

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 96TH NATIONAL CONVENTION  
OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

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COMMUNICATION

FROM

THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE  
DIVISION, THE AMERICAN LEGION

TRANSMITTING

THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND INDEPENDENT AUDIT OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, PROCEEDINGS OF THE 96TH ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, HELD IN CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA FROM AUGUST 22–AUGUST 28, 2014, AND A REPORT ON THE ORGANIZATION'S ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR PRECEDING THE CONVENTION



FEBRUARY 5, 2015.—Referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and ordered to be printed

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U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

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THE AMERICAN LEGION,  
*Washington, DC, January 28, 2015.*

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 96th annual National Convention held in Charlotte, North Carolina from August 22–28, 2014 and a report on our organization's activities for the year preceding the convention.

For God and Country,

IAN DE PLANQUE,  
*Director, National Legislative Division.*

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## FOREWORD

This booklet has been prepared for the information of members of The American Legion. It has come to be known as the Summary of Proceedings of the National Convention for the current year. It is a comprehensive résumé of what took place at the Ninety-Sixth Annual National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26 – 28, 2014.

The final report of the National Organization for the period ending December 31, 2013, and Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2013, and Surplus Analysis, January 1, 2013, to December 31, 2013, 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: Douglas W. Wooddell, Colorado; Robert E. Newman, Indiana; William A. Rakestraw, Jr., New Jersey; Wayne D. Satrom, North Dakota; Paul E. Dillard, Texas





## 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; Quemoy 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. I.E. Whitlock\*, Florida;  
Oscar W. Worth wine\*, Idaho; Dr. F.  
Whitney Godwin\*, Virginia; Louis R.  
Proust\*, 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 Connolly\*,  
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 Salvesson\*, 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. Barrette, 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

**96th NATIONAL CONVENTION**

Charlotte, N. C. Aug. 26 – 28, 2014  
 Commander: Daniel M. Dellinger, Virginia  
 Vice Commanders: Douglas W. Wooddell, Colorado; Robert E. Newman, Indiana; William A. Rakestraw, Jr., New Jersey; Wayne D. Satrom, North Dakota; Paul E. Dillard, Texas

Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia  
 Chaplain: Daniel A. McClure, Iowa  
 Historian: Charemon Dunham, South Dakota  
 Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana  
 Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

**PROCEEDINGS**  
**of the**  
**96<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention**  
**of**  
**The American Legion**  
**Tuesday, August 26, 2014**

*... At 8:00 o'clock a.m., the delegates assembled for the 96th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Ladies and gentlemen, as we begin our program, please join me in a round of applause for Peter Ole. This is his 37th year. *(Applause)*

**Call to Order**  
**Daniel M. Dellinger, Virginia, National Commander**

The 96th 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 Voices of Service.

*... At this time, the delegation rose and rendered a salute to the Colors, followed by the National Anthem performed by Voices of Service. (Applause)*

Color Guard, you may retire. Thank you. *(Applause)* For the invocation, I call on National Chaplain Daniel A. McClure of Iowa. Ladies and gentlemen, please uncover.

**Invocation**  
**Daniel A. McClure, Iowa, National Chaplain**

Let's pray together, shall we? Father, we thank You for this great assembly. We thank You for being the sustainer, the creator of our nation in many ways. We thank You for the privileges and opportunities that we've had throughout the years to serve. We thank You for the legacy that we see within the crowd today and the stories that are told and untold.

And, Father, now as we gather in this way, we ask for Your blessing upon this hour, the hours and days that lie ahead. We ask that we might be given the strength to continue to serve this great nation. Thank You for our commander, what he's accomplished this past year. Thank You for our country. We'd ask You might bless us in a very special way. Bless each home, each community, each state that you see here today.

Now, Father, have Your will and way in all that's said and done, might we do the things that would cause honor and glory to You and to our country. For it's in Your holy name we pray, amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Thank you, Chaplain Dan. 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**  
**E. C. Toppin, North Carolina, Vice Chairman, National Security Commission**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: 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, Michael Schlee of Maryland, and Vice Chairman E. C. Toppin of North Carolina to place the POW/MIA flag on the empty chair.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

**Ronald A. Miluszewski, Virginia, National Sergeant-at-Arms**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Ladies and gentlemen, National Sergeant-At-Arms Ronald A. Miluszewski of Virginia 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**

**Daniel M. Dellinger, Virginia, National Commander**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Legionnaires, please cover and join me as we reaffirm our commitment to the principles and ideals on which The American Legion was founded by reciting the Preamble to the Constitution. ... *At this time, the delegation recited the preamble to The American Legion Constitution.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Please be seated.

### **Special Remembrance**

We open this Convention with a heavy heart. Yesterday morning our dear friend and North Carolina American Legion Convention Corporation President Jerry L. Hedrick joined his savior. His sudden departure has shocked his many friends standing on this stage on your national staff and, in fact, throughout the entire American Legion family.

Jerry was far more than just a member of the National Executive Committee. He was a leader in every sense of the term. So much of what you will see and hear at this North Carolina Convention is because of Jerry's hard work. He was instrumental in bringing the wonderful American Legion World Series to Shelby. This was the second time Jerry has served as the North Carolina National Convention Corporation president.

Our love and our sympathy is extended to his beloved Marie and their family. Lexington, North Carolina, Post 8 has just lost a great Legionnaire, but the Heavenly Kingdom has gained a prince of a man.

On January 10 of this year, The American Legion suffered an immeasurable loss. Past National Commander and longtime New York Department Adjutant Richard M. Pedro joined Post Everlasting. A number of Dick's close friends and family remembered him with touching eulogies at our May NEC meetings. His passing came on the third anniversary of the departure of one his closest American Legion friends, Past National Commander John H. Geiger of Illinois. So respected was Dick Pedro that delegates to our 2012 National Convention in Indianapolis unanimously voted to bestow upon him the title of Past National Commander.

This World War II Navy veteran was a mentor and a friend to so many of us national commanders and leaders in this organization. But whether you were a brand-new Legionnaire or a seasoned commission chairman, Dick was approachable and friendly to all. His love for his country, family, and The American Legion were unwavering. And almost just as unwavering was his love for the New York Yankees.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo said, "We lost one of our strongest advocates in the veterans community with the death of Dick Pedro. Few people have served more selflessly than he has over the many years on identifying and solving the difficult challenges facing veterans of all generations. I join with all veterans as we pay tribute to Dick's service. On behalf of all the



New Yorkers, I offer my thoughts and prayers to his friends and family.” The American Legion also offers our thoughts and prayers and extends our heartfelt condolences to his family.

To begin our opening ceremonies this morning, singing “The Promise That We Make,” please welcome the American Military Spouses Choir. *(Applause)*

... *The American Military Spouses Choir performed “The Promise That We Make.” (Applause)*

### **Opening Ceremony**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Thank you, American Military Spouses Choir. Our opening ceremony host today began his professional career in the U.S. Marine Corps and was the first black Marine selected to the Naval Academy Prep School to then go on to graduate from the United States Naval Academy.

Because of his military service and regard for those in uniform, he has a special place in his heart for our veterans. He serves on the board of Fisher House. He continues to work with researchers in the U.S. Army to further develop their findings with the hopes of helping soldiers who have experienced blast-related traumatic brain injuries.

He is an Emmy Award-winning television personality, an inspired speaker, author, entrepreneur, and advocate for veterans worldwide. Please give a warm American Legion welcome to Montel Williams. *(Applause)*

MR. MONTEL WILLIAMS: Good morning, American Legion! Good morning. I see a lot of people standing. Do me a favor. Everybody else that's in the audience, you'll be sitting all day long. Go ahead and stand up for just one second. Everybody, if you can stand up right where you are. Stand up. On the stage, too, stand up for a second. You guys will be sitting all day. Since you'll be sitting all day, do me a favor. Everybody take your hands, put them right here. Let me see them. Shake them around a little bit. Now turn to your right. Your other right, sir. *(Laughter)*

Take your hands, place them on the shoulders of the person in front of you. Shake them up a little bit. Wake them up. Stop! Turn to the left. Do it again. Hands on the shoulders. Come on, wake them up a little bit. Stop! Good. Turn back, facing forward. Now, still standing, part of the reason why I have you standing is because I've got to acknowledge a couple things really quickly.

First off, I want to thank you for inviting me here today to speak to you at your National Convention. But I'm the one who has got to say thank you, thank you to you, The American Legion and your leadership. You and your leaders are the reason why the bill finally got signed to proudly protect our veterans, because of the hard work you did. *(Cheers and applause)* Your commander, Commander Dellinger, spent tireless hours.

You saw me on TV, and I appreciate the warm wishes and the things that you sent me via e-mail and Twitter and tweet. You sent me so many great messages saying, "Montel, keep going, keep going." But I didn't do it. You did. I was running my mouth, like a lot of pundits, angry, screaming, arguing. I didn't get an invite to Washington D.C. to help work on the bill. You did. I didn't get an invite to go down and talk to committees. You did. And if it weren't for you, this would not have been done. So while you're standing, applaud yourself right now, please. *(Applause)*

And you can go ahead and sit down. So what have you done? What have you done? The president signed a bill that is guaranteeing or working towards correcting some of the issues that were pointed out in April. As I talk about your national commander, Mr. Dellinger, I should also acknowledge your national adjutant, Mr. Dan Wheeler, and his legislative staff in Washington D.C.; and also Mr. Ralph Bozella, who's the chairman of your VA Rehab Commission; and all those who work under them. I can't acknowledge every single person who worked so tirelessly to get it done, but we got it done.

And what did you get done? Well, already today, today's newspaper, the Inspector General's report is coming out and discussing some of the things that have already started to happen. One,

over 190,000 veterans have been given the authority to go out and see private doctors so we can see if we can end some of this backlog. That's applaudable, folks, 190,000. (*Applause*)

Of course, we know that the bill's guaranteeing \$17 billion, but 400 million allocated already for overtime. So we can start to clear the backlog. \$128 million spent on private care costs for just 83,000 veterans. So had we not done this, and had you not done this, there would still be 83,000 veterans, 190,000 veterans who would still be wondering whether or not they get to see somebody.

Now, a lot of people have asked, "Montel, I don't get it. I don't understand why Montel Williams is so involved in this." In my introduction they gave you a bit of my background, but maybe I'll give you a touch more so you understand why I'm so involved and why I'm not going to let this go.

I entered the service, back up even before that. I was born in a little area, an enclave of Baltimore, Maryland, called Cherry Hill. I grew up about three blocks from the Baltimore city dump, which was the first hazardous waste cleanup site authorized for cleanup by the U.S. government. I can remember as a child running through that dump at age three and four and five, because the older kids used to make the little kids run through the dump at the beginning part of it to chase the rats out so they could throw rocks at them or shoot them. I wonder now as I look back at my life here at 58, and I've been suffering from MS now for the last 30 years of my life, I wonder whether or not that had anything to do with it.

But growing up in Cherry Hill, my parents moved outside of the city to a small little enclave called Antelope County, Glen Bernie, and as I grew up, I didn't know anything about the military. There was no one in my family, nobody in my family lineage had been in the military. I had one cousin entered in Vietnam. I was so young I didn't even understand. And when I went to graduate from high school, after being very, very politically involved in school, I was president of my class my junior year. Senior year I was a student of Board of Education. I was involved in all the local and national and state and regional student government associations. I was the fourth child, and my parents had spent a lot of money sending three of my siblings to college. Tough times. Got to me, money ran out.

Even though I had some scholarships, I had a very, very close friend who joined the Marine Corps, and at the time, I should say this, a Caucasian friend, because I was brought up in very, very all-black, segregated community. But a very close Caucasian friend of mine entered the Marine Corps. He was two years ahead of me in school. And his first year out in a uniform got shot. Through the arm. I took it to heart. This was 1972. I needed to go kill somebody for hurting my friend. So I decided to enter the Marine Corps. And unbeknownst to me, this is 1973, I entered a delayed program, go to boot camp in '74 at Parris Island. While I'm there I am meritoriously promoted. I graduate. Sent to Twentynine Palms. I'm meritoriously promoted two more times, and somebody said, "Do you know anything about a place called the Naval Academy?" I said, "I live 20 minutes away from that place. Are you kidding me? I used to mess around with the guys in the white uniforms in the summertime." They said, "You ought to think about going there."

And the second that thought entered my mind, I had to slow it down. I entered the Naval Academy. Graduated with the Class of 1980. It was while at the Naval Academy in '80, 14 weeks before graduation, where unbeknownst to anyone I had an adverse reaction to my pre-commissioning immunizations and immediately went into the hospital for about two and a half weeks. Came out of the hospital, was put on a medical hold, right before graduation, because no one knew what was wrong. I was blind in one eye. I had numbness down the left side of my body. At the time I weighed, 200 pounds, had about a 29-inch waist, and I was squatting 400-plus pounds. So people were looking at this guy saying, "I don't know what's wrong with you." Can't figure it out. They kept me on a medical hold for six months. Never figured it out.

I got commissioned, but because I was blind in one eye, I couldn't go to the Marine Corps. I had to go in the Navy. I went to the Navy being commissioned as a special duty intelligence officer, a cryptologic officer. And for the next 20 years I went back and forth, Walter Reed,

Bethesda, every single base that I was at seeing doctors every month. Something wrong with me. My left arm, right arm. No one could figure it out.

I ended up getting out. I exited the service after starting a program where I was speaking at schools around the nation. Still all kinds of strange anomalies for another 20 years. And then I was finally diagnosed in 2000 with MS.

Now, I went through VA hospital after VA hospital. There was nothing wrong with any hospital I went to. It was so hard to determine what was going on inside of me because there was no history to show an African-American male in his early 20s with a disease like MS. Now, I'm very blessed because I'm glad that the VA and everybody else messed it up. Because if they had gotten it right, they would have put me off active duty. And I would not have been able to stay in the military. So I'm glad I got away.

So now we move all the way forward, and I start the talk show. I'm on the air. I announce nationally that I have MS. And I think everybody thinks that that's where my focus would stay. But even throughout everything that's been going through me, with my medical debacle, I never once stopped calling classmates. Never once stopped talking to classmates, trying to figure out if anybody knew anything like this, anybody had anything weird like me.

Then I started reaching out. I started remembering, wow, the platform that I have is so huge that why am I not using it more to help other guys like me who were servicemembers. So almost 15 years ago, long before the cameras caught me speaking about this current issue, I've been out visiting our guys. I am a board member of Fisher House now. I've been for the last three years visiting Walter Reed and Bethesda, trying to go see every single soldier that came back during our conflict. If I could, I went by at least once, twice a month for three years. I right now go and cook around the country at various Fisher Houses, just to be able to serve those guys a hot meal and sit down with them and talk to them.

And that's part of the reason why I wanted to come and talk today, is because though we think we've accomplished so much, and we have, there's so much more that needs to be done. And there's so much more that really only an organization like yours can do. Because as we've tried to rally so many people around the country to figure out things, you don't have to be a 501(c)(3) or charity to help soldiers, but so many people believe that they have to be. And I thought today with all the work that you've done, how could I step up here today and ask you to do more.

But I have to. And why? Because as much as the VA has stepped up to the plate and they're trying right now to correct the problems, it's not enough. We may think it is. And we know it's not. It's not enough. We have right now, in the report that's going to come out, there's going to be some discrepancies. There's going to be some information about the fact that, you know, maybe the 40 soldiers they were talking about that were delayed in treatment, maybe none of them did die.

We're going to hear some information today that's going to come out in the newspapers today that some of the data that's been reported about suicides depends on who you listen to. But the best information that they share today is that though it appears that the suicide rate among our veterans has dropped, in some people's minds, from 22 to 18, there are people who think that's applaudable. They think that's something we should be able to go "Shwwww, that's great." But if you listen to some of the other accounts where it says 30 to 35, then I think that maybe, just maybe, there still is a huge disconnect. And though we have now filled the ranks of some of the psychological and psychiatrists at certain facilities and added extra staff, there are still soldiers who won't even pick up the phone to call and say they have a problem. We know this. You know this.

I spend time now not in front of a camera, not for camera's sake; I spend time with individual guys who call me on the phone. Now, this past summer, I took a double amputee and his whole family away with my family just for a family vacation. It wasn't a big deal. I wasn't taking them to an event to put them on TV; just come and hang out with my family. *(Applause)* And wait, wait, please — oh, please, thank you, but no. It's what I'm supposed to do. I put that uniform on. I put my hand in the air just like all of you did, and I stated "I do solemnly swear and

affirm that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic and I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same." Well, that "bear true faith and allegiance" wasn't just to the Constitution. It was to those guys, those women, those people who serve right next to you, through all the pain, all the anger, all the disgust, all of it.

I feel now that, in the last seven months, there have been a lot of veteran organizations, so many of them, all coming forward. They're going on television. And a lot of times before the first words come out of their mouth and the last words leave them, I'm hearing "Go up on my website and support www dot somebody."

And I get it. We all need money to solve some of these problems if we're an organization. But you don't need a dime to walk over and sit down next to a soldier at McDonald's, Burger King. You see one walking, just walk up: "Hey, how you been? What's going on? How you doing? Montel Williams. How are you?"

Five years ago, when everybody ran around and said "I support the troops," we have people giving 20 bucks to soldiers every day in the airport: Go get a meal. Bunch of soldiers sitting right over here. In the last year, how many people gave you a dollar? How many people stopped you in the airport and said "Thank you for your service"? You got one or two, right, in your uniform, but how many of them stopped you and asked you: What's your name? Where are you from? You know what? I'm from that community. How are you doing? We don't take the time. And that's what they need the most.

Listen, guys, there are numbers that are out here, and we can go through stats from here to eternity, and I'll drive you crazy with some of them. The estimates right now, 7,100 soldiers have passed in Afghanistan and Iraq. And I may be off by five. So I apologize. But we know now for a fact that since 2007 over 6,200 of America's treasures have taken their own lives. Watch the news today. Watch it tonight. Watch it tomorrow.

This is not a political statement. I say nothing politically. We have the hawks. We have everybody in the world wanting us to send more troops into harm's way. What starts with shock and awe and airpower has to end with feet on the ground.

When there are feet on the ground that means that there are going to be feet coming back here injured. We just fought and screamed and hollered about not taking care of the ones that were already hurt. And it's going to happen again. We can't get out of this without putting boots on the ground. It may not happen today. It may not happen next month. But it's going to happen. And at least we know now that organizations like you, The American Legion, have already put in motion the things that need to help protect this next group that goes off.

You should be so proud of yourself, to kick off a convention today. to be here today at your general assembly, with all of your peers here together, if you don't take some pride in yourself today, recognizing that you are part of the only reason that some of these guys are going to make it when they come home because of what you just did, if you don't realize that, then the person next to them, hit them real quick. And the only way we're going to keep protecting them is if you keep doing what you're doing.

So as I started off today by saying it's a true honor for me to be here with you today. And why? Do you see this? In the last year, the last two years, I've lost friends. I've had people who have contacted me and try to stay in touch with me disappear. And I know unless we all decide together as veterans to do what we were taught in boot camp, we're not going to win. And you know what we were all taught: We leave no soldier behind. (*Applause*) So, please, please reach out. When you get home today, call today, call that classmate you haven't talked to in 20 years. Call that shipmate you were deployed with. Just call to say: Dude, what's up? How are you doing? Because if you don't know how to get some help, maybe I can help you do it.

I am committed and I am so committed to tell you that back about a month ago, three weeks ago, I went on Neil Cavuto right before the bill was signed, and I said, "As the bill gets signed, I will shut my mouth. I'm not going to say another word. I will not disparage the VA. I will not disparage the leadership. I'm going to do what's right. I'm going to step up and say 'I got your back' until you show me that you're not doing what you're supposed to do."

Got another 30 days. Guarantees of things that were going to happen in 90 days. 30 days from now, I guarantee you, if what they promise doesn't happen, you're going to get this mouth. And it's not going to shut up until it gets right. *(Applause)* Thank you so much for letting me be a part.

Part of what The American Legion does is really I think one of the core things that makes you and separates you from so many other organizations. The way that you mentor and teach children of America about rights and responsibilities and citizenship through your many youth programs is absolutely amazing. We want to introduce to you a group of young people today who epitomize the future of this great country, your American Legion Youth Champions. I'll introduce them to you right now. Thank you.

### **The American Legion Youth Champions**

*ANNOUNCER: The 2014 Boys Nation President hails from Lacey's Spring, Alabama. He plans to attend the United States Military Academy at West Point. His professional plan is to pursue a career in public service or law. Sponsored by Post 15, Decatur, Alabama, please welcome your 2014 Boys Nation President Matthew Ellow. (Applause)*

### **2014 Boys Nation President Matthew Ellow, Lacey's Spring, Alabama**

Good morning, and thank you so much for having us, the Youth Champion Delegation, here at the 2014 American Legion National Convention. First and foremost, before we get started, it would be absolutely wrong of me to not honor, mention, and thank those who have been essential and played irreplaceable roles in my becoming Boys Nation President.

I must thank my mother, who is a disabled Army veteran herself; my father, who is with me here at the convention today; and my home post, The American Legion Post 15 in Decatur, Alabama. Without them I would not have been able to begin this journey, for it is their undying support regardless of circumstance that has allowed me to participate and be successful in so many different events over the past several months.

Being selected to attend Boys State was a goal I had high hopes of achieving. Once at Boys State, I decided to take it a step further. I decided to run for the office of governor. And on the campaign of striving for a tight-knit community dedicated to supporting each other's goals as individuals and as a group, I was fortunate enough to be elected. Thus, I was able to attend perhaps the greatest civic responsibility and responsible citizenship training program ever created, Boys Nation.

By conveying the same ideals to the 97 other delegates in Washington, D.C., I would soon experience the single most significant achievement that would change my life forever. To be elected of the 68th Class of Boys Nation is something that I will hold dearly forever. And for all the opportunities that this has created for me, I am forever in debt to The American Legion.

But above all, I plan on using what I learned at Boys Nation to do everything I can, everything in my power for this great country we live in. The invaluable knowledge that my peers and I experienced at Boys Nation has inspired us. It has inspired us to fight for our country, to defend our Constitution, to not give up on our country, and, above all, ensure that our nation and generation prospers as it once did, as America once did at its very highest point, for God and country. Thank you so much for all you do for the youth, thank you so much for fighting for our country and all you do for our veterans. God bless. Have a great afternoon. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: The 2014 Eagle Scout of the Year is from Newtown Square, Pennsylvania. His Eagle Scout project, "Be Prepared to Honor," involved producing a marketing and publicity strategy for "Honor Flight Philadelphia." This young man participates in competitive team swimming and lacrosse, and he's interested in studying criminal justice and pre-law when he*

gets to college. He is a member of the Sons of The American Legion, Squadron 926. Please welcome your Eagle Scout of the Year, Joseph Blaisse. (Applause)

**2014 Eagle Scout of the Year  
Joseph Blaisse, Newton Square, Pennsylvania**

Good morning. It is quite a view from up here. And what an honor it is to be here among so many people of service and so many recognized friends of Scouting. Thank you for selecting me as your 2014 Eagle Scout of the Year and for your support of Scouting for about 100 years. Clearly Scouting and The American Legion are united through Americanism and for duty to God and country. I am proud to be an Eagle Scout and also a Son of your American Legion from the great state of Pennsylvania. (Applause)

Never doubt that your Legion programs develop individual obligation to our community and our state and our nation. I saw it happen before to me and others at Boys Nation when you helped us learn that we can be thoughtful leaders for Americanism.

Some of you we never know, but you all teach us by your examples of service, sacrifice, and doing for others through your membership in the Legion. This past year I met hundreds of World War II veterans through my Eagle Scout project, and listening to war stories I could only relate to by thinking about the movie *Saving Private Ryan*, my personal favorite. You'll recall that scene on the bridge when we realize Private Ryan will get to go home but his captain will not as he lays mortally wounded on the bridge, and he whispers to James Ryan, "James, earn this."

Those two words sent Private Ryan home, remembering that those who gave all obligated him to live his life as a good man. Legionnaires, thank you for coming home from your military service and reminding us to support those who serve and to never forget those who gave all they had.

I want to thank the national organization for my college scholarship, which I have dedicated in your name to my 91-year-old grandfather and Legionnaire, Bill Grogan. Thank you, Mom and Dad. Look where your love and support has taken me.

Legion members, you inspire me. Like Private Ryan, I will leave your convention inspired to earn this right to be an American citizen that you have given me by selecting me as the 2014 National Eagle Scout of the Year. To this I pledge my sacred honor.

Thank you. (Applause)

*ANNOUNCER: In competition in Colorado Springs a few weeks ago, two Youth Champions took top prize in the 24th Junior Rifle Championships. Michael Steinel, from New Philadelphia, Ohio, claimed the Precision Champion title with a 2469.1 out of a possible 2509 score. Mike shoots for the Great Trail Musketeers, the shooting club sponsored by Minerva Post 357.*

**2014 Junior Shooting Sports Precision Champion  
Michael Steinel, Lowell, Ohio**

Hello. My name is Michael Steinel. I first want to say that it is an honor to be here. I am from Lowell, Ohio. I think you're back there.

When I first went to an American Legion meeting, I looked around and I thought, Wow, I know everyone here. I had always had American Legion members around me and didn't realize it. I would like to thank you for this trip. This is actually my first time flying without my rifles. (Laughter)

I would like to thank all of you for this amazing opportunity, for being able to shoot in Colorado, and for being able to come here. I have met some of the nicest people anyone could hope to meet. My favorite part of this trip has been to be able to talk to the Legionnaires, all of you. I don't know if you've noticed, but I've been walking around looking at your hats trying to figure out where are you from and trying to collect as many of your state pins as I possibly can.

I would like to thank The American Legion and the Sons of The American Legion for the scholarship that I am receiving. I am going into my senior year of high school, and I am starting to visit colleges and their rifle teams. This scholarship will really help me to be able to choose from any of the colleges that I am looking at.

I would like to thank The American Legion for supporting my sport. In today's society, guns have a negative image in the media. Most people do not understand that mine is a sport just like football or baseball, except I use a rifle. It is an NCAA and Olympic sport. I am grateful for The American Legion's support of the shooting sports.

Thank you for allowing me to speak to you this morning. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: In the Sporter category, the championship was captured by a young shooter representing the Webster Junior Marksmen. He's sponsored by Post 942 in Webster, New York. He won the title by firing 2309.5 out of a possible 2509. He intends to continue to participate in The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program and has his sights set on the Precision air rifle category for next year. Please welcome our 2014 Sporter Shooting Champion, Antonio "Andre" Gross. (Applause)*

**2014 Junior Shooting Sports Sporter Champion  
Antonio 'Andre' Gross, Ontario, New York**

Good Morning. It is truly an honor to be here today with Matthew, Michael, and Joseph, my fellow 2014 Youth Champions, and especially with all of you who have done and sacrificed so much in service for our country. It is humbling to be in the company of such great men and women who have selflessly and bravely served our country and who continue to serve through your involvement with The American Legion.

I would like to sincerely thank The American Legion and the Sons of The American Legion for the very generous college scholarship. College is still three years away for me, but this scholarship will go a long way toward funding my education. It is greatly appreciated. I also want to thank my local post, Webster, New York, Post 942, Commander Greg Cody, Vice Commander and Shooting Coach, Charlie Marvin, and Adjutant and Secretary, Don Linborg.

I also want to express my appreciation to Mr. Shayne Abrahams and all involved with The American Legion youth development programs. The events over the past few days here in Charlotte have shown me just how important the youth programs are to the entire American Legion family. Thank you for all you do to support and encourage kids like me. Finally, I want to acknowledge and thank my mom and dad and my twin sister, Alaia.

Words cannot express how proud I am to be a part of The American Legion Junior Shooting Program and the impact it has had on me and my family. The American Legion's Junior Shooting Program has opened many doors for me. I now compete in shooting in four shooting disciplines and have participated in matches at the state, regional, and national level.

I am, however, most proud of my participation in The American Legion Junior Air Rifle Championship. I have made some very good friends through this event and especially over the past several days here at the convention and I have learned valuable life lessons that I will carry with me always.

Thank you again to The American Legion, the Sons of The American Legion, my local post, 942, and the entire American Legion family. I'm truly honored and grateful to be part of The American Legion National Convention. Thank you all. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: The 2013 American Legion Baseball All-Academic Team Captain is Matthew Attig, and our 2014 National Oratorical Champion is Ashworth Kumar. Unfortunately, Matthew and Ashworth couldn't be with us today. Ladies and gentlemen, your 2013-2014 American Legion Youth Champions. (Applause)*

**Presentation of the Spirit of Service Awards  
Sergeant Kyle White, Medal of Honor Recipient**

*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 Dellinger in presenting the awards is Sergeant Kyle White, a recipient of the Medal of Honor. Please rise and join Commander Dellinger as he leads us in rendering appropriate honors to Sergeant White.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Hand Salute! Two! (*Applause*)

*ANNOUNCER: Our first Spirit of Service award recipient spends time delivering baked goods to local police, fire, and emergency personnel who work during holidays. She also participates in the Army Service Blood program providing blood products for soldiers, veterans, and their families. She's currently assigned to the United States Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense. Please welcome your Spirit of Service Award recipient representing the United States Army, Specialist Cassandra Rousayne. (Applause)*

SPECIALIST CASSANDRA L. ROUSAYNE: Good morning. So they told us that we're in order based on the ages of the service, but I think they put me first, because we all know the Army is the best branch. (*Cheers and applause*)

Right? Right? I'm from Florida. So big shout-out to Florida there. I have been stationed in Maryland for the last four years, though, so you guys have a special place in my heart. I would like to thank the Legion for selecting me as this year's 2014 Spirit of Service recipient for the Army. It is a really big honor, and it's been really great being here. My family and I have really enjoyed it. You guys have been so welcoming and so gracious, and we're so excited to be part of such a great organization. We're really looking forward to hooking up with our local post when we get home and getting involved.

I, of course, would like to thank God. He's a big part of my life. He has given me a heart of service and provided me with a great church home and a lot of great people around me to support that. The Army has provided me with a lot of opportunities to serve not just my country but also my community. My local command at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense has been really great. They are so awesome at recognizing their soldiers and just providing them with opportunities and just really, really being supportive. That means a lot.

My husband, Heath, and my daughters, Skylar and Cameron, are here with me. They have been unbelievable. My husband especially. He puts up with all of my whims and my need to constantly help everybody and does not hesitate to remind me that I can't do it all, I am just one person. And sometimes I have to slow down. My daughters are amazing. My oldest daughter, Skylar, is really involved. She will donate her old toys. She gets really excited about picking out toys to send to kids for Christmas and just being involved. A couple weeks ago we had our organizational day picnic, and she spent the whole day painting faces with me. So she is a really amazing kid.

I was really hesitant about writing my speech because it is really hard to talk about serving because it is not something that we do because we want recognition. It is something you just do. I was actually at a blood drive last week, and we were in a lull and I was sitting at a bone marrow registry table and thinking about coming here and what I was going to say. I looked around and I realized that we had about 50 to 70 donors that were there and that I had coordinated that. I had picked a location. I put out the flyers. I gave them the opportunity to come in. It was overwhelming to really put it in that perspective. But then I realized it had nothing to do with me.

The people who really mattered were those 50 to 70 people who were there to donate their blood. Each one of those people got up that morning and decided that they were going to save three lives. One unit of blood saves three lives. And that means so much. And it seems like such a simple act. Then we had about 20 people who signed up for a bone marrow registry. So that



day we had people committed to saving almost 200 lives. Those are the people that really exemplify service, those unsung heroes who really on a whim or as part of who they are don't hesitate to give to others.

I want to leave you guys with a verse from the Bible from Romans 15:1. It says, "We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves." Thank you. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: Our next recipient of the 2014 American Legion Spirit of Service Award comes to us from Veracruz, Mexico. He joined the U.S. Navy in May 2003. During his tour in Gulfport, Mississippi, he spent many of his off-duty hours volunteering to help clear roads and build temporary housing for victims of Hurricane Katrina. He also volunteered time coaching children of the Keflavik Youth Athletic Association Soccer League. Please welcome United States Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Porfirio Pimentel. (Applause)*

PETTY OFFICER SECOND CLASS PORFIRIO PIMENTEL: Thank you. Appreciate it. Good morning, everybody. I would like to start my speech by telling you some of the nice surprises that this award has given me already.

On my first day back from leave, it was said to me, "The CO wants to see you in his office right now. Follow me." The first thing that came to my mind was captain's mast. The second was: What did I do wrong? When we got in the CO's office door, he said, "Stop." Then it was about a minute, but to me for, like, about eight hours - pretty sure you've been in the service, you know what it is to go and see the CO. I'm pretty sure my face was all different colors. So when he called me in the office, I stood at attention and said, "Good morning, sir." He said to me, "Do you know why you are here?" I say, "No, sir." He said, "You are here because you got The American Legion Spirit of Service Award." That was great news. Especially there was no captain's mast for me. *(Laughter)*

You can laugh. That's fine. I was not laughing at that time. The second nice surprise was that working with all expenses-paid trip to Charlotte, North Carolina. Last, but not least, from the moment I arrived here, every single member of The American Legion has been very nice to me and my family. From the bottom of my heart, I want to say thank you to my amazing wife, Susanna. She is somewhere there. Sorry, I can't see you. And my amazing daughter, Paulina, which you have seen me hanging with them and giving a lot of kisses to my daughter. I love her. *(Applause)*

I want to say thank you to my English as a second language teachers. As you can see, I did not speak any English when I came to this country. And my teachers, Maria Cooper and Susanna Stein, from New York City, they took the time to teach me English. And I really appreciate it.

I want to say thank you to my outstanding chain of command. They are outstanding. They are the only reason I am standing in front of you and talking to you, and I really appreciate it. Please let me dedicate this award to my wife and all the spouses who leave their country and their family to save our country. May God bless you and your family.

Thank you very much. I appreciate everything you have done for me and my family so far. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: Our next Spirit of Service Award is given to a Marine for his selfless community service while assigned to Headquarters Company, 4th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, Camp Schwab, Okinawa. During his tour on Okinawa, he volunteered hundreds of hours to various organizations on and off base, including the USO, Henoko Orphanage, and the Kadena Special Olympics. He is cited as a leader and mentor in and out of uniform. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Corporal Ricardo Gonzalez, United States Marine Corps. (Applause)*

CORPORAL RICARDO GONZALEZ: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It is a great honor to be here today. I'm truly humbled by the people I have met. And although I did not come with anyone, I found myself quickly surrounded by brothers and sisters, and I'm truly grateful.

I would like to take this moment to thank my mother for raising me. Captain Thomas Malone, retired, for nominating me. The Marines and sailors of 4th Marine Regiment for supporting me. The United States Marine Corps for inspiring me, and the men and women of The American Legion who have recognized me for this prestigious award.

What I cherish most is my title as an United States American. When I took my oath of allegiance naturalized at the age of 13, I found it difficult to recognize what I did to earn my place among this great society. I understood one thing: That the reason I'm alive today is through the hard work of my mother and the community that supported my family and I.

I understand I have an obligation to my community, state, and nation. Americans take care of each other. I cannot and will not miss an opportunity to prove constantly what it means to be an American citizen. If I'm capable to ensure the welfare of my fellow man and woman is taken care of, then I will. Whether if it is an orphan from Japan without a role model, an elderly woman from Thailand whose society has abandoned her, or my fellow Marine who struggles with stress on a daily basis, I'm capable. I am a man of action. I will make change.

If anything, please remember this: It is never so easy to smile when you see someone else smiling because of you. Thank you for having me. *Semper fidelis. God bless you. (Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: The Spirit of Service Award is presented to our next recipient for volunteering much of her off-duty time as a mentor for female high school students. She also organized nontraditional career field trips for female high school students, and she spearheaded the creation of an adult mentorship program for troubled middle school children living in the Kodiak community. From U.S. Coast Guard Communication Station Kodiak, please welcome Operations Specialist Third Class Kristina Manson. (Applause)*

OPERATIONS SPECIALIST THIRD CLASS KRISTINA L. MANSON: Good morning, Legionnaires. I hope everybody is doing well this morning. I have a hard act to follow. I want to thank The American Legion for this great honor and everyone involved in bringing me all the way out here from Kodiak. I also want to thank my brother for taking time off of work to come and support me in this amazing, amazing honor. I want to thank my XO at Communication Station Kodiak for nominating me for this prestigious award.

I'm so pleased to be a recipient of this incredible honor. When my XO informed me I had been chosen for the Spirit of Service Award, to say I was surprised is an understatement. I never thought I would be chosen, let alone be the one to represent the entire Coast Guard at The American Legion National Convention.

President Obama once said: The best way to not feel hopeless is to get up and do something. Don't wait for good things to happen to you. If you go out and make some good things happen, you will fill the world with hope. You will fill yourself with hope.

Volunteering has filled me with hope. I wouldn't be here if not for my fellow shipmates who at one time or another volunteered in our Kodiak community. I am filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude, and I'm humbled to be standing here in front of so many amazing people. Thank you all for your service, and thank you to The American Legion for this incredible opportunity. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: Our next recipient has distinguished herself while serving as an Air Traffic Control Watch Supervisor at Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho, home of the 366th Operations Support Squadron. Her volunteerism encompasses support for her fellow airmen, local veterans, and veterans organizations, as well as Habitat for Humanity, the Humane Society, and church food pantry programs. She's a fundraiser, a mentor, and a leader in her community. Representing the United States Air Force, please welcome Staff Sergeant Jessica Day. (Applause)*

STAFF SERGEANT JESSICA M. DAY: I need a stool because I am fun-sized. Good morning. Where is New York State? *(Cheers and applause)* I just had to say hi. I would like to

say just for the record that Cass did say that we were in order of importance, but I would like to think that they saved best for last, so go Air Force. *(Cheers and applause)*

I would like to begin by thanking The American Legion for putting together such an amazing experience and for choosing us as your 2014 Spirit of Service Award selectees. Thank you very much. Next I would like to thank Commander Dellinger for having us as your distinguished guests. It has been awesome. It's been top-notch hospitality, and it has been an absolute honor. Thank you.

I absolutely must say thank you to my husband, Nicholas, for his continued unwavering support. He was unfortunately unable to attend the convention because he is serving a one-year tour in Korea as an Air Force air traffic controller. Nick, if you see this somehow, know that you are very missed, and I love you.

I would like to thank my parents, Terry and Theresa, for instilling a very rigid sense of right and wrong. You see, they're corrections officers in Upstate New York, so I really didn't have a choice. *(Laughter)*

I also must say thank you to my grandparents who are in attendance today. My grandmother, Mary, or Nana, taught me the importance of volunteerism at a very young age by bringing me to many volunteer opportunities such as American Red Cross blood drives, that sort of thing. My grandfather John, or Papa, taught me about the military and what an honorable thing it is to be a part of it. He is retired Navy, and he was absolutely right.

Speaking of military service, thank you to Senior Master Sergeant Ken Adamczyk who is also in attendance today. Senior Master Sergeant Adamczyk was my recruiter over 12 years ago. Sir, thank you for helping me make the best decision of my life very easy. Thank you for driving up from Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina, to share today with me.

Thank you to my leadership at Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho; namely, Lieutenant Colonel McGlamory and Lieutenant Colonel Anthony for submitting me for an honor such as this. I appreciate your confidence in me, and I never thought that anything like this would happen in a million years, but you did. So thank you for that.

Fellow selectees, thank you for not only serving your country but also serving your community. You truly do make a difference. It's been great getting to know each and every one of you for the past few days, and I wish you all the best. Thank you all for this amazing opportunity. Thank you. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, please show your appreciation to the 2014 American Legion Spirit of Service Award winners. (Applause)*

MR. MONTEL WILLIAMS: One more time, a really big round of applause for our youth award winners and our Spirit of Service winners. *(Applause)*

I just wanted to come back out and tell you that part of the reason I really, really, really want to thank you for letting me participate today is to be on the stage and share the stage with such a wonderful group of young people and people who are making a difference and making a difference because of what you are doing in The American Legion. I cannot say enough on behalf of a extremely thankful nation. If you can accept it from me, I would just like to say thank you on behalf of the nation for all of what you have done, the service to our country, the service to our veterans, past, present, and future. Thank you again for letting me participate today. *(Applause)*

One more time, ladies and gentlemen, please welcome back the American Military Spouses Choir.

*... At this time, American Military Spouses Choir performed "Ain't No Mountain High Enough." (Applause)*

CHOIR MEMBER: Good morning. Thank you. Thank you very much. On behalf of the American Military Spouses Choir, we would like to say thank you so much for all that you have done. Thank you for what you do for our spouses. We are very appreciative and honored to be

here. Again, thank you so much. *(Applause)* ... *At this time, American Military Spouses Choir performed "Gotta Be." (Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Ladies and gentlemen, please show your appreciation, once again, to your American Military Spouses Choir. *(Applause)*

Montel, thank you for your words of encouragement. You are clearly a passionate advocate for veterans. We would like to present you with your brand-new American Legion cap and American Legion lapel pin.

MONTEL WILLIAMS: Thank you, sir. It is truly an honor that I'm here. So this is not something I hope that you have given to me just as an honorary gift. Call me. Ask for me. I will do anything.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: We will do that.

MONTEL WILLIAMS: Thank you, sir. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Also I'd like to present you with a medallion and the Commander's Coin.

MONTEL WILLIAMS: Thank you so much, sir. And thank you, all. Thank you.

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

A recent resident of Charlotte, our next guest joined the Army from Washington State in 2006. He attended U.S. Army Airborne School and served with the 4th Ranger Training Battalion at Fort Benning. While serving in Afghanistan, he distinguished himself far beyond the call of duty when he administered life-saving medical aid to comrades and bravely called in radio situation reports during a 2007 battle in which five soldiers and a Marine were killed and all eight surviving Americans were wounded. He repeatedly exposed himself to enemy fire to rescue his fellow soldiers, Marines, and Afghan Army soldiers.

On May 13, 2014, President Obama recognized his heroism with the nation's highest military award, the Medal of Honor. Our guest also earned the Purple Heart, Army Commendation Medal with Valor device and bronze oak leaf cluster, the Army Achievement Medal with bronze oak leaf cluster, Army Presidential Unit Citation, and many other awards and decorations. He left active duty in May 2011 and is an assistant VP fixed income specialist for the Bank of America Merrill Lynch. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome a true American hero, Sergeant Kyle White. *(Applause)*

**Address: Kyle White  
Medal of Honor Recipient**

Thank you, commander. And congratulations again to all of our Spirit of Service Award winners. When The American Legion approached me about speaking at today's event, I thought it was a great opportunity. Come here, speak in front of a couple hundred people, so I thought, and help recognize some outstanding individuals. And needless to say, I was a little surprised last night when I walked in and saw the thousands of chairs set up. I remember thinking, Oh, Lord, what did I get myself into? But I'm glad I'm here, and thank you for having me.

To our Spirit of Service Award winners, thank you for all that you do to help our men and women in arms and the country which they serve. No one understands service in the same way that both active duty, reserve, and veterans understand it. Robert E. Lee once said: "Duty is the most sublime word in the English language."

Those of us who have worn the uniform of our country know that our service does not end when the uniform comes off. I am one of three members of the 173rd Airborne Brigade to receive the Medal of Honor for actions in Afghanistan. I know most of you are familiar with Sal Giunta, a fellow Legionnaire from the Department of Colorado, who addressed your National Commander's Banquet a few years ago. For Sal, service takes the form of working with the VA's Volunteer Services and in addressing schoolchildren on the honorable nature of military service.

Some of you know as well that my friend Ryan Pitts, a Legionnaire from New Hampshire, received the Medal of Honor a few weeks ago. Although he's now famous for being the guy who broke the gavel at the New York Stock Exchange, which I'm very proud of and I made sure when I was up there with him, I pointed and laughed at him significantly, doing the battle buddy thing. Ryan serves with a local nonprofit named DreamCatchers. They recognize the importance of social experiences for individuals of all ages and abilities and match young men and women like Ryan with developmentally disabled young adults. Ryan's service takes the form of mentorship to these people, but he is quick to discuss the benefits that he gets out of it as well.

My service takes the form of addressing bodies like yours about post-traumatic stress. Servicemembers and veterans need to realize that they went to war and they made it back, but that they might have some scars remaining. They need to reach out to their chain of command or the mental health professionals at the VA and get the treatment they need. At the Legion, through its lobbying and volunteer work, all aim to make sure that the stigma around that is eliminated and getting help is a positive experience.

The actions that would later result in my receiving the Medal of Honor occurred on 9 November 2007. On that day, America did not lose five soldiers and one Marine but gained six heroes. I will forever be a voice for them. I will tell their stories. I will preserve their memories. Although they are gone, they will never be forgotten. Their sacrifice and the sacrifices of so many others is what motivates me to wake up each and every day and be the best that I can be. Everything and anything I do in my life is done to make them proud.

Getting troops to come forward and tell people they're suffering is perhaps the biggest challenge to tackling the mental health issues that many combat veterans face. The treatment and assistance programs are out there, but I think it's just those first steps, that initial getting that individual servicemember or veteran to come forward and admit that, hey, I have a problem. I need some help. That is the biggest issue we face today.

And that's the form that my service will take. But whether your service is working with blood donor programs, volunteering to clean up the aftermath of natural disasters, working with the USO and Special Olympics, working on adult mentorship programs, building houses with Habitat for Humanity, or standing in front of people to say it is okay for servicemembers to say they need help, service is what defines us, both in and out of uniform. God bless you. God bless the United States Army, and God bless The American Legion. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Sergeant, I'd like to thank you for being with us today, and I'd like to present you with an American Legion lapel pin and also, in remembrance of today, one of my medallions and my Commander's Challenge Coin. Thank you. God bless you for everything, and good luck. *(Applause)*

A 65-year member of the organization she now leads, our next guest has contributed to the well-being of veterans on the community, state, and national levels. She joined the Auxiliary through her father, Richard D. Brown, a World War II Army Air Corps veteran. She is also eligible through the service of her husband, Jim Park, a Navy Vietnam War veteran. She has a business background as a retail buyer and currently owns and operates a sales and marketing company. She is a member of George Tadlock Unit 472 in California. It has been my pleasure to serve alongside her and watch her lead this vital component of The American Legion family. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm American Legion welcome to the national president of the American Legion Auxiliary, Mrs. Nancy Brown-Park. *(Applause)*

**Greetings: Mrs. Nancy Brown-Park  
National President, American Legion Auxiliary**

Good morning. Or as they say in the South, hey. I am thrilled to be here this morning to say thank you, to say thank you to all the members of The American Legion for your help in supporting The American Legion Auxiliary.

A few numbers this year. The value of The American Legion Auxiliary members volunteer service was \$2.1 billion. That's because of help from each of you. *(Applause)* They served over 9 million hours and raised or spent on veterans and military families \$38 million plus. And that's because we did it together as a family. So I'm really here to say thank you for all your support and for your service to our country.

I was given the best national commander. Thank you for electing Dan Dellinger as your national commander. Thank you. *(Applause)* We've had an incredible year together. Dan took on a role this year that was not taken on by many past national commanders. And I was with him quite a bit of the time after he called for the resignation of Secretary Shinseki, and his dedication and his work and what he did was absolutely incredible. So, Dan, thank you, what you did for America's heroes.

So besides Dan, I also got Margaret. Margaret, thank you for everything. What an awesome first lady. I'm so thrilled. We've developed an incredible friendship that will last forever. So thank you. *(Applause)* And along with Margaret I got the second dude. Where is the second dude? So Dan's aide was there to help me when I needed help if my husband wasn't there, the first dude. So I was really lucky to have that help and support as we all traveled together.

So I would like to shout out to my own department, the Department of California. *(Cheers and applause)* I'm sure you're somewhere way in the back. So thank you, California, for everything. I really, really appreciated your support over the last years.

And my husband, the first dude, is here somewhere. There he is. Thank you, honey. He's a Navy Vietnam veteran. And thank you for all your help this year. And we've had a great time. *(Applause)* So thank you again, Dan, for everything.

And I just want to say one thing on a personal level. Did anybody see the sunrise this morning? It was absolutely beautiful. And I know when I looked out of my room this morning that Jerry was looking down on us and that we were going to have the best convention ever. So thank you, everybody, very much. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Nancy, I'd like to thank you very much for your hard work and dedication this year, and as a memento, a medallion and also one of my coins. Thank you. It's been a pleasure. National President. Give her a hand. *(Applause)*

As the result of the work of our next guest and military medical pioneers, this nation has experienced a far lower combat fatality rate than what was recorded in wars prior to 9/11. By finding innovative ways to stop battlefield bleeding and restore blood to the circulation systems, our award recipient helped rehabilitate the use of tourniquets and was a practitioner of procedures that reduced mortality rates among U.S. combat casualties to 8.8 percent, compared to 16.5 percent during the Vietnam War and 22.8 percent during World War II.

Because of his success not only in the military but in his civilian medical career, he was elected president of the National Trauma Institute, where he is one of the nation's top experts in traumatic injury, the leading cause of death for Americans between the ages of 1 and 44. As a leader of military medical personnel, he provided life- and limb-saving care on the battlefield, in the back of a transport aircraft, and at military and VA Medical Centers and facilities around the world. He performed emergency surgeries while serving in Iraq during the Battle of Fallujah in 2004, and retired four years later as a colonel in the U.S. Air Force. He is now the director of trauma at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to present the highest honor that our organization can bestow, The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal, to Dr. Donald H. Jenkins. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal  
Dr. Donald H. Jenkins  
Chief, Trauma, Critical Care & General Surgery, Mayo Clinic**

Good morning. Thank you very much for this very prestigious honor. I stand here on behalf of all sorts of men and women in military medicine who have made such a difference. First, thank you to The American Legion. I'm going to tell you, Commander Dellinger, Seth Meyers and the Emmy Awards have nothing on The American Legion and you and Montel Williams and this great entertainment we've had here today. Congratulations on a fantastic National Convention.

What I'd like to also do is to thank those who are really responsible for me standing here. This is not something that an individual can take credit for. There's quite a group of folks that have been working in the background. And it's because of their tireless efforts that we have been able to achieve some of those things that you heard Commander Dellinger tell us about. There are too many people to thank by name, and for fear of leaving someone out I won't, except to shout out to the hospitality from The American Legion to my mom and my wife, who were brought here from Texas and Minnesota to visit with us here today.

Injured combatants die of their wounds in a very rapid fashion. This hasn't changed since artillery was invented, and it really takes a concerted effort of all sorts of individuals to come forward and care for those casualties in a timely fashion, a very timely fashion, if you're going to make a difference in life and death. The person closest to those casualties, and Sergeant White certainly epitomizes this, has got to be that self-aid buddy care. And if we don't put the right tools and training in the hands of those folks, we're not going to get anybody alive to the hospital. One of my favorite sayings is we never saved anybody's life in the operating room that hadn't already been saved before they got to us. Big shout out to all the medics out there for all that you do. *(Applause)*

So can't do an operation if I don't have a blood bank, don't have a lab, don't have logisticians, don't have folks that fix all the equipment, et cetera. We sort of get the glamorous end of this thing, but we couldn't do the first bit of that if it weren't for all those supporting staff and pharmacy and x-ray and you name it. It's a whole group effort. To save those lives, we had to provide early life- and limb-saving care, hemorrhage control, et cetera.

This is a picture from the operating room during Operation Phantom Fury in 2004 when 292 of the 310 injured Marines from Fallujah got surgery at our hospital in the ten-day period. Not one of those Marines died. *(Applause)*

When we invaded Iraq, every unit took with them their robust medical and surgical footprint. This is what things looked like when I got to the war. While it's a good way to invade, it's not a good way to sustain care. Because what was happening was casualties were going to the most local place instead of the most capable place that they needed the care to receive, and it was under triage, and we were losing casualties' lives because of that. So what we did was took a look at this consequence of having fallen behind our civilian counterparts, leverage the experience we had gained in peacetime in the civilian sector, and created a trauma system. Now, it was one of the best kept secrets in the war. We were at this for about eight years before anyone realized we didn't have any authority to do anything. But they did listen to us, and eventually we got those guys the authority as I had promised we would.

So we leveraged that experience. The Department of Texas, you ought to be proud of this. This was the Del Rio model of trauma care that we instituted, taken out of the San Antonio civilian trauma setting, and implemented a civilian-type setting on top of that footprint in Iraq so that we would send more patients to the most capable locations, fewer to those little outposts, and save resources and increase the capability of lifesaving care at those large combat support hospitals. Then get these folks in the back of a transport aircraft and take them not across one continent but an ocean to another continent as well. And those critical care air transport teams

made all of this possible. Over 50,000 casualties have been transported on those aircraft and with those teams, and it's really a modern miracle, if you will.

A surgeon out of the University of California, San Francisco, visited Germany and then flew one of those casualties home. She's got no military experience whatsoever. And her comment was: You take casualties who are so unstable in the back of an airplane across an ocean that I wouldn't dare put in my elevator in San Francisco General Hospital. That's a great testament to the teamwork of those folks who can provide continuous care en route to those injured combatants. We don't get to have folks come home to have PTSD if we don't save their life on the battlefield up front.

So we've really implemented a fantastic system. And it takes a page out of an old playbook, the use of tourniquets. We implemented tourniquets, put tens of millions of dollars in tourniquets into the pockets of soldiers that go to war without any data, without any proof that it would work. We knew it was the right thing to do. Focused empiricism told us that. Subsequently, we've been able to prove that beyond a shadow of a doubt. Now tourniquets are replete in civilian ambulances around this country. We use them on a daily basis.

Burns was a huge problem for us. If we didn't have the right data repository, we would have made some mistakes. There was a unit of Marines out in Fallujah that wanted to have some Nomex uniforms to wear because they sensed that burn injuries were up. We helped to prove that to them and spent \$25 million to put Nomex uniforms out there. And what happened was the incidence of major burns plummeted dramatically. Today all of those uniforms that the soldiers are deployed with are made with Nomex.

This is perhaps the biggest change that we've made, when we rediscovered the use of whole blood and how much that saves lives. If you look at the left of that screen, if we had done things just the way that we had been taught to do them back in our civilian training, the mortality rate for these patients requiring massive transfusion was very high. When we resorted to whole blood, or the proper transfusion ratios of red cells and plasma and platelets, we knocked that mortality down drastically. Better than our civilian counterparts. This today is a standard of care in every civilian trauma center in this country.

These are those statistics that Commander Dellinger told you about, about the case fatality rates and lower mortality rate. But let me put it to you in other terms. When you look at this graph, that top line is the injury severity. Over the course of this war, the enemy has figured out how to create bigger, better weapons, and the injuries that our casualties are sustaining are worse. We have the data to show that, but the mortality is not worse. It's the same because we have learned these lessons and implemented them. That has resulted in a change in combat mortality by a decrease of at least 25% for our casualties, and this is a concerted effort by all those folks that I've mentioned already.

It comes at a cost. Three surgeons that I worked with were all killed by rockets. I barely knew Major Taylor. I was good friends with Colonel Brian Allgood, and I trained with John Pryor. And we were better than comrades. Brian's wife made me promise, and John would want us, to proceed along to not settle for what we have done so far. So the future in what we have rests in doing research. As the combat actions are winding down, we have to turn to our civilian centers. We have to do this research. We must follow these casualties through their long-term outcomes in the veterans administration system of care.

I'd like to speak a minute about Mayo Clinic where I work today and its legacy. Shout out to the Minnesota Department, and especially my fellow Gophers, and the winning team, McCoy Post, there in Rochester. Two of the founding members of that post in Rochester were William and Charles Mayo, and they founded the Mayo Clinic.

Eighty years ago this month Franklin Delano Roosevelt came to Rochester and presented them, along with the national commander of The American Legion, this award in Rochester, Minnesota. Five years later, this summer, they both died. Fifty years ago, this summer, Chuck Mayo, Charlie Mayo's son, received this award. And it's just a fantastic legacy to carry on that is happening there in Rochester.



Interestingly, the catchment area of our trauma said looks a lot like Afghanistan. We've continued to do research to help further the efforts in the combat zone. One of the studies that we were able to accomplish using plasma in the pre-hospital setting resulted in plasma being able to be used by our troops in Afghanistan to take out in a pre-hospital setting, something never done before. So we've taken the military lesson learned, advanced that research in the civilian setting, and made it possible for the combatants to get that same level of care in that setting.

So there's a new enthusiasm that's out there about this transfusion. Medicine is changing drastically, and we have several organizations that are working hard to make sure that these lessons get learned and that we advance the research.

I sit on the defense health board as the trauma surgeon that helps to advise the secretary of defense on health affairs. I'm the immediate past president of the National Trauma Institute, and we are working very closely with our colleagues in the American College of Surgeons, American Association for the Surgery of Trauma, the Eastern Association for the Surgery of Trauma, and the Western Association for the Surgery of Trauma, as well as the NIH and CDC, to make sure that funding becomes available.

So when President Obama comes out later today, let's ask him to make sure that he puts \$30 or \$40 million in the president's budget next year to support trauma research funding so we can bring even more folks home alive. With that, I'd like to thank you very much for this prestigious honor. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Thank you very much, Dr. Jenkins, for being with us, and thank you for what you do every day. Give him another hand, please. *(Applause)*

The man who has led the Sons of The American Legion over the last year is the son of a World War II U.S. Army veteran and grandson of an Army World War I veteran. As a member of American Legion Squadron 130 in Perryhall, Maryland, he has served the Sons at every level and is a 23-year member. Using the theme "United in Service," he has helped raise significant funds for the Child Welfare Foundation and The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund. Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome Past National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion Joseph W. Gladden. *(Applause)*

**Greetings: Joseph Gladden, Maryland**  
**Past National Commander, Sons of The American Legion**

Commander, Mr. Adjutant, Mr. Judge Advocate, past national commanders on the stage, audience, guests, friends, family, everyone, I bring you greetings from the 352,000 members of the Sons of The American Legion.

Last year when I was elected national commander, I had to do a few things, and one of those things was to come up with a theme. And Dan mentioned my theme, "United in Service." I got thinking about all the possible combinations of words, and I kept coming back to those three, because to me they represented what The American Legion family is: The Sons of The American Legion working together with The American Legion, working together with The American Legion Auxiliary, working with The American Legion Riders; that we can accomplish anything that we put our minds to.

As I traveled around the country this year, I had a number of opportunities, and one of those opportunities I want to share with you real quick was when I was in Colorado. I was at an Americanism breakfast, and in front of me was a card. The card had been given to some children at the local elementary schools, and they had asked them to write a message inside to give to a veteran on Veterans Day.

My first thought was when I got the card was, you know, I'm not a veteran, my dad served, my grandfather served, my brother served, and my sons served. And I hadn't served. But after I read the card, I realized that that card was even more important than just to be handed to a veteran. Inside the card, the card talked about how the sacrifices that our soldiers and veterans had made for us and about how their service allowed us to be safe. At that point I realized that

what that card really represented was what The American Legion does for the children of our country. It helps to teach them about the services and the sacrifices that our veterans have made for us. That's why I'm so appreciative of being a part of this American Legion family.

I had to choose a project this year, and I got thinking about all the great projects that The American Legion has, and certainly the Sons of The American Legion over the last 15 to 20 years has done an incredible job with the Child Welfare Foundation, and then this year we hit \$346,000 in donations. This year we went over the \$6 million mark for our donations to that charity. I was so proud of that. *(Applause)*

I kept coming back to another project that's near and dear to my heart and also near and dear to our American Legion Riders, and that was the Legacy Scholarship Fund. As I traveled around the country, I would share my vision of it. Because, to me, I wanted to make it more personal than just talking about a scholarship for a child. I wanted to talk about how there was a veteran that was leaving home and that veteran had every intention of coming back to his family, but he didn't or she didn't.

Then this past May when I was in Ohio, the national commander gave me an opportunity to present a plaque to a young boy named Myles Eckert. Myles was an eight-year-old boy that when he was in Ohio with his mom, Tiffany, and his sister, Marlee, they were going into a Cracker Barrel, and he found a \$20 bill on the ground. He picked up that \$20 bill, and he thought, you know, maybe I'm going to go buy myself a game or something. But all that changed when he went inside, because he went inside and he sat down and he looked over and he saw a soldier sitting there eating breakfast. So Myles pulled out a piece of paper and wrote down a note, and he said: My dad was a soldier, but he's in heaven now. And in our family we believe in paying it forward. Consider this your lucky day. He took that \$20 bill and he wrapped it up and he handed it to the soldier and he left. Well, it turns out it was a lieutenant colonel in the Air National Guard. That soldier was so touched that he went and found out who Myles was. It hit the local news, then it hit the evening news, and the national organization of The American Legion, decided we wanted to do something for Myles. So they gave him a plaque and a life membership in the Sons of The American Legion.

But that's where it all changed for me. Because when I got that plaque and I was about to hand it to Myles, I looked at it, and the first line on it said: Gold Star Son. Because the rest of the story was that Myles, when he was just a baby, his father, Sergeant Andy Eckert, came home from his service over in Afghanistan, and he saw his son and he saw his daughter and he saw his wife. And he returned, to be back with his comrades, and just four weeks later he was killed in action. So at that moment I realized that Myles and his sister, Marlee, were now the face of the Legacy Scholarship Fund and that what I was doing was raising money for their future and for the future of other children similar to them.

So this year as I traveled around, I would take my challenge coin and I would offer people an opportunity to donate money to the Legacy Scholarship Fund. I am so proud that so many people like yourself helped me to raise \$27,000 through that effort. I'm so proud of that. *(Applause)*

But even more so than the money, it was the awareness. People understood that we need to help those children. So I want to say thank you to all those out there.

Is the Department of Maryland in here somewhere? Wow, you are way in the back. *(Laughter)* We're going to have to do something about that when I get home. But I want to thank the Department of Maryland. You don't become national commander of the Sons of The American Legion without the support of your department, without the support of your auxiliary, and certainly without the support of your detachment. So I want to say thank you to them for all their service and leadership to me over the years.

I want to say thank you to my past national commanders, Mr. Clarence Bacon and Mr. Rick Santos, for their support and their guidance over my years coming up to be here. I also want to say thank you in particular to, when I started the year, my commander, Dan Dellinger, he was an acquaintance. He was a person that we talked about things, but as the year went on and as we talked even more and as we learned about each other, I feel that I'm leaving this year not with an

acquaintance but a dear friend. I want to thank Dan for being that dear friend. I want to thank his wife, Margaret, also for being such a good friend to myself and my wife, Bobbie. And I want to thank all of you for all of your service to our country, because without what you have done, I would not be a member of the Sons of The American Legion.

In closing, I just want to say I'll never forget last year when I pulled into League City, I did the Legacy Run last year, and there was a little old lady standing outside of her car with her hand over her heart. And tears started rolling down my cheeks because at that moment I realized that I was a part of something that was so much bigger than myself, that I was a part of The American Legion family, and when The American Legion family works together, we can accomplish anything.

So I just want to say thank you. God bless you, God bless America, and God bless The American Legion family. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Joe, I want to thank you for being a great Sons of The American Legion commander and a great contributor to our great organization, The American Legion family. I'd like to present you with this medallion and also my challenge coin. God bless you always. Give him a hand. *(Applause)*

Our next guest is a combat decorated Marine, author, founder of a small business, and inventor who holds three U.S. patents. He is a syndicated columnist and a former U.S. Senate candidate from my home state, the Commonwealth of Virginia.

A graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, he earned the Silver Star, the Bronze Star for Valor, and two Purple Hearts while serving in Vietnam. He is the honorary chairman of Freedom Alliance and is the host of the documentary series War Stories, which highlights the heroism of America's fighting men and women. He is a Paid-Up-For-Life member of American Legion Post 368 in Newport News, Virginia.

I am proud to present the 2014 National Commander's Public Relations Award to Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North, United States Marine Corps. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Commander's 2014 Public Relations Award Presented to LtCol Oliver L. North, USMC, (Ret.), for raising public awareness about the honorable nature of military service and the sacrifices made by America's heroes. As a career Marine Corps officer, you excelled as a platoon commander in Vietnam, where you earned a Silver Star, a Bronze Star with combat "V", two Purple Hearts, and a Combat Action Ribbon.*

*As host of the documentary series War Stories with Oliver North, you provide riveting reports of the actions, heroism, and valor repeatedly demonstrated on the battlefield by those who have worn the uniform of the U.S. military. Your bestselling books have also contributed to honoring those who have served this nation. Your charitable efforts for the Freedom Alliance Scholarship Fund have reminded us of the need to support the families of those who have served.*

*The 2.4 million members of The American Legion gratefully acknowledge your advocacy for America's veterans. Given this 26th day of August, 2014, during the 96th National Convention of The American Legion. Signed by: Daniel M. Dellinger, National Commander; Daniel S. Wheeler, National Adjutant; Benedict A. Lee, Media & Communications Commission Chairman. (Applause)*

**Presentation: National Commander's Public Relations Award  
Lt. Col. Oliver L. North, USMC (Ret.)**

Thank you, commander. Thank all of you for an award that is quite extraordinary for me. Before I go on, I have to remind you all that I work in television. So it's time for a commercial. Thank you for making Fox News No. 1 in America. *(Applause)*

It is a privilege to receive an award that has been presented to others who are far more deserving but are very special to me nonetheless. Bill Mauldin up front with Willy and Joe

depicted my dad's unit during World War II. Red Skelton came to visit my dad when he was in the hospital. Wayne Newton, Bill Bennett, Lou Dobbs, and I are friends, a word I do not use loosely. Tom Brokaw and I both worked for the same broadcast company years ago when he wrote *The Greatest Generation*.

To share a little sidebar on Tom Brokaw, a couple of weeks ago I was in Annapolis stranded at the airport, and a fellow strandeer, an older gentleman, came up to me and said, "I really loved watching you on television." Past tense. I wasn't paying attention. "And that book about World War II was magnificent." And I did two books about World War II. "Can I have your autograph, Mr. Brokaw?" (*Laughter*)

Being a bit of a smart aleck, I reached in my pocket. Fox gives us these cards to use for signatures in places like airports. But I flipped mine over and I said, "Sure. What's your name?" He said, "Ralph." I wrote, "Ralph, all the best, Tom." And handed it to him. He looked at it, and he said, "I'm the only happy person stranded in this airport."

And I felt just awful. I got home and I told my wife the story. All those of you in the Auxiliary will certainly understand this. She said, "You jerk." (*Laughter*)

"He's going to get home, take that card out that says 'Ralph, all the best, Tom,' flip it over and show his wife, and he's going to see Oliver North on the back of the card." (*Laughter*)

"And he's going to look at that and say, 'Wonder why the hell Tom Brokaw is using Ollie North's cards.'" (*Laughter*)

My brothers and I are sons of the greatest generation. Tom Brokaw wrote in that great book that our parents saw their duty and did it. And that's correct. But the greatest generation's kids went off to Vietnam and they saw their duty and did it but never got the thanks that our parents received.

I've now spent my entire life in and around the United States military. Since the terrible attacks on 9/11/01, Fox has given me the privilege of keeping company with the bravest and best of this generation, youngsters like those you see right there. I have the best job in broadcasting. Hannity thinks he does, but I do, because my only beat is soldiers, sailors, airmen, guardsmen, and the Marines. In other words, I don't have to run around after politicians waiting for them to say something memorable. I don't have to race off to Hollywood to find some starlet taking off her clothes and seeing parts of her body I really didn't want to see anyway.

Instead, I get to keep company with real American heroes. When I turned 70 last year, my producers at Fox asked me what I was going to tell my grandkids about all the birthday parties I've been missing for better than a decade. And so here in two minutes is what my producers pulled together from the miles of footage that we have shot in those 57 embeds over the last 13 years.

To some a hero is a person who wears a football uniform and catches a pass in the end zone or a person who sets a new record of some kind, maybe even someone who wears a spandex suit and a cape. But my hero is like the ones you see on that screen. They wear combat boots and flak jackets and flight suits. And this is where they do the difficult and dangerous work that they're sent out to do so very, very well.

You see, the classical definition of a hero is a person who puts him or herself at risk for the benefit of others. And that's what they do every single day. I get to go along and let them tell their story. I've discovered a few things over the last 13 years. I'm not quite as fast as a 20-year-old, but when I hear the sergeant from explosive ordnance yell "Run," I can keep up with them.

One of the greatest compliments I've received out there was to hear a Marine gunner standing behind a T-wall watch as I dodged the bullets running across the street say loud enough to be picked up but unfortunately with an expletive so we couldn't use it on TV: blinking amazing how fast an old man can move when he's properly motivated. (*Laughter and applause*)

My duty at Fox News is to let these warriors tell their stories without telling the enemy things we don't want the enemy to know. So we don't air the faces and identities of those in special operations. We don't reveal their locations or the unique tactics, techniques, and procedures.

More than 2.4 million young Americans have now served in uniform since we were attacked on 9/11/01. The enemies our troops face today are as brutal and tenacious and often suicidal, more akin to what my uncles faced in World War II in the Pacific theater. But no military force in history is as competent, capable, or today combat experienced as those serving our nation in uniform today. You see them right there. And we are blessed to have them. *(Applause)*

Most importantly, and I hope our next speaker is listening, every single person serving in the uniform of the Armed Forces today for the very first time since the American Revolution, every one of them is a volunteer. No one's been conscripted, drafted, press ganged. Every one of them volunteered. Their perseverance, their skill, their courage is extraordinary. Yet far too often politicians and the media tear down those who have volunteered to serve our nation in time of war.

Though the media coverage today is not nearly as bad as it was for Vietnam, the potentates of the press still try. Think of this. They beat Abu Gharib like a rented mule as though it were commonplace. And it was not. *Newsweek*, now defunct, created a totally false story about a Quran being flushed down a toilet. And I was there and watched the riots, and hundreds died as a consequence of the story that had absolutely no foundation in truth.

In the *New York Times* and the Washington "Compost," two of the newspapers back up north, it was written that those who volunteered to serve our military today are, quote, "nothing but poor kids from Mississippi, Texas, and Alabama who couldn't get a decent job or health insurance. So they joined the military because that's all we offered them." Friends, that kind of assessment of those who serve in our military today is dead wrong! *(Applause)*

I want to put on the screen why they came. I asked tens of thousands of these youngsters, "Why did you come?" They came because of this. The average age of a person coming into the military today is about a year older than it was for Vietnam. The average enlistee today by the time they finish basic training is about 20 1/2. They've got 13 1/2 years on average of education. They all volunteered. They're better educated, more likely to be married, and better equipped, led, than any other force in the world.

They still carry way too much on their back. They go to work in an eight-pound Kevlar helmet, a 45-pound flak jacket, a 50-pound-plus pack. And today in Kandahar it's 120 degrees. And they operate and maintain the most sophisticated weapons and equipment ever designed by the hand and mind of man. They can use their weapons like it's part of their body and their bodies as weapons, and they can take a life or save one with it because they are so remarkably well trained.

I can't see much beyond the first row of lights, but just show of hands of those of you who have raised a teenage boy. I used to do this. My wife caught me once, and she said, "Don't you dare because I did that. You were gone." *(Laughter)*

You think about the kid who once wouldn't share a candy bar with his little brother today gives his last drop of water to a wounded comrade, splits his ammo with a mate in a firefight and give his only MRE to a hungry Afghan kid. They exhibit qualities we all admire — courage, integrity, loyalty, tenacity, accountability. They've become the protectors of Muslim women and children and changed the culture of a country which for 2,000 years didn't offer anyone freedom or hope.

The shots you see of them expressing their faith here in these frames taken from the thousands of miles of footage, these are not staged photographs. Very often the youngster is going to lead that prayer circle, knows they're going on an operation where they're going into mortal combat against an enemy who intends to die and they want to get together and they pray. They're willing to break out a copy of the Good Book. They may be able to take vulgarity to the level of a new art form, but they can also quote Bible and verse. And then of course there's that quality that is so very special for Americans. There's a quality called Christian compassion, the likes of which I've seen on the battlefield before and I've seen it in this world.

I saved this last frame for a reminder of that. It's the 6th of April, 2003. I'm embedded with the 1st Battalion of the 5th Marine Regiment. And they're ambushed by a Republican Guard

regiment on the way to Baghdad. Baghdad is the smoke you see in the background. They've spun their vehicles around to give them a little bit more offset between the RPGs that are impacting, the .50 caliber machine guns fired by the Republican Guard at them. Those weren't armored Humvees.

In the midst of this gunfight, a United States Navy Corpsman rushes out into the middle of it and starts pulling fighters off the battlefield. He puts battle dressings on. And a helicopter lands in the roadway, and he carries them on his back to the helicopter. And I'm now on the ramp as he's carrying the third casualty. If you look carefully at that picture, that is a badly wounded fighter, but it's not a U.S. Marine. It's a wounded Republican Guardsman. This Navy Corpsman has put his own life at risk to save the life of an enemy combatant. (*Applause*)

Think about this. What you can't see, because I'm standing on the ramp at the helicopter, and I can't see off to the right-hand side, a Reuters news crew is now set up. And as he is rushing into the helicopter, the helicopter starts to take hits, and the crew chief says, "We've gotta go." He sets that wounded Republican Guardsman that he's already put battle dressings on, as the doc was describing a little while ago, and the trauma team aboard the helicopter picks him up, wraps him in a shock blanket, starts an IV, treats him just like a wounded Marine. And the corpsman runs off the bird, and he's heading back into the gunfight. As you're looking at the screen, on the right-hand side of it, the Reuters news crew shouts up as all the gunfire shifts toward the helicopter, "Hey, mate, what did you do that for? Didn't you notice that was an Iraqi?" In other words, "You stupid American." And because this is polite company, Commander Dellinger, I have to put it this way: The corpsman gives them a gesture. (*Laughter*) And shouts back, "Didn't you notice he was wounded? That's what we do. We are Americans!" (*Applause*)

So why is it with the qualities I've just shown you on the screen, the qualities you've seen of these young Americans, that the unemployment rate for the veterans in this war is almost double the national average for their peer group?

Here's why. Think about what happened to the veterans of Vietnam. Our media and our politicians defined those of us who fought in Vietnam as pot-headed, village-pillaging marauders. And worse. The veterans unemployment coming out of Vietnam soared. And in Washington D.C., the watchword became: Nothing is too good for our Vietnam vets, and that's just what we'll give them, nothing.

And since we're on the subject of Vietnam, the Vietnam War wasn't lost in the cloud-shrouded mountains and rice paddies and jungles of Vietnam. We won all those battles. The Vietnam War was lost in the corridors of power in Washington D.C. And what happened in Vietnam should never ever happen again! (*Cheers and applause*)

Millions fled and perished because we abandoned a brave ally. In just four years after Vietnam, our military became a hollow shell. Homeless vets populated our cities. The enemies of freedom advanced in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, even in our own hemisphere. And then came a leader for whom I was blessed to work directly, who promised us peace through strength. We rebuilt our defenses and our economy, set the stage to end an evil empire — and it was — and we pledged, never again.

Yet here in this second decade of a new millennium, it is happening again. In 2011 we abandoned Mesopotamia and any hope of a multisectional government and security force in a part of the planet where we had sacrificed thousands of our countrymen and a treasure, and it's a part of the planet where we need friends. Though we're still fighting a war we did not seek, the finest armed force the world has ever known is being hollowed out once again. Osama bin Laden is indeed dead, but the Middle East is in flames, and Washington doesn't seem to know it. (*Applause*)

There's no government worthy of the name in Libya. The Syrian civil war is bloodier than ever. Iraq has been invaded by the largest, best armed, and wealthiest terror organization on the planet. The ayatollahs in Tehran are racing to acquire nuclear weapons and the means of delivering them. Vladimir Putin's army is poised to invade Ukraine, and Beijing's air force does barrel rolls around U.S. aircraft in international airspace. This is not the time to test the utopian thesis that unilateral disarmament will somehow assure peace. (*Applause*)

The defense cuts imposed by the so-called sequester must be restored. Our leaders dare not repeat the mistake of withdrawing from the shadows of the Hindu Kush like we pulled out of Iraq. Our allies need to trust us. Our adversaries ought to at least respect us. Or fear us. In this increasingly challenging world, it's important to keep commitments. I want to show you some footage that we shot last summer over in Afghanistan about commitments. What you're about to see is a Captain Matt Lampert, United States Marines, on his second combat tour. We didn't put this on air. You'll see why.

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

Patriots like Matt Lampert don't sign up to fight for gold or oil or colonial conquest or some ephemeral international community. They forfeit the comforts of home, they absent themselves from the affections of loved ones, and they go into harm's way to protect us and our freedoms. How we care for our active duty military families and our veterans will determine if we have enough good volunteers willing to protect us the next time we are forced to fight, and, sadly, we will be forced to fight again.

That's why the work of our American Legion is so important. National Commander Dan Dellinger led the fight to clean up the systematic widespread neglect at the VA. The American Legion has consistently shouldered the load to protect the benefits for our active duty families and our military retirees. Our youth programs encourage service and help communities all across this land. And our elected officials know that when they do really stupid things, like government shutdowns and sequesters, they risk the ire of 2.4 million patriots who are part of The American Legion. *(Applause)*

The president I was blessed to work for who described me in terms of being an American hero said far more important things. He said, "We have a rendezvous with destiny." I want to close by letting you see how he thought of us as American veterans.

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

That rendezvous with destiny that Ronald Reagan spoke so eloquently of is to live in the land of the free. And we can do that because The American Legion reminds our countrymen that we are still the home of the brave.

God bless you, and thank you for this award. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SATROM: I want to thank Colonel North for being here with us today, and the commander wants you to have one of his coins. And thanks for serving your country.

LT. COL. NORTH: Thank you. Appreciate it. Thank you, all. Semper fi. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SATROM: Next, I would like to recognize Terry Woodburn, Adjutant of the Department of Illinois, at the floor microphone so he can help lead the presentation of Legacy Run donations. Those presenting checks will please proceed to the microphone and announce the amount and donor.

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

Thank you, commander, first, for allowing me to serve. Adjutant Wheeler, delegates, alternates, guests, and friends, it is time again to once again check and see what our two-wheel buddies, and in some cases three wheels, have been up to.

They took a ride that spanned, I believe it touched about eight states, I believe, over 1300 miles in four and a half days, two of which was a torrential downpour. And if you have never ridden in a torrential downpour, you have no idea how wet you can get in a matter of minutes, not to mention when you are trying to lead 350 bikes. We have a short video we'd like to start off with.

*... At this time, the delegates viewed a video. (Applause)*

\$420,000 and growing. I would be willing to bet by the time this line that's standing out here finishes up, I'll bet my first paycheck in January that we will eclipse a very large sum of money,

if not a record one. Those of you in Illinois know how important that first check is for January 15 for me. I'm retiring December 31. *(Laughter)*

In anticipation of our special speaker coming up, we will go ahead now and start with our donations.

DELEGATE STEGMUELLER (IL): Past Commander, Department of Illinois, Bernie Stegmuller writes a check for \$21,925.

DELEGATE GOVERNOR (NY): Mr. Commander, in addition to the New York's great American Legion Riders and the \$2,000, nearly \$3,000 already contributed, we have another check bringing our total to \$10,822.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NY): I'm from Cottreall-Warner Post 942 in Upstate New York, and we donated \$1,000 between the Legion Riders and the post treasury. Thank you.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER SPANOGLA (MI): I'm Bob Spanogle. I'm a member of Oldsmobile Post 237 in Lansing, Michigan, and I live in Indianapolis. I'm here to represent the Blue Star Salute of Indiana started by Avon Post 145, Avon, Indiana. On behalf of Ralph "Zoc" Zocolillo and the Blue Star Salute of Indiana, I'm presenting a check of \$5,000 which brings our total over the nine years to \$80,000.

DELEGATE BEISCHEL (AZ): I'm Judi Beischel from Arizona. I have an additional \$500 from my post, another \$2,500 from my American Legion Riders at Post 58 in Fountain Hills, and our Boys Staters in Arizona raised \$1,000 for the Legacy Foundation this year.

DELEGATE MANSKE (AZ): My name is Fred Manske. I'm with Glendale Post 29, ALR29, and we raised \$2,200 this year.

DELEGATE MOFFITT (AZ): I'm John Moffitt. I'm the chairman of The American Legion Riders for the Department of Arizona. In addition to Fred and Judi, we brought checks for \$100 from ALR 81, Lake Havasu City; \$200 from ALR 12 in Wickenburg; \$500, ALR 35 in Chandler; \$500, ALR 6 in Prescott, my home post; \$750, ALR 52 in Sierra Vista; \$1,000, ALR 109 in Corona De Tucson; \$1,190 from ALR 105 in Phoenix; \$1,480 from ALR 24 in Tombstone; \$1,600 from ALR 5 in Phoenix; \$3,000 from ALR 4 in Globe; plus \$1,722 which was given to the national commander from ALR 86 in Overgaard during the Legacy Run, bringing Arizona's ALR total to \$16,742.

DELEGATE DAVIS (TX): I'm John Davis from the state of Texas where the weather is nice. It is. I have two more days left as president of the National Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms Club. I will be going out of office. At this time I would like to present to you the new incoming president, Mr. Ernie Berry, for a presentation.

DELEGATE BERRY (TX): On behalf of the National Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms Association, we presented a check in the amount of \$500 for Comfort Warriors. Thank you.

DELEGATE SMITH (IL): Roy Smith, Department of Illinois, Louisville, Post 914, ALR Chapter 914. We brought an additional \$500.

DELEGATE LINDBERG (IL): I'm Lee Lindberg, Naperville, Illinois, Post 43, \$1,000.

DELEGATE EVANS (IL): I'm Tom Evans from Naperville, Illinois, and I have an additional \$200 from Post 43.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ENDRES (DE): John Endres, delegation chairman from the small and generous state of Delaware! A total of \$21,654.25 from the family.

DELEGATE RICE (IN): Danny Rice from Kenneth N. Dowden Wayne Post 64 in Indianapolis, the home of the start of the Legacy Run. Our post total, \$20,000. Keep coming back.

DELEGATE GOODMAN (GA): I'm Randy Goodman, commander, Department of Georgia. We have a check today for \$1,500, bringing our total to over \$35,000 for the year.

DELEGATE MILLER (FR): This is John Miller, NEC, and I'm chaplain from the Department of France. We are small. We had a Rider riding along with us today. We gave money the whole way it was going along every day, but we also brought an additional \$1,516. God bless you all.



DELEGATE EVENSON (SD): Paul Evenson with Commander Tim Jurgens from the Department of South Dakota. We are here to present American Legion Legacy Foundation \$1,500.

DELEGATE WALLACE (MI): I'm Jim Wallace, commander, Department of Michigan. I'm also Treasurer of our ALR post in Pinckney, Michigan, No. 419. Our chapter is donating \$4,500.

DELEGATE MILLER (MI): Kenny Miller from American Legion Post 4 in Mount Clemens, Michigan. From the Riders at the post and post members, \$1,850.

DELEGATE BYRLEY (IN): Ron Byrley from American Legion Post 200 in Boonville, Indiana. ALR is donating \$500.

DELEGATE EVONSION (CT): I'm Jackie Evonsion department Riders director from Connecticut, along with my commander, Bob Murray from Connecticut. We would like to present a check for \$2,400.

DELEGATE PISA (AK): Jim Pisa from the Alaska Legion Riders. We've presented a check for \$8,000.

DELEGATE GROSSET : Jim Grosset, President of FODPAL, presenting a check for \$250.

DELEGATE WILSON (CA): Janet Wilson, Department of California, commander.

DELEGATE FERCHO: Dennis Fercho, Past Department Commander. Oxnard Chapter 48 has \$500. And my own chapter, Camarillo 741, is \$800. Thank you.

DELEGATE FLEMING (TX): I'm Jim Fleming from the Department of Texas. I've got Rapid City, South Dakota, I've got a Post 22. I have \$1,750. And Converse, Texas, Post 493, \$32,000.

DELEGATE RYNES (WI): I'm the immediate Past Department Commander Ken "Rhino" Rynes from Wisconsin. We had a little three-day run around the state called Rhino's Run, and with the help of the entire American Legion family, we are presenting a check for \$70,116.25.

DELEGATE MCDANIEL (SC): I'm Gene McDaniel, former commander of American Legion, South Carolina. On behalf of the Riders of South Carolina, we donate \$43,748.31.

DELEGATE CHISHOLM (MA): Bill Chisholm, Department of Massachusetts, immediate past department commander. I have with me Department Commander Charles Towers, and our Legion Rider chairman, Lou Brault. We would like to present a check for \$6,116.62. Thank you.

DELEGATE PITTS (ND): Gerald Pitts. American Legion Riders, my outgoing Legion commander, Gene, I'd like to present a check from the North Dakota American Legion family for \$9,275.50.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ME): From the Department of Maine, The American Legion Riders, a check for \$5,570. Thank you.

DELEGATE KENNEDY (IA): Robert Kennedy, Washington, Iowa, Post 29, American Legion family, total of \$1,500.

DELEGATE MORRIS (OR): My name is Mike Morris with the Department of Oregon, past department commander, and I am a Rider. I'm accompanied by National Executive Committeeman Charles Schmidt. The state of Oregon is proud to donate \$3,877.

DELEGATE KIRCHOFF (FL): Mike Kirchoff, call me "The Goat," out of Department of Florida. We did an in-state Legacy run this year. We presented a check just now for \$24,445.80. The Riders that did the Legacy Run this year all the way through also gave over \$10,000. So we have a total of \$36,013.13 from the Department of Florida.

DELEGATE GOODIN (MO): Hello. I'm Tom Goodin, immediate past department commander from the great state of Missouri, the Show Me State, along with George Scarborough, one of our Legion Riders. We are proud to contribute \$17,687.

DELEGATE ARLUND (VT): Keith Arlund, Department of Vermont. One check for \$1,000 from Chapter 55 in Brandon, Vermont, and \$200 from Post 91, Colchester, Vermont.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NE) On behalf of the state of Nebraska, go Big Red! We have 12 chapters in our state that have donated and there is more on the way, for a grand total of \$16,850 to the Legacy Fund. All right.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SANNEMAN (KS): I'm Gaylord Sanneman. I'm the delegation chairman from the great Department of Kansas. I have checks totaled to \$12,632.70 for a total contribution of over \$15,000 this year.

DELEGATE BUCHANAN (NJ): Tom Buchanan from the state of New Jersey. Bayonne Post 19 donates \$500.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN AMOS (NJ): New Jersey delegate chairman Jim Amos, 2013-'14, from the Department of New Jersey, \$1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (KY): Department of Kentucky, \$500, Post 6, Madisonville, Kentucky, \$100.

DELEGATE KING (KY): This is George Landrum. I'm Dave King. Lexington Man O War Post 8, Lexington, Kentucky, \$1,000.

DELEGATE HOSFELD (PA): Jon Hosfeld, American Legion Rider. On behalf of World War I Memorial Post, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, I would like to present a check for \$2,500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (PA): Commander, Department of Pennsylvania. We have a modest contribution to add to that of \$40,000.

DELEGATE ASH (MN): I'm Mike Ash, immediate past department commander for the Department of Minnesota. Our Legacy Run, five years old, they rode for two weekends. For the fifth accident-free year, they set the goal of \$55,000, but their total is \$87,600!

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

DELEGATE HINES (TX): Howdy. John Hines from Texas. And for my friends from the Northeast, how you doing? My friends at Granbury Post 491 in the great Department of Texas made me promise to tell you that they were donating an additional \$250. Thanks.

DELEGATE RADOSEVICH (NM): Carl Radosevich, vice commander, Department of New Mexico. From Post 69, Duran Y. Gallegos, \$1,000, and from Chapter 10, that's also from them, too, which I'm also a Legion Rider of. Thank you.

DELEGATE WYMAN (NY): My name is Mark Wyman from the Department of New York, Marion Memorial Post 1430.

DELEGATE SOUTHCOTT (NY): Kevin Southcott, Department of New York, Marion Memorial Post 1430. I would like to present a check for \$1,000 for the Marion Riders.

DELEGATE SUSSAN (VA): Bob Sussan from the Department of Virginia. We gave numerous checks over the ride. We do have one more from Post 29, Danville, \$200; Post 49 in Smithfield, \$500; and \$25 of anonymous donations received on the ride.

