	1,142,576
Interest and dividends, net of fees	2,521,958	2	305,628	96,325	-	2,923,913
Net realized gains	133,108	-	87,102	5,675	-	225,885
American Legion Endowment Fund Income	294,740	-	-	-	(294,740)	-
Other	2,183,156	-	-	-	-	2,183,156
	75,149,853	152,926	449,259	446,948	(351,460)	75,847,526
Expenses						
Salaries	15,805,956	-	-	-	-	15,805,956
Employee benefits	3,947,695	-	-	-	-	3,947,695
Cost of sales – Legion	6,391,665	-	-	-	-	6,391,665
Department and magazine costs	2,307,771	-	-	-	-	2,307,771
Direct publications	12,171,401	-	-	-	-	12,171,401
Executive and staff travel	1,740,191	-	5,902	-	-	1,746,093
Commission and committee	1,840,983	-	-	-	-	1,840,983
Printing and postage	8,386,263	-	-	-	-	8,368,263
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,766,630	56,720	294,740	232,397	(351,460)	1,999,027
Office and other operating	13,549,164	5,125	23,083	122	-	13,577,494
Occupancy and usage	2,122,939	-	-	-	-	2,122,939
Special projects and programs	2,992,204	-	-	-	-	2,992,204
	73,024,862	61,845	323,725	232,519	(351,460)	73,291,491
Change in net assets from operations	2,124,991	91,081	125,534	214,429	-	2,556,035
Net unrealized gains - Investments	969,666	(762)	(11,678)	34,912	-	992,138
Net change in PUFL	(2,154,663)	-	-	-	-	(2,154,663)
Amortization of pension loss	(1,209,526)	-	-	-	-	(1,209,526)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	(4,451,339)	-	-	-	-	(4,451,339)
Change in net assets	(4,720,871)	90,319	113,856	249,341	-	(4,267,355)
Net assets, beginning of year	43,120,651	41,360	7,710,946	3,103,583	-	53,976,540
Net assets, end of year	$ 38,399,780	$ 131,679	$ 7,824,802	$ 3,352,924	$ -	$ 49,409,185

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidating Statement 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	4,108,694	83,631	84,538	344,439	(50,400)	4,570,902
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
	72,966,239	83,631	495,114	437,644	(361,995)	73,620,633
Expenses						
Salaries	15,059,423	-	-	-	-	15,059,423
Employee benefits	3,035,623	-	-	-	-	3,035,623
Cost of sale - Legion	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	2,868,107	-	-	-	-	2,868,107
	70,219,542	50,400	337,859	361,872	(361,995)	70,607,678
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	(686,288)	-	-	-	-	(686,288)
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