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT WOODBURN: Thank you all very much. I figured I had a pretty safe bet. I didn't know how much all that adds up to, but after the Rider meeting Friday I knew there was a lot of money still out there. The good thing about it is it's still going to grow. Very quickly I would like to also congratulate Bob. Bob was the lead road captain this year. When you take 400 bikes that many miles over two days of rain, particularly, and still be safe, he did a really great job. *(Applause)*

Mr. Commander, that concludes the report of the Riders.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Thank you very much, Terry. And give a big hand to Terry Woodburn for his leadership in all of this, too. *(Applause)*

Would all the Riders that rode any part of that entire ride please rise. Give them a big hand. *(Applause)* And I can tell you from experience, that second day was very wet.

Ladies and gentlemen, Hall A will be locked down in 15 minutes. Please find your seat as soon as possible. A little message from the Secret Service. *(Laughter)*

A retired Army NCO, this past Department of North Carolina commander understands the plight of military mothers as she deployed alongside her late husband, Walter, separating from their two young children. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the 2013-14 past department commander of North Carolina, Patricia A. Harris. *(Applause)*

**Welcome: Patricia A. Harris**  
**2013-14 Department Commander of North Carolina**

Hi, y'all. Hey. Well, welcome to North Carolina. On behalf of the North Carolina American Legion family, it is a great pleasure that we welcome you to North Carolina and home of the North Carolina Baseball World Series. And also, of course, you know, this is our 96th National Convention.

While we have lost our NEC Jerry, we have not lost our passion to serve and to be dedicated in making this convention great and memorable for you. Just know that the great weather that you all enjoyed for the parade, that was ordered by Jerry.

So, again, welcome to Charlotte. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Representing the Convention Corporation of North Carolina in place of our departed friend and comrade, President Jerry Hedrick, is Shuford Edmisten of Henderson, North Carolina. He is a member of the Convention Corporation and chairman of the National Cemetery Committee. Please welcome Shuford Edmisten. *(Applause)*

**Welcome: Shuford Edmisten**  
**North Carolina National Convention Corporation**

And a good morning, Mr. Commander, Mr. Adjutant, past national commanders, distinguished guests, my fellow delegates and alternates to this 96th National Convention, ladies and gentlemen. You know, what do you think about that Montel Williams? When I grow up, I want to be just like him. What do you think? *(Applause)*

On behalf of our beloved president, Jerry Hedrick, and the 2014 Convention Corporation of North Carolina, we have all made a great effort to bring you a meaningful National Convention. When you see a North Carolina cap, you can bet that the 100-plus volunteers that are here have been and are ready to help. What do you think about that, North Carolina? *(Cheers)*

As you know, it takes a lot of teamwork, and the North Carolina Convention Corporation has done a great job for all of us. We invite you to visit all of our Legion posts in the area and sit back and relax while you're here.

Again, from Murphy to Manteo, we welcome you to the 96th National Convention of The American Legion that we call home. Thank you, Mr. Commander. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Thank you very much. You know, we were here in 2002, and it was such a great venue. It is great to be back here. And I want to thank the Department of North Carolina for all of their hard work in putting this on. Give them another big hand, would you? *(Applause)*

The Chair now recognizes Adjutant Frank Stancil for the purpose of a presentation.

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT STANCIL (NC): Good morning. That's my commander. Commander, on behalf of The American Legion Department of North Carolina, as well as the department leadership from the great state of North Carolina, we present you the ceremonial gavel set crafted from the original teak decking of the battleship *North Carolina*. As the most decorated battleship in World War II, she now serves as the state's memorial to all that have given so much including the 10,000 from our great state who made the ultimate sacrifice to our country. Commander. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Thank you all very much for this wonderful gift. ... *At this time, a musical interlude was played.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: As you can tell, we have to have a couple changes waiting on the president. So now representing Charlotte Mayor Daniel Clodfelter is the vice chairman of the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners. He is serving in his seventh term. Please welcome Mecklenburg County Commissioner Dumont Clarke. *(Applause)*

**Welcome: Dumont Clarke, Vice Chairman  
Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners**

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm very much honored, indeed, to have been asked to make some welcoming remarks to this 96th National Convention. We enjoyed having you here in 2002. We are delighted you have returned in 2014. We have grown. Our population has crossed the one million mark since you were last year, and we've changed a good bit. But I trust your experience here this year has been equally positive and will lead you to consider returning again soon.

I congratulate the Department of North Carolina and The American Legion Convention Corporation of North Carolina for their successful bid and planning and hard work. Great leadership equals great results. While I'm at it, I would like to congratulate all of our hardworking neighbors in Cleveland County nearby for hosting The American Legion World Series and making Cleveland County, Shelby, the permanent home of the series. *(Applause)*

The American Legion has a proud history in Mecklenburg County. The very first municipal structure here that could accommodate large crowds of people, such as we have here today, for sporting, entertainment, and civic events was an outdoor stadium built in 1936. Charlotte's leaders were eager at the time to benefit from the federal dollars provided by the relief programs of the Great Depression. But there was considerable opposition to their plans to use some of the dollars to build this first stadium.

Construction was going to involve cutting some trees. And in case you haven't noticed, we love our trees now and we did then. Strong support for the plans came, however, from members of Hornets Nest Post No. 9 of The American Legion who wanted the stadium to serve as a memorial to those from Mecklenburg County who had served their country during World War I. So a little over 80 years ago, well before construction even began on that new stadium, the city council of Charlotte voted to name it American Legion Memorial Stadium. *(Applause)*

And predictably the opposition to it melted right away. Work started in January 1936, and the stadium was completed in a short nine months, just in time for President Franklin D. Roosevelt's visit to Charlotte where he became the first public speaker there. The first of many college football games played in the stadium occurred later that same month between the University of North Carolina and Wake Forest. Let's just say it was a close game.

You'll all be glad to know that The American Legion Stadium still stands today a mere stone's throw from here, hosts various sporting events and entertainment and civic events and is operated and carefully maintained by the Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation Department. Thank you.

Mecklenburg County government, of which I'm the vice chairman currently, also continues its long history of support for veterans, of which many of our citizens here are completely unaware of that support. We have a veterans service office that has been open since 1949. It is the largest in the state of North Carolina. In our most recent budget, we included approximately \$750 million of local citizens' county tax dollars to fund this veterans service office. It is staffed by ten full-time county employees. They are dedicated and they assist veterans in obtaining the complete array of benefits to which they are entitled. They have a great mission statement, which is, "We work for veterans and their dependents, not the VA."

We have also adopted a ten-year plan to end homelessness, which is a very important program, for we do have living here in Mecklenburg County many veterans who are homeless. We are linking them with housing, with treatment and services, and we are trying to promote housing stability of people most at risk of becoming homeless. It is a complicated problem to solve, but there is no excuse for leaving a single veteran homeless. *(Applause)*

If I may, I would like to end on a personal note. It was just about seven years ago that the older of our two daughters left Charlotte at age 22 after graduating from college. I remember she said to me that spring as she was trying to figure out what her post-graduation plans were going to be, she said, "Dad, all my friends are going to be consultants or Wall Street bankers." She said, "I want to do something different that involves service and helps me better understand what is

really going on in this crazy world." Well, she got what she was looking for and more when she joined the United States Navy. *(Cheers and applause)*

After completing a year of training, this little girl used to fall off her chair, almost without a push, did counter-piracy for six months flying drones from the fan deck of a destroyer cruising off the coast of Somalia. Then she was deployed for providing intel support to a carrier air wing during the surge in Afghanistan. While she was deployed for a second time on the *USS Ronald Reagan*, she had the opportunity to help coordinate the extensive humanitarian relief effort after the extraordinary 2011 earthquake and tsunami that destroyed so much of northern Japan. She then served on the Navy's watch floor in Bahrain for over a year and a half, and she's now posted at the Pentagon where she is an aide to the deputy CNO for information dominance.

I tell you that really because I cannot begin to tell you how much greater appreciation I as a citizen of this country have as a result of her service for the sacrifices that veterans, each of you have made, each of you in your own way, but collectively you do it for the sake of us all.

So keep up the good work you're doing on behalf of veterans, keep up the heat on your elected officials, and enjoy your stay in Charlotte, the Queen City, the county seat of Mecklenburg County. We look forward to you returning soon. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Commissioner Clarke, I'd like to thank you very much for taking time out of your schedule, and thank the mayor for us. We are having a great time in your city. And we would like to present you with a token of our appreciation. Thank you. Have a great day. Give him another hand, please. *(Applause)*

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 combat decorated veteran of the U.S. Army. Please welcome the President and CEO of the Student Veterans of America, D. Wayne Robinson. *(Applause)*

**Greetings: D. Wayne Robinson, President and Chief Executive Officer  
Student Veterans of America**

Good morning, and thank you for having me here today. I bring you greetings from the more than almost one million student veterans that are studying at campuses around the world, studying everything from accounting to the effects of traumatic brain injuries, from how to help their buddies transition from the battlefield to the classroom, to establishing vet centers in environments that lead to graduations.

And speaking of graduations, vets are not just attending school but they are completing. They are completing at rates similar to their traditional peers. We know this because of a study performed by Student Veterans of America in conjunction with the veterans administration and National Student Clearinghouse where we studied more than one million records. From that we saw that there was only about a one to three percent difference between 18- and 22-year-olds and student veterans.

We're now moving on to the Million Records Project phase 2 where we will connect programs to actually graduating outcomes. We cannot do this without the support of The American Legion. Because, you see, our offices actually started in your office because the Legion in their D.C. office, when we were a struggling organization six years ago, gave us our space. And so it is from there that we are able to connect with chapters, connect with student veterans, connect with agencies to be able to work on behalf of the GI Bill and also connect with administrators.

And speaking of connections, there's a fine line that runs between the veterans of previous generations and those of this generation. In my travels, I like to read this particular letter. This is something that was written a little while back that I like to carry with me.

And it says: You're being discharged from the military today, from your military. It is your military because your skill, patriotism, labor, courage, and devotion have been some of the

factors which make it great. You have been a member of the finest military team in history. You have accomplished miracles in battle and supply. Your country is proud of you and you have every right to be proud of yourselves. You have seen in the lands where you have worked and fought, and where many of your comrades died, what happens when the people of a nation lose interest in their government. You've seen what happens when they follow false leaders. You've also seen what happens when a nation accepts hate and intolerance. We are all determined it would happen in the places you have fought must not happen in our country.

Back in civilian life, you will find that your generation will be called upon to guide our country's destiny. Opportunity for leadership is yours. The responsibility is yours. The nation which depended on your courage and stamina to protect it from its enemies now expects you as individuals to claim your right to leadership, a right which you've earned honorably and which is well-deserved. Start being a leader as soon as you put on your civilian clothes. If you see intolerance and hate, speak out against it. Make your individual voices heard, not for selfish things but for honor and decency among men for the rights of all people.

Remember, too, that no American can afford to be disinterested in any part of his or her government, whether it is county, city, state or nation. Choose your leaders wisely. That is the way to keep ours the country for which you fought. Make sure that those leaders are determined to maintain peace throughout the world. You know what war is. You know that we must fight to not have another. As individuals, you can prevent it, if you give to the task which lies ahead the same spirit which you displayed in uniform. Accept that trust and challenge which it carries. I know that the people of America are counting on you. I know that you will not let them down. Good-bye to each and every one of you and to each one of you good luck.

This letter was written actually after World War II by General J. M. Wainwright. And it shows the connection between the struggles of vets of every era. And this is what I communicate to the young student veterans of this generation; that when you look out and you see those vets in organizations like the Legion, that you need to connect. Because their struggle previous to yours is your struggle.

That's what we preach at Student Veterans of America. Once again, I thank you for the opportunity to stand before you representing students vets of this generation. Once again, we could not make it to where we are on more than 1,100 campuses around the world in four countries without the help of organizations like the Legion.

Thank you, God bless, and good luck on the rest of your convention. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER NEWMAN: I would like to present to you the national commander's medallion.

Maestro, can we have some music while we wait for the president.

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Our nation's 44th commander in chief has said, "We have a sacred trust with those who wear the uniform of the United States of America."

This summer the president promised to institute a new culture of accountability at the Department of Veterans Affairs and has taken steps to do so. He said, "My bottom line is this: We've got to change the way VA does business."

The American Legion wholeheartedly agrees, and we look forward to working with you, Mr. President, and your recently confirmed secretary to accomplish this.

The president has taken actions to protect our veterans and approve VA policies. On August 31, 2012, the president signed an executive order that strengthens military and veteran suicide prevention efforts by increasing access veterans and their families have to mental health professionals.

Thousands of companies have increased their efforts to hire and train veterans due to appeals from the president and the first lady. The president has supported tax credits for businesses that hire our returning heroes, with even larger credits for those who hire wounded warriors. The administration promises to reduce the VA backlog and wants to work together with The American Legion and other VSOs to do so.

I am personally grateful that President Obama has taken time to hear from families impacted by The American Legion's work. He recently greeted all of our participants at The American Legion Boys Nation and American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation. He has given representatives of The American Legion the opportunity to personally witness the presentation of America's highest military award during Medal of Honor ceremonies at the White House.

We are honored to have him with us today. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm American Legion family welcome to the president of the United States, Barack Obama. *(Applause)*

**Special Address: The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States**

Thank you so much. Please, everybody, have a seat. Hello, Legionnaires! I want to thank Commander Dellinger for the introduction, but more importantly for your service in the Army, and as you conclude your tenure as commander, thank you for your tireless commitment to American's veterans.

I want to thank the entire leadership team for welcoming me here today, including your national adjutant, Dan Wheeler; your executive director in Washington, Peter Gaytan; Nancy Brown-Park; all the spouses, daughters. Yay! Sisters of the Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion. *(Applause)*

Let me say that I join you in honoring the memory of a friend to many of you, an Army veteran and a great Legionnaire from North Carolina, Jerry Hedrick. *(Applause)*

To Senators Richard Burr and Kay Hagan and Mayor Dan Clodfelter, thank you for welcoming us to the great state of North Carolina and to Charlotte and for your great support of our troops and our veterans. I do have to mention the president of Boys Nation, Matthew Ellow from Lacey's Spring, Alabama. I welcomed Matthew and all the incredible young people of Boys and Girls Nation to the White House last month. I was running a little bit late, so they just started singing, filling the White House with patriotic songs. And then they sang "Happy Birthday" to me, so I was moved. They are a tribute to The Legion and to our country.

I brought with me here today our new secretary of Veterans Affairs, Bob McDonald. *(Applause)* And for those of you who are not aware, Bob is one of America's most accomplished business leaders. He comes from a military family. He excelled at West Point, served as an Army airborne ranger. So he's got a reputation for jumping into tough situations. And he has hit the ground running, visiting hospitals and clinics across the country, hearing directly from veterans and helping us change the way VA does business.

And, by the way, Washington doesn't agree on much these days, but he got confirmed 97-0. *(Applause)* People understand he's the right man for the job. He has my full support. And, Bob, I want to thank you for, once again, serving your country. *(Applause)*

It's an honor to be back with The American Legion. In the story of your service, we see the spirit of America. When your country needed you most, you stepped forward, you raised your right hand, you swore a solemn oath, you put on that uniform and earned the title you carry to this day, whether soldier, sailor, airman, Marine, coastguardsman. Among you are proud veterans of World War II, of Korea, of Vietnam, of Desert Storm and the Balkans, and our newest veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. Across the generations, you served with honor. You made us proud and you carried the memory of friends who never came home — our fallen, our prisoners of war, those missing in action, heroes that our nation can never forget.

When you took off that uniform, you earned another title, the title of veteran. And you never stopped serving. As Legionnaires, you put on that cap, wore that emblem for God and country and took care of one another, making sure our veterans receive the care and the benefits that you've earned and deserve. And just as you defended America over there, you help build America here at home, as leaders and role models in your communities, as entrepreneurs and business owners, as champions for a strong national defense. You helped the United States of

America become what we are today, the greatest democratic, economic and military force for freedom and human dignity that the world has ever known.

Now, these are challenging times. I don't have to tell you that. Around the world as well as here at home, you turn on the TV and we are saturated with heartbreaking images of war and senseless violence and terrorism and tragedy. It can be easy to grow cynical or give in to the sense that the future we seek is somehow beyond our reach. But as men and women who have been tested like few others, you should know better. You know that cynicism is not the character of a great nation. And so even as we face, yes, the hard tasks of our time, we should never lose sight of our progress as a people or the strength of our leadership in the world.

Think about it. Six years after the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, in some ways the crisis had the potential of being worse than the Great Depression, thanks to the decisions we made to rescue our economy, thanks to the determination of the American people, we are stronger at home. Over the past 53 months, our businesses have added nearly 10 million new jobs, the longest streak of private sector job creation in American history. Construction and housing are rebounding. Our auto industry and manufacturing are booming. Our high school graduation rate is at a record high. More young people are earning their college degrees than ever before. Millions more Americans now have quality affordable health care. We've cut the deficit by more than half. And now we have to sustain this momentum so more people share in this progress, so our economy works for every working American.

And just as we're stronger at home, the United States is better positioned to lead in the 21st century than any nation on earth. It is not even close. We have the most powerful military in history. That's certainly not close. From Europe to Asia, our alliances are unrivaled. Our economy is the most dynamic. We've got the best workers. We've got the best businesses. We have the best universities and the best scientists. With our domestic energy revolution, including more renewable energy, we're more energy independent. Our technologies connect the world. Our freedoms and opportunities attract immigrants who yearn to breathe free. Our founding ideals inspire the oppressed across the globe to reach for their own liberty. That's who we are. That's what America is.

And, moreover, nobody else can do what we do. No other nation does more to underwrite the security and prosperity on which the world depends. In times of crisis, no other nation can rally such broad coalitions to stand up for international norms and peace. In times of disaster, no other nation has the capabilities to deliver so much so quickly. No nation does more to help citizens claim their rights and build their democracies. No nation does more to help people in the far corners of the earth escape poverty and hunger and disease and realize their dignity. Even countries that criticize us when the chips are down, they need help, they know who to call. They call us. That's what American leadership looks like. That's why the United States is and will remain the one indispensable nation in the world.

Now, sustaining our leadership, keeping America strong and secure means we have to use our power wisely. History teaches us of the dangers of overreaching and spreading ourselves too thin and trying to go it alone without international support or rushing into military adventures without thinking through the consequences. And nobody knows this better than our veterans and our veteran families because you are the ones who bear the wages of war. You are the ones who carry the scars. You know that we should never send America's sons and daughters into harm's way unless it is absolutely necessary and we have a plan and we are resourcing it and prepared to see it through. *(Applause)*

You know the United States has to lead with strength and confidence and wisdom. And that's why after incredible sacrifice, by so many of our men and women in uniform, we remove more than 140,000 troops from Iraq and welcomed those troops home. It was the right thing to do. It's why we refocused our efforts in Afghanistan and went after al-Qaeda's leadership in the tribal regions in Afghanistan and Pakistan, driving the Taliban out of its strongholds and training Afghan forces, which are now in the lead for their own security. In just four months we will complete our combat mission in Afghanistan, and America's longest war will come to a responsible end. And we honor every American who served to make this progress possible.



*(Applause)* Every single one. Especially the more than 2200 American patriots who made the ultimate sacrifice in Afghanistan to keep us safe.

And now as Afghans continue to work towards the first democratic transfer of power in their history, Afghan leaders need to make the hard compromises that are necessary to give the Afghan people a future of security and progress. And as we go forward, we will continue to partner with Afghans so their country can never again be used to launch attacks against the United States. *(Applause)*

Now, as I've always made clear: The blows we've struck against al-Qaeda's leadership don't mean the end to the terrorist threat. Al-Qaeda affiliates still target our homeland. We've seen that in Yemen. Other extremists threaten our citizens abroad as we have seen most recently in Iraq and Syria. As commander in chief, the security of the American people is my highest property, and that's why with the brutal terrorist group ISIL advancing in Iraq, I have authorized targeted strikes to protect our diplomats and military advisors who are there. *(Applause)*

And let me say it again. American combat troops will not be returning to fight in Iraq, will not allow the United States to be dragged back into another ground war in Iraq, because ultimately it is up to the Iraqis to bridge their differences and secure themselves. *(Applause)*

The limited strikes we're conducting have been necessary to protect our people and have helped Iraqi forces begin to push back these terrorists. We've also been able to rescue thousands of men and women and children who were trapped on a mountain, and our air drops of food and water and medicine show American leadership at our best. And we salute the brave pilots and crews who are making us proud in the skies over Iraq every single day. *(Applause)*

More broadly, the crisis in Iraq underscores how we have to meet today's evolving terrorist threat. The answer is not to send in large-scale military deployments that overstretch our military and lead for us occupying countries for a long period of time and end up feeding extremism; rather, our military action in Iraq has to be part of a broader strategy to protect our people and support our partners to take the fight to ISIL.

So we are strengthening our partners. More military assistance to government and Kurdish forces in Iraq and modern opposition in Syria. We're urging Iraqis to forge the kind of inclusive government that can deliver on national unity and strong security forces and good governance that are ultimately going to be the antidote against terrorists. And we are urging countries in the region and building an international coalition including our closest allies to support Iraqis as they take the fight to these barbaric terrorists.

Today our prayers are with the Foley family in New Hampshire as they continue to grieve the brutal murder of their son and brother, Jim. But our message to anyone who harms our people is simple: America does not forget. Our reach is long. We are patient. Justice will be done. We have proved time and time again we will do what's necessary to capture those who harm Americans. *(Applause)* To go after those who harm Americans. And we'll continue to take direct action where needed to protect our people and to defend our homeland.

And rooting out a cancer like ISIL won't be easy and it won't be quick, but tyrants and murderers before them should recognize that kind of hateful vision ultimately is no match for the strength and hopes of people who stand together for the security and dignity and freedom that is the birthright of every human being.

So even as our war in Afghanistan comes to an end, we will stay vigilant. We will continue to make sure that our military has what it needs. And as today's generation of servicemembers keeps us safe and as they come home, we also have to meet our responsibilities to them, just as they meet their responsibilities to America. *(Applause)*

Now, when I was here at the Legion three years ago, I said that the bond between our forces and our citizens has to be a sacred trust and that for me, for my administration, upholding our trust with our veterans is not just a matter of policy, it is a moral obligation. And working together, we have made real progress. Think about it. Working with the Legion and other veteran service organizations, we've been able to accomplish historic increases to veterans funding. We've protected veterans health care from Washington politics with advance appropriations.

We've been able to make VA benefits available to more than two million veterans who didn't have them before, including more Vietnam vets who were exposed to Agent Orange. *(Applause)*

We've dedicated major new resources for mental health care. We've helped more than one million veterans and their families pursue their education under the Post-9/11 GI Bill. And, moreover, as The Legion and other veterans groups have said, once veterans get in the door, the care you receive from the VA is often very good. The specialized care is among the best in the world. And many of the hard-working folks at the VA are veterans themselves, veterans serving veterans. And we can never thank them enough for their good work. But what we've come to learn is that the misconduct we've seen at too many facilities with long wait times and veterans denied care and folks cooking the books is outrageous and inexcusable. *(Applause)*

As soon as it was disclosed, I got before the American people and I said we would not tolerate it, and we will not. And I know the Legion has been on the front lines fanning out across the country helping veterans who have been affected. And I know Bob is going to give you an update on the actions we're taking. What I want you to know directly from me is that we're focused on this at the highest levels. We are going to get to the bottom of these problems. We are going to fix what is wrong. We are going to do right by you and we are going to do right by your families, and that is a solemn pledge and commitment that I'm making to you here. *(Applause)*

Already we're making sure that those responsible for manipulating or falsifying records are held accountable. We're reaching out to veterans, more than a quarter million so far, to get them off wait lists and into clinics. We're moving ahead with reforms at the Veterans Health Administration, and to help get that done you supported and Congress passed and I signed into law the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act, which means more resources to help the VA hire more doctors and nurses and staff. It means if you live more than 40 miles from a VA facility or your VA doctors can't see you fast enough, we'll help you go to a doctor outside the VA.

And we're instituting a new culture of accountability. Bob doesn't play. Bob likes to recall a cadet prayer from West Point which should be the ethos of all of us: Choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong. With the new legislation I signed into law, Bob and the VA now have the authority to more quickly remove senior executives who don't meet our high standards. If you engage in unethical practices or cover up a serious problem, you should be and will be fired. *(Applause)*

And, by the way, if you blow the whistle on higher-ups because you've identified a legitimate problem, you shouldn't be punished. You should be protected. *(Applause)*

So my bottom line is this: Despite all the good work that the VA does every day, despite all the progress that we've made over the last several years, we are very clear-eyed about the problems that are still there. And those problems require us to regain the trust of our veterans and live up to our vision of a VA that is more effective and more efficient and that truly puts veterans first. And I will not be satisfied until that happens. *(Applause)*

And we're in the midst of a new wave of veterans, more than a million servicemembers returning to civilian life. So we have to do more to uphold that sacred trust, not just this year or next year but for decades to come. We're going to have to stay focused on the five priorities that I outlined last year. I just want to reiterate them for you just so you know what it is that we're committing to.

Number one, we need to make sure our veterans have the resources you deserve. And the new funding we just passed with the help of Senators Burr and Kay, that helps. But as you know, it is not enough. In these tough fiscal times, I've therefore proposed another increase in veterans funding for next year. And I will continue to resist any effort to exploit the recent problems at the VA to turn veterans health care into a voucher system. We don't need vouchers. You need VA health care that you have earned and that you can depend on. We need to make the system work. *(Applause)*

Second, we need to make sure veterans are actually getting the health care you need when you need it. Reforming the VHA and more doctors and staff is a good step, but with this new

wave of veterans, we've got to deliver the care our newest veterans need most, and that includes tailored care that treats our women veterans with respect and dignity. *(Applause)*

It means doing even more to help veterans from all wars who are struggling with traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress. And we have to end this tragedy of suicide among our troops and veterans. *(Applause)*

As a country we can't stand idly by on such tragedy. So we're doing even more. More than ever, more awareness, more outreach, more access to mental health care. So long as any servicemember or veteran is suffering or feels like they have nowhere to turn or doesn't get the support that they need, that means we haven't done enough. We all know we need to do more. Veterans called for it. We heard you, which is why today I'm announcing 19 new executive actions to help improve mental health care for those American heroes and their families. *(Applause)*

So just one example. We're expanding suicide prevention training across the military and the VA. So colleagues and clinicians can spot the warning signs and encourage our troops and veterans to seek help. We'll improve access to care with more peer support. Veterans counseling veterans at VA hospitals and clinics. We're calling on Congress to help us ensure that our troops get coverage for mental health care that's on par with the coverage for other medical conditions. And we're going to make it easier for servicemembers being treated for mental health conditions to continue their care as they transition to the VA, so automatically connecting them with the support they need, making sure they don't lose access to any medications they may be taking.

And maybe most of all, we're going to keep saying loud and clear to anyone out there who is hurting: It is not a side of weakness to ask for help. It is a sign of strength. Talk to a friend. Pick up the phone. You are not alone. We are here for you, and every American needs to know if you see someone in uniform or a veteran who is struggling, reach out and help them to get help. They were there for America. We now need to be there for them. *(Applause)*

Our third priority, we have to keep attacking the disability claims backlog. Now, the good news is since its peak last year, we've worked with you to slash the backlog by more than 50%. There has been a surge in the backlog in part because of the influx of new veterans, in part because we opened it up for folks who had PTSD, folks with Agent Orange symptoms. Then we had to work that backlog back down. The trend lines are good. But we don't just want those claims processed fast. We need to make sure they get processed right. So we are going to keep at this until we end this backlog once and for all. And as we do, we're going to keep working to liberate you from those mountains of paper. We've got to move towards a paperless system, electronic health records that our troops and veterans can keep for life and that could cut down on some of the bureaucratic red tape so you're getting the benefits that you've earned a little bit faster. *(Applause)*

Number four, we need to uphold the dignity and rights of every veteran, and that includes ending the tragedy of homelessness among veterans. *(Applause)*

Again, we've got good news to report. Today I can announce that, working together over the last few years, we have been able to reduce the number of homeless veterans by one-third. And that means on any given night there are 25,000 fewer veterans on the streets or in shelters. But we're not going to stop until every veteran who has defended America has a home in America. That's the basic commitment that we have to uphold. *(Applause)*

And, finally, we need to make sure our troops and veterans have every opportunity to pursue the American dream. That includes a home of their own. You know, under the law, our servicemembers are entitled to reduced mortgage rates. But the burden is on them to ask for it and prove they're eligible, which means a lot of folks don't get the low rates they deserve. So today we're turning that around. We're announcing a new partnership in which some of America's biggest banks and financial institutions will simplify the process, proactively notify servicemembers who qualify for lower rates and make it easier to enroll. In other words, we're going to help more of our troops and military families own their own home without a crushing debt. *(Applause)*

We're also going to keep helping our troops transition to civilian life. Because of the work we've done together, if you already have a military truck driver's license, every state now waives the skills test so it is easier for you to get a commercial driver's license. *(Applause)* And we're going to keep pushing more states to recognize the incredible skills and training of our veterans. If you could do a job in a war zone, if you are a medic in a war zone, you shouldn't have to go take Nursing 101 to work in a hospital here in the United States. *(Applause)*

If you can handle million dollar pieces of equipment in a war zone, that should count for something in getting certified back here at home. If you can do the kinds of jobs so many of you have done in the most extreme circumstances, I'm pretty confident you can do that job right here at home. *(Applause)*

To help our troops and veterans pursue their education, we worked with loan services to automatically cap interest rates on student loans to our servicemembers at six percent. For veterans going back to school under the Post-9/11 GI Bill, we will keep standing up against dishonest recruiting and predatory practices that target and prey on you and your families. So far about 6,000 colleges and universities have pledged to adhere to our principles of excellence, promising to do right by our veterans. And more than 1,000 colleges and universities have adopted our eight keys to make sure that they're truly welcoming veterans and helping them succeed on campus. And, by the way, every school in America should join them. You should be proud if you're educating a veteran, and you should be doing right by them. *(Applause)*

And we're going to keep helping our veterans find those private sector jobs worthy of your incredible talents. Our new online Veterans Employment Center is a single one-stop-shop connecting veterans and their spouses to more than 1.5 million jobs that are open right now. And we're joining with states and local leaders to identify nearly two dozen cities and regions with the most opportunities for veterans.

And with Michelle and Dr. Jill Biden leading the call, America's businesses are joining forces to hire or train veterans and spouses, more than half a million so far and growing. So veterans unemployment is going down and it is now actually lower than the national average. It was higher to begin with, and we have been driving it down. But we've got more to go, especially for our post-9/11 veterans. So we are going to keep saying to every business in America: If you want somebody who knows how to get the job done, no matter what the mission, hire a veteran. Hire a vet. *(Applause)*

So fixing what's broken at the VA, ensuring the resources you deserve, delivering the health care that you've earned, eliminating the backlog, standing up for your rights and dignity, helping you realize the American dream that you so honorably defended, these are our commitments to you. This is what we're focused on. This is what we can do together, especially as our war in Afghanistan comes to an end and we welcome home our newest veterans.

There are a lot of them here tonight. We salute Captain Scott Miller of Indiana, a proud Hoosier and a proud Marine. In Afghanistan he went out on dangerous patrols, traveling to remote villages, meeting with tribal elders, building trust, forging partnerships to push back insurgents. And here at the Legion he continues to serve by encouraging businesses across America to give back to the veterans who defended our way of life and make our prosperity possible. So thank you, Scott. Where is Scott here today? We are proud of him. There he is. *(Applause)*

We salute Master Sergeant Carol Barker of Greensboro, North Carolina. As first sergeant of her medevac unit, she was responsible for more than 100 troops, helped save the lives of our wounded warriors in those critical first hours when life so often hung in the balance. And here at the Legion, she continues to serve helping homeless veterans come in off the streets and begin their lives anew with a roof over their heads. Thank you, Carol. Where's Carol? *(Applause)*

We salute Sergeant Joe Grassi who grew up just outside New York City. After his hometown was attacked on 9/11, he left his civilian job. He joined the Army. A squad leader in Afghanistan. He spent most of his time on the flight line in the 120-degree heat supplying our helicopter crews. And here at the Legion, he continues to serve helping veterans complete their disability claims and raising his voice in Washington for a strong national defense, because, he

says, "Some things are worth fighting for. America is worth fighting for." Thank you, Joe. We're proud of you. Thank you, sir. *(Applause)*

Scott, Carol, Joe, they're among the patriots here today who served in Afghanistan and Iraq. And I would ask all of our post-9/11 generation veterans to stand, if you are able, and accept the thanks of a grateful nation. I ask these men and women to stand because the American people have to know that even as our war in Afghanistan comes to an end, our obligation to this generation of veterans has only just begun. And this cannot just be the work of government and veterans groups alone. I want everyone American to take this commitment seriously. Please stand, post-9/11 generation, all of you who have served in Afghanistan and Iraq. We are grateful for you. *(Cheers and applause)*

This is not just a job of government. It is not just a job of the veterans organizations. Every American needs to join us in taking care of those who have taken care of us. Because only one percent of Americans may be fighting our wars, but 100 percent of Americans benefit from that one percent. 100 percent need to be supporting our troops. 100 percent need to be supporting our veterans. 100 percent need to be supporting our military families. *(Applause)*

And everybody can do something. Every American, every business, every profession, every school, every community, every state. All of us as one American team, that's how we will truly honor our veterans. That's how we will truly say thank you. That's how we will uphold the sacred trust with all who have served in our name.

God bless you. God bless our veterans. God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much. *(Applause) ... At this time, a musical interlude was played.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Our next guest is a vocal advocate for our men and women in the military and their families. Currently the ranking member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, he also sits on the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee; the Intelligence Committee; and the Finance Committee. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Senator Richard Burr of North Carolina. *(Applause)*

**Greetings: The Honorable Richard Burr  
United States Senate**

Commander, thank you very much. I'm humbled to be asked to speak to you. I've got to tell you, it's a tough act to follow the president of the United States.

Before I serve in my official capacity to welcome you here, let me say, commander and Secretary McDonald, to the leadership of the Legion, to the members of the Legion and to those of you that are here in uniform, a grateful nation thanks you for your service to the country, and many of us enjoy the freedoms and liberties we have today because of the sacrifices you have made in the past and those we'll make in the future, and we are grateful for that sacrifice.

Now, welcome to Charlotte, North Carolina, for those that are not from here, the financial and energy capital of the United States. And for those not from North Carolina, welcome to North Carolina. We're proud of the Legion choosing North Carolina to hold their annual meeting. And we believe that North Carolina is the most friendly state in the United States to the United States military.

I'm also here to thank you. And I want to make this personal. I want to thank the commander and I want to thank the Legion, because truly had the Legion not stood with some of us in Washington about the need for change at the VA, I'm here to tell you today: We wouldn't have a new secretary that I've got tremendous confidence in and we wouldn't have reforms that are on the table and we wouldn't be talking about addressing wait times or claims backlogs. But it was the action of the executive team of The American Legion that gave us the clout to reach the changes that have been reached this far. And you should be commended for that. *(Applause)*

Let me be cautious, though. And I say this with Secretary McDonald in the room. This is the first step. It's a small step. But it's a step in the right direction to rectifying a promise that we made to every veteran in the past and we will make to every veteran in the future. We will not

succeed at this long journey if in fact America's veterans aren't behind us. We will need your continued support to achieve the reforms and the changes that are absolutely crucial to provide you that promise of the best quality of care this nation can provide.

As I conclude, let me just say this. Helen Keller was asked once could she think of anything worse in life than to lose her sight. And Helen Keller paused for a minute, and said, "Yes, to have my sight and lose my vision."

I'm often asked what happened. Let me just say: I think we lost our vision. We now have a visionary in Bob McDonald as secretary of the VA. We've got an individual that not only is one of you, but he's successful in every facet of life. I was impressed on the first day I met him, and I have high expectations for him. And I also have his cell phone number if in fact those expectations ever drain. But let me assure every Legion member: Bob McDonald has a vision for the VA, and the vision is consistent with the promise that we made.

And I leave with a promise to you: I won't quit until this is done. And I won't quit because I remember the promise we made to every veteran, and that's a commitment this country will never break. Thank you for being here. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Senator, I'd like to thank you for your leadership and your commitment to the veterans of this great country. As a memento, I'd like to present you with one of my medallions and one of my Commander's Coins. Thank you for everything you did. God bless you. Give him a big hand, please. *(Applause)*

Our next speaker has backed legislation to support family caregivers of veterans and co-sponsored legislation that is designed to prevent partisan budget battles from interfering with funding for veterans health care.

Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm American Legion welcome to U.S. Senator Kay Hagan of North Carolina. *(Applause)*

### **Greetings: The Honorable Kay Hagan United States Senate**

Good afternoon. Thank you, Commander Dellinger, for your gracious introduction. And welcome to North Carolina, everybody. And I want to thank all of the members of The American Legion for having me today. I am truly honored to join you.

And I want to begin by expressing my truly deepest sorrow for the loss of Jerry Hedrick, a North Carolina native and a National Executive Committeeman. Jerry's dedication to our country, The American Legion, and youth he served through The American Legion Baseball program will not be forgotten.

All of you have protected our country during times of peace and war, facing dangers that most of us could never imagine. And all of you in The American Legion continue to serve by coming together as the largest veterans service organization in the nation. Through your work, you have been by the bedsides of wounded warriors, aided veterans applying for health care benefits, and, most importantly, helped make veterans services a national priority.

As a U.S. senator from the great state of North Carolina, I want you to know that I am your partner in this mission. Like so many people from my state, I come from a family of veterans. My husband's a Vietnam veteran. My dad and brother were both in the Navy. My father-in-law was a major general in the Marine Corps. And I have two nephews on active duty right now. One's an F-15 fighter jet pilot; the other one is a Navy SEAL. For me, when I say that one of my top priorities is ensuring that federal policies work for our veterans and our active duty military, it's not just words. It is a personal obligation.

That's why I'm so glad the president was here today to address the challenges and failures the federal government has had meeting its obligations to our veterans and to all of you. And I've told the president that promises alone are not going to get it done. The administration, I do believe, understands that we need a complete change in culture at the VA. In the past few months

there have been positive signs. Congress took an important step by passing the bipartisan VA reform bill late last month.

I've also had a chance to spend some time with our new secretary, Bob McDonald. The secretary served in the 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg, and I know that he is bringing valuable experience and a fresh perspective to the VA. But I think we all know that this is just the beginning. The administration has a long road ahead to restore the faith and trust in our veterans. Please know that I am confident of Bob McDonald's ability and that he is up to this challenge. The first objective must be to end the culture of delay and excuses that is hurting American veterans. *(Applause)*

Let me give you a quick example. Two and a half months ago the acting VA secretary visited the VA in Fayetteville, North Carolina, where wait times are among the worst in the country. He was told that the number one immediate action that could be taken to help them serve more veterans would be to approve some temporary medical space. At his request, within a week, the VA had lease proposals in hand for more space in Fayetteville and in Jacksonville. Everyone was ready to move except the federal bureaucracy. After months of waiting, I actually had to contact the president directly to get these leases moving. And I'm pleased to report that now it appears the leases will be approved. But it shouldn't be so difficult in this time. This is one symptom of a larger problem, a symptom that's designed to delay and deny rather than to move quickly and nimbly to better serve our veterans. And I think we all know that that has to change.

Here in North Carolina we are proud to be the most military-friendly state in the nation. The military is part of our state's tradition, and as far back as when I was a state legislator here, I was proud to be part of an effort to protect our servicemembers stationed in North Carolina by outlawing predatory lending that targeted military bases in our state.

And I actually have to say I've been deeply disappointed with repeated efforts by our current state legislature to make it easier for predatory lenders to take advantage of hardworking military families. One effort even prompted military leaders across North Carolina and the Pentagon to take the unusual step of speaking out against these reckless actions. And while the North Carolina legislature has not lived up to their obligations, I am proudest of some of the work that I've done in this area, working closely with Senator Burr and others to bring justice to the Marines who were affected by contaminated water at Camp Lejeune.

For 30 years servicemembers and their families who served at Camp Lejeune were exposed to toxic chemicals in their water. Many have faced serious medical challenges, and far too many have died because of their time exposed. Having suffered one tragedy, these veterans then faced a second blow when the government they had bravely served refused to admit the mistakes. And I'm going to tell you: It has not been an easy struggle. We faced resistance at every turn, from one government agency or another. But we felt that we had an obligation to fight until justice was done. There's still work to do, but I'm proud to say that we were able to pass legislation that will allow so many veterans from Camp Lejeune and their family members who are suffering to get the health care that they deserve at the VA. *(Applause)*

And I look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure that our veterans as well get the treatment that you deserve. Please know that my office is always open on any issues that you may have. I really appreciate your service, your support, everything that this organization is doing to benefit our current veterans. You represent the very best that our country has to offer. It is a true honor to be with you today. May God bless you and may God bless the United States of America. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Senator, I'd like to thank you very much for taking time out of your busy schedule to be with us and thank you for those words concerning our veterans. It's a great state, and we're glad to be here. And I would like to present you with my medallion and my Commander's Coin also.

We will take a ten-minute break in order to reset the stage. Peter, if you would.

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Nominated by President Obama to serve as the eighth secretary of Veterans Affairs, our next speaker was confirmed for that position by the U.S. Senate on July 29, 2014. He was previously the chairman, president and CEO of the Procter & Gamble Company. Under his leadership, Procter & Gamble added nearly a billion people to its global customer base and its stock increased 60 percent from 2009 to 2013. A graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, he served in the 82nd Airborne Division and earned a Ranger Tab, the Expert Infantry Badge, and Senior Parachutist Wings.

He has assumed responsibility for heading a department that is in desperate need for strong leadership. The American Legion is eager to work with the new secretary to restore confidence that veterans can have in this essential health care system that was created for them. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming the secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Robert A. McDonald. *(Applause)*

**Address: The Honorable Robert A. McDonald, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Dan, thanks for that kind introduction, and thank you all for a warm welcome. Let me first recognize your leadership: Dan Wheeler, Peter Gaytan; your vice commanders, Paul Dillard, Robert Newman, William Rakestraw, Wayne Satrom, and Douglas Wooddell; Peggy Thomas, Chris Huntzinger. Let me also recognize those in attendance from a broad range of national and international organizations: The Royal British Legion; Army, Navy & Air Force Veterans in Canada Association; the Royal Canadian Legion; the Republic of China Veterans Affairs Commission; the Korean Veterans Association; the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution; Student Veterans of America; and the National American Legion Press Association. Finally, all the members of the Legion family present today; VA colleagues, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Good afternoon, everyone. It's a pleasure to be with you here today in Charlotte and a true privilege to hear President Obama's remarks earlier. I deeply appreciate his trust and confidence in me, providing me the opportunity to serve at the VA. President Obama's presence here at your convention, his steady support of VA over the past six and a half years, and his leadership that he has demonstrated in driving greater support and opportunities for veterans are all evidence of his strong, unwavering support of veterans. Once again, he has taken the lead in calling on the elimination of claims backlog, the ending of veterans homelessness, better and more substantial mental healthcare and support, encouraging companies to seek veteran employees, increasing educational opportunities, and recruiting medical professionals to better serve our nation's veterans. There is no stronger advocate for veterans than President Obama.

First, let me thank the Legion for your staunch support, for almost a full century now, of our nation's veterans. Your counsel is important to me. I welcome your advice on how to reinforce the time-honored covenant between America and our veterans. The VA owes its existence, in part, to The American Legion. You lobbied for the creation of the Veterans Bureau in 1921. You fought long and hard to see that bureau become first an administration in 1930 and then a cabinet-level department in 1989.

Your accomplishments on behalf of veterans are legendary. Harry Colmery, a past national commander, wrote the first draft of the GI Bill of Rights, a year before Congress passed the GI Bill and two years before the first wave of World War II veterans returned home. You led the effort to pass the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Thousands of your volunteers donate millions of hours through the VA Voluntary Service Program. Your Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission provides assistance to veterans and families to make sure they receive the benefits they deserve. And a myriad of other Legion programs well serve this nation's veterans of all generations.

So your devotion to veterans isn't lost on me, and I want to assure you that your contributions to the VA reform discussions have been of great help. That sort of ongoing give-



and-take will be vital as we take steps to right the wrongs that have occurred and, importantly, to improve the department and reposition it for years to come.

There's no question, no question, that this is a critical moment for the VA. We have a lot of work to do to resolve the challenges we're facing. Before my confirmation hearing, I spoke with VSO leaders and met with many members of Congress. Again and again I was asked: Why do you want to be secretary of Veterans Affairs? And here's what I told them, and I believe this strongly, to the bottom of my heart: There is no higher calling in life than serving America's veterans. I see the leadership of VA as a great opportunity to improve the lives of the men and women I care deeply about. It's more than professional. For me, it's very personal.

My wife, Diane, and I both come from military families. Diane's father was a tail gunner in a B-24 during World War II. He was shot down over Europe and survived the hardships of being a prisoner of war. My father served in the Army Air Corps after World War II and was in the occupation forces in Japan. Both of our fathers were educated through the original GI Bill. Diane's uncle was a member of 101st Airborne Division, the Screaming Eagles, in Vietnam. He was exposed to Agent Orange multiple times, and today he receives care from the VA. And right now, right now as I stand here, my nephew, who is a pilot in the Air Force, is flying missions in the Middle East.

I graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1975 along with Sloan Gibson, the VA deputy secretary, a great leader and a great friend of mine of many, many years. My education at West Point and then my service as an Airborne Ranger in the 82nd Airborne Division instilled in me a lifelong sense of duty to country.

Four decades later, the words of the West Point Cadet Prayer, which President Obama referred to earlier, still guide me, help me to choose the harder right rather than the easier wrong. Subsequently, 33 years of experience at the Procter & Gamble company taught me a great deal about a mission-driven corporation, about strong company values, about great management practices, and about goal-oriented leadership. I believe that I can use those many lessons, those lessons learned, to help change and move forward the VA. Unlike, P&G, VA may not be concerned about quarterly profit and loss statements or shareholder value, but the VA does have a bottom line, and that bottom line is care for veterans. *(Applause)*

VA's in the important business of making a positive difference their lives, and I'm here to promise you VA will go beyond its present difficulties and be stronger for it. And there's two reasons for that: mission and values. First, VA has a great mission. It doesn't matter whether you're a GS-1 or a senior executive, everyone wants to have a clear purpose for coming to work every single day. There are few clearer or more inspiring missions than caring for those who have borne the battle for our nation.

Even with just a few weeks on the job, there's no doubt in my mind that the vast majority of VA employees, many of them veterans themselves, come to work every single day with a strong passion and even a stronger sense of purpose. They take great pride in what they do and, importantly, who they do it for. From what I've seen and from what I've heard, I can't overstate their enthusiasm for being part of the solution to our current problems. Overwhelmingly, their dedication to veterans is over 100 percent.

Second, VA has strong institutional values, those mission-critical ideals and attitudes that profoundly influence our day-to-day behavior and performance — integrity, commitment, advocacy, respect, and excellence — all taken together to spell the acronym I-CARE. And that's why I wear this button.

On my first day as secretary, I asked all VA employees to join me in reaffirming their commitment to these core values. And I've directed VA leaders to do the same with the people who work for them. As we tackle VA's specific problems, our values help cultivate a climate where everyone understands what the right thing is and then does it. Said another way, VA's way of doing business must conform to how we expect employees to treat veterans and how we expect employees to treat one another. Those expectations extend to how people behave on-the-job and how they behave when no one's looking.

It's clear that somewhere along the way, some people's behavior was at odds with VA's mission and core values. The result was seen in the stark difference between receiving care at, say, one of our highest performing locations, like the medical center not far from here in Columbia, South Carolina, and until recently in Phoenix. That said, though, I don't think we can lose sight of the fact that it was at Phoenix and elsewhere that employees had the moral courage to do the right thing, to take a stand, to make sure their voices were heard about what they saw happening that was going wrong. Those employees are examples of I-CARE at its best.

I just mentioned Columbia a moment ago. I think it's important to note that last year, the Joint Commission, which accredits and certifies health care organizations all over the country, named the William Jennings Bryan Dorn Medical Center there in Columbia, and 31 other VA hospitals to its Top Performers list in its annual review of patient care. This recognition goes back to my earlier comment that the vast majority of VA employees are 100 percent committed to veterans and to the highest standards in care.

At Columbia, and at VA facilities across the country, veterans always come first. I don't think we should overlook that fact. At Procter & Gamble, the most important metric for its more than 120,000 employees is customer satisfaction. It's the most important metric for any organization, public or private. For VA, that means veterans' satisfaction. Our strategic plan says it clearly: VA is a customer service organization. We serve veterans. And it's by how well we serve those veterans ultimately that decides the value of our organization. The truth of the matter is that we've failed in a number of ways, and we need to do better. We have to do better. Much better.

Right now, it's up to the department to reaffirm its worth and regain veteran trust. Over the past months, we've been forced to take a hard look at ourselves through the eyes of the veterans and through their experiences — good, bad, and indifferent. I think one of the lessons I learned is that we have to be truly veteran-focused. We need to continuously measure our performance, not just when things go wrong, but also when things go right. It's a 24/7, 365-days-a-year job, and that's what we intend to do.

From here on out, we want veterans to know that when they walk through VA's doors, employees are all in when it comes to meeting our mission, living our values, and keeping veterans first and foremost in all that we do. Without that, there can be no trust.

Right now we're listening hard to what veterans, employees, Congress, VSOs, and other stakeholders are telling us. Based on what I've heard, we're in the process of rapidly developing and instituting an array of changes aimed at fixing VA's problems in the areas of process initiatives, leadership, and resources.

Here's what we're doing to address these challenges. First, process initiatives. We've reached out to over 266,000 veterans to get them off the wait lists and into clinics sooner. In just the last two months, we've made almost 912,000 referrals for veterans to receive care in the private sector. The number of people waiting for appointments has declined by 57 percent since May 15 of this year. Facilities are adding more clinic hours, they're recruiting to fill physician vacancies, we're deploying mobile medical units, and we're using temporary staffing to provide more care to veterans more quickly.

We're updating the existing appointment scheduling system with a short-term enhancement until we replace it entirely with a state-of-the-art, commercial off-the-shelf system. We're contracting with an outside organizations to conduct a comprehensive independent audit of VHA's scheduling practices. We've directed every medical center and VISN director to make regular monthly, in-person inspections of their clinics to assess scheduling practices and identify obstacles to timely care. So far we've conducted over 2,300 of these visits.

I spoke earlier about the importance of customer satisfaction. Right now we're building a more robust system for measuring veterans' satisfaction. It will capture real-time, site-specific information on a continuous basis, and it will incorporate social media and online input as well. We'll also be reaching out to leading healthcare systems to see what they're doing to track patient access experiences. The 14-day access measure has been removed from all individual employee performance plans to eliminate any motive for inappropriate scheduling practices or behaviors.

VHA is providing direct access to facilities that need the most improvement. There's a large multidisciplinary team on the ground right now in Phoenix where we've taken action on all the recommendations made in the IG's May Interim Report. Until we get our systems up to capacity, we're expanding the use of private sector care. At the same time, we're better monitoring closely to ensure veterans are receiving the quality care they deserve, whether it's in VA or outside VA. *(Applause)*

Second, leadership challenges. Too many leaders failed to take ownership of the problems facing their facilities and employees. They failed to identify shortfalls in resources and take action to obtain the additional resources they needed. And they failed to set the standard for honesty and integrity and quash the culture of self-protection and retaliation. As you would expect, we've made a number of leadership changes in the field and at the Central Office. To help address our immediate concerns, we've brought in former VA undersecretary for health, Dr. Jonathan Perlin, for a short tour of duty as senior advisor. And we brought in VA General Counsel Leigh Bradley to help sort through VA's responsibilities for taking action against those accused of wrongdoing or management negligence.

Since May 1, 2014, we have taken over 30 personnel actions, and investigations are ongoing. Two members of the Senior Executive Service have resigned or retired. Three members of the Senior Executive Service have been placed on administrative leave pending the results of investigations. Over two dozen healthcare professionals have been removed from their positions, and four more GS-15s or below have been placed on administrative leave. *(Applause)*

That said, right now over 100 ongoing investigations at VA facilities are being conducted by the Office of Special Counsel, an independent federal agency that investigates whistleblower allegations and complaints of whistleblower retaliation, and inspections are being done by the VA's Office of Inspector General in some cases jointly investigating with the FBI. In most cases, we cannot begin our own investigations while third-party investigations are still active, but when those investigations are concluded and the findings are provided to us, you can bet we will take appropriate action. *(Applause)*

As those outcomes unfold, we will share information, to the degree that we can, while abiding by the law, issues of privacy covered by the Privacy Act of 1974 and appropriate due process. For cases involving senior executives, as President Obama said, the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014 that President Obama recently signed into law streamlines the removal of senior executives and the appeals process, intended to allow us to terminate SES leaders' employment more quickly than we might have previously if misconduct is found. It doesn't change anytime lines related to frontline employees or lower-level supervisors.

VA has a noble mission, caring for veterans and their families, and we have strong, institutional values, mission-critical ideals that must profoundly influence our day-to-day behavior and performance — integrity, commitment, advocacy, respect, and excellence. In performing that mission and guided by those values, we will judge the success of our efforts against a single metric — veterans' outcomes.

Our strategic plan already states, and I quote: VA is a customer service organization. We serve Veterans. If we fail at serving Veterans, we fail. They're our only reason for being. So we are awaiting the outcomes from the investigations now ongoing with OSC, OIC and all other parties. In some cases we have already announced personnel actions. Cheyenne, Wyoming, and Fort Collins, Colorado, those are both cases in point. Others will follow.

In addition to leadership accountability issues, we're also addressing cultural issues and we're creating a more open VA. We've frozen VHA Central Office and VISN office headquarters hiring and suspended VHA Senior Executive Performance Awards for fiscal year 2014. VA's now posting regular data updates showing progress in improving access to health care and making public additional-care quality statistics available for every medical center.

Communication is key. Sloan Gibson and I have been making the rounds of VHA medical centers and VBA regional offices to get at on-the-ground truth. Over the past several weeks, I've been to our facilities in Phoenix, Las Vegas, Memphis, Reno, and Palo Alto. Later this week I'll

be back here in Durham, North Carolina. At every location, I've met with very good people who spoke honestly, from the janitorial service to the medical staff directors, caring and compassionate employees who want to do right by veterans. I'm listening carefully to veterans at all these visits and to our VSO partners like The American Legion and to our own hardworking employees. I want to know when you and other veterans are not being served well, and I also want to know when you are.

The information, the insights, and the input I hear from employees, from you, and from others will shape and determine the way forward for the VA. It will constitute the kind of accountability we at VA always want to ensure that veterans always deserve.

Last, let me turn to resource issues. In June, Acting Secretary Gibson made a compelling case to Congress for the additional funds needed to address our immediate needs. The result is found in the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014. The act allocates \$15 billion to the VA, \$5 billion to hire physicians and other medical staff and improve infrastructure and \$10 billion to fund additional purchased care while we build capacity to meet demand. It authorizes the VA to enter into 27 major medical facility leases to give us more space to treat patients; and, as I mentioned earlier, it streamlines the removal of senior executives based on poor performance or misconduct.

What VA needs to do now is to institute the operational efficiencies, the cost savings, the productivity improvements, and the service innovations needed to support future budget requests. We have to show Congress that VA can operate with the same levels of efficiency, customer service, and financial discipline as the best-run companies in America. Here are a few areas where I intend to change the status quo. For one thing, we need to get back to basics and reset the focus on VA's Strategic Plan. It's VA's scripture, so to speak, at the core of all we do.

I'll be reorganizing the department to efficiently leverage VA's resources and operate cohesively as one team, with one dream, in delivering the best care and services to veterans. Part of that includes redesigning or streamlining work processes. In other words, ferreting out the bottlenecks in our operations that slow down service and frustrate veterans. A lot of that change will come from our people in the field, in our hospitals and clinics. High-performance companies get their very best ideas for improvements and innovation from those closest to the customer, and VA can too.

We need to do a better job of forecasting. It's essential for us to reliably predict future demand for services so we can make good decisions about budgets, about support systems, and about people. Inadequate forecasting was partly responsible for the severe shortages of personnel at some locations. And so recruiting right now is job one. I intend to be out in front and hands-on in that effort. Later this week I'm going to launch our recruiting efforts by speaking to doctors, interns, residents, and students at Duke University's medical school.

Recruiting isn't just for HR. Here's how I look at it. I was on an airplane going to Phoenix to visit our VA facility there. A gentleman behind me knew I was with the VA. He was a 22-year veteran of the Air Force. He's currently an employee with Lockheed Martin. He said to me I need to do something about recruiting. His daughter is a lieutenant in the Air Force. She's currently going to medical school in Washington D.C. He talked to her about a noble career with the VA. She said, "Dad, haven't you read the newspapers or seen on television what's going on with the VA? Why would I want to work there?" I'm here to tell you, I asked for her phone number. I called her three different times. I'm going to speak at her medical school. The VA is a great place to work.

I also want to tell you about a story about Nancy. Nancy is a neurologist in medical school. We met on a plane when I was coming back from Memphis. She said, "Wow, my dream job is to work at the VA." And she's in school at George Washington University Medical School. And she wants to be a neurologist. So I gave her my card, I gave her my address, I gave her my coin, I said, "Contact me. I want you to work for the VA too."

Turning to technology, it's an important enabler for us. We need to make the most of it, particularly by expanding the use of digital technology which will free up doctors and nurses to provide more direct care for patients. On another front, VA and DoD synergy is critical. Chuck

Hagel and I both agree on this. We need to create an integrated records system. And you should not see a difference or a barrier between DoD and VA. Like you, I don't want VA to be known for just standard care. I want VA to be known as the standard for health care in the United States. *(Applause)* To help do that I'm establishing a board of medical professionals comprised of the foremost medical minds in our nation to advise me on the best industry practices.

Now, I know I've just laid down a pretty ambitious agenda. However, I am confident that all of this, and more, can be done. It can be done with The American Legion's help and with the support of all of our veterans service organizations. Close collaboration, ongoing dialogue on priorities, no organization can separate itself and be in a vacuum. I want that close collaboration. I want to hear from you. Together we can move VA forward with the urgency that the current situation demands and with the balanced reforms that will ensure VA as the provider of choice for veterans from Maine to Manila. Testifying before Congress last month, my good friend and our Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson portrayed our situation this way when he said, "We can turn these challenges into the greatest opportunity for improvement in the history of the Veterans Affairs Department."

I firmly believe that. I don't deny that we have challenges ahead and that they are significant. There's a lot to do. But there's also a lot at stake. In tough times, I've always turned to a favorite saying of mine by Winston Churchill. "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."

Well, you should know I'm an optimist, I'm a realist and a pragmatist. I have no doubt that with the support of President Obama, with the support of Congress, with the support of the veterans service organizations like The American Legion and other stakeholders, we can do what needs to be done to restore confidence in the Veterans Affairs Department.

I want to thank you for all you've been doing for a long time. You've been a great friend of the VA. I want to thank you and encourage you to continue to give us feedback, continue to tell us what you like and what you don't like, and to continue to be there for veterans and their families. And I thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak with you this afternoon. I look forward to working closely with you as we move forward together. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Mr. Secretary I'd like to thank you for taking time out of your schedule to be with us and thank you for the steps you've already taken to right and to put trust back in for the stakeholders, our veterans. And believe me, sir, we're looking forward to our partnership with you, and you will be hearing from us.

SECRETARY MCDONALD: I know that. Thank you very much.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: God bless you. Thank you very much. And a memento of your visit, I'd like to present you with my medallion and my coin also, sir. Give the secretary a big hand, please. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER DILLARD: 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, join me in welcoming George Beaulieu, the dominion president of the Army, Navy, Air Force Veterans in Canada. *(Applause)*

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

Good afternoon. National Commander Dellinger, special guests, comrades all, it gives me great pleasure to be with you this afternoon to bring greetings from our comrades in the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada.

I would first like to commend The American Legion and its leadership on their efforts in hosting the Veterans Crisis Command Centers across America. These centers are helping

veterans receive benefits and medical care in a timely fashion in the face of mounting delays and backlog within the VA department.

Yet, the battle is just beginning. In both our respective countries, there are staggering increases in combat-related mental health issues and operational stress injuries. These wounds, however, do not have commonality with the physical wounds of war. Best outcomes are always dependent on the speed in which treatment is obtained. Timely physiological assistance can help reduce the severity of PTSD. But left untreated, these invisible wounds can manifest, further isolate the veteran, and lead to worsening depression, addiction issues and thoughts of suicide. In many cases, PTSD leaves its victims unable to work or successfully transition into civilian life. Coupled with increased anxiety, socialized isolation, and the breakdown of family relationships, this is also leading to increase homelessness among the veteran population.

But we can fight back. Access is the key. Access to programs, benefits, health care, supportive housing and transitional vocational assistance is vital in helping us win the battle and helping our soldiers, sailors and airmen and women cope with their injuries and return to society they fought so valiantly to protect. We must continue to push our government to get our veterans the benefits they need at the initial application, thereby reducing the mounting number of appeals that prolong their access to the services they need.

In Canada, we continue to advocate alongside our comrades at the Royal Canadian Legion for improved service and benefits as well as for the improved access to these benefits for our armed forces personnel who are facing rehabilitation, mental health, and transitional needs after service.

We also need to recognize and help the families of our veterans to educate them on the symptoms, stressors, and techniques with which to interact and help their loved ones. We need to encourage counseling for spouses and children so that they may also deal with the effects the illness of their family members have on their life. Our government needs to be urged to commit resources to increase the availability of service providers, to invest in research of new and innovative treatments, and to quickly adopt, learn best practices whether they are from our own research or that of our allied countries who are achieving success.

I am encouraged by the success that The American Legion is having with their Veteran Crisis Command Centers and their influence in having President Obama sign off on over \$16 billion in their new funding for the health care and health care practitioners earlier this month. With collective determination and continued hard work, we will endure to fight for all of our veterans, past, present, and future.

I again thank you for having me here with you this week and for all of your wonderful hospitality. Have a successful convention. God bless. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER DILLARD: The Royal Canadian Legion is committed to securing adequate pensions and benefits for veterans and their families by dealing directly with the federal government. Our next guest is a member of Royal Canadian Legion Marble Arch Branch 29 in New Brunswick Command.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the Royal Canadian Legion Dominion President Tom Eagles. *(Applause)*

**Greetings: Tom Eagles, Dominion President  
The Royal Canadian Legion**

Thank you very much for the kind words and also allowing me to take a few moments today to speak to you. Good afternoon. National Commander, honored guests, and members of The American Legion, on behalf of approximately 300,000 members of the Royal Canadian Legion in more than 1,440 branches located in Canada, the United States, Germany, the Netherlands, and more recently Lake Chapala in Mexico, I bring you greetings. I may also add I want to thank you all for the kind hospitality you have all shown me and Cheryl during my stay since last Friday. I really, really appreciate it.

Ladies and gentlemen, for many of us here today looking back, we see that the 20th century represented a particularly hard set of challenges to our basic freedom, the rule of democracy and our collective human rights to name a few. Back then, we fought largely against a clearly identifiable foe. Today, the fight against tyranny has taken on a whole new dimension with terrorism and insurgent operations. Despite these changes to warfare, our collective response to these threats has continued and so must our shared commitment to the welfare of the servicemen and women whom we put into harm's way. Our men and women have a common history of answering the call when our nations were in need, and we have every right, ladies and gentlemen, to expect our governments to answer the call in time of need as well. (*Applause*)

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

I have been a member, ladies and gentlemen, of the Royal Canadian Legion since 1976, 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, retaining the respective members as well as advocating on behalf of our veterans for better health care and benefits.

To that end, I would like to cite some examples of our working on common issues, bearing in mind, ladies and gentlemen, that Canada is roughly one-tenth the size of the United States. So if you extrapolate the numbers I will use and multiply by ten, you should have an idea in American terms the equivalence of the impact we are having, and I'll just give you a few examples.

The first example is helping veterans. We both share a common interest in helping veterans who are experiencing financial hardships. In Canada, we call it the Legion Benevolent Poppy Trust Fund. Last year more than \$14 million was given to veterans and their families through our benevolent funds program. If you extrapolate numbers in American terms, this would be approximately \$140 million given in benevolent funds. We also helped victims of flooding last year in and around the city of Calgary in July of 2013. Some branches were destroyed while others offered shelter and services to flood victims.

Legion Riders. Last year we held a news conference to launch our own version of the Legion Riders program. And plans are well underway to help generate awareness about the Legion. This community engagement across the country and its services to our serving and retired veterans, members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and their families.

Partnerships. Recently the Royal Canadian Legion launched a national partnership with the Wounded Warriors Canada to help promote services for Canadian veterans. We recently launched a partnership with A Ride for Dad. For those who may not be familiar with it, Ride for Dad raises funds for prostate cancer. Since 2000, the Tellus Ride for Dad has donated more than \$13 million to the Prostate Cancer Fight Foundation to support prostate cancer research in awareness in the communities where the funds were raised.

Advocacy. We are keeping our government's feet to the fire, ladies and gentlemen, about the review of the New Veterans Charter that was passed in April of 2006. It is, indeed, in dire need of enhancements. And the government has committed to making some important improvements no later than September 30 this year.

These, ladies and gentlemen, are just but a few examples of our common history of advocating on the behalf of the interest of the veterans. I have done so in an effort to let you know about 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 strengthened our shared belief in the ability of our respective organizations so that we can relieve hardship and suffering facing our veterans. Thank you very much. May God bless. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER DILLARD: 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 organization happenings. Bringing us greetings today is the president of NALPA, Patrick R. Rourke of New York. *(Applause)*

**Greetings: Patrick R. Rourke, President  
National American Legion Press Association**

Legionnaires, delegates, distinguished guests, good afternoon. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the 96th Annual Convention of The American Legion on behalf of the members of the National American Legion Press Association, with the acronym of NALPA.

In 1922, the national adjutant, Lemuel Bolles, had a vision to create a national press association for The American Legion. Next year, 2015, NALPA will celebrate 92 straight years of facilitating the communications of the aims, achievements, news, events, and all the different happenings of The American Legion at the local grass level, and now all levels of The American Legion family through newsletters, publications, web sites, and social media. We are comprised of editors, contributors, webmasters, site administrators, bloggers, public relations officers, historians, and supporters who encourage the exchange of ideas, share expertise, promote communication, and annually recognize those who achieve excellence in doing so.

Yesterday we had our annual awards ceremony, or awards party, I would really call it. And we gave our second media award. And this went to the West Virginia Boys State. The kids actually ran their own Facebook page during Boys State. And if you think about what they did and the fact that all their friends and buds and girlfriends back at home got to see what they did during Boys State, what kind of recruitment does that do for next year's Boys State as well as Girls State. Something to think about and for you to take home.

Our many sanctioned department press associations provide local outlets for communicators to meet, share ideas, provide guidance, and promote the programs and the ideals of The American Legion to our members and communities. At my local post, we actually have a formal public relations person. I would say that Royal Sheldon, our PI guy, was actually born with a camera in his right hand. I never see him without a camera. One day I asked him, I said, "Why are you doing this?" He said, "It is very simple. If you write it, they'll print it."

A couple weeks ago we had a large Veterans Appreciation Day event. A significant number of local media outlets were there. On the 6:00 news that night, the event got 15 seconds. The local newspapers printed a quarter and half-page articles for the next week every single day. If you write it, they'll print it.

On behalf of our executive director, Michael Dugan, and our newly elected president, Michael Moses of Kentucky, I cordially invite you and The American Legion family to join our communicators' ranks. The NALPA desk is conveniently located upstairs on the second level in the National Headquarters office of the convention center and right beside the Media & Communications Commission. We can also be found on the Internet and on Facebook.

Thank you very much for your attention, and have a great convention. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER DILLARD: Thank you for your remarks. 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 Taiwan area by solving their living problems as well as to providing medical care, home care, employment opportunities, and education assistance. Please welcome from the Deputy Minister of Republic of China Veterans Affairs Commission Major General Hsai-hui Chin. *(Applause)*



**Greetings: Maj. Gen. Chin, Hsiao-hui (Ret.), Deputy Minister  
Veterans Affairs Council, Republic of China**

National Commander Dellinger, National President Brown-Park, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. I'm greatly honored to address your convention on behalf of Minister Tung Hsiang-lung of Veterans Affairs Council in Taiwan, the Republic of China. Minister Tung asked me to convey his best regards to all of our good friends in The American Legion. Thank you for allowing me to address you all.

The VAC will be celebrating its 60th anniversary of founding this coming October 31, and The American Legion and the Veterans Affairs Council in Taiwan have built a very strong relationship for nearly 60 years. In the past 60-some years, we have maintained top-level visit each year. National Commander Dellinger, National President Brown-Park, and their party have visited Taiwan. I hope they enjoyed their stay with us in Taipei. Every year The American Legion has passed resolutions in support of my country, the Republic of China in Taiwan, during your annual conventions, and we truly appreciate this friendship.

We, the Republic of China, have been pursuing a life of peace, democracy, and freedom just like the Americans. Since May 20, 2008, when our President Ma Ying-jeou came into his presidency, he has been trying to promote peaceful development and a win-win policy for his international and cross-Taiwan Strait relationships.

My good friends in The American Legion, we need your continuous support by urging your federal government to provide us with defensive weapon systems. We also need your support to help us to join more international organizations so that we can be strong enough to defend ourselves on the one hand and to help stabilizing the Western Pacific on the other.

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

Now, before leaving the podium, on behalf of President Ma Ying-jeou, I would like to take the honor to present the Medal of Order of Resplendent Banner to National Commander Dellinger to express our gratitude to him for his great efforts in strengthening our mutual relationship. And I'd like to ask my colleague to read the citation. Thank you. *(Applause.)*

INTERPRETER: It's my honor here to read the citation in Mandarin edition first, then read the certificate of award in English.

*... At this time, the award was read in Mandarin.*

Certificate of Award to commander. Award of the Order of the Resplendent Banner with Cravat to Mr. Daniel Dellinger, national commander, The American Legion, in recognizing his significant contribution to promotion of a friendship and mutual cooperation between the Republic of China and the United States of America. The award of Order of the Resplendent Banner with Cravat is hereby awarded on the date of 9th of August in the year of 2014. Minister, Minister of National Defense, Republic of China. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: I would like to thank you very much for this award. *(Applause)* You know, our relationship with Republic of China goes back to 1944. The American Legion sent some VA&R members to the mainland and helped them set up their veterans affairs committee. So it's been a 70-year relationship with this great country. I'd like to present you with my medallion and coin. And thank you very much for all the hospitality extended to the Legion family as they traveled to the Far East this past fall. Thank you. *(Applause)*

The Vietnam-USA Society works to promote mutual understanding and future cooperation between our two countries. This is especially important as we search for the remains of American and Vietnamese servicemembers. Our next guest is a former Deputy Foreign Minister of Vietnam. Please welcome the president of the Vietnam-USA Society, Ambassador Nguyen Tam Chien. *(Applause)*

**Greetings: Ambassador Nguyen Tam Chien, President  
Vietnam-USA Society**

Mr. Dellinger, national commander, ladies and gentlemen, greetings from Vietnam! (*Applause*) We are from Vietnam-USA Society, a nearly 70-year-old organization founded on October 17, 1945, with the aim to promote friendship and cooperation between the people of Vietnam and the people of the United States of America. It is our great honor to be invited to the 96th National Convention of The American Legion for the very first time. (*Applause*)

May I extend to all of you warmest greetings and wishes for the successful convention. Next year, we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Vietnam and the United States — July 12, 1995 to July 12, 2015. During this period, Vietnam and United States have come a long way from foe to the partner and friend.

In July 2013, during the official visit of our president to the United States, the two leaders, President Truong Tan Sang and President Barack Obama, have agreed to upgrade the framework of Vietnam-U.S. relations to the level of comprehensive partnership. The trade turnover between our two countries has now increased almost 30 times since signing of the Bilateral Trade Agreement, BTA, in 2000, and has reached nearly \$30 billion last year.

We have here representative from one company of Vietnam, GARCO 10, in the delegation, which has exported nearly 100 million garments among the total 8 billion U.S. dollars of garments that Vietnam exported to the United States last year. Many of you may have worn clothes or shoes of brands Nike made in Vietnam or tasted delicious catfish from Vietnam's Mekong Delta. In turn, we have bought modern Boeing 777 and 787 aircraft from the U.S. to help shorten the geographical distance between our two countries.

The Vietnamese people today enjoy more and more American artwork and music and use high-tech product from the U.S. The Vietnam-U.S. exchange in other areas have also made great success. At present, there are about 16,000 Vietnamese students studying in your universities. The number of American tourists traveling to Vietnam is growing rapidly. Even military-to-military relations are also expanding every year. There are exchange visits by the Minister of Defense and friendly visit of the U.S. military ships to visit Vietnamese ports.

Ladies and gentlemen, to the process of Vietnam-U.S. reconciliation and normalization, the veterans of our two countries have made outstanding contributions. Repeatedly the government of the U.S. has expressed appreciation and gratitude to the Vietnamese government and people for efforts in searching for American soldiers missing in action, MIA. A lot of U.S. veteran organizations and individuals have also visited Vietnam to participate in the humanitarian activities for healing the wounds of war, at the same time to have opportunity to know more about the renovation cost and process in Vietnam. As the first U.S. ambassador to Vietnam who is also a Vietnam vet, Ambassador Pete Peterson has said, "Vietnam today is not a war but a country," when he refers to the modern Vietnam.

The market economy of Vietnam is growing with the growth rate of 7-8 percent per year in the last decade, and of 5-6 percent per year in the last two years despite the global economic and financial crisis. Vietnam now is actively integrating into the regional and world economy and is participating in the TPP negotiation with United States, joining FTAs, free trade areas, in East Asia as well as FTA negotiations with Europe, etc.

In spite of many difficulties and limitation in resources, in the past decades, our government and people, including millions of veterans, have made great effort to deal with the war consequences such as effects of Agent Orange dioxin on about 4 million people, particularly young generations and the environment. Vietnam still has more than 300,000 soldiers missing in action, MIA. Until now, there are still thousands of victims affected by unexploded bombs and land mines, and around one-fifth of our potential cultivated land area could not be put into use because of these land mines. Our people would like to receive more humanitarian assistance and cooperation from the United States from yourselves to heal those wounds of war.

Vietnam always looking into the future, welcoming American friends to Vietnam to promote understanding, to find opportunities of mutually beneficial interaction, to make more new friends so that we could jointly make a difference in our relationship.

Delegates and friends, you may have heard about the recent tension in East Sea of Vietnam resulting from the invasion of China to our islands and seawater. We are determined to defend our sovereignty, territory waters, and airspace. However, we would like to resolve complicated problems by peaceful means based on international law as well as respect to our independence and sovereignty. That way, we can contribute to the peace and stability in Southeast Asia as a whole. We disrupt Vietnam, the United States, and other nation need. We would like to thank all those who have raised voices supporting the justified stance and policy of Vietnam.

Ladies and gentlemen, American Legion is a big organization with significant and meaningful activities towards society and the lives of millions of American veterans. Our Vietnam-USA Society, an organization aimed at enhancing people-to-people exchanges between the two countries, is glad to have a partnership with your association. There is indeed nothing more necessary than having the opportunity to witness another country through one's own eyes, directly meeting and talking to ordinary people, veterans, in order to know the reality and to avoid the lack of objective information leading to the misunderstanding about each other, about partner and friend.

For many years the Vietnam-USA Society has always been a bridge to enhance people-to-people contact. Our society is welcoming U.S. veterans, entrepreneurs, young leaders, scholars, students of sister schools and universities, U.S. citizens in home-stay programs and many social activities in Vietnam.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend an invitation to all of you to travel to Vietnam so that for those who have been in Vietnam before, four to five decades ago, and see the changes in development that have come about. And for those who are visiting the first time, to get a chance to discover the history, culture, custom, religious life of the 54 ethnic groups in friendly country of Vietnam, as well as to enjoy the beauty of many recognized world heritage sites and the hospitality of our people. Your visit would contribute to the promotion of Vietnam-USA exchanges and strengthen ties between the people of our two countries. The Vietnam-USA Society will always warmly and truthfully welcome all of you American friends.

Once again, I would like to express our sincere thanks to the board of The American Legion for inviting us to attend your National Convention. Great success to the National Convention of The American Legion. Good health and happiness to all of you, and hope to have a chance to welcome you in Vietnam. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: I'd like to thank you very much for coming to our convention. I'd like to thank you for the hospitality extended to my aide and myself during our visit to Vietnam. I'd like to present you with my medallion and also my Commander's Coin. (*Applause*)

A member of the Florida society of the Sons of the American Revolution, our next guest is also an Air Force veteran and a life member of The American Legion. He was elected president general of the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution in July. Please welcome President General Lindsey C. Brock. (*Applause*)

**Greetings: Lindsey C. Brock, President General  
National Society-Sons of the American Revolution**

Thank you, Commander Dellinger, distinguished guests, fellow Legionnaires, members of the Ladies Auxiliary, and the Sons of The American Legion. It is a great honor and a very special privilege to stand before those who have served this great country in one of the five branches of our military and to personally thank you for your service to the greatest country in the world, the greatest hope for freedom in the world, the United States of America. And as a fellow veteran of

the United States Air Force, including 13 months in Korea, I can say I am proud to be a member of The American Legion Post 3116 in Atlantic Beach, Florida.

As president general of the National Society-Sons of the American Revolution, it is a privilege to extend greetings from our membership whose patron ancestors were the first veterans that gave us the freedom that we enjoy today. May God grant us the fortitude and the wisdom to always be ready to defend the freedom wherever and whenever it is threatened.

And now it is my pleasure to make a special presentation to our national commander, Daniel Dellinger. Commander Dellinger, in recognition of your accomplishments as a patriot leader in the nation, it is an honor and a pleasure to present you on behalf of the National Society-Sons of the American Revolution, Distinguished Patriot award. This award is presented only one time during the tenure of the president general. It is presented to an American citizen for outstanding service and patriotism in our country. Thank you, sir, for your leadership and your service. *(Applause)*

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

### **National Commander's Report to Convention Daniel M. Dellinger, Virginia, National Commander**

My fellow Legionnaires, Legion family members, and friends, Thomas Edison once said that the three great essentials to achieve anything worthwhile are, first, hard work; second, stick-to-itiveness; and, third, common sense. I have noticed during my travels as national commander that The American Legion has an abundance of all three.

When you elected me last year, I told you that the foundation of The American Legion is strong. And I still believe that. But while our Four Pillars are rock solid, some outside forces have been chipping away at the granite. You have heard plenty about the problems, no, scandals, that have been epidemic throughout the Department of Veterans Affairs. It goes without saying that there are many good people who work for VA. In fact, the biggest abuses were exposed by brave VA employees who risked likely and, in some cases, proven retaliation by putting veterans ahead of their careers.

It's impossible to gauge with certainty exactly how many veterans died while waiting for care, but we do know that at least 110 VA hospitals and clinics lied about how quickly they were treating veterans. The law of averages states that some who were waiting died because of the delays. One death because of bureaucratic ineptitude is one too many.

The American Legion was the first and only major veterans organization to call for a leadership change at the top of the VA. We were criticized by some for acting rashly or prematurely. "Wait for the investigations to be completed," people in and outside the government told us. Other veterans groups would not join us in our call for a change. But then report after report came out completely confirming our worst suspicions and reinforcing our stance. The system is broken.

Now, we still believe it is a system worth saving, and we have confidence that the new VA secretary now armed with fresh legislation backed by The American Legion will help fix what was once the best health care system anywhere. Our demands are simple: Access and Accountability. Veterans have earned the right to quality health care and should be seen in a timely manner. When VA managers and employees fail to provide this access, they need to fix the problem or seek employment elsewhere. *(Applause)* In cases of fraud or other crimes, they need to be prosecuted. *(Applause)*

Access also applies to the claims process as well. No veteran should have to wait six, nine, in some cases several years to have a claim processed and settled. The American Legion is doing its part. Thousands of Legion service officers assist veterans with their disability claims free of charge and regardless of their membership in our organization. Moreover, your American Legion has been conducting town halls and organizing Veterans Crisis Command Centers in communities around the country to assist veterans and family members affected by long wait times for VA medical care and for benefits claims processing.

I would like to read you a message that our national VA&R director sent to, our Washington executive director from the Crisis Center in Phoenix on June 11. "All is well. We have helped 145 veterans with four hours left for today. Several have been service-connected on the spot, and two more received 100 percent today. One veteran has been fighting for over 30 years. Veterans are still coming in. We have had a steady flow all day. Staff is well and working hard."

Similar success stories have occurred at our crisis centers in Fayetteville, Baltimore, El Paso, West Virginia, Colorado, and in Charlotte. Thousands have been helped. While the Legion will remain persistent and dedicated to making a system worthy of those it is intended to serve, we will remain equally dedicated to fulfilling the mandates of our other three pillars.

Last fall, the United States government shut down. It went AWOL. Republicans, Democrats, the president, and Congress failed to do their jobs. The situation was eventually resolved, but it is no exaggeration to believe that veterans and The American Legion made the ultimate difference. No examples of shutdown travesties registered with the public like the images of World War II veterans being denied access to their memorial and military families being denied benefits after their loved ones made the supreme sacrifice in Afghanistan. I held press conferences at the World War II Memorial and at the Indiana War Memorial to remind the public that our elected politicians should never ignore the needs of those who have sacrificed to keep us free. Politics must never replace patriotism. *(Applause)*

Defending America is a constitutional responsibility that should be job one for any political officeholder. And you cannot defend America without supporting the good people who have sworn an oath to do it. This is even more essential in a country with an all-volunteer service. We spend too little time on defense as it is, and sequestration is scheduled to return in fiscal year 2016. Friends, we are funding our military at pre-World War II levels, as a group of mad terrorists run rampant throughout the Middle East, beheading innocent men, women, and children, including Americans. Secretary of Defense Hagel just called the Islamic State, "an imminent threat to every interest we have, whether it's in Iraq or anywhere else."

And it's not just our enemies that can do us harm. Last year, seven Marines were killed during a live-fire exercise at Hawthorne Army Depot in Nevada. While the official investigation cited human error as the cause, it was also determined that the mortar section had not conducted appropriate preparatory training. Ladies and gentlemen, military officials from the Department of Defense on down have repeatedly warned that training and readiness would suffer because of sequestration. It is immoral to send improperly trained or ill-equipped troops into harm's way. Those who serve have taken an oath to sacrifice their lives if necessary, but it should not be because their leaders in Washington can't pass a sufficient budget. *(Applause)*

And if we spend trillions to fight wars and rebuild nations, we can spend billions to take care of those who did the heavy lifting. The American Legion won a great legislative victory earlier this year by restoring cuts to military pensions that were planned by Congress. However, this victory is incomplete. Future military members, including those who joined this year, will see these benefit reductions. Does America really want to send a message to future veterans that their military service is less valuable than that of those who served in previous wars? I have one simple message to anybody who believes that military and veterans benefits are too generous: "The recruiter will see you now!" *(Applause)*

As long as you don't mind grueling training, possibly getting shot or killed, long separations from your family and uprooting your children from their schools every couple of years, a career in the military might be perfect for you. The American Legion exists to advocate for those who are willing to make these sacrifices.

Seventy years ago, President Franklin Roosevelt signed what many historians and economists consider the greatest social legislation ever passed by the U.S. Congress. If not for The American Legion, there never would have been a GI Bill. And it is due to our continued advocacy that the current generation of veterans once again has a GI Bill worthy of its name. *(Applause)*

Through programs like Operation Comfort Warriors, the Family Support Network, Temporary Financial Assistance, the National Emergency Fund, the Legacy Scholarship and our

partnership with Soldier's Wish, we are having a great impact on thousands who have served and sacrificed for our great nation. The American Legion sponsors veterans job fairs around the country. Last year about 850 veterans found work because of these events. 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.

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 21 years ago. Between 2006 and 2013, they have raised more than \$4.2 million in scholarship money as part of the Legacy Run. As you saw during this morning's presentation, the 2014 Legacy Run was another outstanding success. There were no shortages of small American flags displayed on motorcycles and by our parade delegations on Sunday.

The American Legion knows that you cannot respect our veterans by disrespecting the symbol under which they fought. Tell your members of Congress to pass a constitutional amendment to protect the American Flag now! *(Applause)*

We should also be concerned about our national sovereignty and what is occurring at our borders. If unaccompanied children can so easily enter the United States, what message does this send to al-Qaeda and ISIS? It is inhumane to continue a policy that encourages children to risk violence and rape by human traffickers or death in the desert. If given the opportunity, hundreds of millions of people from third-world countries would love to live in the United States. We simply cannot afford this influx. Amnesty needs to be off the table. *(Applause)*

It is an election year, and I ask all of you to remember each of our Four Pillars when you cast your ballot. As an organization we are nonpartisan, but that should never be mistaken as nonparticipants. Veterans have paid too high a price defending the right to vote for us not to exercise it. Voting for The American Legion values is good for America. *(Applause)*

Unfortunately there are so many American values under attack, whether it be faith that is nurtured by military chaplains or the inclusion of a cross at a veterans memorial, our nation needs The American Legion to remind us of the values that built this great country. I see these values being passed on to our younger generation as epitomized by our youth champions who spoke to us this morning. But I have to ask: What would America be like if there was no longer an American Legion? Who would serve as role models, instilling traditional American values into the next generation? Who would advocate for the next generation of troops, just as we have for veterans since World War I? Who would be awarding National Emergency Fund grants, organizing community blood drives, and raising money for scholarships?

This is why membership is so important. If the Legion wasn't here to defend the Four Pillars that have not only made our organization great but have also made America great, who will. When a post is struggling with membership, we should not look for excuses but instead find solutions. Our current membership eligibility window for the War on Terrorism extends back to the beginning of the Gulf War, August 2, 1990. That's 24 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 need just to sign them up. Just ask.

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 and leadership development, post development and revitalization, recruiting, and retention. Visit [legion.org](http://legion.org) or call our Membership Division if you need more information about practicing these strategies. Contact our Media & Communications Division for a copy of the Membership Public Relations Guide. Most importantly, get out and ask people to join. When members of the media ask you about a dying or struggling American Legion post, point out that there are more Legion posts in The American Legion than there are Starbucks coffeehouses. There are also more American Legion posts than there are McDonald's in America. So those are two good examples. *(Applause)*

Nobody will join The American Legion out of pity. We must maintain a positive outlook. It's up to all of us to give them a reason to join. In fact, I can think of four good reasons: A strong national defense, veterans affairs, youth, and Americanism. *(Applause)*

I would like to thank the Department of Virginia for their unwavering support over the years for me, and I would like to thank each and every one of you for the warm hospitality extended to my wife, Margaret; my aide, Bob; and myself during our travels this year. All I can say is: It's been quite a ride. May God bless you all, God bless our troops everywhere, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: 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 96th annual national convention of The American Legion is hereby called to meet in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26-28, 2014. The convention business sessions will be held in the Charlotte Convention Center, Hall A, exhibit 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 transacting such other business as may be brought before it.

On Thursday, August 28, 2014, 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 28, 2014), 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, "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 the 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 the 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 By-laws.

**Department Officials**

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

**Convention Committees**

Committee: Americanism, one delegate; Children & Youth, one delegate; Constitutional Amendments, one delegate, Credentials & Rules, one delegate; Internal Affairs Other Internal Matters, one delegate; Internal Affairs, Membership, one delegate; Veterans Employment & Education, Veterans Employment & Education, Employment & Veterans Preference, one delegate; Veterans Employment & Education, Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness, one delegate; Finance, one delegate; Legislation, one delegate; National Security, National Security, Military Benefits & Quality of Life, One Delegate National Security, Foreign Relations One Delegate, National Security, Unconventional Forces & Intelligence, one delegate; National Security, Conventional Armed Forces, one delegate; National Security, Aerospace, one delegate; National Security, National Guard & Reserve Forces, one delegate; National Security, Law and Order & Homeland Security, one delegate; Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, VA&R, Health Administration, one delegate; VA&R, National Cemetery, one delegate. Signed by Daniel M. Dellinger, National Commander; attest Daniel S. Wheeler, National Adjutant. That completes the call, Mr. Commander. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Thank you very much, Mr. Adjutant. I now declare the 96th Annual National Convention of The American Legion to be regularly convened. The Chair recognizes George West, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credentials & Rules, for the purpose of making a report.

**Report: Convention Committee on Credentials & Rules  
George West, New Hampshire, Chairman**

To the 96<sup>th</sup> Annual National Convention of The American Legion, Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014.

Forty-two delegates to the Committee on Credentials and Rules met at 8:30 a.m., August 24, 2014, in the Westin Charlotte, Tryon Room, Level Two.

George West (NH) was elected Chairman, and Timothy Collmer (NY) 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 Procedure for The Organization of National Conventions of The American Legion.

It was regularly moved, seconded and carried to accept the Delegate Strength Report as reported by the National Adjutant certifying membership 30 days prior to National Convention. It was regularly moved, seconded and carried that the report be based upon the provisions of



Section 3, Article V, of the National Constitution: Five delegates for each Department, plus one additional delegate for each 1,000 members or major fraction thereof, whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer thirty (30) days prior to the opening of the Convention (July 28, 2014); and one alternate for each delegate. In addition, in accordance with Section 3, Article VII, members of the National Executive Committee, which committee includes the National Commander, who exercises his vote only in his capacity as Chairman of the National Convention, and five (5) National Vice Commanders are delegates to the National Convention. For a total of 2,541 delegates to the National Convention.

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

In accordance with the membership report certified to the Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs by the National Adjutant on July 28, 2014, and in accordance with Article V of the National Constitution, the voting strength of the 54 Departments is 2,540 plus the National Commander allocated as follows:

Alabama .....	29	Montana.....	18
Alaska .....	14	Nebraska .....	43
Arizona .....	53	Nevada .....	16
Arkansas .....	22	New Hampshire .....	25
California .....	123	New Jersey .....	61
Colorado .....	33	New Mexico .....	19
Connecticut .....	29	New York .....	13
Delaware .....	18	North Carolina .....	53
Dist. of Col. ....	8	North Dakota .....	24
Florida .....	138	Ohio .....	119
France .....	9	Oklahoma .....	--
Georgia .....	56	Oregon .....	28
Hawaii .....	9	Pennsylvania .....	188
Idaho .....	18	Philippines .....	7
Illinois .....	106	Puerto Rico .....	11
Indiana .....	102	Rhode Island .....	12
Iowa .....	60	South Carolina .....	31
Kansas .....	42	South Dakota .....	28
Kentucky .....	33	Tennessee .....	37
Louisiana .....	33	Texas .....	91
Maine .....	29	Utah .....	15
Maryland .....	68	Vermont .....	19
Massachusetts .....	52	Virginia .....	61
Mexico .....	7	Washington .....	39
Michigan .....	87	West Virginia .....	27
Minnesota .....	93	Wisconsin .....	70
Mississippi .....	23	Wyoming .....	13
Missouri.....	55		

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

It was also regularly moved, seconded and carried that the Committee Chairman and Secretary be authorized to sign the report on behalf of the Committee.

Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of New Hampshire, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: We have a motion on the floor. Do I hear a second? ... *Second.* Any discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor signify by the usual sign. All opposed? The report of Credentials & Rules is adopted.

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

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

Thank you, Commander, convention guests. This is a report on Finance.

Forty members met at the Charlotte Convention Center at 9 a.m. on Sunday, August 24, 2014 in Charlotte, North Carolina. 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 Paul Morin (Massachusetts) was made that the 2016 per capita dues remain at \$13.50. Robert Wilson (Pennsylvania) seconded the motion, and it was adopted by unanimous vote.

The Chairman then recognized Benedict Lee (North Carolina), chairman of the Media & Communications Commission for a report.

Chairman Danilson reported that the 2013 consolidated financial statements were audited by Crowe Horwath who issued an unqualified opinion.

The Chairman called on National Finance Director Shawn Long, CPA to discuss the financial results of 2013. The committee was informed that 2013 total assets decreased approximately \$11.7 million to \$122 million. Membership and DMS revenue decreased 3.2% during 2013. Total revenue for 2013 increased approximately \$1.7 million and total expenses increased approximately \$1.5 million

Paul Morin (Massachusetts) moved to empower the Chairman and Secretary to write and/or amend the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Finance. Tom Mattice (Idaho) 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.

After my report I would like to show a short video in regards to some marketing things we're doing in Iowa. And also to expand that, and we'll have a short presentation after that.

Respectfully, Mr. Commander, this concludes my report. As a duly elected delegate from the Tall Corn State of Iowa, I move for its approval.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: We have a motion on the floor. Is there a second? ... *Second.* Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor of the motion signify by saying aye. Opposed? The report of Finance is adopted.

I now entertain a motion for the adoption of the rules of the convention. So moved. Do we have a second? ... *Second.* We have a motion on the floor. Any discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor of the motion signify by saying aye. Opposed? Motion carries.

CHAIRMAN DANILSON: Mr. Commander, I would like to request a point of personal privilege.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Point of personal privilege is granted.

CHAIRMAN DANILSON: Thank you. This past Memorial Day weekend The American Legion of Iowa had the opportunity to participate in a new annual event called the Tree Town Music Festival. This was a three-day country-western event with such entertainers as Toby Keith and Brad Paisley. We have a short video that will give you a better idea, and after the video two of the event leaders are here to speak a few words about next year's event. We are very hopeful

to be involved in this and I think it goes with our new marketing effort for brand awareness and also to tell our story of The American Legion. So if we could show the video right now.

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

CHAIRMAN DANILSON: We also have two guests here from the festival, and also I'd like to ask our department adjutant, John Derner, to introduce them, and we have a presentation to make too.

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT DERNER (IA): Thank you, commander. On behalf of The American Legion Department of Iowa, we would certainly like to thank the Tree Town Music Festival and Songdish for the incredible opportunity that they provided to The American Legion, naming us as the official charity partner of this event.

As you have seen in the video, we managed to have a little bit of fun. Actually, a lot of fun. We had an amazing lineup of country music performers and a great opportunity to promote The American Legion and let people know who we are and what we do. But most importantly, the Tree Town Festival gave us an opportunity to accomplish our mission: To provide assistance and support to our fellow veterans. We manned the booth with service officers from the Department of Iowa and Minnesota, and we spent much of the weekend answering questions and offering to provide representation with their claims for VA benefits. The American Legion is grateful to the Tree Town Festival for allowing us to tell our story, and those we assisted will be forever grateful for the service you allowed us to provide.

And at this time I would like to introduce the promoter of the festival as well as the host. The promoter is Dave DeWaard with Songdish; and joining him was the emcee and host of the event, comedian, country singer, and songwriter, Joe Denim. *(Applause)*

MR. DAVE DEWAARD: Thank you. Just a brief little description of the festival, other than what you saw. Iowa is home to Winnebago Industries. Anybody hear of Winnebagos? Well, I think they're going to give a new one away if y'all come next year, everybody come to the festival. You'll have to check it out. But, anyway, the festival is held on part of Winnebago's property. It's in Winnebago County, and the Winnebago River runs right beside it.

As you can see from the video, we had a tremendous turnout. I think our mission was proven that we can have a good festival. We partnered with The American Legion, and we were very happy with the results of that. We plan on 2015 trying to grow it and trying to get more people from outside of the immediate area. So, once again, you're all invited to come down to the Tree Town Festival in Forest City, Iowa. With that, I'll let our host, Joe Denim, give you a little idea of who is going to be there.

MR. JOE DENIM: Thank you, Dave. How is everybody doing? Is everybody good? Still awake? We there? All right.

Dave asked me to host this thing last year. We had an absolute blast. We had Brad Paisley, Toby Keith, both of whom are very patriotic and understand and respect our veterans and The American Legion. So we're going to continue that this coming year with a lot more acts. We've got Blake Shelton and Dierks Bentley going to be there along with a whole bunch of others. And one of the biggest attractions to this is the fact the country music audience is a very loyal, very understanding audience who respects honor and dignity and our veterans and The American Legion and everything it stands for. So I'm very honored to be a part of it. We're going to have a great year. So thank you again, American Legion, for being a part of it, Soldier's Wish, thank you, guys. *(Applause)*

MR. DEWAARD: Mr. Commander, could you come up to the podium, please. One of the featured entertainers at this year's Tree Town Festival was Toby Keith. He was kind enough to sign, actually I think it was three guitars, and we'd like to present one to the national organization. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Thank you very much. Appreciate it. Thank you all very much for that.

With us today is the executive director of Soldier's Wish, Kevin McDugle, of American Legion Post 1 in Oklahoma. He is here for the purpose of granting a deserving soldier a wish. Please welcome Kevin McDugle. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: Kevin McDugle, Executive Director  
Soldier's Wish**

Good afternoon. Boy, you sound better than you did two minutes ago. We've had a great year at Soldier's Wish, and I want to tell you about one wish we granted prior to coming here, one of my favorites. We were at the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville. We had the Gold Star Families there, and one story in particular hit close to home. One Marine that was in some of the same units that I served in had made the decision to get out of the Marine Corps because of family, to spend more time with family. He made that decision just like I did. And after I left the drill field, I had the opportunity to leave the Marine Corps so I could be with family. He never had that opportunity. Instead, he was killed in Afghanistan.

When I talk to the Gold Star Families, what do you say? What do you say to the mother of a Marine who has passed away? And I told them if I were the one that had passed away and another Marine was standing on stage to speak on my behalf, what would I say? First of all: Mom, don't feel sorry for me because I'd do it all over again. And I know that would have been his sentiments as well. But outside of that, Mom, know that I love you. Brothers, sisters, grandma, grandpa, I love you.

For the Wish, we were able to send grandmother who couldn't spend time with her grandkids because after he passed away the family moved away to Maryland. So we paid for her to fly up to Maryland, get her grandkids, fly them all back to Tennessee, spend two weeks in Tennessee with the grandkids, fly them all home, and then fly her back. That's just one of the many wishes we got to grant last year.

At this event, how many of you actually participated in the Corn Hole challenge at the Soldier's Wish booth? (*Applause*) All right, a lot of you. I want to announce the four states that were the top leads. We had Massachusetts, Indiana, Minnesota. And is Ohio out there? The winners of that challenge, the most money raised was raised by the great state of Ohio. (*Cheers and applause*) The most points scored were scored by the great state of Minnesota. (*Cheers and applause*) You'll be getting plaques in the mail, but thank you so much.

And because of what you all did here, we wanted to present a check to The American Legion for Post 49. This next year we're going to be spending a lot of time to rebuild that post. So, national commander, if you don't mind, on behalf of Soldier's Wish, we want to present this check, because of all these great people who participated, \$2,757 for Post 49. And there will be a real check to follow, just so you know. (*Applause*)

Today we have a good family here, one that knows and understands struggles, like many of you. And just this week, with the passing of Jerry Hedrick, the pain that that causes we all know, but this family has served honorably in the United States Army. Second Lieutenant Ed Baldwin, originally from New Jersey, now residing in North Carolina, and his wife, First Lieutenant Caroline Baldwin, originally from Prescott, Arizona, now also residing in North Carolina, both going through life serving their time, serving in the United States Army, both airborne, going above and beyond. And on April 21, 2013, some short time ago, Second Lieutenant Baldwin was on his way home with his daughter, Sara, when he experienced a stroke and due to the stroke had a terrible car accident, which killed Sara and left the first lieutenant with a long, long recovery.

When we found out about this, actually, The American Legion let us know about the family and some of the struggles they were going through. And one of the toughest things when you go from walking on two feet to a wheelchair is being able to get around in your own home. So today on behalf of The American Legion, the Lowe's corporation, and Soldier's Wish, I want to first of all introduce to you First Lieutenant Caroline Baldwin and her husband, Second Lieutenant Ed Baldwin. (*Applause*)

With gratefulness for your service to our country, Soldier's Wish, The American Legion, and the Lowe's corporation is honored to present to you a remodeling service that will equip your home to allow you better access and mobility. I know that's going to include a new shower and a bathroom so you can get in and get around. We're going to widen the doors. We're going to do whatever it takes to make it to where you can get around and live the life that you deserve to live,

mainly because you're American heroes to me for serving this great country. We have a couple of things I also want to present you with. Quilts of Valor, Mr. Jeff Thorne, if you don't mind please coming forward. Quilts of Valor has given away over 97,000 quilts. I don't know what grandma is sewing those, but they want to present two quilts today to simply say thank you for your service to your country, thank you for what you've gone through, and just letting you know simply that we love you. *(Applause)*

Thank you, guys, for taking the time, and thank you so much for your support of Soldier's Wish this last year and all that you do to serve this great country. God bless. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Also let you know that the first and second lieutenant are both members, newest members, of The American Legion. And while I had Bob McDonald in the back room, I also gave him an application. So hopefully the secretary will be one very shortly. Just ask.

Some announcements. Child Welfare Foundation donations will be collected after the Children & Youth report tomorrow. Operation Comfort Warriors collections will be on Thursday. And also the NEF donations will be after the Internal Affairs report tomorrow. Legionnaires, please join me in a salute to the flag of the United States of America. ... *At this time, the delegation rose and rendered a salute to the Colors.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: The time is now 3:31. The Convention will stand in recess until 8:30 tomorrow morning.

... *At 3:31 p.m., the Convention was recessed to reconvene the following day, August 27, 2014, at 8:30 a.m.*



**PROCEEDINGS  
SECOND DAY**

**Wednesday, August 27, 2014**

*... At 8:30 a.m. the delegates assembled for the second day of the 96th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had.*

**Call to Order**

**Daniel M. Dellinger, Virginia, National Commander**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Before we begin today, I have requested a special song by a special country and western artist. When I was in Michigan I had an opportunity to meet this young man. He's put together a song for veterans, and he's utilized the war in Afghanistan and Iraq but he's going to change it a little bit so it encompasses all wars. But a portion of the proceeds will benefit the Department of Michigan's Wilwin Lodge, which is for disabled veterans. I predict The American Legion will be hearing a lot more from Richard Lynch in the future. If you could please play that song. *... At this time, the song "Love Tattoo" by Randy Lynch was played. (Applause)*

**Pledge of Allegiance**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: What a great way to start the day. Sergeant-at-Arms, please lead us.

*... At this time, the delegation rose and rendered a salute to the Colors and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: For the invocation, I call on National Chaplain Daniel A. McClure of Iowa.

**Invocation**

**Daniel A. McClure, Iowa, National Chaplain**

It is a little hard for me this morning. That song kind of hit home. I was in Vietnam but I was also in the Middle East, and I've left a lot of friends. They carry a love scar. Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for this great country and the men and women that are willing to serve it. Thank You for the privilege of serving a country as great as ours. Help us to continue in everything that we do — to love our land, to love our people, and to serve in every way we possibly can to make her even greater. Thank You for being our sustainer, our creator, the God who loves, the God who cares, the God of mercy.

We recognize that we have a lot of shortcomings. We thank You that You're a patient God, willing to overlook, not excuse those shortcomings. Now, Father, we ask for Your guidance, Your direction, Your help as we continue this, our annual meeting. But we can join as friends and comrades enjoying one another's company, hearing great reports, making wonderful decisions. Now, Father, have your will and way. Thank You again for this great country. God bless America. In your holy name we pray. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Please be seated. The convention is now in session.

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 29 in Washington, Iowa, and a retired Army colonel who served in Vietnam and Iraq. He and his wife, Marge, have two children and four grandchildren. It is an honor for me to present a certificate of appreciation marking his year of service as national chaplain to Dr. Daniel A. McClure. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: Certificate of Appreciation presented to Daniel A. McClure, National Chaplain of The American Legion, 2013-2014. Given in recognition of faithful and honorable service to The American Legion.*

**Certificate of Appreciation**  
**Dr. Daniel A. McClure, Iowa, National Chaplain**

When I was asked by some arm-turners if I would be interested in serving as national chaplain, my immediate reaction was: What do I have to do? And their immediate reaction was "nothing." (*Laughter*)

Well, it's more than nothing. I want to tell you something, folks. I promised the NEC that I would pray for one member of the NEC and I would be praying for one member of the staff and I would be praying for our commander on a daily basis from the time I took office. I want to stand here this morning and say this: That will continue whether I'm in the office or not. We have one of the greatest organizations in the world, and our Constitution says "for God and country." And I don't know about the rest of you folks, but the U.S. of A. means a whole lot to me. (*Applause*)

But I'll stand here and say this: When the USA turns its back on God and God's people, I'm done, because God comes first. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: I would now like to call our five national vice commanders to join me on stage for our next presentation, which will be given by Bron Mogenis, trustee for the Chapel of the Four Chaplains Foundation; Foundation Chairman of the Board Louis Cavaliere; Foundation Executive Director Christine Beady; and the department commander of the District of Columbia, George Roundtree.

**Presentation: Chapel of Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion**  
**Bron Mogenis, Trustee, Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation**  
**Louis Cavaliere, Chairman of the Board, Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation**  
**Christine Beady, Executive Director, Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation**

BRON MOGENIS: Good morning. It is my pleasure this morning to give out some awards. But before I do this, let me avoid a little confusion. I'm wearing two hats — one because I'm the new ANEC for the District of Columbia department, and I'm not wearing that hat now, but I'm also the representative and trustee for the Chapel of Four Chaplains. And what I would like to do is sort of tell you a little bit about what the awards are about, introduce the people who are the recipients of the award and introduce two special guests who came here to honor the service people, to honor the recipients, and they love our country like we do, two executives from the Chapel of Four Chaplains in Philadelphia.

I like to say that having been born outside of this country and receiving all the privileges that every American did and has and enjoys today, I am a good judge of how great this country is and a good judge of how good our military is and how supportive they are. And we can't thank them enough for their service.

No tradition of American society is more precious to, or characteristic of, our culture than that of voluntary reaching out to neighbors in need. Such selfless service is a part of both of our civic and our religious heritage. The Chapel of Four Chaplains is a non-profit organization. It's founded upon one shining manifestation of our heritage, that of our Army 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 in Torpedo Alley, February 3, 1943.

This historical event began at Torpedo Junction, the U-Boat-infested icy waters of the North Atlantic during World War II. On January 23, 1943, the *Dorchester*, an old steamer quickly pressed into military service, was carrying a full capacity of soldiers to Greenland. Most of the men were already sick and green with nausea. The weather was bitterly cold with gale-force winds. Ice began building up on the decks, slowing the *Dorchester* to 10 knots.



Moving among them were the Four Chaplains — George L. Fox, Alexander D. Goode, Clark V. Poling, and John P. Washington. The chaplains talked and listened to the men, soothing apprehensions, offering encouragement, telling jokes. They were the only calm people on board. On February 2, 1943, as the *Tampa* sonar detected the presence of submarine, the captain took precautions. He ordered all the men to go to sleep in clothing, having lifejackets close to them and so forth. They were only 150 miles from Greenland. With daylight they would have had American base protection.

It was just after midnight, February 3, 1943, when an enemy submarine fired a torpedo towards the *Dorchester's* flank. The missile exploded in the boiler room destroying the electric supply and releasing suffocating clouds of steam and ammonia. Many aboard died instantly. Some were trapped below deck.

When you listen to some of the eyewitnesses, and a few are still around, and I did at one function at the Chapel of Four Chaplains in Philadelphia, you become overcome with the kind of frightening nightmare that took place. Overcrowded lifeboats capsized. Rafts drifted away before anyone could reach them. Men clung to the rails, frozen with fear, unable to let go and plunge into the dark, churning waters. The testimony of the survivors really give you that grim feeling, and you can see how these young people, totally surprised, felt and what they saw and how they interpreted it.

The Four Chaplains gave away their only means of survival. When there were no more lifejackets to be handed out, they gave away their own lifejackets. That means that they gave up their only means of saving themselves. They linked their arms together, and the slam to the deck became severe. It was a heroic act. It wasn't the only heroic act aboard *Dorchester*. But it was especially significant because of the identity of these four young men — two Protestants, one Catholic, and a Jew.

Today, as it has in many years, the Chapel of Four Chaplains serves as memory of these brave men and carries their message of inner faith, cooperation, and selfless service to every part of the country, to recognize and encourage acts of brotherhood, sacrifice among Americans every age and station in life.

The chapel has established a Legion of Honor program, and that's what we're going to do. We're going to issue to some Legionnaires that you may possibly know, would know. The Bronze Medallion is the award that the Chapel gives in recognition of exceptional self-service an individual contributes to the well-being of others above and beyond what his duty station may call.

I have the following people that will be receiving the award. The Bronze Medallion will go to Daniel M. Dellinger, the national commander. The Humanitarian Award plaque will go to Paul E. Dillard, national vice commander of the Southern Region; Wayne Satrom, national vice commander, Midwest Region; Douglas W. Wooddell, national vice commander, Western Region; Robert Newman, national vice commander, Central Region; and William Rakestraw, national vice commander of the Northern Region.

The two people that I would like to also introduce to you that came from Philadelphia in order to help honor these folks, we have Retired Captain Louis Cavaliere at the back, we have Christine Beady, executive director of the Foundation, and we have me. And at this point, I would like to ask you for a hand of applause for the recipients as well as for the visitors. (*Applause*)

LOUIS CAVALIERE: Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Chapel of Four Chaplains in Philadelphia, all of our board of directors, our area directors, and our chaplains and associate chaplains throughout the country, we really appreciate this opportunity to be here.

I am impressed because this is my first American Legion convention. If you notice, I'm not wearing one of your hats. But that may change. I had a career in the Navy, and the thing that I like about The American Legion is that you bring all of the services together because we are one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

And that's what we do at the Chapel of Four Chaplains, we bring all faiths together because we are one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

This country needs to know that. There are a lot of things going on in the world today that involve war, oppression, human trafficking, you name it. You guys are out there to help heal all that. I appreciate the work that you do, and in recognition of that, we give out these awards which we are doing today.

The other impression that has been made upon me in the past several days is the number of four chaplain ceremonies that are held throughout the country at all of your posts. We appreciate that. We want to hear about that. We want to hear about all of those events. We are rejuvenating the chapel, and that is part of our program. We want to know what you guys are doing, and we want to be part of it.

I am so overwhelmed because everybody I meet tells me that their post does a Four Chaplains ceremony. So you can count upon two things in February, in early February. You can always count on, number one, the Super Bowl being that first Sunday, and, number two, on February 3 we are celebrating the memory of the Four Chaplains and what they have done to bring unity without uniformity and allows us to go throughout the country to look for people, ordinary people who are doing extraordinary things. I thank you, and I want to turn the podium over for just a minute to our executive director, Christine Beady. *(Applause)*

CHRISTINE BEADY: Good morning, everyone. I will be very brief. One, I just want to say thank you to each and every one of you who contribute to the success of the chapel. The American Legion is our largest donor base across the country. And I salute and congratulate all of you for that.

We are in Philadelphia. I welcome every single one of you to visit the chapel. It is an experience. The largest piece that we have there is we do have five bronze plaques that represent every individual who perished the night the *Dorchester* sunk. For all of their families, our building is their memorial, and we want to keep it open. So I welcome all of you to visit us. I look forward to meeting as many of you as I can while I'm here. Again, thank you, and congratulations to all the recipients today. *(Applause)*

*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; Foundation Board Chairman Louis Cavaliere, Foundation Executive Director Christine Beady; and DC Department Commander George Roundtree.*

*They are being awarded to National Commander Daniel M. Dellinger, National Vice Commander Bob Newman, National Vice Commander Wayne Satrom, National Vice Commander Douglas Wooddell, National Vice Commander Paul Dillard, and National Vice Commander Bill Rakestraw. (Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: And to let you know, I did give the captain an application. I even gave him a pen to fill it out with. So just ask. Thank you very much for that.

USAA was founded by veterans and 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 2010, Major General Jason Kamiya served in the U.S. Army in a variety of leadership and staff positions. He participated in three major combat campaigns, including one as the leader of a multinational joint task force in Afghanistan. He is a member of American Legion Post 345 in Texas. He now serves as senior vice president of financial foundations at USAA. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome General Jason Kamiya. *(Applause)*

**Address: MG Jason Kamiya, USA (Ret.)  
Senior Vice President, USAA**

Thank you. Good morning, Legionnaires! Hoah. That's what I'm talking about. I'm very honored to be here with you this morning. And, again, like our previous speakers, I'm wearing

two hats. Caps, I should say. The first cap, the one you see sitting proudly on my head, is as a fellow Legionnaire and a 33-year veteran of the United States Army. The other cap I wear is as a representative of my employer, USAA, The American Legion's preferred financial services provider for the last four years.

USAA and The American Legion share a common legacy of serving and supporting our servicemembers and veterans. And we have both been doing it for a long time — USAA for 92 years and The American Legion for 95. So perhaps it isn't surprising that so many connections exist between our two organizations.

This year is an important year for the Legion, not only because it marked the 70th anniversary of the GI Bill but also because it marked the journey towards your 100th anniversary milestone celebration in 2019. I understand that USAA chairman of the board, General Lester Lyles, will be serving on your 100th Anniversary Honorary Committee. The Legion and USAA have also been working together to promote the hiring of veterans and military spouses. This includes efforts like the Chamber's Hiring our Heroes campaign.

Last year our CEO, General Joe Robles, spoke to you about how the nation honors its veterans and how that reveals the fundamental character of a country. With 1.5 million veterans and servicemembers transitioning to civilian life in the next five years, our character is being tested right now. Transitioning veterans are taking off their uniforms with one question first and foremost on their mind: "What do I do now?" Their trepidation typically revolves around finding a new career. I personally experienced that uncertainty, as did my father, who, as a World War II wounded warrior, left the Army and asked himself the question: What do I do now?

A man of Japanese-American heritage, my father was raised in an immigrant community on a sugar plantation in Hawaii. He was a man of simple means and very little formal education. But he responded when the nation called during World War II and was wounded in combat. After being medically discharged, he worked as a busboy at a restaurant to save enough money for business school. But first he had to get in. Nervous, shy, and uncertain about the path he was to take, my father tells a story of him pacing up and down in front of the business school for three days with application in hand. And finally on the fourth day he summed up enough courage to submit his application. Well, he did get in, and after working hard and getting a business education, he blazed a 30-year career in real estate, underwriting, and in selling and servicing insurance and investments. But he later admitted that he could have used some help making this career transition, like hundreds of thousands of today's transitioning veterans.

The challenges of veterans and spouses are well documented. As civilians and employers, we have to ask ourselves a question that you may be familiar with: What are we going to do now? I'm happy to say that more and more employers around the country are committed to doing something to help veterans and military spouses. That's certainly the case at USAA. Our approach to veteran and spouse hiring can be summed up in three parts: First, hire them; second, connect them; and, third, develop them.

Step one, hire them. That's not as easy as it sounds. Fortunately, companies don't have to start from scratch. They can learn from the best practices of other companies that learn what works and what doesn't. Now there's a great resource for employers who are new to formal vet hiring efforts. Working together, USAA and the U.S. Chamber have created a brand-new best practices resource called the Employer Roadmap. Companies can go on [employeroadmap.org](http://employeroadmap.org) to learn how to launch formal vet hiring and military spouse programs. They will find, among other things, useful, helpful, step-by-step guidelines.

For example, at USAA we've found it useful to establish a specific hiring goal. Our goal is that 30 percent of all new USAA hires will be veterans or military spouses. And we've been meeting that goal since last year. In total, we've hired more than 8,700 veterans or spouses of veterans since 2006. Another best practice employers can adopt is to include their supplier network for even greater impact. Companies can give preference to suppliers that are either owned by veterans or military spouses or make veteran hiring a priority. Step one, hire them.

Step two, connect them. New hires, especially fresh out of the military, do better when they are connected with other veterans. Colleagues who understand where they are coming from and

can serve as a support network in the transition to the civilian workplace. Veterans who join USAA have ready access to mentors who have already made that civilian transition and can provide professional as well as personal advice. At USAA we have a community called VetNet where veterans can find mentors, connect socially to other veterans, and tap into professional development opportunities. Hire them. Connect them.

And, third, develop them. At USAA, we are doing more and more cohort training for veterans, bringing them in together for training classes where they can begin and grow together. Programs like Combat to Claims where veterans train to be insurance claims agents; and VetFIT, a new program that trains recently separated veterans, many without any prior IT experience, to become Java software developers and start promising, long-term careers in information technology.

And if you doubt the power of hiring, connecting, and developing, then consider the case of Joey Brand. Joey Brand is a 15-year Army veteran who served as an ammunition specialist, a psychological operations specialist, and as a supervisor of a microwave-based communications network. He also participated in operational deployments to Bosnia and Iraq. Joey didn't know a thing about computer programming, but when he was looking for a civilian job in Texas to be close to his four children, he read about the VetFIT program at USAA, a program that would pay him to learn to use Java in an intense 12-week training course followed by an intense 12-week internship that could turn into a full-time job and a promising career in IT. Even better, Joey would be in a class with 21 other veterans just like himself.

He applied, was accepted, and began his training last spring. Thankfully there was a support network to encourage and guide him. With the help of the support network, Joey finished his training, completed his paid internship, and became a full-time Java programmer at USAA last month. Joey says he's glad to be part of a company where his work has so much meaning because of the members, much like yourselves, who USAA serves.

Hire them. Connect them. Develop them. That's how you help a veteran and military spouse find not just a job but a fulfilling career. We are so pleased to have an ally like The American Legion, an organization that has helped hundreds of thousands of veterans in the past century find an answer to that question: What do I do now?

On behalf of the 27,000 employees at USAA, thank you, American Legion, for proving that this nation is ready and willing to take care of its veterans and military spouses, all who have sacrificed so much on our behalf. Thank you and best wishes. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: General, I would like to thank you for coming today. I would like to thank you for your continued support of our veterans. We have a strong partnership, and I only see it growing in the future.

I call on Past National Commander James Koutz of Indiana to present the plaque of appreciation to Past National Commander John Brieden who is representing President John Morris of The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Texas, for hosting the 2013 National Convention in Houston.

**Presentation: Plaque of Appreciation to the City of Houston  
Host City of the 2013 National Convention**

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you, Mr. Commander. On behalf of the 2013 National Convention in Houston, if you remember my opening five words at the opening session at that convention, was "Houston, we have a problem." Well, let me tell you, I think finally under the reins of National Commander Dellinger, we are under the right direction with the VA, and we want to thank him for his leadership in doing that this year. Thank you, commander. *(Applause)*

I think everybody that was at the 2013 National Convention in Houston would like to say thank you to the City of Houston and the Department of Texas for putting on a nice and great National Convention. The parade might have been a little bit warmer than this Sunday's parade,

if you remember. It was about 104. But it was a great parade, a great convention, and we want to thank them for the great job they did. We want to also remember John Morris and hope he gets over his illness. He couldn't be here. But I want to present this plaque on behalf of the national organization and all of you to Past National Commander John Brieden. (*Applause*)

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER BRIEDEN: Thank you, Commander Koutz. I am filling in for John Morris who is ill and not able to be here. He is the president of the Convention Corporation of Texas.

It was an honor for us and the Department of Texas and the citizens of Texas to be your host for the 95th Convention last year. The thing that was probably the most satisfying to me was I had people come to me during that convention and in the time since and even while we have been here and comment about the friendly hospitality of the people of the Department of Texas and the people of the City of Houston.

I'm talking about cab drivers, restaurant workers, hotel staff. They had one goal in mind, and that was to make sure you had a good convention and a good stay. And we appreciate very much and we hope you come back to Texas soon. Thank you. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: 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 2014 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year is a highly decorated detective sergeant with the Bensalem Township Police Department in Pennsylvania.

As a leader in the development and implementation of Bucks County's Crisis Intervention Training, he has coordinated instruction for over 200 officers. He has shown continued interest in mental health awareness and training, with a special interest in veterans. His nomination for the award was sponsored by American Legion Post 317 in Bensalem, Pennsylvania. Ladies and Gentlemen, please give a warm round of applause to Detective Sergeant Andrew Aninsman. (*Applause*)

*ANNOUNCER: This is to certify that The American Legion has bestowed the title of the National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year to Andrew D. Aninsman 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 Bensalem Township Police Department, and law enforcement officers everywhere.*

*Presented by The American Legion at the 2014 American Legion National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina. (Applause)*

**Presentation: 2014 National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year  
Andrew D. Aninsman  
Bensalem Township Police Department, Bensalem, Pennsylvania**

Ladies and gentlemen, I would first like to thank Post 317 for this nomination out of Yardley, Pennsylvania. It is an honor and a privilege to be nominated and accepted for an award to this exceptional level. I would also like to thank my family for the support that they've given me through the 26 years I've had in law enforcement. But most important, I can't stand up here and take credit for everything that everyone is trying to do to assist veterans. I am one speck in this grand goal to honor and respect our veterans of the United States of America.

It is my goal and my passion to do whatever I can to help a veteran who is returning from war or any other veteran in the United States to make sure that they get the most professional and courteous respect that I as a law enforcement officer can provide. Again, I am one speck in this grand scheme of things. As I walked around here yesterday with my family, people were coming up to me and congratulating me and saying "great job."

Although I am very humble for that, it is you that I shake your hand and I say thank you and I wish you congratulations on a great, successful convention. I commend you and I thank you for

the service that you provided us to allow us to be free in our great country. I will continue to do the best I can, and I will serve Bensalem Police Department to the best of my ability.

I would like to dedicate this award to my father who served in the Korean War as a staff sergeant in the Army. I would also like to dedicate this award to all the fallen law enforcement officers who have paid the ultimate sacrifice to make our life easier. I thank you all, and God bless you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Just as members of The American Legion answered our nation's call during time of war, America's firefighters and emergency medical technicians answer their community's call during time of extreme danger.

Our 2014 American Legion Firefighter of the Year is an eight-year veteran of the Prince George's County Fire/Emergency Medical Services Department in Maryland. During her tenure, she has received numerous awards, including individual certificates of achievement and a unit citation. She currently serves as a member of the Technical Rescue Team at Fire/EMS Station 806. She understands the human cost of war. On April 5, 2007, her cousin, Army Specialist Jason A. Shaffer, made the Supreme Sacrifice while serving with the 1st Cavalry Division in Iraq. Ladies and gentlemen, please extend a warm welcome to Firefighter/Medic Sara A. Shaffer. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: This is to certify that The American Legion has bestowed the title of The National Firefighter of the Year to Sara A. Shafer 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 Prince George's County Fire/Emergency Medical Services of Maryland and firefighters and emergency medical technicians everywhere.*

*Presented by The American Legion at the 2014 American Legion National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina.*

**Presentation: 2014 Firefighter of the Year**

**Sara A. Shaffer**

**Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department, Chesapeake Beach, Maryland**

Thank you, all, for this honor. I'm not going to lie. I'm a little nervous standing up here in front of everyone. To the Maryland delegation, especially Mr. Milligan and Post 115, they are the ones who sponsored me and started this ball rolling. I'm a little nervous so it's not showing how much of an honor this is, and I thank you all and I thank you all for your service and your continued service with The American Legion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: In an era of heightened partisanship, our next guest worked across the aisle with his counterpart in the House of Representatives, our other Patriot Award recipient, to agree on needed legislation to return accountability and improve access to the VA medical centers and clinics. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to present the 2014 American Legion Patriot Award to Senator Bernie Sanders. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: The American Legion Patriot Award is presented to Senator Bernie Sanders for your leadership as the chairman of the U.S. Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. Hailed as a "practical" and "successful legislator" by The Almanac of American Politics, your dedication to those who have borne the battle and their families is unquestionable.*

*When systemic problems plaguing the Veterans Health Administration were brought to your attention, you immediately ordered hearings and introduced legislation to improve the lives of patients and those trying to access care. While supportive of the temporary use of vouchers for veterans who live in remote areas or have waited too long to receive a VA medical appointment, you are a true champion of the need for a strong Veterans Affairs Health Care system and have*

*been a powerful critic of attempts to privatize the Department of Veterans Affairs and its essential services. Your commitment to bringing accountability, transparency and accessibility to VA is highly commendable.*

*On behalf of the 2.4 million members of The American Legion, thank you for your strong support of America's veterans. Presented this 27th day of August 2014 at the 96th National Convention. Signed: Daniel M. Dellinger, National Commander, and Daniel S. Wheeler, National Adjutant. (Applause)*

**Presentation: The American Legion Patriot Award  
The Honorable Bernie Sanders  
Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs**

Commander Dellinger, thank you very much for this wonderful award, which I will cherish. I want to thank Dan for his very hard work over the last year. I am very pleased to be joined by a number of delegates from the state of Vermont. Thank you all very much for being here. We're small, but we're strong, and we have a long and proud history of military service.

I'm also very proud to be here with all of you. I thank all of you for your service to our country. It is an honor to be here amongst so many of America's heroes. As the largest veterans service organization in the nation, The American Legion plays an enormously important role in a number of areas. Your staff and volunteers do an extraordinary job assisting veterans all across this nation, with disability claims, job searches and educational needs.

In Washington, The American Legion does outstanding work, does outstanding work with the Senate and the House Veterans Committee on legislation and in helping us understand the needs and the priorities facing millions of veterans. Further, in addition to all that you do for America's veterans and their families, I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge the work you do for our young people through your Girls and Boys State programs, your scholarship programs, and the various clubs and athletic programs you offer. At a time when too many kids throughout this country are hanging out on street corners with nothing to do, your efforts are much appreciated. I would much rather see the kids of this country playing basketball and baseball rather than doing drugs or getting into crime, and your efforts are making a big difference in that direction. Thank you. *(Applause)*

I have been chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee for only 18 months. But during that period, I have learned several very, very important lessons. First and foremost is that the cost of war — the cost of war — is much greater than most Americans perceive, and that the cost of war does not end when the last shots are fired or the last missiles are launched. *(Applause)*

Let us all be very, very clear. The cost of war continues until the last veteran, and that could be 70 or 80 years after his or her service. The cost of war continues until that veteran receives all of the care and all of the benefits that he or she has earned. *(Applause)*

I have a very simple message for those in Washington who claim that taking care of veterans is just too expensive: If you are not prepared to provide the health care and other benefits that veterans have earned, then don't send them to war in the first place. *(Applause)*

Taking care of veterans is a cost of war. Now, here is a very simple political truth: It is very easy for politicians to give great and heartfelt speeches praising veterans on Memorial Day, on Veterans Day, and on other occasions. And these are heartfelt, because one of the things we know in Congress is, whether you're progressive, conservative, Democrat or Republican, there is widespread support and admiration for those who have sacrificed so much.

But here is what is even more important than those speeches: And that is to make sure that when these men and women come home from war, they get all of the benefits they earned. We cannot turn our backs on veterans who are in need. *(Applause)*

We are all familiar with the enormous sacrifices made by the men and women and their families, those who fought in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, other conflicts. Let me just for a moment, just for a moment, touch upon the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and what those

wars have cost us in human terms. Almost 7,000 brave men and women lost their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan; 7,000, who never returned. And that is the deepest cost of war. But hear this: The cost of war is also some 500,000 men and women coming home from those wars with post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury. 500,000.

The cost of war is the many servicemembers coming home without legs, without arms, without eyesight, or hearing. The cost of war is a tragically high rate of suicide among the men and women who served in those wars. The cost of war are too many veterans coming back from the wars unable to find jobs and unable to get their feet back on the ground financially. The cost of war are high divorce rates and the impact that family stress has on the lives of the children. The cost of war is young widows having to rebuild their lives without the person they married and loved.

These are some of the true costs of war, costs which are felt by veterans and their families every single day, year after year after year. If we as a nation stand for anything, we cannot and must not turn our backs on those men and women who defended us and who sacrificed so much. *(Applause)*

Now, as many of you know and as you have just heard, Congress accomplished something significant a few months ago and something that does not happen very often these days, we passed legislation. An unusual occurrence. The House and the Senate voted in overwhelming bipartisan numbers to pass, and President Obama signed into law, the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014. This was, in fact, a true bipartisan effort, and I very much enjoyed working with Congressman Jeff Miller, Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, to make that happen.

Now, in my view, this important legislation begins — begins — in some significant ways to address major issues facing the veterans community and the VA. It is a good beginning. But, in my view, we still have a long way to go, and all of us have got to continue going forward to improve the VA. Now, before I get into some of the key provisions of this legislation, let me touch on a few other measures that the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee worked on successfully.

Over the last number of years, there has been a lot of discussion in Washington — and you've seen it on TV, in the newspapers, you've heard it coming from Wall Street, you've heard it coming from big corporate think tanks — about the need to enact so-called "entitlement reform." Entitlement reform.

Now, what everybody in this room should understand is that when people talk about entitlement reform, what they really mean in English is cutting Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. That is what they are really talking about. Now, the cuts to Social Security benefits were going to come in the form of a so-called chained CPI, which would have meant significant cuts in the COLAs that senior citizens receive, that people with disabilities receive, and, if you can believe it, that disabled veterans receive.

Moving to a chained CPI would have cut the benefits of more than 3.7 million disabled veterans. Veterans who started receiving the disability benefits at age 30 would have seen their benefits cut by over \$1,400 a year by the time they reached 45, and on their 65th birthday these benefits would have been cut by more than \$3,200.

Moving toward a so-called chained CPI would also have cut the benefits of more than 350,000 surviving spouses and children of those who have lost a loved one. These are the benefits that average about 15,000 a year. Now, that was the proposal. Whole lot of people in Washington, a whole lot of multimillionaires said it's a great idea, let's cut entitlement programs for the seniors, for the sick, and for veterans. But I am very happy to tell you that working with The American Legion, working with the other service organizations, working with senior groups all over this country, we said: No, you are not going to cut benefits for some of the most vulnerable people in this country. *(Applause)*

And because we stuck together, we won that. And now the discussion in Washington is not cutting Social Security but the need to expand those benefits. *(Applause)*



Further, as many of you know and some of you perhaps by personal experience, for a number of years, the VA used a "round down" when it sent out monthly checks to disabled vets. You all know what a "round down" is? It means if your check that you receive was \$399.99, you didn't get the 99 cents every month. And some of us said: No, we're not going to nickel and dime disabled vets. Those 99 cents add up. We got rid of that so-called round down. *(Applause)*

Now, let me take a moment to touch on some of the key provisions of the recently passed Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014, which is one of the more significant pieces of veterans legislation passed in recent history. The simple fact is that tragically too many veterans in too many facilities across this country were placed on waiting lines that were much, much too long. In some cases, those waiting lists were manipulated or were doctored so that the real length of time veterans waited for care was hidden. Needless to say, that type of activity is abhorrent and is in violation of everything that the VA is supposed to represent. In my view, those people engaged in these dishonest activities must be held accountable and must be punished. *(Applause)*

I'm happy to tell you that the law we just passed will go a long way to address these issues and to ensure veterans receive the timely and quality health care they have earned and deserve. In a time when millions of new veterans are coming in to the VA system, that is exactly what we should be doing. This war invests a significant sum of money, some \$10 billion, to make sure that we end those waiting lists. And the essence of the provision that deals with this says, very simply, if a veteran cannot get into a VA facility in a reasonable period of time, that veteran will get care at a private facility, at a community health center, at a Department of Defense base, an Indian health service facility. We will end once and for all these unacceptable wait periods for veterans. *(Applause)*

Further, this legislation addresses another issue which has been longstanding, and that is in many rural states we have veterans who live 100, 200 miles away from a VA facility and it is very difficult, especially when they're ill, to make the trip into the VA.

And what this legislation says is, under a three-year trial period, if a veteran lives more than 40 miles away from the nearest VA facility, that veteran also will be able to receive his or her health care through a private physician or a community health center or whatever. Point is, we don't want veterans to have to travel hundreds of miles to get the health care that they need. This law also addresses the very serious issue of accountability. When people at high levels screw up, when they are incompetent, when they are dishonest, the secretary of the VA should have the ability to fire those individuals. This legislation gives them the tools to do that. *(Applause)*

If our goal is to make certain that we have a strong and robust VA all over this country, then it is important that we get to the root cause of why in some cases we have had these outrageously long wait periods. And in my view, the simple truth is and the reason for many of these facilities not being able to accommodate veterans in a timely manner is that these facilities need more doctors, they need more nurses, they need more medical personnel. In certain facilities around the country, they simply need more space to accommodate the large numbers of new veterans who are coming in to the system.

This is especially true when so many of the new veterans are coming in with difficult medical issues like PTSD or TBI. And we have also an aging veterans population, people that also need a whole lot of care. Does the VA need better management? You bet it does. Does it need to be more efficient and more accountable? Absolutely. But at the end of the day, we are not going to have the kind of VA that we need if we do not have the doctors, the nurses, and the medical personnel available to give the high quality and timely care that our veterans deserve. And this legislation importantly moves us in that direction. *(Applause)*

We are putting \$5 billion into improving the capability of the VA in terms of doctors and nurses and medical personnel. This bill also provides a billion and a half dollars for the VA to enter into 27 major medical facility leases in 18 states and Puerto Rico. In many instances, these leases will improve access to care closer to home and will increase the availability of specialty care in these locations. Will all of this be enough to solve all of VA's problems? Frankly, I doubt it. But it is certainly a good step forward. Now, also included in this legislation are a number of

other provisions that the veterans community has asked us to do. Let me briefly touch on some of them.

Until this legislation was passed, we had a situation where the widows of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan could not take advantage of the Post-9/11 GI education bill. And that was wrong. These are women who want to rebuild their lives, get an education after the death of their husbands. This bill remedies that situation. Those women and spouses will be able to get an education, and that's the right thing to do. *(Applause)*

This legislation also addresses an issue that many of the younger vets felt strongly about, and that is that states around the country should be providing in-state tuition to all veterans who are taking advantage of the GI educational bill. This legislation finally addresses that issue. *(Applause)*

This bill also touches on a very painful issue. It is no secret to anybody that there is much, much too much sexual assault going on in the military. This bill provides ample funding for the VA to be able to provide quality care for all of those people, women and men, victims of sexual assault. *(Applause)*

The problems in the VA were not created overnight, and we know that they're not going to be solved overnight. Though significant, this compromised legislation cannot be relied upon to solve all of VA's problems. There is much left to do, and I have no doubt that The American Legion will continue to play a leadership role in addressing the problems facing the VA and the veterans community. However, in the midst of all of the attention recently given to the VA, there is one very important fact that we should never forget. And that is that the VA is the largest integrated health care system in the country. Today and tomorrow and on Friday we will be providing health care to some 230,000 veterans every single day in every state in this country. And the truth of the matter is that while the VA has its share of problems, as does every health care system in this country, the vast majority of veterans who walk in to a VA facility believe that the care that they are getting is good care, and that's something we should not forget. *(Applause)*

And what our job is, it seems to me, is to address the very real problems that the VA faces but not throw the baby out with the bath water. Our job is not to move to the privatization of the VA, it is to strengthen the VA. *(Applause)*

Our goal is that every man and woman who walks into a VA will get quality care and will get that care in a timely manner. The essential problem, in my view, that faces the VA right now is not a question of quality, which in most cases is good, it is a question of timeliness, and our job is to address that issue.

Now, let me just say a few words about some of the remaining issues that we have to deal with. I think this legislation has taken us a step forward, but there's a lot more that has to be done. Right now all over this country there are people, most often women, but not exclusively, who are taking care of disabled vets. And maybe that vet is 70 or 75, maybe he served in Vietnam, and for 50 years that wife 24/7 has been taking care of that veteran. A few years ago, Congress did the right thing and passed a caregivers act to take care and support those caregivers for the post-9/11 generation, for Iraq and Afghanistan. In my view, we should expand that program and give support to every caregiver of every generation in this country. *(Applause)*

Up to 22 veterans tragically every single day commit suicide. This is a national issue. It is a veterans issue, and we as a people have got to do everything that we can to expand mental health services so that veterans who are in trouble get the mental health care that they need. *(Applause)*

There is another issue I have felt very, very strongly about, and that is most physicians, most experts understand that dental care is part of health care in general. Today the VA provides dental care for service-connected problems. In my view, we've got to expand that and make dental care a part of VA health care. *(Applause)*

Let me just conclude by thanking The American Legion for this wonderful award that they are bestowing on me today. I cherish it, and I thank you very much for this. My hope and expectation is that The American Legion, the other service organizations, will continue to go forward together, to explain to the American people what the true cost of war is about, what the

real sacrifices made not only by the people who served but by their families are. When we do that, we will create a VA that every American and every veteran will be proud of, and we will make sure and be able to provide all of our veterans with all of the health care and the other benefits which they earned and they deserve. Thank you so much for all that you are doing. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Senator, I would like to thank you very much for your leadership and your support of veterans. Believe me, I think I can speak on behalf of the 2.4 million members of The American Legion that we will be with you every step of the way. Thank you. *(Applause)*

A former elected official in Hamilton County, Indiana, he has a B.A. degree in economics from Westminster College. As vice president and senior relationship manager for Fifth Third Bank's Greater Indiana Region, he manages more than 50 accounts and has a portfolio in excess of \$700 million. Please welcome Carl S. Mills. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: Carl S. Mills,  
Vice President and Senior Relationship Manager, Fifth Third Bank**

Good morning. On behalf of Fifth Third Bank, I am very pleased to enclose a check in the amount of \$10,000 to The American Legion as a contribution to the National Emergency Fund. *(Applause)*

This is our third installment of a five-year pledge to The American Legion in support of your many worthwhile endeavors on behalf of veterans and their families.

Fifth Third Bank values its relationship with the outstanding organization of The American Legion and looks forward to working with you on many projects in the years to come. And I personally just want to thank all of you for your sacrifice and your service to your country and to help my family and my grandchildren maintain a safe environment here in this country. God bless all of you. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: The Chair recognizes Kenneth E. Orrock of South Dakota, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs - Membership, for the purpose of making a report.

**Report: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs  
Larry J. Besson, Illinois, Chairman  
Sunday, August 24, 2014**

At 9:30 am, Sunday, August 24, 2014, 82 delegates assigned to the Convention Committees of Internal Affairs Other Matters and Membership met initially in the Tryon Room, Level Two, at the Westin Charlotte Hotel for the purpose of electing a permanent Chairman and Secretary for Internal Affairs. Larry Besson (IL) was elected Chairman and Larry Sheets (FL) was elected Secretary for the purpose of reporting to the Convention.

It was regularly moved, seconded and carried that the Committee Chairman and Secretary be authorized to accept and sign the report of the Convention Committee on Internal Affairs on behalf of its delegates.

It was moved and seconded that the Chairman, Internal Affairs Convention Committee be authorized to accept the actions of the two Committees assigned to Internal Affairs on the resolutions assigned to the respective committees.

It was also regularly moved, seconded and carried that the Chairman and Secretary may 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).

No further business was discussed at this point.

At this point, the delegates were dismissed into the two Committees assigned to the Internal Affairs Convention Committee — Membership and Other Internal Matters — for the purpose of reviewing and acting on the assigned resolutions.

The Convention Committees met and considered their assigned resolutions as follows:

### **Membership**

**Kenneth E. Orrock, South Dakota, Chairman**

At 9:45 am, Sunday, August 24, 2014, 42 delegates assigned to the Convention Committee on Membership met in the Independence Room, Level Two, at the Westin Charlotte Hotel. Kenneth E. Orrock (SD) was elected Chairman and Michael Strauss (SC) was appointed Secretary. The committee considered two resolutions and their dispositions are as follows:

### **Referred to the Standing Committee on Membership**

**Resolution No. 28 (MT): Release of Direct Membership Solicitation Members to Departments**

**Resolution No. 269 (CT): Membership Credit be Given to Departments for Transferring First and Second Year Direct Membership Solicitation Members into Local Posts**

### **Other Internal Matters**

**Larry J. Besson (IL), Chairman**

At 9:45 am, Sunday, August 24, 2014, 40 delegates assigned to the Convention Committee on Other Internal Matters met in the Tryon Room, Level Two, at the Westin Charlotte Hotel. Larry Besson (IL) was elected Chairman and Herbert Odell (TX) was elected Secretary. The committee considered seventeen resolutions and their dispositions are as follows:

**Resolution No. 1: Appreciation to Host City**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs**

WHEREAS, There has been a spirit of cooperation and friendship along with mutual helpfulness evidenced by the Legionnaires of North Carolina, the officers of the convention corporation and the department, and by the officials and the people of Charlotte, North Carolina; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That we express our deep appreciation to the Department of North Carolina, Governor of Charlotte Pat McCrory; Mayor Dan Clodfelter; the city of Charlotte, North Carolina, including the fire department, police department, and other public safety officials, and to The American Legion National Convention Corporation of North Carolina Inc., Jerry Hedrick, 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. 356: 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 U.S. Code**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs**

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-six 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 descendants 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, 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, There are some posts that are ceased recruiting new members into their Sons of the American Legion Squadrons out of concern of this 75% stipulation; and

WHEREAS, The size of the military is being reduced and the number of eligible veterans will be reduced in the out years, and therefore, the Sons of the American Legion will be counted on more heavily in some posts to continue the programs of the American Legion in the local communities; 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 equitable 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, and 28, 2014, That The American Legion seek an amendment to Section 501(c)(19) of Title 26 U.S. Code by the 114th 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. 192: Support and Defend Veteran and Military Memorials**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs**

**(As amended)**

WHEREAS, The American Legion has since its founding in 1919 dedicated itself to the defense of veterans and American values pursuant to its founding creed of “For God and Country” and the precepts of the Preamble of its Constitution; and

WHEREAS, One of the reasons The American Legion exists is “... To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars ...”; and

WHEREAS, Many communities across America, and the United States government itself, have established veterans monuments to honor the service and sacrifice of veterans, and The American Legion has traditionally assisted in the establishment, maintenance, care, or defense of those veterans monuments; and

WHEREAS, Many of those veterans monuments include symbols of America’s history and heritage, or expressions, in tribute to veterans, including without limitation at America’s National Cemeteries, and overseas at Normandy Beach and other cemeteries in theatres of war, and at such singular veterans monuments as the Mojave Desert WWI Veterans Memorial and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier; and

WHEREAS, Many of these veterans and military memorials have come under attack by secular extremists thru litigation under the Establishment of Religion Clause who believe that the public square must be stripped of all symbolism and speech which could in any way be construed as containing religious content to include the public display of the Ten Commandments and other symbols of America’s religious history and heritage; and

WHEREAS, The cross has been used by the military as a symbol of selfless sacrifice and service throughout our nation’s history, from the Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Army Cross, and Air Force Cross to the countless crosses placed as headstones for fallen Americans, including the unknown soldiers; and

WHEREAS, Americans overwhelmingly support veterans and military memorials and do not want them torn down or removed; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of memorials is not solely to remember the sacrifices of those who have gone before, but to give strength and encouragement to future generations; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support and defend, by appropriate means, including lawsuits and legislation, veteran and military memorials bearing symbols and/or words which may be alleged to be historically associated with religious expression, including, but not limited to, crosses, stars of David, crescents, and the word “God”; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports such veterans’ monuments, whether they be located on private land or land owned by federal, state or local governments.**

**Resolution No. 208: POW/MIA Forever Stamp**

**Origin: Wisconsin**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs**

**(As amended)**

WHEREAS, The plight of America’s POW/MIAs and the suffering of their families, while honored in words, are for the most part ignored; and

WHEREAS, The National POW/MIA Day of Remembrance and its meaning and history is recognized by few; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Postal Service regularly issues stamps to highlight public issues and concerns; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long been concerned about POW/MIAs and adopted Resolution 288 at the 67th National Convention which calls for the designation of a POW/MIA empty chair at all official meetings of The American Legion as a physical symbol of the thousands of American POW/MIAs still unaccounted for from all wars and conflicts involving the United States of America; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion petition Congress to authorize a forever (perpetual) POW/MIA stamp to honor the sacrifices of the brave men and women of the armed forces who are still prisoner, missing, or unaccounted for while serving in any conflict – past, present or in the future.**

**Referred to the Standing Commission on Internal Affairs**

**Resolution No. 38 (NE): Increase National Emergency Fund Relief Amounts**

**Resolution No. 100 (TX): Revise Cost of Paid-Up-For-Life Membership**

**Resolution No. 111 (MN): Recognize Members of National Guard and Reserve at National Convention**

**Received and Recorded**

**Resolution No. 14 (SD): Endorsement of Byron Callies for National Vice Commander**

**Resolution No. 71 (NC): Endorsement of James W. 'Bill' Oxford for National Commander**

**Resolution No. 110 (MN): Endorsement of Dennis J. Henkemeyer for National Vice Commander of the Sons of The American Legion**

**Resolution No. 122 (MO): Redesignate the Liberty Memorial in Kansas City, Missouri as the National World War I Memorial and Museum**

**Resolution No. 211 (VA): Endorsement of Brett P. Reistad for National Commander**

**Rejected**

**Resolution No. 29 (MT): Balanced Federal Budget**

**Resolution No. 74 (CA): Rescind New National Convention Resolutions Policies**

**Resolution No. 108 (MN): Congressional Change in Eligibility Dates for Membership in The American Legion**

**Resolution No. 120 (MO): Organization for Male Spouses of Female Legionnaires**

**Resolution No. 266 (AZ): Additional Names to be Added to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial**

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 and thank you for allowing me to serve.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: We have a motion on the floor. Is there a second? ... *Second.* Any discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor of the motion signify by saying aye. Opposed? Report is adopted. Thank you, gentlemen.

Our next award recipient serves as chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. He is also a strong supporter of the Defense Department and the Global War on Terrorism. He was the chief architect, along with Senator Bernie Sanders, of the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to present the 2014

American Legion Patriot Award to Representative Jeff Miller. Please give him a big hand. (Applause)

*ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion Patriot Award presented to Representative Jeff Miller for your leadership and bipartisanship as the chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Veterans' Affairs Committee. Your commitment to a strong national defense and your support for a constitutional amendment to protect the U.S. flag from desecration have earned you the appreciation and respect of many military veterans and their families. By calling for greater accountability, transparency, and accessibility throughout the Veterans Health Administration during a time that VA faces unprecedented challenges, you are providing needed oversight and attention to make it a system truly worth saving.*

*As a senior member of the House Armed Services Committee, you have proven to be a strong advocate for the men and women in uniform and have developed a well-earned reputation as a leading proponent of Naval Aviation and Special Operations. Guided by a peace-through-strength philosophy, you always remembered that caring for veterans is a cost of war. On behalf of the 2.4 million members of The American Legion, thank you for your strong support of America's veterans. Presented this 27th day of August 2014 at the 96th National Convention. Signed: Daniel M. Dellinger, National Commander and Daniel S. Wheeler, National Adjutant. (Applause)*

**Presentation: The American Legion Patriot Award  
The Honorable Jeff Miller  
Chairman, U.S. House Committee on Veterans' Affairs**

Commander, thank you very much. I appreciate the kind words and the recognition that you've bestowed upon me here this morning. It is a pleasure to be with you. It is a pleasure to see my friends from Florida who are in the audience. (Cheers)

As chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, it is our responsibility on the House side of the building to provide oversight to the Department of Veterans Affairs. To say the least, the department has not been as cooperative as they should have been. But I will tell you this: In conversations with the new secretary, I believe that the curtain has now been pulled back. Transparency will be a cornerstone and accountability will be critical to saving the system that serves so many of you today either through benefits or through health care.

You know, despite the trouble that we have seen over the recent months and years, doing what we do in the House and in the Senate is the easy part because we get an opportunity to serve you. You did the hard part. We get the easy part. Interestingly enough, you ask for very little, if anything, just provide us what we have earned by wearing the uniform of this country. I take pride in doing what I do every day, and, again, you, each of you, did the hard work.

I can stand up here today and talk about all the negative things that are going on at the department, and I plan for highlighting a few of those things, but let me tell you this: The vast majority of people that go to the work at the Department of Veterans Affairs go to work every day to do the right thing for the right people. But because a few people decided to take upon themselves making secret lists, hiding wait times for their own personal benefit, we now know veterans in fact did die because they were on waiting lists. We know veterans were harmed because they were on waiting lists. I will tell you today: That should never, ever happen again. (Applause)

I will tell you this also: Your organization, along with your commander, played a leading role in helping us to expose the problem that exists within the department. You leaned forward at a time when people did not want to step out, make comments, make recommendations. But that's exactly what needed to happen in order to bring the problem to the forefront. At the Department of Veterans Affairs, it has been easier for individuals that have caused harm to veterans to get bonuses and promotions than it has to get disciplined.



Now, unfortunately, we had to pass a law, a law that Senator Sanders and our conference committee and our committees worked on, but a law that says it's okay to fire people for not doing their job. It is okay to fire people for keeping veterans on waiting lists for your own personal gain. The only thing that will change the way the department has been doing business over the recent years is transparency and accountability.

At our request, we have worked with the secretary, who I believe is an honorable man, a man who wants to do the right thing because he has walked in the same boots that you have walked in. He understands what it means to be a veteran of this country, but he also understands from being in business on the outside for 33 years that business as usual will no longer be the watchword. People have to be held accountable, and there has to be transparency at the Department of Veterans Affairs. *(Applause)*

What we have found over the past months since I have been chairman, the 112th and 113th Congress, is a lack of desire to work with the legislative branch. At every turn we have been blocked in our attempt to get information. At every turn, we have been told that things are okay, that incidents are isolated, just as they told us about what was going on in Phoenix. And the bad thing about Phoenix is the very people who are at the very root of what has been going on are still on the payroll at the Department of Veterans Affairs. But I know that the secretary is committed to making sure that those people that are responsible for past wrongs and future wrongs will be held accountable.

But this cannot be solved by legislation alone. You cannot legislate ethics and you cannot legislate good conduct. That has to be instilled into the workforce at the Department of Veterans Affairs, and I know that Secretary McDonald is committed to do that. So our legislation talked about accountability. It talked about transparency. And it is also going to open a conversation, a conversation that everybody should be involved in — the media, the Congress, the veterans service organizations, and certainly the department employees that are out there working every day, over 330,000 of them, need to be a part of making this system better, better because you deserve nothing but the best because you earned the very benefits that in some instances you have to beg for.

So in this conversation, we are going to have a bottom-to-top and top-to-bottom review, and before your next convention, there will be a total review certainly of the way health care is delivered to you and those who qualify for the benefits at the Department of Veterans Affairs. No more waiting times. You should be able to choose where you go to get your health care, and you should choose when you go, not just follow the direction of VA that tells you we can see you in four or five months from now and you have to drive four hours in order to receive that care.

I know that that is something that each and every one of you has wanted for a long time. So what we have done in our legislation that the president signed on the 7th of August is to give you, the veteran, the choice, the choice of staying in a system that in some ways does great health care work — and we all know that — polytrauma, post-traumatic stress, prosthetics, traumatic brain injuries, things that nobody can do anything like the Department of Veterans Affairs. But for things like flu shots, for things like the common cold, for things like allergies, you shouldn't have to go to the VA if you should choose to go somewhere different. So for the next three years, a pilot program will allow you to choose where you go and when you go to see that health care provider.

So we will look over the next nine or ten months as to whether or not physicians at the Department of Veterans Affairs are seeing an adequate number of patients. There are those that say we don't have enough doctors. I'm here to tell you the doctors that we have aren't seeing enough patients. They will tell you that we don't have enough infrastructure. I will tell you that the infrastructure that we have is closed during the hours that you would want to use it the most. So we have to change the way VA has been delivering its benefits, changing the way it delivers health care into the 21st century, no longer doing it the way VA did it 50 years ago.

So I'm here to tell you that I renew my commitment to work with the leadership of the Department of Veterans Affairs, hand in hand, with you, trying to resolve the problems and trying to make the things that they do best better. Over the coming years, with accountability,

transparency, and an open-and-honest dialogue, I believe that the Department of Veterans Affairs will continue to serve you in a way that you would want to be served: honorably, in a timely fashion, and with health care second to none.

Commander, thank you so much for the award this morning. It is a pleasure to be here with you. I knew that I was in the right place when I came up and the driver turned into the NASCAR Hall of Fame. I knew that I was home, but certainly inside this hall this morning, I do know that I am home. Thank you to The American Legion for what you do. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Congressman Miller, on behalf of the 2.4 million members of The American Legion, let me tell you, we will be there to assist you with whatever you need to ensure that our veterans get the best health care in a timely manner. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

### **Presentation: Department Membership Awards**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: It is now time for the membership awards. The departments and individuals who will be joining me are being recognized on stage today for their outstanding membership efforts in 2014.

Resolution 64 was passed in the Fall of 2012 implementing our Strategic Plan for Sustained Membership Growth. It is important for us to continue this plan to reverse our current trend of declining membership and promote and embrace a culture of growth throughout the Legion. 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, and every Legionnaire plays a vital role in this effort.

Membership gives The American Legion strength because, as we all know, there is strength in numbers. We know this is true. Look at what happened when we made our voices heard regarding the recent VA scandals and the government shutdown. When the Legion speaks, people listen. Think for a moment how much influential we can be with continued membership growth.

Building relationships with the active duty, Reserve military components and the National Guard is an ongoing effort. Through our Reconnect visits and programs such as Operation Comfort Warriors, the Family Support Network, Soldier's Wish, Temporary Financial Assistance, The American Legion Riders, and many others, we 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. Last year, close to 800 posts received support through these revitalizations, and you can clearly see why The American Legion's growth potential is unlimited. It is also important for us to reach out on campuses in coordination with Student Veterans of America.

Today we would like to recognize a few departments and individuals for their outstanding efforts in membership. I now ask that National Vice Commander Bob Newman to assume duties at the podium and the national vice commander assigned to each department, from their regions, join me as we congratulate these hardworking Legionnaires. ... *At this time National Vice Commander Newman assumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER NEWMAN: Our first presentation will be the Eagle Award. National Commander Dellinger has placed a huge emphasis on membership growth. This year this special incentive award developed by Commander Dellinger is given to the departments in each category with the highest membership percentage increase from the October's 55 percent target date to the May 100 percent target date.

Please join me in congratulating the departments: Category 1 - Florida with 37.18 percent; Category 2 - Texas with 34.18 percent; Category 3 - Arizona with 37.77 percent; Category 4 - Washington with 34.98 percent; Category 5 - New Mexico with 40.14 percent; Category 6 - Alaska with 40.81 percent. *(Applause)*

We have handed out six Eagles, and there is still one Eagle left. That Eagle goes to the national vice commander whose region had the highest percentage increase during the same October to May timeframe. This region finished with 34.43 percent increase and also has four departments at or above 100 percent of their goal as well! Will national vice commander of the Western Region, Douglas Wooddell, Colorado, please make your way to the stage. Congratulations, Doug, and other Eagle Award winners. Thank you for all of your hard work and dedication. *(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 this year's award winner and 2nd place was 64 hundredths of a percent in one category. Please join me in welcoming these district commanders to the stage:

Category 1, District 1: Johnny Camacho, Department of Colorado.

Category 2, District 7: Michael Hughes, Department of California.

Category 3, District 3: Dean Casey, Department of Colorado.

Category 5, District 6: T.C. Biddle, Department of Florida. *(Applause)*

These district commanders are being presented a new Legion cap, a polo shirt and a shadowbox. We sincerely appreciate your hard work and dedication. Thank you.

Eight departments have exceeded their membership goal for the 2013-2014 membership year. A plaque is being presented to the following department commanders: Colorado - Carol S. Kennedy; France - James M. Settle; Mexico - Ronald Gregory Abbe; Philippines - Gordon G. Grubb, Jr.; Puerto Rico - Angel O. Narvaez; South Dakota - Richard J. MacDonald; Montana - Richard A. Ellwein; Wyoming - Doug Uhrig. *(Applause)* ... *At this time National Commander Dellinger resumed the Chair.*

### **Presentation: National Recruiter of the Year**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Now, this leads me to our most prestigious membership award. This year's National Recruiter of the Year recruited 480 new members into The American Legion! This is his first time earning the title of National Recruiter of the Year, and I am sure this will not be the last. Please join me in congratulating Robert J. Ouellette, Sr., Department of Maryland. *(Applause)*

With Robert is his wife, Kathy.

... *At this time National Vice Commander Rakestraw assumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER RAKESTRAW: Commander Dellinger is presenting a new Legion cap, a shadowbox plaque, a polo shirt, and a ring signifying that Robert has earned the title of National Recruiter of the Year for the 2014 Membership Year. Robert, will you make it two years in a row? Or is there someone in the audience up to the challenge of being in his spot next year? Remember, all you have to do is just ask, and they will join.

DELEGATE OUELLETTE (MD): Mr. Commander, distinguished guests, the Maryland delegation, delegates and Legionnaires watching in the bowels of the Pentagon, greetings. I'm honored to be your 2014 Membership Recruiter of the Year. Every Legionnaire here and out there has the ability to recruit members by using a few words. When you meet a veteran, just ask: What post do you belong to? And when they say none, you ask them to join. I look forward to seeing you in Maryland in the summer of 2015. Remember, always be yourself. If you can't be yourself, be a Legionnaire, and then always be a Legionnaire. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER RAKESTRAW: Congratulations, Robert. We hope that you continue to recruit more members into our great organization.

... *At this time National Commander Dellinger resumed the Chair.*

**Presentation: Consolidated Post Reporting 2013-2014**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: The Consolidated Post Report is a summary of what American Legion posts have accomplished in their communities. It's an opportunity to tell the story of your post in an easy-to-fill-out form either on hardcopy or online.

When I testified before Congress last fall, I used the data from this report as part of my testimony. But as you heard me explain during the year, last year there was only 57 percent. And I asked everyone to take it upon themselves to increase that number. For 2013, it's now 67 percent, or 8,995 posts out of the 13,475. As you can see, we still 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 out to the departments who met the challenge of a 75 percent response rate this year. Those departments were Alaska, California, Kentucky, Ohio, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming. They deserve a round of applause. Give them a big hand. *(Applause)*

Now, I have asked the departments that exceeded the challenge and had a response rate of 95 percent or higher to join me on stage today for special recognition. At this time, we will present their plaques to the department commander.

*... At this time, National Vice Commander Satrom assumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SATROM: Judith Beischel - Department of Arizona; Arthur Schwabe - Department of Florida; Gary Vogt - Department of Maryland; Lynne Rollins - Department of Georgia; Thomas Goodin - Department of Missouri; Richard Ellwein - Department of Montana; David Bruckner - Department of Nebraska; Maurice Anderson - Department of New Hampshire; Eugene Kachena - Department of North Dakota; Michael Morris - Department of Oregon; Linden Dixon, Jr. - Department of Virginia; Kenneth Rynes, Jr. - Department of Wisconsin. *(Applause)*

*... At this time National Commander Dellinger resumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: All right. Back to business. Before we announce the NEF award winners, I ask that those who plan to present NEF donations please gather in the backstage area. And I'd like to give you an update now on the Legacy Fund. So far this year we have raised \$906,190.88. *(Applause)*

The breakdown, from the Run itself, for five days, we collected \$435,524. And from the floor we collected \$470,666. I want to thank you very much for all your hard work. If anybody has any spare change in their pocket, we'd like to make a million.

I now call on Past National Commander Rehbein for the purpose of a presentation.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Thank you, Mr. Commander. For those of you that went through the exhibit hall during the time that they were opened, you saw in the 100th Anniversary booth a customized version of the centennial pistol. That pistol was donated by Mark Smith of A&A Engraving who has done work for many of us out in the departments with rifles and other weapons over the years. The proceeds from that raffle are being donated to the National Emergency Fund. So we will lead those presentations today.

The total amount from that raffle and other donations, because it was not just all raffle tickets, \$2,345.57. We have the raffle tickets up here in a tumbler, and we're going to ask Commander Dellinger to please draw the winning ticket. That ticket jumped out and stuck to his finger. As is normally the case with a weapon, this will have to be delivered through a federal firearms licensed dealer. So we will make arrangements to that. The winning name, and I will do my best, from Avon, New York, Paul Tagliaferri. Thank you to everyone that bought a ticket or that made a donation. The National Emergency Fund is \$2,300 richer because of you.

**Presentation: National Emergency Fund Awards**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: The National Emergency Fund is perhaps one of the most visible ways we can demonstrate our devotion to mutual helpfulness to our fellow

Legionnaires. But I don't know how many times I've heard long-time Legionnaires mention that they just heard about the National Emergency Fund.

When I was elected your national commander, I took the National Emergency Fund as my project and challenged every department to raise 50 cents per member with the final goal being \$1 million for the National Emergency Fund. I knew it was a lofty goal, but I also knew that Legionnaires are generous and never hesitate to help a fellow comrade in need.

This year's disaster season was not as intense as prior years, but still we saw tornados cut swaths through Tupelo, Mississippi and Midwest cities like Pilger, Nebraska. Flooding also struck legion family members in Idaho and Greeley, Colorado. During every disaster, because of the helping nature of The American Legion family, we stepped up and assisted when needed. The question has always been—not if a natural disaster will hit, but when and where.

During this challenge year, we distributed \$57,450 to 45 American Legion family members and six American Legion posts for the disasters experienced. We also raised \$468,595 and currently have \$3,356,481 available for those in need. Because of your generous donations since the NEF's creation in 1989, we have been able to provide more than \$8 million to those family members who were displaced.

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. It is great to know that when a Legion member needs help, the Legion family will step up and give without reservations. 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 and exceeded my NEF challenge of 50 cents per member before August 1 in their respective membership size categories will be presented a plaque. We have 13 departments being recognized today for exceeding my challenge by August 1. At this time, we will present their plaques.

... *At this time, National Vice Commander Dillard assumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER DILLARD: There were five departments that met the NEF challenge and achieved the highest percentage within their membership category. They are: Category 2 - Department of Illinois; Category 3 - Department of Maryland; Category 4 - Department of Nebraska; Category 5 - Department of New Mexico; Category 6 - Department of Nevada.

Eight departments are receiving a plaque for meeting their per capita challenge of 100 percent, and they are: Department of Alaska, Department of Connecticut, Department of Delaware, Department of District of Columbia, Department of Georgia, Department of Louisiana, Department of Mississippi, Department of Montana.

Congratulations. Thank you for your hard work and ensuring Legion family members in local communities know where to turn during a natural disaster. (*Applause*)

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 is used for this purpose. We take care of our own when they need help.

... *At this time National Commander Dellinger resumed the Chair.*

### **Presentation: National Emergency Fund Post Excellence Awards**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Before we move on from the NEF Awards, there is one more category to present. The National Emergency Fund Post Excellence Award recognizes those posts that, when a natural disaster strikes their community, went above and beyond to provide assistance to their 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, one American Legion post will be receiving this recognition. ... *At this time, National Vice Commander Wooddell assumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER WOODDELL: There is one post that is being recognized for its work in its community after a natural disaster struck. It is: Victor Candlin American Legion Post 18 from Greeley, Colorado. *(Applause)*

Receiving an honorable mention are American Legion Arlington Post 76 and American Legion Lake Stevens Memorial Post 181, both in Department of Washington. I know that 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 your presentations now.

### **Donations to the National Emergency Fund**

DELEGATE GOVERNOR (NY): Mr. Commander, at the beginning of your term, you asked if the Department of New York could raise \$61,500 for the National Emergency Fund. To date the Department of New York has contributed almost \$27,000.

And through the unselfish generosity of thousands of New York Legionnaires, American Legion family members, we're pleased to present an additional check in the amount of \$66,000, bringing New York's total contribution to the NEF this year to \$92,931. Thank you, New York.

DELEGATE BOLAND (FL): The great state of Florida, home of the snowbird, donates \$5,000 to the National Commander's National Emergency Fund.

DELEGATE WEST (TX): Bill West from the great state of Texas for the second district present a check in the amount of \$294.

DELEGATE ROGERS (TX): Fred Rogers, vice commander for the great state of Texas. Sunday night at the Texas party we decided to have a little fun. Someone ripped a boot off of somebody else and we passed it; unfortunately, there wasn't enough there to turn in. Department Adjutant West and myself announced that we would submit ourselves to severe humiliation and sing for the group unless they raised the right amount of money. The boot began to get filled. Still wasn't enough money. Three members of the delegation stood up and demanded that the adjutant sing and offered another \$150 if he would, and he did. We're proud to submit a check today for an additional \$844 from the Department of Texas.

DELEGATE KILE (WV): Commander, on behalf of the Southern caucus, the grits gathering, and in honor of Jerry Hedrick, chairman, I present you a check for \$8,000 for the NEF fund.

DELEGATE HICKMAN (OH): Commander, Glenn Hickman from the Department of Ohio with our delegation chairman, Jeff Kaufman. Proud to present to your National Emergency Fund a check for \$50,000.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DEMAREST (IA): Commander, Jim Demarest, delegation chairman from the Department of Iowa. I have our NECman Bruce Feuerbach and our ANECman Jerry Sebben. The Department of Iowa has a \$5,000 check for the NEF. And the NEF was part of my project this year. I have another check for \$916.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DIXON (VA): Commander, Linden Dixon, delegation chairman, Department of Virginia. Also with me, Department Commander Gerald Rhoads; NECman Tom Saunders; Department Adjutant Dale Chapman. We have an additional \$16,156.28 for the NEF fund.

DELEGATE GROSSET: Commander, I'm Jim Grosset, President of FODPAL, along with Past President Jim Pisa. We have a check for \$250.

DELEGATE LEE (NC): Commander, Ben Lee, North Carolina. We have a check for \$225 for the NEF in memory of Jerry Hedrick from the ladies of the Auxiliary of North Carolina. More to follow.

DELEGATE HARRIS (NC): Commander, the Department of North Carolina Legion Riders have a check for \$10,000 for the Legacy Fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NJ): Commander, on behalf of the Department of New Jersey, I have a check for you for the NEF in the amount of \$3,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (PA): Commander, on behalf of the great Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, we have a check to present to you for the NEF for \$40,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (CO): Commander, on behalf of the state of Colorado, from a wager in membership, we have \$50 that was graciously donated by Wyoming.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ID): Commander, on behalf of the Department of Idaho, we have three checks here for a total of \$3,335.63 to the NEF fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IN): Commander, on behalf of Boonville American Legion post in Boonville, Indiana, we have two checks for a total of \$1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MN): Commander, from the Department of Minnesota, we have a check here for \$2,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AZ): Commander, on behalf of John Ivens Post 42, Grand Canyon, Arizona, a check, \$1,000, NEF.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ME): Commander, on behalf of the members of the great Department of Maine, I have a check for \$1,783.

DELEGATE ANDERSON (NH): Commander, Maurice Anderson from the Department of New Hampshire. We have a check for \$1,000 for your NEF contribution.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MO): Commander, the Department of Missouri, the great state of home of Harry S. Truman and Past National Commander Joe Frank, I have a check for you for \$8,686.55. And our adjutant went to the bathroom without permission, so I got another dollar for you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MO): Commander, additionally on behalf of the Department of Missouri Past Post Commanders Club, I have a check in the amount of \$3,485.

DELEGATE JURGENS (SD): Commander, on behalf of the great state of South Dakota, birthplace of American Legion baseball, Tim Jurgens, Department Commander, along with NEC Paul Evenson. The Department of South Dakota is happy to present \$1,114.

DELEGATE CHISHOLM (MA): Commander, Bill Chisholm, past department commander, Department of Massachusetts, and with me is my current department commander, Charlie Towers. I'd like to present two checks: One from the department for \$5,000; and one, since it was my charity this year, I collected \$4,250. Thank you.

DELEGATE GRAY (VT): Commander, Richard Gray, Department Commander for the Green Mountain State of Vermont. Our NEF check is for \$5,205.

DELEGATE BEISCHEL (AZ): Judi Beischel from the great state of Arizona, and I have another check from my department for \$3,442 for the NEF. And from my Post 58 in Fountain Hills, Arizona, the Sons of The Legion donated 500; my post donated 500; and my Legion Riders donated 1,000. So even though our state didn't make 100 percent, my post made 800 percent. And one of our members passed away this year and asked that we would give their memorial donations of \$1,070 to Operation Comfort Warriors. Thank you.

DELEGATE UHRIG (WY): Commander, Doug Uhrig, Department of Wyoming. Tom Dean, our first vice, and Deanna Hurless, our Post 14 commander. We have an additional \$1,412 for NEF. Thank you.

DELEGATE KACHENA (ND): Eugene Kachena, past department commander from the state of North Dakota. Joining me is our Donald Weible, our current commander. Proud to announce that we did meet, after we present this check, our goal as we present a check of \$8,100.

DELEGATE LANDRUM (KY): Mr. Commander, George Landrum and Dave King, executive members from the Man O War Post 8, Lexington, Kentucky, proud to present you \$1,000 for the National Emergency Fund.

DELEGATE MILLER (FR): Commander, John Miller from the Department of France. I have a check from an individual at Paris Post 1 for \$702 for the National Emergency Fund.

DELEGATE MORRIS (OR): Commander, my name is Mike Morris from the Department of Oregon. I'm accompanied by Alternate National Executive Committeeman Rob Liebenow. The state of Oregon is proud to present a check for \$2,600, bringing our total to \$5,082.13. Thank you.

DELEGATE ROLLINS (GA): I'm Lynne Rollins, immediate past department commander from Georgia, and with me is our amazing NEF chairman, Eddie Asberry.

DELEGATE ASBERRY (GA): The grand state of Georgia would like to donate in the name of Past Alternate NEC Willie Pitts, Jr., \$18,133.

DELEGATE MURRAY (CT): Commander, Bob Murray from the Department of Connecticut. We have an additional check with us today, bringing our total donations for the NEF to \$15,854.

*... At this time National Commander Dellinger resumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: The Chair recognizes Denise H. Rohan of Wisconsin, chairwoman of the National Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education, for the purpose of a report.

**Report: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education  
Denise H. Rohan, Wisconsin, Chairman**

Seventy-nine (79) members of your Committees on Employment and Veterans Preference and on Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness met at 9:00am on August 24, 2014, in the Westin Charlotte, Grand Ballroom, Section A, Level Two, Charlotte, North Carolina, 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 Veterans Employment & Education Commission, acted as temporary secretary and called the roll. A quorum being present, nominations were received for chairman. Denise Rohan (WI), Chairman of the Standing National Veterans Employment & Education Commission, was unanimously elected Chairman of the Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education.

With unanimous consent, the Chairman elected James Fratolillo (MA), as Committee Secretary; James Fratolillo (MA), Chairman of the Employment and Veterans Preference Committee and Dennis Tipsword (IL), Secretary; John Sampson (NY), Chairman of the Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness Committee, and Robert Batty (WI), Secretary.

A Screening Committee on Veterans Employment & Education Resolutions, in a pre-convention 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 Denise Rohan, (WI), Chairman of the Veterans Employment & Education Commission and was composed of the following persons:

James Fratolillo (MA)  
Dennis Tipsword (IL)  
John B. Sampson (NY)  
Eric Measles (CA)

The 70 Veterans Employment & Education 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..... 67  
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved..... 1  
Referred to the Standing Commission ..... 0



Received and Recorded ..... 1  
Rejected ..... 1

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 70 resolutions referred to the Standing Veterans Employment & Education Commission will be made to the National Executive Committee and to the Adjutant of the Department concerned.

**Employment & Veterans Preference  
James Fratolillo, Massachusetts, Chairman**

**Approved**

**Resolution No. 101: Oppose the Department of Labor's Restructuring of Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist and Local Veterans' Employment Representative Roles**

**Origin: Texas**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, Congress has long recognized that America has a special obligation to help veterans find employment, and that "veterans bring a unique combination of skill, discipline, character, and talent to the marketplace," and accordingly, Congress has created special resources for veterans; and

WHEREAS, In April 2014, the Department of Labor issued a directive that deprives many veterans of valuable job-search and worker training assistance that Congress intended by the enactment of Title 38 Ch. 4103 and 4104; and

WHEREAS, The original GI Bill of 1944 created a system of grants for states to hire Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs), "persons who would become expert in the placement of veterans needing jobs," and from the start, LVERs reached out to "employers with jobs suitable for. . . veterans" and "assisted veterans looking for work"; and

WHEREAS, In 1977, in response to the high unemployment rate among Vietnam veterans, especially disabled veterans, the Department of Labor created the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist, which provided special employment services for disabled veterans, and in 1980, Congress made the program permanent; and

WHEREAS, From the start, DVOPs were instructed to provide services to any veteran, "with the following priority in the provision of services: (1) special disabled veterans, (2) other disabled veterans, and (3) other eligible veterans in accordance with priorities determined by the Secretary"; and

WHEREAS, On April 10, 2014, the Department of Labor issued a guidance letter that limited what functions LVERs could perform and whom DVOPs could assist, contrary to decades of practice and the text of the statutes Congress passed; the result is that some veterans will no longer be allowed to see a veteran specialist for assistance; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion seek legislation that will preserve the integrity, intent and purpose of Title 38, Chapters 41, 42, and 43 by prohibiting the Department of Labor efforts in implementing Training and Guidance Letter 19-13 or other directives that restricts or forbids services to veterans by Local Veterans' Employment Representatives or Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists.**

**Resolution No. 102: Support the Increased Funding of Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist and Local Veterans' Employment Representative Programs**

**Origin: Texas**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**(As Amended; Consolidated with Resolution No. 328 (Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education))**

WHEREAS, Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists as defined in 38 U.S.C. 4103A (a); Contain the requirements for employment by States of a sufficient number of specialists; and

WHEREAS, Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) as defined in 38 U.S.C. 4104 (a); Contain the requirements for employment by States of a sufficient number of representatives; and

WHEREAS, Title 38 U.S.C. 4106 (a); "The Secretary shall estimate the funds necessary for the proper and effective administration of this chapter ... include amounts necessary in all the States for the purposes specified in paragraph (5) of Section 4102 A (b) of this Title (see 4012A (b)(5) above); and

WHEREAS, In the above statute, it is the intent and purpose of Congress that sufficient funds be made available to staff at least one DVOP or LVER position in each Workforce Center nationwide; and

WHEREAS, Sufficient funding has not been made available to fully staff this program for the past 20 years, resulting in decreased levels of services to our nation's veterans in a time when jobs are critical to the recent influx of Iraqi and Afghanistan veterans; and

WHEREAS, There are approximately 3,000 One-Stop Career Centers operating in the United States and there are approximately 960 fewer DVOP and LVER resources than there are One-Stop Career Centers; and

WHEREAS, To ensure sufficient staff is assigned by each state, an increase of the current funds to \$240 million is required; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion continues to advocate full funding and staffing for the Veterans' Employment and Training Service and its effective programs; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports legislation that would increase funding for the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist and Local Veterans' Employment Representative programs to the level necessary to ensure that at least one position is located in each One-Stop Career Center in the United States.**

**Resolution No. 103: Support the Elimination of Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service Regional Offices**

**Origin: Texas**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, The Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) is one of the smallest divisions of the Department of Labor which severely limits the number of staff available to investigate Uniformed Service Employment and Reemployment Rights Act and veterans' preference complaints; and

WHEREAS, The President's Management Agenda calls for elimination of the middle level of management of the federal government; and

WHEREAS, The current system of management within the Veterans' Employment and Training Service includes regional offices who continue to increase the number of staff that do not provide direct services to veterans, conduct investigations or provide any identifiable services or products that directly benefit veterans; and

WHEREAS, This continued growth of staff in the regional offices of VETS has had a negative and adverse impact on the delivery of services to veterans seeking and needing

assistance with their complaints by reducing the number of assistant directors located in the various states; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion seek and support legislation that will eliminate the regional offices of the Veterans' Employment and Training Service and return the organization to its original purpose of advocating and providing direct oversight services to veterans' programs.**

**Resolution No. 223: Support for Expansion of Oil Refineries**

**Origin: Idaho**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, Employment in America at the present time is rather dismal; and

WHEREAS, There are existing oil refineries in both the states of Montana and North Dakota; and

WHEREAS, These refineries could be expanded to help meet the energy needs of our country; and

WHEREAS, Pipelines from Canada could be directed to these expanded refineries; and

WHEREAS, With the expanded output from these refineries, the finished products could serve the Northern Tier of our country where the energy needs are the greatest; and

WHEREAS, The expanded refineries would require more people to man these facilities with permanent employment; and

WHEREAS, These expanded refineries would increase energy production and reduce unemployment; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion sponsor and support legislation that expands these refineries and elevates the issue of building the pipelines to an issue of high national priority; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That both of these actions would improve the employment situation and also help to supply more energy for America.**

**Resolution No. 263 Support Employment Services for Spouses of Servicemembers Killed in the Line of Duty**

**Origin: Illinois**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of their community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always supported strong programs to assist veterans, disabled veterans and the spouses of veterans in obtaining assistance in finding employment; and

WHEREAS, Under federal civil service guidelines certain veterans are given either five or ten point preference in federal hiring and this preference passes on to the surviving spouse if the veteran dies while on active-duty and their service was under honorable conditions; and

WHEREAS, The Jobs for Veterans Act (Public Law 107-288) established job counseling, training and placement services for veterans and certain spouses; and

WHEREAS, Under this act it narrowly defined a spouse (Title 38, Chapter 41, Section 4101 definitions) as 1) the spouse of any veteran who died of a service-connected disability, or 2) listed by the Secretary concerned as missing in action, or 3) captured in line of duty for a hostile force, or 4) forcibly detained or interned in line of duty by a foreign government or power; and

WHEREAS, This public law completely left out the spouses of those veterans "killed in the line of duty" causing a great injustice to this group of spouses; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to amend Title 38, Chapter 41, Section 4101 definitions to include spouses of servicemen and women who were killed in the line of duty.**

**Resolution No. 294: Allow Military Retirees to Apply for Position in Federal Law Enforcement after Age 37****Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, Public Law 101-509 makes it mandatory for all federal law enforcement position personnel to retire by age 57 requiring an applicant to be no older than 37 when applying, thus allowing them to complete 20 years of service before age 57; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense spends in excess of \$15 billion annually to train men and women of the Armed Forces with thousands of career personnel who complete their initial 20 years for retirement of which a large number have reached the age of 38–40 at time of separation; and

WHEREAS, Under existing law it is impossible for a 20 year military retiree to obtain a career in federal law enforcement because of age restriction even though they are more than qualified for federal employment with their job expertise, security clearance credentials, allegiance to their country, etc.; and

WHEREAS, Providing opportunities for transitional career military personnel is a reinvestment in defense training that would help preserve scarce recruiting and training funds while providing a stable source of manpower to help fulfill the federal government's 188,000 law enforcement personnel requirements; and

WHEREAS, Removing the age restriction or at least providing a waiver based on military service would complement the American taxpayer who has fully funded the training and experience of our career military by utilizing their expertise for federal law enforcement position; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion petition the Congress to amend Public Law 101-509 that makes it impossible for our retiring military men and women to pursue post-military careers in federal law enforcement based solely on age; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That age waivers or other means are adopted to accommodate those who have served honorably allowing them to continue to serve in a profession that would be enhanced by their previous experiences.**

**Resolution No. 296: Support “Buy American” Policy at the Department of Veterans Affairs to Create Job and Opportunities for Veterans****Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, To reverse the devastating impact to the economic security of veterans is to partner with the Department of Veterans Affairs to foster job creation for veterans, through the 3 million veteran small businesses, by adopting and enforcing a “Buy American” policy under the Veterans First Contracting program at the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, The rates and statistics of critical veteran social issues have been accelerated to higher numbers by the Department of Veterans Affairs' establishment of acquisition policies that gives no priority or preference to more than 3 million veteran small businesses and diverts more than \$66 million annually in contract opportunities to large businesses who sell products from overseas manufacturers to the Department of Veterans Affairs when same or similar “Made in the United States” products are available at same or lower pricing; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support any legislation that mandates that the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs adopt and enforce a “Buy American” policy under the Veterans First Contracting program at the Department of Veterans Affairs.**

**Resolution No. 297: Support the Development of Veterans On-The-Job Training Opportunities****Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

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 of 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 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 301: Enforcing Veterans' Preference Hiring Practices in Federal Civil Service****Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 304: Federal and State Incentive for Employers to Use Veterans' Preference Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 310: Improve Transition Assistance Program****Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, The goal of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is to ease the adjustment of separating servicemembers during the difficult transition from active-duty into civilian life by offering job search assistance, medical/health services, the advising of available benefits, and other related counseling; and

WHEREAS, TAP pre-separation counseling was not always integrated into the Military Separation process for servicemembers, and not all military bases allowed nationally accredited service organizations to participate in the pre-separation or TAP briefings; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act mandated TAP participation in 2011 thanks to advocacy from The American Legion in response to Government Accountability Reports emphasizing the need for all eligible servicemembers to attend TAP prior to discharge; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion request that the Department of Defense expand and standardize their existing pre-separation counseling policies to ensure that separating servicemembers receive information regarding federal and private sector employment opportunities, GI Bill and vocational rehabilitation and employment programs; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to require that the Department of Labor thoroughly review the new Transition Assistance Program for maximum effectiveness in helping servicemembers transition to civilian life and find gainful employment, while encouraging cooperation and inclusion of nationally accredited service organizations in their program.**

**Resolution No. 315: Oppose Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service Hiring of Non-Veterans****Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, The Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) administers employment assistance and employment protection programs serving veterans, members of Armed Forces Reserve Components and eligible persons as defined in and pursuant to Chapters 41, 42 and 43 of Title 38, United States Code (USC); and

WHEREAS, Public Law 107-288 amended 38 USC, Chapter 41 to allow for the appointment of non-veterans to positions of regional administrators, directors in the states assistant directors in the states and "other professional staff assigned to the states"; and

WHEREAS, VETS staff located in regional offices and those serving in the state routinely and extensively interact with state workforce agencies' staffs, members of active and Reserve military components and veterans service organizations, all of whom are veteran or military affiliated; and

WHEREAS, VETS staff would be unable to fully participate in, nor have the full confidence and credibility with the veterans service organizations; and

WHEREAS, VETS staff would not have the credibility of the shared active military service or transition experience from active duty, for which VETS has the responsibility for program delivery leadership; and

WHEREAS, For more than 25 years, the VETS staff have, by Title 38, USC, Chapter 41, been required to be veterans; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion finds it inconceivable that Congress would not find "Veterans Serving Veterans" to be the most appropriate manner of delivering these critical services; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion seek and support legislation to amend Title 38, United States Code, to require Veterans' Employment and Training Service regional administrators, state directors and assistant state directors and "other professional staff" under VETS to be veterans of the Armed Forces.**

**Resolution No. 316: Oppose Efforts to Change the Residency Requirements for State Directors of the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS)**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, The United States government has recognized that the employment of veterans is a national priority and responsibility; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment & Training Service has done a satisfactory job of promoting the employment of veterans and protecting the right of veterans to employment across the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, It is essential that each state director have a comprehensive knowledge of the state economy, veterans service organizations, including The American Legion, local service providers, and each state's workforce agency; and

WHEREAS, Each state director must have a strong cohesive relationship with state workforce agency; therefore, in most cases the state directors are hired from the state workforce agency; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code 4103 (s) (2) requires each director for Veterans' Employment and Training for a state shall, at the time of appointment, have been a bona fide resident of the state for at least two years; and

WHEREAS, The residency requirement as stated in Title 38, United States Code, has served this nation well and has enhanced the success of all programs administered by the Veterans' Employment and Training Services; and

WHEREAS, For many years The American Legion has been a strong supporter of keeping the residency requirement part of federal law; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion vigorously oppose any effort to change the current law that requires the residency requirement for state directors in the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service.**

**Resolution No. 317: Oppose the Transfer of Veterans' Employment and Training Service to the Department of Veterans Affairs****Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

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

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

WHEREAS, In section 3401, Title 38, United States Code (USC), Congress expressed its purpose in enacting the Uniformed Service Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA), "to encourage non-career service in the uniformed services by eliminating or minimizing the disadvantage in pursuing civilian employment and careers which can result from such service"; and

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

WHEREAS, It is altogether fitting and proper that such programs of employment assistance for veterans be provided by direction of, and subject to the oversight by, Congress to ensure that all veterans/disabled veterans are afforded such services in a uniform manner following completion of their service and return to the several states; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 107-288 has eliminated the requirement that the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) review all workforce centers annually and this has minimized federal oversight of the programs since the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training Service has drastically cut funds allocated for this activity and established a policy that only 10 percent of the centers operated under Title 38 will be reviewed; and

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

WHEREAS, VETS works closely with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation Program to assist enrolled veterans in job search efforts throughout their rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, The present administration continues to recommend transferring VETS from DOL to VA; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Labor has expertise in job placement, job development, vocation counseling, vocational testing, job search training, and any other area of employment services; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion opposes all legislative or administrative efforts to transfer the Veterans' Employment and Training Service from Department of Labor to the Department of Veterans Affairs.**

**Resolution No. 318: Oppose any Weakening of the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist and Local Veterans' Employment Representative****Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, Throughout the nearly two hundred and thirty eight-year history of the United States, the men and women of this nation have served in the Armed Forces in the interest of the



collective body of states, united under a central federal government, “to provide for the common defense”; and

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

WHEREAS, It has been the finding of numerous surveys and studies that, for a variety of reasons, the vast majority of veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States are disadvantaged in pursuing civilian employment and careers, and that veterans helping veterans has proven to be extremely effective; and

WHEREAS, It is altogether fitting and proper that such programs of employment assistance for veterans be provided by direction of, and subject to oversight by, the Congress of the United States to ensure that all veterans who served the United States in uniform in time of war and peace are afforded such services in a uniform manner following completion of their service and return to the several states; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 107-288 has revised Title 38 to eliminate the requirement that Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program Specialist and Local Veterans’ Employment Representative (DVOP/LVER) staff be veterans and serve only veterans and to reduce the direction and control of such employment assistance programs while relinquishing the direction of veterans services to the discretion of the governors of the several States and/or contracting of such services to for-profit organizations; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 107-288 also eliminates the requirement that DVOP/LVER staff be assigned based on veteran intake and veteran population, and creates half-time DVOP positions, thereby eliminating positions available to serve veterans or allowing positions to be assigned at the discretion of the individual state workforce agency, which may or may not adequately assign positions; and

WHEREAS, Such devolution of program responsibility will then be based on each state’s elected officials’ perspective and may result in either limited services or such variations in employment assistance provided to disabled veterans, while possibly making a mockery of the Congress intent found in Title 38 USC; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion will support legislation that will require Local Veterans’ Employment Representatives (LVER) and Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists serve only veterans, and that the assignment of these positions to local one-stop centers be based on veteran populations; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion will support legislation that federalizes DVOP and LVER staff member positions.**

**Resolution No. 320: The Status of Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business After the Death of the Veteran Owner**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, Public Law No. 109-461 passed in December 2006 created additional benefits for surviving spouses who inherit service-disabled veteran-owned businesses; and

WHEREAS, The intent of the law was to ensure that a business owned by a veteran that received contracts based on the service-disabled veteran-owned business status did not suffer because the veteran died; and

WHEREAS, Spouses are able to retain the service-disabled veteran-owned business status for up to 10 years if the veteran owned at least 51 percent of the company before their death; and

WHEREAS, The law passed in December 2006 only took into account the veteran who returned disabled; consequently, it left a large gap in those servicemembers who owned businesses who were killed in the line of duty; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 109-461, in its treatment of businesses after death of veteran-owner, neglected to take into account Reservists and National Guard members who owned businesses before their activation; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 109-461 only transfers service-disabled veteran-owned business status to the surviving spouse of a veteran who acquires ownership rights in a small business if the death of a veteran causes a small business to be less than 51 percent-owned by one or more veterans; and

WHEREAS, The transfer of status in the period beginning on the date on which the veteran dies, only applies to a surviving spouse of a veteran with a service-connected disability rated as 100 percent disabling or a surviving spouse of a veteran who dies as a result of a service-connected disability; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support amending Public Law 109-461 to read that if any disabled veteran who owns a certified service-disabled veteran-owned business dies, (regardless of his/her disability at the time), their business inherited by their spouse/dependent will retain the service-disabled veteran-owned business status in conjunction with Public Law 109-461; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports that if any servicemember, to include those who were mobilized in the National Guard or Reserve, is killed in action and owns at least 51 percent of a business prior to his/her death, the business bequeathed to their spouses/dependents must be granted service-disabled veteran-owned business status for reason of preference in federal contracts; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports any administrative or legislative effort that will improve and increase the benefits bequeathed to the veteran's spouses or dependents upon a veteran business owner's death.**

**Resolution No. 322: Support an Investigation of Hiring Practices in the Federal Government**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, It is incumbent upon the government of the United States to not only provide for the rehabilitation of disabled veterans, but to also make every effort to aid all veterans in their return to a normal and productive life; and

WHEREAS, Federal law gives preference to employers to hire veterans and their widows; and

WHEREAS, Fewer than half of the employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Labor are veterans; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion encourages Congress to conduct an investigation into the employment of veterans by the various agencies of the federal government; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports remedial legislation, as may be needed, to increase the percentage of veterans hired in all agencies; specifically, the Department of Veterans Affairs to 50 percent or above.**

**Resolution No. 323: Support Legislation that Ensures that all Agencies that Receive Funding from the U.S. Department of Labor or the Workforce Investment Act Meet the Mandatory Compliance Standards for Veterans' Preference**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

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

WHEREAS, The Job Service Centers for each state and territory receive funding under the Wagner–Peysner Act of 1933 and are eligible for special grants to provide services to veterans; and

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

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

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to ensure that all agencies that are provided funds from the Department of Labor, or that receive funding under the Wagner–Peysner Act or Workforce Investment Act meet the same compliance standards as the state workforce agencies relative to veterans’ preference, as mandated by current law; and, be it finally**

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

**Resolution No. 324: Support and Strengthen the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA)  
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

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), formerly known as the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Civil Relief Act, 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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.**

**Resolution No. 325: Supporting the U.S. Economy and Increase U.S. Energy Security  
Through a Canadian-American Pipeline**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, The American Legion, the nation's largest veterans service organization, is a strong advocate for programs and policies that enhance our nation's economic strength, and national security, and opportunities for veterans and all citizens; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's sense of obligation to community, state and nation drives honest advocacy for veterans in Washington; and

WHEREAS, The strength of our nation's economy relates directly to the economic opportunity available to veterans of the United States Armed Forces and all other citizens; and

WHEREAS, The proposed pipeline will increase our nation's energy security by delivering 700,000 barrels per day of North American Crude oil to our nation's refineries; and

WHEREAS, The construction of the currently proposed pipeline to transport oil from the oil fields in Canada and the American upper Midwest to the American refineries in the Gulf Coast will strengthen the economy and make the United States the second largest oil producer in the world; and

WHEREAS, This added stability will stimulate annual gains in American business activity including the immediate creation of 20,000 jobs and an expected additional 118,000 jobs in adjacent industries; and

WHEREAS, The pipeline will reduce the United States' dependency on foreign oil and prevent the future need to deploy American citizens to respond to potential disruption involving foreign conflicts, piracy or other unforeseen risks; and

WHEREAS, The Canadian oversupply of oil has been severely discounted as result of the current Administration's rejection of the permit for the XL Pipeline; and

WHEREAS, Canada resorted to courting China to invest in their oil reserve thereby giving China a large stake in North American oil supply; and

WHEREAS, America's veterans, who have been hit hard by the Great Recession and its aftermath, will benefit significantly from these economic gains; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion, in order to increase American energy self-sufficiency, promote the creation of 20,000 jobs, and improve the stability of the American economy, strongly recommend the permitting, construction and operation of the pipeline; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges all segments of the U.S. government pursue and grant all required permits necessary for the construction of the proposed pipeline without further delay.**

**Resolution No. 326: Support Legislation that would Change the 12-year Delimiting Date for Eligibility to Chapter 31 Benefits (VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program)**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

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

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

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

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

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge**

**Congress to change the eligibility delimiting date for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program by eliminating the 12-year delimiting date for eligibility to Chapter 31 benefits and allow all veterans with employment impediments or problems with independent living to qualify for VR&E services for life; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That the VA must restructure performance measures to emphasize long-term rehabilitation versus the current short-term indicators of success; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That VR&E should continually follow up with veterans considered to be rehabilitated to ensure that the rehabilitation and employment placement plans have been successful; and, be it finally**

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

**Resolution No. 327: Affirm Support for Emerging-Internet-Base and Peer-Financed Alternative Capital Options for Veteran-Owned Small Businesses**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, There is increasing demand among veterans for assistance in funding veteran-owned small businesses; and

WHEREAS, Access to capital and credit is critical and difficult for veteran-owned small businesses; and

WHEREAS, The greater the number of capital and credit options available to veterans, the more likely a veteran-owned small business will succeed; and

WHEREAS, Younger veterans, in particular, are increasingly using non-bank internet-based and peer-financed funding sources for their projects and businesses; and

WHEREAS, Successful veteran-owned small businesses are good for the economy in the local community, state, and nation; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports initiatives and organizations that advance emerging internet-based and peer-financed alternative capital options that focus on funding veteran-owned small businesses.**

**Resolution No. 329: Support Legislation that Bolsters the Hiring of Veterans in the Public and Private Sectors**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

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

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

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

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

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges Congress to modify Title 38 USC 4212 to require that any information collected through the VETS-100, a required annual filing for federal contractors receiving over \$100,000 that lists the number of veterans they employ, be made available to the public and in a user friendly format for both veterans and those who assist veterans in locating employment; and, be it further**

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

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

**Resolution No. 331: Support Improvements in the Reporting Programs Available to and Administered by Veterans' Employment and Training Service**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion continue to work closely with Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs) and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist (DVOPs) in local communities across the country; and

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

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion strongly support improvements in the reporting programs available to and administered by Veterans' Employment and Training Service; and, be it finally**

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

**Resolution No. 332: Support Federal Legislation that Protects the Employment of Veterans in the U.S. Postal Services Mail Processing Facilities that are Slated for Closure**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, As one of the largest employers of veterans and disabled veterans, approximately 25 percent of the 500,000 men and women employed by the U.S. Postal Service are veterans; and

WHEREAS, The Postal Service intends to reduce its service standards that guarantee the delivery of First Class mail within 1-3 days; and

WHEREAS, The reduction of delivery standards will degrade mail transit time for critical veterans' healthcare and/or claims documentation, many of which are required to arrive in designated Veterans Affairs Regional Offices with 'date-certain' deadlines; and

WHEREAS, The reduction of delivery standards will permit the Postal Service to dramatically reduce its mail processing network in order to dramatically cut costs; and

WHEREAS, The widespread closure of mail processing facilities will threaten approximately 35,000 postal employees, including large numbers of veterans and disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, Federal employment veteran preference protections are inapplicable when a federal facility is closed; and

WHEREAS, Federal veteran preference protections will be upheld when mail processing facilities alternatively are downsized, but not closed; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to support legislation requiring the U.S. Postal Service to preserve current service standards guaranteeing the delivery of First Class mail within 1-3 days, preserving quick mail transit times for the Department of Veterans Affairs claims documentation and/or medications; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to support legislation that limits closures of mail processing facilities, while protecting veterans employment within the U.S. Postal Service.**

**Resolution No. 333: Support Recognition of Military and Pay When Calculating Starting Federal Civilian Salaries**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, The Office of Personnel Management's interpretation of Section 531.203 of Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations does not allow the use of military pay rates to determine the rate of basic pay that may be paid to an individual upon appointment to a civil service position; and

WHEREAS, The interpretation of this law places an undue financial hardship on former members of the Armed Forces and penalizes the individual for serving in the military; and

WHEREAS, It also provides an advantage to non-veterans seeking higher starting salary when entering into federal employment; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports legislation that requires federal agencies to take an employee's military experience and military pay history into consideration when computing that employee's starting civilian salary.**

**Resolution No. 334: Support for the Military Transition Program**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, In 1992, Congress enacted the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA) which became Public Law 102-484; and

WHEREAS, SMOCTA is a transition tool designed to provide job training and employment to certain veterans discharged from the military after August 1, 1990; and

WHEREAS, The SMOCTA program provides financial incentives to employers who hire and provide training to eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, To be eligible for participation in the SMOCTA program, the veteran must meet at least one of the following criteria: (1) have a primary or secondary military occupational specialty that the Department of Defense has determined is not readily transferable to the civilian work force; or (2) be entitled to compensation (or would be entitled to compensation but for the receipt of military retired pay) for a Department of Veterans Affairs service-connected disability rating of 30 percent or more; or (3) be unemployed and have been unemployed for at least eight (8) of the last 15 work weeks before filing an application; and

WHEREAS, The veterans eligible for job training under SMOCTA are precisely those individuals who need the most assistance in making a successful transition to the civilian work force; and

WHEREAS, The Departments of Defense (DOD), Veterans Affairs (VA), and Labor (DOL) signed a Memorandum of Understand (MOU) in March of 1993, which defined their roles and responsibilities in the implementation of SMOCTA; and

WHEREAS, DOD provided funding for SMOCTA while the VA and DOL were responsible for administering the program; and

WHEREAS, Under the terms of the MOU, the SMOCTA program will terminate when all the funds provided by DOD are expended or at such time as agreed upon by all parties; and

WHEREAS, This country's unemployment problem is being exacerbated by the drastic downsizing of the military; and

WHEREAS, The Military Transition Program can help to alleviate the employment problems faced by many veterans who are being separated from the military; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion seek continuation of the Military Transition Program until the employment picture improves and the downsizing of the military is completed; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek adequate funding for the Military Transition Program so that it can achieve what it is designed to do.**

**Resolution No. 335: Support for the Strengthening and Adequate Funding of the National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI)**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

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

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

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

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

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support legislation to continue funding the National Veterans' Training Institute, and its continuation of uniform training for these veteran employment professionals as provided by this institution.**

**Resolution No. 336: Support the Restoration of the Duties and Responsibilities of the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER)**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 20124, That The American Legion support legislation that will restore language to Chapter 41, Title 38 that will require that veteran staff serve only veterans, require that half-time Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives positions be assigned only after approval of the Director for Veterans' Employment and Training Service, and that the Secretary of Labor be required to monitor all career centers that have veteran staff assigned; and, be it further**

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

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

**Resolution No. 337: Support the Rollover of IRA Account Penalty of Tax Liability of a Permanent and Total 100 Percent Service-Disabled Veteran with Individual Unemployability**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

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

WHEREAS, The United States government has recognized responsibility to its honorably discharged veterans and that alleviating tax burdens for them should be a priority; and

WHEREAS, Pursuant to the bylaws of this organization it is deemed desirable and in the best interest of its members that action be taken to change present laws; and

WHEREAS, The federal tax law is administered primarily by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), a bureau of the Department of the Treasury; and

WHEREAS, While the main intent of the law is to provide revenue for the federal government, the tax code is frequently used for public policy reasons, i.e. to achieve social and economic goals; and

WHEREAS, Veterans under 59½ years of age will pay a 10 percent penalty on amount drawn from IRA; and

WHEREAS, Total amount of withdrawal from Individual Retirement Accounts (IRA) is subject to federal income tax; and

WHEREAS, Due to a poor economy, IRAs have lost value; and

WHEREAS, Veterans home mortgages may be higher than the value of said home; and

WHEREAS, High unemployment has caused hardship to the veterans income from other sources in the family; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support legislation to permit veterans who are permanent and total 100 percent service-disabled and/or permanent and total 100 percent service-disabled with individual unemployability the opportunity to rollover their individual retirement accounts into tax free Roth Accounts, prior to maturity, without penalty or tax liabilities.**

**Resolution No. 338: Support Effort of the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Office of Veterans Business Development**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, Assistance to veterans who have honorably served our country is a veterans benefit that dates back to the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944; and

WHEREAS, Benefits to veterans have always included assistance in creating and operating veteran-owned small businesses; and

WHEREAS, The military is currently in the process of downsizing, which will mean that thousands of former military personnel who have honorably served their country will be unemployed; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports increased funding for the efforts of the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Office of Veteran Business Development in its initiatives to provide enhanced outreach and specific community-based assistance to veterans and self-employed members of the Reserve and National Guard; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation that would permit the SBA's Office of Veteran Business Development to enter into contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements to further its outreach goals and develop a nationwide community-based service delivery system specifically for veterans and members of Reserve Components of the United States Military.**

**Resolution No. 339: Support Reasonable Set-Aside of Federal Procurements and Contracts for Business Owned and Operated by Veterans**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, Government small business assistance for all honorably discharged veterans dates back to the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944; and

WHEREAS, Veterans have provided selfless military service to America and previous generations of veterans have achieved significant self-employed small business success in America; and

WHEREAS, Present policies and legislation ensure that not all veterans receive the same opportunity to prosper as small business owners, undermining their opportunity to succeed as part of the Department of Defense or government's supplier base that is central to ensuring America's success in the War on Terrorism, and America's success in the international economic systems; now, therefore, be it;

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion will support development and passage of federal, state and local veteran business development legislation to provide assistance to all veterans, including disabled veterans and members of Reserve Components of the United States military to ensure equal opportunity for veterans to start or grow a small business, including establishing numerical goals for all veterans to compete in government procurement; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to ensure equal parity for all veterans in all small business government contracting programs, thus ensuring no veteran procurement program is at a disadvantage in competing with any other government procurement program established by law.**

**Resolution No. 340: Support Legislation that would Return Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) Funding to a Staffing Grant**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, Veterans' preference and priority of service for veterans have been earned by the sacrifices of men and women who have served in the military and protected our inalienable rights and nation; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, changed the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) grants from staffing grants to performance grants; and

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

WHEREAS, Currently, there is legislation before Congress that seeks to overhaul how all Department of Labor one-stops and veterans' priority programs, including DVOPs/LVERs, are financed; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support legislation that would return Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) funding to a staffing grant; and, be it further**

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

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

**Resolution No. 341: Support Legislation to Amend Title 38 United States Code, to Prohibit Discrimination and Acts of Reprisal by Employers against Veterans that Seek Treatment for Their Service-Connected Disabilities**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports legislation to amend Title 38, USC, to prohibit discrimination and acts of reprisals by employers against veterans that seek treatment for their service-connected disabilities.**

**Resolution No. 342: Support Veterans' Preference in Public Employment**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, Our federal government specially selected as mentally, morally, and physically fit, certain members from its society; specially trained this group, subjected them to stringent rules and regulations, removed them from home, family and employment, asked of them a special sacrifice, required some of them to suffer wounds they will live with forever; and

WHEREAS, A grateful nation through its representative in the Congress of the United States and state legislatures has in recognition of that special service and loss of employment opportunity while defending the country in time of need, extended a long history of employing the returning veterans by enacting the Veterans' Preference Act; and

WHEREAS, The term "veteran" includes every category of socioeconomics, gender, age, religion, ethnic group, race, and creed; and

WHEREAS, Absence from the highly competitive job market due to military service creates an unfair and unequal burden on veterans in competing for employment with non-veteran peers upon completion of military service; and

WHEREAS, The veterans' preference law accomplished the legislative purpose of honoring veterans and provides a small advantage in competing for federal and state government jobs; and

WHEREAS, Veterans' preference requires a veteran must be fully qualified for the position sought; and

WHEREAS, There are reported incidents of hiring officials in both the federal and state government agencies who have ignored veterans' preference in selecting new employees; and

WHEREAS, There have been federal and state legislative efforts to repeal or avoid application of veterans' preference in hiring practices; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion deplors each and every attempt to degrade, dilute, or modify the historical precedence of giving job eligibility preference to those who are taken from their communities to serve their country in time of war; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That all lawmakers at every level of government are urged to oppose any and all efforts to repeal or circumvent veterans' preference in government hiring practices; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That all executives at every level of government are urged to enforce veterans' preference in their respective government agencies.**

**Resolution No. 343: Support for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program Hiring More Counselors and Employment Coordinators**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

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

WHEREAS, The intent of the Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program is to retrain and educate service-disabled veterans so they may find productive jobs compatible with their disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Currently, the caseload for the VR&E Program is one employment coordinator per 141 cases; and

WHEREAS, The average veteran is enrolled in VR&E for approximately 700 days, in part due to large case loads of vocational rehabilitation counselors and lack of individualized care; and

WHEREAS, Veterans, especially those of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, continue to have higher unemployment rates than non-veterans; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports an increase in funding that would allow the VR&E Program to hire more vocational rehabilitation counselors and employment coordinators, to minimize the caseload so veterans have more individualized counseling as well as ensure them of ample employment opportunities once they complete the program.**

**Resolution No. 345: Transition Assistance Program Employment Workshops for National Guard and Reserve Members**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports legislation that will provide every member of the Armed Forces (including those in the National Guard and Reserves) who are activated for 12 months or longer, an adequate amount of time to attend the Transition Assistance Program workshop in entirety, within ninety days of separation.**

**Resolution No. 346: Support Tax Credit for Certain Employers**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, More than 265,300 members of the National Guard and Reserves components served on active-duty during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm (1990-1991); and

WHEREAS, According to Defense Manpower Data Systems, since 1991, an additional 63,938 members of the Reserve components served on active-duty during the military operations known as Southern Watch, Joint Forge and Uphold Democracy; and

WHEREAS, Currently, another 71,000 Reserve Components are supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation New Dawn; and

WHEREAS, The vast majority of those men and women left jobs and careers in the civilian community to answer the call of their country; and

WHEREAS, Many of those veterans and their families suffered economic hardship as the result of that service because the military salaries they received while on active-duty were often much lower than the salaries paid by their civilian employers; and

WHEREAS, While some employers were able to make up the difference between their employee's military pay and their regular civilian salary, most employers could not, or would not, make up the difference between the two; and

WHEREAS, There is no incentive for employers to make up the difference between an employee's military pay and their regular salary; and

WHEREAS, The financial disadvantages suffered by many members of the Reserves and National Guard who are called to active-duty could very possibly serve as a major impediment to the recruitment and retention of a competent Reserve component of the military total force; and

WHEREAS, The recent downsizing of the Armed Forces resulted in increased reliance on Reserves and National Guard units for military operation; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion sponsor and support legislation providing tax credits to any employer who either pays an employee who is called to active-duty their regular salary or who makes up the difference between that person's military pay and their regular civilian salary.**

**Resolution No. 347: Support Legislation to Increase Telework (Telecommuting) Opportunities for Service-Disabled Veterans and Military Spouses**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

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 servicemembers on active-duty who need telework to prevent repeated unemployment as they move with their servicemembers 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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.**

**Resolution No. 349: Support Verification Improvements for Veterans' Business within the Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense****Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DOD) is the nation's largest purchaser of goods and services; and

WHEREAS, DOD 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 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 Contracting 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion recommend the streamlining and improvement of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) verification of Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses and Veteran-Owned Small Businesses 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 Contracting 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. 350: Veterans Employment Initiative****Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, Significant hurdles to veterans employment in the federal government exist despite veterans' preference laws, including deficiencies in federal agency human resource departments and a lack of adequate information on the part of veterans about how to obtain federal employment; and

WHEREAS, Executive Order 13518 created a Veterans Employment Initiative in response to these hurdles, but provides only general guidance to covered agencies as to how the initiative is to how to be implemented; and



WHEREAS, The government-wide Veterans' Recruitment and Employment Strategic Plan for FY 2010–FY 2012, published as part of the Veterans Employment Initiative, also sets out general goals; and

WHEREAS, Many of the goals described in the three-year strategic plan have been met less than a year after the plan was published, leading to the impression that in the strategic plan has set the bar too low; and

WHEREAS, Because each agency or department named in Executive Order 13518 is required to develop its own operational plan and standards, there is no efficient way for the government, the individual veteran, or the public at large to track these plans and their outcomes; and

WHEREAS, Some agencies are absent from the list of agencies participating in the Veterans Employment Initiative; and

WHEREAS, Neither Executive Order 13518, nor the strategic plan establish metrics to assess whether the Veterans Employment Initiative is successful; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That Executive Order 13518 and the strategic plan be supplemented to include measurable, specific goals and specific metrics to better assess the effects and successes of the Veterans Employment Initiative; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That Executive Order 13518 and the Veterans Employment Initiative include all federal agencies and departments; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That there be further development of the Veterans Employment Initiative to provide enforcement and oversight mechanisms and rights or benefits enforceable by law to any veteran.**

#### **Resolution No. 351: Veterans Entrepreneur Training Program**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, In 1989, The American Legion Department of Utah received a grant for \$91,447.00 from the Small Business Administration (SBA) to be used to fund entrepreneurial training for veterans desiring to implement and own a small business venture; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion program was designed to encourage and motivate veterans to explore their management and organizing abilities required in formulating sound business plans and help in obtaining needed financing for successful implementation of a business; and

WHEREAS, Cooperation with The American Legion and SBA with local entities that entail schools with Small Business Development Centers, Chambers of Commerce, business owners, State Industrial Development Departments, private consulting support systems, lending institutions, and instruction and information from existing and retired business owners can contribute to The American Legion programs following three fold objectives:

1. To reach out to as many veterans as possible to explore their business interests;
2. To select a reasonable number of veterans to participate based on entrepreneurial potential and application of business successful criteria;
3. To provide selected veterans with education programs, support workshops and counseling to assist in forming sound business plans; and

WHEREAS, Classes should be held at educational establishments during evening or weekend hours and should include the veteran entrepreneur's spouse or partner whenever possible having proved to be an unequivocal asset to the veteran's success; and

WHEREAS, Due to older age individuals separating from active military, plus activation of National Guard and Reserve units who have immediate family obligations that interrupt a servicemember's business or employment while deployed can completely change their future professions when returning could necessitate a training program to fit their changed needs; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion request the Small Business Administration and Congress make funding available to reinstate the Veterans Entrepreneur Training Program grants to help those who are in need to return to productive civilian professions.**

**Resolution No. 355: Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, The United States government has recognized that employment of veterans is a national responsibility and that alleviating unemployment or underemployment of honorably discharged veterans is a national priority; and

WHEREAS, Unemployment rates of individuals recently separated from military service is unacceptable because America's employers have been lax in hiring those ex-servicemembers; and

WHEREAS, The Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program created by Congress encourages employees to hire targeted applicants, but present program language is too restrictive and fails to include many veterans who are receiving food stamps, welfare or seeking job vocational rehabilitation when requesting employment; and

WHEREAS, Expansion of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program to include those and other categories of separated members of the Armed Forces will in the long run promote recruitment and retention of members in all branches of the military services; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion request Congress for changes in legislation relating to the Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program to include:**

1. All members of the military who have served active-duty and/or still on active-duty for training who have served more than 180 days since September of 2001;
2. That this benefit will be extended beyond September 1.

**Received and Recorded**

**Resolution No. 104 (TX): Support the Requirement of Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service 'Professional Staff' to be Veterans**

**Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness**

**John Sampson, New York, Chairman**

**Approved**

**Resolution No. 293: Support Accountability for Institutions of Higher Learning**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, The American Legion is concerned over the education of America's servicemember and veteran students and their ability to acquire gainful employment after earning degrees from institutions of higher learning; and

WHEREAS, Some institutions of higher learning have engaged in fraudulent and improper recruiting activities; and

WHEREAS, Accreditation has become a key point of issue of both the political and policy communities; few of those who are critical of it understand the present system, which is a big part of the problem, however, before any meaningful reform can be undertaken, there needs to be

an agreement as to whether the present system is “too difficult” or “too lax” and whether the desired end goal is a regulatory enforcement body or one of quality assurance; and

WHEREAS, Assessment has become a major concern for higher education; and

WHEREAS Increasingly, regulators and accreditors are moving away from input models and instead are asking, “What is the country receiving in return for the billions being spent on higher education and how do we know if it is effective?”; and

WHEREAS, Learning outcome-assessment has become the basis for determining institutional effectiveness, however, the availability of valid, widely accepted tools and methods needed to determine learning and skill acquisition are proving hard to come by; and

WHEREAS, The economy is gaining strength and employment is once again rising, and while this is generally good news, it also gives fuel to those who maintain that a college education is not necessary to employment; and

WHEREAS, Cost-value comparisons that question the investment in a degree at today’s prices (always the “published” tuition for an elite private institution) are increasing in frequency; and

WHEREAS Student recruiting is likely to become more difficult as a result of improved economic activity and because of the political perspective that marketing is not an acceptable use of funds generated under Title IV; and

WHEREAS, There is a need to recognize the (not-all-that) new majority in student bodies; while higher education has not seen a dramatic shift in student demographics, neither the media nor the policy community appear to fully recognize that today’s typical student is no longer a 18 to 24 year old studying full-time on a campus; and

WHEREAS, There is data which shows that fewer than 20 percent of the roughly 20 million students now enrolled fit this traditional description, and the rest are “post-traditional” students who are older, working part-time, and often commuting, either by car or, increasingly, the internet yet policies and programs still make assumptions based on the needs of a shrinking minority; and

WHEREAS, The State Approving Agencies are ill-equipped to undertake such a task due to the lack of manpower and funds to adequately perform both Veterans Affairs Compliance Surveys and proper proactive oversight of for-profit schools and their programs; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support oversight and legislation evaluating post-secondary education institutions on quality factors, such as, but not limited to, accreditation, transferability, cost, graduation rates, and acceptance in the job market; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion pursue opportunities to educate servicemember and veteran students on selection and attendance at post-secondary education institutions; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports legislation to provide additional resources and increased funding for State Approving Agencies, ensuring continuation of its primary responsibility with focus in reviewing, evaluating, and approving quality programs of education and training, while providing oversight to institutions of higher learning to ensure alignment with state and federal criteria on behalf of servicemember and veteran students.**

**Resolution No. 295: Amending the Eligibility for the Transfer of the Post-9/11 GI Bill Educational Benefits**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, Eligible servicemembers can share the Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits with their immediate families only if they were on active-duty on August 1, 2009, had completed six years of active-duty military service and committed to serve four more years; and

WHEREAS, When Congress passed the new GI Bill, a provision was included to allow the transfer of education benefits to immediate family members; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense wanted to entice troops to reenlist, so the transferability benefit only applies to servicemembers with 10 years of active-duty service or a commitment to serve 10 years; and

WHEREAS, A spouse can begin using transferred benefits before the additional four years are served, but children may not use benefits until a servicemember has completed at least 10 years of service; and

WHEREAS, Servicemembers with 10 years of active-duty service or more; who are eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill educational benefits; who were not on active-duty on August 1, 2009; and who were prevented from committing to another four years by the Department of Defense; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports legislation that would authorize all servicemembers with 10 years or more of active-duty service, who are eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill educational benefits, but left the Armed Forces before August 1, 2009, be able to use the transferability entitlement to give to their immediate family members.**

**Resolution No. 298: Veterans Education Debt Forgiveness**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

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 Department of Veterans Affairs 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 299: Eliminate Delimiting Dates for the Montgomery GI Bill and Post-9/11 GI Bill**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 – the original GI Bill; and

WHEREAS, This GI Bill helped our veterans to pursue a higher education; and

WHEREAS, The Montgomery GI Bill is now in place; and

WHEREAS, The Post-9/11 GI Bill is now in place; and

WHEREAS, The benefit of a higher education is still viewed as a vehicle to economic security; and

WHEREAS, The present ten year delimiting date for the Montgomery GI Bill and fifteen year delimiting date for the Post-9/11 GI Bill to utilize this benefit should not exist; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That there be no time constraint with regards to the Montgomery GI Bill and Post-9/11 GI Bill.**

**Resolution No. 300: Support Elimination of the VA Home Loan Funding Fee**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Home Loan Guaranty Program has been in effect since 1944 and has afforded approximately 20 million veterans the opportunity to purchase and refinance homes; and

WHEREAS, The VA Home Loan Guaranty Program offers veterans an affordable and easy to use method of purchasing homes in return for their service to this nation; and

WHEREAS, The VA funding fee charged to veterans was enacted into law to defray the costs of the VA guaranteed home loan program; and

WHEREAS, Funding fees collected each year virtually always exceed the costs of operating the program; and

WHEREAS, The current fee of 2.15 percent for first-time users amounts to a principal payment of nearly \$4,500 by the veteran on the current average loan of \$209,000; and

WHEREAS, This is the equivalent of requiring the veteran to "purchase" a benefit that historically could be used cost free; and

WHEREAS, The VA funding fee that is collected goes to a Department of Treasury account that sustains that VA Home Loan Program, with excess monies used to pay for other federal government programs and expenses; and

WHEREAS, Congress is required to fund the operation of the home loan program because the program has "permanent and indefinite budget authority"; and

WHEREAS, The funding fee paid to VA has had a negative effect on many veterans by adding significantly to the cost of a VA loan, or by deterring other veterans from using an earned benefit; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, on August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports the elimination of the VA Home Loan funding fee; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion petition Congress to appropriate funding to sustain the VA Home Loan Program.**

**Resolution No. 302: Support Major Enhancements for the Montgomery GI Bill**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, The American Legion first drafted the GI Bill of Rights, which was enacted by Congress in 1944; and

WHEREAS, The nation now has a total force military policy that requires the operational integration and deployment of active-duty, National Guard and Reserve forces; and

WHEREAS, All members of the total force endure the same hardships and sacrifices, including National Guard and Reserve personnel who contribute to every operational mission and deployment; and

WHEREAS, The original purposes of the GI bill are sound and supportable; and

WHEREAS, Many Selective Reserve members have significant readjustment challenges upon discharge from active-duty service; and

WHEREAS, The current structure and management of the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) by the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs causes administrative confusion and inequitable allocation of benefits; and

WHEREAS, A grateful nation should honor the service of all members of the total force GI Bill that is compatible with the nation's Total Force military policy; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That Congress should move the Montgomery GI Bill – Selected Reserve from Title 10, the United States Code (USC) to Title 38 USC; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That the annual appropriations for the MGIB and the MGIB-SR become one annual appropriation within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That VA has administrative authority for both the MGIB and the MGIB-SR Bill.**

**Resolution No. 303: Expanding Post-9/11 GI Bill for Entrepreneurship**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, Our nation's economy is comprised of a majority of small businesses; and

WHEREAS, Our men and women returning home from military service certainly have entrepreneurial skills; and

WHEREAS, Many small businesses struggle in their first years of start-up and can utilize assistance in getting established; and

WHEREAS, Returning veterans are eligible for the GI Bill for education benefits, which are designed to give the veteran assistance toward obtaining an education; and

WHEREAS, The GI Bill could be expanded to encourage veterans to establish their own businesses; now, therefore be it

**RESOLVED, The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support legislation to allow veterans who are eligible for Post-9/11 GI Bill educational benefits to convert those benefits into assistance in starting a business, purchasing a business or expanding a business.**

**Resolution No. 305: Support Funding for Additional Housing for Homeless Veterans with Families**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) represents an entirely new and wholly unique model for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, SSVF is the first and only VA program that provides services to veterans and their families; and

WHEREAS, It is a community-based, competitive grant program that rapidly re-houses homeless veterans families and prevents homelessness for those at imminent risk due to a housing crisis; and

WHEREAS, The program's objective is to achieve housing stability through a short-term, focused intervention and in the first two years of operation, SSVF has had a dramatic impact; and

WHEREAS, During this time almost 100,000 veterans and their family members (97,979 people in total) received direct assistance from SSVF and 85 percent of those exiting SSVF had permanent housing; and

WHEREAS, In the first year (2011), 86 percent (16,204) of program participants who exited the program, including 86 percent of veterans who exited, had a successful permanent housing outcome at an average of \$2,810 per household; and

WHEREAS, Results in the second year were comparable with 84 percent (41,104) of program participants and 82 percent of veterans in permanent housing at exit, but with a lower average cost per household of \$2,480, a cost reduction of 12 percent on average per household; and

WHEREAS, This reduction in cost is largely driven by lower service costs and greater efficiencies achieved by renewal grantees in Fiscal Year 2013; and

WHEREAS, At a time when the number of homeless veterans on any given night hovers at approximately 58,000, the need for safe, affordable, and permanent housing is imperative; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, on August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports legislation or administrative proposals that provide additional transitional and permanent housing for homeless veterans with families.**

**Resolution No. 306: Support Funding for Homeless Veterans**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, The Congress of the United States has passed legislation to fund the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Healthcare for Homeless Veterans Program, the Homeless Domiciliary Care Program and the Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) Rehabilitation Program; and

WHEREAS, Some of these programs have been in partnership with veterans service organization and other nonprofit organizations; and

WHEREAS, VA estimates that 58,000 veterans are currently homeless; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has been an active partner with VA with the Healthcare for Homeless Veterans, CWT, Grant and Per Diem, and Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Programs; and

WHEREAS, These programs have proved to be successful in rehabilitation of the veteran in helping him/her to become a productive citizen; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, on August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion renew its commitment to assisting homeless veterans and their families; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue to support the efforts of public and private sector agencies and organizations with the resources necessary to aid homeless veterans and their families; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek and support any legislative or administrative proposal that will provide medical, rehabilitative, and employment assistance to homeless veterans and their families.**

**Resolution No. 307: Support Home Loan Guaranty Program**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, The Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 (P.L. 346 – 78th Congress) established, among other things, a home loan guaranty program that was to be administered by the Veterans Administration, which later became the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, The two purposes of the original program were to help returning World War II veterans in their readjustment to civilian life and to stimulate the economy by assisting those veterans in obtaining mortgages financing from the private sector; and

WHEREAS, Because of the popularity and success of the VA Loan Guaranty Program, and due to how it benefitted the economy as well as eligible veterans, Congress decided to make that five-year pilot program permanent; and

WHEREAS, To date the VA has guaranteed over 20 million loans to eligible veterans and has for the most part, maintained a lower default rate than private sector mortgages; and

WHEREAS, While some of the veterans who have participated in this program could have obtained private sector financing that required a down payment, many others could not have qualified for such financing; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, on August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion reaffirms its strong support for the Department of Veterans Affairs Loan Guaranty Service and its programs; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion support any administrative and/or legislative efforts that will improve and strengthen the Loan Guaranty Service's ability to serve America's veterans.**

**Resolution No. 308: Homeless Veterans Assistance**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, To properly assist homeless veterans in their reintegration into the civilian workforce and self-sufficiency, there needs to be more funding available; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to establish a fund in the Treasury of the United States to be known as the "Homeless Veterans Assistance Fund," to provide assistance to homeless veterans as a supplement to, but not a replacement for, existing funds for such assistance; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to amend the Internal Revenue Code to allow taxpayers with income tax liability of \$3.00 or more to designate \$3.00 of said liability for transfer to the Homeless Veterans Assistance Fund.**

**Resolution No. 309: Support Housing Preference for Low-Income Veterans in the Department of Housing and Urban Development**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, Currently, there are millions of low-income and elderly veterans; and

WHEREAS, Because many of those veterans are living on fixed incomes, it is often difficult if not impossible for them to provide adequate housing for themselves and their families; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Housing and Urban Development operates affordable housing programs for low-income and senior citizens; and

WHEREAS, Many needy and deserving veterans are unable to participate in those housing programs because of long waiting lists; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, on August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports any administrative and/or legislative initiative that will give preference to America's veterans and their families in obtaining housing through the programs within the Department of Housing and Urban Development.**

**Resolution No. 311: Support Legislation to Improve the Post-9/11 GI Bill**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, the original GI Bill, was one of the most successful pieces of legislation and spurred over 50 years of economic prosperity; and

WHEREAS, The Post-9/11 GI Bill was signed into law in 2008 and is a robust and comprehensive education benefit, rivaling the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, providing the tools and resources veterans need to be a success; and

WHEREAS, Congress introduced and passed the Post-9/11 GI Bill Improvements Act of 2010, which aimed at fixing some of the unintended consequences of the Post-9/11 GI Bill; and



WHEREAS, The Post-9/11 GI Bill Improvements Act of 2010 has a provision which allows the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as being the payer last resort after any other aid was provided, such as state funded tuition; and

WHEREAS, The Post-9/11 GI Bill Improvements Act of 2010 eliminated break pay, otherwise known as interval pay, for students of both the Post-9/11 GI Bill and Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program (chapter 31); and

WHEREAS, Certain veterans rely on this break pay to meet financial obligations they and their family require and cannot afford to miss interval/break pay even for a brief period, which the Post-9/11 GI Bill Improvements Act of 2010 eliminated; and

WHEREAS, Under current law, states that offer free tuition to veterans will be the first payer with the Department of Veterans Affairs paying the disparity for those eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill; and

WHEREAS, This change makes it difficult for the schools to keep track of the funding and where the money should come from and then the VA deducts this funding from the veteran's GI Bill pay; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support legislation ensuring the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Post-9/11 GI Bill as a first payer and the non-federal entities for those who require additional funding to go to those veterans; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to restore funding in the Post-9/11 GI Bill and Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Programs for veterans attending school during this break or interval between terms; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion recommends that VA sustain full tuition and fees reimbursement for veterans attending public undergraduate colleges, while setting a national standard for private and graduate schools.**

**Resolution No. 312: Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Student's Education at Institutions of Higher Learning**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, The American Legion 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, Servicemembers and veteran students are changing the discourse of how a growing need for interdisciplinary efforts are needed within institutions of higher learning; and

WHEREAS, Servicemembers and veterans utilizing the GI Bill, Federal Tuition Assistance (FTA), and other education benefits are given certain parameters regarding the way the money is used, the amount of money which can be used, and the time in which the money can be used; and

WHEREAS, Student characteristics and outcomes, along with the changing dynamics of education issues affect servicemembers, veterans, and their families differently at public, nonprofit, and for-profit schools; and

WHEREAS, Congressional committees, Department of Veterans Affairs, veterans service organizations, state approving agencies, educational organizations, and educational institutions all need to work together to ensure veterans are fully aware of the educational opportunities provided for them; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, on August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion seek and support any legislative or administrative proposal that improves, but not limited to, the GI Bill, Department of Defense Tuition Assistance (TA), Higher Education Title IV funding (i.e., Pell Grants, Student Loans, etc.) and education benefits so servicemembers, veterans, and their families can maximize its usage; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to find a solution that ensures colleges and universities that receive federal tuition payments grant priority enrollment to those individuals who qualify for either the Department of Defense or Department of Veterans Affairs education benefits.**

**Resolution No. 313: Support Licensure and Certification of Servicemembers, Veterans and Spouses**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, Veterans are in need of employment after exiting the military; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DOD) provides some of the best vocational training in the nation for its military personnel; and

WHEREAS, DOD establishes, measures and evaluates performance standards for every occupation within the Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, There are many occupational career fields in the Armed Forces that can easily translate to a civilian counterpart; and

WHEREAS, There are many occupations in the civilian workforce that require a license or certification; and

WHEREAS, In the Armed Forces, these unique occupations are performed to approved military standards that may meet or exceed the civilian license or certification criteria; and

WHEREAS, Upon separation, many former military personnel, certified as proficient in their military occupational career, are not licensed or certified to perform the comparable job in the civilian workforce, thus hindering chances for immediate civilian employment and delaying career advancement; and

WHEREAS, This situation creates an artificial barrier to employment upon separation from military service; and

WHEREAS, A study by the Presidential Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance identified a total of 105 military professions where civilian credentialing is required; and

WHEREAS, DOD is obligated to keep such licenses and certifications current and cover the costs of renewal; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support efforts to eliminate employment barriers that impede the timely and successful transfer of military job skills to the civilian labor market; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That all federal and state stakeholders (i.e., Departments of Defense, Energy, Veterans Affairs, and Transportation, along with the National Governors Association and National Conference of State Legislatures) take appropriate steps to ensure that servicemembers and veterans be trained, tested, evaluated and have the opportunity to obtain any credential (i.e., licensure, certification, certificate, degree, etc.) that may be required in the local civilian workforce; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion support efforts to increase the civilian labor market's acceptance of the training, education, and prior experience provided by the Armed Forces.**

**Resolution No. 314: Support Extended Time for Mortgage Payments for Servicemembers**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, Currently, servicemembers are forced to sell their homes at a loss when they move on government orders; and

WHEREAS, Current law requires homes had to be bought by July 1, 2006, and applications for partial reimbursement benefits for financial loss to pay off the mortgage, or assistance if they are forced to default on the mortgage were due by September 30, 2010; and

WHEREAS, Many believe this time period was too restrictive and many members of the Armed Forces failed to qualify for this program; and

WHEREAS, Legislation has been introduced to allow the Department of Defense to change the eligibility dates for a specific military installation when circumstances require; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support the enactment of legislation that will provide assistance to servicemen and women who incur a financial loss through no fault of their own when they move due to government orders.**

**Resolution No. 319: Support Increase in Reporting Fees for Educational Institutions**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, A certifying official is responsible for certifying the enrollment and changes in enrollment of eligible students to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, The certifying official's primary function is to let VA know if a student is registered for classes, showing the beginning and ending dates, number of credit hours or clock hours per week in attendance, and indicating the status of the student as an undergraduate or graduate student; and

WHEREAS, VA pays an annual reporting fee to schools; and

WHEREAS, The reporting fee is intended to help defray the cost of processing VA certifications; and

WHEREAS, The annual reporting fee is based on the number of VA students, including Chapter 31 (Vocational Rehabilitation), certified by the school during the calendar year; and

WHEREAS, Colleges and universities are always relying on reporting fees from VA to pay for veteran-related activities; and

WHEREAS, Currently, the reporting fees to colleges and universities is \$7.00 per student-veteran enrolled; and

WHEREAS, Colleges and universities use certifying officials as the first liaison for a veteran using veterans' educational benefits; and

WHEREAS, Certifying officials need continuing training in order to properly inform veterans about their education benefits; and

WHEREAS, Veterans enrolled in institutions are in need of a place/location to meet other enrolled veterans to confer and find information for veteran-related assistance; and

WHEREAS, The increase in reporting fees would allow certifying officials to receive initial and recurring training, buy and/or upgrade equipment (i.e., computers) and provide office space for student-veterans to meet; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is dedicated to assuring proper education and information for those who are assisting veterans and their families; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports increasing the amount of the reporting fees payable to educational institutions for certifying officials who assist/enroll veterans receiving educational benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs and for other purposes.**

**Resolution No. 321: Support Student-Veterans Return-on-Investment Education Outcomes**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

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, while 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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 document 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. 330: Support Funding for the Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Veterans Affairs (VA) Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Homeless Program**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes the nation has a responsibility to ease the difficulties experienced by America's veterans returning to civilian life; and

WHEREAS, In the most severe cases, veterans transitioning home and their families have found themselves homeless; and

WHEREAS, The HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program is a collaboration between the Departments of Housing and Urban Development and Veterans Affairs (VA) to help homeless veterans and their immediate family members by providing permanent housing with case management and supportive and clinical services provided by VA at its medical centers and community partners that promote and maintain recovery and housing stability; and

WHEREAS, HUD-VASH is a prominent element of VA's Five-Year Plan to eliminate veteran homelessness by 2015; and

WHEREAS, HUD allocates rental subsidies from its Housing Choice Voucher program to the VA, which then distributes them to the eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, At a time when the number of homeless veterans on any given night hovers at approximately 58,000, the need for safe, affordable, and permanent housing is imperative; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, on August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support funding for another 10,000 housing vouchers for the Departments of Housing and Urban Development and Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program be set aside to assist homeless veterans with permanent housing; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages a higher allocation of project-based HUD-VASH voucher units.**

**Resolution No. 344: Surviving Spouse Mortgage Eligibility****Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

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

WHEREAS, Veterans who meet certain criteria are eligible for the Department of Veterans Affairs home loan program for as long as they live and in certain circumstances may use this benefit several times; and

WHEREAS, Once the veteran expires this benefit does not pass onto the surviving spouse except in those situations where the veteran died of a service-related condition or died in service; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are usually the primary income provider for the household and contribute the majority of payments to mortgages for the family; and

WHEREAS, Once the veteran dies the mortgage payments must continue to be paid and the burden falls on the surviving spouse; and

WHEREAS, The surviving spouse may have to downsize and/or move to a different area to obtain a more affordable dwelling; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion sponsor and support legislation to allow the surviving spouse of a veteran who was determined to be eligible for the Department of Veterans Affairs home loan program to use this same entitlement for a one time guarantee of a new mortgage and that this eligibility be good for up to fifteen years after the veteran dies or the surviving spouse remarries.**

**Resolution No. 348: Transitional Housing Allotments for Returning Combat Veterans****Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, Unlike the active-duty component that are stationed stateside in the final months of their service, National Guardsmen and Reservists are fully employed in a combat zone up until the final day that they redeploy back to the continental United States; and

WHEREAS, At the demobilization site, returning veterans undergo approximately three weeks of physicals, transition programs, reunion with family members and inventory accountability; and

WHEREAS, There is little time for these servicemembers to start the process of finding a home, apartment, room or other dwelling; and

WHEREAS, Families are sometimes unaccommodating to returning veterans and cannot or refuse to house them; and

WHEREAS, Young veterans are living with their families, friends, in hotels, in cars, and are homeless; and

WHEREAS, Many single soldiers stay at hotels and are burning up their savings earned over the prior year; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are having to enter unfair leases/agreements just to find a place to stay because they are in dire need; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are ineligible to live in campus housing due to the likelihood of returning in the middle of a semester and are unable to start college for four more months; and

WHEREAS, For nine months out of the year, universities are in their lengthy fall and spring semester terms and these young men and women can't restart their academic careers until the next term starts; therefore, they are not eligible to live on campus; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 90,000 National Guard and Reserve have been re-entering the private sector each year since 2001; and

WHEREAS, A 180-day 'buffer' period will allow veterans to transition back in to the civilian sector with much greater ease and will prevent homelessness; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support the creation of a program by Congress for returning veterans similar to Basic Allowance for Housing for housing upon return from mobilization for 180 days.**

**Resolution No. 352: Support Licensure and Certification Standards for Veterans Health Administration**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has certain licensures and credentials they require for certain positions; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense provides comprehensive and specific training during military service; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs VHA is looking for highly qualified individuals to fill their job descriptions; and

WHEREAS, Military experience that is gained while serving in the Armed Forces is valuable to healthcare and non-healthcare related positions found within VHA; and

WHEREAS, All valuable experience while gained on active service can translate into academic education for certain positions within the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, Servicemembers experience and training can help fill the vacancies for healthcare and non-healthcare related positions within VHA; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support the Department of Veterans Affairs, and specifically the Veterans Health Administration, in allowing military education, training, and experience to be considered towards a license or certification for healthcare and non-healthcare related positions that require licenses or credentials.**

**Resolution No. 353: Veterans Home Loans**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, Legislation to amend the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) tax code to delete the requirement that State Veterans Home Loans may only be made to those veterans who are within twenty-five years of date of discharge is pending in Congress; and

WHEREAS, This change in the IRS tax code would allow thousands of veterans to become eligible for a State Veterans Home Loan; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports amending the IRS tax code to delete the requirement that State Veterans Home Loans may only be made to those veterans who are within twenty-five years of date of discharge.**

**Resolution No. 354: Support Veterans Housing Repair and Modification for Pilot Program**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

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, Of America's 21 million veterans, 6 million are disabled and 1.5 million are at-risk of homelessness; and

WHEREAS, For veterans returning home with severe injuries such as amputation or traumatic brain injury, readjustment and reintegration can be hampered by the lack of a wheelchair ramp or the ability to take a shower; and

WHEREAS, This situation is partially addressed through the Specially Adaptive Housing Program administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and this program provides grants to eligible disabled veterans and servicemembers for housing adaptations due to disability; and

WHEREAS, The Specially Adaptive Housing Program does not fully address the urgent need to help those who have honorably served this nation; and

WHEREAS, A pilot program that serves veterans who are low-income or disabled and who own their homes or are living in the owner-occupied home of a family member would be extremely beneficial; and

WHEREAS, The pilot program would include simple repairs to help keep veterans safe and healthy and out of more costly health care facilities; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support the creation of a veterans housing pilot program for home rehabilitation and modification to augment programs like the Specially Adaptive Housing Program, to allow veterans service organizations and housing nonprofits to combine their resources with other federal funding by applying for grants through the Department of Housing and Urban Development.**

### Rejected

#### **Resolution No. 232 (WV): Support Reducing Costs on VA Refinance Mortgages**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ROHAN: As a duly elected and registered delegate to this convention, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: We have a motion on the floor. Do I hear a second? ... *Second* Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor of the motion signify by saying aye. Opposed? The report of Veterans Employment & Education is adopted. Great job. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Military members transitioning home have few priorities that are more important than finding meaningful employment. Local Veterans Employment Representative of the Year Award honors individuals who have done such a remarkable job of placing veterans in jobs that even their peers take notice. In 2013, the LVER Award goes to Robert O'Keefe of Columbus, Ohio. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Local Veterans Employment Representative of the Year, 2013, presented to Robert O'Keefe for your outstanding service to the veterans of the State of Ohio. Presented at the 96th National Convention, Charlotte, North Carolina, August 27, 2014.*

#### **Presentation: American Legion Local Veterans Employment Representative of the Year Award Robert O'Keefe**

I wasn't expecting to be able to stand up here and say a few words, but I received this award, and there are 52 of us in the state of Ohio working towards getting veterans jobs. In my region alone, we are lucky enough to have a real good group and a lot of employers that are seeking young veterans that are coming out of the service. We were lucky enough last year to place 488 of them. But it was all in good work and good veterans. So I thank you for the award. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: 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 Specialist of the Year Award to Roy M. Fillion of Grand Forks, North Dakota. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year 2013 Presented to Roy M. Fillion for your outstanding service to the veterans of the state of North Dakota. Presented at the 96th National Convention, Charlotte, North Carolina, August 27, 2014.*

**Presentation: Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year Award  
Roy M. Fillion**

You know, they were right, I can't see everybody in the audience up here. Greetings from North Dakota. I want to thank the national commander and The American Legion for this wonderful award.

It's been my pleasure the last 14 years to work as a Disabled Veterans Outreach Project Specialist for Job Service in Grand Forks, North Dakota. I've had this job for 14 years, and it is the best job that I've ever had. It gives me that unique opportunity to work with veterans in the community in northeastern North Dakota. Hopefully I've made a difference in some of their lives.

It's really neat to talk to these veterans and looking at their goals and so forth and to be able to help them with their employment needs and being able to really get to know some of these veterans that have served in all the different conflicts that we have.

My job really isn't a job for me. It's really a pleasure for me to go to work every day. I really enjoy helping veterans with their employment needs. I want to thank the Convention for this wonderful award and recognition. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: The American Legion strongly believes that older workers are a valuable economic resource of proven skills, stability and experience. We also encourage employers to hire and retain older workers in the work force. The purpose of the Employer of Older Workers Award is to recognize employers for their outstanding record in hiring and retaining these experienced employees. This year's award goes to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul North Idaho. Accepting the award is Eric Swanbeck, veteran services case manager. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Older Workers 2013 is presented to: The Society of St. Vincent de Paul North Idaho, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, for an exceptional record in the employment of older persons.*

*Presented at the 96th National Convention, Charlotte, North Carolina, August 27, 2014. (Applause)*

**Presentation: Employer of Older Workers Award  
St. Vincent De Paul Society of North Idaho, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho**

ERIC SWANBECK: Well, in getting prepared for this, I've had four different people tell me: You're going to say a few words. No, you're not going to say a few words. Yes. No, you're not going to say a few words. So I really didn't have anything prepared. But the day before I came out here — my job is I'm the veterans services officer for St. Vincent de Paul, a nonprofit that helps homeless, including veterans, find employment and housing.

I had a Vietnam veteran come sit with me actually the day before I left, and he had an interesting story. I thought I would tell you this little story very quickly. The day before his base was overrun by the North Vietnamese, he was shipped out for a family tragedy back home. So for about 25 years until this event— something happened in his life, he lived with these guilt feelings of making it out and the rest of his unit not making it out. He dealt with PTSD. A very



troubled man. Twenty-five years after he left, he was in a gas station in California, and this very large black man came up to him, screaming: Lucky, Lucky! Threw his arms around him and was swinging him back and forth. And he had no idea who this guy was. Turns out it was his best friend from Vietnam who was also shipped out the day before at the other end of the base. And for 25 years, the two of them thought the other had died.

So I as a veteran services officer, I am very honored to do the work that I do. And partly because of those stories that I get to hear. Thank you. *(Applause)*

### **Presentation: Employer of the Year Awards for Hiring Veterans**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: It is now time to extend special recognition to employers of various sizes, who all have outstanding records of hiring veterans. That special recognition comes in the form of The American Legion Employer of the Year Award.

#### **Small Category M1 Support Services, Abilene, Texas**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: In the small business category, an employer with 50 workers or less, The American Legion recognizes M-1 Support Services of Denton, Texas.

Accepting the award is Site Manager Otis R. Duffee. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans 2013, Presented to M-1 Support Services, Denton, Texas for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 96th annual National Convention, Charlotte, North Carolina, August 27, 2014.*

OTIS DUFFEE: M-1 accepts this award with great pride. We know any award given by The American Legion tops all. One of our secrets to good business is hire a veteran, give him the tools to do the job and step back. He'll make it happen. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

#### **Medium Category L-3 Communications ASD, Fort Bragg, North Carolina**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Next is Employer of the Year for Hiring Veterans, Medium Category. This goes to companies with fewer than 200 employees. The 2013 Outstanding Employer of Veterans Award winner is L-3 Communications ASD of Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Accepting the award is Michael Saulnier, program manager. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans 2013, Presented to L-3 Communications ASD, Fort Bragg, North Carolina for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 96th annual National Convention, Charlotte, North Carolina, August 27, 2014.*

MICHAEL SAULNIER: Thank you very much, from all our veterans at Fort Bragg, home of Special Operations and Airborne forces for the United States Army, this is a real honor. But it's kind of a surprise. We're just doing the right thing. And we're going to keep doing the right thing. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

**Large Category**  
**North Carolina Food Service, Fayetteville, North Carolina**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Now we recognize Employer of Veterans, Large Category, for businesses or employers with more than 200 workers. This award goes to North Carolina Food Service of Fayetteville. Accepting the award is Project Manager David Morton. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans 2013, Presented to North Carolina Food Service, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 96th annual National Convention, Charlotte, North Carolina, August 27, 2014.*

DAVID MORTON: As a serviceman, I spent 34 years in the Army myself. I look forward to hiring veterans. I know their qualities. And I can hardly wait to hire them and put them on with my company. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: Employment Service Local Office Award**  
**Brazos Valley Workforce Solutions, Bryan, Texas**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: 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 Brazos Valley Workforce Solutions of Bryan, Texas. Accepting the award are Executive Director Tom Wilkinson, Board Manager Patricia Buck, and Center Manager Gaylen Lange. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: The American Legion National Award to the Outstanding Employment Service Local Office of the Year 2013 is presented to Brazos Valley Workforce Solutions, Bryan, Texas, for outstanding service to the veterans of the state of Texas. Presented at the 96th Annual National Convention, Charlotte, North Carolina, August 27, 2014.*

TOM WILKINSON: Let me begin with simple words of thank you. Thank you for recognizing the staff that worked very hard every day in service to our veterans. But I also want to say thank you to each of you for your past and continued service in leadership in our country. Particularly to — I know him as County Judge John Brieden— you know him as Past Commander John Brieden. He's a member of my leadership team in the Brazos Valley, and I appreciate his continued leadership, both state, nationally and locally.

Being here, we got to hear your resolutions and your agenda for the legislature. And I want to thank you for that as well, because it is your continued efforts that allow us to do the job we do in service to veterans. Thank you. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: Enhance the Lives of Disabled Persons Award**  
**Sioux Steel Company, Inc., Sioux Falls, South Dakota**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: 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 the many positive aspects of hiring disabled persons and thereby increase their employment opportunities.

The Award for Enhancing the Lives of the Disabled goes to the Sioux Steel Company of Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Accepting is owner Jimmie Rysdon. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: The American Legion National Award for Enhancing the Lives of the Disabled 2013, Presented to Sioux Steel Company, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, for an exceptional record in the Employment of Disabled Persons, presented at the 96th National Convention, Charlotte, North Carolina, August 27, 2014.*

JIMMIE RYSDON: Like most people, I wasn't prepared for a speech, but I just want to say this is truly an honor to receive this award, and there's no words that I can say that will justify the sacrifices that our veterans have made. We look forward to bringing them on at Sioux Steel Company. And I want to thank each and every one of you for your sacrifices. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: Michael Guty Homeless Veterans Outreach Award  
The American Legion of Oregon**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: The charge of The American Legion is to serve veterans and their families. This includes helping our homeless vets as they try reentering 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 is the Department of Oregon. Accepting the award is Homeless Veterans Chairman Robert Huff. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: The American Legion National Award Michael Guty Homeless Veterans Outreach 2013, Presented to The American Legion Family, Department of Oregon, for an exceptional effort toward the elimination of homelessness amongst veterans. Presented at the 96th Annual National Convention, Charlotte, North Carolina, August 27, 2014.*

ROBERT HUFF: I'd like to take this opportunity to thank The American Legion family in the Department of Oregon for all the work that we're doing and that we're continuing to do on our events and our programs to end homelessness in this country, and I'd like to thank the national organization and all members who are participating in this program. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: 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 or assisting veterans. We're equally certain that you will assist homeless veterans. Please tell other businesses about the reliability and work ethic of veterans. No veteran should be in need of a job, nor should veterans have to live on the streets. Thank you and congratulations to all of our award winners. *(Applause)*

The Chair recognizes Brett P. Reistad of Virginia, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Legislation, for the purpose of making a report.

**Report: Convention Committee on Legislation  
Brett Reistad, Virginia**

The National Convention Committee on Legislation met on Sunday, August 24, 2014, in the Westin Trade conference room in Charlotte, North Carolina. There were 44 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 following a motion from Jim Whitfield, Department of Missouri. John Lenotte, a delegate from the Department of Massachusetts was elected Secretary following a motion from Hank Robards, Department of Illinois.

During the new business portion of the meeting the recently enacted law, the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014, was reviewed and discussed. The Legislation Convention Committee did not receive any resolutions for consideration or action.

A motion by Jim Willis, Department of Oregon to allow the Chairman and Secretary to make technical corrections to the Committee Report, as necessary and appropriate was unanimously approved and adopted by the Legislative Convention Committee. A final motion offered by Jeff Joyner, Department of North Carolina was seconded and also unanimously approved to authorize the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Legislation.

National Commander Dellinger, as a duly authorized Delegate to this Convention from the Department of Virginia, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: We have a motion on the floor. Is there a second? ... *Second.* Any discussion? Hearing no discussion, all those in favor of the motion signify by saying aye. Opposed? The report of Legislation is adopted.

**Presentation: Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: I now have the pleasure of presenting the Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award to the department that raised the most money for the Child Welfare Foundation during the past program year. Ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure for me to present this award to the Department of Ohio. (*Applause*)

*ANNOUNCER: The Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award presented by The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to The American Legion Department of Ohio for the program year 2013-2014. 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 DELLINGER: 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. (*Applause*)

*ANNOUNCER: The U.S. "Udie" Grant Legacy Award presented by The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to the Department of Florida for the program year 2013-2014 in recognition of Outstanding Support for The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. We thank you. (Applause)*

CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT BOLAND: Commander Dellinger, I have the honor to be the president of the National Child Welfare Foundation, and it's indeed an honor today to present you with a gold lapel diamond pin from the Child Welfare Foundation on behalf of the board of directors for the foundation. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: If anyone has donations to the Child Welfare Foundation I will now accept those on stage. Those presenting checks should proceed to the microphone, announce the amount and donor, and go to the front, on the floor, for a photograph.

*... At this time, National Vice Commander Rakestraw assumed the Chair.*

**Donations to the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation**

DELEGATE MILLER (AZ): Scott Miller, John Ivens Post 42 Grand Canyon, Arizona, \$500 Child Welfare Foundation in honor of Past Post Commander Kenneth Talakte.

DELEGATE WEIBLE (ND): Don Weible, department commander, North Dakota. We have a check for \$1,344.71.

DELEGATE GOODIN (MO): Charles Goodin. The Department of Missouri has an additional \$332.

DELEGATE SUCHY (NE): Don Suchy, Department of Nebraska. Home of the Cornhuskers, home of the leading candidate for national commander, a check for \$2,107.64.

DELEGATE MURRAY (CT): Bob Murray from the Department of Connecticut, home of Electric Boat submarines, Sikorsky helicopters, and UConn Huskies, has an additional check for \$1,500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WY): Past Post Commander for Husted-Pendleton Post 14 in Laramie, Wyoming, we've donated \$2,000 to the Child Welfare Foundation.

DELEGATE LASHUS (MA): Mr. Commander, Milton Lashus from the state of Massachusetts. On behalf of Department Commander William Chisholm, we have a check here for the Child Welfare Foundation for \$913.

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

*... At this time National Commander Dellinger resumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Thank you, Peter. The Chair recognizes Richard Anderson of Connecticut, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Americanism, for the purpose of a report.

**Report: Convention Committee on Americanism  
Richard W. Anderson, Connecticut, Chairman**

To the 96th Annual National Convention of The American Legion, Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26-28, 2014.

Forty-four members of your Convention Committee on Americanism met at 8:30 a.m. on Sunday, August 24, 2014, in the Westin Charlotte, Providence Ballroom, Section One, Lobby Level, Charlotte, North Carolina to discuss matters of Americanism-related resolutions assigned to the committee.

The committee organized by electing Richard Anderson (CT), Chairman; Joseph Caouette (NH), Vice Chairman; and Larry Price (SD), as the Secretary.

The committee discussed twenty-two 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 Ron Moore (FR) and seconded by David King (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.

Twenty-two resolutions were considered with the following disposition:

**Resolution No. 27: School Prayer****Origin: Montana****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, Americans have historically believed in seeking God's protection and guidance through prayer; and

WHEREAS, The value of expressing spiritual convictions through public prayer has been recognized as a firm basis on which to conduct public proceedings; and

WHEREAS, Supreme Court decisions during the early 1960's have had the effect of severely restricting the practice of any manner of public prayer, even though these decisions simply addressed prescribed or compulsory prayer; and

WHEREAS, This restriction is most evident in our nation's public schools where a concurrent moral and spiritual decline is clearly manifested; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American reaffirms its support for an amendment to the Constitution of the United States that would permit voluntary prayer in public buildings, including public schools and other public gatherings; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That Congress pass legislation to promote the concept of school prayer, in order to ensure that our nation's public school children have a daily opportunity to pray.**

### **Resolution No. 63: Return Patriotic Holidays to Traditional Dates**

**Origin: Nebraska**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, The dates of certain patriotic holidays have been changed from their original dates to create "three-day weekends"; and

WHEREAS, The time-honored traditional observances of these holidays has been eroded; and

WHEREAS, The majority of Americans view Memorial Day as a time for relaxation and leisure recreation rather than as a solemn occasion and a time to reflect and pay tribute to the American servicemen and women who sacrificed their lives in defense of our nation; and

WHEREAS, By urging the ringing of bells in our communities for one minute on traditional Memorial Day, May 30, will help Americans to realize that the true purpose of this day is to pay tribute to those who have given so much for their country; and

WHEREAS, Our hope for the future has been made possible because our servicemen and women have made sacrifices in order to secure freedom for America and the ringing of community bells is a fitting way to observe traditional Memorial Day in the years to come; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion calls upon the Congress of the United States to restore the official observance of Lincoln's Birthday to February 12, Washington's Birthday to February 22, Memorial Day to May 30 and Columbus Day to October 12 each year; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the passage of federal legislation that would result in an annual Presidential proclamation calling on all American institutions, public and private, to toll their bells for one minute, beginning at 11:00 a.m. on the traditional Memorial Day, May 30, in remembrance of the servicemen and women who died defending our nation and our freedom.**

### **Resolution No. 117: The Boy Scouts of America and the Department of Defense**

**Origin: Missouri**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, The Eighty-Second National Convention of The American Legion in Milwaukee, Wisconsin passed Resolution 334 titled "Support of Boy Scouts of America" which reiterated The American Legion's longstanding support of the Boy Scouts of America in its efforts to maintain and practice traditional family values with regard to their membership and their leadership standards; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, as chartered by the United States Congress, pledges to "transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy"; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion endorses the concept that the perpetuation of these principles may best be initiated by an enlightened public achieved through the implementation of

educational practices offered in the homes, in our schools and through public wide programs organized and developed for this purpose by organizations like the Boy Scouts of America; and

WHEREAS, The Supreme Court of the United States has upheld the constitutional right of the Boy Scouts of America to set their own standards and membership policies because an indispensable part of being free is the right of individuals to hold moral positions and to associate with others who share those positions; and

WHEREAS, Despite the Supreme Court having ruled in favor of the Boy Scouts' freedom to associate with those sharing their moral views and to not associate with those who do not share their moral views, the Boy Scouts have been subjected to a continual barrage of attacks by groups and individuals holding opposing views; and

WHEREAS, These opposition groups have been successful in eliminating the Scouting program from all branches and installations of the U.S. Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that this unrelenting assault against the Boy Scouts is not a unique occurrence but a part of an orchestrated effort to denigrate, damage and systematically destroy traditional American values, as embodied in the Boy Scouts of America, The American Legion, the Flag of the United States, the Pledge of Allegiance, and numerous other embodiments of Americanism; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion express its steadfast opposition to Department of Defense policies that prohibit the chartering of Boy Scout units by components of the Armed Forces of the United States and prohibit the use of Department of Defense (DOD) installations and facilities worldwide by the Boy Scouts of America; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion use every executive, legislative and judicial avenue available to restore longstanding policies of cooperation between the Department of Defense and the Boy Scouts of America that will allow Boy Scout units the right to use DOD facilities and to authorize components of the active duty military, National Guard and reserve units to charter or sponsor Boy Scout units without fear of legal reprisal.**

### **Resolution No. 118: Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance**

**Origin: Missouri**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, Since the earliest days of our republic, Congress has exercised its constitutional power to establish a uniform Rule of Naturalization; and

WHEREAS, The Rules of Naturalization, as established by Congress, requires an oath of allegiance and renunciation of all prior allegiances as a condition of naturalization; and

WHEREAS, The Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance serves as a contract between the applicant for citizenship and the United States government in which the applicant, in return for the benefits and privileges received, agrees to

1. Renounce all allegiance to any foreign state or sovereign; and
2. Support and defend the U.S. Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, both foreign and domestic; and
3. Bear "true faith and allegiance" to the United States of America; and
4. Bear arms, perform noncombatant service, or perform work of national importance on behalf of the United States of America when required by law; and
5. Take this oath without mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that naturalization is a privilege, not a right, to be granted only in accordance with the conditions established by the Congress; and

WHEREAS, In taking the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance, the immigrant pledges to transfer their full political allegiance from his or her birth nation to the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, According to immigration experts, the great majority of immigrants applying for U.S. citizenship come from countries that "allow or encourage multiple citizenship"; and

WHEREAS, Many immigrant-sending countries, including Mexico, are actively promoting dual allegiance; and

WHEREAS, To retain allegiance to another constitution besides the U.S. Constitution, is inconsistent with the moral and philosophical foundations of American constitutional democracy, thus violating our core principles as outlined in the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance; and

WHEREAS, The integrity of the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance and the integrity of the entire citizenship naturalization process are challenged or compromised by the continuing increase in the number of U.S. citizens who hold multiple national allegiances; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion opposes any and all changes to the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance, as used in naturalization ceremonies, that would dilute or eliminate any of the following important and necessary elements of the oath:**

1. **Renunciation of all allegiances to foreign states or sovereignties; and**
2. **Support for and defense of the U.S. Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; and**
3. **Bear 'true faith and allegiance' to the United States of America; and**
4. **Bear arms, perform noncombatant service, or perform work of national importance on behalf of the United States of America; and**
5. **Take this oath without mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to prescribe the language that is used in the oath of renunciation and allegiance for purposes as outlined in the Immigration and Nationality Act; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the Congress of the United States to enact measures to prevent dual citizenship by naturalized U.S. citizens.**

#### **Resolution No. 119: Support Fairness for Immigrant Spouses**

**Origin: Missouri**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, The American Legion was founded by veterans who were concerned about the welfare of dependents of servicemen and women killed as a result of their service in World War I; and

WHEREAS, Current immigration law requires an immigrant spouse to be married to a citizen of the United States for two years before proceeding with a petition for legal permanent resident status; and

WHEREAS, The immigrant spouse's petition for permanent legal residence is canceled when the citizen spouse dies before the two-year threshold is reached; and

WHEREAS, Current law allows immigrant spouses of U.S. military personnel who die in combat or as a result of combat to continue their original petition for permanent resident status; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is committed to caring for the families of the servicemen and women who made the ultimate sacrifice by giving their lives in the furtherance of the interests of the United States; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to allow immigrant spouses of U.S. military personnel who die in training on military installations to continue their petition for permanent resident status without the current two-year eligibility restriction; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That the Immigration and Nationality Act be amended to waive the fees for posthumous citizenship assessed to surviving family members who lose a relative in**



**hostile combat while a member of the U.S. Armed Forces and who has a pending application for United States citizenship.**

**Resolution No. 204: Conscientious Objectors Tax Diversion**

**Origin: Wisconsin**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the United States of America provides for the common defense of all citizens; and

WHEREAS, The freedoms we enjoy and the security of our nation that we desire rests on the individual determination of each of us to help preserve it; and

WHEREAS, Legislation has been introduced in the Congress that would allow conscientious objectors to elect to have their income, estate, or gift tax be used for non-military purposes; and

WHEREAS, Implementation of such a practice could affect military strength and national security; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges Congress to oppose legislation that would give conscientious objectors a voice in diverting monies from military spending.**

**Resolution No. 213: English Language be Declared as the Official United States Language**

**Origin: Illinois**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who come from many ethnic backgrounds and who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, The United States has over its many year history been a haven and in most cases a new home for people from all over the world; and

WHEREAS, These Americans, although keeping their ethnic background alive, were urged to take advantage of our free educational system that taught them the English language, American history, and civics; and

WHEREAS, Many permanent residents and new citizens, although clinging to their ethnic backgrounds did with pride and determination take advantage of learning English; and

WHEREAS, Bilingual programs funded by the Department of Education are designed to teach with the primary instruction in the student's home language, while English is subjected to a secondary status; and

WHEREAS, These programs tend to encourage separatism, rather than a unification of purpose; and

WHEREAS, There exists alternative bilingual education programs which provide a more efficient transition to proficiency in the English language; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion shall sponsor and encourage legislation which would establish English as the official national language; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to encourage and fund alternative bilingual education programs to serve, as was intended, as a short intermediate step to achieve proficiency in the English language.**

**Resolution No. 270: Pledge of Allegiance**

**Origin: Iowa**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, In October 1970, The American Legion's National Executive Committee passed Resolution No. 13 titled "Defense and Respect for the United States Flag," that voiced

The American Legion's support for continuing the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in the nation's public schools; and

WHEREAS, In recent years, several states have passed legislation to encourage and authorize the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance in the schools within their state; and

WHEREAS, In 1954, The Congress of the United States reaffirmed the influence on government by a supreme power when it revised the Pledge of Allegiance by inserting the words "under God" as follows:

*I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all; and*

WHEREAS, Liberal judicial opinions and media coverage have questioned the propriety of reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools in the United States, citing the unconstitutionality in references to God; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, the Congress of the United States, and many other groups and organizations open their regular meetings by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion reiterate its continuing support for the Pledge of Allegiance in its current form, voicing opposition to any and all attempts to revise it beyond the version approved by Congress in 1954; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the nation's schools to include the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance by teachers and students in regular school activities and events; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion, at all levels, continue its unyielding support for the Pledge of Allegiance and its provisions of national loyalty by using all means practical to inform Americans about the belief in and the reliance in God by our nation's founders in forming our democratic Republic.**

### **Resolution No. 360: Constitutional Amendment to Protect the Flag of the United States**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, The American Legion has campaigned diligently for the passage of an amendment to the Constitution of the United States to protect the symbol of our nation, the Flag of the United States, from physical desecration; and

WHEREAS, Part of that campaign has included the founding of The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc., a coalition of civic, veteran, business and fraternal organizations which have come together to persuade Congress to propose a flag amendment; and

WHEREAS, The legislatures of all 50 states have indicated by memorial resolutions to the U.S. Congress that such an amendment to the U.S. Constitution is needed in view of the 1989 decision of the United States Supreme Court (*Texas v. Johnson*) that invalidated all flag protection laws; and

WHEREAS, Surveys have shown that over 80% of the American people support the passage of a flag amendment; and

WHEREAS, Flag protection amendments have passed the House of Representatives six times previously, only to fall short of the necessary two-thirds supermajority required in the Senate; and

WHEREAS, Since the time of the American Revolution millions of men and women have proudly defended our country under the "Stars & Stripes" and, as a last gesture of gratitude this emblem of our country is placed upon the coffin of veterans as a token of respect for services rendered to a grateful nation; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion continue to urge the Congress of the United States to propose and approve an amendment to the U.S.**

**Constitution that would allow the Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the Flag of the United States; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue its efforts through affiliation with The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. to bring to a successful conclusion the grassroots campaign to amend the Constitution of the United States of America in order to return to the people their right to protect the Flag from acts of physical desecration.**

**Resolution No. 358: Eliminate Damages and Attorney Fees in Establishment Clause Lawsuits**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, The American Legion, whose motto is “For God and Country” and has been since its founding by veterans of World War I in 1919, is leading a nationwide effort to combat the secular cleansing of our American heritage through Establishment Clause lawsuits; and

WHEREAS, Many Americans mistakenly believe that the words “separation of church and state” are included in the Constitution of the United States and provide the legal basis for removal of symbols with a religious aspect or references to God in our National Motto or to our country’s founders’ reliance on God, from veterans memorials, and other public lands, areas, monuments, buildings, seals, or ceremonies; and

WHEREAS, The First Amendment to the Constitution nowhere in fact mentions “separation of church and state,” nor “separation of state from religion,” but states only: *“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”*; and

WHEREAS, Judges in increasing numbers have issued orders in Establishment Clause cases that ban the Boy Scouts, ban the Ten Commandments, ban religious symbols at veterans memorials, ban the Pledge of Allegiance, ban historical religious symbols in the official seals of counties, and ban cities and the Department of Defense from assisting the Boy Scouts, and judges in such cases have awarded millions of dollars to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and others in attorney fees to be paid by taxpayers as authorized by 42 U.S. Code Section 1988, the Equal Access to Justice Act, 28 U.S. Code Section 2412, and/or other federal statutes; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that all federal statutes of the United States should be amended to rescind and repeal the authority Congress gave the courts to impose damages or attorney fees in Establishment Clause cases, as the threat of judge-ordered damages or attorney fees is being used as a club to compel local elected bodies, villages, towns, cities, counties, school boards, and state and federal agencies, to surrender to demands to remove or destroy symbols or expressions of a religious aspect from all areas of the public sphere for fear of imposition of damages or attorney fees to be paid by taxpayers, and is being used to chill private citizens from exercising the First Amendment right to seek redress by entering Establishment Clause lawsuits to defend symbols of and references to our American heritage, for fear that damages or attorney fees will be imposed upon them personally; and,

WHEREAS, The 86<sup>th</sup> National Convention of The American Legion, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, passed Resolution No. 326, titled “Preserve WWI Veterans Memorial in Mojave Desert,” which called on Congress to amend the Civil Rights Attorney Fees Act of 1976, 42 U.S. Code Section 1988, to prohibit the courts from awarding attorney fees under that statute in lawsuits brought to remove or destroy religious symbols; and

WHEREAS, The 87<sup>th</sup> National Convention of The American Legion, August 23, 24, and 25, 2005, passed Resolution No. 139, titled “Amend the Equal Access to Justice Act,” which called on Congress to amend 28 U.S. Code Section 2412, or any other similar federal statute, to limit remedies to declaratory and injunctive relief only and to eliminate court-ordered attorney fee awards in cases brought under the Establishment of Religion Clause of the U.S. Constitution; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the Congress of the United States to amend the Civil Rights Attorney Fees Act of 1976, 42 U.S. Code Section 1988, the Equal access to Justice Act, 28 U.S. Code 2412, and any and all other federal statutes, to limit remedies to injunctive relief and declaratory relief only, and to rescind the authority of the courts to award attorney fees to the prevailing party in lawsuits brought under the Establishment of Religion Clause in the U.S. Constitution.**

**Resolution No. 359: Oppose Flag Code Change Conduct During Hoisting, Lowering or Passing of the Flag or During the National Anthem**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, The American Legion is recognized as one of the country's foremost authorities on the proper display of the United States flag; and

WHEREAS, Title 4, Chapter 1, Section 9, United States Code previously stated, "During the ceremony of hoisting or lowering the flag or when the flag is passing in a parade or in review, all persons present except those in uniform should face the flag and stand at attention with the right hand over the heart. Those present in uniform should render the military salute. When not in uniform, men should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Aliens should stand at attention. The salute to the flag in a moving column should be rendered at the moment the flag passes."; and

WHEREAS, Title 36, Chapter 3, Section 301, United States Code previously stated, "During a rendition of the National Anthem when the flag is displayed all present except those in uniform should stand at attention facing the flag with the right hand over the heart; men not in uniform should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold the headdress at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart; and individuals in uniform should give the military salute at the first note of the anthem and maintain that position until the last note."; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 110-181, 110th Congress, amended Title 4, Chapter 1, Section 9, United States Code to read: "During the ceremony of hoisting or lowering the flag or when the flag is passing in a parade or in review, those present in uniform should render the military salute. Members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may render the military salute. All other persons present should face the flag and stand at attention with their right hand over the heart, or if applicable, remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Citizens of other countries should stand at attention. All such conduct toward the flag in a moving column should be rendered at the moment the flag passes."; and

WHEREAS Public Law 110-417, 110th Congress amended Title 36, Chapter 3, Section 301, United States Code to read: "During a rendition of the national anthem when the flag is displayed individuals in uniform should give the military salute at the first note of the anthem and maintain that position until the last note; members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may render the military salute in the manner provided for individuals in uniform; and all other persons present should face the flag and stand at attention with their right hand over the heart, and men not in uniform, if applicable, should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart"; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion appreciates the sincere intent of the current law to recognize all veterans by authorizing the military salute as an option to the traditional means of honoring the flag by placing the right hand over the heart; and

WHEREAS, Military regulations were affected, which previously specified that members not in uniform face the flag and stand at attention with the right hand over the heart, if covered, men shall remove the headdress and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart; and

WHEREAS, Title 4, Chapter 1, Section 4, United States Code states, "The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag should be rendered by standing at attention facing the flag with the right

hand over the heart. When not in uniform men should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Persons in uniform should remain silent, face the flag, and render the military salute"; and

WHEREAS, The sentence "Members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may render the military salute," raises the concern that Legionnaires, while wearing a baseball cap or other casual headdress would render a military salute; and

WHEREAS, The non-veteran public may soon follow the lead of those veterans and render the military salute as the flag is hoisted, lowered, is passing or during a rendition of the national anthem when the flag is displayed; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That those sections of the U.S. Flag Code prescribing that members of the Armed Forces and veterans out of uniform may render the military salute during hoisting, lowering, or passing of the United States flag and/or during a rendition of the national anthem when the flag is displayed, causes confusion leading to breaches of flag etiquette, to include proper conduct during the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to repeal that portion of Title 4, Chapter 1, Section 9, United States Code permitting members of the Armed Forces and veterans out of uniform to render a military salute during hoisting, lowering, or passing of the United States flag; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to repeal that portion of Title 36, Chapter 3, Section 301, United States Code permitting members of the Armed Forces and veterans out of uniform to render a military salute during a rendition of the national anthem when the flag is displayed.**

#### **Resolution No. 357: Star Spangled Banner**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, The Star Spangled Banner became our national anthem on March 3, 1931, when President Herbert Hoover signed Public Law 823; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that many millions of Americans cherish and respect the currently accepted version, both words and music, of "The Star Spangled Banner," such version being the "Service Version" prepared in 1918 by the War Department for use in Army and Navy song books; and

WHEREAS, It has become customary and traditional to sing or play "The Star Spangled Banner" before sporting events and other large gatherings of people in this country in a traditional manner reflecting a solemn pride, dignity and respect; and

WHEREAS, Many American Legionnaires have been offended by disrespectful and unconventional playing and singing of the national anthem at sporting events; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, by action of the 78th National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah, went on record supporting establishment of a national day of observance for "The Star Spangled Banner;" now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion encourage and recommend the playing of the national anthem at all sporting events and that it be performed in its original customary and traditional rendition; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge radio and television networks and stations to desist from pre-empting with commercial advertisements the singing and playing of our National Anthem and the raising and/or lowering of our Flag; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion is opposed to any changes in the words and music of the national anthem as adopted under Public Law 823 of the 71st Congress; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion promote the establishment of March 3 of each year as a national day of observance for “The Star Spangled Banner” and that the patriotic observance of this day stress the origin of “The Star Spangled Banner.”**

**Resolution No. 69: The Purchase of American Made U.S. Flags**

**Origin: Massachusetts**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

**(As amended)**

WHEREAS, The United States has been losing most of its manufacturing capabilities to foreign countries; and

WHEREAS, The United States government recognized the importance of stimulating the economy in order to capture some of the jobs lost to foreign competitors; and

WHEREAS, The manufacture and use of foreign made American flags has flooded every sector of American life; and

WHEREAS, The American people must be made aware of how they can help themselves to restore the economic success they have enjoyed in the past; and

WHEREAS, The Massachusetts legislature this year passed a law that all states agencies will purchase American made flags; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge all government agencies at the local, state, and federal levels to insure that all American flags purchased for use by these agencies be American made; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion embark upon a program to urge the American public to buy American made flags for their personal use and for the use of their community, fraternal, religious and social organizations.**

**Received and Recorded**

**Resolution No. 205 (WI): English Language be used in Naturalization Ceremonies**

**Referred to the Standing Commission on Americanism**

**Resolution No. 4 (FL): National Flight Academy Educational Program**

**Resolution No. 33 (CA): 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policy of Remembrance**

**Resolution No. 64 (SC): National Vietnam Veterans Day**

**Resolution No. 124 (DC): Voter Eligibility and Identification**

**Resolution No. 193 (NY): Uniform Eligibility Requirements for Boys State**

**Resolution No. 210 (VA): Information Authorized for Background Screening Checks**

**Resolution No. 224 (OH): Revise Eligibility Requirements for The American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year**

**Resolution No. 268 (CT): Certificate of Recognition for all Senior Ranks of Scouting**

**Children & Youth**

**Herbert J. Petit, Jr., Louisiana, Chairman**

The Children & Youth Committee met on Sunday, August 24, 2014 at 9:00 a.m. in the Westin Charlotte, Grand Ballroom, Section B, Level Two. The meeting was called to order by Jason R. Kees (IL), Manager, Americanism Division. Roll Call was taken and a quorum was formed as there were 42 members of the committee present. The meeting was organized by electing delegate Herbert J. Petit of Louisiana as Chairman and John Konkol of New York as Secretary.

The committee considered fourteen resolutions. Fourteen resolutions were approved.

**Resolution No. 5: Financially Assist Families Faced by Catastrophic Illness of Their Children****Origin: Louisiana****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, A catastrophic illness is any illness or condition, acute or chronic, for which expenses are incurred that are not fully covered by a private insurer, federal or state health care assistance, or other financial resource; and

WHEREAS, When a child becomes ill or disabled, the cost of medical care alone can be catastrophic for the family; and

WHEREAS, Families of any income level may be faced with high uncovered medical expenses for their children; and

WHEREAS, Families with or without insurance are vulnerable to extraordinary medical bills; and

WHEREAS, Several states have enacted legislation to establish Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Funds to help families bear the excessive financial burdens associated with the care of children with special health care needs and disabilities; and

WHEREAS, These funds have been proven effective and are designed to act as a safety net for families from all walks of life who have excessive expenses related to a child's medical needs; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges the federal government to expand the present federal Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant programs to include catastrophic illness; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That department and post leadership are encouraged to urge state governments to enact legislation to assist financially those individual families faced by the catastrophic illness of their children in order to maintain the integrity of the family.**

**Resolution No. 6: Support Funding Comprehensive Health Care for Children & Youth Programs****Origin: Louisiana****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, The American Legion has and will continue to do everything possible to ensure that every child has a home, health, education, character, and opportunity; and

WHEREAS, Since its inception, the Maternal and Child Health Services Title V Block Grant has provided a foundation for ensuring the health of our nation's mothers and children; and

WHEREAS, The Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant has operated as a Federal-State partnership for more than 77 years; and

WHEREAS, When the Social Security Act was passed in 1935, the Federal Government, through Title V, pledged its support of state efforts to extend and improve health and welfare services for mothers and children; and

WHEREAS, Title V funds are used by states and jurisdictions to implement a wide range of maternal and child health care programs (assessment, diagnosis and treatment for low-income children, long-term care for special needs children, rehabilitation services for blind and disabled children, prenatal care for women, and childhood immunization) and to develop comprehensive, family-centered, systems of care for children with special health care needs; and

WHEREAS, These programs are dependent upon the annual appropriation of funds by the Congress of the United States; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion affirms its support of the programs as outlined by the Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant contained under Title V of the Social Security Act and urges the Congress to appropriate funds that meet or exceed current funding levels, to include all programs related to the Comprehensive Health Care for Children and Youth.**

**Resolution No. 7: Funding for Drug Trafficking Prevention Programs****Origin: Louisiana****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, The illegal trafficking of drugs into the United States is one of the greatest threats to the welfare and safety of our citizens, particularly our youth; and

WHEREAS, The enemies of our nation and way of life hope to destroy us from within by debilitating our most precious resource for the future, our youth; and

WHEREAS, The economic and social costs of drug abuse exceed \$180 billion annually; and

WHEREAS, The efforts to halt the entry of such illegal drugs may be seen as a war of will and resources — a war that at the present we are not winning; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the President and Congress of the United States to appropriate funds that meet or exceed current funding levels for state, federal, and military drug trafficking prevention programs.**

**Resolution No. 8: Prevention of Child Sexual Exploitation****Origin: Louisiana****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, The sexual victimization of children is overwhelming in magnitude, yet largely unreported and underreported; and

WHEREAS, Statistics show that one in four girls and one in six boys are sexually abused before they reach the age of 18; and

WHEREAS, Nearly 70 percent of all reported sexual assaults occur to children ages 17 and under and it is believed that as many as 73 percent of children do not report the abuse for a least one year and 45 percent do not report their abuse for 5 years or more; and

WHEREAS, The widespread use of the Internet to sexually victimize children presents an even broader threat to the safety of children; and

WHEREAS, According to Online Victimization of Youth: Five Years Later conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice, one in seven children receive unwanted sexual solicitations online and one in three children are exposed to unwanted sexually explicit material; and

WHEREAS, By far the most prevalent exploitive act reported to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children is the production and distribution of pornographic images of children; and

WHEREAS, The lives of the children featured in these illegal images are forever altered, not only by the exploitation itself, but by the permanent record of it; and

WHEREAS, The impact of these terrible acts can devastate families and put children at risk of depression, disassociation, and post traumatic stress, symptoms that can last well into adulthood; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support appropriate legislation aimed at the prevention, investigation and prosecution of child sexual exploitation; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion be authorized to collaborate with national and state agencies and organizations involved in the prevention of child sexual exploitation as determined by the Americanism Commission to the end that The American Legion can maintain an effective role in preventing child sexual exploitation; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That departments and posts are encouraged to actively raise community awareness about the prevalence of sexual exploitation of children and are encouraged to cooperate with law enforcement agencies, government entities and public/private organizations that seek to empower the public to take immediate and direct action to enforce a zero tolerance policy regarding child sexual exploitation.**



**Resolution No. 9: Oppose Any Attempt to Weaken Present Laws Governing Penalties for the Production, Sale and Distribution of Pornographic or Obscene materials to Minors****Origin: Louisiana****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, Since 1960, The American Legion has maintained a position of complete opposition to the production, sale and distribution of pornographic or obscene materials to minors (defined as children under 18 years old); and

WHEREAS, Present laws forbid the production, sale and distribution of pornographic materials to minors; and

WHEREAS, Any attempt to eliminate such protective laws from state and/or federal criminal codes would have a negative impact on our youth and society in general; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion strongly opposes any attempt to weaken our present laws governing the penalties for the production, sale and distribution of pornographic or obscene materials to minors.**

**Resolution No. 10: Support Efforts to Immunize all Children****Origin: Louisiana****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long recognized that there is no place in civilized society for communicable diseases; and

WHEREAS, Vaccination is the best protection against 16 major diseases; and

WHEREAS, Every state sets its immunization requirements for school-aged children; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion reaffirms its position of supporting the fullest use of any licensed vaccine to immunize children; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That departments and posts are urged to actively raise awareness about local treatment and immunization programs so that children in every community may achieve the fullest protection against communicable diseases.**

**Resolution No. 11: Protect Children From Unrestricted Media****Origin: Louisiana****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, In the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion we pledge "To uphold the Constitution of the United States" and "To maintain law and order"; and

WHEREAS, Movies, TV shows and TV news, and the Internet have become very explicit in describing and depicting various types of violence; and

WHEREAS, Organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) have taken it upon themselves to defend such actions as the constitutional right of freedom of speech of the author, regardless of the potential consequences to minor children; and

WHEREAS, God has been rejected as a violation of civil rights; and

WHEREAS, The void has been filled with violence, vulgarity, racism, and every other form of moral depravation that can be imagined; and

WHEREAS, Laws governing such productions allows for a vast expansion of audiences at all media levels promoting a violent country without restraint; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion promote efforts to restrict the excessive use of violence, vulgarity and other forms of moral depravity in movies, TV programs, TV news and the Internet; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED**, That departments and posts are encouraged to conduct awareness campaigns to educate their members, their families and the general public about the potential dangers the Internet and other forms of electronic media pose to children and teenagers; and, be it finally

**RESOLVED**, That the Americanism Commission disseminate educational materials, when feasible, to inform department and post leadership about the potential dangers inherent in the media and Internet, in an effort to return the country to the God-given principles of life, liberty, and the true pursuit of happiness.

**Resolution No. 214: Establish “National Family Week”**

**Origin: Illinois**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, One of the principles guiding The American Legion's Children & Youth programs is to maintain the integrity of the family unit; and

WHEREAS, The family unit is the center of our affections and the foundation of our American society; and

WHEREAS, No institution can take the family unit's place in giving meaning to human life and stability in our society; and

WHEREAS, It is fitting that official recognition be given to the importance of strengthening family life; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges the President of the United States and the Congress to establish "National Family Week" during the Thanksgiving holiday week as an annual observance.

**Resolution No. 221: Locate Missing Children and Prevent Child Victimization**

**Origin: Illinois**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, Each day in the United States, an average of 2,191 children, 17 years and younger, are reported missing or disappear by abduction, run away or are lost to some unknown cause; and

WHEREAS, The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) was created in 1984 as a central resource and data clearinghouse for law enforcement, victims and their families, to aid in fighting for the safe recovery of missing children and the protection of all children from sexual exploitation; and

WHEREAS, Today more children come home safely than at any time in our nation's history, law enforcement is better prepared, and families are more alert and aware than ever before because of the tireless work of NCMEC and law enforcement; and

WHEREAS, NCMEC's overall recovery rate for missing children is 97 percent, demonstrating that the current system is working due to effective response of law enforcement, technological advances, and the general public paying attention to missing children photos; and

WHEREAS, Although NCMEC has made a significant impact in tackling this daunting problem, there is much that remains to be done for too many children still do not make it home, and too many are still victims of sexual predators; and

WHEREAS, Even one child disappearing is the concern of all responsible persons; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support appropriate legislation aimed at locating missing children and preventing child victimization; and, be it further

**RESOLVED**, That The American Legion urge Congress to appropriate funds that meet or exceed current funding levels for the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children; and, be it further

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion be authorized to collaborate with national and state missing and exploited children agencies and organizations as determined by the Americanism Commission to the end that The American Legion can maintain an effective role, at all levels, in locating missing children and preventing child exploitation; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That the departments and posts are encouraged to actively increase the public's awareness of child victimization and its detrimental effects on the children and youth of our society and are urged to cooperate with credible organizations and agencies that seek to locate missing children in their states and communities.**

**Resolution No. 222: National School Lunch Program**

**Origin: Illinois**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, There has been an expression of concern by health authorities and various national organizations with an interest in the status of proper nutrition among young people; and

WHEREAS, The National School Lunch Program and other federally-supported nutrition programs for children have demonstrated their effectiveness as evidenced by the reduction of health problems and improved performance among children; and

WHEREAS, In Fiscal Year 2012, more than 31.6 million children each day got their lunch through the National School Lunch Program; and

WHEREAS, The National School Lunch Program cost \$11.6 billion in FY 2012; and

WHEREAS, Since 1941, The American Legion has supported the National School Lunch Program and other related programs of nutrition for children; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That Congress appropriate funds at or exceeding current funding levels for the National School Lunch Program.**

**Resolution No. 240: Prevent Child Maltreatment**

**Origin: Illinois**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, The American Legion has, since its inception, voiced and demonstrated active concern about the health and welfare of children; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau reported that in 2012 that an estimated 3.4 million cases of child maltreatment were reported to child protective service agencies and 601,800 cases of child maltreatment were substantiated; and

WHEREAS, The federal government defines child abuse and neglect in the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) of 2010 as "Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act, which presents an imminent risk of serious harm"; and

WHEREAS, According to CAPTA, child maltreatment encompasses physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and psychological maltreatment; and

WHEREAS, All responsible citizens have a valuable role to play in building strong communities in which families and children are valued and supported, and in which children are safe from all forms of maltreatment; and

WHEREAS, There are concerned adults who care about this problem and will work to combat its degenerative effect on our society; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support appropriate legislation aimed at preventing child maltreatment; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion be authorized to collaborate with national and state child maltreatment prevention organizations as determined by the Americanism**

**Commission to the end that The American Legion can maintain an effective role in the promotion of child maltreatment prevention programs; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That departments and posts are urged to cooperate in all ways possible with organizations and agencies that advocate for child maltreatment prevention and are urged to promote and increase the public's awareness of child maltreatment and its detrimental effects on the children and youth of our society; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges all educators, coaches, school administrators and all others responsible for children in any capacity to familiarize themselves with the warning signs of all forms of child maltreatment and report any suspected maltreatment to the proper authorities and ensure that these children are referred to the appropriate child protective service in their community; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue through its Children & Youth program, at all levels, to educate the public of their obligations and duties with respect to reporting suspected cases of child maltreatment.**

**Resolution No. 241: Programs and Organizations that Promote Child Safety**

**Origin: Illinois**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, unintentional injury remains the leading cause of death among children ages 17 and under in the United States; and

WHEREAS, In 2010, everyday, more than 22,770 children ages 17 and under were injured seriously enough to require medical treatment, totaling more than 8.3 million children each year; and

WHEREAS, A combination of education, environmental improvements, engineering modifications, enactment and enforcement of legislation and regulations, economic incentives, community empowerment and program evaluation is effective at reducing the incidence and severity of unintentional death and disability; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support appropriate legislation aimed at preventing or reducing unintentional injury among children and adolescents; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion is authorized to collaborate with the leading national safety organizations as determined by the Americanism Commission to the end that The American Legion can maintain an effective role in the promotion of adequate child safety programs; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That departments and posts are encouraged to actively raise the public's awareness on organized safety commissions and are urged to actively promote child safety at the state and local levels.**

**Resolution No. 242: Reducing or Preventing Teenage Pregnancy**

**Origin: Illinois**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long been concerned with the health and quality of life issues surrounding its young people; and

WHEREAS, Despite declines since 1991, the United States has a significantly higher teen birth rate than any other developed nation; and

WHEREAS, In 2011, approximately 330,000 births occurred among teens ages 15-19; and

WHEREAS, Childbearing has adverse consequences for teenage mothers and particularly for their children, contributing directly to mothers and their children being poorly educated, unmarried and lacking job skills; and

WHEREAS, The offspring of teen mothers have high rates of illness, mortality, educational and emotional problems, and often are the victims of child abuse at the hands of parents too immature to understand their baby's needs; and

WHEREAS, Preventing teen pregnancy is an effective way to address a range of other pressing social issues including poverty, child and family well-being, responsible fatherhood, workforce development, and out-of-wedlock childbearing; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support appropriate legislation aimed at reducing or preventing teen pregnancy; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion is authorized to collaborate with national and state teen pregnancy prevention organizations as determined by the Americanism Commission to the end that The American Legion can maintain an effective role in the promotion of adequate teen pregnancy prevention programs; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That departments and posts are encouraged to actively raise the public's awareness about organizations and agencies that seek to educate teenagers on the advantages of delaying pregnancy.**

**Resolution No. 243: Support for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention**

**Origin: Illinois**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism**

WHEREAS, The Americanism Commission is vitally concerned about the violent crimes committed by juveniles in this nation each year; and

WHEREAS, The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is organized: to develop and encourage the implementation of national standards for the administration of juvenile justice; to assist state and local governments in removing juveniles from jails and lockups for adults; to develop and implement effective methods of preventing and reducing juvenile delinquency, including methods with specific focus on maintaining and strengthening the family unit so that juveniles may be retained in their homes; to develop effective programs to prevent delinquency, to divert juveniles from traditional juvenile justice systems and to provide critically needed alternatives to institutionalization; and to coordinate all federal juvenile delinquency programs and all federal programs related to missing and exploited children; and

WHEREAS, The Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention program now promoted by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has proved effective in many states; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and its programs; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That the President and Congress meet or exceed current funding levels for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.**

A motion was made by W. Fraizer Brinley (CT) and seconded by Glenn Hickman (OH) that the Children & Youth Committee authorize the chairman and secretary to sign and deliver the report on behalf of the committee to the Americanism Convention Committee for inclusion in its report to the National Convention. The motion was approved.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: As a duly elected and registered delegate for the Department of Connecticut, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: We have a motion on the floor. Do I have a second? ...*Second.* Any discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor of the motion signify by saying aye. Opposed? The report of Americanism is adopted.

Having completed the adoption of the Americanism report, it is appropriate to announce the winners of Americanism awards.

**Presentation: Frank Belgrano, Jr. Trophy**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: 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 Boy Scouts of America program. This year's winner is the Department of North Carolina. Please welcome Department of North Carolina Boy Scout Committee Chairman Cary McMaster. *(Applause)*

CARY MCMASTER: I would like to accept this award on behalf of the Department of North Carolina. We are very active in the Scouting program and ensure that our different posts throughout the state charters Boy Scout units. Also Jerry Hedrick was very instrumental in our Scouting award, and he will truly be missed. I also accept this award on behalf of Jerry L. Hedrick. Thank you. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: 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 Pennsylvania. *(Applause)*

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (PA): On behalf of Pennsylvania, I'm very proud to accept this award. The school awards are very important. One of the things that comes to mind is Past National Commander Fang Wong once said he received this award and that's what inspired him. And hopefully out of all the awards we gave out in Pennsylvania, there's another Fang Wong that's going to be coming up and standing up here in a red hat one day. Thank you. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: 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 Virginia. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy awarded to The American Legion Department of Virginia in recognition of the most outstanding Americanism program presented at the 96th National Convention of The American Legion, Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26-28, 2014. Daniel M. Dellinger, National Commander and Richard W. Anderson, Chairman The American Legion National Americanism Commission.*

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (VA): We are very proud to accept this award on behalf of all the posts in the Department of Virginia who work hard every day at Americanism, and we are very humbled and proud to receive this award. Thank you. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: Certificate of Appreciation  
Cleveland County American Legion World Series Committee**

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: A couple observations. First, last year they set a new attendance record of over 104,000 attendees for the week. This year they set a new record of over 110,000 attendees. Give them a big hand. *(Applause)*

If you were not fortunate enough to attend the exciting American Legion World Series last week in Shelby, North Carolina, I hope you were able to view the final game on ESPN or the other games on ESPN3. The final score of the championship game was lopsided, but there was no questioning of the heart, determination, and character of both the Brooklawn, New Jersey, and Midland, Michigan, teams. *(Applause)*

It wasn't just about one game, but the entire tournament. It was the culmination of many years of hard work between two great bodies, The American Legion and the Cleveland County American Legion World Series Committee. The people of Cleveland County were just outstanding in their support of this great event. It is an honor for me to recognize the people most responsible for the great success and new levels of attention now given to The American Legion World Series. First, please welcome the Cleveland County American Legion World Series Committee. *(Applause)*

Before I make the group presentation, I would like to offer these individual certificates of appreciation to Chairmen Eddie Holbrook and Jim Horn.

*ANNOUNCER: The American Legion Certificate of Appreciation presented to Edwin C. Holbrook and Jim Horn, Shelby, North Carolina, in grateful appreciation for your leadership, management and enthusiasm for making The American Legion Baseball World Series project an overwhelming success. While many were involved, and many contributed, no one deserves kudos more than you for your exemplary dedication and service to the success of this endeavor. Well done! Presented at the 2014 National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina. Signed: Daniel M. Dellinger, National Commander and Daniel S. Wheeler, National Adjutant. (Applause)*

EDDIE HOLBROOK: Thank you very much, commander. Just a couple of words. First of all, the kudos and the credit goes to all these people over here in the green that have made all of this work culminate into fruition that it has. Our goal from the beginning has been one thing really. We wanted to make The American Legion proud that they had chosen Cleveland County and Shelby, North Carolina, as the permanent home. We wanted you to be able to go home and say, "We made the right selection." We're proud to be a partner with you and thank you so much for allowing us to be a partner. *(Applause)*

JIM HORN: As Eddie has said, we really do appreciate the many, many volunteers that we've had since forming our committee. They have worked just as hard as they possibly could and we are proud of our community. We are proud of our supporters, and we are proud of The American Legion for the backing that you have given us. We will continue to strive to make you proud of what we do with The American Legion World Series. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: I have to say something about Jim Horn. I was there for about four days and then came back for the final game. But I ran into one of their contributors, and he told me that Jim Horn could sell a glass of water to a drowning man. *(Laughter)*

I would ask Past National Commander Paul Morin and Past National Commander Jake Comer to come forward.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Thank you, commander. Before I make this presentation, I just want to express my gratitude also to Eddie and Jim and the whole committee of Shelby. Any one of you that likes baseball as much as I do, you must get to Shelby, North Carolina. I've been there for three years, and every year I find more and more excitement when we arrive there. It is the most outstanding place.

And, Jim, I was there for every game. A young man was sitting behind me. We got talking about Major League Baseball with my brother and him and Minor League Baseball and American Legion Baseball. And he is the brightest baseball enthusiast I have ever seen, never realizing he was your grandson. He was quite a guy, quite a boy.

"The American Legion Certificate of Appreciation presented to Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, Past National Commander 2006-2007, in grateful appreciation for your vision that The American Legion Baseball World Series would be held at the same location each year

and be televised nationally throughout the United States and in recognition of your leadership which made this come to pass in Shelby, North Carolina, presented at the 2014 National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, attested by Daniel M. Dellinger, National Commander, and Daniel S. Wheeler, National Adjutant."

Paul, I'm so proud to present this to you. *(Applause)*

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Thank you, Commander Jake, Commander Dan and all assembled. The American Legion was founded by leaders who had vision. No one did that by an individual. When I served as your commander, I had some thoughts for The American Legion World Series, to put an individual on that committee to carry that. He became my go-to guy. Today he serves as your national adjutant. He truly deserves this award. This organization does not do anything alone.

I thank you for this award, this certificate. I thank the national staff. I thank Jim and Eddie because they are truly carrying on a vision that I had beyond what anyone could ever expect because there will be a day when each and every one of us will watch the whole American Legion World Series on national TV because it's those 5,500 teams across America that our posts are sponsoring, that are putting 18 kids on a ball field, that are spending \$6,000 to \$8,000 to do it. It's a team. That's what we are all about within The American Legion. Thank you so very much for this award. *(Applause)*

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Thank you, Paul. And, remember, one individual that put this all together for the permanency of Shelby, North Carolina, by resolution as he chaired the Subcommittee on Resolutions is our good friend who is no longer with us, Jerry Hedrick. I ask the Shelby committee and The American Legion Baseball Committee that some way, somehow whether we name the Jerry L. Hedrick Banquet or something, but something for permanency in that lovely man will be there in Shelby, North Carolina. I ask that you do that, please, at least for me and for everyone here. Thank you. *(Applause)*

MR. HOLBROOK: One other comment I would like to make at this time, a lot of this has been made possible by our local group of county commissioners who have supported this effort wholeheartedly. A guy who has been chairman of our board as well as vice chairman who is going to make a presentation to people on the stage, County Commissioner Johnny Hutchins. If you would come forward to do that.

But, secondly, let me say most of all that Jerry Hedrick was as dear to us in Cleveland County, in Shelby, as he was to a lot of you. He was a guy I listened to for guidance and leadership. And, Jake, I can assure you that on behalf of our committee, we will do something to honor this great man who is no longer with us but will forever be remembered. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

COMMISSIONER JOHNNY HUTCHINS: Thank you, Eddie. You know, it is very humbling to stand up here when you watch the kids out there playing, but more so when you look around at the Legionnaires and see what they do, what input they have and the time away from their family that they do. And it is just a small token but we've got a Cleveland County pin. And I'm going to pass some of them out. I want to make sure that most of the guys up here get one. If for some reason they don't get one, let us know and we will get some more to you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Before we move on, do I have some figures from the National Emergency Fund. You know, my goal was \$1 million, very lofty. Prior to coming to convention, we had \$461,637.49. Today and in the exhibit hall we collected \$279,904.35 plus a \$10,000 donation from Fifth Third Bank for a total of \$741,541.84. God bless you all. Thank you. *(Applause)*

The Chair recognizes Ralph Bozella of Colorado, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, for the purpose of making a report.



**Report: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**  
**Ralph P. Bozella, Colorado, Chairman**

One hundred and eleven members of your Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation met at 9:00 a.m. on 24, 2014, in Charlotte Convention Center, Room 213, Section D, Ballroom Level, Charlotte, North Carolina which is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

The Committee was called to order by Verna L. Jones (NC), Liaison Representative appointed by the National Adjutant to act as temporary chairman. Roscoe Butler (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 Phil Youngblood (GA), as Committee Secretary; Wendall Sandell (PA), Chairman of the Claims and Rating Subcommittee and Kelly Ackerman (MT), Secretary; Phil Youngblood (GA), Chairman of the Health Administration Committee, and Jeanette Rae (NV) as Secretary; Shuford Edmisten (NC) Chairman of the National Cemetery Committee, and Reverend Daniel Seehafer (WI), Secretary.

Subcommittee liaison assignments were as follows: Verna Jones (NC), Director, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division and Zachary Hearn (PA), Deputy Director for Claims and Rating and Roscoe Butler (DC), Deputy Director for Health Policy to Health Administration and Edward Lilley (DC), Assistant Director for Health Policy to National Cemetery.

Historically a Special Department Service Officers Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Resolutions, in a pre-convention 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 Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and was composed of the following Department Service Officers:

- REGION 1 – Gary W. Wayman (NH)
- REGION 2 – Damon C. Christensen (KS) (Absent)
- REGION 3 – Paul M. Sullivan (AL)
- REGION 4 – James E. Fialkowski (WI)
- REGION 5 – Thomas A. Weiss (OR)

The Convention Committee recommended that such a Committee be appointed for this purpose to serve the Ninety-Sixth National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation.

The 126 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.....	91
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved.....	20
Referred to the Standing Commission .....	7
Received and Recorded .....	2
Rejected .....	6

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Chairman and Secretary to sign and deliver the report on the Convention Committee's behalf.

A report of action taken on the five (5) resolutions referred to the Standing National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission will be made to the National Executive Committee and to the Adjutant of the Department concerned.

**Resolution No. 16: Assured Funding for VA Medical Care****Origin: Georgia****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) annual budget consists of both mandatory and discretionary funding; and

WHEREAS, Mandatory funding refers to a process where the level of funding is governed by formulas or criteria set forth in authorizing legislation rather than by appropriations; and

WHEREAS, Under budget law, a mandatory program is one that requires provision of benefits to all who meet the eligibility requirements of the law; and

WHEREAS, Mandatory funding is provided for programs such as Social Security, Medicare and VA compensation and pension; and

WHEREAS, In contrast, discretionary funding is “all other” funding subject to the annual appropriations process; and

WHEREAS, Discretionary funding in VA’s current annual budget provides for programs such as medical care, major and minor construction, National Cemetery Administration, State Extended Care Facility Grants, and State Cemetery Grants; and

WHEREAS, There have been annual struggles to obtain sufficient funding to provide access to quality care for eligible veterans seeking care in VA facilities; and

WHEREAS, A method to provide dependable, stable and sustained funding for veterans health care is needed; and

WHEREAS, Assured (mandated) funding is one component of a combination of funding mechanisms to ensure adequate Veterans Health Administration funding; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That Congress designate assured funding for VA medical care; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That Congress continue to provide discretionary funding required to fully operate other programs within the Veterans Health Administration’s (VHA) budgetary jurisdiction; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That Congress provide, if necessary, supplemental appropriations for budgetary shortfalls in VHA’s mandated and discretionary appropriations to meet the health care needs of America’s veterans.**

**Resolution No. 17: Amend Title 38, United States Code, to Increase the Special Monthly Compensation (K) Award****Origin: Georgia****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation****(Consolidated with Resolutions No. 258 (IL) and No. 260 (IL))**

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

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code (USC), section 1114, provides for the payment of disability compensation for a service-connected disability, which is rated from ten percent to one hundred percent under the Department of Veterans Affairs’ (VA) Schedule for Rating Disabilities for the particular disability; and

WHEREAS, An additional \$99 in Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) is payable, under title 38, USC, section 1114 (k), where a veteran, as the result of a service-connected disability, has suffered the anatomical loss or loss of use of one or more creative organs, or one foot, or one hand, both buttocks, or blindness in one eye and having only light perception in the other eye, or rendered unable to speak, or deafness in both ears, or in the case of a female veteran, suffered the anatomical loss of one or both breasts, including by mastectomy; and

WHEREAS, The SMC (k) award, which is paid over and above the amount of compensation authorized under title 38, USC, section 1114, for these losses or loss-of-use disabilities, is intended to recognize the lifelong physical limitations and psychological trauma associated with such loss or loss of use of the veterans’ limbs or other body parts; and

WHEREAS, In contrast to regular increases in the rates of disability compensation through the years, the SMC (k) award, which was initially authorized in 1939, has been increased infrequently; and

WHEREAS, In 1939, the SMC (k) award was originally \$18.75 when the rate of compensation for being totally or one-hundred percent disabled was \$75; and

WHEREAS, To restore the original twenty-five percent (25%) differential that existed in 1939 between the amount of the (k) award and the compensation rate for being totally or one-hundred percent disabled, the SMC (k) award should be increased to \$692; and

WHEREAS, A male veteran may suffer from erectile dysfunction (E.D.) due to an injury they receive while on active duty; and

WHEREAS, Male veterans may also suffer from E.D. due to a service-connected medical condition such as diabetes or hypertension and/or due to a side effect of medication(s) prescribed for a service-connected condition; and

WHEREAS, Male veterans may also suffer from E.D. due to a side effect of medication prescribed for a service-connected illness; and

WHEREAS, Male veterans may resort to prescription drugs such as Viagra and Cialis to address this problem; and

WHEREAS, Under the current Schedule of Rating Decisions that the VA uses, a male veteran who suffers from E. D. due to a service-related injury or due to medication prescribed for a service-related condition becomes eligible for Special Monthly Compensation K; and

WHEREAS, Females now make up close to 20% of the military services and they too will suffer injuries or illnesses which will result in painful or difficult sexual intercourse; and

WHEREAS, This sexual dysfunction in females may include insufficient vaginal lubrication due to depression, pregnancy, stress and fatigue, painful intercourse due to endometriosis, pelvic mass, ovarian cysts, and scarring from surgery, to name a few; and

WHEREAS, Female veterans can sometimes treat these problems with medication, counseling and hormone therapy; and

WHEREAS, There is no corresponding SMC (k) provision for veterans who suffer from female sexual dysfunction and they can only receive this SMC (k) rate if they actually lose their creative organs or a portion of their breast; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to amend its current regulation for Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) (k) to include females who suffer sexual dysfunction to be able to obtain this SMC (k) rate similar to that awarded male veterans; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion support an increase in the SMC (k) award, under title 38, USC, section 1114(k) to at least \$692; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the evaluation of all SMC awards under Title 38 USC, Section 1114 to ensure that veterans are being fairly compensated for their sacrifices.**

### **Resolution No. 18: Department of Veterans Affairs Disability Compensation**

**Origin: Georgia**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The current disability compensation program has proven to be a fair and equitable manner in which to indemnify veterans suffering disabilities that are incurred or aggravated in line of duty in the military, naval, or air service; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is totally supportive of every benefit that is currently provided to veterans for their past contributions to their country and its welfare; and

WHEREAS, Disability compensation is a monthly payment made by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) based on a schedule of ratings of reduction in earning capacity from specific injuries as set forth in title 38, Code of Federal Regulations; and

WHEREAS, It is the opinion of The American Legion that there is no way to adequately compensate a veteran for loss of ability to be a working, productive member of society, and that the current monthly rates do not adequately compensate these disabled veterans for the loss due to reduced earning capacity; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes Congress should periodically review the amount of disability compensation veterans are receiving and provide a cost-of-living adjustment to assure they have sufficient economic support; and

WHEREAS, Periodically, proposals are made to tax VA disability compensation benefits; and

WHEREAS, Taxation of these benefits would amount to nothing more than a permanent, enduring reduction in benefits and would demean the sacrifice and service of our nation's service-connected disabled veteran population; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion vigorously oppose any proposal that would subject VA disability compensation benefits to taxation; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose any administrative or legislative proposal to dilute or eliminate any provision of the disability compensation program; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, section 1114, to provide a periodic cost-of-living adjustment increase and to increase the monthly rates of disability compensation; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose any legislative effort to automatically index such cost-of-living adjustments to the cost-of-living adjustment authorized for Social Security recipients, non-service connected disability recipients and death pension beneficiaries.**

**Resolution No. 19: Extend the Filing Period of an Appeal Notice to the Court of Veteran Appeals for Veterans Claims**

**Origin: Georgia**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

**(Consolidated with Resolution No. 253 (IL))**

WHEREAS, Claimants have up to one year from notice of a Department of Veterans Affairs rating decision to file an appeal with any or all adjudicated issues to the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA); and

WHEREAS, Notice of Appeal of a final denied claim by the Board of Veterans' Appeals must be filed with the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC) within 120 days of the denial by the BVA; and

WHEREAS, The CAVC lacks statutory authority to waive the 120 day period for filing Notice of Appeal; and

WHEREAS, Veterans or their surviving spouses can become discouraged, or are not effectively represented, or may require more time to perfect their appeal to the CAVC; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 25, 26, 27, 2014, That The American Legion shall support legislation to extend the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims Notice of Appeal filing period to one year following Board of Veterans' Appeals final denial of an appeal.**

**Resolution No. 20: Presumptive Conditions for Former Prisoners of War****Origin: Georgia****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, In its interest for the welfare of all those who have served in the nation's Armed Forces, one of the major concerns of The American Legion has been the welfare of those who have been prisoners of war (POWs); and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has supported various legislative measures intended to alleviate the disabilities that afflict former POWs as a result of experience during internment; and

WHEREAS, In the past, The American Legion supported enactment of Public Law 97-37, the Former Prisoners of War Benefits Act of 1981, approved August 14, 1981, and the presumptions included in Public Law 100-322; and

WHEREAS, Continued scientific observation of their condition during the years subsequent to their internment indicates additional health problems probably associated with the conditions of their internment; and

WHEREAS, The United States has a fundamental obligation to do everything possible to alleviate any and all health problems of former POWs and see to their physical, social, and economic well-being; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes there is a need to further modify the current provisions of title 38, United States Code, that provide for former POWs; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion shall support legislation to amend section 1112 of title 38, United States Code, so as to provide presumptive service connection for the following conditions in the absence of demonstrable inter-current disease or injury:**

- 1. Hepatitis or other infectious diseases of the liver;**
- 2. Arthritis, including osteoporosis;**
- 3. Chronic pulmonary disease (where there is a history of forced labor in mines during internment);**
- 4. Chronic liver disease;**
- 5. Adult-onset diabetes; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation to be enacted to rescind the requirement in section 1112(b) of title 38, United States Code, that a POW must be held in captivity for at least 30 days to receive benefits and compensation for any presumptive disabilities, specified in that section, that were incurred in captivity; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion shall support any and all efforts on the part of the United States government to alleviate and ameliorate social, economic, and physical disabilities experienced by former POWs where such disabilities can reasonably be attributed to the effects of internment by the enemies of the United States.**

**Resolution No. 21: State Veteran Home Per Diem Reimbursement****Origin: Georgia****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, State Veterans Homes were founded in the late 1800s for indigent and disabled Civil War veterans and continue to serve generations of veterans today; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code Subchapter V – Payment to State Homes authorizes the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to pay per diems for care in State Veterans Homes to those veterans with a 70 percent or greater service-connection rating or any veteran in need of such care for a service-connected disability; and

WHEREAS, A Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report 06-264 in March, 2006, *Data Gaps Impede Strategic Planning for and Oversight of State Veterans' Nursing Homes*, identified that certain aspects of VA's per diem reimbursement policy had not been applied consistently and VA headquarters officials have not been consistent in explaining to VA Medical

Centers whether they could approve reimbursement to state veterans' nursing homes for care provided to veterans; and

WHEREAS, Public Law (P.L.) 109-461, Veterans Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006, authorized the Secretary of VA to publish a Strategic Plan for Long-Term Care for VA to include specific plans for working with Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance companies to expand the availability of such long-term care, which included State Veterans Homes; and

WHEREAS, In response to the P.L. 109-461 in August 2007, VA submitted the long-term care strategic plan to Congress with the effective dates through Fiscal Year (FY) 2013; and

WHEREAS, A GAO Report 09-145 in January, 2009, *Long-Term Care Strategic Planning and Budgeting Need Improvement*, reported that, "many veterans who need long-term care do not receive it from VA, but instead receive care from other providers that is financed by programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, private health or long-term care insurance, or self-financing by the patients"; and

WHEREAS, GAO Report 09-145 concluded as a result, in VA's long-term care strategic planning, determining future workload is a multi-step process requiring estimating the number of veterans who will need long-term care, the number of those veterans seeking care through the VA and the number of veterans VA will serve, which is expected to increase by 167 percent between FY 2007 and 2013 and that VA provided unrealistic cost assumptions and workloads in its FY 2009 budget submission; and

WHEREAS, VA pays State Veterans Homes a per diem that covers approximately one-third of the cost of providing these services to eligible veterans, which is less than the actual daily cost of care provided by Medicare/Medicaid rate; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has supported enactment of legislation to require VA per diem payments be at a rate of 50 percent of the national average cost of providing care in State Veterans Homes, to increase the VA per diem rate closer to the Medicare/Medicaid rate; and

WHEREAS, In September 2009, The National Association of State Veterans Homes and State Directors of Veterans Affairs recommended that Congress pass a clarifying amendment to P.L. 109-461 to postpone the mandatory implementation of the VA per diem program due to the lower cost of VA's per diem amount, compared to the Medicare/Medicaid rate which would shift all the cost burden on the State Veteran Home operating budget; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion remains concerned that Congress has not provided clarification of Public Law 109-461 and VA has not factually reported its planning workload projections to assist State Veterans Homes budgets; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support legislation to amend Title 38, United States Code to provide clarification to the State Veterans Home, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) per diem reimbursements; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to increase VA per diem payments to a rate of 50 percent of the national average cost of providing care in a State Veterans Home to more closely align to the Medicaid/Medicare rate; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That VA accurately report its planning workload projections and budget submissions in future fiscal years to account for the 167 percent increase in long-term care workload identified by the Government Accountability Office.**

#### **Resolution No. 22: National Cemetery Administration**

**Origin: Georgia**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration (NCA) was established by Congress and approved by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862 to provide for the proper burial and registration of graves of Civil War dead; and

WHEREAS, NCA is currently comprised of 131 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico, as well as, 33 soldiers' lots and monuments; and

WHEREAS, More than 3 million Americans including veterans of every war and conflict are buried in VA's national cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, More than 24 million veterans and Reservists and National Guard members have earned the honor of burial in a national cemetery; and

WHEREAS, Annual internments in national cemeteries have annually increased and are projected to increase for the next several years due to an aging veteran population; and

WHEREAS, Appropriate land acquisition is a key component to providing continued accessibility to burial options; and

WHEREAS, Operations, maintenance, renovation, and construction funding must continually be adjusted to reflect the true requirements of the National Cemetery Administration; and

WHEREAS, NCA administers a program of grants to states, U.S. territories, and federally recognized tribal governments to assist them in establishing or improving state-operated veterans cemeteries in locations where there are no nearby national cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, Congress must provide sufficient major construction appropriations to permit NCA to accomplish its stated goal of ensuring that burial in a national or state cemetery is a realistic option by locating cemeteries within 75 miles of ninety percent of all veterans; and

WHEREAS, In addition to providing a grave site, NCA provides a headstone or marker, a Presidential Memorial certificate, a U.S. Flag, Medallion, and perpetual care for the grave; and

WHEREAS, The 1990 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act eliminated the then-headstone allowance of \$85, which was paid to all eligible veterans in lieu of a government-provided headstone or marker and now directly provides a standard government headstone or grave marker to eligible veterans anywhere in the world; and

WHEREAS, VA pays a burial allowance of \$2,000 for veterans who die of service-related causes and for veterans who were receiving VA compensation or pension, VA pays \$722 for burial and funeral expenses and \$722 for a plot; and

WHEREAS, The plot allowance would still be payable to state veterans cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, If a veteran passes away in a Department of Veterans Affairs hospital, nursing home, or domiciliary, or in an institution at which the individual was receiving hospital or nursing care at the expense of the United States at the time of death, VA will pay for the cost of transporting the remains to the place of burial; however, a veteran who passes away in a State Veterans Home is not allowed transportation cost for the remains to the place of burial by VA; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support the establishment of additional national and state veterans cemeteries and columbaria wherever a need for them is apparent and petition Congress to provide required operations and construction funding to ensure Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) burial in a national or state veterans cemetery is a realistic option for veterans and their eligible dependents; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to return the burial allowances and burial plot allowance to all veterans who served during a time of war or conflict; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That the burial allowance for veterans now eligible under 38 United States Code (USC) § 2302 and 2303 be increased from \$722 to at least \$1,500; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That the burial allowance for veterans who died as a result of a service-connected condition as set forth in 38 USC § 2307 be increased from \$2,000 to at least \$4,000; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That VA be required to annually adjust burial allowances and burial plot allowance for inflation by tying the increased allowances to the Consumer Price Index; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion should support legislation for the restoration of the pre-1990 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act criteria to provide eligibility for a government-furnished headstone or marker allowance and restoration of the burial plot allowance for all honorably discharged veterans; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion support action to provide, when an eligible veteran dies in a state veterans hospital or nursing home, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall pay for the cost of transporting the remains to the place of burial determined by the family.**

### **Resolution No. 23: The Department of Veterans Affairs Dental Care**

**Origin: Georgia**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

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

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes that oral health is integral to the general health and well-being of a patient and is part of comprehensive health care; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare system is mandated under Section 1712, Title 38, United States Code, to provide outpatient dental services to veterans rated 100% service-connected, to veterans held Prisoner-of-War, or to those who have sustained dental trauma in performance of military service; and

WHEREAS, Section 1710, Title 38, United States Code, authorizes VA to provide hospital care and medical services to any veteran for a service-connected disability or a veteran who has a service-connected disability rated at 50% or greater; and

WHEREAS, A dental condition is a medical condition which can impact on all other medical conditions; and

WHEREAS, VA currently provides dental services throughout the VA health care system; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports legislation to amend Title 38, United States Code, Section 1712, to provide outpatient dental care to all enrolled veterans.**

### **Resolution No. 24: The Department of Veterans Affairs' Role in National Emergency Preparedness**

**Origin: Georgia**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Under title 38, United States Code, 8111A, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has been established as the principal medical care back-up for military health care "during and immediately following a period of war, or a period of national emergency declared by the President or the Congress that involves the use of the Armed Forces in armed conflict"; and

WHEREAS, Under the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) and the Federal Response Plan (FRP) VA's specialized duties entail conducting and evaluating disaster and terrorist attack simulation exercises; managing the nation's stockpile of pharmaceuticals for biological and chemical toxins; maintaining a rapid response team for radiological releases; and training public and private NDMS medical center personnel around the country in properly responding to biological, chemical, or radiological disasters; and

WHEREAS, The VA Strategic Plan for 2014-2020 lists as an objective, "Ensure Preparedness to Provide Services and Protect People and Assets Continuously and in Time of Crisis"; and



WHEREAS, If VA is to play a key supporting role as part of the FRP and the NDMS, it must have adequate resources to execute its role; and

WHEREAS, The Strategic Capital Investment Planning process was designed to ensure that VA's capital infrastructure meets the needs of veterans for health care services in 2011 and beyond; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) implementation of the Strategic Capital Investment Planning decision must take into consideration and sustain VA's ability to perform its fourth mission as a back up to the Department of Defense; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to continue to take an active role in the development and implementation of plans to enhance Federal homeland security initiatives; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion strongly urges Congress to provide VA with the funding necessary to further enhance its capacity to act as a back-up to the Department of Defense in times of war and to the Federal Emergency Management Agency in responding to national emergencies.**

#### **Resolution No. 30: Project Shipboard Hazard and Defense**

**Origin: Montana**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Project SHAD, an acronym for Shipboard Hazard and Defense, was part of a larger effort called Project 112, was allegedly conducted during 1962 and 1973; and

WHEREAS, The project started under John F. Kennedy's administration, and was authorized by his Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, as part of a total review of the U.S. military; and

WHEREAS, The exact number of participants is unknown but it is estimated that more than 6,000 military personnel, mostly Navy and Marine personnel, participated in a series of tests of U.S. warship vulnerability to biological and chemical warfare agents without their knowledge; and

WHEREAS, In September 2002, the Institute of Medicine agreed to undertake a scientific study, funded by the VA, of potential long-term health effects of participation in Project SHAD; and

WHEREAS, Participants also reported statistically significantly worse health than controls; and

WHEREAS, Comparing all Project SHAD participants versus all controls, heart disease deaths showed a statistically significant increase; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs manual states "Veterans Affairs Disability compensation is a monetary benefit paid to Veterans who are disabled by an injury or illness that was incurred or aggravated during active military service. These disabilities are considered to be service connected"; and

WHEREAS, Participants in project SHAD have been diagnosed and treated by the department of Veterans Affairs without any monetary compensation; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That the Department of Veterans Affairs accept the illnesses caused by involvement in PROJECT SHAD be classified as service connected and provide just compensation to those veterans for their disabilities; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion national organization, on behalf of military personnel involved in any way with PROJECT SHAD, demand the Department of Veterans Affairs accept the fact that these members of the armed forces were unwittingly exposed to life threatening chemical and/or biological agents while in active military service**

**and are suffering or have suffered now and prior to their death from exposure to these agents, be listed as presumptive causes of their illnesses or death.**

**Resolution No. 31: Prevent Exploitation of Veterans and Family Members Applying for Benefits, to Include Aid and Attendance**

**Origin: Utah**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

**(As amended)**

WHEREAS, Veterans and widows of veterans qualify for Aid and Attendance and pension benefits with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, There are groups or individuals that charge veterans and their families to file for these benefits some as much as \$2,000 dollars and as a result have turned claims assistance in this area into a profit center; and

WHEREAS, This practice allows the exploitation of our senior veterans and their families; and

WHEREAS, Veterans service organizations, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, State Veterans Offices and County Veterans Service Officers all provide claims assistance without charge; and

WHEREAS, It is critical that our veterans and their families be protected from those seeking to profit from claims assistance in this area; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion goes on record urging the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Congress to tighten current laws that prohibit the practice of charging veterans or their families for claims assistance; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That the national organization support all efforts by Congress to "criminalize" the practice of charging veterans for claims assistance and creating a for-profit business based on these practices.**

**Resolution No. 35: Oppose Any Reductions to the Department of Veterans Affairs' Budget Due to Sequestration**

**Origin: Kentucky**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & 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, the Office of Management and Budget 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 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 36: Department of Veterans Affairs Child Care Program**

**Origin: Kentucky**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) mission is to provide for those who have borne the battle; and

WHEREAS, The veteran should not be penalized in receiving access to health care because they have children; and

WHEREAS, In 2010, the VA was granted authority under the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010, Public Law 111-163, Section 205, to carry out a two-year pilot program to assess the provision of care for the children of qualified veterans; and

WHEREAS, The program was officially launched in October 2011 at three VA Medical Centers in Buffalo and Northport New York and American Lake (Tacoma), Washington; and

WHEREAS, Upon completion of the pilot program a report will be submitted to Congress on the finding, recommendations, and conclusions for the continuation of the program; and

WHEREAS, The VA would need Congress to provide an extension of authority in order to continue providing child care services beyond the two-year pilot; and

WHEREAS, A memorandum VAOPGCADV 7-2009, from the VA Office of The General Counsel provided a legal opinion on the authority to provide child care for Veterans Health Administration (VHA) patients, which addressed the legal barriers that prevent VA from providing child care for VHA patients when the patients have appointments at a VHA facility; and

WHEREAS, The VA is not authorized to operate child care facilities for VHA patients; and

WHEREAS, VA may provide child care services in VHA facilities only if Congress expressly granted that authority to VA and/ or if child care is "included by necessary implication" in the authority granted VA; and

WHEREAS, Currently, no statute authorizes VHA or VA in general to provide child care at VHA facilities; and

WHEREAS, However, Congress has authorized VA to operate child care centers to benefit VA employees and Federal government employees such as The Department of Defense stated; and

WHEREAS, Under 38 U.S.C. 1701 (6) the words "medical services" includes inter alia, examination, treatment, rehabilitative services, and other services such as surgical, dental, optometric, and preventive health services; and

WHEREAS, Hospital care is defined as medical services rendered in the course of the hospitalization of any veteran; and

WHEREAS, Hospital care also includes other supplies or services as the Secretary of Veterans Affairs determines to be reasonable and necessary; and

WHEREAS, Under 1701 (6) (F) medical services is directly related to the medical care of the veteran such as wheelchairs and clothing to accommodate prostheses; and

WHEREAS, The memorandum concluded that it would be unreasonable to conclude that child care may constitute a service that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs could make available; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to pass legislation to provide child care services to veterans with children in order for the veteran to receive access to the quality care that they have earned.**

**Resolution No. 37: Department of Veterans Affairs Rural Healthcare Program****Origin: Kentucky****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation  
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 286 (ID))**

WHEREAS, One out of every three veterans treated by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) lives in rural communities; and

WHEREAS, Rural veterans have been underserved due to a lack of access to health care, which can be attributed to greater travel barriers and a lack of public transportation; and

WHEREAS, Although VA has established access standards, the standards and definition of rural and highly rural veterans do not take into account the distance and driving time it takes for veterans to be provided with VA care; and

WHEREAS, Rural Health Consultants (RHCs) are located and fall under the Veteran Integrated Service Networks (VISNs), which leads to additional collateral duties, inconsistent with the schedules, ultimately distracting RHCs from needed outreach to facilities within their VISN; and

WHEREAS, The Rural Health Resource Center is advisory in nature and primarily conducts research without providing direct resources to rural veterans or outreach; and

WHEREAS, VA Medical Centers in rural areas have concerns in recruiting and retaining qualified medical and clinical providers, in many cases rural areas do not have attractive resources for medical providers; and

WHEREAS, While the development of Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) have increased access to healthcare for veterans in rural areas, communication between the CBOCs and medical centers have decreased, creating communication and managerial difficulties; and

WHEREAS, Telehealth services have more than doubled in the last four years, creating more access to healthcare for rural veterans, however, space and bandwidth limit the level of service and number of veterans the VA can serve; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to develop its own definition of rural and highly rural veterans, and not based on the Census Bureau's, but on access and driving times; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Office of Rural Health (ORH) to centralize and consolidate the Rural Health Consultants (RHC) under the ORH; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge ORH to ensure Rural Health Resource Centers provide service to rural veterans from surveys, national hotline and connecting veterans living in rural communities with providers; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to develop a recruitment and retention strategy to incentivize medical providers to practice in rural communities; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to ensure each Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) has adequate staff and direct communication between the CBOC's and medical center's RHC; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the ORH to search for opportunities to expand telehealth services by collaborating with local offices in rural areas that can share space.**

**Resolution No. 65: Veterans Discounts on Federally Funded Public Transportation****Origin: Colorado****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Currently, transit systems that 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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.**

**Resolution No. 66: Department of Veterans Affairs Means Test**

**Origin: Colorado**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Public Law 107-135, the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Programs Enhancement Act of 2001, directed VA to implement a Geographic Means Test (GMT); and

WHEREAS, VA uses the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) "low-income" geographic-based income limits as the thresholds for VA's GMT; and

WHEREAS, Congress established Priority Groups within the VA to prioritize access to VA health care; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of the VA authorized suspension of new enrollment of Priority Group 8 veterans in January 2003; and

WHEREAS, Using the adjusted gross income may reclassify them as a Priority Group 7, thus allowing enrollment into VA; and

WHEREAS, Using the adjusted gross income may reclassify Priority Group 7 veterans as Priority Group 5 veterans; and

WHEREAS, The eligibility requirement for enrollment in Priority Group 5 or 7 for veterans to receive health care services provided by VHA is based on income; and

WHEREAS, The income for the Means Test is based on gross income, not adjusted gross income; and

WHEREAS, All other Federal agencies have eligibility on adjusted gross income; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support legislation to change Department of Veterans Affairs Means Test policy to allow adjusted gross income to be used for the eligibility criteria in Priority Groups 5, 7, and 8.**

**Resolution No. 67: Military Sexual Trauma****Origin: Colorado****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Military Sexual Trauma (MST) impacts thousands of brave men and women in the Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, In FY2010, Department of Defense (DOD) estimated that only 13.5 percent of MST incidents were reported; and

WHEREAS, In addition, reporting of MST is frequently followed by a lackluster investigation and prosecution, with many resulting in administrative or dishonorable discharge rather than Uniform Code of Military Justice prosecution; and

WHEREAS, DOD does not have a policy of permanently maintaining files of reported incidents of MST, creating evidentiary roadblocks for future Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) claims; and

WHEREAS, A history of MST has correlations to many health and economic consequences, including PTSD, sexually transmitted infections, homelessness, and substance abuse; and

WHEREAS, According to a 2010 report published by the VA Office of Inspector General (OIG), entitled "Review of Combat Stress in Women Veterans Receiving VA Health Care and Disability Benefits," Women Veterans Coordinators (WVCs) are frequently underutilized due to lack of public awareness of the services and assistance provided by WVCs; and

WHEREAS, According to the same OIG report, women veterans are disproportionately granted Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) claims based on MST; for instance, 9 percent of PTSD claims granted to women veterans by Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) were on the basis of MST, compared to only 0.1 percent of male veterans; and

WHEREAS, MST claims and treatment involve delicate, sensitive emotional issues; and

WHEREAS, VBA lacks a complete assessment of its system-wide MST-related workload and outcomes, without which it cannot determine if additional MST-specific training and testing is necessary; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the Department of Defense (DOD) to improve its investigation and prosecution of reported cases of Military Sexual Trauma (MST) to be on par with the civilian system; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the DOD to examine the underreporting of MST and to permanently maintain records of reported MST allegations, thereby expanding victims' access to documented evidence which is necessary for future Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) claims; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the VA to ensure that all VA medical centers, vet centers, and community-based outpatient clinics employ a MST counselor to oversee the screening and treatment referral process, and to continue universal screening of all veterans for a history of MST; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the VA to review military personnel files in all MST claims and apply reduced criteria to MST-related PTSD to match that of combat-related PTSD; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the VA to employ additional Women Veterans Coordinators (WVCs) and to provide MST sensitivity training to claims processors and WVCs; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the VA to conduct an analysis of MST claims volume, assess the consistency of how these claims are adjudicated, and determine the need, if any, for additional training and testing on processing of these claims.**

**Resolution No. 68: WWII Veterans Hospital and Medical Entitlements****Origin: Colorado****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation  
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 161 (MD) and Resolution No. 249 (IL))**

WHEREAS, The American Legion strongly supports the extension of U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health benefits to include all U.S. veterans; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code (U.S.C.), Chapter 17, Sect. 1710 (a) (2) (e) requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish needed hospital care and medical services without regards to the other VA eligibility requirements to veterans of the Mexican border period or of WWI; and

WHEREAS, Only a small number of WWI veterans and none from the Mexican border period are alive today; and

WHEREAS, The veterans of WWII have served our country honorably both in the war and as exemplary citizens of our great nation and are reaching an age when such medical services are needed similar to those granted WWI and Mexican border period veterans in the aforementioned law; and

WHEREAS, The current medical services provided to the WWII veterans by VA is based on a category and/or an income means test and proves difficult for these aging veterans to complete as well as being cumbersome for VA to apply and thus prevents some WWII veterans from accessing those services; and

WHEREAS, The funds the VA spends to apply this bureaucratic means test procedure could be better spent providing direct care to these WWII veterans; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support amending Title 38, U.S.C. Chapter 17, to grant World War II veterans the same Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital and medical entitlements as granted to World War I and Spanish American War veterans to honor their service and ensure the VA continues the same standards of care.**

**Resolution No. 70: Include Korean War Veterans in Priority Group 6 for Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care****Origin: Massachusetts****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Mexican War and WWI veterans were provided priority medical care on reaching advance age; and

WHEREAS, There are no surviving Mexican and WWI veterans, and

WHEREAS, The average age of the Korean (forgotten-war) veteran is 81 years, and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code (USC) fails to provide reasonable care to Korean (forgotten-war) veterans who are passing away at the rate of 400 per day; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support legislation to amend Title 38, USC, to give the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) the authority to enroll Korean (forgotten-war) veterans in "Priority Group 6" unless already enrolled in a higher Priority Group, for the purpose of receiving VA health care services; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion strongly supports this legislation, asking Congress to amend Title 38 to include Korean veterans.**

**Resolution No. 105: Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record****Origin: Delaware****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, On April 9, 2009, President Obama provided direction to the Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to develop a Virtual Lifetime

Electronic Record (VLER), which would create a unified lifetime electronic record for members of the Armed Services; and

WHEREAS, The VLER plans to include administrative and medical information for servicemembers from when they first join the service throughout their lives until they are laid to rest; and

WHEREAS, The VLER plan seeks to expand the departments' health information sharing capabilities by enabling access to private sector health data as well; and

WHEREAS, VLER is a federal, inter-agency initiative to provide portability, accessibility and complete health, benefits and administrative data for servicemembers, veterans and their beneficiaries; and

WHEREAS, DoD and VA for years have yet to fully implement a bilateral medical record between both agencies with no target end date in sight; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 2.6 million members of the military have served in Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn and are returning home in unprecedented numbers needing care for their injuries and illnesses sustained in service to our nation; and

WHEREAS, Failure to implement a bilateral medical record and VLER to date has caused significant delays in the veterans' treatment process from DoD to VA because the VA treatment team does not have full access to the patient's DoD records and have to rely on a patient's self report of their medical history and symptoms; and

WHEREAS, Servicemembers and veterans are forced to make copies of their records at their last duty station or submit a request to the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, which can take months to process; and

WHEREAS, Veteran service organizations, such as The American Legion, have not been invited to VLER meeting to provide stakeholder input and sharing of mutual concerns; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has over 2,000 accredited department (state) and county veteran service officers that will continue to need access to Veteran Benefit Administration databases in order to file for VA benefits and claims for those claimants represented; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is concerned that within VA's three branches – Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Veterans Benefits Administration, and National Cemetery Administration – there are numerous computer-based programs that are inoperable between these branches which are not addressed in the VLER plan; and

WHEREAS, Because a bilateral medical record is not currently available, there is not an ability for a patient's record to be flagged at the time of injury/illness occurred during military service, which makes it difficult and more time-consuming for DoD/VA physicians and raters to find proof of service connection; and

WHEREAS, Currently VA has the ability to send patients encrypted email messages and a VHA program, Myhealthvet, allows patients to refill their VA prescriptions, view their labs and receive VA wellness reminders but does not allow VA patients to schedule appointments online; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to provide oversight to the Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to ensure that the Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER) is fully implemented by Fiscal Year 2015; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge DoD and VA to implement VLER no later than FY 2015 to ensure returning servicemembers' medical records are able to be accessed by both agencies which will improve the timeliness and delivery of VA health care and claims benefits; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion recommend the following be included in design and implementation of VLER:**

- **Include veteran service organizations, such as The American Legion, in VLER meetings to offer stakeholder input and sharing of mutual concerns;**



- **Allow servicemember records to be flagged at the time of injury/illness in the military to speed up processing of VA benefits (health care and claims) during and after discharge;**
- **Ensure computer systems and programs within the Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, and National Cemetery Administration are interoperable and able to communicate with each other;**
- **Allow VA patients to be able to make appointments online by choosing the day, time and provider and that VA sends a confirmation within 24 hours.**

**Resolution No. 106: Veterans Transportation System & Benefits Travel**

**Origin: Delaware**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, In the Fall of 2010, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) implemented the Veterans Transportation Service (VTS) in order to improve access to VHA health care services; and

WHEREAS, The VTS program provided mobility managers, transportation coordinators, and vehicles to be driven by Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) staff and volunteers; and

WHEREAS, On May 7, 2012, the Office of General Counsel released opinion, VAOPGCADV 5-2012, which found that the VA only has the authority to use volunteer drivers to provide veterans transportation to and from VA health care facilities, not paid employees; and

WHEREAS, Some facilities solely rely on the VTS system, because they do not have volunteer drivers; and

WHEREAS, The vans utilized by the VA for must be parked on federal government property; and

WHEREAS, Some drivers in rural locations may drive up to two hours one way to pick up a van, which will total eight hours of driving in one day after conducting one trip; and

WHEREAS, If a Memorandums of Understanding were created for local facilities such as post offices, the trip times could be reduced by up to half; and

WHEREAS, The guidelines set forth by the physical examinations make it hard to recruit and retain volunteer drivers, which can create an inconsistent delivery system; and

WHEREAS, Neither the Volunteer Transportation Network nor VTS really works hand in hand with the Beneficiary Travel Office; and

WHEREAS, This can lead with decreased efficiency in cost and coordination of patient transportation; and

WHEREAS, Service-connected and other veterans authorized beneficiary travel only receive \$0.415 (41.5 cents) per mile, and are subject to \$3.00 per one way trip, \$6.00 for a round trip with a maximum deductible of \$18.00 per calendar month; and

WHEREAS, Eligible veterans are not reimbursed at a reasonable level for costs incurred to visit a VA medical facility for service-connected or other authorized care and treatment; and

WHEREAS, Beneficiary travel pay was never intended to pay actual transportation costs, such as authorized by the government for Federal employees, but instead, provided to help defray costs; and

WHEREAS, There are no provisions in law that VA must increase the per mile travel authorization on a regular basis; and

WHEREAS, The beneficiary travel program is discretionary and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs is required to review the program annually to determine the VA's ability to maintain the program and its ability to increase the reimbursement rate for eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Veterans Affairs has determined that it is necessary to maintain the current reimbursement rate in order to allow the VA health care system to accommodate the increasing patient workload; and

WHEREAS, Mandatory funding for VA health care would allow the Secretary to increase the rate without negative consequences to funding for direct care; and

WHEREAS, The price of gasoline has steadily increased since the \$0.41 rate was established, creating a financial hardship for veterans who have to travel long distances for care, or for those who have limited financial resources; and

WHEREAS, The lack of a consistent and reliable mechanism to periodically adjust the per mile authorization for beneficiary travel creates an injustice and an unfair economic burden to many veterans; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) to seek adequate funding to accommodate the needs of the increasing demand for care, to include the need for a Veterans Transportation System (VTS), accompanied by an increase in the beneficiary travel rate; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to provided dedicated funds for both benefits travel and VTS; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That the VA co-locate VTS and the Beneficiary Travel Office to develop transportation departments at the VA medical centers; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to authorize the VA to establish Memorandums of Understanding with state and local government properties with respect to federal government vehicles used for the purpose of transporting veterans to and from the VA medical facilities; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to periodically adjust the rate to assure that the per mile reimbursement rate is increased at a reasonable and acceptable level.**

**Resolution No. 107: Prosecution of VA Employees Engaged in Fraudulent Practices in the Department of Veterans Affairs**

**Origin: Minnesota**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

**(As amended)**

WHEREAS, The American Legion National Commander, Dan Dellinger, called for a leadership change at the Department of Veterans Affairs and specifically called for the resignations of Eric Shinseki, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Under Secretary of Health Robert Petzel and Under Secretary of Benefits Allison Hickey due to poor oversight and failed leadership; and

WHEREAS, It is widely reported that a number of VA Hospitals have engaged in various waiting list schemes and procedural bypasses for the specific purpose of overstating organizational effectiveness and hence awarding bonuses or other consideration to specific employees; and

WHEREAS, An undetermined number of veterans have been denied timely medical care resulting in death or unnecessary deterioration of their health; and

WHEREAS, A culture of indifference and fraud permeates some VA facilities in violation of medical oaths, fiduciary responsibility and moral codes; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That the American Legion continues to advocate for the President of the United States and the U.S. Congress to press for a special prosecutor to be assigned to investigate and vigorously prosecute any VA employees engaged in fraudulent practices designed to improperly award bonuses or other financial or meritorious awards to the perpetrator.**

**Resolution No. 114: Department of Veterans Affairs Veteran Integrated Service Networks  
Origin: Washington**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is organized into a national VA Central Office Headquarters and 21 Veteran Integrated

Service Networks (VISNs), or regions, which oversee several VA Medical Center facilities and Community Based Outpatient Clinics; and

WHEREAS, VISNs were established by Dr. Kenneth Kizer, Former Under Secretary for Health for VHA to decentralize VA from VA Central Office to regions in order to promote best practices, innovation and be responsible for all financial and operational activities for the VA Medical Center facilities under their jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, Originally, VISN staffing models called for seven to ten full time employee equivalents (FTEE) within each of the 22 VISNS nationwide, for a total of 220 FTE employees nationwide; and

WHEREAS, Over the years, as new VHA programs and initiatives have been designed and implemented by VA Central Office, the VISNs have considerably increased staff to administer, track and manage these programs which is over 1,300 employees today; and

WHEREAS, The VA Office of the Inspector General issued three reports on VISNs recommending (a) the Under Secretary for Health implement a system of financial management and fiscal controls for the VISN offices; (b) strengthen the VISN offices' performance management system and implement management controls over organizational structures and staffing; (c) VA and VHA acquisition management improve oversight of VISN contracts and develop tools to effectively manage VISN contracting activities, which clearly indicates the need for improvements with VISN programs and initiatives; and

WHEREAS, Since the VISN model was developed, there has not been any Government Accountability Office, VA Office of the Inspector General or reports from VHA leadership on the overall effectiveness of the current VISN structure and geographic boundaries in improving access to and quality healthcare for veterans; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges Congress to direct the Government Accountability Office and Department of Veterans Affairs Office of the Inspector General conduct a comprehensive study to include purpose, goals, objectives and budget and evaluation of the effectiveness of the 21 Veteran Integrated Service Networks (VISNs); and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That the Veterans Health Administration leadership conduct an internal review and develop an action plan to address VISN management, staffing and its current geographic boundaries/catchment areas concerns, in order to better provide timely access and quality health care for veterans.**

#### **Resolution No. 125: Environmental Exposures**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

**(As amended)**

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long been at the forefront of advocacy for veterans exposed to environmental hazards such as Agent Orange, Gulf War-related hazards, ionizing radiation and the various chemicals and agents used during Project Shipboard Hazard and Defense; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense's disclosure of information regarding various potential hazardous exposures and the current advancement of scientific research continue to reveal new potential environmental threats to service members on an ongoing basis; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs was congressionally mandated by Public Law 102-4 (1991) to contract with the National Academy of Sciences to review existing peer-reviewed research on herbicides, to include their components, exposure and medical evidence on related health effects; and

WHEREAS, In the last several years new concerns have been raised regarding contamination of stateside and international military installations and locations such as, but not limited to: groundwater contamination at Camp Lejeune, NC; environmental contaminants at

Gagetown, New Brunswick located in Canada; Fort Drum, NY; Fort Dugway, UT; post-hostility Vietnam; and Fort McClellan, AL; and

WHEREAS, Major overseas situations regarding exposures such as sodium dichromate in a water treatment facility in Qarmat Ali, Iraq, toxic exposures at the Naval Air Facility in Atsugi, Japan, dioxins and other contaminants at Johnston Atoll, and others; and

WHEREAS, On October 31, 2011, the Institute of Medicine released a report on the long-term health consequences from exposure to burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan, and currently determined that there is insufficient evidence at this point, but recommended further longitudinal studies over time from to deployment the Joint Base Balad over many years to determine incidences of chronic diseases; and

WHEREAS, The importance of developing a comprehensive policy that allows for maximum flexibility to respond to new research as it becomes apparent in the timeliest and most proactive manner possible is recognized; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion's comprehensive policy on environmental exposures be an all inclusive policy recognizing the traditions of previous advocacy on behalf of veterans exposed to environmental hazards; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Department of Defense (DoD) to provide a full disclosure of all wartime and non-wartime locations to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) where hazardous environmental exposures exist and that armed forces members were exposed through testing, transportation, storage, disposal, and environmental contamination; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to enact legislation requiring the VA to establish a national center for the research on the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions of the descendants of individuals exposed to toxic substances during service in the Armed Forces and establish an advisory board, responsible for advising the national center, determining health conditions that result from toxic exposure and to study and evaluate cases of exposure; and be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the VA to expeditiously conduct peer reviews and scientific investigations through the National Academy of Sciences within the Institute of Medicine on all locations provided by the DoD; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That veterans reporting to VA medical care facilities claiming exposure to such environmental hazards be provided examinations and treatment which are thorough and appropriate, and that VA physicians demonstrate compassion in responding to the medical needs of these veterans; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion vigorously advocate for the liberalization of the rules relating to the evaluation of studies involving exposure to any environmental hazard and that all necessary action be taken by the federal government, both administratively and legislatively as appropriate, to ensure that veterans are properly compensated for diseases and other disabilities scientifically associated with a particular exposure; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue to closely monitor the development of all ongoing research on the long-term effects of all environmental exposures and point out to the proper officials any perceived deficiencies or discrepancies in these projects; and to ensure that government committees charged with review of such research are composed of impartial members of the medical and scientific community; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion will continue to consult with medical experts in order to ensure the effectiveness of its advocacy.**

**Resolution No. 126: Extend Department of Veterans Affairs Mortgage Protection Life Insurance to Service-Connected Veterans Who are Permanently and Totally Disabled**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs Mortgage Protection Life Insurance is presently available to veterans entitled to the special adapted housing award under Section 2102 (a) of Title 38, United States Code; and

WHEREAS, Service-connected veterans rated as permanently and totally disabled cannot obtain Mortgage Protection Life Insurance through commercial insurance companies; and

WHEREAS, Their widows and dependents must bear an undue hardship upon the death of such veterans; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion work with Congress to enact legislation by December 2015, which would extend the Veterans Administration Mortgage Protection Life Insurance to service-connected veterans who are rated as permanently and totally disabled.**

**Resolution No. 127: Gulf War Illnesses**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Approximately 700,000 members of the United States Armed Forces were deployed to the Southwest Asia Theater of Operations during the Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, More than 40,000 women served in theater during the Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, Approximately fifteen percent of the Armed Forces today are women and that percentage is likely to grow in the coming years; and

WHEREAS, The vast majority of Gulf War veterans are in good health, thousands of Gulf War veterans nevertheless suffer from unexplained physical symptoms known as "Gulf War veteran illnesses"; and

WHEREAS, Over 200 scientific studies are investigating these illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Few of the aforementioned studies are focused exclusively on the illnesses experienced by women Gulf War veterans; and

WHEREAS, Misleading information about Gulf War veterans illnesses has spread on the Internet and through the media, and this information has caused a great deal of misunderstanding regarding the severity and prevalence of Gulf War veterans illnesses; and

WHEREAS, The National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine is currently preparing reports that evaluate the nature, the likely causes and the federal government's response to Gulf War veterans illnesses; and

WHEREAS, These reports directly affect Department of Veterans Affairs compensation programs for Gulf War veterans illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Several independent expert scientific committees and organizations have stated that a number of suspected causes of Gulf War veterans illnesses are not likely associated with those illnesses, whereas others are more likely associated with those illnesses; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Veterans Affairs established a committee comprised of doctors, scientists, Gulf War veterans and veteran service organization representatives to provide guidance and advice on future Gulf War-related research efforts; and

WHEREAS, Pyridostigmine bromide was used by the United States and some coalition troops as a nerve agent pre-treatment during the Gulf War although the Food and Drug Administration had not yet approved the drug for that use and some researchers contend that pyridostigmine bromide may be associated with Gulf War veterans illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Several medical studies have found that the unexplained physical symptoms reported by Gulf War veterans are similar to other medically unexplained symptom syndromes like chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and irritable bowel syndrome; and

WHEREAS, The President of the United States signed into law legislation amending the Gulf War undiagnosed illness law (title 38, United States Code, section 1117) to include medically unexplained disabilities such as chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, and irritable bowel syndrome; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's contract with a medical consultant from the University of Connecticut proved invaluable in helping the organization strive towards its goal of serving Gulf War veterans; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs to devote the appropriate resources to finding effective medical treatments to alleviate the unexplained physical symptoms of Gulf War veterans; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That the Department of Veterans Affairs fund more scientific studies that exclusively investigate the health of women Gulf War veterans; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs to quickly implement any reasonable recommendations contained in Institute of Medicine reports, or recommendations offered by the newly established Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses, regarding its Gulf War veterans programs and research; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the scientific community to focus its efforts on the most likely causes of Gulf War veterans illnesses and to refrain from supporting or encouraging investigations of risk factors that are not likely related to Gulf War veterans illnesses; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the Department of Defense to not use investigational drugs on U.S. troops without their informed consent; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs to closely monitor the implementation of the changes to title 38, United States Code, section 1117, to ensure proper application of the law at the Department of Veterans Affairs regional office level; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That the Department of Veterans Affairs continue to develop the Gulf Registry; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion will continue to consult with medical experts from time to time in order to ensure the effectiveness of its advocacy.**

**Resolution No. 128: Increase the Transparency of the Veterans Benefits Administration's Claims Processing**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The American Legion, while supporting the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in its efforts to provide support to military veterans of the United States of America, recognizes the growing backlog of claims for disability and compensation submitted by military veterans; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has continued to challenge the VA to improve both the efficiency and accuracy with which veterans' claims are processed; and

WHEREAS, Testimony by The American Legion before the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, United States House of Representatives informed Congress that the VA continues to be inefficient and inaccurate in processing veterans' claims for disability and compensation; and

WHEREAS, Even though bonuses for Senior Executive Service (SES) employees in the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) have decreased from Fiscal Years 2009 to 2011, bonuses still average around \$14,000 for SES employees in the VBA while the backlog of claims and inaccuracy of claims prepared by the VBA continued to increase; and

WHEREAS, The VBA continues its inefficiency and inaccuracy in processing valid veterans' claims for compensation and pension and medical services without penalty for poor performance; and

WHEREAS, Military veterans who have submitted claims with required documentation continue to suffer from the denial of medical services and monetary compensation due to VBA inefficiency and inaccuracy; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges Congress to pass legislation requiring the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provide, in a venue readily available to the citizens of the United States, a monthly report of the number of claims for compensation and disability that were submitted, that were granted/awarded, that were denied and that remain in a pending status; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, The American Legion petitions Congress to pass legislation that requires VA be held accountable for achieving the VA Secretary's stated goal to achieve an operational state for VA in which no claim is pending over 125 days and all claims have an accuracy rate of 98 percent or higher; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to pass legislation requiring that any veteran whose claim is overturned on appeal be paid an amount, to be determined by Congress, which would be compounded daily, from the date of original submission of the claim; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That bonuses for VA senior executive staff be tied to qualitative and quantitative performance measures developed by VA.**

**Resolution No. 129: All Veterans Receive "Wartime" Benefits for Active Military Service Between February 28, 1961 and August 5, 1964**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Certain Department of Veterans Affairs benefits require wartime service by veterans; and

WHEREAS, The present dates for wartime service during the Vietnam War are August 5, 1964, through May 7, 1975; and

WHEREAS, On November 10, 1997, Public Law 105-110 was signed by President Clinton; and

WHEREAS, This legislation amended the public law which established The American Legion (41 Stat. 285; 36 United States Code (USC) 45), approved September 16, 1919, by striking December 22, 1961, and inserting February 28, 1961; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always advocated the principle of equal benefits for equal service and believes that wartime service is not limited to only those who served in combat; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes the provision in section 101(29)(A), title 38, USC, which limits entitlement to wartime benefits to those who served "in-country in the Republic of Vietnam" in the period February 28, 1961, to August 5, 1964, discriminates against those other veterans who served on active duty during this period, but who did not happen to have been stationed in Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, During these early years of the war in Vietnam, those serving on active duty in other parts of the world were a part of the build-up of military forces in Vietnam and were subject to transfer to Vietnam at any time; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion shall seek legislation to establish February 28, 1961, as the beginning date of the Vietnam War for Department of Veterans Affairs benefit purposes.**

**Resolution No. 130: Amend the Eligibility Requirements and Extend the Eligibility Time Period for Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance****Origin: Maryland****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation****(Consolidated with Resolution No. 218 (IL))**

WHEREAS, The Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (SDVI) program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) was founded by Congress in 1951 to provide life insurance coverage for veterans suffering only from disabilities rated by VA as being connected to their military service to the nation; and

WHEREAS, Service-connected disabled veterans are required by statute to not only be in good health except for their service-connected disability, but must apply for SDVI coverage within two years from the date of their last VA rating for a new, original, disability, with increases in prior VA disability ratings not being includible for this purpose; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans in good health except for their service-connected disabilities, and who are granted rating increases because of worsening severity in such disabilities, continue to be denied SDVI coverage at a time when it has become most needful to them, due to the requirement that SDVI eligibility periods begin only with a VA rating for a new disability and last for only two years; and

WHEREAS, Other service-disabled veterans also continue to be denied insurance, due to the strict two year time limit (from the date of their last original rating) to make application; and

WHEREAS, It continues to be the experience of veterans service organizations such as The American Legion that many service-disabled veterans remain unaware of the SDVI program despite automated VA notifications, a fact supported by VA's own casework experience and program studies, and that the insurance benefit remains inadequate and in need of enhancement; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to amend Sec. 1922(a) of title 38, United States Code, to permit that increases in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) service-connected ratings also provide a service-connected veteran with an eligibility period to apply for VA Service-Disabled Life Insurance in the same manner that ratings for new, original, disabilities presently do, and that the time period of such eligibility be increased from the current two years to a period of at least five years from the date of rating determination and notification, and that such amendment also apply to any new similar issue of VA Service-Disabled insurance that may be enacted into law.**

**Resolution No. 133: Designate United States Air Force C-123K Transport Aircraft as Agent Orange Exposure Sites****Origin: Maryland****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation****(Consolidated with Resolution No. 254 (IL))**

WHEREAS, The levels observed in the C-123K aircraft greatly exceed the Department of Defense's (DoD) own standards for maximum permissible exposure to any dioxin contaminating interior surfaces; and

WHEREAS, Other federal agencies have reviewed the data and concurred that exposures to personnel at levels exceeding DoD recommendations are likely to have occurred; and

WHEREAS, In response to the State of Arizona and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency environmental concerns, the U.S. Air Force withdrew the aircraft from commercial resale, quarantined them and, in April 2010, ultimately took extraordinary disposal measures and smelted the remaining fleet; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated that approximately 1,500 servicemembers, including aircrews and maintenance personnel were exposed to military herbicide-contaminated conditions on the C-123K aircraft; and



WHEREAS, Many of these personnel, still surviving, now have health problems commonly associated with herbicide exposure and have endured lengthy legal struggles to prove these problems are service-related; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs has statutory responsibility to accurately designate situations and locations that caused veterans to have been exposed to military herbicides used in Vietnam, as well as their contaminants; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion work with Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs to promptly designate the C-123K aircraft, in the United States, as having been Agent Orange exposure sites to permit veterans who were aircrew or maintenance personnel to be eligible for Agent Orange-related benefits.**

**Resolution No. 134: Disability and Death Pension Program**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Public Law 95-588, the Veterans and Survivors Pension Improvement Act of 1978, provided major changes in the disability and death pension program for the veterans of World War I, World War II, the Korean, Vietnam, and Gulf Wars and their surviving spouses and children; and

WHEREAS, This pension program established different guaranteed annual income levels for necessary economic support; and

WHEREAS, After extensive study, The American Legion concludes that certain inequities exist in the Improved Pension program that need to be addressed by Congress; and

WHEREAS, Under the current Death Pension program, the annual benefit rate for a surviving spouse with no income and no dependents is \$8,219 or about only two thirds of the amount received by a veteran with no income and no dependents; and

WHEREAS, In addition, current regulations provide that surviving spouses are not entitled to pension benefits for the month in which the veteran dies, if they are not found eligible for death pension; and

WHEREAS, The majority of these surviving spouses are elderly and disabled and are living below the poverty level; and

WHEREAS, Under the current Death Pension program, the annual benefit rate for a surviving child with no income where there is no surviving spouse is \$2,093 or seventeen percent of the amount received by a veteran with no income or dependents; and

WHEREAS, This limited amount may impose a severe financial hardship on the surviving child; and

WHEREAS, Under title 38, United States Code, section 1543 where the surviving child is residing with a person who is legally responsible for such child's support, the income and corpus of estate of that person is countable for the purposes of determining entitlement or continued entitlement to pension benefits; and

WHEREAS, Currently, when two veterans are married to one another where both meet the disability, service and income requirements, basic pension benefits are payable only at the rate of a "veteran with one dependent," which is currently \$16,051 annually; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that since each veteran in their own right meets the eligibility criteria for pension with the exception of being married to another veteran, this discriminatory provision of the law should be eliminated and each veteran should be paid at the basic pension rate of a single veteran without dependents which is \$12,256, reduced by the amount of countable family income; and

WHEREAS, In the determination of annual income, payments under all Government Life Insurance programs are countable, but proceeds from fire and casualty insurance policies may be excluded; and

WHEREAS, Previous pension programs have excluded the proceeds of Government Life Insurance Policies in the determination of annual income; and

WHEREAS, Currently, the effective date of reduction or discontinuance of pension based on a change of income shall be the last day of the month in which the change occurred; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes it would lessen the financial hardship of such adjustments to pension if any such change would be made as of the last day of the calendar year in which the change occurred; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support amendments to title 38, section 1543, United States Code, to accomplish the following:**

1. **Establish the pension rates of surviving spouses at ninety percent of the rate for a veteran without dependents;**
2. **Establish the pension rate for a surviving child where there is no surviving spouse entitled at ninety percent of the rate of a veteran without dependents;**
3. **Delete the requirement that the income and corpus of estate of a person legally responsible for the support of a surviving child be counted in the determination of annual income of such child;**
4. **Provide that when two veterans, who meet the service, disability and income requirements for pension eligibility, are married to one another, each shall be paid at the rate of a single veteran without dependents reduced by the amount of countable family income;**
5. **Exclude in the determination of annual income payments all proceeds from Government Life Insurance policies;**
6. **Change the effective date for reduction or discontinuance of pension based on a change of income from the last day of the month in which the change occurred to the last day of the calendar year in which the change occurred.**

**Resolution No. 135: Extend the Presumptive Period for Service Connection for Gulf War Veterans with Undiagnosed Illness**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

**(Consolidated with Resolution No. 256 (IL))**

WHEREAS, Thousands of Gulf War veterans still suffer from chronic unexplained physical symptoms; and

WHEREAS, Many servicemembers who have served in the Southwest Asia theater since the 1991 Gulf War, including those serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom, have also been exhibiting chronic, unexplained physical symptoms; and

WHEREAS, The Gulf War Era has not been officially concluded; and

WHEREAS, There has recently been some progress in research on the long-term health effects of many of the agents Gulf War veterans were potentially exposed to during the Gulf War, but numerous symptoms experienced by sick Gulf War veterans are still not well understood, the causes of such symptoms remain elusive and answers could likely remain evasive for some time; and

WHEREAS, Additional research into the long-term health effects of exposures is needed, a fact confirmed by the Department of Veterans Affairs Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses; and

WHEREAS, The health effects from the Gulf Wars may not manifest until years after the servicemembers' service; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge that legislation be enacted to reinstate and extend the presumptive period for service connection of Gulf War veterans with undiagnosed illnesses indefinitely.**

**Resolution No. 136: Oppose Legislation Authorizing Legion-Accredited Representatives to Develop Claims Directly on Behalf of the Department of Veterans Affairs****Origin: Maryland****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, There are almost 23 million veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Currently, there are approximately 685,686 veterans who have some type of action pending on their claims by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, Approximately 405,938 of those claims are over six months old; and

WHEREAS, In addition, there is a growing backlog of pending appeals, which is now over 267,002 cases, as well as approximately 18,000 remanded cases at the Appeals Management Center; and

WHEREAS, Appeals are, by definition, among the oldest claims in the system and reflect the claimant's belief that they have not received a fair or proper decision; and

WHEREAS, The nation's veteran population is dying at a rate of over 1,300 veterans a day; and

WHEREAS, Proposed legislation to reduce the backlog of veteran's claims at VA was previously introduced in the United States House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, Under currently proposed legislation, a pilot program, establishing an official federally funded arrangement between county veteran service officers and VA in five states (California, Florida, Ohio, South Carolina, and Texas), with the potential of expanding to other states upon the request of a county veterans service officer in such a state, would be created in order to eliminate the backlog of claims for veterans benefits; and

WHEREAS, Many county veterans service officers are, in fact, accredited representatives of The American Legion and employed by local municipalities; and

WHEREAS, The proposed legislation would allow the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to choose a county veterans service office for development of a claim based upon the office's geographical proximity to the claimant; and

WHEREAS, County veterans service officers are already working long hours to assist veterans and eligible dependents in the application for, administration of, or receipt of benefits under any federal, state, or county veterans benefits program; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, under this program, would refer claims to the county veterans service officer for specific development as specified by the Secretary; and

WHEREAS, Claims submitted to the county veterans service officer under this program would be treated, for receipt of claim purposes, as if submitted to VA; and

WHEREAS, VA referrals to a county service officer imply a dual role, that of advocate for the veteran and VA adjudicator of the veteran all at the same time; and

WHEREAS, This dual role would essentially make the county service officer a quasi VA employee, creating an inherent conflict of interest between the county service officer's role as a veterans advocate and his/her function as a quasi employee of VA; and

WHEREAS, VA referrals could jeopardize the veteran-service officer confidentiality and even violate the Privacy Act and power of attorney relationship; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion adamantly oppose any federal legislation requiring an accredited representative of The American Legion to develop claims on behalf of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under a contractual arrangement between VA and county or state government or under any other arrangement where the representative would be acting in an official capacity directly on behalf of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.**

**Resolution No. 137: Radiation Exposure****Origin: Maryland****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code (USC), section 1112, lists various diseases which will be presumed to be service-connected in radiation-exposed veterans; and

WHEREAS, The term “radiation-exposed veteran” is defined as a veteran who participated in a radiation-risk activity while on active duty or inactive duty for training; and

WHEREAS, The term, “radiation-risk activity” is defined as involving onsite participation in an atmospheric nuclear weapons test, or the occupation of Hiroshima or Nagasaki during the period beginning on August 6, 1945, and ending on July 1, 1946, or internment as a POW in Japan during WWII which resulted in an opportunity for radiation exposure, or participation in underground nuclear tests at Amchitka Island, Alaska prior to January 1, 1974, or service at gaseous diffusion plants at Paducah, Kentucky, Portsmouth, Ohio, or Oak Ridge, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Radiogenic diseases recognized as being presumed to be related to veteran’s exposure to radiation in service-listed in title 38, Code of Federal Regulation (CFR), section 3.309 - include various cancers that may manifest decades after exposure; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, CFR, section 3.311, requires The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to consider the circumstances of the veteran’s service and make a determination of whether the veteran’s disease resulted from the claimed exposure; and

WHEREAS, Such determinations are based heavily on an estimate of the veteran’s probable dose exposure; and

WHEREAS, It is well documented that because thousands of veterans who participated in the atmospheric nuclear weapons tests and various other radiation-risk activities did not have dosimetry badges, and record-keeping by the military and other Federal agencies concerning individual and group exposures was poor, current radiation dose estimates have been arbitrary, unreliable, and inaccurate; and

WHEREAS, The VA’s continued use of questionable radiation dose estimates has caused the claims of thousands of radiation-exposed veterans to be denied; and

WHEREAS, Congress expressed concern about this problem in a provision of Public Law (PL) 106-419 requiring VA to conduct a two-year study of the radiation dose estimate program and report back to Congress; and

WHEREAS, Based on the lack of credible historic data as to the amount of radiation atomic veterans were actually exposed to, The American Legion believes this requirement in the regulations should be eliminated; and

WHEREAS, PL 106-398 included provisions amending the Radiation Compensation Act of 1990 to include workers in Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear weapons-related programs who were exposed to radiation, beryllium, or silica; and

WHEREAS, Over the years, thousands of veterans have been assigned duty at various DOE nuclear weapons development, testing and manufacturing facilities, such as Hanford, Washington, Oak Ridge, Tennessee and others, and would have been similarly at risk of exposure to radiation, beryllium, or silica; and

WHEREAS, The claim for a radiogenic disease or a disease related to beryllium, or silica by such veterans would be denied by VA, because their military duty does not meet the current definition of a radiation-risk activity in title 38 USC and proof of such exposure for direct service connection would be difficult if not impossible to obtain, nor do these veterans meet the eligibility criteria for benefits under the Radiation Compensation Act of 1990 as amended; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion seek legislation to eliminate the radiation dose estimate requirement in claims of veterans who were exposed to ionizing radiation during their military service; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation to recognize military duty at all Department of Energy nuclear weapons development, testing and manufacturing facilities as a “radiation-risk activity”; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation it include title 38, United States Code, those diseases recognized for benefit purposes under the Radiation Compensation Act of 1990 as amended, including those resulting from exposure to beryllium and silica.**

**Resolution No. 138: Recognize Operations in Lebanon (1958), Grenada (1983), and Panama (1989-1990) as Periods of War for Department of Veterans Affairs Pension Purposes**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Subsection 11 of section 101, title 38, United States Code (USC), defines “period of war” as the Spanish-American War, Mexican Border Period, World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict, the Vietnam Era, the Gulf War and the period beginning on the date of any future declaration of war by Congress and the ending on the date prescribed by Presidential proclamation or concurrent resolution of Congress; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, USC, section 1521 (a) provides that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) shall pay pension to each veteran of a “period of war” who meets the length of service requirements specified in section 1521 (j) and who is permanently and totally disabled and who meets the income criteria in this section; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, USC, section 101 (6) recognizes that, for VA purposes, the dates for the “period of war” for the Spanish-American War (April 21, 1898, to July 4, 1902) also include service during the Philippine Insurrection, Boxer Rebellion, and service in the Moro Province from April 21, 1898, to July 5, 1903; and

WHEREAS, Operation “Blue Bat” in Lebanon, July 1, 1958, to November 1, 1958, Operation “Urgent Fury” in Grenada, October 23, 1983, and Operation “Just Cause” in Panama, December 20, 1989, to January 31, 1990, are not qualifying service for pension or benefit purposes, under title 38, USC, definition of a “period of war”; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That the Congress be urged to include in the definition of “period of war” in title 38, United States Code, sections 101 (11) and 1521, the following periods: the operations in Lebanon in 1958, Grenada in 1983, and Panama in 1989-1990 for the purpose of establishing entitlement to VA pension.**

**Resolution No. 139: Revision of Work-Rate Standards for Department of Veterans Affairs Adjudicators**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The current Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) work-rate standards are based upon a series of work credits or End Products (EPs) that can be taken upon completion of work at the various stages in the processing of a claim; and

WHEREAS, This data is used to measure and evaluate each individual adjudicator’s performance as well as the station’s overall performance; and

WHEREAS, Under this type of system, the amount of work performed is measured in terms of the cumulative number of EPs reported without regard to whether the action taken, as indicated by the EP, was correct or proper; and

WHEREAS, Since all action, good and bad, receives the same amount of work credit, there is no incentive to do good quality work or disincentive to do poor quality work, which makes the use of these work credits prone to manipulation and abuse; and

WHEREAS, The use of a piecemeal approach to work measurement does not provide accurate or reliable information on the actual amount of work being performed, its quality, or the amount of time and resources needed to properly process a claim; and

WHEREAS, Without a fundamental change in the work measurement system, the Board of Veterans' Appeals will continue to be burdened with an inordinate number of unnecessary appeals, and veterans and their families forced to endure prolonged hardship while waiting for a final decision on their claim; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion seeks legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Regional Office adjudicators shall receive work credit under a system that integrates not only the quantity of work performed, but also the quality of work performed; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That such a work credit system adequately applies negative credit to work found to be in error, whether by decision overturned on appeal, through internal reviews within the VA, such as the Systematic Technical Accuracy Review, or by any other means that are applicable.**

#### **Resolution No. 140: Support Presumption of Service Connection for Hepatitis C**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C is an easily transmittable blood-borne virus, which can result in long-term, potentially fatal health problems; and

WHEREAS, Because of the exposure risk factors directly related to military service, veterans have a much higher incidence of Hepatitis C than the general population; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) estimates 10 to 20 percent of veterans currently have Hepatitis C, compared to under 2 percent for the general population; and

WHEREAS, Vietnam veterans are the group most directly affected by the Hepatitis C virus; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans who contracted Hepatitis C 25 or 30 years ago or more in service are now showing signs of severe liver disease and 52 percent of the liver transplants done by VA are for veterans with Hepatitis C; and

WHEREAS, In 85 percent of cases, no acute symptoms would have shown up at the time of infection with Hepatitis C; and

WHEREAS, Military training and combat situations offer many opportunities for transmitting the blood-borne Hepatitis virus through blood to blood contact; and

WHEREAS, No effective blood test for Hepatitis C was available until 1992; and

WHEREAS, Veterans with Hepatitis C who were treated for acute Hepatitis during military service and who now claim service connection are generally denied by VA, because they cannot prove the current Hepatitis C is related to the Hepatitis noted in service; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Veterans' Appeals often rejects claims for service connection for Hepatitis C, because the veteran's medical records do not show the presence of Hepatitis C at time of discharge from service; and

WHEREAS, Because of the nature of this disease and the long latency period, veterans who experience certain exposure risk factors in service, such as: blood transfusion prior to 1992; exposure to blood on or through the skin or mucous membrane; hemodialysis; experience of a needle-stick accident or medical event involving a needle, not due to the veteran's willful misconduct; a diagnosis of unexplained liver disease in service; experience of an unexplained liver dysfunction or abnormal liver test; or duty as a health-care position or specialty as prescribed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; should be accorded a statutory presumption for the purpose of establishing entitlement to service connection for Hepatitis C; and

WHEREAS, Service connection for Hepatitis C is important to veterans and their families, since it entitles the veteran to compensation for any disability related to the disease as well as necessary medical care; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion strongly urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to expeditiously promulgate regulations providing for presumptive service connection for Hepatitis C; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to provide for a statutory presumption of service connection for Hepatitis C under certain conditions in service; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That the Department of Veterans Affairs provide regular notification to Congress, the veterans service organizations, and veterans on new treatment modalities for Hepatitis C.**

**Resolution No. 141: Means Test for Married Veterans**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation  
(Consolidated with Resolutions No. 228 (OH) and No. 247 (IL))**

WHEREAS, United States Code, Title 38 § 1722, subsection (b) authorizes income thresholds for veterans eligibility for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care benefits; and

WHEREAS, Veterans enrolling in VA health care are authorized additional income thresholds for each dependent they have in qualifying for health care benefits; and

WHEREAS, VA's means test threshold for calendar year 2014 for a single veteran is \$31,443 or less; and

WHEREAS, VA's means test threshold for calendar year 2014 for a veteran with one dependent is \$37,733 or less; and

WHEREAS, A veteran with one dependent, with that dependent being a veteran eligible to apply for VA health care, the financial means test threshold is also \$37,733 or less for financial test year 2013; and

WHEREAS, A veteran married to a veteran, where both are eligible to enroll in VA health care, are penalized by the means test threshold by not having both of their honorable service recognized; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support legislation to amend Title 38, United States Code, Sections 1722, subsection (b) to increase the income threshold of a veteran married to a veteran by two times the financial means test of a single veteran for the financial test year applied for enrollment into the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system.**

**Resolution No. 142: Opening the Federal Supply Schedule for Pharmaceuticals to Medicare and Medicaid**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The Federal Supply Schedule for Pharmaceuticals (FSS-P) is a schedule of pharmaceutical supply contracts awarded to responsible vendors supplying comparable products and services at fair and reasonable prices to the government; and

WHEREAS, FSS-P is essentially a price catalog of approximately 24,000 pharmaceutical products available to the federal government; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is the largest purchaser of pharmaceuticals under FSS-P; and

WHEREAS, Pricing of pharmaceuticals to VA is at least 24% below and as much as 60% below drug manufacturers' most favored non-federal, non-retail customer pricing; and

WHEREAS, Known as Federal Ceiling Prices (FCP), these prices are generally 14-20% lower than regular negotiated FSS-P prices; and

WHEREAS, Medicaid is a joint federal and state program that pays for medical assistance for individuals and families with low incomes and relatively few assets; and

WHEREAS, Numerous states encounter shortfalls in Medicaid funds and implement aggressive measures to control growth and curb expenditures, including prescription drug expenditures; and

WHEREAS, Beneficiaries of prescription drug benefits under Medicaid who also receive medical care under Medicare Parts A and B are known as “dual-eligible”; and

WHEREAS, “Dual-eligible” are mostly elderly poor who account for 34% of the enrolled Medicaid population, but 80% of the Medicaid drug bill; and

WHEREAS, “Dual-eligible” beneficiaries were automatically enrolled into the new Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit; and

WHEREAS, In 1990, the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 (OBRA90) required drug manufacturers to provide rebates to state Medicaid programs for outpatient drug purchases in exchange for Medicaid reimbursement; and

WHEREAS, Manufacturers are willing to price FSS-P low because it accounts for a very small fraction of the total domestic drug market and because up to 70% of new doctors receive some residency training in medical school affiliated VA medical centers, thereby creating a continuous flow of loyal prescribers of their products; and

WHEREAS, When OBRA90 Medicaid rebates went into effect, manufacturers responded by raising FSS-P pricing to VA some 14%; and

WHEREAS, If federal legislation mandates that the new Medicare Part D drug benefit be tied to FSS-P, pharmaceutical manufacturers will act predictably to raise FSS-P prices to VA; and

WHEREAS, U.S. veterans in priority group 7 receiving VA medications on an outpatient basis are required to pay a co-payment of \$8.00 for a 30-day supply of medication and veterans in priority group 8 are required to pay a co-payment of \$9.00 for a 30-day supply of medication would almost certainly end up paying more were VA to lose its protected FSS-P pricing; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has consistently opposed increases in prescription co-payments in the past, arguing that corrections to other programs should not be made “on the backs of veterans”; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion oppose any federal legislation that would open the Federal Supply Schedule for Pharmaceuticals to Medicaid, Medicare Part D, or any other entity or program not now specifically authorized to purchase on the Federal Supply Schedule for Pharmaceuticals.**

**Resolution No. 143: Oppose any Reduction of Eligibility Criteria for Department of Veterans Affairs Per Diem Payments to State Veterans Homes**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, State Veterans Homes were founded for indigent and disabled Civil War veterans beginning in the late 1800s and have continued to serve subsequent generations of veterans for over one hundred years; and

WHEREAS, Today, there are more than 133 State Veterans Homes facilities in 49 states and Puerto Rico with over 30,255 total beds providing nursing home, hospital and domiciliary care; with more capacity being added annually; and

WHEREAS, The State Veterans Home Program has proven to be a cost-effective provider of quality care to many of the nation’s veterans; and

WHEREAS, This program is an important adjunct to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) own nursing, hospital and domiciliary programs; and



WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, authorizes VA per diem payments for veterans residing in State Veterans Homes; and

WHEREAS, There has been consideration of limiting the eligibility for inpatient long term (maintenance) care to veterans in Priority Groups 1 through 3 and Priority Group 4 veterans determined to be catastrophically disabled; and

WHEREAS, Such a change would cause thousands of veterans who are now eligible for per diem to become ineligible; and

WHEREAS, Such a change could cause financial disaster to many State Veterans Homes that now rely on VA per diem for revenue; and

WHEREAS, Such a change could result in a new population of elderly homeless veterans, especially in states that have poor Medicaid nursing home reimbursement rates; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion shall oppose any legislative proposal to reduce the eligibility criteria for Department of Veterans Affairs State Veterans Homes per diem.**

#### **Resolution No. 144: Prostate Cancer Research and Treatment**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Prostate cancer is the most common form of cancer, other than skin cancer, among men in the United States and is second only to lung cancer as a cause of cancer-related death among men; and

WHEREAS, One of six males will develop clinically significant prostate cancer in their lifetime; and

WHEREAS, The 2014 American Cancer Society Surveillance Research estimated that 233,000 new cases of prostate cancer will be diagnosed, while 29,480 will die within the next year; and

WHEREAS, Prostate cancer has been demonstrated to be service-connected to Agent Orange exposure and, pursuant to the Agent Orange Act of 1991, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has determined that a presumption of service connection based on exposure to herbicides used in Vietnam is warranted for prostate cancer, in that VA has found a positive association between the condition and such exposure; and

WHEREAS, Advances in biomedical research are leading to new treatments and cures for all forms of cancer, and will lower long-term health care costs; and

WHEREAS, VA is very productive in advancing medical knowledge, improving health care for veterans and all other citizens; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That federal funding for prostate cancer research, treatment, and therapies at the National Institutes of Health, Department of Defense, and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) be significantly increased and that Congress and the Administration re-double their efforts to find a cure for prostate cancer; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That the Veterans Health Administration increase its investment in prostate cancer clinical research by improving and accelerating clinical trials at VA hospitals and affiliated university medical centers and research programs.**

#### **Resolution No. 145: Protection of Religious Rights and Ceremonies at National Cemetery Administration National and State Cemeteries**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Some National Cemetery Administration national and state cemeteries do not allow graveside services that include a reference to God; and

WHEREAS, This policy is pursuant to a memorandum of the Undersecretary of Veterans Affairs for Memorial Affairs dated November 1, 2007; and

WHEREAS, This policy involves prior restraint of speech and religion in violation of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion and other veteran service organizations have challenged this policy in the United States District Court; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That the National Cemetery Administration amend the November 1, 2007 memorandum of the Undersecretary of Veterans Affairs for Ceremonial Affairs on Honor Guard Funeral Flags to uphold and guarantee the freedom of all religious rights and ceremonies for veterans and their families at national and state cemeteries; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion petition Congress to support legislation guaranteeing the right that all religious rights and ceremonies be permitted at all national and state cemeteries; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion support litigation against policies that violate the use of speech and religion in accordance with the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.**

**Resolution No. 146: Provide the Department of Veterans Affairs the Ability to Purchase Medications Located Outside the United States**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, 41 U.S.C. Sections 10a-10d prohibits the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) from purchasing pharmaceutical products manufactured in United States Food & Drug Administration (FDA) approved facilities located in non-approved trading partner countries; and

WHEREAS, Since 2010, there have been an unprecedented number of VA pharmaceutical product shortages; and

WHEREAS, Some of these pharmaceutical products can be directly or indirectly linked to FDA product recalls while others cannot; and

WHEREAS, At times, even the manufacturer cannot or will not explain the reason for the shortage; and

WHEREAS, Outsourcing of pharmaceutical production, to areas outside of the U.S., is occurring at an increasing rate; and

WHEREAS, There are multiple instances of either primary product selection and/or secondary options that are only manufactured in countries from which the VA cannot purchase; and

WHEREAS, This forces the VA to either utilize costly brand name products or switch the veteran to a totally different product; and

WHEREAS, In almost all cases this procurement restriction has resulted in a higher cost to the VA, with no corresponding increase in quality; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion petition Congress to enact legislation to provide the Department of Veterans Affairs authority to purchase needed pharmaceuticals, manufactured in United States Food & Drug Administration approved facilities located outside the United States.**

**Resolution No. 147: Exempt Purple Heart and Medal of Honor Recipients from VA Prescription Co-Payment****Origin: Maryland****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation  
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 252 (IL))**

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

WHEREAS, Under the priority category system at Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers, those who were awarded the Purple Heart have been singled out as a special group of veterans deserving special consideration for their service and sacrifice to their country; and

WHEREAS, This special group of Purple Heart recipients has been placed in Priority Group Three; and

WHEREAS, Under the Caregiver Bill, veterans that were awarded the Medal of Honor were placed into Priority Group Three; and

WHEREAS, Priority Group Three veterans do not have to make any co-payments for any of their inpatient or outpatient care; and

WHEREAS, These same veterans, if they are rated under 50% service-connected disabled or receive prescriptions for a non-service connected condition are charged an \$8 co-payment for each 30 day supply of medication; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to exempt all those who were awarded the Purple Heart and/or the Medal of Honor and are enrolled in the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system, from any co-payment for prescription drugs.**

**Resolution No. 148: Request Congress Provide the Department of Veterans Affairs Adequate Funding for Medical and Prosthetic Research****Origin: Maryland****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical and Prosthetic Research Service is very productive in advancing medical knowledge and improving health care for veterans and all other citizens; and

WHEREAS, VA has developed the cardiac pacemaker, nicotine patch, the concepts that led to the Computerized Axial Tomography (CAT) scan, and other medical breakthroughs; and

WHEREAS, Basic biomedical research provides the most rational and cost-effective means of preventive health care and provides treatments and cures for many diseases; and

WHEREAS, Advances in biomedical research lead to the creation of new knowledge in biotechnology and serve as a successful model in lowering long-term health care costs; and

WHEREAS, In 1998, VA realigned its research priorities in response to recommendations of the department's Research Realignment and Advisory Committee to better serve the needs of the veteran population; and

WHEREAS, The Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) is a venture undertaken by the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research Service to establish a national system to translate research discoveries, innovation, effective and efficient diagnostic and treatment strategies into patient care; and

WHEREAS, QUERI is a comprehensive, data driven, outcome-based quality improvement program that will ensure excellence in all areas of Veterans Health Administration medical care: in-patient, out-patient and long-term care; and

WHEREAS, Continued research is urgently needed for many diseases if medical science is to overcome cancer, heart disease, AIDS, new strains of tuberculosis, mental illness, hepatitis and others, to help spare veterans and citizens from prolonged illness and permanent disabilities; and

WHEREAS, The need to reduce the nation's budget deficit must not compromise the efforts to maintain and improve health productivity and develop new preventive and therapeutic procedures through the Department of Veterans Affairs and other government agencies; and

WHEREAS, It is essential that Congress and the Administration support strong medical and prosthetic research programs within VA so that veterans and all citizens continue to benefit from the exceptional research capability of the department; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support adequate funding for Department of Veterans Affairs biomedical research activities; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That Congress and the Administration encourage acceleration in the development and initiation of needed research on conditions that significantly affect veterans, such as prostate cancer, addictive disorders, trauma and wound healing, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, rehabilitation, and others, jointly with the Department of Defense, the National Institutes of Health, other federal agencies, academic institutions and the Department of Veterans Affairs.**

**Resolution No. 149: Service Dogs for Injured Service Personnel and Veterans with Mental Health Conditions**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation  
(Consolidated with Resolution 217 (IL))**

WHEREAS, Thousands of American soldiers have sustained serious mental and physical injuries during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, Countless numbers of veterans continue to suffer from mental and physical injuries incurred on behalf of our country during prior conflicts; and

WHEREAS, In 2009, Congress authorized the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to extend benefits for the upkeep of service and guide dogs used primarily for the aid of persons with physical disabilities and psychological wounds by amending 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) Section 1714; and

WHEREAS, In the Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 National Defense Authorization Act, Congress mandated VA to conduct a five-year study on the effectiveness of service dogs for veterans with rated mental health disabilities as their primary diagnosis; and

WHEREAS, The VA does not issue a service or guide dog; and

WHEREAS, The VA will only provide a referral and once the dog has been certified, only the maintenance of the hardware with the exception of non-prescription dog food; and

WHEREAS, VA issued a proposed rule on 38 C.F.R. Part 17 to amend its policies and procedures directly related to veterans benefits and service dogs; and

WHEREAS, Veterans should have the same experience in a VA hospital as a private sector hospital with regards to the access of a service or guide dog, but currently do not; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion provided public comments on VA's proposed rule on Monday, August 15, 2011, with concerns such as VA does not provide service dogs or money for service dogs, VA only provides benefits to veterans that already have a service dog a VA doctor deems medically appropriate, as well as VA's selection of the standards set by the Assistance Dogs International or the International Guide Dog Federation for certification process; and

WHEREAS, 38 U.S.C. Section 1714 currently only states that the VA "may" provide service dogs for veterans with mental illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Eligibility for a veteran being issued a service dog is loosely defined and relies on clinical judgment and criterion which is not provided in this regulation and in the proposed rule VA states, "that trained dogs may provide valuable services to veterans diagnosed with certain mental illness, at this time VA does not have any scientific data to determine, from a purely clinical standpoint, whether or when service dogs are most appropriately provided to veterans with mental illness, including post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)"; and

WHEREAS, VA is promulgating regulations that do not clearly define the original Congressional intent of 38 U.S.C. Section 1714 that VA provide the benefits outlined by said section to qualified veterans, as outlined by 38 CFR 1705, with psychological disabilities as their primary VA diagnoses; and

WHEREAS, Many agencies provide service dogs or training for service dealing with mental or psychological disabilities specifically for veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury and PTSD which are not included in the proposed rule; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to clearly define regulations and current eligibility requirements for a veteran to receive a referral for mental and/or physical conditions to pass legislation for clarification and of the original intent of Congress to VA as needed in order to ensure VA provides service and guide dogs to veterans with mental health illnesses; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, The American Legion urge Congress to pass legislation to changed the “may” to “shall” located in 38 U.S.C. Section 1714; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, The American Legion urges VA to provide outreach and education to staff and veterans regarding the guide and service dog programs’ policies, procedures, and benefits; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, The American Legion urges VA to mirror ADA standards or be less restrictive in regards to service and guide dogs; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, The American Legion urges VA to more clearly define its regulations and current eligibility for issuance of service dogs to veterans with mental health illnesses; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That VA expand its list of agencies that can provide and accredit service dogs to veterans for the treatment of physical and mental conditions requiring the use of service and/or guide dogs, use during the three-year pilot study on the effectiveness of service dogs for mental health purposes and thereafter.**

#### **Resolution No. 150: Strategic Capital Investment Planning Program**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Strategic Capital Investment Planning (SCIP) program is a ten-year capital plan designed to address VA’s most critical infrastructure needs within the Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration and National Cemetery Administration; and

WHEREAS, The SCIP plan evaluated gaps associated with space, access/workload, condition, safety, security, energy and other gap data needing to be reduced with major construction, minor construction, non-recurring maintenance, enhanced-use leasing, sharing, and other investments and disposal; and

WHEREAS, The SCIP plan has identified 4,808 capital projects that will be necessary to close gaps over a ten-year period with a cost between \$53 and \$65 billion with a current facility condition assessment deficiency cost of \$10 billion; and

WHEREAS, The SCIP Plan does not include activation costs for facilities, which include staffing full-time employee equivalents and office furniture, which will be additional costs incurred by the Veteran Integrated Service Network, VA Medical Center and allocated by other VA appropriations; and

WHEREAS, The Government Accountability Office report in January, 2011, *VA Real Property: Realignment Progressing, but Greater Transparency about Future Priorities Is Needed*, recommended, “VA annually provide to Congress the full results of its SCIP process and any subsequent capital planning efforts, including details on estimated costs of future projects”; and

WHEREAS, Under VA's Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services planning process, The American Legion urged Congress to annually appropriate sufficient funds to fund the plan, however, VA was not given the \$1 billion appropriation as intended; and

WHEREAS, Funding for VA's major and minor construction programs have been consistently targeted for reductions; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges Congress to provide increased appropriations annually to address Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) construction deficiencies and gaps identified by VA's Strategic Capital Investment Planning (SCIP) program; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That VA include activation costs in their future SCIP cost projections and allocations so VA's budget will not have to offset this lack of national funding; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That VA continue to be transparent about SCIP progress by publicly posting information about projects and costs on an annual basis.**

**Resolution No. 151: Support Legislation to Place Mariner Medal Recipients in Priority Group 3 for the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Qualified Merchant Marines are eligible for veterans benefits; and

WHEREAS, Congress authorized the Mariner's Medal, which was awarded to any seaman who while serving in a ship during the war period (World War II) was wounded, suffered physical injury, or suffered through dangerous exposure as a result of an act of enemy of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Enrollment levels for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care are set according to eight priority groups established by Congress; and

WHEREAS, Purple Heart and Medal of Honor recipients are accorded Priority Group 3 status for VA health care; and

WHEREAS, Recipients of the Merchant Medal should be accorded similar priority group status for VA health care; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support legislation that would place recipients of the Mariner Medal in the Priority Group 3 enrollment level for Department of Veterans Affairs health care.**

**Resolution No. 152: Support Medicare Reimbursement for the Department of Veterans Affairs**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides medical care to eligible beneficiaries as authorized by title 38, United States Code; and

WHEREAS, The fundamental branch of VA that administers and operates this medical care delivery system is the Veterans Health Administration (VHA); and

WHEREAS, VHA is the nation's largest comprehensive, integrated health care delivery system that provides excellence in health care value, service, education and research; and

WHEREAS, The mission of VHA is to meet the medical needs of America's veterans by providing specialized care, primary care and related medical and social support services for eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, VHA consists of hospitals, ambulatory clinics, nursing homes, domiciliarys and readjustment counseling centers located nationwide; and

WHEREAS, VHA continues to be the nation's largest educator of health care professionals through its affiliations with medical schools, academic medical centers and other research institutions; and

WHEREAS, VHA continues to be a major national research asset conducting basic, clinical, epidemiological and behavioral studies across the entire spectrum of scientific discipline; and

WHEREAS, VHA continues to serve as a contingency back-up to Department of Defense medical services and, during national emergencies, supports the National Disaster Medical System; and

WHEREAS, Enrollment in VHA could be limited by the availability of existing annual federal discretionary appropriations to meet the health care needs of enrolled veterans; and

WHEREAS, VHA continues to seek other revenue streams to supplement limited annual federal discretionary appropriations and meet the growing demands for quality treatment of enrolled veterans; and

WHEREAS, VHA is authorized to bill, collect and retain first party co-payments from enrolled veterans and third party co-payments from their health care insurers, except Medicare, for inpatient and outpatient care, outpatient medications and long-term care services, and

WHEREAS, Medicare is a prepaid, federally mandated health insurance program for all eligible Americans; and

WHEREAS, Medicare is an entitlement program for nearly forty million Americans; and

WHEREAS, VA is prohibited from billing and collecting Medicare reimbursements for the treatment of non-service-connected medical conditions of enrolled Medicare-eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, Indian Health Service has successfully demonstrated the ability to bill and collect Medicare reimbursement; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's GI Bill of Health proposes Medicare reimbursement for VA as a realistic health care coverage for enrolled, Medicare-eligible veterans seeking treatment of non-service-connected medical conditions in VHA health care facilities; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion advocate to Congress amending title XVIII of the Social Security Act, to allow Medicare Reimbursement for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) on a fee-for-service basis for the treatment of non-service-connected medical conditions of enrolled, Medicare-eligible veterans; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That enrolled, Medicare eligible veterans be authorized to participate in the Medicare Advantage option by choosing VA as their primary health care provider.**

### **Resolution No. 153: Policy on State Veteran Homes Inspection**

#### **Origin: Maryland**

#### **Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, State Veterans Home program, represented by 140 participating facilities within 50 states and in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, has proven itself to be the most cost-effective resource available to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), for high quality long term health care services for those of the nation's veterans who need skilled nursing, domiciliary care, adult day health care and other specialized long term care programs to meet their needs; and

WHEREAS, VA promotes and closely monitors the care and treatment of veterans in State Veterans Homes as an important means to attain its goal of developing, providing, maintaining and guaranteeing options for the highest quality of long term care for eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, Each state is accountable for ensuring veterans in its State Veterans Homes receive quality long term and other health care services, and for achieving high patient satisfaction and comfort in safe environmental conditions; and

WHEREAS, A State Veterans Home generally functions within a state's department or division of veterans affairs, public health, or other accountable state agency, and operates under

the governance and oversight of a board of trustees, a board of visitors or other similar accountable public body; and

WHEREAS, State Veterans Homes hold themselves accountable for the quality of care they provide through myriad internal management controls, state and federal long term care regulations, and integration of model policies, practices and standards advocated by the National Association of State Veterans Homes and other standards bodies, for the continuous quality improvement of their programs of care for sick, elderly and disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, State Veterans Homes are subject to both regular and periodic inspections and audits from state agencies, the federal Department of Health and Human Services, the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, among other inspectors, and are accountable to the general public through the press and news media; and

WHEREAS, Surveys by state agencies and the federal Department of Health and Human Services already hold State Veterans Homes to the same and more conditions and standards of care as the VA, with the exception of eight VA unique and primarily administrative criteria; and

WHEREAS, In the Memorandum on VA Inspections of State Veterans Homes dated June 6, 1996, the VA Under Secretary of Health instructed the Deputy Secretary to modify relevant sections of the Veterans Health Administration Administrative Manual to ensure that State Veterans Homes that are accredited/certified (without waivers) by either the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) or the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) are exempted from annual VA inspections unless there is good reason to believe that the State Veterans Home is not substantially in compliance with the current VA standards, likewise, non-JCAHO or non-HCFA certified State Veterans Homes may be exempted if they are licensed by the state inspection standards and the state standards approximate VA standards; and

WHEREAS, In the Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government, issued on January 21, 2009, the President instructed the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to issue an open government directive to direct executive departments and agencies to take specific actions to implement the principles of transparency, participation and collaboration to improve the effectiveness of government by encouraging partnerships and cooperation within the federal government, across levels of government, and between the government and private institutions; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports the consolidation of the duplicitous inspection process and that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), where applicable, combine their surveys into one inspection or defer to the CMS inspection results, except for those unique VA criteria, to assure that State Veterans Homes function within required standards and fulfill their roles as effective, safe and high quality sources of compassionate care for eligible sick and disabled veterans and their dependents and survivors.**

**Resolution No. 154: Department of Veterans Affairs Enhanced-Use Leasing**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Formerly under the provisions of Title 38, United States Code (U.S.C.), Chapter 81, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs is authorized to lease real property under the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) jurisdiction or control to a private or other public entities for a term of up to 75-years; and

WHEREAS, The Enhanced-Use Leasing (EUL) activity must either: "(i) contribute to the mission of VA; be consistent with, and not adversely affect VA's mission; enhance the use(s) of the property to be leased; and be in exchange for fair consideration to VA as determined by the



Secretary; or (ii) result in a demonstrable improvement in services to eligible veterans in the geographic service-delivery area in which the property is located”; and

WHEREAS, “As part the fair consideration to be provided in exchange for the EUL, the Secretary is authorized to accept “in-kind” consideration such as facilities, office, storage, or other usable space, services, money, and/or other “in-kind” consideration”; and

WHEREAS, The Building Utilization Review and Repurposing Initiative, which cannot be enacted without the EUL program, was started by the VA in order to meet the needs of homelessness, but does not address other needs of the veterans community; and

WHEREAS, There are other needs that the veterans have to include but not limited to: adaptive sports, women veteran health care, mental health, and rural health care; and

WHEREAS, VA has repeatedly negotiated agreements involving use of VA assets with business and organizations without contact or discussion with, or seeking input and involvement from, veterans' service organizations and stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, Third party organizations that engaged in EULs with the VA were not held to the reporting requirements as the VA, which will aide in communications with the Chief Business Office; and

WHEREAS, Congress did not reauthorize the Department of Veteran Affairs Enhanced-Use Leasing in November 2011; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That the American Legion petition Congress to reauthorize the use of Enhanced-Use Leasing (EUL) for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That Congress restricts the EUL capabilities to a priority list of services that will meet the needs of the veteran community; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That the VA require outside organizations to follow the same reporting procedures as the government in order to ensure effective communication with the Chief Business Office; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports a publicly transparent Enhanced Use Lease process in consultation with veteran service organizations and stakeholders; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose any EUL that does not specifically provide any obvious and permanent benefits, resources or services to the veterans' community.**

#### **Resolution No. 155: Department of Veterans Affairs Mental Health Services**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) has a substantial mental health population; and

WHEREAS, According to the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards, of the returning Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans who have sought care at VHA facilities, mental health problems are the second most common medical problem of these war veterans; and

WHEREAS, There has been significant restructuring of VA mental health services during the past several years; and

WHEREAS, This restructuring has often resulted in a downsizing of in-patient-base care, and the shift of treatment programs from residential-based to ambulatory-based programs; and

WHEREAS, There has not been a commensurate re-investment of resources in alternative treatment modalities to maintain community-based mental health services to treat veterans who were de-institutionalized by the closure of inpatient programs; and

WHEREAS, During the past several years, the number of veterans provided specialized substance abuse treatment has declined, while the funding for such treatment has been significantly decreased; and

WHEREAS, Since the restructuring, the Veterans Health Administration now has more mental health patients seeking treatment with fewer mental health providers; and

WHEREAS, Veterans continue to need increased access to mental health services, including, but not limited to, Community Based Outpatient Clinics, Mental Health Intensive Case Management, Substance Abuse Disorder Programs, and Compensated Work Therapy Programs; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion shall monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the Mental Health Strategic Plan; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to annually appropriate sufficient funds for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to ensure comprehensive mental health services are available to veterans; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to provide annual oversight of VA's mental health services.**

### **Resolution No. 156: Department of Veterans Affairs Nursing Home Capacity**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Long-Term Care has been the subject of discussion and legislation for nearly twenty years; and

WHEREAS, In a landmark July 1984 study, *Caring for the Older Veteran*, it was predicted that a wave of elderly veterans had the potential to overwhelm VA's long-term care capacity; and

WHEREAS, The recommendations of the Federal Advisory Committee on the Future of Long-Term Care in its 1998 report, *VA Long-Term Care at the Crossroads*, made recommendations that serve as the foundation for VA's national strategy to revitalize and reengineer long-term care services; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 106-117, the Millennium Act, enacted in November 1999, required VA to continue to ensure 1998 levels of extended care services (defined as VA nursing home care, VA domiciliary, VA home-based primary care, and VA adult day health care) in its facilities; and

WHEREAS, The Millennium Act specifically requires VA to maintain its in-house Nursing Home Care Unit bed capacity at the 1998 level of 13,391; however, VA has never met this mandate; and

WHEREAS, Recent General Accounting Office reports show that VA has failed to fully implement mandates of the Millennium Act that would expand non-institutional long-term care services; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) should be required to restore its nursing home care unit capacity as intended by Congress to the 1998 level of 13, 391; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That VA must create incentives and receive appropriate funding to maintain its nursing home care unit beds rather than abandon them to alternative sources; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That VA be prohibited from counting any but their own nursing home care unit beds for the purposes of compliance with the provisions of Public Law 106-117, the Millennium Act; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That Congress should appropriate sufficient funds to support the provisions of the non-institutional long-term care mandates of Public Law 106-117, the Millennium Act, so that VA is not forced to reduce its nursing home care unit capacity in order to comply with said non-institutional care mandates.**

**Resolution No. 157: Department of Veterans Affairs Pharmacy Benefits****Origin: Maryland****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) basic Medical Benefits Package includes prescription drugs and supplies; and

WHEREAS, VA has experienced unprecedented demand for prescription drugs since open enrollment in 1998; and

WHEREAS, By law (Public Law (P. L.) 101-508 and P. L. 106-117) VA must charge veterans a co-payment for each 30-day or less supply of medication provided on an outpatient basis for the treatment of a non-service-connected condition; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act (P. L. 106-117) authorized VA to increase the co-payment amount and to establish an annual cap on the amount of medication co-payment charged; and

WHEREAS, The amount of the medication co-payment and the annual cap may be changed on an annual basis; and

WHEREAS, VA increased the amount of the co-payment from \$2.00 to \$7.00 dollars effective February 4, 2002; and from \$7.00 to \$8.00 in 2005; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion opposed the pharmacy co-payment increases citing alternative options; and

WHEREAS, The Office of Inspector General reported an audit of VA regarding pharmacy co-payment levels and restrictions on filling privately written prescriptions for priority group 7 veterans in December 2000; and

WHEREAS, This report raised the issue that the indirect cost of re-writing private prescriptions that are filled by VA physicians can exceed the direct cost of the prescriptions themselves; and

WHEREAS, VA's policy to fill only prescriptions written by VA physicians and the processes that have been developed to comply with this policy affects all veterans receiving or eligible to receive VA health care; and

WHEREAS, VA has been unable to provide all enrolled veterans with services in a timely manner and this has generated interest in filling prescriptions from outside providers; and

WHEREAS, Various legislative proposals have been offered to grant VA the authority to provide veterans with pharmaceuticals prescribed by physicians or other health care professionals who have no affiliation with VA; and

WHEREAS, VA is a managed health care system that requires enrollment; and

WHEREAS, Authorizing VA to fill prescriptions from a private sector physician without the veteran enrolling would fundamentally change the system; and

WHEREAS, VA provides medications and pharmaceutical supplies to veterans, with limited exceptions, only in the course of providing medical care; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion oppose significant pharmacy co-payment increases at the expense of veteran beneficiaries, in lieu of seeking alternative funding sources, such as mandatory funding and Medicare reimbursement, that would generate and provide the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) with more adequate system-wide funding; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion support the provision of VA Pharmacy Benefits to enrolled veterans only when prescribed by an authorized VA physician or provider in the course of providing them medical care.**

**Resolution No. 158: State Veteran Homes' Extended Care Facilities Grant Program****Origin: Maryland****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, State Veterans Homes were founded for veterans after the American Civil War and have ably served disabled veterans for nearly 150 years; and

WHEREAS, Every state operates at least one State Veterans Home, with one home in Puerto Rico, and more State Veterans Homes and beds and other programs within them are planned or projected annually to meet a growing demand for long term care programs and facilities for American's elderly, sick and disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, The State Veterans Home program has proven itself to be the most cost-effective source of high quality long-term health care services for the nation's veterans who need skilled nursing, domiciliary, adult day health care and other specialized programs to meet their needs; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) promotes the care and treatment of veterans in State Veterans Homes as an important means to attain its goal of developing, providing and maintaining the highest quality of care for eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, Subchapter III of Chapter 81, Title 38, United States Code, authorizes the State Extended Care Facilities Grant Program, funded by VA through Congressional appropriations, to assist the states through grants for construction of new State Veterans Homes and for significant renovations of existing facilities, at a cost not to exceed 65% of the total cost of any such project proposed by a state and approved by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, VA has not kept up with the states' pace of grant applications for construction of new State Veterans Homes and significant renovation and modernization projects at existing homes, resulting in a significant backlog of "Priority One" projects already funded by the States, within a total backlog of projects and new homes approaching \$1 billion; and

WHEREAS, Congress appropriated \$150 million in supplemental appropriations for the State Extended Care Facilities Grant Program, as a small increment of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, H.R. 1, an act the President approved on February 17, 2009; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support the National Association of State Veterans Homes in supporting full annual funding, at an amount based upon the Department of Veterans Affairs State Veteran Home Construction Program Priority List.**

#### **Resolution No. 159: Veteran Treatment Courts**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, When veterans return from combat, some turn to drugs or alcohol to cope with mental health issues as a Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and/or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI); and

WHEREAS, An unfortunate number of veterans are entering the criminal justice system to face charges stemming from these issues; and

WHEREAS, In 2008, a judge in Buffalo, NY, created the first Veterans Treatment Court after seeing an increase in veterans' hearings on his dockets; and

WHEREAS, Veteran Treatment Courts are hybrid Drug Courts and Mental Health Courts and have evolved out of the growing need for a treatment court model designed specifically for justice-involved veterans to maximize efficiency and economize resources while making use of the distinct military culture consistent among veterans; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans that enter the veteran treatment courts are not aware of their federal, state, county and a variety of additional benefit programs, in particular, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits for compensation, pension and health care; and

WHEREAS, Grouping justice-involved veterans into a specific court docket significantly expedites access to veteran-specific resources, including benefits and treatment earned through military service; and

WHEREAS, In 2009, the Department of Veterans Affairs sent a memorandum to the 152 VA Medical Centers recommending that a Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Coordinator be

established at each of the VA Medical Centers nationwide to provide veterans with assistance in Veteran Treatment Courts and connect these veterans with VA benefits and assistance; and

WHEREAS, Currently, VA has not established a national Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive on the VJO program and a single staff person manages this program under the auspices of the VHA Homeless Office; and

WHEREAS, Only 120 of the 153 VA Medical Centers nationwide currently have VJO coordinators and their schedules are inconsistent in coverage of veteran treatment courts necessitating the need for national oversight, funding and clearly established policies and responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, Veteran service organizations, such as The American Legion, can assist these veterans in the Veteran Treatment Courts in pursuit of their VA claims and benefits or volunteering to help connect them with resources and assistance; and

WHEREAS, Veterans deeply value their military experience and share an inimitable bond among their peers and Veteran Treatment Courts build upon this camaraderie by allowing participants to go through the treatment court process with people who are similarly situated and have common past experiences, and pairing veterans with volunteer veteran mentors; and

WHEREAS, Veteran Treatment Courts are able to better serve veterans and are greatly enhanced when American Legion department service officers are involved with the court process; and

WHEREAS, Justice For Vets, in coordination with the National Drug Court Institute, both professional service organizations of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, a 501(c) 3, non-for-profit organization, serves as the national clearinghouse for Veteran Treatment Courts and ensures Veteran Treatment Courts receive the proper training and technical assistance to be successful; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to continue to fund the establishment and expansion of Veterans Treatment Courts; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to establish a separate program office within VA Central Office with an increased program budget and hiring of staff to expand the Veterans Justice Outreach program and policies; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion work with Justice for Veterans, at no cost to The American Legion, to provide training to The American Legion department service officers and American Legion volunteer veteran members interested in creating and/or supporting a Veterans Treatment Court in each appropriate community; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion recommends the various departments and posts provide non-monetary assistance and support to veteran treatment courts by having department service officers serve on the Veteran Treatment Court or having volunteers provide information on VA benefits and services.**

#### **Resolution No. 160: Veterans Receive Same Level of Benefits**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a membership organization founded in 1919 on the common bond of wartime service during any active U.S. period of war; and

WHEREAS, The United States Code (U.S.C.) § 101, unfairly categorizes servicemembers and veterans by dates of service and/or theater of operations; and

WHEREAS, Due to this injustice, veterans from different eras and theaters of operations are receiving different levels of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits based solely on their dates and locations of service, rather than their honorable service; and

WHEREAS, For example, the Caregiver and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 recently passed by both chambers of Congress created two distinct caregiver support

programs, providing a stipend to caregivers of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) veterans, but not to caregivers of veterans from previous eras; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always advocated on the principle of equal benefits for equal service; and

WHEREAS, All veterans of the United States are all united by the common bond of service and all took an oath of service to preserve, protect and defend the country; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to direct the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide the same level of benefits for any veteran, regardless of the dates or theater of operations during their military service; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That Congress review current legislation and public laws to ensure that veterans benefits are provided equitably and consistently for all veterans from the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as those veterans from previous eras and conflicts.**

**Resolution No. 194: Authorization to Apply for a Headstone, Marker, or Medallion**

**Origin: New York**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

**(Consolidated with Resolution No. 206 (WI))**

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

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides veterans' headstones and markers for unmarked veterans' graves anywhere in the world and the choices range from flat bronze, flat marble, upright granite and upright marble, and also make available niche markers for identifying cremated remains in columbaria; and

WHEREAS, The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 38.632 "Headstone and Marker Application Process" became effective on July 1, 2009; and

WHEREAS, This regulation describes the processes required to apply for a government headstone and marker, as well as request a new emblem of belief be added to the list of emblems available for inscription on headstones and markers; and

WHEREAS, Headstones and markers for graves in national cemeteries shall be ordered from the Record of Interment (VA Form 40-4956) prepared by the national cemetery superintendent at the time of interment, and no further application is required; and

WHEREAS, Headstones and markers for graves in public and private cemeteries shall be ordered using VA Form 40-1330, Application for Headstone, Marker or Medallion; and

WHEREAS, Under CFR 38-632, only the decedent's next-of-kin (NOK), authorized representative on behalf of a decedent, or authorized representative on behalf of NOK may apply, using VA Form 40-1330, for a headstone, marker or medallion; and

WHEREAS, If someone other than the NOK is applying for the headstone, marker or medallion, the application package must include a written statement signed by the NOK or decedent authorizing that person (the applicant) to apply for this benefit; and

WHEREAS, If an unmarked veteran's grave site is discovered and no NOK is available to sign the VA Form 40-1330, this grave site will go unmarked for eternity under current CFR 38-632 rules; and

WHEREAS, The VA authorizes designated veteran service organization (VSO) accredited representatives to prepare and prosecute claims on behalf of veterans; and

WHEREAS, These accredited representatives routinely assist the NOK complete and submit VA Form 40-1330 and appropriate documentation to apply for a headstone, marker or medallion; and

WHEREAS, These accredited representatives could complete a VA Form 40-1330 to order a headstone, marker or medallion for a veteran's unmarked grave site when no NOK is available if authorized under CFR 38.632; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support legislation to amend Code of Federal Regulations 38-632 to specify that Department of Veterans Affairs recognized veteran service organization accredited representatives be authorized to apply for a headstone, marker or medallion, in the absence of any next-of-kin.**

**Resolution No. 196: Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act**

**Origin: New York**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Members of the United States Armed Forces are often called upon to perform their duties in stressful and life-threatening situations which can result in the development of mental health issues; and

WHEREAS, According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) an estimated 22 veterans die each day by suicide; and

WHEREAS, The Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act would improve access to care for veterans by extending the period during which veterans who experienced combat are eligible for care from 5 years to 15 years; and

WHEREAS, The act would increase the service capacity of the VA by offering student loan repayment to mental health care professional who agree to long-term service commitments; and

WHEREAS, Under the Act, the VA and the Department of Defense (DOD) would be required to review their mental health care programs annually to ensure their effectiveness, offer special training on identifying those veterans who are at risk of suicide to their mental health providers and to improve the process regarding medical records and prescriptions to ensure seamless care to transitioning servicemembers; and

WHEREAS, Enhancing mental health care services provided by the federal government would better the lives for countless returning servicemembers and veterans; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the U.S. Congress to pass and the President to sign into law the Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act or similar acts that will expand and improve the care provided to veterans and servicemembers who have mental health issues or are at risk for suicide.**

**Resolution No. 200: Dependency and Indemnity Compensation for Surviving Spouses**

**Origin: New York**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

**(Consolidated with Resolution No. 259 (IL))**

WHEREAS, A surviving spouse who remarries on or after December 16, 2003, and on or after attaining age 57, is entitled to continue to receive Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC); and

WHEREAS, By placing an age on eligibility for DIC, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is forcing surviving spouses to not move forward with life; and

WHEREAS, When other survivor benefit programs were liberalized, they usually covered the widows of veterans who died before the enactment of the law, (e.g. deaths from cancers from Agent Orange); and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, section 1318 authorizes DIC to be paid to the widows and widowers of service-connected disabled veterans who die as a result of their service-related condition or who at the time of death were, or should have been, rated 100% service-connected disabled for at least ten years; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans do not reach the 100% level for a service-connected disability until they are much older and their condition has worsened; and

WHEREAS, The spouse has usually been the primary caregiver and companion for these veterans throughout the veteran's lifetime and VA's compensation is their primary means of support; and

WHEREAS, On the surface the 10-year rule discriminates against a large group of veterans, and their survivors, simply because of when they file a claim for service-connected disability rather than recognizing the severity of the condition(s) and the impact of death (not related to the condition) on the family; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion work with Congress to enact legislation by December 2015 to eliminate the age criteria for a surviving spouse to remarry for eligibility to receive Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC); and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion work with Congress to enact legislation by December 2015 to reduce the number of years that a veteran must have a 100% disability rating from ten years to one year for eligibility of DIC payments.**

**Resolution No. 201: Service Officers Participation in the Transition Goals, Plans and Success Program**

**Origin: New York**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The American Legion accredited representatives (service officers) support the National Guard, Reserves, U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, and U.S. Coast Guard by presenting information for eligible transitioning and retiring military members and their spouses; and

WHEREAS, These service officers participated in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) workshops conducted throughout the United States since 1990 when the first TAP workshops were conducted; and

WHEREAS, These service officers provided valuable and timely information and assistance to inform TAP workshop participants with benefits and entitlements to prepare them for returning to civilian status following honorable service in the U.S. Military; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Labor (DOL) initiated a new TAP program titled the Transition Assistance Program Goals, Plans and Success (GPS), effective January 1, 2013; and

WHEREAS, The new Transition GPS Program is conducted by hiring local subcontractors to conduct the TAP workshops; and

WHEREAS, In some locations, Transition GPS prevents veteran service organizations (VSOs) from participating or providing assistance to transitioning servicemembers, guard and reserve, which has resulted in a lack of uniform or consistent policy on the level of VSO participation in Transition GPS nationwide; and

WHEREAS, In the past, the service officers participated voluntarily, at no cost to the government, as presenters during TAP Workshops; and

WHEREAS, Transitioning servicemembers could benefit from receiving information directly from The American Legion accredited representatives (service officers) and other major VSOs who have over 98 years of experience in assisting veterans in obtaining their VA benefits, especially when benefits have been denied by VA; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Labor (DOL) work together to establish a nationwide policy to permit American Legion accredited representatives (service officers) as well as other major veterans service organizations (VSOs), that choose to participate in the Transition Goals, Plans and Success Program; and, be it finally**



**RESOLVED, That the VA, DoD, DOL, and The American Legion and other major VSOs co-author and sign a memorandum of agreement outlining all policy, procedures and level of expectations of all parties involved to better improve the awareness and filing of veterans' earned benefit.**

**Resolution No. 202: Department of Veterans Affairs to Provide Interim Benefits for Pending Claims Over 90 Days**

**Origin: New York**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The American Legion, while supporting the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in its efforts to provide support to military veterans of the United States of America, recognizes the growing backlog of claims for disability and compensation submitted by military veterans; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has continued to press the VA to improve both the efficiency and accuracy with which veterans' claims are processed; and

WHEREAS, Testimony by The American Legion before the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, United States House of Representatives informed Congress that the VA continues to be inefficient and inaccurate in processing veterans' claims for disability and compensation; and

WHEREAS, Veterans who have filed compensation and pension claims with the Veterans Benefits Administration and disagree with the decisions of the Regional Offices are entitled to appeal these decisions to the Board of Veterans Appeals; and

WHEREAS, The Regional Offices take anywhere from 76.6 to 361.7 days to produce a rating decision; and

WHEREAS, Although the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) has authority to complete the development of cases, it remands approximately 25% of cases appealed back to the Regional Offices for additional development, thereby further delaying consideration of the veteran's claim; and

WHEREAS, Another government agency, the Internal Revenue Service (I.R.S.), must pay interest on delayed refunds of more than 45 days from the due date of the return; and

WHEREAS, The rate of interest the I.R.S. uses changes every three months to reflect the prime interest rate then in effect; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion shall support any legislation to pay on a non-refundable basis in an amount to be determined by Congress for each day, from the date of original submission, for any claim decided after the 125 day limit; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That the action taken by Congress can include, but is not limited to, a nominal grant or interest that will be at the same rate as used by the Internal Revenue Service when their refunds are delayed more than 45 days; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to establish interim benefits for veterans awaiting action on claims for service connected disabilities if no action is taken by the Department of Veterans Affairs within the first 125 days of the claim's submission.**

**Resolution No. 212: Designate Hypertension as a Presumptive Condition for Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange**

**Origin: Georgia**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Hypertension/high blood pressure is a highly recognized disorder/disease, which can result in many long term health issues and potentially have fatal end results; and

WHEREAS, Hypertension/high blood pressure is directly related to heart and kidney disease; and

WHEREAS, While a significant number of veterans suffer from hypertension, or high blood pressure and many were exposed to Agent Orange; and

WHEREAS, A 2008 study conducted by the Institute of Medicine suggest that many cases could be a result of exposure to Agent Orange during Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, This study added high blood pressure to the category of “limited or suggestive evidence of an association,” meaning there could be a link with Agent Orange exposure; and

WHEREAS, More recent studies from the Institute of Medicine, indicate strongly that Veterans who handled or were exposed to defoliant have a higher rate of high blood pressure; and

WHEREAS, The United States has used Agent Orange as a defoliant in Thailand (February 1, 1961 thru May 7, 1975), Vietnam (January 9, 1962 thru May 7, 1975) and again in Korea from April 1, 1968 thru August 31, 1971; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion seek the Department of Veterans Affairs for approval of adding hypertension/high blood pressure to the list of presumptive conditions for any veteran who was exposed to Agent Orange in any area where Agent Orange was tested, sprayed or stored; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation to amend Title 38, of the United States Code, section 1116 to provide entitlement to those presumptions for those veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange in any area where Agent Orange was tested, sprayed or stored.**

**Resolution No. 215: Extend Eligibility for National Cemetery Administration Medallion  
Origin: Illinois**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

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

WHEREAS, Our country has a proud history of honoring deceased veterans by providing a free government headstone or marker which can be placed either in a Department of Veterans Affairs national cemetery or a private cemetery; and

WHEREAS, Some veterans' families prefer to purchase their own headstone or marker for interment in a private cemetery; and

WHEREAS, Many of these headstones have no engraving upon them to reflect that the deceased was a veteran; and

WHEREAS, To correct this, the Department of Veterans Affairs now furnishes a medallion made of bronze that can be affixed to an existing privately purchased headstone or marker for veterans interred in a private cemetery; and

WHEREAS, Its purpose is to signify the deceased's status as a veteran and is available in three sizes: 5 inches, 3 inches, and 1½ inches and each medallion is inscribed with the word VETERAN across the top and the branch of service at the bottom; and

WHEREAS, Under PL 110-157 this medallion is currently issued to all deceased other than dishonorably discharged veterans that died on or after November 1, 1990, and whose grave in a private cemetery is marked with a privately purchased headstone or marker; and

WHEREAS, If a veteran died before November 1, 1990 they would not qualify for this medallion; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support legislation to remove the date of November 1, 1990 from the current law (PL 110-157) and change it to grant eligibility for this medallion to all veterans other than dishonorably discharged, regardless of their date of death.**

**Resolution No. 216: Automatic Waiver for Over-Payments of \$300 or Less****Origin: Illinois****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

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

WHEREAS, Veterans sometimes incur overpayments with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) due to the complexity of VA laws and regulations; and

WHEREAS, The majority of these overpayments are not due to any misrepresentation or fraud on the veteran's part; and

WHEREAS, VA processing of waiver requests through the Committees on Waivers and Compromises and collection of these debts requires significant employee resources and time, printing, mailing, filing, et cetera; and

WHEREAS, Under current regulations, many small overpayment waiver requests are granted; and

WHEREAS, Elimination of processing of small overpayment amounts would allow VA personnel to concentrate on other duties, such as attacking the large claims and appeals backlog, thus improving the timeliness of delivery of benefits to our deserving veterans; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to allow the Department of Veterans Affairs to grant an automatic waiver for those overpayments of \$300 or less if the claimant requests one.**

**Resolution No. 219: Increase Maximum Coverage Under the Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance****Origin: Illinois****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

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

WHEREAS, Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (also known as S-DVI or RH insurance) was established in 1951 to meet the insurance needs of certain veterans with service-related disabilities; and

WHEREAS, The maximum coverage was set at \$10,000 back in 1951; and

WHEREAS, What cost \$10,000 back in 1951 would cost over \$77,000 in 2012 due to inflation; and

WHEREAS, This puts a greater burden on the surviving family members to meet the burial and final expenses of a deceased service-connected disabled veteran; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to increase to \$50,000 the maximum coverage a service-connected disabled veteran can purchase under the Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance program.**

**Resolution No. 220: Oppose Lump Sum Payments for Department of Veterans Affairs Disability Compensation****Origin: Illinois****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

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

WHEREAS, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation is paid monthly to an eligible veteran at a rate commensurate with diminished earning capacity resulting from the effects of service-connected disease or injury; and

WHEREAS, Such compensation is designed to provide continuous relief from the service-connected disability for as long as the veteran continues to suffer its effects at a compensable level, usually for the rest of the veteran's life; and

WHEREAS, By law, the rate of compensation is determined by the level of disability present, thereby requiring reevaluation of the disability upon a change in its degree; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans may start out with a lower rating, but as they age the degree of disability worsens; and

WHEREAS, There is some discussion in Congress on having the VA consider establishing lump sum payments for veterans with disability ratings of 20 percent or less; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans who are first discharged from the military and have a service-connected disability are usually in a financial bind and would find a lump-sum payment enticing, and would not focus on the long range implications of this decision e.g. later increases, added stipend for having dependents, secondary service-connected disability, to name a few; and

WHEREAS, Such lump-sum payments would not, on the whole, be in the best interests of disabled veterans but would be for government savings and convenience; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion oppose any recommendation, legislative or otherwise, to establish lump-sum payments of Department of Veterans Affairs disability compensation.**

#### **Resolution No. 233: Agent Orange**

##### **Origin: Michigan**

##### **Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Agent Orange was the most common herbicide used in Southeast Asia by the U.S. Armed Forces during the Vietnam War from 1962-1971; and

WHEREAS, Agent Orange was contaminated by the carcinogen dioxin (2, 3, 7, 8-tetrachlorodibenzo-para-dioxin [TCDD]); and

WHEREAS, Over 2 million veterans served in Vietnam during the Vietnam War and are presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange; and

WHEREAS, Scientific evidence has linked human exposure to dioxin and certain diseases; and

WHEREAS, A significant number of Vietnam veterans have developed various cancers, neurological disorders, liver dysfunction and other severe diseases; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion supported Public Law 96-151 (1979), which mandates that the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) conduct a major epidemiological study of Vietnam veterans who were exposed to dioxin, unless it is determined to be unfeasible; and

WHEREAS, VA was congressionally mandated by Public Law 102-4 (1991) to contract with the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to review existing peer-reviewed research on herbicides, to include their components, exposure and medical evidence on related health effects; and

WHEREAS, A committee convened by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies to study the health effects of herbicide exposure had little information about the exposures the Vietnam veterans encountered and recommended in its 1994 biennial report that VA, upon discovering the feasibility of a valid exposure reconstruction model, facilitate epidemiological studies; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of VA, in response to the recommendation, requested that IOM convene a separate committee to oversee development and evaluation of herbicide exposure models for use in studies of Vietnam veterans; and

WHEREAS, The IOM committee determined, in 2003, that a model created by researchers from Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health demonstrated the feasibility of a valid exposure-reconstruction model of Vietnam veterans' herbicide exposure and recommended that VA and other governmental agencies promote more epidemiological studies of veterans by non-governmental groups and independent researchers; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs has still not funded the major epidemiology study mandated by public law; and

WHEREAS, In view of the current absence of alternative judicial recourse to remedy the injustice perpetuated on so many disabled Vietnam veterans, their families and survivors, The American Legion will continue to monitor other pending dioxin-related suits; and

WHEREAS, Information has been released by the Department of the Defense on numerous locations other than Vietnam where the herbicide was tested, sprayed, and stored, including: testing at Fort Drum, New York, in 1959; spraying in the Panama Canal Zone in the 1960s and 1970s and in the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in 1968-69; and the storage of unused herbicide on Johnston Atoll in the Pacific from 1972-78; and

WHEREAS, VA has recently identified more units that were exposed to herbicide at the Korean DMZ; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, section 1116 and title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, section 3.309, set forth certain presumptions that apply to claims for service connection based on herbicide exposure by veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam during the period January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975; and

WHEREAS, Veterans who served in other locations during these periods who may have been exposed to the herbicide and who may have developed one of the recognized Agent Orange-related diseases, set forth in title 38, United States Code, section 1116 and title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, section 3.309, are not entitled to presumptive service connection for their disability, rather they must meet the more stringent requirements for direct service connection; and

WHEREAS, This inequity was not contemplated at the time of the enactment of Public Law 102-4, the Agent Orange Act of 1991, as amended, due to limited available information on the full extent of the United States' Agent Orange testing, spraying, and storage activities; and

WHEREAS, Under title 38, United States Code, Chapter 18, benefits are payable to children of veterans that served in the Republic of Vietnam during the period January 9, 1962, to May 7, 1975, and who suffer from the birth defect spina bifida; and

WHEREAS, Recent legislation has extended the spina bifida benefits to include the children of veterans who served in or near the Korean Demilitarized Zone during the period of September 1, 1967, and August 31, 1971, and determined by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to have been exposed to herbicides during such service; and

WHEREAS, The children of veterans who served in locations other than Vietnam and Korea who were possibly exposed to Agent Orange would be denied entitlement to compensation for spina bifida under the current statute and regulations; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That, The American Legion continue to urge the completion of the scientific study mandated by Public Law 96-151; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, The American Legion vigorously support the liberalization of the rules relating to the evaluation of studies involving exposure to dioxin and the adjudication of claims based on Agent Orange exposure; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue to closely monitor the development of all ongoing research on the long-term effects of Agent Orange exposure and point out to the proper officials any perceived deficiencies or discrepancies in these projects; and to ensure that government committees charged with review of such research are composed of impartial members of the medical and scientific community; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That veterans reporting to Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) medical care facilities claiming exposure to Agent Orange be provided examinations and treatment which are thorough and appropriate, and that VA physicians demonstrate compassion in responding to the medical needs of these veterans; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, section 1116, to provide entitlement to these presumptions for those veterans**

who were exposed to Agent Orange while serving in areas other than the Republic of Vietnam where Agent Orange was tested, sprayed, or stored; and, be it finally

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, Chapter 18, to provide entitlement to spina bifida benefits for the child or children of any veteran who was exposed to Agent Orange as the result of service in the Republic of Vietnam or in other locations where Agent Orange was tested, sprayed, or stored.**

**Resolution No. 234: Co-Payments and Enrollment Fees for Priority Groups 7 & 8**

**Origin: Michigan**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Since the enactment of Public Law (PL) 104-262, that authorized eligibility reform and open enrollment process, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration (VHA), has experienced a dramatic growth from 2.5 million veterans to over 7 million veterans enrolled in VA health care; and

WHEREAS, Fiscal Year 2002 saw the astronomical growth of Priority Group 7 veterans seeking health care at their local VA medical facility and the creation of a new Priority Group 8; and

WHEREAS, VA, upon creating the new Priority Group 8, placed an immediate suspension on all new Priority Group 8 enrollments; and

WHEREAS, VHA is authorized to bill, collect, and retain co-payments and the third party insurance payment of Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans; and

WHEREAS, During the past several years, VA has proposed to increase the outpatient co-payment from \$15 to \$20 and the prescription co-payment from \$8 to \$15 per 30 day supply, as well as, levy a \$250 enrollment fee on Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans; and

WHEREAS, In 2006, VA proposed to eliminate the copayment offset (reduction in payment) to Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans who have third party insurance; and

WHEREAS, The co-payment increases and enrollment fees could suppress the demand for VA services at the expense of Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans who may not be able to afford the co-payment increases and out-of-pocket enrollment fee; and

WHEREAS, VA believes these initiatives will ultimately drive 1.2 million veterans away from the VA health care system; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion adamantly oppose any effort to increase co-payments or impose an enrollment fee for Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans to receive Department of Veterans Affairs health care.**

**Resolution No. 235: Improvements to Department of Veterans Affairs Women Veterans Programs**

**Origin: Michigan**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Women veterans are the fastest growing demographic serving in the military and enrolling in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for their health care treatment; and

WHEREAS, According to VA statistics, the total veteran population in the United States, as of September 30, 2012, was approximately 22.3 million, of which women veterans numbered 2,248,579; and

WHEREAS, Women veterans continue to face many barriers and challenges with enrolling for and receiving their VA care due to a number of reasons such as: not identifying as a veteran; not being recognized as a veteran by VA employees and staff; lack of awareness and understanding of their VA health care benefits; and the stigma and perceptions that VA is still an "all male" health care system; and

WHEREAS, According to VA, women veterans are 30 percent less likely to enroll for health care than their male counterparts, which is as a result of many factors that include, but are

not limited to lack of awareness of benefits and fragmentation of care from limited access to gender specific care (OB/GYN, Mammography); and

WHEREAS, According to VA estimates, 27 percent of female Vietnam veterans report that they have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and 20 percent of female veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan have been diagnosed with PTSD; and

WHEREAS, The majority of VA facilities do not offer inpatient/residential mental health programs for women veterans, and as a result, based on findings from the System Worth Saving Task Force, one veteran had to travel from Colorado to the Coatesville, PA VA Medical Center in order to receive inpatient treatment for Military Sexual Trauma and PTSD; and

WHEREAS, Research on women veterans long-term care health and reproductive issues is needed, especially in developing mental health treatments for women veterans in their child-bearing ages; and

WHEREAS, On October 3, 2011, VA launched congressional child care pilot programs for veterans at the Buffalo VA Medical Center, Northport, NY VA Medical Center and the Tacoma, WA VA Medical Center; and

WHEREAS, On October 3, 2013, the legislative authority for these child care programs expired and VA no longer has congressional authority to provide these crucial and vital child care services, which many veterans have come to rely on when seen by their VA health care provider for their scheduled appointment; and

WHEREAS, Without the support of VA's child care program, veterans may no longer be able to attend their scheduled appointments, which will result in a significant increase in VA's no show rate or veterans not receiving care in VA; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Caroline, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to work with the Department of Labor and Department of Defense to develop a customized women veterans health care track for the Transition Goals, Plans and Success program, facilitated by women clinicians; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge VA to establish an acceptable benchmark for communication of mammogram results to women veterans that is better than industry standards, which currently is 30 days for normal results and 3 to 5 days for abnormal results; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge VA to evaluate the access and demand for mental health residential services for women veterans at each of the 152 VA Medical Centers and require each of the 21 Veteran Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) to have a minimum of one (1) Inpatient/Residential Mental Health Program site per VISN; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That VA conduct studies on the long-term health effects for women in the military and differences in treatment for mental health conditions, especially for women in their child-bearing age; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to pass legislation extending the VA child care program for veterans, which expired on October 3, 2013.**

**Resolution No. 236: Exempt Certain Income from VA Pension Rate Determination**

**Origin: Michigan**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Veterans and surviving spouses in receipt of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pension benefits under Public Law (PL) 95-588 must report all income received from outside sources, since this directly affects the amount of VA pension to which they are entitled; and

WHEREAS, Countable income received by the veteran from most sources would include earnings, disability and retirement payments, interest and dividends, and net income from farming or business; and

WHEREAS, Any reimbursement that would compensate a veteran for expenses due to an accident, theft or loss would also be considered countable income; and

WHEREAS, At many polling places, there is a shortage of needed supervisory personnel and serving as an election judge helps ensure a fair and impartial election process; and

WHEREAS, The amount of financial remuneration received from these types of civic activities is relatively small, but it can result in the reduction in monthly benefits, dollar for dollar, or the complete loss of entitlement to pension; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support legislation to amend paragraph (5), section 1503(a), and title 38, United States Code, to exempt the reimbursement of expenses related to accidents, theft loss or casualty loss from being included in the determination of countable income with respect to pensions for veterans and surviving spouses and children of veterans; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to exempt income received from jury duty and income from service as an election judge in determining the VA pension rate under Public Law (P.L.) 95-588.**

**Resolution No. 238: State Veterans Home Funding for Construction Grants**

**Origin: Michigan**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Federal Funding for construction grants to State Veterans Homes has been static at \$85 million for the past three fiscal years (FY 2011 to 2014), however; in FY 2015 the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) budget proposed a decrease to this funding amount by \$5 million; and

WHEREAS, The President's budget request for 2014 included \$85 million for State Veterans Homes construction grants; and

WHEREAS, The National Association of State Veterans Homes expects to see an increase in the number of State Home construction projects submitted in the coming years as more states are once again able to provide matching funds for projects that were previously withdrawn or deferred due to the recessions; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs has added a new type of Community Living Centers (CLC) which is referred to as a small house concept in which the house is a home for 10 to 12 residents; and

WHEREAS, The home concept is based on the "small house" model, which is more intimate, less institutional and contains fewer residents to accomplish the goal of a home setting; and

WHEREAS, The CLC neighborhood consists of not more than twelve (12) homes and a community center; and

WHEREAS, This new home concept is leading to higher construction costs for new State Veterans Home projects and renovations; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to provide funding to the Departments of Veterans Affairs for State Veteran Homes construction grants at a minimum of \$125 million annually and that these costs permit sufficient funding to mitigate life-safety issues in State Veterans Homes, as well as the design and construction of new types of Community Living Center "small house" models.**



**Resolution No. 239: Research to Develop a Blood Test to Detect Colorectal Cancer****Origin: Michigan****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, According to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Colorectal Cancer (CRC) is the third most common cancer and the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States; and

WHEREAS, In the 2013 VA's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) report "Gastroenterology (GI) Consult Delays at the William Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center, Columbia, SC," the OIG cited the Centers for Disease Control that more than 22 million Americans remain unscreened for CRC; and

WHEREAS, Failure to recognize the critical nursing staffing shortages resulted in a GI consult backlog of 3,800 gastroenterology consults, 700 of them critical; and

WHEREAS, During the review "look-back" period, 280 patients were diagnosed with GI malignancies, 52 of which had been associated with a delay in diagnosis and treatment; and

WHEREAS, In accordance with the Veterans Health Administration Directive 2007-004 titled, "Colorectal Cancer Screening," it is VA's policy that eligible veterans at average or high risk for CRC must be offered CRC screening; and

WHEREAS, To detect CRC, there are four commonly tests used:

- Fecal occult blood test (FOBT)—This test checks for hidden blood in fecal material (stool);
- Sigmoidoscopy—This test examines the rectum and lower colon using a lighted instrument called a sigmoidoscope;
- Colonoscopy—This test examines the rectum and entire colon are examined using A lighted instrument called a colonoscope, and;
- Double contrast barium enema (DCBE)—With this test a series of x-rays of the entire colon and rectum are taken after the patient is given an enema with a barium solution and air is introduced into the colon; and

WHEREAS, Delays in detecting CRC due to backlogs, and scheduling can result in patients deaths as in the case where six deaths were linked to delayed screenings for colorectal cancer at a South Carolina VA Medical Center; and

WHEREAS, On May 28, 2013, in House Report 113-90 titled, "Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bills," the Committee on Appropriations encouraged the VA to support additional research and development in the field, including investigation of a less costly blood test for colorectal cancer; and

WHEREAS, In a May 2012 VA Research Currents publication it included a quote stating, "A simple blood test would be the ideal approach to colorectal cancer"; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to increase the budget for The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) research and clinical trials to develop a blood test for colorectal cancer; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That VA accelerate the research and development of a screening blood test for detecting colon cancer to ensure that veterans at risk for colon cancer are properly screened and evaluated to prevent further harm or death.**

**Resolution No. 245: Exempt Funds Related to Interment Services at Cemeteries from any Future Sequestration****Origin: Illinois****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation****(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, Our country has a proud history of honoring deceased veterans by providing burials in cemeteries paid at the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) expense; and

WHEREAS, When a serviceman or woman dies on active duty there are additional benefits available to the surviving spouse and/or family; and

WHEREAS, In these killed in action (KIA) or active duty deaths cases those benefits include a \$100,000 death gratuity normally paid out to help tide the family over until survivor benefits kick in and also a year's worth of housing allowance, typically paid in a lump sum to the surviving spouse or dependent children of a service person; and

WHEREAS, During the recent federal government budget problems we experienced sequestration of funds; and

WHEREAS, This put a halt to these above-mentioned benefits and families were unable to bury their loved ones in a timely manner and unable to secure these monetary benefits, causing greater personal financial pressure and problems during their time of grief; and

WHEREAS, Families who wished to have their loved ones interred in a cemetery, paid at VA expense also experienced delays in burial; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion promote and support legislation to have all benefits paid, at time of death to the surviving families of those killed in action or died on active duty, and funds related to interment services at cemeteries be exempt from any future sequestration of laws.**

**Resolution No. 246: United States Census to Include Veterans Information**

**Origin: Illinois**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

**(Consolidated with Resolution No. 25 (UT))**

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of their community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, For over 225 years our brave men and women have served this country in the Armed Forces of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Every ten years the U.S. Census is taken and does not ask U.S. citizens to identify if they have served in the active military, national guard or reserves; and

WHEREAS, Veterans benefits, e.g. national cemeteries, community based outpatient clinics, are allocated to states based on veterans population which is currently estimated based on sampling; and

WHEREAS, Each census therefore does not accurately reflect true veterans, national guard and reserve populations in this country and as a result inaccuracies exist; and

WHEREAS, This is a disservice to the men and women who have served out country in times peace and war; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion strongly support any legislation that mandates the U.S. Census Bureau to include veteran, national guard and reserve data on any future census.**

**Resolution No. 248: Add Agent Orange Component to Code of Federal Regulations 4.16**

**Origin: Illinois**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of their community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, After veterans are released from service they are able to apply for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) compensation for their injuries and illnesses related to their active duty service; and

WHEREAS, Some veterans are given a VA rating that is less than total i.e. under 100%, but they are unable to secure gainful employment due to their service-related condition(s); and

WHEREAS, Under VA regulations found in Code of Federal Regulations 4.16 the VA is able to grant a total rating for individual unemployability if the veteran has one disability rated 60% or a combined rating of 70% with one disability rated 40%; and

WHEREAS, Under this regulation the following will be considered as one disability: (1) Disabilities of one or both upper extremities, or of one or both lower extremities, including the bilateral factor, if applicable, (2) disabilities resulting from common etiology or a single accident, (3) disabilities affecting a single body system, e.g. orthopedic, digestive, respiratory, cardiovascular-renal, neuropsychiatric, (4) multiple injuries incurred in action, or (5) multiple disabilities incurred as a prisoner of war; and

WHEREAS, Some veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange are being granted compensation for various presumptive conditions e.g. residuals of prostate cancer, diabetes, coronary artery disease, etc. and have a combined rating of 60% or more; and

WHEREAS, They are unable to use the above cited regulation because the disabilities are not from a single accident, affect a single body system, incurred in action or incurred as a prisoner of war; now therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion ask the Department of Veterans Affairs to review and revise Code of Federal Regulations 4.16 to include the following new subsection: (6) multiple presumptive disabilities from exposure to Agent Orange.**

**Resolution No. 250: Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans**

**Origin: Illinois**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

**(Consolidated with Resolutions No. 131 (MD), No. 132 (MD) and No. 199 (NY))**

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of their community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Annually the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) updates a list which includes vessels that operated primarily or exclusively on Vietnam's waterways; and

WHEREAS, This list includes ships that temporarily operated in these waterways or were moored at the shoreline and ships that operated in close coastal waters of Vietnam for extended periods with evidence that the crewmembers went ashore; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated that more than 500,000 servicemembers served aboard ships off the coast from 1964-1975; and

WHEREAS, Many of these personnel now have health problems commonly associated with herbicide exposure and have endured lengthy legal struggles to prove these problems are service-related; and

WHEREAS, In 2011, the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies of Science released its results of the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans and Agent Orange Exposure Report, which found no consistent evidence to suggest "Blue Water Navy" veterans were at higher or lower risk and were unable to state with certainty that "Blue Water Navy" veterans were or were not exposed to dioxins from Agent Orange; and

WHEREAS, Current international law and treaties usually put the International Water boundary 12 nautical miles (22km) from a country's coastline; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion strongly supports legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, to presume exposure to Agent Orange for any military personnel who served during the Vietnam War on any vessel that came within 12 nautical miles of the coastlines of Vietnam.**

**Resolution No. 251: Extended Hours and Weekends for Veterans' Health Care****Origin: Illinois****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of their community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) mission is to provide for those who have borne the battle; and

WHEREAS, Veterans employed in the civilian workforce may require more flexible hours to meet their health care needs, because they have not accrued an adequate amount of personal or sick leave to use for health care appointments or are in a probationary period of employment with a new company and don't wish to foster a bad impression by taking excessive days off; and

WHEREAS, Eligible veterans should not be denied access to VA health care due to a lack of flexible health care appointments; and

WHEREAS, Veterans with children, especially those in single parent households, also may require flexible hours to meet their health care needs; and

WHEREAS, Extended hours such as early mornings, evenings and weekend appointments should be made available at all VA facilities to include primary and specialty care; and

WHEREAS, Offering extended hours for veterans may reduce no-show rates by providing flexible appointments; and

WHEREAS, Additional clinic hours are not possible due to chronic short staffing; and

WHEREAS, Staffing limitations would affect patients from receiving health care on a timely basis; and

WHEREAS, The VA's premium and overtime compensation should be competitive with the private sector for employees who contribute overtime and weekend work; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion shall encourage and support the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in providing extended hours and weekend appointments for both primary and specialty care at all VA medical facilities in addition to their regular hours of operation; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That the VA recruits and hires additional staff to accommodate the rising need of weekend and extended hours for appointments in both primary and specialty care.**

**Resolution No. 255: Allow Beneficiaries to Retain \$90 of their Benefits While in Medicaid-covered Nursing Homes****Origin: Illinois****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation****(Consolidated with Resolution No. 15 (GA))**

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

WHEREAS, When a veteran without dependents in receipt of pension benefits is covered by Medicaid for nursing home care, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pension is reduced to \$90 for incidental expenses; and

WHEREAS, However, when a veteran without dependents who is receiving compensation benefits and is similarly covered by Medicaid, only \$30 a month is allowed for incidentals; and

WHEREAS, When a helpless child who is in receipt of pension or Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) and is similarly covered by Medicaid, there is no provision for VA to reduce the individual's award for incidental expenses; and

WHEREAS, When a surviving parent who is in receipt of Parents' DIC and is similarly covered by Medicaid, there is no provision for VA to reduce the individual's award for incidental expenses; and

WHEREAS, Under current VA and Medicaid statutes, the service-disabled veteran, helpless child and surviving parent are financially disadvantaged; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to authorize veterans in receipt of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) compensation, or a helpless child in receipt of VA pension or Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), or a surviving parent in receipt of VA Parents' DIC, to keep up to \$90 of their monthly VA benefits for incidental expenses while in a Medicaid-covered nursing home.**

**Resolution No. 257: Exempt Certain Income from VA Pension Rate Determination**

**Origin: Illinois**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of their community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Serving on jury duty is a civic obligation, which all citizens, when called, should take very seriously; and

WHEREAS, At many polling places, there is a shortage of needed supervisory personnel and serving as an election judge helps insure a fair and impartial election process; and

WHEREAS, Veterans and surviving spouses in receipt of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pension benefits under Public Law 95-588 must report all income received from outside sources, since this directly affects the amount of VA pension to which they are entitled; and

WHEREAS, The amount of financial remuneration received from these types of civic activities is relatively small, but it can result in the reduction in monthly benefits, dollar for dollar, or the complete loss of entitlement to pension; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to exempt income received from jury duty and income from service as an election judge in determining the Department of Veterans Affairs pension rate under Public Law 95-588.**

**Resolution No. 262: Grant a 10% Rating for Veterans Who Must Take Daily Medication for Hypertension**

**Origin: Illinois**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of their community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, After veterans are released from service they are able to apply for Department of Veterans Affairs compensation for their injuries and illnesses related to their active duty service; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of this program is to compensate a veteran for the average effect of their disability on their employment and quality of life; and

WHEREAS, Most rated disabilities start at 10% disabling and may go up to 100% depending on the severity of the condition; and

WHEREAS, In the case of hypertension a veteran who takes their medication regularly, watches their diet, weight and exercises on a regular basis may be able to keep their hypertension under good control; and

WHEREAS, Due to their proactive measures their diastolic pressure can be kept below 100 and/or systolic pressure predominantly under 160; and

WHEREAS, Under the current rating schedule, diagnostic code 7101 would only allow a 0% rating; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion shall**

**encourage and support legislation to change the rating schedule under diagnostic code 7101 to grant a 10% rating for any veteran who must take daily medication to keep their hypertension under control.**

**Resolution No. 264: Timely Processing of Overpayments for Reserve Components and/or Active Duty Pay**

**Origin: Arizona**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, U.S. Code Title 10 Armed Forces, Subtitle E, Chapter 1209 Active Duty, Section 12316 states in part: (a) Except as provided by subsection (b), a Reserve of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard who because of his earlier military service is entitled to a pension, retired or retainer pay, or disability compensation, and who performs duty for which he is entitled to compensation, may elect to receive for that duty either-

- (1) the payments to which he is entitled because of his earlier military service; or
- (2) if he specifically waives those payments, the pay and allowances authorized by law for the duty that he is performing; and

WHEREAS, U.S. Code Title 38 Veterans Benefits, Part IV General Administrative Provisions, Chapter 53 Special Provisions Relating to Benefits, Section 5304 states in part: (c) Pension, compensation, or retirement pay on account of any person's own service shall not be paid to such person for any period for which such person receives active service pay; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has the authority under U.S. Code Title 38, Chapter 53 to withhold any such overpayment incurred from duplicate payment of disability compensation and active service pay from future compensation payments to the veteran; and

WHEREAS, With other debts incurred by veterans for overpayments or educational debts the veteran is afforded the opportunity to make payment arrangements with the collection arm of the VA, namely Debt Management, and pay this debt back in monthly installments; and

WHEREAS, The VA is grossly delinquent in processing the overpayments for military drill pay each year, sometimes resulting in processing of two or three years at the same time, several years in arrears; and

WHEREAS, The VA does not afford the veteran the opportunity to make payment arrangements, but instead withholds the entire monthly compensation, which can result in the veteran not receiving any compensation for two, four, or six months; and

WHEREAS, The veteran has come to rely on the monthly disability or pension payments and having the entire amount withheld, sometimes years after the veteran has ceased to be in a drilling status with a Reserve Component, results in serious financial difficulty for the veteran; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports a strong recommendation to the Department of Veterans Affairs that they:**

**a. Place greater emphasis on processing of these overpayments for performance of Reserved Component and/or Active Duty pay so as not to have multiple years processed at the same time; and**

**b. Allow the debt to be placed with Debt Management for collection to allow the veteran to pay the debt in installments so as not to cause a financial hardship.**

**Resolution No. 281: Advance Appropriations for all of the Department of Veterans Affairs' Discretionary Accounts**

**Origin: Iowa**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & 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 appropriations to include the following discretionary programs within the Department of Veterans Affairs:

- (1) VA Construction, Research, and Information Technology;
- (2) National Cemetery Administration;
- (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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 282: Congressional Budget Office Scoring on Department of Veterans Affairs Leasing**

**Origin: Iowa**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, In the mid-1990s, Dr. Kenneth Kizer, former Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Under Secretary for Health, revolutionized the delivery of health care to our nation's veterans by opening local community based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) to provide outpatient medical care to veterans; and

WHEREAS, CBOCs transformed VA into a health care-based system that became more geographically accessible to veterans; and

WHEREAS, Since the mid-1990s, the VA has turned to outpatient clinics as a way to bring health care closer to where veterans live, with 821 clinics to supplement the care provided at 152 medical centers; and

WHEREAS, In FY 2012, H.R. 2646 authorized the VA sufficient appropriations to continue to fund and operate leased facility projects that support our veterans all across the country; and

WHEREAS, The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) abruptly changed its scoring methodology of interpreting leases as operational to capital leases after decades of precedence; and

WHEREAS, In September of 2012, the authorizations for 15 Veterans Health Administration facility leases were eliminated from a construction bill due to the scoring change initiated by the CBO; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 27 leases are impacted for FY 2013 and FY 2014 as well as a number of future leases that are set to expire; and

WHEREAS, Based on the scoring change, funding for these leases must be accounted for up-front; and

WHEREAS, VA would see a detrimental impact on its budget and medical care program without the leases; and

WHEREAS, This technical book-keeping ruling prevents Congress from enacting important authorizations to renew and establish new leases; and

WHEREAS, If no action is taken to resolve the issue, veterans will ultimately suffer increased delays and diminished access to needed medical care and services; inefficiencies in their continuum of care, and veterans' care will negatively be impacted by increased costs of duplication of services and contracted care; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion request that**

**Congress provide an annual or permanent exemption for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) leases from the Congressional Budget Office's scoring process, so as to give flexibility to VA to meet the health care needs of veterans.**

**Resolution No. 283: Licensed Professional Mental Health Counselors and Marriage and Family Therapists**

**Origin: Iowa**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Licensed professional mental health counselors (LPMHCs) and marriage and family therapists (MFTs) comprise over 40 percent of the mental health workforce, totaling more than 175,000 mental health professionals; and

WHEREAS, All 50 states license LPMHCs and MFTs to independently deliver clinical mental health services to individuals, families and groups, providing diagnosis and treatment of mental and addictions disorders, psychotherapy, counseling, and the full range of behavioral health services offered by all mental health professionals; and

WHEREAS, Congress passed legislation recognizing LPMHCs and MFTs as qualified mental health professionals within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in 2006, and VA released qualification standards authorizing the hiring of these professions in 2010; and

WHEREAS, As of August 31, 2012, there were 28 LPMHCs and 69 MFTs onboard in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), and since then, VHA has more than tripled the number of LPMHCs to 90 onboard providers and increased by 55% the number of MFTs to 107 onboard providers; and

WHEREAS, The VA's primary recruitment program, the trainee support program, provides over \$100 million in financial stipends, including \$36 million for social work and psychology trainees, and trains more than 3,000 mental health professionals annually; and

WHEREAS, The VA trainee support program does not recognize LPMHCs or MFTs for financial stipends, and the VA has stated that it will not add the professions to the program; and

WHEREAS, Research demonstrates that LPMHCs and MFTs are more likely to practice in rural and underserved areas that lack social workers, psychologists or other mental health professionals, so exclusion from the VA workforce and trainee support program decreases veterans' access to behavioral health care; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports the inclusion of licensed professional mental health counselors (LPMHCs) and marriage and family therapists (MFTs) as funded associated health trainees through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) trainee support program; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports legislation directing VA to provide financial stipends to LPMHCs and MFTs through the VA trainee support program and increase the hiring of these mental health professionals.**

**Resolution No. 284: Department of Veterans Affairs to Develop Outreach and Peer to Peer Programs for Rehabilitation**

**Origin: Iowa**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, One of The American Legion's founding principles is Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion considers itself to be a partner with the Department of Veterans Affairs in ensuring that our nation's military members and veterans have access to the best health care available; and

WHEREAS, In 2013, the unemployment rate of returning servicemembers is 9.0% compared to approximately 7.0% for their civilian counterparts; and

WHEREAS, Citizen soldiers often return from combat duty and immediately resume civilian life without access to readjustment services of Veterans Affairs facilities; and



WHEREAS, The stated goal of the Veterans Administration regarding mental health is to move away from the maintenance model of treatment and transition to the recovery model; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Administration recognizes that the most important aspect of the recovery-oriented model is peer to peer support; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the President of the United States and the U.S. Congress to call on the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to develop a national program to provide peer to peer rehabilitation services based on the recovery model tailored to meet the specialized needs of current generation combat-affected veterans and their families; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That the Secretary of Veterans Affairs direct the Department of Veterans Affairs to develop effective service partnerships with community mental health and addictions agencies to expand access to mental health services for National Guard members and reservists living in rural America; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue to exert maximum effort to ensure that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs utilizes returning servicemembers for positions as peer support specialists in the effort to provide treatment, support services and readjustment counseling for those veterans requiring these services.**

#### **Resolution No. 285: Congress to Provide Back Pay to Veterans and Dependents**

**Origin: Idaho**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, On October 1, 2013, the United States Congress failed to approve the federal budget, which resulted in the furlough of federal government employees; and

WHEREAS, Compensation payments to more than 3.8 million veterans would have been suspended if the government shut-down extended past October 31, 2013; and

WHEREAS, Pension payments to more than 315,000 veterans and over 202,000 surviving spouses and dependents would not have been distributed if the government shut-down extended past October, 31, 2013; and

WHEREAS, The failure to provide veterans and their families with their earned benefits will result in financial hardship, which could lead to a loss of homes, to include other basic necessities of living, and may result in delinquent credit reporting; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to reinstate any and all federal benefits to include, but not limited to, compensation, pension, education and dependency and indemnity compensation payments, and provide back pay to veterans and surviving spouses and dependents whose payments may be suspended due to government shut-down.**

#### **Resolution No. 287: Agent Orange Presumption for Service in Southeast Asia Since 1975**

**Origin: Pennsylvania**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Agent Orange was the most common herbicide used in Southeast Asia by the U.S. Armed Forces during the Vietnam War from 1962-1971; and

WHEREAS, According to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, U.S. military forces sprayed over 19 million gallons of herbicide over Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, Agent Orange was contaminated by the carcinogen dioxin- 2, 3, 7, 8 tetrachlorodibenzo--dioxin (TCDD); and

WHEREAS, Over 2 million veterans served in Vietnam during the Vietnam War and are presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange; and

WHEREAS, A significant number of Vietnam veterans have developed various cancers, neurological disorders, liver dysfunction and other severe diseases; and

WHEREAS, Current law 38 USC Sec. 1116 and 38 CFR 3.307 state a veteran who, during active military served in the Republic of Vietnam during the period beginning on January 9, 1962 and ending on May 7, 1975 shall be presumed to have been exposed during such service to an herbicide agent; and

WHEREAS, Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) was activated on October 1, 2003, created from the merger of the 30-year-old U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory - Hawaii and the 11-year-old Joint Task Force – Full Accounting, which replaced the 19-year old Joint Casualty Resolution Center; and

WHEREAS, Commanded by a flag officer, JPAC is manned by approximately 400 handpicked soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Department of the Navy civilians; and

WHEREAS, JPAC maintains three permanent overseas detachments and are assigned active duty servicemembers; and

WHEREAS, Detachment Two is stationed in Hanoi, Vietnam and routinely carries out day-to-day operations involving investigating leads, recovering and identifying Americans who were killed in action but never brought home; and

WHEREAS, Hatfield Consultants, out of North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; and the Office of the National Steering Committee 33 Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, out of Hanoi, Vietnam, have performed multiple environmental and human health assessments of dioxin contamination in Vietnam as late as 2011; and

WHEREAS, Significant quantities of TCDD were detected in soil samples in December 2006, January 2008 and 2010; and

WHEREAS, A Hatfield Consultants report dated April 2007 states, “The present study (and previous work by Hatfield/10-80 Division of the Ministry of Health [1998, 2000, 2003,2005]) has verified that the highest concentrations of Agent Orange dioxin in soils/sediments in Viet Nam are found in the top 10 cm layer”; and

WHEREAS, Dioxin levels exceed Vietnamese and international standards and guidelines for TCDD; and

WHEREAS, Tilapia, the most common fish captured and raised in Vietnam, were found to have more than 200 times the acceptable level established by Health Canada; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion request Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) grant those members of the United States Military of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC); The U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory - Hawaii, the Joint Task Force – Full Accounting, and the Joint Casualty Resolution Center, who have been activated and served in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia be presumed to have been exposed during such service to an herbicide agent; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That the VA grant these personnel the same compensation as their counterparts who served between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975.**

**Resolution No. 288: Department of Veterans Affairs Involvement in the Department of Homeland Security**

**Origin: Pennsylvania**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The Department of Homeland Security provides a single source of authority, at the highest level, for all homeland defense programs and policies; and

WHEREAS, The role of the Department of Homeland Security is to coordinate national strategy to strengthen protection against terrorist threats or attacks; and

WHEREAS, One of the critical missions of the Department of Homeland Security is emergency preparedness and response “to minimize the damage and recover from future terrorist attacks”; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical system serves as a primary back-up to the Department of Defense (DOD) in the event of military casualties; and

WHEREAS, VA and DOD have a Contingency Hospital System Plan as part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency; and

WHEREAS, VA is prepared to augment the DOD's network of hospital and health care facilities in the event of a crisis, with 155 medical centers and a significant medical staff, many of whom are veterans; and

WHEREAS, VA also acts as a federal support organization during major disasters, as one of four partners in the National Disaster Medical System; and

WHEREAS, VA provided medical and psychological support to those in need during the months following the September 11, 2001, attack; and

WHEREAS, VA also maintains radiological response teams and decontamination systems should radioactive materials ever be used; and

WHEREAS, VA manages the largest health care program and is the largest medical education and health professional training program in the United States; and

WHEREAS, VA is a federal presence in virtually every local community in the country; and

WHEREAS, VA has the ability to move health care professionals to the site of a disaster and provide medical care quickly and efficiently; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that the contingency plan for disasters developed by VA and DOD should be integrated as a part of the primary health care procedures of homeland security; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress and the Administration to include the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in all strategic planning of the Department of Homeland Security; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That Congress takes into account any additional requirements of VA as a result of involvement in homeland security obligations when developing VA's annual budget.**

### **Resolution No. 291: Oppose Lowering of Cost-of-Living Adjustments**

#### **Origin: Pennsylvania**

#### **Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The American Legion, since its inception, has promoted improvements in the earned benefits of the nation's military retirees and veterans; and

WHEREAS, These Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits were earned through a veteran's selfless service during wartime; and

WHEREAS, The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure of the average change over time in the prices paid by urban consumers for a market basket of consumer goods and services; and

WHEREAS, The CPI for all Urban Consumers (CPI-U) is based on the expenditures of almost all residents of urban or metropolitan areas, including professionals, the self-employed, the poor, the unemployed, and retired people; and

WHEREAS, Military retirees, veterans receiving Social Security benefits and certain VA beneficiaries receive an annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) based on the CPI-U calculation; and

WHEREAS, The Chained Consumer Price Index (C-CPI-U) uses a formula that reflects the effect of substitution that consumers make in response to changes in relative prices; and

WHEREAS, The C-CPI-U would result in a lower COLA than one based on the current CPI-U; and

WHEREAS, There is current dialogue among lawmakers to consider switching future COLA calculations from the current CPI-U to the C-CPI-U; and

WHEREAS, The Congressional Budget Office estimates that switching to the C-CPI-U instead of the CPI-U for calculations of future COLAs would save the U.S. Treasury \$208 billion

(by reducing VA benefits and civilian and military retirement pay by approximately \$24 billion and Social Security benefits by \$112 billion) over 10 years; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion expresses strong opposition to using any Consumer Price Index that would reduce the annual cost-of-living adjustment for military retirees, veterans receiving Social Security benefits or Department of Veterans Affairs beneficiaries.**

**Resolution No. 292: Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Programs  
Origin: Pennsylvania**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, According to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Public Health estimates in January 2014, 2.6 million servicemembers who deployed to support Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and Operation New Dawn (OND), 1,724,058 have left active duty and are eligible for VA health care, of which 998,004 have received VA health care.; and

WHEREAS, The “signature wounds” of Iraq and Afghanistan are Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); and

WHEREAS, Mental disorders are the second largest frequency of diagnoses among returning OEF/OIF/OND servicemembers which are currently estimated at 50.7 percent; and

WHEREAS, In 2007, VA established a TBI, PTSD Clinical Reminder in VA’s electronic medical record for any new patient to identify veterans that need additional screening for a possible TBI or PTSD diagnosis; and

WHEREAS, VA has screened and diagnosed hundreds of thousands of veterans with TBI/PTSD and continues to have several challenges in the proper diagnosis and treatment of TBI and PTSD because of the overlap of symptoms; and

WHEREAS, According to VA, the overlapping symptoms between mild TBI and PTSD are headaches, dizziness, fatigue and noise/light intolerance, re-experiencing, avoidance and emotional numbing; and

WHEREAS, Currently, there are not any definitive medical treatments for TBI and providers/clinicians use therapy and medications to treat the symptoms; and

WHEREAS, Evidence-based treatments for PTSD include Cognitive Processing Therapy, Prolonged Exposure Therapy, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, as well as medication management; and

WHEREAS, VA’s Veteran Health Administration has several different research offices involved in studying TBI/PTSD including: VA Office of Research and Development; TBI Centers of Excellence; National Center for PTSD; Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Centers; War Related Illness and Injury Study Center; and Office of Public Health Environmental Epidemiology Service Office but lacks central oversight for management of all the different research studies and trials through the current decentralized research model; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DOD) and VA developed a DOD/VA Integrated Mental Health Strategy which recommended as one of the strategic objectives to “develop a system to deliver evidence-based psychotherapies” but in the plan it does not mention coordinating research jointly between both departments; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion developed a TBI/PTSD Ad Hoc Committee in 2010 to investigate the existing science and procedures and alternative methods for treating TBI/PTSD; and

WHEREAS, The committee has found several concerns including: the overlapping of symptomology between TBI/PTSD and Substance Abuse Disorder which makes it difficult to diagnose and treat the correct injury/illness; ineffective and overuse of medications; and reluctance of servicemembers and veterans to receive and continue mental health treatment; and

WHEREAS, VA conducted a study on Risperidone, a second generation antipsychotic, which is not approved by the Federal Drug Administration for use in treating PTSD; and

WHEREAS, Researchers of the study concluded that Risperidone did not improve PTSD symptoms but had several negative side effects which included weight gain, sleepiness and increased saliva in the mouth; and

WHEREAS, Researchers in the study concluded that in FY 2010, VA treated 86,852 veterans for PTSD last year, of which nearly 20 percent were prescribed this off-label and ineffective medication, and currently the only antidepressants and serotonin reuptake inhibitors such as sertraline and paroxetine are currently approved for treatment; and

WHEREAS, Veterans that have participated in past DOD/VA TBI/PTSD research studies have not always been properly informed that they are participants in the study and are not given a disclosure of the effects of any treatment they may be receiving through a study; and

WHEREAS, Additionally, the TBI/PTSD committee in their charge found several new innovative treatments for TBI/PTSD which include Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy and Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy that have not been prioritized for clinical studies to determine if they are evidence-based treatments; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to provide oversight and funding to the Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for innovative Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) research currently used in the private sector, such as Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy and Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy and other non-pharmacological treatments; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to increase the budgets for DOD and VA to improve the research, screening, diagnosis and treatment of TBI/PTSD as well as provide oversight over DOD/VA to develop joint offices for collaboration between DOD/VA research; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That DOD/VA both establish a single office for their agency's research and serve as a clearinghouse to track all DOD or VA research, and that all DOD/VA individual research programs and activities coordinate and provide monthly and as needed updates on research activities; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That servicemembers and veterans who participate in DOD/VA TBI/PTSD research studies are properly informed and give their consent to be included in the study as well as be provided with a disclosure of any negative effects of treatment; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That DOD/VA accelerate research efforts to properly diagnose and develop evidence-based treatments for TBI/PTSD; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to exercise oversight over DOD/VA to ensure servicemembers and veterans are only prescribed evidence-based treatments for TBI/PTSD and not prescribed off-label and non-Federal Drug Administration approved medications or treatments for TBI/PTSD.**

**Referred to Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation**

**Resolution No. 32 (CA): Patriot Outreach Program**

**Resolution No. 73 (SD): Department of Veterans Affairs Preservation of National Historic Properties**

**Resolution No. 109 (MN): The Department of Veterans Affairs Work Force be Comprised of 50% or more Veterans**

**Resolution No. 229 (OH): Department of Veterans Affairs Chiropractic Services**

**Resolution No. 237 (MI): Tobacco-Related Disabilities**

**Resolution No. 267 (AZ): Change the Manner in Which Claims are Determined**

**Resolution No. 290 (PA): Legislation to Provide Reporting, Tracking, and Action Dealing with Sexual Assaults at Department of Veterans Affairs Facilities**

**Received and Recorded**

**Resolution No. 244 (IL): Urn Markers Provided by the National Cemetery Administration**  
**Resolution No. 289 (PA): Department of Veterans Affairs to Include and Treat Family Members of Veterans with Illnesses and Injuries**

**Rejected**

**Resolution No. 13 (SD): Preservation of Department of Veterans Affairs Historic Properties**  
**Resolution No. 113 (WA): Department of Veterans Affairs Tracking System for Disability Claims**  
**Resolution No. 115 (WA): Improvements to the Veterans Online Application (VONAPP)**  
**Resolution No. 116 (WA): In-State Licensure for VA Healthcare Providers**  
**Resolution No. 231 (OH): Accountability of Department of Veterans Affairs and Veterans Health Administration**  
**Resolution No. 265 (AZ): Establish an Asbestos Registry within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BOZELLA: Commander, that concludes the report of the VA&R Committee. And I move for its adoption.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: I have a motion on the floor. Do I have a second? ...*Second*. Any discussion? All those in favor of the motion signify by saying aye. Any opposed? The report of Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation is adopted. (*Applause*) Thank you, Chairman Bozella.

**Presentation: William F. Lenker National Service Trophy**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: With the adoption of Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation report, it's 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 2013-2014 program year, the trophy is awarded to the Department of Minnesota. (*Applause*)

DELEGATE NEWMAN: I'm Tom Newman. I'm the state DSO for the Department of Minnesota. Behind me I've got Past State Commander Mike Ash, incoming Commander Peggy Moon, and our NECmen from Minnesota, Ray DeZurik.

We're tremendously humbled by this award. I know that within The American Legion we've got a long history of service to our fellow veterans. I went to Legion College a couple of years ago and had the opportunity to learn about the full array of programs in which our veterans and members of our organization have an opportunity to serve our fellow veterans.

I have a particular soft spot in my heart because of what it is that I do for those veterans that have found their niche volunteering in our hospitals and our state veterans homes, giving back to our veterans that at times are at the lowest point in their life, the most vulnerable, the most in need.

A point of privilege, if I could. If you are a registered volunteer at your local medical center in your state, could you please stand. If you are a registered volunteer that provide volunteer hours, either regular or recurring, could you stand. Could we give a round of applause for these folks. (*Applause*)

Again, we are truly grateful to be recognized for this award. It is our privilege to serve our veterans. Thank you. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: I now call upon Michael Schlee, 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 24, 2014, 149 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security initially met in the Charlotte Convention Center, Room 217, Ballroom level. Mr. G. Michael Schlee (Maryland) was elected Chairman and Mr. E.C. Toppin (North Carolina) was appointed Secretary.

After the initial meeting, the following convention committees met, held elections and dealt with the resolutions assigned to them:

Aerospace	Robert C. Weyenberg (WI), Chairman William Bryant (VA), Secretary
Conventional Armed Forces	Charles E. Kruger (MN), Chairman Thomas Schottenbauer (MN), Secretary
Foreign Relations	Randall Fisher (KY), Chairman Todd White (WY), Secretary
Law and Order & Homeland Security	George Wehrli (FL), Chairman E.C. Toppin (NC), Secretary
Military Benefits & Quality of Life	Melvin Smullen (MD), Chairman Dennis M. Duggan (MD), Secretary
National Guard and Reserve Forces	William Goede (MN), Chairman Milton Lahus (MA), Secretary
Unconventional Forces and Intelligence	Douglas Haggan (FR), Chairman Daniel Watrous (OH), Secretary

At 11:00 a.m., Sunday, August 24, 2014, the delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Security reconvened in the Charlotte Convention Center, Room 217, Ballroom level. Reports of all Convention Committees were read and their recommended actions on resolutions considered. A total of 104 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.

**Aerospace**  
**Robert C. Weyenberg, Wisconsin, Chairman**

**Approved**

**Resolution No. 81: Fully Fund NASA**

**Origin: North Carolina**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges Congress to make funding of NASA's programs among its highest priority ensuring the continued superiority of the American aviation industry and continued high safety record of American aircraft while looking toward future innovation in a collaborative effort between NASA and the aircraft industry; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That upon passage at The American Legion National Convention that this resolution becomes a part of The American Legion's efforts in lobbying for continued adequate funding of NASA in the upcoming Congress.**

**Resolution No. 95: Support for the United States Air Force**

**Origin: North Carolina**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, People are the United States Air Force's top priority and 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

WHEREAS, In order to grow the force, recruiting and retention are among its highest priorities and 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 more than 162,000 sorties supporting those same operations; and



WHEREAS, Air Force aeromedical evacuation crews surged to complete over 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 over 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 which 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, The Air Force has reduced its force by over 4,200 to 325,952 over the past three years to meet the lower budget levels called for by the Budget Control Act of 2011; and

WHEREAS, To meet the lower budget levels called for in the Budget Control Act of 2014, the Air Force will downsize its civilian workforce by 900 positions and leave 7,000 unfilled jobs vacant; 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 97: Support for NASA and Advancements in Aeronautical and Space Research**

**Origin: North Carolina**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is critical to defending our nation and maintaining military superiority; and

WHEREAS, U.S. progress in aerospace research has also had a profound impact on our nation's quality of life and its economic, social, environmental and political institution and made possible communication on a global scale; and

WHEREAS, The dissemination and use of space systems technology, the research programs on which it is based, and the spin-off products, techniques and services derived from the U.S. space program are vital components of the nation's economy and the well-being of its citizens; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. space program has kept the nation on the leading edge of the technology frontier, has created jobs, improved communications, electronics, material, diagnosis and treatment of medical care for veterans and all Americans, fostered new scholastic interest in

space science, provided insight into the evolution of the universe and current state of the earth, its environment and its solar system, and has provided visions and objectives for the future for business, industry and academia and the nation's youth; and

WHEREAS, The final Space Shuttle mission was completed on August 31, 2011; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 7,000 NASA employees lost their employment to the ending of the 30-year Space Shuttle Program; and

WHEREAS, Continued U.S. economic growth is dependent on further expansion of air transportation system which requires further investments and aeronautical research, and in addition, the stunning success of air power in Afghanistan and Iraq is the result of research performed a decade or more ago and reminds us that continued emphasis on military aviation R&T is essential to future U.S. air superiority; and

WHEREAS, To meet lower budget levels called for in the Budget Control Act of 2011, significant budget reductions to NASA's near-term and long-term projects are expected; and

WHEREAS, On September 14, 2011, NASA announced that it had selected the design of a new Space Launch System that it said would take the agency's astronauts further into space than ever before and provide the cornerstone for future human space exploration efforts by the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, In light of current reductions and possible additional cuts due to impending sequestration, the viability of NASA's long-term basic research programs and exploration initiatives remain vulnerable; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 98: Support for Research and Development of Air Breathing Scramjet  
Origin: North Carolina**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The X-43A Scramjet test flights are part of NASA Hyper-X program, an advanced research effort in propulsion technologies for high speed flight within 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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.**

**Conventional Armed Forces  
Charles E. Kruger, Minnesota, Chairman**

**Approved**

**Resolution No. 3: Commission the USS American Legion**

**Origin: Florida**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

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

WHEREAS, The American Legion is the nation's largest wartime veterans service organization, committed to mentoring youth and sponsorship of wholesome programs in our communities, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting strong national security, and continued devotion to our fellow service-members and veterans; and

WHEREAS, In 1941, after participating in the U.S. build-up in Iceland, a 13,736-ton transport, originally built at Camden, New Jersey, as a civilian passenger ship was transferred to the Navy and commissioned as USS American Legion (AP-35); and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense should have the authority to designate a ship name to support the veterans of our great nation, The American Legion's focusing on service to veterans, servicemembers and communities, The American Legion evolved from a group of war-weary veterans of World War I into one of the most influential non-profit groups in the United States; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion strongly support the Department of Defense and the United States Navy in designating a Naval Warship be named the USS American Legion by the year 2019.**

**Resolution No. 34: Name a United States Navy Ship in Honor of Jeremiah A. Denton, Jr.**

**Origin: California**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The late Rear Admiral Jeremiah A. Denton Jr. was historic in war as a U.S. Navy Aviator and as a prisoner of war in Vietnam for seven years and seven months; later served as a United States Senator, was a statesman and humanitarian whose work continues worldwide through the Admiral Denton Legacy Initiatives (formerly the Admiral Denton Foundation) he founded and led to his death; was author of the now classic book on the horrific torture endured by American POWs by their communist captors, "When Hell Was In Session;" and was an American Legionnaire who lived a heroic life in war and in peace which is an extraordinary and

inspiring example of selfless service to duty, honor, God and Country, as expressed in the American Legion creed; and

WHEREAS, Admiral Denton's passing on March 28, 2014, was marked as the loss to the nation of a true American hero, patriot, and humanitarian, in an outpouring of tributes all across the country, including from The American Legion, V.F.W. and other veterans service organizations; U.S. Senator, members of the House and others holding public office from across the political spectrum; thousands of editorials, commentaries, and news reports in print and broadcast media universal in their praise of his heroic life; and including, perhaps most importantly, salutes as a hero from American POW's who served under him and knew him best as one who led them in resisting demands that they betray their country and collaborate with the North Vietnamese communist enemy refused to abide by the Geneva Convention and instead inflicted barbaric torture on them as POW's; and

WHEREAS, Torture of our POW's was first confirmed when Admiral Jeremiah Denton Blinked T-O-R-T-U-R-E in Morse Code when the communists attempted to use him in an internationally television propaganda broadcast, resulting in Admiral Denton suffering retaliatory torture so horrendous it almost killed him when the communists discovered he has outwitted them; and

WHEREAS, The epic true story of the heroism of our POW's in resisting torture rather than betray their country, as exemplified by the group of resisters most hated by the communists who became known as the "Alcatraz 11," led by the late Admiral James B. Stockdale, who received the Medal of Honor, and Admiral Jeremiah A. Denton, who received the Navy Cross, is now accurately and comprehensively told by Author Alvin Townley in the new book, "DEFIANT: The POW's who Endured Vietnam's Most Infamous Prison, The women Who Fought for Them, And The One Who Never Returned"; and

WHEREAS, Surviving POW's of the "Alcatraz 11" have themselves initiated a call for a U.S. Navy ship to be named in honor of Admiral Jeremiah A. Denton as was done to honor their other leader, Admiral James B. Stockdale; and

WHEREAS, At the initiative of Defense of Veterans Memorials Project of The American Legion Department of California, the Department of California by resolution dedicated a plaque honoring Admiral Denton at Mt. Soledad National Veterans Memorial on National POW/MIA Day in 2008; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports and joins the initiative of the surviving Vietnam prisoners of war known as the "Alcatraz 11", who served under the late Rear Admiral Jeremiah Denton Jr., to call the Department of Defense, the United States Navy, The Congress of the United States, and any and all relevant federal agencies or entities, to take appropriate action to cause a ship of the United States Navy to be named in honor of the late Rear Admiral Jeremiah A. Denton, Jr.**

**Resolution No. 78: Develop Defense Against Electromagnetic Pulse Attack**

**Origin: North Carolina**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, In defiance of the United States and international community, both North Korea and Iran actively strive for missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads; 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, Although the U.S. Missile Defense Agency has requested \$1.9 billion (2015) over the next five years to overhaul ground-based missile-defense systems including \$939.5 million budget for a new long-range discrimination radar through fiscal 2019, critics suggest that

these figures underscore the deficiencies in the current infrastructure and the need to employ newer technologies rather than continuing to invest in aging systems; 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges the United States Government to fully fund, develop, and deploy a national ballistic missile defense system designed to intercept electromagnetic pulse (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. 85: Long-Range Strike Capabilities**

**Origin: North Carolina**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, United States Air Force Chief of Staff General Schwartz once 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, Russia and China continue to update their strategic-missile capabilities evidenced by exercises such as the Russia's intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test conducted on March 4, 2014 and China's test of a long-range ICBM which occurred in December 2013; and

WHEREAS, Development of Russian surface-to-air missiles (SAM) 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, Although the President's 2015 budget proposal provides at \$0.9 billion for Air Force Long Range Strike Bombers for FY 2015 and \$2.4 billion for seven KC-46 Tankers in FY 2015, the U-2 high-altitude altitude reconnaissance aircraft is being retired in favor of the unmanned Global Hawk system; and

WHEREAS, The growth of Predator/Reaper-drone forces is being slowed, and plans for the new combat rescue helicopter are being reviewed; 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 Deborah Lee James recently said the top three priorities for modernization remain the newest fifth generation fighter, the F-35 Lightning II, the new KC-46 tanker, and the Long Range Strike Bomber; and

WHEREAS, 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, 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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 2018.**

#### **Resolution No. 86: Modify Battlefield Helmet**

**Origin: North Carolina**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

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

WHEREAS, The American Legion is founded on four pillars of service, of which one of the pillars is to foster a strong national security; and

WHEREAS, United States military personnel serve our nation worldwide with many of them serving in harm's way; and

WHEREAS, These troops are being subjected to injury from improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and these IEDs have been causing severe bodily harm and traumatic brain injuries; and

WHEREAS, The United States Department of Defense responded to the problem of traumatic brain injuries with unprecedented speed and installed sensors on the troops helmet to measure the concussive force suffered by individual service personnel and provided military medical professionals with treatment programs to minimize the dilatory effects of the concussion; and

WHEREAS, These appropriate actions have had a noticeable effect of reducing the amount of traumatic brain injury to our service personnel; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion petition the United States Department of Defense to provide research to modify the current battlefield helmet to provide possible relief of the shock wave caused by improvised explosive devices thus attempting to lessen the traumatic brain injury received by United States military personnel; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That this research be given the same fast track and unprecedented speed as the program responsible for the development of the shock sensors now installed on military helmets.**

**Resolution No. 94: Support Full Funding for the Department of the Army Budget****Origin: North Carolina****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The United States Army is serving a nation at war and, as America's strategic and decisive land and expeditionary combat force, is a proud member of the Joint Force providing combatant commanders with relevant and ready campaign power; and

WHEREAS, The Army's compelling needs include providing landscape power, training and equipping soldiers and adaptive leaders for the rigors of war, sustaining the all-volunteer force, and providing the infrastructure and support systems to ensure the Army is able to execute its missions; and

WHEREAS, The momentum of Army transformation and modernization needs to be maintained so as to deal with irregular, catastrophic, disruptive and traditional challenges; and

WHEREAS, The Army vision is to remain the preeminent land power, the ultimate instrument of national resolve, that is both ready and relevant to the challenges of the dangerous and complex 21st century security environment; and

WHEREAS, Support and funding is required to achieve critical recruiting and retention goals for all Army components; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 99: Support for National Missile Defense System****Origin: North Carolina****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972 between the United States and the Soviet Union had placed a cap on deploying missile defense systems and limited more advanced research on such defensive systems; and

WHEREAS, The Bush administration in January 2002 had given Russia and our allies the required six-months notice of U.S. intent to withdraw from the 1972 ABM Treaty and did so in June 2002; and

WHEREAS, Work on the underground silos for the first missile interceptors in Alaska began in June 2002 which reflected the urgency to begin moving on a missile defense system; and

WHEREAS, According to former Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, the New Start Treaty, which was ratified by the Senate in December 2010 and went into full effect in February 2011, in no way limits U.S. plans for missile defense or modernizing its nuclear arsenal; and

WHEREAS, In early 2010, NATO acquired the first phase of an initial capability to protect alliance forces against ballistic missile threats; and

WHEREAS, At the November 2010 NATO summit in Lisbon, NATO's leaders decided to develop a ballistic missile defense (BMD) capability to pursue its core task of collective defense; and

WHEREAS, Allied leaders recognized that the planned deployment of European-based U.S. ballistic-missile defense assets would help protect allies, and agreed that this capability should be an integral part of any future NATO-wide ballistic-missile defense architecture; and

WHEREAS, In June 2011, the NATO-Russia Council defense ministers 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 169: Support Full Funding and Resourcing for the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

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 U.S. 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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.**

**Resolution No. 183: Rebuild America's Defense Industrial Base**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The Administration recently proposed in its fiscal year (FY) 2013 budget to cut Pentagon spending by roughly \$487 billion over the next decade and because Congress failed to meet the Budget Control Act's deadline to reduce the long-term deficit by \$1.2 trillion, the Pentagon now faces the following scenario: current law now requires additional across-the-board cuts to the Pentagon budget totaling more than \$500 billion over ten years; and

WHEREAS, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel recently stated, "Continued sequestration cuts would compromise our national security both for the short-term and long-term"; and

WHEREAS, Although the Opportunity, Growth and Security Fund provides an additional \$26 billion for defense in FY 2015, the Secretary Hagel said that the Pentagon has planned for full sequestration for FY 2016 requiring the Army to be reduced from 450,000 soldiers to 420,000 as well as dropping Army National Guardsmen from 335,000 to 315,000 and Army Reservists from 205,000 to 185,000; and

WHEREAS, Full sequestration would also cut 50 Light Utility Helicopters from the National Guard; and



WHEREAS, Full sequestration in FY 2016 and beyond would mean retiring the aircraft carrier USS George Washington (CVN-73) instead of refueling it, bringing the Navy to a 10-carrier fleet instead of the congressionally mandated 11 carriers; and

WHEREAS, The Navy already plans to put half its cruiser fleet in reduced operating status to save money, but full sequestration would force six additional ships to be laid up and the service would also buy its new destroyers at a slower rate, resulting in 10 fewer large combatants in the fleet by 2023; and

WHEREAS, Full sequestration would mean the Air Force would retire 80 aircraft beyond the plans laid out in the FY '15 request, which include retiring the entire A-10 and U-2 fleets; and

WHEREAS, The additional Air Force cuts would include the entire KC-10 tanker and Global Hawk Block 40 fleets and Joint Strike Fighter acquisition would be slowed, meaning the service would have 24 fewer F-35s in FY '19; and

WHEREAS, Secretary Hagel also recently stated, "... the scale and timeline of continued sequestration-level cuts would require greater reductions in the military's size, reach and margin of technological superiority (and) under sequestration spending levels, we would be gambling that our military will not be required to respond to multiple major contingencies at the same time."; 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, 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 225: National Defense Budget**

**Origin: Ohio**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

**(Consolidated with Resolution No. 178 (MD))**

WHEREAS, The American Legion views a strong national defense as paramount to national security; and

WHEREAS, The proposed spending cuts in the Department of Defense FY 2015 budget would reduce the Army to its smallest size since before World War II while significantly reducing the size and capabilities of the other branches of the armed services; and

WHEREAS, Not only do the spending cuts downsize the force structure, but also reduce servicemembers pay and benefits, which could potentially lead to the loss of highly trained men and women; and

WHEREAS, While the Department of Defense is content on shrinking the size and scope of the United States military, or major adversaries, Russia and China, along with rouge nations such as North Korea and Iran are ramping up their military stocks and capabilities; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to oppose the pending budget cuts in military spending proposed by the Department of Defense; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That Congress not allow our military forces to reach a weakened state in these uncertain and perilous times.**

**Resolution No. 274: Identifying National Interests Before Committing Military Forces and Assets**

**Origin: Iowa**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, One of The American Legion's founding principles is national security; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion considers itself to be a partner with the Department of Defense in ensuring the nation's security; and

WHEREAS, The United States Constitution clearly defines the duties and responsibilities of the branches of government relating to defense of the nation; and

WHEREAS, There is no greater responsibility of a government than to protect its population and infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, The War Powers Resolution of 1973 requires the President to advise the Congress and American people what national security interest is served by committing U.S. 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 support for military operations they do not understand; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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 U.S. 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. 277: Military Occupational Specialty Standards**

**Origin: Iowa**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long recognized the significant role and the contributions of women serving in the military services of the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, Women veterans have been eligible for full membership in The American Legion since its founding in 1919, prior to the full franchise of women to vote in presidential elections; and

WHEREAS, There are approximately 205,000 women serving on active duty in the military comprising 14.5% of the total active force, and approximately 130,000 women serving in the National Guard and Reserve comprising 18% of the total Guard and Reserve all serving with distinction, honor, and valor; and

WHEREAS, Women have been 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 was 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 have and still are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan in low intensity combat, truck convoys, military-police units, female engagement teams, where they have interacted and assisted 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, As of January 24, 2014, 67 female servicemembers have been killed by hostile fire in Iraq and 33 have been killed by hostile fire in Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 1,000 female servicemembers have been wounded due to military action in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, A number of female servicemembers are suffering from what is termed the "signature wounds" of service in Iraq and Afghanistan, Post Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injury; and

WHEREAS, Congress, in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, Section 596, mandated the creation of the Military Leadership Diversity Commission (MLDC), whose report has been delivered to the President, the Secretary of Defense and Congress; 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, In 2013, the Department of Defense issued an order mandating that women have the same opportunities as men in combat jobs; and

WHEREAS, The Armed Services have been developing plans to update physical standards, training, education, and other programs for thousands of military occupational specialties that must be made available to female servicemembers by January 1, 2016; and

WHEREAS, In accordance with this mandate, if some military occupational specialties remain closed to women that the DOD must explain why; 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion strongly believes that the Department of Defense and all branches of the military services must maintain the current physical and mental requirements and qualifications for acceptance into military service that have 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 standard 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. 279: Support for the Selective Service Registration Program**

**Origin: Iowa**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

**(Consolidated with Resolutions No. 12 (SD), No. 123 (DC) and No. 261 (IL))**

WHEREAS, The American Legion has given long-standing support to universal military training; and

WHEREAS, 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 and continued

sequestration 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 than 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 23 million veterans alive today, 12% are female; and

WHEREAS, Females make up approximately 14.5% of the active duty forces in the United States military; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has opened a majority of Military Occupational Specialties to female servicemembers; 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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.**

**Received and Recorded**

**Resolution No. 195 (NY): Cold War Service Ribbon**

**Foreign Relations Committee  
Randall Fisher, Kentucky, Chairman**

**Approved**

**Resolution No. 2: Taiwan Straits Dialogue**

**Origin: Alaska**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The Republic of China (Taiwan) is a long-time friend, ally, and major trading partner of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of China, closely cooperated with the United States against Japanese imperialism during World War II and in the fight against Communism during the Cold War; and

WHEREAS, Taiwan is strategically located and is extremely important to the peace, prosperity, and stability of the Pacific Rim; and

WHEREAS, It is in the best interests of all parties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to resolve political differences peacefully; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That the United States Government encourages the parties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) to promote peaceful dialogue and avoid any negative actions by either side to change the status quo, which might lead to military conflict.**

**Resolution No. 39: Central America Democracy Promotion**

**Origin: Nebraska**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, Over the past decade the nations of Central America have made great strides toward establishing democratic societies; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has taken a great interest in supporting democracy, development, and security in this area so close to our borders and strategically situated between the naval lifeline between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Panama Canal, and one of our major trading partners, Mexico; and

WHEREAS, In the light of the decreasing threat from subversion in Central America as well as budget restrictions in the United States, it is inevitable that U.S. aid to Central America must be reduced; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the U.S. Government to continue economic aid to friendly, democratic Central American nations which are seeking to develop democratic societies with market economies; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion recommend the U.S. Government provide minimal amounts of military aid while urging Central American nations to adopt the model of Costa Rica and Panama and disband military forces and rely solely on police forces for internal security, thus freeing funds for development and contributing to peaceful relations in the region.**

**Resolution No. 40: Enhanced Funding for USAID**

**Origin: Nebraska**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The Department of State is the first line of defense in combating the myriad security threats that face America from abroad, and is charged with a number of missions that are vital to the nation; and

WHEREAS, These missions include: diplomatic relations with foreign nations, promoting peace and stability in regions of vital interest, bringing countries together to address global challenges, creating jobs at home by opening markets abroad, and helping developing nations establish stable economic environments that provide investment and export opportunities; and

WHEREAS, The State Department has been allocated little more than 1% of the total federal budget to accomplish many of these development tasks through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in contrast to the approximately 19% spent on defense; and

WHEREAS, In recent years the State Department's responsibilities have expanded enormously to include combating threats from terrorism, international crime, and narcotics trafficking, and that development programs through USAID are in the frontline to offer solutions and alternatives for emerging states to prevent their economic and democratic failure; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support policies and legislation that increase funding for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) within the Department of State and seek use of that funding towards**

targeted states whose failure to provide for its people could result in the expansion of international terrorism; and, be it finally

**RESOLVED**, That USAID, because of its technical knowledge and expertise, be given a greater role in the decision-making process for the disbursement and usage of funds targeted for reconstruction in nations in which our military presence resulted in the need for infrastructure redevelopment.

**Resolution No. 41: Expand Foreign Service Officer Corps**

**Origin: Nebraska**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, Foreign Service Officers have the mission to promote peace, support prosperity, and protect American citizens while advancing the interests of the U.S. abroad; and

WHEREAS, Foreign Service Officers are the primary force in bringing foreign policy objectives to fruition by acting as the essential link between strategic interests and the U.S. Aid and International Development programs that achieve those interests; and

WHEREAS, Given the current climate of international relations and the importance of reconstruction following U.S. combat operations, the Foreign Service Officer Corps needs to be increased to meet the ever growing challenges against American vital interests; and

WHEREAS, Due to the fact the work of the Foreign Service Officer Corps often takes place in hostile and desolate environments, qualified military veterans should be given veterans' preference in the staffing of such positions; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the President, Congress, and the Department of State to significantly increase the number of Foreign Service Officers; and, be it finally

**RESOLVED**, That The American Legion urge the President, Congress, and the Department of State to implement a veterans' preference policy with the aim of recruiting more veterans into the Foreign Service Officer Corps whose experience may be an essential enhancement of the nation's diplomatic mission.

**Resolution No. 42: Foreign Policy Objectives**

**Origin: Nebraska**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion, as veterans of wartime service in the defense of liberty, have a special concern for maintaining peace with freedom and recognize that a strong U.S. foreign policy is vital in that regard; and

WHEREAS, The official concern of The American Legion stems from that part of the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion which states: "We associate ourselves together ... to make right the master of might; to promote peace and goodwill on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy"; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion believes that the following objectives should be incorporated into U.S. foreign policy in order to maintain peace with freedom while preserving and promoting democracy:

1. Recognition that the U.S. has great and multiple responsibilities as a leader of the Free World
2. Dedication to achievement of world peace with freedom, secured by a peace through strength posture
3. Support for a global fight on multiple fronts to end the scourge of terrorism
4. Support for democracy and human rights in other countries when such is consistent with U.S. national interests and national power

5. **Participation in essential collective security alliances, provided our allies contribute their fair share**
6. **Negotiation of equitable, verifiable arms control agreements, which improve U.S. national security**
7. **Opposition to the spread of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons or long-range ballistic missiles which may be used by terrorists, terrorist organizations, communists or aggressor nations**
8. **Determined opposition to international terrorism and drug trafficking**
9. **Support for responsible international organizations that are consistent with U.S. sovereignty and serve U.S. national interests**
10. **Participation in an increasingly interdependent Free World trading system based on fair and equitable trading practices**
11. **Recognition that the President must be the chief architect of U.S. foreign policy as envisioned in the U.S. Constitution, while Congress performs important functions of advice, oversight and funding**
12. **Support for the appropriate resources to promote and protect U.S. vital national interests world-wide.**

**Resolution No. 43: Military Retiree Mail at Overseas Embassies**

**Origin: Nebraska**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, As of January 1, 2010 the Department of State has said it cannot be responsible for the costs of mail going to military retirees at embassies, consulates, and diplomatic missions; and

WHEREAS, This decision has adversely affected the quality-of-life of U.S. military retirees and veterans living abroad; and

WHEREAS, This new policy has negatively impacted veterans' personal lives and will likely result in prohibitive costs in addition to potential unreliable delivery of medications, compensation, absentee ballots, legal correspondence and other important personal documents from Federal, state and local government agencies; and

WHEREAS, According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Veteran Health Administration, the estimated number of veterans that live outside the continental United States at the beginning of FY 2012 was 333,000; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense cannot pay the Department of State for the delivery of retiree mail on the basis of the Anti-Deficiency Act (31 U.S.C. § 1341); now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion strongly urges Congress to change any necessary laws to permit the Department of Defense to fund the cost of essential mail service delivered to military retirees at embassies, consulates, diplomatic missions or other U.S. government facilities.**

**Resolution No. 44: Middle East/Gulf States Foreign Policies**

**Origin: Nebraska**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The end of World War I brought about the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the arbitrary delineation of the middle eastern states of the former Turkish held territories of Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Palestine (Israel), Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Aden, Oman, (United Arab Emirates), and the Gulf of Aden states of Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Sudan, and to include the sovereign states of Egypt and Libya; and

WHEREAS, Many of these nations continue to struggle with reforming from authoritarian regimes to more democratic and representative forms of governance; and that the call by their own populations to seek greater freedoms and the protection of individual human rights and



universal suffrage must be heard; and that states which fail to provide the basic needs of their people creates an opportunity for extremists and terrorists to flourish and grow; and

WHEREAS, That as each of these nations strives to reform their government they will need the technical and economic support of more developed and advanced representative democracies, and these needs will include: creating diplomatic coalitions with other countries and international institutions, creating jobs, open market reforms, developing and establishing stable economic environments, achieving internal and international security cooperation; and

WHEREAS, The President and Congress have both called for a policy that will help promote and assist nations seeking to establish greater democratic reforms in the Middle East; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support legislation and foreign policy that specifically targets diplomatic, economic, and educational programs to promote greater and peaceful democratic reforms in countries within the Arabian Gulf and Middle Eastern Region.**

#### **Resolution No. 45: Policy on Africa**

**Origin: Nebraska**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, Decades of colonization, authoritarian rule, severe economic disparity, internal conflicts, rampant corruption, and, in many cases, great resistance to change have overwhelmed the African continent; and

WHEREAS, Today some African nations are beginning to develop strong economic markets, and are making determined efforts to put the continent towards a solid democratic course with multi-party systems and other significant political changes; and

WHEREAS, Promoting policies that support democracy, conflict resolution, economic development, free and open trade, and disease prevention in African countries are in the national interests of the United States, understanding that a major contributing factor to terrorism are failed states; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports bipartisan policies and legislation that identify areas and authorize and fund programs where the United States can provide economic, political, and social development in Africa; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes such U.S. policies toward African nations must be intertwined with our nation's overall strategy to promote democracy throughout the world; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That any African nation that clearly demonstrates open democratic reforms, human rights protection, and cooperation in the fight against international terrorism, will have the support of the U.S. government.**

#### **Resolution No. 46: Policy on Cuba**

**Origin: Nebraska**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The communist government of Cuba has ruined the Cuban economy, repressed the Cuban people, provided a base for forces inimical to the United States, and committed aggression in many lands; and

WHEREAS, Following the demise of the Soviet Union and the liberation of Eastern Europe, Cuba has lost the sources of foreign subsidies that alone sustained its inefficient communist economy; and

WHEREAS, If the Free World remains firm in its rejection of communism in Cuba, many economic, social, and political indicators point to the likely collapse of the Castro dictatorship in Cuba; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the U.S. Government to continue to maintain control of Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, continue intelligence flights over Cuba, remain firm in opposition to the export of revolution by Cuba, continue broadcasting true news and information to the Cuban people, and encourage the development of democracy and a free market economy in Cuba.**

**Resolution No. 47: Policy on the United Nations**

**Origin: Nebraska**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The American Legion played a significant role in helping to establish the United Nations after World War II, believing it would help prevent the outbreak of future wars; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has remained generally supportive of the United Nations over the succeeding years, although it has been critical of particular ineffective, wasteful, or undesirable activities of the United Nations; and

WHEREAS, Countries with vast national budget surpluses are exploiting their working citizens for unfair economic leverage in the United Nations; and

WHEREAS, The current scale of assessments, which weighs and considers the “low per capita income” of each member nation, determines the funding structure of the United Nations, is inequitable to the United States; and

WHEREAS, Although the United Nations in half a century of operation has not fulfilled the lofty purposes of international peace and human betterment envisioned by its founders, it continues to be in the national interest for the United States to function as a member of the United Nations; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to use American leverage to encourage the United Nations to focus on limited, necessary, achievable tasks that truly better the lot of humankind in a sensible, cost-effective manner; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That Congress encourage the United Nations not to infringe on national sovereignty when operating economic and social programs; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That Congress encourage the United Nations to recalculate the assessment of nations’ funding obligations to be based on the Gross National Product of each country with no “low per capita income” factor to distort the proportion of such obligations; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That in the absence of such reform of the funding formula the United Nations should adopt a weighted voting strength based on the funds contributed by each member nation; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That truly independent authority be provided to the UN Inspector General and ensure that United Nations agencies become subject to periodic, unannounced auditing, the findings of such audits to be reported to member nations; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That an equitable fiduciary relationship be established between the United States and United Nations.**

**Resolution No. 49: Prohibit Foreign Investments in U.S. Defense Industry**

**Origin: Nebraska**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, In this era of changing technology, the United States must maintain ownership and control of critical defense industries so that U.S. technological secrets can be protected and adequate production facilities can be maintained to meet any national emergency; and

WHEREAS, The generally declining strength of the dollar and the downsizing of our industrial base in the 1990s and the continuing decline in the 2000s have made it very lucrative

for foreign entities to purchase U.S. firms, including those involved in national defense production; and

WHEREAS, Some allies of the United States, which lease or purchase U.S. advanced technology, may transfer or resell to actual or potential enemies of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Such technology transfers threaten the security of sensitive U.S. military technologies and U.S. technological superiority; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the U.S. Government to ensure that foreign entities are not permitted to own critical industries, especially those involved in producing defense items; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion opposes the transfer and sales of sensitive technologies which may endanger our national security and economic interests.**

**Resolution No. 50: Support for the American Battle Monuments Commission**

**Origin: Nebraska**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

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

WHEREAS, The American Battle Monuments Commission 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 27, 2014, 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. 51: Social Security Survivor Benefits for Non-Resident Alien Spouses and Dependents**

**Origin: Nebraska**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, From its inception The American Legion has been dedicated to guarding the well being of the surviving spouses of members and veterans of the armed services; and

WHEREAS, All Legionnaires pledge themselves to "devotion to mutual helpfulness"; and

WHEREAS, The survivors of veterans living in countries where appreciable numbers of U.S. military forces are based presently benefit from treaties and administrative agreements which are not applicable to other foreign domiciled "nonresident alien beneficiaries"; and

WHEREAS, Existing Public Law and administrative regulations of the Social Security Administration require Mexican and Central American nationals who claim survivor benefits to provide proof of physical presence inside the territory of the United States either:

- a) 30 days every six months or
- b) one day per month every month of the year, but such physical presence may not be required of Social Security beneficiaries of other nationalities when residing outside the United States depending upon whether or not the Social Security Administration has entered into international agreements with the governments of those beneficiaries; and

WHEREAS, Establishing a physical presence in the United States requires considerable expense and disruption of family life when a Mexican or Central American beneficiary lives anywhere except along the U.S.-Mexico border; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (formerly the "Immigration and Naturalization Service or INS"), a bureau of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) exercises the ability to legally deny entry to non-U.S. citizens even when such persons hold valid visas issued by the Department of State; and

WHEREAS, Since the events of September 11, 2001 the USCIS has increased the level of its control of persons attempting to enter the United States; and

WHEREAS, The USCIS has denied entrance into the United States by visa-holding surviving beneficiaries of veterans based solely upon their apparent lack of means of support even though they would have received an appropriate level of income once they had met the physical presence requirements of the law; and

WHEREAS, The regulations implementing Public Law relating to Social Security Survivor Benefits are inherently unfair because they impose different conditions upon surviving spouses which may vary according to the location of that person's domicile; and

WHEREAS, Existing law allows an individual USCIS officer to be the arbiter as to whether or not a potential recipient may enter the U.S. for the purpose of meeting the physical presence requirements of the Social Security legislation; and

WHEREAS, Proposed new Department of Homeland Security regulations would limit visitor visas to a period insufficient to establish physical presence under the requirements of the Social Security legislation; and

WHEREAS, Mexican and Guatemalan surviving spouses of American veterans have requested The American Legion assist them in gaining relief from these unfair and country-specific regulations; and

WHEREAS, Section 233 of 42 USC 433 allows for the establishment of agreements between the social security system established by the act and the social security system of any foreign country; and

WHEREAS, Section 404.463 of the Social Security Act contains a listing of the countries which meet the social insurances or pension system requirements which may result in relief from Section 404.460 "nonpayment of monthly benefits"; and

WHEREAS, The countries of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama are included in this listing; and

WHEREAS, The present situation can be remedied by administrative action by the Office of International Programs of the Social Security Administration without the necessity of new legislation; and

WHEREAS, The Social Security Administration's Internet web site indicates that in some cases bilateral negotiations are being conducted or are being planned, but that such negotiations are not currently planned for all countries of Central America and negotiations with Mexico have been postponed on more than one occasion; and

WHEREAS, The Social Security Administration has responded in writing to requests for information by Legion staff indicating that no discussions are even contemplated with the governments of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua, or Panama; and

WHEREAS, Rules of The American Legion relating to resolutions requiring Social Security legislation are different from resolutions which do not require legislative action by Congress, the following is submitted as a separate resolution from any other resolution relating to Non-Resident Alien Survivor Beneficiaries; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion petition the Social Security Administration's "Office of International Programs" to expedite the negotiation of international agreements with the governments of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama to permit the recession of the nonpayment provisions of Section 404-460 of the Social Security Act, thereby allowing the payment of survivors' benefits and any other legally accrued benefits to the non-resident alien spouses and children of U.S. veterans residing in the above named countries; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That such expedited negotiation apply to the matter of survivor benefits payments and that other matters related to interests of the Social Security Administration not be included if such negotiation would delay the realization of bilateral agreements relating to survivor benefits payments; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress, with the Social Security Administration, establish uniform eligibility requirements applicable to all foreign nationals receiving Social Security survivor benefits so that all such persons shall be subject to the same eligibility requirements regardless of the location of the recipient's domicile.**

#### **Resolution No. 52: Securing Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenal**

**Origin: Nebraska**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, Pakistan is a long-time ally, which has partnered with the United States against terrorist threats in Iraq and Afghanistan during the Global War on Terror; and

WHEREAS, Pakistan's nuclear program is a vital concern to U.S. national security, due to the close proximity to al-Qaida and Taliban insurgents as well as suspected Islamist sympathizers imbedded within Pakistan's army; and

WHEREAS, The audacious attacks that occurred in 2011 on Pakistan Navy Aviation Base Mehran, in close proximity of a nuclear holding facility and alongside a Pakistan Air Force Base, once again brings renewed focus on the safety of Pakistan's nuclear weapons arsenal; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion seeks to deter the possibility of terrorists gaining access to nuclear weapons as the potential for the intersection of terrorism and nuclear weapons is arguably the greatest threat to U.S. national security; and

WHEREAS, In an effort to prevent the infiltration of a nuclear establishment by individuals sympathetic to al-Qaida goals, the U.S. must construct and implement policies that proactively thwart the unwelcome possibility of Pakistan's nuclear weapons falling into the wrong hands; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges the President and the Congress to carefully formulate and execute policies toward Pakistan in order to deter the possibility of terrorists gaining access to nuclear weapons; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That the U.S. should seek to provide assistance to Pakistan in implementing programs that will improve security and effective accountability at nuclear facilities thereby transforming Pakistan from a source of insecurity in the Middle East to a country committed to eliminating terrorism, and ensuring security from nuclear proliferation.**

**Resolution No. 54: Vietnam Human Rights****Origin: Nebraska****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes the comradeship and loyalty of the ethnic minorities of Vietnam to include, Montagnards and Hmong hill people, whose assistance was invaluable during the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion, as veterans of wartime service in the defense of liberty, have a special concern for maintaining peace with freedom and recognize that the protection of human rights are vital in that regard; and

WHEREAS, Since diplomatic and trade relations have been established over the last 20 years and normalized as recently as 2007 between the U.S. and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the condition of tribal people who assisted United States forces during the Vietnam conflict has greatly worsened in terms of persecution; and

WHEREAS, The official concern of The American Legion stems from that part of the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion which states: "We associate ourselves together...to make right the master of might; to promote peace and goodwill on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy"; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges the President and the Congress to support legislation and policies that will compel the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to meet the international standards of human rights; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That the ethnic and religious minorities within the country of Vietnam be extended those protections and rights to live and worship in peace without threat of imprisonment or retribution from their government; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to take such measures as are necessary to overcome the jamming of Radio Free Asia by the government of Vietnam; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That educational and cultural exchange programs with Vietnam should promote progress toward freedom and democracy; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to create a U.S. policy that will offer refugee resettlement to Vietnam nationals (including members of the Montagnard ethnic minority groups) who were eligible for the Humanitarian Resettlement program, the Orderly Departure program, the Resettlement Opportunities for Vietnamese Returnees program, the Amerasian Homecoming Act of 1988, or any other U.S. refugee program, but who were deemed ineligible for reasons of administrative error, to include inaccurate language translation or certain circumstances beyond their control.**

**Resolution No. 55: Support for Foreign Exchange Education Programs****Origin: Nebraska****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The United States, Mexico, and Central and South America are historic, regional neighbors with a common heritage and thousands of miles of common boundaries; and

WHEREAS, The Congress and the Executive Branch have entered into the North American Free Trade Agreement with Mexico; and

WHEREAS, College scholarships and educational exchanges help reduce social, cultural, and international barriers and promote good will and understanding; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to increase financial and political support for existing international education exchange and scholarship programs, such as: the Fulbright, Gilman, and other programs, offered through the Departments of State and Education which will increase cooperative**

endeavors on all fronts to enhance the prosperity and security of those nations participating; and, be it finally

**RESOLVED**, That The American Legion urge the U.S. Government to expand the number of scholarships for Mexico, Central America, and South America, particularly for those highly qualified students, who lack funds to attend undergraduate and appropriate vocational-technical programs, provided said students promise to abide by current or future immigration student visa policies after completing their education or program requirements.

**Resolution No. 56: Global Trade Policies**

**Origin: Nebraska**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, China and other trade countries have purchased billions of dollars worth of U.S. Government bonds, stock market shares, and individual companies with their windfall money from our trade deficit as a result of Congress approving the “World Free Trade” policy a number of years ago; and

WHEREAS, China and other trade countries have not adhered to the global trade rules initially agreed to in the treaty relating to import fees and tariffs resulting with below reasonable costs of the products in the U.S. and higher prices of U.S. products sold in their countries; and

WHEREAS, Revenues realized by other countries from these trade imbalances have resulted in greater purchasing power and the potential for foreign ownership of essential industries and corporations vital to our basic national security interests and infrastructure; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the President and Congress to balance trade deficits by pursuing the enforcement of the conditions of the trade negotiations made in good faith with these nations and support the efforts of our trade negotiators and diplomatic officials to use every avenue available through the World Trade Organization and the International Court of Justice to pursue our nation’s claims for fair trade practices.

**Resolution No. 57: Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC)**

**Origin: Nebraska**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) is established in Public Law 106-398, Section 911 which amended Chapter 108 of Title 10, United States Code by adding a new section numbered as § 2166, to enhance security, and promote democratic values, and foster cooperation among the Organization of American States; and

WHEREAS, In addition to the primary missions cited above, the mission of WHINSEC also includes promoting respect for human rights; knowledge and understanding of U.S. customs and traditions; and training programs covering ethics, the rule of law, international treaties and conventions, international humanitarian law, the military role in democratic societies and civilian control of the military; and

WHEREAS, WHINSEC inherited an unfair and unfortunate reputation from its predecessor, the School of Americas (SOA) and such reputation is being generated by public response to media coverage of claims by a number of human rights activist groups who accused SOA, without any specific cause and effect evidence, of conducting training that had influenced a total of eight military leaders from Central and South America to commit serious human rights violations and crimes against their fellow citizens, long after leaving SOA and serving in much higher positions of responsibility in corrupted governments; and

WHEREAS, WHINSEC and the Department of Defense have long maintained that no school should be held accountable for the actions of only a minute number of its large number of its graduates; and

WHEREAS, American Legion representatives visited WHINSEC in June 2008 and observed ethics and human rights courses being conducted and met with students from South and Central America who expressed appreciation for the training in American alliances, cooperation, democracy, living in free societies and traditional American values; and

WHEREAS, During their WHINSEC visit, The American Legion representatives observed the personal relationships and bonding developed between and among the WHINSEC faculty, the international military students and U.S. military students training along with the international military students and how effectively, therefore, WHINSEC is building the kind of partnering with other nations and their military, police, and first responders that is deemed as an essential element of national power to use in the long fight against extremist terrorism, as well as a very cost effective way to build improved relationships and the international partnering needed for success in the prolonged war against extremist terrorism; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges Congress and the Secretary of Defense to ensure that the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) is adequately funded on the basis that hemispheric training, alliance building, and the sharing of knowledge among the Organization of American States is a vital interest to the U.S. in terms of the establishment of alliances, hemispheric cooperation and national security; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls on Congress to ensure that such funding be restricted for use only for those purposes included in the mission statement of WHINSEC; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress and the Secretary of Defense to establish similar institutes for other regions of the world where international mutual cooperation and alliance building can be beneficial to the vital interests of the United States.**

#### **Resolution No. 58: Support for World Press Freedom**

**Origin: Nebraska**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, In a democratic society the essential right of the press (print and electronic) to report on government activities, social movements, scientific developments, and other significant events or breakthroughs is one of the basic pillars of our Bill of Rights; and

WHEREAS, Such reporting and expression of speech helps to ensure the transparency of the political and social systems that are in place and that an informed and educated public can more effectively participate politically; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes that oppressive and restrictive regimes around the world work to deter, manipulate or out-rightly deny their citizens the ability to get unfettered information, or to allow free press to investigate and report in those countries; and

WHEREAS, Department of State and U.S. Government News Media Organizations under the Broadcast Board of Governors such as: The Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio Marti TV, and Middle East Broadcasting Network, are essential news resources to countries whose domestic news sources are oppressed or restricted; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the President and Congress to designate and provide appropriate funding for the Department of State and U.S. Government News Media Organizations under the Broadcast Board of Governors such as: The Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio Marti TV, and the Middle East Broadcasting Network; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports international press freedom and the protection of international journalists who report and investigate news throughout the world.**



**Resolution No. 59: Secure National Borders Against Illegal Drugs****Origin: Nebraska****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The borders that separate the United States, Canada, and Mexico are relatively open; and

WHEREAS, There are rising concerns among U.S. officials regarding the deteriorating security situation which allows significant smuggling of drugs, illegal immigrants, and other contraband across our borders; and

WHEREAS, The violence on the Mexican border has caused a change in smuggling from that area to other parts of our national borders such as Canada and our sea coast; and

WHEREAS, The Mexican government, while attempting to control the problem, is not able to counter the drug cartels due to being out-manned and out-gunned; and

WHEREAS, The United States has the capability to provide assistance to the Mexican Government that would allow it to reestablish control and eliminate the drug cartels; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support the President's and Congress' efforts to provide assistance and aid to the Canadian and Mexican Governments to secure the borders separating the United States, Canada, and Mexico from trafficking illegal drugs across those borders.**

**Resolution No. 60: Taiwan Defense Arms Sales****Origin: Nebraska****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The Republic of China, also known as Taiwan, is a long-time friend having fought with the United States against Japanese Imperialism during World War II and against communism during the post-war period; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of China is a major trading partner and democratic ally of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Taiwan is strategically located and is extremely important to the peace, prosperity, and stability of the Asia-Pacific region; and

WHEREAS, Under the provisions of the Taiwan Relations Act (Public Law 96-8), the United States is committed to provide defense equipment and defense services, in such quantities that the Government of the Republic of China may maintain a sufficient self-defense capability; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports the sales of the latest American weapon systems, including naval vessels, submarines, military aircraft, high-tech electronics, communications equipment and air-defense missile systems to Republic of China of such quality and in such quantities so as to enable the Government of the Republic of China to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports the continued sales of sophisticated U.S. weapon systems, including, but not limited to, F-16 fighter aircraft, anti-submarine equipment and torpedoes, anti-aircraft/anti-missile systems, and electronics and communications equipment to Republic of China; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That the Government of the Republic of China be given preferential pricing for these items but not equal to that given to the U.S. government, to enable the Republic of China to purchase sufficient quantities of these items for their defense needs.**

**Resolution No. 61: Security of Overseas Embassies****Origin: Nebraska****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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.**

**Resolution No. 62: Ratify Disabilities Treaty****Origin: Nebraska****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

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 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 72: Benefits and Burial Rights for Select Surrogate Forces****Origin: Colorado****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The United States government since the creation of the Union has engaged indigenous groups to support combat military operations in both the continental United States and areas outside the continental United States; and

WHEREAS, These surrogate soldiers, such as the Montagnards, Hmong, Philippines Guerrilla Units and others, fighting on behalf of the U.S. Forces, aided in the rescuing of downed air crewman, protecting radar facilities and suppressing supply routes utilized by the enemy, and in so doing saving untold lives, and gave of themselves the utmost sacrifice of life in support of the U.S. operations; and

WHEREAS, When U.S. Forces withdrew from those areas of operation, the majority of time these individuals were forced to flee from their homes, leaving their worldly possessions behind, escaping with their families to refugee camps and were then allowed to received refugee status in the U.S. or lawfully immigrated into this country; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion adopted resolution No. 159 at the 2002 National Convention in Charlotte, NC and resolution No. 92 at the 2005 National Convention in Honolulu, HI urging the federal government to recognize these and similar groups as U.S. veterans having served alongside U.S. Forces in all wars and conflicts since, for the purpose of federal veterans benefits in CFR 38.3.7; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That, The American Legion urge the U.S. Congress to investigate, evaluate and prescribe legislation to provide these special groups who have lawfully obtained U.S. citizenship, due benefits fitting their support of the U.S. military operations; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the U.S. Congress to investigate, evaluate and prescribe legislation to provide these special groups who have lawfully obtained U.S. citizenship, burial rites in national cemeteries.**

**Resolution No. 227: Prevent a Nuclear Armed Iran****Origin: Ohio****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The American Legion views nuclear weapons development and proliferation a critical threat to national security; and

WHEREAS, Although denying the fact the Islamic Republic of Iran has been aggressively pursuing a nuclear weapons development program for the past decade by enriching uranium to the weapons grade level of 20 percent; and

WHEREAS, Iran has agreed to cease its nuclear weapons development program in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions levied on them by the United Nations in June 2010; and

WHEREAS, The United States and its allies stood idle and watched as North Korea, in a similar scenario, deceive the world and develop an atomic bomb; and

WHEREAS, Allowing Iran to develop or acquire a nuclear weapon would destabilize the entire Middle East and pose an eminent threat to Israel; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to resolve not to allow Iran to develop or acquire nuclear weapons; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That the United States of America exercise all options up to and including military action to achieve this endeavor.**

**Resolution No. 53: POW/MIA Policies****Origin: Nebraska****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security****(As amended)**

WHEREAS, American servicemembers and civilians remain missing in action or otherwise unaccounted for from America's past wars and conflicts, and reports indicate that in former enemy areas where Americans could still be alive, information has been deliberately and cruelly withheld; and

WHEREAS, The families of POW/MIAs suffer untold uncertainty due to the lack of an accurate accounting for their missing loved one, often in spite of heroic efforts by U.S. specialists; and

WHEREAS, The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2010 called upon the Secretary of Defense to provide funds, personnel, and resources as the Secretary considers appropriate to significantly increase the capability and capacity of the Department of Defense (DOD), the Armed Forces, and commanders of the combatant commands to account for missing persons so that, beginning with fiscal year 2015, the POW/MIA accounting community has sufficient resources to ensure that at least 200 missing persons are accounted for under the program annually; and

WHEREAS, While the Department of Defense has increased funding and resources to the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) to support the expanded mission as explained in NDAA 2010, the military construction project for a new facility to meet the needs of JPAC has a funding shortfall of \$22.79 million, which will delay the ability to occupy the new building; and

WHEREAS, Advancements in science, forensic technology and foreign government cooperation have helped specific locations of alleged remains of US personnel to be recently identified by the U.S. Government; and

WHEREAS, Promising identification techniques involving radiographic comparison and facial superimposition have dramatically increased the U.S. Government's ability to identify remains of unaccounted for servicemen and civilians for whom DNA matching was not an alternative; and

WHEREAS, Each member of the DOD POW/MIA accounting community, including the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory, the Defense Intelligence Agency POW/MIA specialists, the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office, the Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory, and the service casualty and mortuary offices, plays a vital role in the mission to account for missing and unaccounted for U.S. servicemen and civilians from our nation's past wars and conflicts; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Defense recently directed "complete reorganization" of the DOD POW/MIA accounting community, a consolidation encouraging to family members and veterans, though the end-result will require close scrutiny for viability; and

WHEREAS, The single agency that will be formed as a result of the Defense Secretary's directive for "complete reorganization" will be the agency responsible for policy, administration and operational implementation to achieve the fullest possible accounting for missing U.S. personnel; and

WHEREAS, The POW/MIA accounting effort should not be considered complete until all reasonable actions have been taken to achieve the fullest possible accounting for all U.S. personnel; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion advocates for the fullest possible accounting of missing Americans, in every country, on every continent; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes U.S. Government POW/MIA operations, though currently still inadequate, are achieving substantial progress; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28 2014, That The American Legion remains steadfast in our commitment to the goal of achieving the fullest possible accounting for all**

U.S. military personnel and designated civilian personnel missing and unaccounted for from our nation's wars and conflicts; and, be it further

**RESOLVED**, That The American Legion urges the President and Congress to speak out on every occasion to expedite the return of U.S. personnel still missing and unaccounted for, regardless of location or era of loss; and, be it further

**RESOLVED**, That The American Legion urges the President and Congress to support legislation and policies that will use all reasonable resources to achieve the fullest possible accounting of all missing American servicemembers and designated civilians regardless of location or era of loss; and, be it further

**RESOLVED**, That The American Legion calls upon Congress to provide full funding, personnel, and any other resources for all members of the Department of Defense (DOD) POW/MIA accounting community, and to ensure these funds not be redirected by the DOD for any other purpose; and, be it further

**RESOLVED**, That The American Legion calls upon the Secretary of Defense to quickly fund the shortfall for the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) construction project; and, be it further

**RESOLVED**, That The American Legion calls upon the President and Congress to continue to declassify all POW/MIA information (except that revealing intelligence sources or methods) in a form readily available to the affected families and public review; and, be it further

**RESOLVED**, That The American Legion calls upon Congress to establish a joint standing congressional committee on POW/MIA affairs to ensure continued priority action by the executive branch in addressing the POW/MIA issue; and, be it further

**RESOLVED**, That The American Legion calls upon the President and Congress to initiate or strengthen joint commissions with Russia, the People's Republic of China, and Democratic People's Republic of Korea to increase POW/MIA accounting and recovery efforts; and, be it further

**RESOLVED**, That The American Legion calls upon the President and Congress to take further favorable actions toward the Socialist Republic of Vietnam as Hanoi increases efforts to provide the fullest possible accounting for US personnel still missing in Vietnam or in areas of Laos and Cambodia it controlled during the Vietnam War; and, be it finally

**RESOLVED**, That "fullest possible accounting" is defined as turning over live prisoners, repatriating remains of those killed in action or who died in captivity, or providing convincing evidence when neither is possible.

**Received and Recorded**

**Resolution No. 48 (NE): Taiwan Straits Dialog**

**Resolution No. 174 (MD): Veterans' Mail at Overseas Embassies**

**Resolution No. 207 (WI): Interment Rights for Hmong Veterans**

**Resolution No. 209 (VA): JPAC to Investigate Crash Site of B24J-44-41258**

**Law and Order & Homeland Security**

**George Wehrli, Florida, Chairman**

**Approved**

**Resolution No. 79: Fully Enforce Immigration Laws**

**Origin: North Carolina**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, Each sovereign nation is responsible for 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 means to obtain legal means to enter our nation; and

WHEREAS, These immigration laws are being violated each day by persons entering our nation and endangering our national security; and

WHEREAS, There are existing means 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support the strict enforcement of immigration laws already in existence; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That benefits of any kind should not be granted to those immigrants who have gained access to our nation in an illegal manner.**

**Resolution No. 80: Support for Financial Anti-Terrorism Law Enforcement**

**Origin: North Carolina**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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.**

**Resolution No. 83: Support for the Department of Homeland Security and Coast Guard**

**Origin: North Carolina**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on American soil have made Americans painfully aware of their vulnerability to violence from international terrorism; and

WHEREAS, On September 20, 2001, President Bush announced the establishment of the Office of Homeland Security, a new cabinet position designed to be the single source of authority, at the highest levels, for all homeland defense programs and policies; and

WHEREAS, The Coast Guard was transferred from the Department of Transportation to the Department of Homeland Security; and

WHEREAS, The Coast Guard was able to respond to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, within hours, and its homeland security missions have since significantly increased; and

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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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.**

#### **Resolution No. 84: Illegal Immigration Policy**

**Origin: North Carolina**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, Immigration and Customs Enforcement estimates that there are 11.5 million illegal immigrants who currently reside within the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Homeland Security, Office of Audits stated that each year more than one million aliens attempt to illegally enter the United States without proper documentation or enter legally and violate the provisions of their visa; and

WHEREAS, A need exists for a broad exchange of intelligence and related action between regulatory agencies which govern immigration policy, social services, and the Department of Justice; and

WHEREAS, Aggressively tracking foreign nationals is a deterrent to terrorist activities and failing to effectively utilize the available systems and technology to track illegal aliens threatens the security and future of the U.S.; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to adopt an immigration reform policy which emphasizes border security against those individuals attempting to enter this country illegally and internal tracking of all resident aliens and illegal immigrants; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose legislation that would result in the granting of amnesty and legal residency, in any form or by any name, to illegal immigrants currently in the United States; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That the Department of Homeland Security be provided the monies necessary to ensure both the thorough performance of its responsibilities and the security of the borders of the United States; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose any change to "Title V of the Immigration and Nationality Act" (8 U.S.C. 1531-1537) that would require revealing the source(s) of secret evidence used in the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, Department of Homeland Security, administrative deportation hearings; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the federal government to provide the needed resources to enforcement agencies tasked with curtailing illegal immigration in this country and encourage the Congress of the United States to mandate that the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Student and Exchange Visitor Information System continue and be aggressively administered by the responsible agency of the federal government; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to provide agencies of the federal government with the necessary resources to track the arrival and departure of foreign nationals to the United States; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages a thorough background check and interview for each candidate for a U.S. visa prior to issuing said visa; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That those foreign nationals who perpetrate fraud and/or are visa overstays be arrested by law enforcement and turned over to the Department of Homeland Security for removal/deportation proceedings; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages Congress to pass legislation prohibiting the acceptance of foreign-issued forms of identification deemed untrustworthy by the federal government for application for government-sponsored public services, and that businesses, including financial institutions, be prohibited from accepting foreign-issued documents determined to be unacceptable forms of identification; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages Congress to authorize and fund the securing of the borders and points of entry in the United States by: construction of physical barriers; hiring a sufficient number of U.S. Border Patrol Agents; federalization of National Guard troops to assist border security operations; searching all vessel and 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. 88: Pipeline Construction and Energy Independence**

**Origin: North Carolina**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

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 our 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 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, Despite the January 2014 State Department report which managed to conclude that the proposed pipeline Canada to the Gulf of Mexico and other points won’t significantly increase oil-sands production or worsen climate change, President Obama is still waiting to hear from other federal agencies before deciding to issue the necessary presidential permit in lieu of an approved veto-proof bill from Congress; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion call upon Congress and the President to expedite the approval and construction of a pipeline from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico and other points as a step toward greater U.S. energy independence along with allowing the development of all viable energy resources; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion call upon Congress and the President to phase out all subsidies and tax loop-holes in connection with this transcontinental energy project; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That all duplicative and nonessential regulations in connection with this transcontinental energy project be revoked.**

**Resolution No. 89: Protection, Preservation and Retention of Federal and Military Monuments in the United States**

**Origin: North Carolina**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, At different times through history there have been attempts by either the Filipino government or other groups to petition the United States Government for the return of the church bells taken by American military forces from the belfry of the church in Balangiga, Samar, Philippines; and

WHEREAS, Any return of a Federal or military monument by the United States of America would set a negative and dangerous precedent on any and all federal or military monuments; and

WHEREAS, Military monuments honor those servicemen and servicewomen whose sacrifice for the United States of America has preserved the nation and recognizes those who have sacrificed their lives in service to their country; and

WHEREAS, Returning any military monument should never be considered as contributing to the enhancement or reaffirmation of any friendly relationship with foreign countries; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 90: Reclassify Fort Hood Shooting**

**Origin: North Carolina**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, On November 5, 2009, Nidal 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 one 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 email 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, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014 requires, not later than six months after the date of the enactment, that the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report containing the results of a review of this matter and report findings of the review and any recommendations the Secretary considers appropriate regarding modifying the criteria for eligibility for the Purple Heart; and

WHEREAS, This legislation can ensure 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 92: Second Amendment**

**Origin: North Carolina**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States guarantees each law-abiding American citizen the right to keep and bear arms of his or her choice; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated that over 60 million individuals, representing over half of the households in America, have chosen to exercise that right by owning one or more firearms; and

WHEREAS, Gun bans, registration, and licensing of firearms and their owners have had little or no effect in such urban areas such as New York City, California and Washington D.C.

and have 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion reaffirms its recognition that the Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States guarantees each law-abiding American citizen the right to keep and bear arms; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That the membership of The American Legion urges our nation's lawmakers to recognize, as part of their oaths of office, that the Second Amendment guarantees law-abiding citizens the right to keep and bear the arms of their choice, as do the millions of American veterans who have fought, and continue to fight, to preserve those rights, hereby advise the Congress of the United States and the Executive Department to cease and desist any and all efforts to restrict these rights by any legislation or order.**

### **Resolution No. 93: Commercial Shipbuilding for Defense**

**Origin: North Carolina**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The United States emerged as the world's foremost economic power and trading nation after the Cold War, and America's policymakers have neglected to use these advantages to sustain the nation's naval and maritime power; and

WHEREAS, According to the U.S. Maritime Administration the number of merchant vessels sailing internationally flying the U.S. Flag has been reduced from 1,072 to 191 over the last six decades; and

WHEREAS, In 1955, the U.S. Flag fleet represented almost 25% of the world's overall tonnage while the U.S. share today is approaching a mere 2% of total world tonnage; and

WHEREAS, The 600-ship navy envisioned by President Ronald Reagan would have kept the ship yards busy; and

WHEREAS, U.S. Navy active ship levels have been reduced from 559 ships in 1975 to approximately 291 today, including 11 aircraft carriers, 22 cruisers, 60 destroyers, 26 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, and 14 mine countermeasures ships; and

WHEREAS, According to the Navy News Service, only approximately 12 Navy ships are currently under construction and only about 25 ships are in the procurement process; and

WHEREAS, The Navy FY15 budget is a \$15 billion decrease from the level forecast in last year's budget submission and is a \$38 billion reduction over the Future Year Defense Plan from the FY14 Presidential Budget; and

WHEREAS, Although, the Defense Department's \$496 billion budget supports a Navy of 291 ships rising to a total 309 by fiscal year 2019, the Navy's 2015 budget request reduced purchase orders of littoral combat ships from 52 to 32; 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 are 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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.**

**Resolution No. 96: Support for U.S. Blood Banks**

**Origin: North Carolina**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The public needs to be constantly reminded that the blood banks of the United States need to be supported by The American Legion and the public; and

WHEREAS, Emergencies continue to come up where blood is needed without warning; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 162: Amend the "Temporary Protection Status" Portion of the Immigration Act of 1990**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

**(Consolidated with Resolution No. 203 (WI))**

WHEREAS, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) is a classification granted to eligible nationals of designated countries who are temporarily present in the United States when natural disaster or political turmoil in their country interferes with their plans to return; and

WHEREAS, A person from a designated country who is in the United States is eligible to be granted TPS only by establishing that the designated country was the applicant's last place of habitual residence; and

WHEREAS, TPS beneficiaries are granted work authorization during the TPS period and for any extensions of the designation; and

WHEREAS, TPS was created by the Immigration Act of 1990; and

WHEREAS, Anyone in the United States from the designated country is eligible for TPS, whether they entered the country in violation of our immigration law in order to find work or for other reasons, or violated the law by staying in the country and taking a job illegally, or were a bona fide visitor; and

WHEREAS, Currently six countries are designated as TPS; and

WHEREAS, Conferring TPS status on persons illegally in the United States rewards them with a work permit that legitimizes their illegal activity; and

WHEREAS, Any person who can establish that they fear persecution if forced to return to their country of origin is eligible for asylum in the United States; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to amend the Temporary Protected Status section of the Immigration Act of 1990 to limit its coverage to foreign visitors legally in the United States.**

**Resolution No. 173: Support for the Jones Maritime Act and Related Cabotage Laws**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

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 2010, the privately owned ocean-going U.S.-flag fleet consisted of only 192 active ships, which included 97 ships in domestic trade and only 95 U.S.-Flag ships that operated 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 annually; and

WHEREAS, On October 8, 1996, the President signed the Maritime Security Act of 1996 establishing the Maritime Security Program (MSP) for Fiscal Years (FY) 1996 through 2005 and on November 24, 2003, the President signed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004, which contained the Maritime Security Act of 2003 (MSA 2003) reauthorizing the MSP for FY 2006 through FY 2015; and

WHEREAS, The MSA 2003 requires that the Secretary of Transportation, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, to establish a fleet of active, commercially viable, militarily useful, privately-owned vessels to meet national defense and other security requirements; and

WHEREAS, MSA 2003 authorized \$156 million annually for FYs 2006, 2007, and 2008; \$174 million annually for FYs 2009, 2010, and 2011; and \$186 million annually for FYs 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 to support the operation of 60 U.S.-flag vessels in the foreign commerce of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Participating operators are required to make their ships and commercial transportation resources available upon request by the Secretary of Defense during times of war or national emergency; and

WHEREAS, The MSP maintains a modern U.S.-flag fleet providing military access to vessels and vessel capacity, as well as a total global, intermodal transportation network and this network includes not only vessels, but logistics management services, infrastructure, terminals facilities and U.S. citizen-merchant mariners to crew the government owned/controlled and commercial fleets; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 189: Support for Legislation Prohibiting Hate Speech at Military Funerals**  
**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, Since its creation, the United States has honored its war dead by a sacred tradition of military funerals, and continues to treat its war dead with sanctity, dignity and honor, and recognizes the ultimate sacrifice made to protect, defend, and preserve the freedoms and way of life in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Certain groups oppose various policies of the United States, particularly the armed conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and protest those policies at the time and location of military funerals of servicemembers who were killed in combat or who died from battle wounds; and

WHEREAS, Such protests have included chants against the President, the United States and its armed forces; laced with profanity, insults to the deceased servicemember, and his or her family, desecration of the Flag of the United States, and other sacred symbols of our country; and

WHEREAS, Such protests at military funerals have led to confrontations between protestors and family or community members including members of veterans organizations who vociferously oppose the positions advanced by the said protestors, and who support and honor the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and others serving in the armed forces; and

WHEREAS, These protests are targeted at the deceased servicemember and 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 servicemembers who have died in armed conflict and their families; and

WHEREAS, Justice Samuel Alito has stated, "... it is clear that the First Amendment does not entirely preclude liability for the intentional infliction of emotional distress by means of speech" and "in order to have a society in which public issues can be openly and vigorously debated, it is not necessary to allow the brutalization of innocent victims" in addition to "our profound commitment to free and open debate is not a license for...vicious verbal assault"; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion finds the targeted protest of servicemember funerals to be a vile and despicable act and not worthy of American citizens who enjoy the freedoms purchased by 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 servicemember funerals as hate speech prohibited by law; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That Congress define the official mourning period for servicemembers killed in combat to be at least one week; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That Congress prohibit the planning for, or conduct of, protests aimed at a specific member of the military or the related family within the one mile radius of activity pertaining to funeral services, procession, and internment for a period of one day before and one day after the official mourning period.**

**Resolution No. 272: Buy American****Origin: Iowa****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime service veterans which pledges to foster and perpetuate one hundred percent Americanism; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense contracts with large corporations and small businesses for the construction and repair of military hardware to include ground systems, armaments, aircraft and other systems for all of our military branches; and

WHEREAS, These government contractors may rely on subcontractors for the production and overhaul of individual components and subsystems to be used in these equipment items; and

WHEREAS, The government contractor manufacturing a system or systems may choose to employ the services of subcontractors located in foreign countries rather than those subcontractors which have comparable equipment and comparable costs in this country; and

WHEREAS, The choices made by the government contractor not only can affect the security of our nation as well as the employment of many Americans and veterans who may work at these subcontractors at both the originating and overhaul facilities located in the United States; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 273: Support Domestic Energy Production****Origin: Iowa****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The United States' continued reliance on foreign sources of energy places our national security and economic well-being as a nation at risk during times of crisis; and

WHEREAS, The United States continues to import approximately 60 percent or more of its crude oil; and

WHEREAS, The countries of Algeria, Angola, Ecuador, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela are bound by their membership in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC); and

WHEREAS, The United States imports 40 percent of its oil from OPEC-member countries; and

WHEREAS, The war on terrorism and continuing conflict in the Middle East has brought into sharp focus the heavy reliance of the United States on foreign oil which necessitates a re-evaluation of our current and long-range energy policies; and

WHEREAS, Congress has denied petroleum exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Region and the Administration has denied the construction of the northern section of the Keystone Pipeline XL even though such efforts to expand our domestic supply could reduce our reliance on foreign sources of energy; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 278: Rare Earth Elements****Origin: Iowa****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, Rare earth elements are a collection of 17 elements that are critical to civilian and military high technology applications: Scandium; Yttrium; Lanthanum; Cerium; Praseodymium; Neodymium; Promethium; Samarium; Europium; Gadolinium; Terbium; Dysprosium; Holmium; Erbium; Thulium; Ytterbium; and Lutetium; and

WHEREAS, Rare earth elements are distributed globally, with 36 percent of known reserves located in China, and 13 percent located in the United States; and

WHEREAS, China now produces 97 percent of the world's rare earth elements, key components in a large assortment of advanced technologies, and increasing global demand along with Chinese government reductions in export quotas over the past six years have led to international concerns about future supply shortages; and

WHEREAS, Some U.S. weapons and equipment that contain rare-earth elements are: Predator unmanned aerial vehicles, Tomahawk cruise missiles, Zumwalt-class destroyers, night vision goggles, smart bombs, and sonar transducers as well as other sophisticated military applications including guidance and control systems; advanced optics technologies; radar and radiation detection equipment; and advanced communications; and

WHEREAS, China may use its monopoly over rare earths to leverage its influence on U.S. foreign policy, and numerous analysts have expressed concerns that Chinese quota reductions will increase U.S. element dependence; and

WHEREAS, National Defense Authorization Act for FY2011, Congress had mandated that the Secretary of Defense conduct an assessment of rare earth supply chain issues and develop a plan to address any vulnerabilities; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DOD) was required to assess which rare earths met the following criteria: (1) the rare earth material was critical to the production, sustainment, or operation of significant U.S. military equipment; and (2) the rare earth material was subject to interruption of supply, based on actions or events outside the control of the U.S. government; and

WHEREAS, The DOD report was issued in March 2012; and

WHEREAS, Given that DOD's assessment of future supply and demand was based on previous estimates using 2010 data, there could be new concern for a possible rare earth material supply shortage or vulnerability that could affect national security; and

WHEREAS, Dependence on foreign sources alone for rare earths may pose a national security threat; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to continue to require the Department of Defense to provide regular assessments of the needs of the U.S. rare earth supply-chain for defense and require the Defense Secretary to have a long-term rare-earth supply plan in the interest of national defense.**

**Resolution No. 77: Support Research and Funding for Alternative Energy Resources****Origin: North Carolina****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security****(As amended)**

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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge**



Congress to fund research and development of all alternative sources of energy including the utilization of coal; crude oil; oil shale; natural gas; wind; and solar energy 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.

### Rejected

**Resolution No. 187 (MD): Strategy to Address Social, Economic and Population Problems Related to Illegal Immigration**

**Resolution No. 226 (OH): Support Research & Funding for Alternative Energy Resources**

### **Military Benefits & Quality of Life Melvin Smullen, Maryland, Chairman**

**Resolution No. 163: Include Chiropractic Care and Services in Tricare Coverage Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, Many retired veterans have TRICARE for Life as their supplemental health care program; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE is not an insurance plan, but rather a health care entitlement earned by our nation's military members for their service to this country; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE does offer its Chiropractic Health Care Program to active duty servicemembers including activated Guard/Reserve members only when approved by the servicemember's primary care manager; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE currently does not provide any chiropractic care to active-duty family members, military retirees, former spouses or survivors; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, **By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress include chiropractic care for all those enrolled in the TRICARE health system.**

**Resolution No. 164: Codify Burial Eligibility for Arlington National Cemetery**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, Arlington National Cemetery is our nation's most sacred shrine representing an embodiment of the sacrifices that were made to uphold our country's ideals and freedoms; and

WHEREAS, More than 400,000 veterans and their dependents are buried here on 612 acres of land; and

WHEREAS, Arlington is one of more than 100 National Cemeteries but, unlike the others, Arlington Cemetery is administered by the Department of the Army; and

WHEREAS, In spite of restrictive regulations (Title 32, CFR), there have been numerous waivers in past years, falsification of military records to gain interment at Arlington and even an unprecedented presidential requested waiver and reservation; and

WHEREAS, Eligibility criteria for burials at Arlington need to be codified in order to assure compliance and fairness and to assure that the remaining space at Arlington is judiciously used; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, **By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges Congress to codify eligibility criteria for burial at Arlington National Cemetery and that**

such burial be restricted to servicemembers who die on active-duty; to our most decorated veterans to include recipients of the Purple Heart; former members of the armed forces separated from the military with a physical disability of 30 percent or more before October 1, 1949; and to veterans who spent full careers in uniform, and to their spouses and eligible children; to former prisoners of war; and for the President or former Presidents as Commanders in Chief of the Armed Forces; and, be it further

**RESOLVED**, That The American Legion believes there should be no waivers for unqualified persons except under unique and compelling circumstances that comport with codified non-partisan waiver procedures as established by Congress; and, be it finally

**RESOLVED**, That The American Legion believes eligibility for interment of cremated remains of honorably discharged veterans in the Columbarium at Arlington should also be codified.

**Resolution No. 165: Support for Concurrent Receipt of Military Retirement Pay and VA Disability Compensation**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security  
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 185 (MD))**

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, Sections 3.750 states a veterans who is entitled to military retired pay and disability compensation for a service-connected disability rated 50 percent or more, or a combination of service-connected disabilities rated 50 percent or more, under the schedule for rating disabilities is entitled to receive both payments; and

WHEREAS, Beginning in 2014, retired servicemembers eligible for Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP) will no longer have to waive any portion of their military retirement in order to receive Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation; and

WHEREAS: The CRDP program, enacted in 2004, allowed military retirees with a VA disability rating of 50% or higher to receive both military retired pay and VA disability compensation at the same time; and

WHEREAS, This has been commonly referred to as the “concurrent receipt” of disability pay and retired pay; and

WHEREAS, Before creation of the CRDP, military retirees were forbidden by law to receive both military retirement benefits and VA disability compensation; and

WHEREAS, Parties seeking disability benefits were required to waive an equivalent portion of their military retired pay; and

WHEREAS, Retirees with a VA disability rating lower than 50 percent, however, are still not eligible for concurrent receipt; and

WHEREAS, Disabled retirees with disability ratings less than 50 percent 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 this group of disabled military retirees essentially fund their own disability compensation; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense retirement system and the VA disability program compensate for different characteristics of military service; rewarding longevity in the former case and remunerating pain and suffering in the latter; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion expresses its gratitude to Congress for the authorization of both Combat-Related Special Compensation and partial concurrent receipt but urges Congress to authorize and fund full concurrent receipt for all disabled military retirees with a service connection.

**Resolution No. 167: Earned Military Benefits****Origin: Maryland****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, Without highly qualified, dedicated men and women, even the most sophisticated weaponry will not provide the deterrent force necessary for this nation to remain at peace; and

WHEREAS, The profession of arms cannot be compared to any civilian occupations because of the required amount of sacrifice or necessary individual dedication; and

WHEREAS, An all-volunteer military requires benefits commensurate with sacrifices made by military personnel to entice enlistment and re-enlistments; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DoD) has on several occasions conducted studies to change, modify, and update military retirement, healthcare, or other earned benefits yet recommendations from those studies have been repeatedly found to be unsatisfactory; and

WHEREAS, Regardless of identified negative impacts to servicemembers and retirees, DoD continues to attempt to conduct a "bait and switch"; changing benefits for military service with no recourse for currently serving individuals; and

WHEREAS, A change in earned retirement benefits, known as REDUX, was instituted in 1986 but was changed in 2000 because of negative impact on recruiting and retention; and

WHEREAS, The Murray-Ryan Bill and the Bipartisan Budget Act 2013 were passed with the devastating cut to Military COLA included, though no input was received from the Department of Defense or the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Board; and

WHEREAS, On February 12, 2014, under tremendous pressure from the military community, Congress overwhelmingly voted 95-3 to repeal the COLA cut for all military members who joined prior to January 1, 2014 and President Obama signed the repeal into law; 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion encourage Congress to ensure that any benefit in force at the time of initial enlistment cannot be reduced in value, and that benefit is to remain in force throughout the entire military career and retirement of a servicemember.**

**Resolution No. 168: Flexible Savings Accounts****Origin: Maryland****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, Medical savings accounts, also known as "flexible savings accounts," are recognized by Title 37 of the United States Code for civilian employees and active duty members of the Department of Defense; and

WHEREAS, Medical savings accounts are pretax dollar savings utilized by families specifically for health care, dental care, and child care expenses; and

WHEREAS, Reserve Component members not under TRICARE historically have had significant mobilization issues due to deferred preventive health care due to cost for such things as dental checkups, which reduced the mobilization readiness of both servicemembers and their units; and

WHEREAS, Medical savings accounts would allow Reserve Component members to afford regular health care, thus improve their mobilization health readiness, and thereby also improve the readiness of the Reserve Components; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion supports benefits that support Reserve Component members, their military families and the nation; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes the Department of Defense, by not allowing medical savings accounts for the Reserve Components equal to the active duty components, is

discriminating against those members of the Armed Services Reserve Component who, although they serve equally in the defense of this nation, are not allowed access to a medical savings account; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports the participation in pretax medical savings accounts for both active duty and Reserve Component servicemembers and military families; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That Congress be urged to pass legislation that enables participation in pretax medical savings accounts.**

**Resolution No. 170: Grant Access to all U. S. Military Facilities to Military Retirees and Their Dependents**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, A portion of the earned benefits of military retirees is considered to be the use of military facilities, such as post and base exchanges, commissaries, health care, 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 172: Handling of Military Remains**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, In December 2011, it was revealed that the Dover Air Force Base Mortuary had dumped the incinerated partial remains of at least 274 American troops in a Virginia landfill before halting this secretive practice three years ago; and

WHEREAS, The landfill dumping was apparently concealed from families who had reportedly authorized the military to dispose of the remains in a dignified and respectful manner; and

WHEREAS, When queried, the Department of the Air Force reported that the military wanted to spare families of the additional anguish and "to open up the wound would be cruel," and the Air Force also indicated they would confirm for family members whether their loved one's partial remains had been placed in the landfill if they came forward and requested that information; and

WHEREAS, In January 2014, Stars and Stripes obtained internal communications from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) documenting allegations that JPAC's Central Identification Laboratory personnel were involved in the desecration and mishandling of remains; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 175: Military Commissaries**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

**(Consolidated with Resolution No. 276 (IA))**

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense is developing plans to cut \$1 billion from the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) budget over the next three years; and

WHEREAS, General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs stated that the Joint Staff did not ask DeCA to come up with a plan to close U.S. commissaries; and

WHEREAS, Defense officials have asked DeCA for cost-saving options including how the system would operate with reduced or no taxpayer subsidies; and

WHEREAS, DeCA currently operates nearly 250 stores worldwide and received \$1.5 billion in subsidies in 2013; and

WHEREAS, These potential cuts aimed reducing discounts or calling for store closures are a direct result of the military budget reduction plan along with the sequestration-based cuts as mandated in the Budget Control Act of 2011; and

WHEREAS, By using commissaries, financially challenged military families can save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared with commercial supermarkets; and

WHEREAS, In addition to improving the quality of life for the troops and their families, commissary privileges help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve our country; and

WHEREAS, Without commissary savings, pay compensation for active duty and military retirees would be less competitive with the civilian sector; and

WHEREAS, Retired as well as drilling Reservists and National Guardsmen are now authorized to use the commissaries and their access to the DeCA should not be restricted; and

WHEREAS, 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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 reduce discounts or to dismantle or downsize the Defense Commissary Agency.**

**Resolution No. 176: Department of Defense Military Retirement System**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, Without highly qualified, dedicated men and women, even the most sophisticated weaponry will not provide the deterrent force necessary for this nation to remain at peace; and

WHEREAS, Preserving an attractive retirement system for the active and reserve components is critical to maintaining an effective all-volunteer force; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has on several occasions conducted studies to change, modify, and update the military retirement system; and

WHEREAS, Recommendations from those studies have been repeatedly found to be unsatisfactory; and

WHEREAS, The July, 2011 Defense Business Board study recommended significant changes in the current military retirement system; and

WHEREAS, Many of these same recommendations were made by the 1978 Presidential Commission on Military Compensation; and

WHEREAS, The 1978 report from the Congressional Budget Office addresses the significant risk to maintaining a viable volunteer force if dramatic changes to the current system are made; and

WHEREAS, In the attempt to slow the growth in military personnel costs, The Department of Defense 2013 Budget Request calls for the creation of an independent commission to study the military retirement system; and

WHEREAS, The Murray-Ryan Bill and the Bipartisan Budget Act 2013 were passed with the devastating cut to Military COLA included, though no input was received from the Department of Defense or the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Board; and

WHEREAS, On February 12, 2014, under tremendous pressure from the military community, Congress overwhelmingly voted 95-3 to repeal the COLA cut for all military members who joined prior to January 1, 2014 and President Obama signed the repeal into law; and

WHEREAS, Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Board continues review the military compensation and retirement programs in preparation of their recommendations for financial sustainability to the President and Congress due February of 2015; 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion oppose any changes to the current military retirement system which reduces the incentive for enlistment or re-enlistment.**

### **Resolution No. 177: Support for the Reformation of the Military Voting System**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The 1986 Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (Public Law 99-410) streamlined the procedures for overseas absentee voting; authorized a back-up write-in overseas ballot if the voter did not receive one requested from the state; Postal Service was to ensure that balloting materials were “carried expeditiously and free of postage;” and the overall intent was to ensure “maximum access to the polls” by both uniformed and civilian overseas voters; and

WHEREAS, The 2000 general election demonstrated numerous problems concerning uniformed and overseas citizens absentee balloting procedures exist not only in Florida, but nationally as well; and

WHEREAS, Although a presidential election is held on the same date across the United States, it is composed of 50 separate state elections; and the Constitution of the United States grants the responsibility for the conduct of elections to the states; and

WHEREAS, Many states have difficulty printing and mailing ballots to overseas military voters in a timely manner, thus, posing a challenge for military members and their family members to vote and return ballots within deadlines; and other states will not accept ballots received 30 days before general elections making it difficult, particularly, for military personnel deployed overseas; and

WHEREAS, Absentee ballots from forward deployed military members entitled to free postage in locales like the Iraq, Afghanistan and Bosnia often are not postmarked at mailing but are postmarked en route resulting in late postmarking in CONUS; and

WHEREAS, Military voters should be protected from disenfranchisement based on technicalities that are beyond their control such as postmark discrepancies, missing notarized signatures, and confusion on residency requirements; and

WHEREAS, Some military units compound military absentee voting problems because voting assistance in the military is often an additional duty relegated to the most junior officers and special vigilance is often not given to handling election mail; and

WHEREAS, A worldwide Internet voting pilot program was recently tested by a Department of Defense contractor using digital signatures and ballot encryption, however, it was rejected for security reasons; and

WHEREAS, Many states now allow the fax transmission of absentee voting materials; and

WHEREAS, Despite progress made after more than a decade by the Department of Defense cooperatively working with the states, on average, some 30 percent of all military absentee ballots are still not counted in federal elections; and

WHEREAS, National defense is uniquely a constitutional mandate that gives the federal government the authority and responsibility to ensure military personnel and their families are not disenfranchised by the circumstances of their service and, thereby, necessitating federal legislation as the states have not resolved the problem for nearly 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 in 2010 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](http://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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 179: Oppose TRICARE Fee Increases**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes the debt owed to the entire military retirement community for their sacrifices and hardships endured in honorable military service to this nation; and

WHEREAS, Administration and defense leaders are seeking to impose very large health care fee increases on military retirees and their families; and

WHEREAS, The proposed fee increases are inappropriate and out of line with career servicemembers' 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, The fiscal 2014 budget proposed fees for future enrollees in TRICARE for Life as well as fee increases or new fees for other TRICARE programs based on retirement pay; and

WHEREAS, The Pentagon's 2015 budget is likely to contain instituting enrollment fees for TRICARE for Life; 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 180: Department of Defense Personnel Policy**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime veterans created by an act of the United States Congress in 1919; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense establishes fitness for duty criteria and standards of conduct consistent with the Uniform Code of Military Justice; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense's current standards and directives have produced one of the most dominant military forces in history; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 181: Correction of Military Records**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 provided for the recognition of representatives of The American Legion, and other organizations, to serve as counsel before the discharge and retirement boards of the Armed Forces, and this recognition was extended to cover



the Boards for Correction of Military Records (BCMRs) when they were created under the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion was actively involved in the legislative process that established the Correction Boards under section 1552 of title 10, United States Code (USC); and

WHEREAS, Although under provision of title 10, USC, 1552, a three year statute of limitations was created which begins as of the date of discovery of an error or injustice on the military records of a former service member, the boards are also authorized, under statute, to excuse filings beyond the three year period if it is in the interest of justice to do so; and

WHEREAS, For many years, the boards routinely waived the three year statute of limitation so as to provide veterans the opportunity to correct any error or injustice in their records; and

WHEREAS, In the past, the BCMRs have considered that the effective date of commencement of the three year limit was effective the date of the final separation from service; and

WHEREAS, Congress is investigating the fairness and independence of the BCMRs and the effective date for the commencement of the correction of records by active servicemembers; 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 182: Support for Military Quality of Life Standards**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always supported quality of life features for members of the Armed Forces, their dependents, and military retirees, and survivors as people are the foundation of our Nation's fighting forces; and

WHEREAS, Without highly qualified, dedicated men and women, even the most sophisticated weaponry will not provide the deterrent force necessary for this nation to remain at peace; and

WHEREAS, Military compensation is only one factor in the quality of life equation as to whether a good service members and their families remain in military service: Other major factors include fair treatment, career stability, regular promotions, adequate quarters, adequate health care, commissaries, and day care facilities, all of which ease the numerous sacrifices that are demanded of servicemembers; and

WHEREAS, Our military retirees and their dependents and survivors are deserving and rightfully entitled to adequate health care treatment, concurrent receipt, and regular cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to military retirement pay and survivor benefit plans; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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 servicemembers within 90 days of separation from service; full funding concurrent receipt of military retirement pay, and VA disability compensation as well as Special Compensation pays for disabled military retirees; that the Survivor Benefit Plan/Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (SBP/DIC) offset be eliminated; TRICARE for Life and the TRICARE Senior Pharmacy program for Medicare-eligible military retirees, their dependents and military survivors, should be adequately funded; and regular cost-of-living adjustments to military retirement and increased death gratuity payments, and combat zone tax exclusions for service in South Korea; that Congress to extend and improve additional quality of life benefits, allowances and privileges to the National Guard and Reserves involved in homeland security and other missions so as to more closely approximate those of the active force; military retirement pay and TRICARE health care for members of the Reserve Components should be authorized before age 60; tax credits to private businesses that pay the difference between military and civilian salaries to mobilized reserve component service members and restore travel exemptions for Reserve and Guard members for expenses associated with attending drills; military health care should also be provided to members of the Reserve Components and their dependents, who become injured while on active duty status regardless of the number of days served on active duty, to the same degree as active duty members under the same circumstances; and whenever a Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) is conducted, certain base facilities such as base medical facilities, commissaries, exchanges and other facilities be preserved for use by active duty and Reservist personnel and military retired veterans and their families.

**Resolution No. 184: Reference Veterans Service Organizations at Discharge**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion are veterans of the United States Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, Legionnaires would like to share the veterans services available to newly discharged and retired servicemembers; 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support legislation to insert a clause into the briefing of transitioning servicemen and women that makes specific reference to veterans service organizations, such as The American Legion, in their civilian communities.**

**Resolution No. 188: Support Armed Services Retirement Homes****Origin: Maryland****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH), formally known as United States Soldiers' and Airmen's Home (USSAH) and the United States Naval Home (USNH), is a pair of continuing care facilities which was 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, Persons are eligible to become residents of AFRH who served as members of the Armed Forces, at least one-half of whose service was not active commissioned service (other than as a warrant officer or limited-duty officer), are eligible to become residents of the Retirement Home: are 60 years of age or over; and were discharged or released from service in the Armed Forces under honorable conditions after 20 or more years of active service; persons who are determined under rules prescribed by the chief operating officer to be incapable of earning a livelihood because of a service-connected disability incurred in the line of duty in the Armed Forces; served in a war theater during a time of war declared by Congress or were eligible for hostile fire special pay were discharged or released from service in the Armed Forces under honorable conditions; and are determined under rules prescribed by the chief operating officer to be incapable of earning a livelihood because of injuries, disease, or disability; served in a women's component of the Armed Forces before June 12, 1948; and are determined under rules prescribed by the chief operating officer to be eligible for admission because of compelling personal circumstances; and

WHEREAS, A person who has been convicted of a felony or is not free of drug, alcohol, or psychiatric problems shall be ineligible to become a resident of the Retirement Home; and

WHEREAS, Pursuant to 24 U.S. Code and 37 U.S. Code, monthly pay deductions of \$1.00 from every enlisted member, warrant officer, and limited-duty officer provide a substantial stream of revenue, among other sources of support, fund the AFRH; and

WHEREAS, The extensive downsizing of the Armed Forces due to the Budget Control Act of 2011 and associated sequestration is subsequently resulting in the reduction in the number of military personnel; and

WHEREAS, The current and upcoming reductions in end-strength evidently will reduce revenue and, coupled with rising nursing home care costs are a cause for concern which would potentially require both locations of the AFRH (Gulfport, Mississippi and Washington, D.C.) to close their doors; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to continue support and fund those measures, to include annual appropriations, which will provide for the long-term solvency and viability of the Armed Forces Retirement Home.**

**Resolution No. 190: Support for Pain Management Research, Treatments and Therapies at DOD, VA and NIH****Origin: Maryland****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The characteristics of modern warfare, including the global war on terrorism, exposes members of the uniformed services to many adverse and dangerous environmental diseases and living conditions; and

WHEREAS, War zone conditions, replete with noxious gases released from explosive devices among other potentially harmful environmental exposures in such theaters as the Middle East and Southwest Asia, as well as in other areas of the world in which servicemembers 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 191: Support for Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The American Legion has supported the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU), since its establishment in 1972 as the nation's federal academic health center dedicated to providing uniquely educated and trained uniformed officers for the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, and Public Health Service; and

WHEREAS, The university's nationally ranked military and civilian faculty conduct cutting edge research in the biomedical sciences and in areas specific to the Department of Defense (DOD) health care mission such as combat casualty care, infectious diseases, and radiation biology; and

WHEREAS, The university specializes in military and public health medicine, focusing on keeping people healthy, disease prevention, and diagnosis and treatment, and USU faculty offer significant expertise in tropical medicine and hygiene, parasitology, epidemiologic methods, and preventive medicine; and

WHEREAS, The 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 Military Health System (MHS); and

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, USU has developed similar training for civilian first responders, medical professionals and emergency planners; and

WHEREAS, 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 thousands of uniformed physician officers who represent approximately one-quarter of the total physicians on active duty in the Armed Forces; USU alumni have been described as the backbone of the MHS, and in addition, the USU Graduate School of Nursing has conferred Masters of Science in Nursing degrees to uniformed, critically required advanced practice nurses during the current nationwide nursing shortage; and, the university has conferred master and

doctoral degrees through its Graduate Education Programs in essential areas requested by the MHS; and

WHEREAS, The establishment of the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) expands the role of USU; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to: continue its demonstrated commitment to the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (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 chemical, radiological and biological, nuclear, and high yield explosive (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 Walter Reed National Military Medical Center with USU as the core academic health center.**

**Resolution No. 230: Prescription Drugs and Military Suicides**

**Origin: Ohio**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The suicide rate for service personnel in all branches of the United States military is at an unprecedented level; and

WHEREAS, More service personnel are lost to suicide than to enemy action; and

WHEREAS, Psychotropic drugs are now prescribed to our service personnel at unprecedented levels; and

WHEREAS, The side effects of some of these drugs are suicidal tendencies; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion request The Department of Defense to re-evaluate providing these drugs to active duty service personnel; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion undertake a study of the effects of these prescription drugs on active duty service personnel.**

**Received and Recorded**

**Resolution No. 198 (MD): Eliminate Costs of Shipping Packages to Overseas Military Personnel Via the United States Postal Service**

**National Guard and Reserve Forces  
William Goede, Minnesota, Chairman**

**Approved**

**Resolution No. 76: Position on the Operational Reserve**

**Origin: North Carolina**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, Historically, America has in times of relative peace looked for an immediate economic "peace dividend"; and

WHEREAS, This fervent call for cost savings has repeatedly placed the national security of the nation at risk; and

WHEREAS, The nation is currently undergoing severe economic times; and

WHEREAS, Once again the Department of Defense (DOD), in order to meet budget constraints has been required to reduce active duty end strength; and

WHEREAS, A reduction in active duty end strength will require a continued and even increased dependence on the reserve components in the form of an “Operational Reserve” to meet mission requirements; and

WHEREAS, The 2012 Department of Defense base budget request does not identify missions nor budget line items for an operational reserve; and

WHEREAS, The 2013 Department of Defense Budget Request states, “the reserve component (RC) must continue to serve in an operational capacity as well as in a strategic capacity...Preventing and deterring conflict will likely necessitate the continued use of RC elements to protect and serve the Total Force”; and

WHEREAS, The Fiscal Year 2014 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 servicemembers 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion shall urge Congress to reform the laws and policies governing the reserve components to provide them programmable sustainability as an operational force; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That the Department of Defense be directed to, in compliance with those laws and policies, establish missions and funding supporting taskings consistent with the National Defense Authorization Act, the Quadrennial Defense Review, the National Security Strategy, and the National Military Strategy, which directly impact national security and support the readiness of and the rotational nature of the operational reserve.**

#### **Resolution No. 82: Guard and Reserve Space-A Travel**

**Origin: North Carolina**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The United States Department of Defense (DoD) in DoD Regulation 4515.13-R has established a program of travel known as space-available travel—also known as “Space-A”—to allow authorized passengers to occupy DoD aircraft seats that are surplus after all required passengers have been accommodated; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of this privilege was to provide uniformed servicemembers 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; and

WHEREAS, So called, “gray area” retirees (retirement eligible members of the Guard and Reserve who are under 60 years old) are excluded from traveling outside the continental United States (OCONUS) on Space-A; and

WHEREAS, Both the Guard and Reserve have transitioned from a Strategic Reserve into an Operational Force to meet the exigencies of an all-volunteer force in an era of persistent conflict in which all soldiers, active-duty and reserve-component alike, are expected to regularly deploy; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges Congress to authorize the Department of Defense 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.**

**Resolution No. 87: Support for the Non-Federal Roles of the National Guard**

**Origin: North Carolina**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, Members of the National Guard swear dual allegiance to support and defend the United States as well as the individual states in which they serve; and

WHEREAS, National Guard units perform invaluable non-federal roles such as quelling domestic civil disturbances, providing relief assistance in man-made or natural disasters, as well as civil defense and drug interdiction functions, and other vital missions as determined by state authorities; and

WHEREAS, National Guard units are often the first relief or rescue forces to provide immediate on-scene response in the event of such emergencies; and

WHEREAS, Past large scale natural and man-made disasters could be repeated across the country requiring the immediate intervention of military units to supplement and assist state and local authorities and our citizenry; and

WHEREAS, Numerous overseas missions are expected to continue; and

WHEREAS, The participation of the National Guard in these traditional non-federal roles may be in danger of being severely limited or even eliminated in some cases; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 91: Reserves and National Guard Retirement Benefit Fairness**

**Origin: North Carolina**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, Congress has passed laws that allow Reserve and National Guard members retirement credit points to retire early provided that they served on active duty for 90 consecutive days in a fiscal year and have completed 20 years of service before the age of 60 years; and

WHEREAS, The effective date for this benefit is for those who served after its signing in early 2008; and

WHEREAS, The law signed leaves out all the Reserve and National Guard members who were activated between August 2, 1990 through present that would give them credit for their active duty service toward early retirement; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 271: Authorize and Fund TRICARE for Reserve Components and Dependents****Origin: Iowa****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security****(As amended)**

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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to authorize and fund the Department of Defense in providing permanent TRICARE health care access for members of the Reserve Components and their dependents.**

**Unconventional Forces And Intelligence  
Douglas Haggan (FR), Chairman**

**Approved**

**Resolution No. 166: Support Fight Against Cyberspace Threats****Origin: Maryland****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The security of the United States is being increasingly challenged by non-traditional threats which may extend the fields of battle and terrorism to cyberspace warfare; and

WHEREAS, The United States government maintains a comprehensive and integrated system of federal agencies, including the Armed Forces, law enforcement, intelligence, and public health, to detect, deter and defend against cyberspace warfare threats to critical government and private infrastructures; and

WHEREAS, Presidential Decision Directive 62 (PDD-62), titled Combating Terrorism established the National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection and Counterterrorism; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 171: Support for the Global War on Terrorism****Origin: Maryland****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security****(Consolidated with Resolution No. 275 (IA))**

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 preempt future acts of terrorism; and

WHEREAS, Our servicemembers have made tremendous sacrifices over the past decade in fighting the forces of tyranny and terror, including over 6,700 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 operate in many locations and pose a grave threat to the national security of the United States; and

WHEREAS, As of 2014, the number of U.S. military personnel in Afghanistan is approximately 35,000; and

WHEREAS, Defense officials continue to urge Afghan President Hamid Karsai to sign the Bilateral Security Agreement which is imperative to the U.S. and NATO plan Operation Resolute Support which focuses on more training and assistance for the Afghan military and is set begin on January 1, 2015; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 186: Establish a Strategic Plan for the Internal Security with the United States**

**Origin: Maryland**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always recognized the importance of investigations that expose the truth about subversive activities that may harm or seek to destroy our constitutional government; and

WHEREAS, The Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, both security agencies of this nation, perform functions essential to the maintenance of our national security; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion supports the thorough background investigation of all applicants for federal employment to expose possible links to subversive activities or membership in subversive organizations that contribute to the weakening of the internal security of the United States; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, 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. 280: Support Unmanned Vehicles**

**Origin: Iowa**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

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, 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; and

WHEREAS, As the war in Afghanistan ends and new threats emerge in the Asia-Pacific region, the Pentagon is considering adapting multiple weapons for drones, including the Cold War-era Hydra 70 rocket and the Laser Homing Attack or Anti-Tank Missile, or LAHAT, according to its latest report on the future of unmanned systems; and

WHEREAS, Although the Pentagon plans to spend almost \$24 billion on unmanned air, ground and maritime systems over the next five years through fiscal 2018, research and development funding for drones is expected to fall by \$1.3 billion, more than a third, from fiscal year 2013 to fiscal year 2014; 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 Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That the U.S. Government be encouraged to continue to proceed on a path of transforming American's armed forces into a modern force capable of providing for the security of all Americans, strengthening and expanding our military capabilities using unmanned vehicles.**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN SCHLEE (MD): 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 California

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: No Submission

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 3,900 medals were awarded to deserving cadets in Senior ROTC and Junior ROTC Units. The winning Departments for 2012-2013 are the Departments of Alaska, Colorado, Hawaii, Maryland, and Minnesota. 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. ... *Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: We have a motion on the floor. We have a second. Is there any discussion? No discussion. All those in favor of the motion signify by saying aye. Opposed? The report of National Security is adopted. Thank you, Michael. Thank you all.

An update on the Legacy Fund. We have \$947,450 with \$1,000 promissory, which brings us to \$948,000. If anyone would like to write a check out of your casual account, I will take it to make the million dollar mark. If not, I will ask for the sergeant-at-arms to please come forward and salute to Colors. Please rise.

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: The time is now 4:15. The Convention will stand in recess until 8:30 a.m. tomorrow. Have a good evening.

... *At 4:15 p.m., the Convention was recessed to reconvene the following day, August 28, 2014, at 8:30 a.m.*



**PROCEEDINGS  
THIRD DAY**

**Thursday, August 28, 2014**

*... At 8:30 a.m. the delegates assembled for the third day of the 96th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had.*

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

**Call to Order**

**Robert E. Newman, Indiana, National Vice Commander**

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER NEWMAN: The convention will come to order. Sergeant-at-Arms.

*... At this time, the delegation rose and rendered a salute to the Colors.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER NEWMAN: For the invocation, I call on National Chaplain Daniel A. McClure of Iowa.

**Invocation**

**Daniel A. McClure, Iowa, National Chaplain**

Let's pray together. Shall we? Father, thank You for this, our last day. Thank You for the privilege we've had of being here. Thank You for the things that have been accomplished during this time, the friends that we've been able to reconnect with, all of the opportunities that have existed. We just trust that we have taken advantage of each one. Thank You for being a God that cares for our land. Thank You for the privilege we have of being here and serving You and serving this great country. Continue to bless.

And, Father, we ask that You might bless our families, our states, our communities and those who continue to serve in uniform in various parts of the world. We'd ask Your hand of mercy and safety upon each one. We ask for their families as well. Now, as we go into this, our final day of the Convention, have Your will and way in all that's said and done. Might these things glorify You in a very special way. We pray this in Your holy name. Amen.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER NEWMAN: Thank you, Chaplain Dan. Ladies and gentlemen, please remain uncovered as National Sergeant-at-Arms Ronald A. Miluszewski leads us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

*... The delegates recited the Pledge of Allegiance.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER NEWMAN: The convention is now in session.

**Presentation: The American Legion Fourth Estate Award**

**Robert E. Newman, National Vice Commander**

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER NEWMAN: We begin this morning by recognizing outstanding achievement in journalism that had a positive impact on a community. The American Legion Fourth Estate Award is difficult to earn. It is a testament to the demanding nature of the competition and the quality of entries. Not only do the reports have to be informative and entertaining, they have to provide a tangible benefit to society.

**Broadcast Category**  
**NBC4 News, Washington, D.C.**

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER NEWMAN: Being honored in the Broadcast Category is NBC4 News from Washington, D.C. After receiving several complaints from customers and a tip that a problem inside an auto repair chain went beyond local shops, WRC-TV News launched a one-year investigation, which ultimately led to a five-part television report titled "Under the Hood: The AAMCO Investigation."

As a result, the world's largest transmission repair chain retrained more than 700 franchise owners, conducted thousands of overdue repairs and now faces a class action lawsuit. Please turn your attention to the video monitors.

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

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER NEWMAN: Accepting the award from WRC-TV are Vice President of News Mike Goldrick, Investigative Producer Rick Yarborough, and Investigative Reporter Jeff Piper. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion 2014 Fourth Estate Award for outstanding achievement in the field of journalism is presented to WRC-TV News for a one-year investigation and a series of investigative reports that exposed "What really goes on behind garage doors when they think that no one is looking."*

*The series led AAMCO, the world's largest transmission repair chain, to pull its multimillion dollar ad campaign, retrain more than 700 franchise owners, and conduct thousands in overdue repairs. "Under the Hood: The AAMCO Investigation."*

*Presented at the 96th National Convention, August 28th, 2014, Charlotte, North Carolina. (Applause)*

RICK YARBOROUGH: This award means so much to us because it comes from you. We are very honored to be recognized by an organization that's made its mission to advocate for veterans who fought for our freedom, including that freedom of the press; that we pale in comparison to those who serve, we as journalists strive to a similar mission, to make a difference, to protect, to shine a light and a spotlight. We cannot do our jobs without the brave people willing to come forward to tell us their stories. By honoring us with this Fourth Estate Award, you honor them as well. We thank you very much. *(Applause)*

**Online Category**  
**Washington Examiner, Washington, D.C.**

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER NEWMAN: The Fourth Estate Internet/New Media Award goes to the Washington Examiner's Mark Flatten, on his online investigative series "Making Heroes Wait."

Long before the recent VA scandals made national news, Mark found veterans who waited decades for treatment of unhealed wounds with much of the delay caused by VA unresponsiveness. The work helped lead to congressional hearings about VA operations and brought needed public and further media attention to the issue. Accepting the award is Senior Examiner Watchdog Reporter Mark Flatten. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion 2014 Fourth Estate Award for outstanding achievement in the field of journalism is presented to Mark Flatten, Senior Investigative Reporter, Washington Examiner, for an investigative series into the claims backlog at the Department of Veterans Affairs. "Making Heroes Wait."*

*Presented at the 96th National Convention, August 28, 2014, Charlotte, North Carolina. (Applause)*

MARK FLATTEN: Thank you. I get asked a lot: Why did you start looking at the Department of Veterans Affairs? I'm not a veteran myself. I was fortunate enough to come to age at a time of peace. I started looking at the VA because it was a bloated federal agency that was wasting money. When I did, I started getting calls from veterans asking me to look into more important issues like the backlog of disability claims, like the problems they were having receiving health care. So I did start looking at it.

Afterwards, many of those veterans started calling me to say thank you, thank you for listening to us. And it struck me as, I guess, odd that these are folks that I owe a huge debt of gratitude to and they were thanking me just for listening to them, for doing my job. So thank you very much for the award. Thank you to the Legion for the award. But more importantly, thank you, each and every one of you, for everything you've done for me. You've kept me safe. You've kept my family safe. And you've kept my country safe. So thank you very much. *(Applause)*

### **Print Category**

#### ***The Daily News, Jacksonville, North Carolina***

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER NEWMAN: This year's Print Category Award goes to *The Daily News* of Jacksonville, North Carolina. In a series of three articles, the newspaper reported on the effects of sequestration and its impact on the military mental health system. Reporter Thomas Brennan's investigation found that by furloughing mental health workers, servicemembers were not able to receive adequate treatment for post-traumatic stress. The exposé captured the attention of Congress and led to the secretary of defense restoring these workers to full capacity. Accepting the award is Reporter Thomas Brennan and *Daily News* Managing Editor Cyndi Brown. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion 2014 Fourth Estate Award for outstanding achievement in the field of journalism is presented to The Daily News for a series of reports by Thomas Brennan on the impact of sequestration that furloughed large numbers of government mental health care workers which prevented servicemembers from receiving treatment for post-traumatic stress.*

*The publication gained the attention of a member of Congress which led to the Secretary of Defense exempting mental health workers across the Department of Defense restoring treatment of personnel to full capacity. "Breaking News: Behavioral Health Care Takes a Hit." Presented at the 96th National Convention. August 28, 2014, Charlotte, North Carolina. (Applause)*

ELLIOTT POTTER: My name is Elliott Potter. I'm the publisher of the newspaper. I would like to first congratulate Thomas and thank The American Legion for this award. We were particularly proud of this honor because it meant a great deal to the community that our newspaper serves. One other thing that I would like to add is the fact that this story was made possible for our newspaper because our managing editor here, Cyndi Brown, hired a veteran. Thomas was able to use his experiences in military service to make this story happen. And for us, that's what it was all about. So thank you again and congratulations to Thomas. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER NEWMAN: The Chair recognizes the honorable Vincent Gaughan of Illinois, chairman of the Convention's Committee on Constitutional Amendments, for the purpose of making a report.

### **Report: Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments Hon. Vincent M. Gaughn, Illinois, Chairman**

To the 96th National Convention of The American Legion, Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27 and 28, 2014.

The Committee on Constitutional Amendments met at 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 24, 2014, in the Sharon Room, Level Two of the Westin Charlotte, Charlotte, North Carolina. 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 Frank A. Porter (MD) was duly elected Secretary. Thereupon they assumed their respective places.

Copies of the Resolution, 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 resolution assigned to the Committee, which was done.

A motion was made by Charles Mills (NY) and seconded by J. R. Johnson (LA) 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 further announced that he was in agreement with the Report of the Standing Committee on the Constitution and By-laws.

**Resolution No. 112 (WA)** was considered. The Chair announced that this resolution was in order.

Michael Cassidy (MA) made a motion to reject Resolution No. 112 (WA), seconded by J. R. Johnson (LA). Motion carried unanimously.

The Chair then asked for a motion that the Chairman and Secretary be permitted to sign the report to the Convention on behalf of the members of the Convention Committee. Larry Marcouillier (DE) made the motion and it was seconded by J. R. Johnson (LA). The motion was carried unanimously.

J. R. Johnson (LA) made the motion to attach the Report of the Constitution and By-laws Committee to this report as an exhibit, seconded by Marshall Behr, Jr. (NJ). The motion was carried unanimously.

Bob Beals (MT) made a motion to recess, subject to the call of the Chairman. The motion was seconded by Michael Reed (RI). The motion was carried unanimously.

The Chairman then thanked the Committee for its cooperation and productive meeting. The meeting was then declared in recess pending a call from the Chairman of the Committee.

Mr. Commander, as a duly elected delegate to the 96th National Convention of The American Legion, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER NEWMAN: Do I hear a second? ... *Second.* Is there any discussion? All those in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All those opposed? The report of Constitutional Amendments is adopted.

A graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, our next speaker retired from the Army in 2009 and was appointed as executive director and chief of military history at the U.S. Army Center of Military History in 2011. He is the editor of the *Army Officer's Guide* and widely published on the lifeways and material culture of the American soldier.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Robert Dalessandro. (*Applause*)

**Address: Robert J. Dalessandro, Chief  
U.S. Army Center for Military History**

Thank you for that kind introduction. I'm truly honored to be here today. I'm especially honored to be here as a proud member of Post 24 in Alexandria, Virginia. (*Applause*)



On behalf of the men and women of the United States World War I Centennial Commission, I want to thank you for your service. And I want to thank The American Legion and especially your national commander, Dan Dellinger, for standing up for the rights of veterans, even when it's tough to do so. (*Applause*)

Veterans are important to Americans. Even political whims in Washington or in the states don't dissuade them from thanking you for your service as I thank you now. Veterans are truly important. Whatever we call them, whether we call them grunts or leathernecks or dogfaces or gobs or just GIs, they're important to our nation.

Today I want to spend a moment with you to talk a little bit about veterans of another era, veterans who we know as "doughboys." At the commission, we have an ambitious multiyear program aimed at fostering awareness and educating the American public on the triumphs and on the tragedies of this era. Our goal is to commemorate the legacy of the mothers and the fathers, the parents who raised the greatest generation, the people who launched a new age and ultimately an American century.

But let's get back to that doughboy for a moment. The term "doughboy" may well have its roots way back in the American Civil War. It is kind of unclear. There are many theories about the origin of the name. It might have been because after long marches on dust-covered roads throughout the United States, the dusty uniforms made those soldiers appear to be made of dough. Or because Spanish American War soldiers and Civil War soldiers, and to some extent World War I soldiers, subsisted on what was called hard crackers. Or last, but not least, it's because those that answered the call in 1917 were a generation of men and women who loved a new treat, the donut, dispensed by the Red Cross or the Salvation Army Sallies.

In any case, the name stuck for that entire generation, those that served in World War I, a war also called "The Great War" or "The War to End All Wars," which, as we all know, did no such thing. So imagine the promise of that moment. The promise of a war to end war. A war that would make the world safe for democracy. Close your eyes and imagine that, and imagine that perhaps in this room there is a doughboy here today. Not in person, of course, only in spirit, as the last known survivor of World War I, Corporal Frank Buckles, passed away in 2011.

Frank spent the last years of his life battling Washington bureaucracy for a monument to World War I on the National Mall. And like you and our two and a half million fellow Legionnaires around the country, Buckles was a Legionnaire. He had a 75-year membership plaque to prove it. So there is a doughboy today here in this room. And if that person was here, he would tell you he joined your Legion in France at the end of World War I. He would tell you that he joined to provide the very kind of support you provide today to soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen.

So there is a doughboy here today. He's here because, like you, he is wherever his country needs him to be. In 1917, along with four million other Americans, he willingly joined in a war to save others. Over 116,000 of his brothers and sisters never came home. More than Vietnam, more than Korea, more than Iraq, more than Afghanistan, all combined. So there is a doughboy here today. He was young. He had dreams. He loved. He had a sense of humor. Corporal Buckles did. I knew him. When asked how he survived for so long, he offered some good advice: When you start to die, don't.

There's a doughboy here today. He would tell you how proud he was of his mother and his sister, of his aunts and his cousins who also went to war in a much different way, in factories and on farms and on the home front to make sure he had what he needed in the battle over there. Were he alive today and standing next to me, he'd grin and remind you that Rosie the Riveter had a mother.

Yes, there's a doughboy here today. He'd want you to know that he remembered the sacrifices of his forebearers, his grandfather and great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather who served at Bunker Hill or Bladensburg or Chapultepec or Chickamauga.

There's a doughboy here today, and he would ask you that you take a moment and remember him. He'd ask you that you tell his story to your children and your grandchildren. He'd ask you to support a memorial in Washington, D.C., as the Legion already is supporting a

monument in D.C., a place where you can take your children and grandchildren and share the doughboy story with them. And there you could explain to them as best you can what it meant to fight in World War I just like you describe to them now what it's like in places like Inchon, Guadalcanal, or Fallujah or Afghanistan.

He'd smile and he'd wisely remind you there will come a day when you will want to be remembered, too. He'd ask you to do your part to tell his story to other Americans and to those to whom his memory has been lost. If a doughboy were standing up here today, he'd ask you to support the World War I Centennial. He'd ask you to reach out to Congress and support a World War I memorial at Pershing Park. He would ask you to support a World War I Centennial World War I Coin Act. He would ask you to be involved through the Centennial Commission's web site.

Lastly, he'd look over this room full of today's doughboys and say, "Don't let our tombstones be our only memorials and the memorials of my brothers and sisters." And, finally, he'd say, "Thank you, my fellow Legionnaires, for remembering me."

May God bless each one of you, and I thank you for your service to our great nation. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER NEWMAN: Our next guest leads the operations of a company that delivers and picks up more than 15 million packages every day and has over 322,000 employees. In 2010, he led a strategic transformation of the company's U.S. small package business. He currently serves on the National Board of Governors and as a Southeast Region trustee for the Boys & Girls Club of America.

Please give a warm welcome to the president of U.S. operations for the United Parcel Service, Myron Gray. *(Applause)*

**Address: Myron Gray, President of U.S. Operations  
United Parcel Service**

Thank you, Commander Dellinger. It's an honor to be here today, along with our good friends from Atlanta, The Home Depot, representing corporate America at this prestigious event. I'm glad we're having this opportunity to talk face-to-face because, let's admit it, communications is sometimes a problem between business and veterans.

Sometimes we just don't speak the same language. In the business world we're in, we know how important it is to communicate clearly, with our employees, our customers, and our share owners. But in your world, communications is really important. I mean, if a general is calling a nuclear silo in Wyoming to say "turn the launch key," you want the 23-year-old sergeant on the other end of the line to hear that message very, very clearly.

But in business, we're making progress. We're starting to understand each other much better. Business is doing a better job of recognizing the value and skills veterans bring to the workplace. And I believe we're doing a better job in helping veterans promote those skills by putting them to work in a career.

But we can't feel too proud. That's because while today's national unemployment number hovers at just above 6 percent, the unemployment rate for 25 to 34-year-old veterans is at 9 percent. And if you look at veterans 18 to 24-years-old, which includes a lot of men and women looking for their first transitional job, the unemployment rate goes much higher. The last number I saw was 32 percent. Overall, one of every two veterans who has transitioned from the military in the last five years is unemployed. Those numbers convince me of one thing: We still have a lot of work to do.

But, clearly, veterans are overcoming some of the challenges they've faced when entering the business world. Communications was one of those challenges. But even it paled in comparison to the lack of understanding, and appreciation, some businesses had for the skills you offered. But, as I said, we're making progress. You're hearing from two companies today, but there are many more who are also recognizing how veterans help their businesses.

I've been impressed with the efforts of companies like JPMorgan Chase, Walt Disney, USAA, and, of course, Home Depot, and how they are helping are to bring hundreds of thousands of veterans into the workforce. As Commander Dellinger was kind to mention, UPS employs more than 24,000 veterans. Veterans now represent over 7.5 percent of our domestic workforce. Veterans are sorting packages in our hubs. They're driving our brown package cars. They're flying our fleet of 237 aircraft. They're contributing to our success in every corner of our business.

We're proud of our track record when it comes to hiring veterans. But I really didn't come here to brag about how many veterans we employ. That's because we don't think this is all about numbers. We don't think it's enough simply to hire a veteran. If that's all a company is going to do, it's actually doing a disservice to veterans. It's also doing a disservice to its business. What veterans deserve is a fair chance, an opportunity to pursue their goals and contribute as much as their potential allows. That means more than having a job. That means having an opportunity for a career.

A career starts with a job, but it grows with new opportunities. It's made more challenging with added responsibility. It's made more fulfilling when goals are reached, recognized and rewarded. That's why we're doing our best to help veterans build careers, not just clock in and out on a job.

One way we're doing that is by participating in the American Corporate Partners program. This is a program that matches veterans with business professionals who help them by mentoring, career counseling, and networking opportunities. Many of these veterans will never work for UPS. But over 100 UPS managers have volunteered to share their business experiences and encourage their success.

We've also been a part of the Education with Industry Initiative for the past five years. This is a nine-month assignment for Air Force personnel, where they get on-the-job education and training before rotating back into a military position.

Captain Rebecca Heyse is one of those participants. Captain Heyse spent nine months in our public relations office at our corporate headquarters. By studying business best practices, EWI students take new knowledge and understanding back to the Air Force. Capt. Heyse is now serving in the Pentagon, overseeing training development for Air Force public affairs personnel.

We also have eight business resource groups, also known as affinity groups at some companies, supporting veterans. These groups help veterans network with coworkers and expand their professional relationship as they are gaining new insights and experience. But make no mistake; while we're supporting veterans' career development, charity is not our motivation. In addition to the right thing to do, hiring veterans is also the smart thing to do for our business.

At UPS, we're looking for leadership, technical expertise, grace under pressure, and someone who has a mission-oriented mindset, diverse points of view, and problem-solving abilities. Ethics, integrity are values that go a long way at UPS. Does that sound like someone that you know? So hiring veterans is an investment in our business. It's also an investment that's paying dividends.

We take the same approach with sustainability, another of those corporate initiatives that often gets lumped into the "nice to do" category. When it comes to sustainability, we believe we have a responsibility to contribute to society and to the environment. We also believe that every investment our company makes should return value to our business.

We view it that way, that properly focused sustainability becomes a competitive advantage, not a "nice to do."

Likewise, our investment in veterans is an investment in our business. An investment that becomes a competitive advantage. I realize that some of you here today are no longer in the job market. But for those of you who are looking for a civilian job or will be looking for one, I have some advice. The first thing is don't undersell yourself or undervalue your worth.

A story in *Fortune* magazine recently caught my attention. A young Navy veteran applying for a job at AT&T described himself on his resume as a "mechanic." But when the AT&T hiring manager dug a little deeper into the veteran's background, he discovered more than a mechanic.

As it turned out, while in the Navy, the veteran led a team of 100 helicopter mechanics and was responsible for over \$200 million worth of equipment. All that responsibility on the shoulders of a young person shows great leadership ability. But you would never have known it from his resumé. So, all you infantry types, pilots, truck drivers, and mechanics out there, don't be modest when you're telling us how you can contribute.

Here's another suggestion: Be ready to prove your return on investment. A business that's going to pay a veteran with management experience \$85,000 to do a job and another \$15,000 in benefits that is a company that is looking for more than \$100,000 in value. Be ready to deliver. Also, be ready to assimilate into a new future. Find ways that you can adapt to a new culture at the same time you're demonstrating how valuable your skills are on the job.

Business could take a few pointers, too. Businesses need to do a better job at recognizing that your background has prepared you for a lot of jobs that don't bestow certificates or degrees. A piece of paper shouldn't be a deal breaker. Most hiring managers haven't walked in your boots. They may not understand how your skills apply to the business world. So when anyone in business talks about understanding culture, they should know that's a two-way street. We need to understand yours as much as you need to understand ours.

UPS has a long history of supporting veterans. Three of our former chairmen of our company are veterans. One of our founders, George Casey, was a Petty Officer 3rd Class in World War I. His rating was classified as "storekeeper." Interestingly, that position today is known as a "logistics specialist." As you may have heard, at UPS we love logistics. So we've long been convinced of veterans value. Veterans don't always make it to the chairman's office, but they do find their way to meaningful positions throughout our company.

Let me introduce you to three who are making significant contributions to UPS while building great careers. This is Wade Franklin. Lieutenant Franklin was a Navy officer who saved his salary during his seven years of service, hoping to run his own business when he separated. Following his discharge, 29-year-old Lieutenant Franklin was one of 120 veterans for whom UPS waived the \$30,000 fee for a UPS Store franchise. We continue to help qualifying veterans join the UPS Store network by waiving \$10,000 of the franchise fee and 50 percent of the application fee. Wade is now a UPS Store franchise owner in Arlington, Virginia, and one of nearly 200 veterans who are UPS Store franchise owners around the country. *(Applause)*

Let me introduce you to Donna Andrews. Master Sergeant Andrews specialized in logistics during her 20-year Air Force career. Donna joined UPS in 2012 as a part-time operations management specialist. She was promoted a year later and today is a full-time supervisor with 50 employees reporting to her.

David Padilla, Petty Officer 2nd Class, returned to civilian life with a bachelor's degree. But he couldn't find a job. He was unemployed for two and a half years. We're lucky that he never gave up looking, because a veterans networking group finally connected him with UPS. We hired David as a part-time package dispatch supervisor at our 43rd Street Package Center in New York City. Six months later, he received his first promotion. Last year David made it all the way to the White House, where he introduced the president and first lady at an event supporting the Joining Forces initiative.

We're proud of those stories. We're really proud that there are thousands more where they came from. But we know there's more work to be done. As the military draws down troop levels in the coming years, hundreds of thousands of veterans will need a job. More than that, they'll need a place to start a career. The men and women who have served in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and Marine Corps have done their part.

Now it's our turn to step up and make an investment in their futures and ours. That's why UPS recently doubled our hiring and volunteer service commitment to veterans, as part of the Joining Forces initiative. Our hiring commitment now stands at 50,000 veterans. *(Applause)*

Our service commitment is to commit over 50,000 employee volunteer hours by year-end of 2018. We're well on our way. But I encourage people at our company, and across business, to look past the numbers, because this is about more than numbers. Those of you who serve the military are special people. You volunteer to go through the toughest physical training on the

planet for the privilege of defending our country. You are the kind of people business should want on its side. At every point in our history, veterans have returned home from war to lead and accomplish great things. Veterans coming home today have the same God-given potential. Business just needs to give them a place to start and a place to grow.

On behalf of everyone at UPS, I want to thank you for your service and I want to thank your families for their support. It's been a pleasure and an honor to be with you here today. Thank you. *(Applause)*

*... At this time National Commander Dellinger assumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Mr. Gray, I'd like to thank you for coming to our Convention, and I'd like to give you a memento of that, and I'd like to thank you for what UPS does for our veterans. Give him a big hand. *(Applause)*

The Chair recognizes Ken Danilson for the purposes of a presentation.

CHAIRMAN DANILSON: Mr. Commander, as chairman of the American Legion Charities, we called a special board meeting last night and approved a donation to the Legacy Fund. I'm pleased to present this check to the commander for \$53,000, which will bring the total to over \$1 million. *(Cheers and applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Our next guest leads the Home Depot's philanthropic strategy, volunteer efforts, and The Homer Fund. He brings a personal connection to the foundation's mission of ensuring every veteran has a safe place to call home, having served for four years as an infantry officer in the United States Army, including leading troops in combat in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Prior to joining The Home Depot Foundation, our speaker spent 10 years with The Home Depot in various leadership positions. He is a member of Will's Club supporting Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and the Emory Wise Heart Society. Please give a warm welcome to the executive director of The Home Depot Foundation, Gaven Gregory. *(Applause)*

**Address: Gaven Gregory, Executive Director  
The Home Depot Foundation**

Good morning. How is everybody doing? I've got a lot to do here. I've got a clicker, notes, all kinds of things. You might have to bear with me, and I'll need some help from you on a few of these things. But I did want to say I'm excited to be here on behalf of The Home Depot. And thank you to our great partners in Atlanta, UPS. Great to be here with you guys.

I want to say thank you to you. I want to say thank you for the great work you are doing in your communities helping your members, helping their families, helping the folks in those communities and you do it all across the country. I have witnessed this hard work firsthand. I'm going to tell you a little story. So there I was in Madera Beach, Florida. Where are you at Florida. *(Cheers and applause)*

You probably know where I'm going with this, don't you? So there we are, Post 273, looking out at the Intercoastal Florida. It was a really hot day. Maybe 75 degrees. And we're sitting at that famous Tiki bar they've got there in Madera Beach. I think the band was playing some nice '80s throwback music and the dance floor was really hot that day. So I won't go any further, but as you can see, that's a lot of hard work that was going on at 273. So that's a joke. Well done. *(Chuckling)*

Seriously, we've been doing this for three years. It's pretty amazing, when we look back on where we were three years ago and who we were supporting then and then what we're doing now. I'm going to share a few examples of the work that we've done together and that the folks at Team Depot do with your posts all across the country.

But I want to tell you real quick: Our Team Depot is our group in the field that volunteers in individual communities. We have 350,000 associates, and I can tell you tens of thousands of those associates, a lot of numbers here, do thousands of community service projects every year. Hundreds of them are at your posts. And I can tell you, when we got involved with this

relationship with you guys, a lot of it was because of those folks in the field had done projects with you and had said: Hey look, The American Legion is important to us. They're important to our communities, and we want to do more. So we took that work from them and we took that guidance from them and we said: Okay, we're going to do more. So The Team Depot is a big reason why we're here and why we're doing as much as we are.

So Home Depot has been about homes and housing. But why vets. When we looked at this a few years ago, we said the most vulnerable population for housing needs were seniors, persons with disabilities and veterans. Then we took a look at our associate base, and we said 35,000 veterans are working at The Home Depot. We looked at the issues that were facing veterans all across the country and it hit pretty close to home for The Home Depot. That's why, in 2011, we shifted our focus to improving homes and lives of U.S. veterans and their families. And we made a five-year pledge to give \$80 million behind that focus. *(Applause)*

Now I can tell you, in just three years, we've actually given away now \$81 million to provide safe housing for veterans, and along with the help of our Team Depot volunteers that I've mentioned we transformed more than 13,000 homes for veterans across the country. We're pretty proud of that. *(Applause)*

Last year alone more than 25,000 of our associates volunteered their time and talents to complete nearly 900 projects to help veterans in local communities. Since the launch of our mission our volunteer have touched the homes and lives of veterans in every state and more than 1,000 cities across the country. We're pretty proud of that accomplishment over the last three years. But look, we didn't do that alone. So without the support and work of our partners, these accomplishments wouldn't have been possible.

I can tell you we've developed a powerful alliance with The American Legion over the years. We've worked together all across the country to improve the lives of our veterans, from touching up Legion posts, to repairing homes for American Legion members in need, we've created a unique relationship that allows both of us to have a greater impact.

In 2011, when we first shifted our focus to giving back to veterans, we gave more than \$140,000 in grants to The American Legion. The very next year we tripled that contribution to more than \$450,000 to support the great work in American Legion posts all across the country. I'm building into something here.

The more we worked together, the more we realized what a powerful force we could make. This is an example of us planting a tank, and I can tell you, sometimes they're difficult, highly temperamental, but that one was pretty successful. That's also a joke. That's why last year we doubled our monetary contribution yet again to support the great work that American Legion posts are doing across the country.

I promised you I'd share a few examples. Here's one of those stories. We've done more than 300 of these post renovations in the last three years. In Tybee Island, Georgia, where are you at Georgia? That's one shout out. Another shout out in a minute. I want it to be louder in the next one. You'll see why. In Tybee Island, Georgia, we worked together to install a wheelchair ramp to make the 100-year-old, historic post accessible to its members. I think 100 years ago there weren't even American Legion conventions. I know I'm the only thing standing between you and, what is this, the 70th day give or take of the Convention. We'll try to speed it up.

The next one is in Stickney, Illinois, more than 100 Team Depot volunteers partnered with American Legion William McKinley Post 231 to complete home modifications for a disabled veteran named Greg Rodriguez. Where is Illinois? They went home early? That's good, because I have no idea where Stickney is, and I was hoping someone could tell me. I'll have to map it. Over the course of two weeks, volunteers swept in and completely transformed his home to make things more comfortable and accessible, all ending in an honorary parade across the town in his honor. That's pretty cool.

Phoenix, Arizona, where is Arizona at? They didn't go home early. In Phoenix, Arizona, volunteers stepped in to renovate American Legion Post 41. From new ceiling fans to a kitchen makeover, Team Depot gave the post what it needed to continue its more than 60 years of service to its community.

I'm going to tell you one more story. So I was at a Legion build last year. Post 201 in Alpharetta, Georgia. Georgia, give it to me one more time. *(Cheers and applause)* Good job. That's awesome. We had a few hundred volunteers including the chairman of The Home Depot were in attendance to transform one of the most impressive posts I've seen. We did a bunch of interior work, some ball field improvements, benches, desks, and gazebos. It was really a cool build. But what was unique about this post was they had a memorial set up and they had a brick in the ground for every citizen of Georgia who had served in the military and died in our nation's wars. And I mean every single one. It was truly an amazing memorial. With the exception of one brick. They had an extra brick for a man named Darren Wright. So Colonel Wright, I'll tell you quickly, was my battalion operations officer when we were in Iraq in the 18th Infantry.

Darren did four deployments. He did OIF one all the way through OIF last one, and literally he was there seemingly for the whole war. He wrote a book about it. So if you're ever interested. But last spring, Darren, who was a dedicated paratrooper, ended virtually every sentence with either Airborne or "hook 'em." He's from Texas — Texas. *(Cheers and applause)* So he was a proud Texan. He burned in on a night jump when he was at 18<sup>th</sup> Airborne Corps and he was killed. I just want to thank you, Post 201, for honoring Darren. He was a true American hero. He wasn't a native of Georgia, but you stepped out of your way and had a memorial for him. I really appreciate that, and I want to thank you personally for that. *(Applause)*

So let's get to it. They say you should always start a speech with what's in it for you, but we're going to end it with that. I'm so proud of this relationship and the amazing work that we do together. That's why we're incredibly proud to announce we're committing an investment of a million dollars over the next year to American Legion posts and the veterans you serve across the country and alliance with the national group. *(Applause)*

So this investment will allow us to do even more for veterans in the years to come. We're excited about the future. We know we'll be working together for a long time. And, look, I want to tell you, so to find out more about these grants in your local communities, I want you to go to your local stores. I want you to ask for the Team Depot captain. Ask them for an application. And start that local relationship with your stores. Because it's all local, and you want to have that relationship with those folks. That's what I'd ask you to go do.

Let me ask you again personally as a 9/11 vet, post-9/11 vet, reach out to those younger vets in your community, extend a hand to them because they're passionate about giving back to their communities being a part of something great. You guys are something great. Sometimes they need an introduction to all the great work you do, but I'll tell you they'd be excited to be part of your organization.

Thank you for having me here today. And most importantly, thank you for working together with us to improve the homes and lives of veterans all across the country. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: I want to thank you very much for what the foundation is doing, especially as I go around the country. I hear those stories of Home Depot helped me here and Home Depot helped me there. I'd like to give you a memento of your visit. But more importantly, here, I have a membership application. *(Cheers and applause)* But thank you for your service for our great country. Thank you. Remember, just ask.

We have one more speaker. Our next guest is a true philanthropist. Kenneth Fisher is chairman and CEO of the Fisher House Foundation, a not-for-profit organization that constructs comfort homes for families of hospitalized military personnel and veterans. Founded in 1990 by his late uncle Zachary Fisher, the program has built 63 houses in the United States and Germany and partnered with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham in the United Kingdom. Fisher Houses serve more than 22,000 families each year and have saved more than \$200 million in lodging and travel costs since inception. The foundation also administers the Hero Miles program, allowing frequent flyers to donate their unused airline miles to provide free tickets to military families and the Hotel for Heroes program. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm welcome to a true friend of veterans and military families, Kenneth Fisher. *(Applause)*

**Address: Kenneth Fisher, Chairman  
Fisher House Foundation, Inc.**

Thank you. I want to thank National Commander Dan Dellinger for giving me the opportunity to be with you today in this beautiful city. Because it's not every day that you get to say thank you to so many people in the same place at the same time. But today I have that chance. You have supported me. You have educated me. And most importantly you have defended me. So let me begin my remarks by saying thank you for your service. *(Applause)*

I continue to be inspired by your wisdom and your ongoing service to your fellow veterans, and I'm grateful for the sacrifices that you and your families have made on behalf of freedom. I feel privileged to be able to honor those sacrifices by leading an organization that aids our servicemen and women, veterans and their families in their time of need. For 25 years, the Fisher House Foundation has built a network of comfort homes where families can stay at no cost while a loved one is receiving treatment. Maybe you've seen one of our homes away from home, visited someone there, or needed to use one yourself. They're all within walking distance of major military and VA medical centers nationwide. We built two in Germany at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center. And in 2012 we opened one in the United Kingdom to aid the families of our British allies. So the Fisher House brand has now become global. *(Applause)*

My uncle Zachary Fisher founded the Fisher House program because he had a passion for helping veterans. He called them America's greatest national treasure. And he was right. From the islands of the Pacific to the beaches of Normandy, from the villages of Korea to deserts of Vietnam, the deserts of Kuwait and Iraq and mountains of Afghanistan, you fought to uphold American ideals and to protect this country's freedom. You are the guardians of all this nation holds sacred. And this nation has a sacred responsibility to you and to all veterans. To care for your physical and emotional wounds and create opportunities for servicemembers returning with the same rigor and determination with which you served this nation.

So when I think about the past few years and how organizations charged with fulfilling that responsibility failed, I feel pretty angry. And I know you do too. Scandals hindered access to the medical care and mental health services veterans earned honorably. Weeks, months, sometimes years went by, as men and women who served their country went without the care they had needed and had earned. Bureaucracy and political infighting left military families who made the ultimate sacrifice the loss of a loved one in uniform without critical death benefits. Sequestration continues to threaten not only our national security but also the wallets of our military families through reduction to important benefits and incentives, all the while pink slips being handed out on the battlefield.

But with the problems associated with the VA once again at the forefront, I sense these issues are finally gaining traction. As a matter of fact, the other day the president stood before you and announced more initiatives. So as we stand at the proverbial crossroads, again we have a choice. You can continue to feel let down, disappointed, forgotten and overlooked. We can let our anger and distrust of a failed system grow. Or we can look for pockets of good. And in this country there is always good to be found. And be inspired to engage the vast untapped resources within our communities and ourselves to bring about change.

Under the leadership of Secretary McDonald, it's time to forge a new path, one that's paved not only by refocusing government leadership, but also by redoubling the commitment of companies and reengaging communities. The American Legion has said the VA is a system worth saving. I agree. Even with its problems, our system for generations has served veterans well. And it has long been the envy of allies who look to us not just for guidance and leadership but for cutting-edge techniques in treating our wounded war fighters. So it's time to rededicate ourselves to those words spoken by Lincoln that are memorialized on a plaque that greet all who enter its front doors, "To care for them who have borne the battle and for his widow and orphan." It's time we get serious about the VA's core mission. It's time we put veterans first and military families first. *(Applause)*



I know over the last three days you've heard that a lot. But the time has come that we back these words up with action. Action that's meaningful, that's doable, and more importantly, that's sustainable. So how do we fix what's been broken and build a system that will be a source of innovation and pride going forward.

First, let's start with the obvious. We need to clean the corrosive culture at the VA and simplify it. So the administration can focus on what it was created to do — provide excellent healthcare, administer comprehensive health insurance and benefits to veterans.

Second, let's replace a failed bureaucratic mindset with a bottom line business mindset. *(Applause)*

I believe Secretary McDonald is well positioned to do this based on his military service and his career in the private sector, helping to build one of the world's most recognized brands. And, third, we need to get down to business strategically, implementing changes today that will last well into the future. *(Applause)*

Earlier this month I was fortunate to be with National Commander Dellinger at the bill signing of the VA Emergency Funding Bill, one of the few bipartisan initiatives in recent memory. It appropriates \$16.3 billion to address the problems within the VA. But just to be clear, financial resources were never the issue. Corruption and mismanagement were. Now, I want to be unequivocal in saying that our veterans deserve every penny of these funds. But under the new leadership, the VA needs to be careful not to fall into that age-old pattern of throwing new money at old problems. *(Applause)*

It needs to spend cautiously and wisely so that every dollar invested produces a return on that investment. It must also set a strategic framework for a revitalized VA that will meet the needs of our veterans for generations to come. For example, the law includes funding for the VA to lease or build new medical facilities along with stringent requirements for budgetary compliance. Now, this kind of oversight needs to be extended to the VA's ongoing construction projects, which have a track record of running millions of dollars over budget and coming in years beyond deadline. Now, I agree with The American Legion. As a matter of fact, we spoke about this at the bill signing, and I would suggest that the VA not be in the construction business at all. It's just one example of a noncore function that takes up exorbitant amounts of manpower and money and it diverts attention from the VA's primary mission. *(Applause)*

The VA could save costs, not cut costs, but save costs, by working with outside construction managers, collaborating with other departments such as the DOD, whose health facility planners build military medical facilities or create innovative public/private partnerships with proven infrastructures to help reign in budgets on facility upgrades and other projects. And it could use just a fraction of the savings to incentivize good performance. I'm not using the word bonus.

This is done with success in the private sector. I'm a real estate developer. We do it, and it's done as a smart business move that can help focus people while bringing down the bottom line. Money saved by letting go of costly and cumbersome non-core projects could also be allocated by the VA for mission-critical work, such as funding research and development for cutting-edge treatment; achieving interoperability between the IT systems of the VA and the Department of Defense to reduce waiting times and help eliminate the benefit gaps that have existed far too long; getting ahead of the curve on mental health issues that affect today's veterans as much as they do the heroes who pave the way for us to talk openly about the issue.

The new law also allocates funds to hire more doctors and nurses. Now, when it does so, the VA must look for skills and experience that match the needs of all its constituents, from fitting prosthetic limbs lost to IEDs, to treating cancers resulting from exposure to Agent Orange, to managing the mental wounds resulting from the horrors of war. And the law also gives the secretary broader power to fire top level employees for incompetency or mismanagement. *(Applause)*

I agree with that. This is critical to running any successful business. If the right people are not in the right job, you have a failed model. Restoring leadership and working strategically to create efficiencies, strengthen infrastructure and double down on customer needs, these are

business-minded ways for the VA to eliminate its bureaucracy, focus on its core mission, and bring integrity back to the system. So in short, simplify it.

The VA should also look to engage corporate partners with a vested interest in a strong America to help fill the gaps. To be clear, achieving a strong America takes more than a world-class military equipped to respond to challenges abroad because every day we are reminded of what a dangerous place this world is. It also requires world-class care and benefits and civilian opportunities to prepare veterans to enter the job market when they come home and that dignify their service as well as their families' sacrifices. As we have seen, this doesn't always happen.

One morning while watching the news, I learned that the death benefits had been withheld from the families of soldiers who had died during the government shutdown. And like everybody who saw it, I felt sickened and outraged. While political infighting and partisan politics kept the government shut down, Fisher House stepped up and offered to pay the death benefits so families who had sacrificed so much could honor their loved ones with the dignity that they deserved. *(Applause)*

It wasn't something that we did for profit or for political gain, it spoke to our mission and just had to be done. Underlying this was a moral imperative, one that weighs heavy upon us, to seek to repay just a fraction of the debt that we owe those who daily defend the freedoms that we often take for granted. Fisher House was well positioned to do this not just financially but operationally. We took advantage of our lean infrastructure and we were able to pivot while simultaneously keeping our core mission operational. This is because, and some of you may have heard me say this before, the Fisher House model is beautiful in its simplicity.

By focusing on a straightforward mission, staying accountable to our constituents and leveraging our purchasing power and committing to quality, we've been able to provide more than five million days of lodging to almost 220,000 military and veterans' families while saving them an estimated \$235 million in total lodging and transportation costs. *(Applause)*

We've seized opportunities and created new ones to expand our work all while keeping our administrative costs at four percent of the donated dollar. *(Applause)*

So it comes down to two basic concepts. It's focus and it's efficiency. These are the strengths of the private sector. From Verizon working with the city of New York in the wake of 9/11 to fuel the generators that helped the first responders to the Red Cross teaming up with FEMA and local organizations to deliver emergency assistance to victims of Hurricane Katrina, we've seen that good can come from the private sector partnering with nonprofits in government to meet the ever-growing unmet needs.

The private sector can also help government build bridges and inspire hope. Last month I met with Prince Harry in London to discuss the Fisher House sponsorship of the Invictus games, the international sporting event held for wounded and rehabbing servicemen and women and veterans. Thirteen countries will come together and compete. They'll use the power of sport to inspire recovery, support ongoing rehabilitation, and celebrate the hard work and dedication to country and to self. They'll also educate the public about the journey to recovery in a framework that honors every competitor, and that's how it should be.

There's a third component. The VA must gather and apply insight from the people on the ground who are most familiar with what veterans need. We have to continue to encourage and recognize service by good people everywhere. From the staff and volunteers of organizations like The American Legion and Fisher House, to the doctors and the nurses and health care professionals who do such tremendous work caring for veterans and active duty servicemen and women, to the fund raisers who hold car washes and auctions, to the philanthropists who write the checks.

We must increase the engagement of veterans themselves, the heroes in every community who personify service, who believe in the greatness of this nation with every fiber of their being, who most importantly know the meaning of sacrifice, understand the physical, emotional and logistical challenges of returning home from a grueling tour of duty, sometimes to a public that didn't care.

For nearly 100 years, The American Legion has provided financial, social and emotional support to veterans and members of the Armed Forces and their families. Whether it's joining with local agencies to hold job fairs for veterans ensuring they get hired, offering scholarships to military children, providing assistance in the wake of natural disasters or housing the homeless, you've been there. Your suicide hotline has been so vital in saving countless lives of veterans who suffer in silence. You've retrieved retroactive payments for uncollected benefits, reopened closed cases and restored hope when hope was lost. And you've been there for us time and again.

When we opened our second home in Houston last year, Legionnaires delivered thousands of dollars of comfort items, gift cards and household essentials to that new building. Palisades Post 283 gave one of the largest donations ever to make the Los Angeles Fisher House a reality. *(Applause)* And the Department of Pennsylvania, you led a remarkable grassroots campaign in support of the Pittsburgh Fisher House. *(Applause)* You are in fact represented at every one of the 64 Fisher Houses around the world. You understand the needs not only as veterans but as families, as friends, and as neighbors.

So as the VA undergoes real reform, it needs to seek out the perspective of the very people it seeks to serve with its finger on the pulse of veterans young and old, The American Legion knows where the needs are the greatest and what practices are best suited to meet them. Your perspective will be the asset that this secretary must have if he's going to turn things around. The past few years have been difficult. They've been painful for many of you and disappointing for us all.

Through a renewed commitment of working together, each of us bringing to bear our unique strengths and insights we can restore that focus and trust and we as a nation can resume that sacred responsibility to the honor and care for you, our greatest national treasure. I urge you to continue to make your voices heard. Stay engaged in the process and ensure what comes out of it is finally a system that cares for you and a nation that honors for you. Thank you very much. May God bless you and may God continue to bless the United States of America. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: I'd like to thank you very much for coming to our Convention. I'd like to give you a little token of that. But also I want to thank you for what you do for veterans and their families and our servicemen and women. It's fantastic. Keep up the good work. Give him another big hand. *(Applause)*

### **Operation Comfort Warriors Donations**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: I will now accept donations for Operation Comfort Warriors or any other of our Legion programs.

*... At this time, National Vice Commander Satrom assumed the Chair.*

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (PA): Commander, from the great Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I have a check for \$40,000 for Operation Comfort Warriors.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NJ): On behalf of the Department of New Jersey, we have a \$1,000 check for Operation Comfort Warriors.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GOVERNOR(NY): Mr. Commander, in addition to the New York donations following this presentation, on behalf of the Legionnaires and American Legion family in the Department of New York, we're proud to add this further additional contribution in the amount of \$2,423.64, to bring New York's total contribution to Operation Comfort Warriors to \$88,552.

DELEGATE HEYEL(NY): Mr. Commander, on behalf of the Capt. Oliver C. Chase, Jr., American Legion Post 274 in Peekskill, located in Westchester County in the great Department of New York, Richard Calbo and myself, Howard Heyel, are here to make a donation to Operation Comfort Warriors. Two years ago in Indianapolis, Peekskill donated \$3,170; last year in Houston, it was 4,600; this year it's our privilege and honor to present this check to you for Operation Comfort Warriors in the amount of \$7,500, which, in addition to the department you just heard, brings us up to \$95,000.

DELEGATE BURKE (MA): Good morning, Legionnaires. My name is Bob Burke. I'm vice commander of the Department of Massachusetts. Accompanying me is Past Commander Billy and to my left is current Commander Charlie. We three are representing Simeon L. Nickerson Post 64 down in Middleboro, Massachusetts. We'd like to make a donation of \$9,500 to Comfort Warriors.

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT FINLEY-JACKSON (MO): Good morning. On behalf of the great state of Missouri and home of the World Series Champion Cardinals, we present \$500 to Operation Comfort Warrior.

DELEGATE TAYLOR (OH): Commander, I am Dorian Douglas Taylor from the Department of Ohio, the Fighting Fifth District, and I have a check here for \$200 from our district for Operation Comfort Warriors.

BARBARA CORKER (NY): Good morning, Legionnaires. Thank you for your service. I'm Barbara Corker from the Department of New York, past department president, and my project was Operation Comfort Warriors. We sent a check in for 72,199. Thank you very much.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you, Mr. Commander. Let me first say that I want to thank every post, district, and department for continuing their support, and thank you for the support for Operation Comfort Warriors. As you know, this is a project that's always going to have to happen as long as we have servicemen and women fighting for our country every day. I want to thank you for that. Some donations we have here from the First District, Post 66, Griffith, \$1,500. From some ladies that I went to a church and spoke about Operation Comfort Warriors, one check for \$50, another check for \$50, another check for \$25. From Post 200 in Boonville, Indiana, you know where that is, \$200. And I've got a cash full, and Dan Wheeler will love this, got change and everything else in it, for \$102.79. Thank you. Thank you all so very much for supporting Operation Comfort Warriors.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ME): This is a donation for The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation on behalf of the great state of Maine. We are donating \$2,066.53.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JEFF BROWN (IN): Mr. Commander, this morning before the session began, Department of Montana, in addition to the Legacy donations they made yesterday, brought an additional \$185 to help push to the million dollar mark.

*... At this time, National Commander Dellinger resumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: I need to really say this. You know, I started the year and we had lofty goals, but I never thought that when the day was done, that you all would raise over \$2 million this year for our charities. God bless you all. Give yourself a big hand. *(Applause)*

### **Presentations**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: I would like to call my family to the lectern. And friends. I would like to introduce my wife, Margaret, who allowed me the year to be with you all. My daughter, Anne, and her friend David. Give them a big hand. *(Applause)*

I would like to thank them for allowing me a year off of my honey-do lists and other things so I could do this great job. It has been a fantastic ride. I would also like for the Department of Virginia to please rise. Give them a big hand. *(Applause)*

Thank you very much for everything, all the support this year. Thank you. Last year when I took this office, I also had my son and his wife here, and unfortunately they can't be here because I'm a grandfather as of last Thursday. *(Applause)*

So it has been a great year. Would my vice commanders please come forward. Gentlemen, you have represented me well this past 12 months with your devotion to this great organization and with much sacrifice on your part. And let me say, I may be prejudice but I think they are the best group ever. Give them a big round. *(Applause)*

I would like to present a gift to each one of you.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER NEWMAN: Commander, I would like to interrupt you. On behalf of your five vice commanders, we wanted to get you a gift. And you are one of those

people that have everything, and we really, really scratched our heads on what we could get you. I'm going to present it to you. You can look at it later. There was a lot of things that we could say why we were doing this on this presentation and everything else, and the words that we could say to you to express our gratitude on having served with you for a year. I could stand up here all day and say those words. It came down to one word, and that word is "friend." Thank you very much.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Thank you all very much. *(Applause)*

Thank you very much. It was great being with you all this year. I now call the national historian, sergeant-at-arms, chaplain, and my aide. Each of you played a very important role this year in the success of this year. And I just want to thank each and every one of you. Chaplain, you did a fantastic job. Give him a big hand. *(Applause)*

Charemon, everywhere I turned, she was there taking pictures and recording history as it should be done. *(Applause)*

My sergeant-at-arms did a great job this year, Ron. I want to thank you very much for taking time out of your life. Thank you. *(Applause)*

What can you say about an aide? He was there every step of the way. You know, you talk about me being on the road 333 days this year. Well, he was right there beside me all the way. He took a year out of his life like I did to serve this great organization. Give him a big hand. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN MCCLURE: What do I say? There's an A-team and there's a B-team. Y'all saw the B-team first. *(Laughter)*

And the A-team would like to say, we have a word, too, for our commander: Admiration. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Thank you, sir. I appreciate it. God bless you. Next we have a few words from our national adjutant, Dan Wheeler.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Thank you, commander. First off, I would like to call on Ann Rehbein, wife of Past National Commander David Rehbein, for the purpose of a presentation.

ANN REHBEIN: Commander Dellinger, over 40 years ago you raised your right hand and swore to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. And you did that well for many years.

A year ago, you again raised your right hand and pledged to fight for and preserve the rights of veterans and servicemen and women at home and abroad. And, again, you have done that very well. From the Atlantic to the Pacific, on foreign soil and at home, you have seen firsthand the problems and concerns of our veterans, young and old, the trials and triumphs of the youth of our nation, and the many issues facing our military.

With pride and purpose, you stepped forward as the leader of the world's largest veterans service organization and relentlessly worked to retain and attain the rights and benefits due to those who have fought our nation's wars. You have spearheaded efforts to raise funds for NEF, the Legacy Fund, and other worthy causes. But perhaps your greatest legacy has not been captured on CNN, Fox News, or the *Washington Post*. I have seen firsthand how you seek out servicemen and thank them for their service; how you congratulate a youth champion for an achievement; how you welcome a Legionnaire who traveled to France to visit a father's grave whom he had never met.

And so, Commander Dellinger, for all these reasons, and through the efforts of your wife, Margaret, this Quilt of Valor was created for you in honor of the comfort and healing that you have provided for whoever you have reached out to this past year. It is signed by your friends and peers, and we hope it will bring you much comfort knowing that you have, indeed, built for tomorrow. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Thank you very much, Ann, for this gorgeous quilt.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, point of personal privilege. I would like to ask your national judge advocate and your three executive directors and national treasurer to approach the lectern.

It has been an honor and a pleasure for all of us to serve with you this year. At no time were you unwilling or hesitant about changing your schedule to take advantage of an opportunity that would help The American Legion and America's veterans and their families. You were calm under pressure and gracious at all times. Your staff will miss you, even as we adjust our efforts to assist the new national commander. But to help you adjust to a new schedule, not allowed by the world events and politics that you have so freely taken advantage of and taken care of, we have a few things for you. First of all, we know you like to fish. Don't know if you have everything that you need. It will buy a lot of bait. Here is a \$500 gift certificate for Bass Pro Shops. *(Applause)*

Also, we know that you're a big fan of the Washington Redskins. And we have a little gift for you. It is a genuine historic Washington Redskins helmet that's been signed by John Riggins and Joe Theismann. Thought you might enjoy that. *(Applause)*

And to help you enjoy that — and I hope they win at least one of these games — we have four tickets and a parking pass for you to view the Dallas Cowboys playing the Washington Redskins on December 28, and we have four tickets and a parking pass for you to view the Washington Redskins playing the Seattle Seahawks on October 6. We think those will be two good games. And we hope you enjoy each gift as much as we have enjoyed serving you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Thank you very much. The best thing is I was actually at that game when John Riggins ran for that touchdown against Miami. So it was a great day. *(Applause)*

Thank you all very much for those gifts. You know, we have, and I knew it going in, but when you work with these people day in and day out, we have a fantastic staff. Give our entire staff a big hand, will you? *(Applause)*

*... At this time, National Vice Commander Dillard assumed the Chair.*

**Presentation: Plaque and Colors to Outgoing National Commander  
Harold 'Butch' Miller, Virginia, Past National Commander (Colors)  
John P. 'Jake' Comer, Massachusetts, Past National Commander (Plaque)**

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER DILLARD: 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 to our national commander, Daniel M. Dellinger, the Colors of his year in office and a plaque. At this time I call on Past National Commander Harold 'Butch' Miller of Virginia to present the Colors.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: I ask for the National Championship Color Guard from Post 472, Department of Texas, to bring the Colors of our national commander to the center stage, please.

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

Commander Dellinger, on your watch, The American Legion received unprecedented media attention. You bravely called for a change in VA leadership, because they let our nation's veterans down. When other veterans organizations were silent, you loudly proclaimed and reminded the world that cooking the books while veterans died was not acceptable. You proved that The American Legion was not just about words, but about service, as demonstrated at The American Legion Veterans Crisis Command Centers set up under your direction. You reminded all of us that comfort can even come during the time of national disasters through the generosity of the National Emergency Fund. In short, you have done The American Legion proud and the Department of Virginia proud. And we thank you for that great service. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Thank you, Commander Miller. You and so many other past national commanders have been a treasure trove of knowledge and an example of how to represent The American Legion as the national commander. I only hope to be able to provide this same wise counsel and advice to my successors as my predecessors have provided me. It is called paying it forward. I will always treasure your friendship. *(Applause)*

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: I now call on Past National Commander John P. 'Jake' Comer of Massachusetts to present the Plaque to our outgoing National Commander.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Commander, will you please join me. You have been a great champion for our veterans, their families and The American Legion. You have led us with class, professionalism and wisdom. Indeed, you were a stalwart advocate for veterans when confidence in the VA system hit an all-time low. I am happy to present to you a plaque, which attests to your election to the high office of national commander of The American Legion for the year 2013-2014.

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 28th day of August, before the delegates assembled at the National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Commander, you have been one of the best. You will go down in history as one of the greatest national commanders that we have ever witnessed because of the year of service, your television experience, and you didn't let the veteran down when everyone thought they were going out the door. Commander, congratulations. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Thank you, Past National Commander Comer. Your wise counsel has been truly valued by me this year. 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. And 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 how to build a better tomorrow, today. Thank you all very much. *(Applause)*

... *At this time, National Commander Dellinger resumed the Chair.*

### **Special Order of Business: Election of National Officers**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: We have now come 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, commander. If I may, as a point of personal privilege, I just want to thank everyone who sent the nice cards, letters and wishes during my illness this past winter. Thank you.

Rules for Election of National Officers.

Rule 15 final sentence: Election of National Officers shall be by roll call.

Rule 17: Prior to the election of National Officers, the National Commander shall appoint, subject to approval of the convention, a Judge of Election and such number of tellers as he deems necessary, provided that the total tellers so appointed shall be an odd number. In a contested election each candidate going to the ballot shall be entitled to one teller of his choice.

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 Delegation Chairman shall deliver a written ballot to the tellers. Such ballots shall be in the hands of the tellers before communication is made to the National Commander for announcement of the results.

Mr. Commander, that completes the reading of the rules pertaining to the election of national officers.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Thank you, judge advocate. As chairman of this Convention, I now appoint as judge of the election, Dale D. Chapman, adjutant of the Department of Virginia; and as tellers of the election, David W. Salak, adjutant, Department of Nebraska; Pat Lafferty, adjutant, Department of Michigan; and Don Epperson, adjutant, Department of Oregon. Will the judge and tellers of the election please come forward. National Adjutant Daniel S. Wheeler will now call the roll of the departments. The purpose of the roll call is to receive nominations for the national commander of The American Legion.

*[The national adjutant calls each department in turn.]*

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN STACEY (AL): Mr. Commander, I'm Wayne Stacey, chairman of the delegation from the great state of Alabama, the state that produces football national champions. At this time, Alabama would like to yield to another great football state, Nebraska. *(Cheers and applause)*

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BRUCKNER (NE): Mr. Commander, Dave Bruckner, delegation chairman from the state of Nebraska. Mr. Commander, I request that the Chair recognize Robert Craig for the purpose of making a nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Granted.

DELEGATE CRAIG (NE): Mr. Commander, past national commanders, national officers, fellow delegates, and distinguished guests, I am Bob Craig, a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of Nebraska.

I have a friend. I met him in 1978 in New Orleans at the 60th National Convention of The American Legion. Although we were both from Nebraska and I had heard his name, we had never met before. And here we were assigned to be roommates. He wasn't in the room when I arrived, but I noticed the open closet contained denim jeans and a pair of cowboy boots. I wondered just what kind of man my roommate was. Well, here we are 36 years later at yet another National Convention, only now I know what kind of man he is, and I am certain most of you do, too.

I have a friend, and his name is Mike Helm. This friend and I have traveled many a road together in the past nearly four decades. We have both remained very active in this great organization in our own ways and through different callings. While I joined our department staff the very next year after we met, Mike, an Army veteran of service during the Vietnam era, took an entirely different path.

My friend Mike was already a busy young man in his community, having joined the same American Legion post his father belonged to in the small country town of Lebanon, Nebraska. He went right to work in his post and, like some other officers here can relate to, was elected Adjutant nearly immediately. I'm sure you know the rest of the story. He has spent a lifetime serving our American Legion in a wide range of appointed and elected offices at every level of our organization.

Along the way, both my friend and I have married, raised families, and retired from satisfying and productive careers. And we've also been blessed to share the experience and



comradeship of our fellow American military veterans through our participation in The American Legion.

Mike has served us very effectively at the national level on the Executive Committee, as a national vice commander, and through several commission appointments and chairmanships. He has recently completed traveling the nation and visiting with you in your own departments for the past couple of years. His credentials are impeccable, and his approach to every assignment has been of measured and positive action. You know him and are well aware of his qualifications. Mike has also been a stalwart friend and mentor to me as I worked many years for this organization. Now it is my extreme opportunity to endorse and affirm Mike for his many talents and abilities in research, organization, mentorship, leadership and action, all with a teaching, loving, and caring attitude to those he leads and serves.

Today I know who that young man with those denim jeans and cowboy boots I met those many years ago has become. He is a family man, a community man. He is a selfless, giving man. He is a church man. He is a teaching man. He is a man with servant spirit. He is a man of consistency and of action, and he is a man possessing great leadership skills.

Mike Helm is a man ready and capable to stay on course in leading The American Legion to greater national service as we prepare to enter our second century of veterans still serving America. He is poised for the challenge before him. Yes, my friend and I have experienced this life journey across the years, and he has shared his love of God and country with each of us. It's very easy to understand why Mike Helm has distinguished himself as a friend to all of us.

Therefore, it is my humble honor and privilege to place in nomination for the high office of national commander of The American Legion the name of our good friend and great Legionnaire, Nebraska's own Michael D. Helm. Thank you. *(Applause)*

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KING (AK): Mr. Commander, Ernest King, chairman of the delegation from Alaska. Mr. Commander, Alaska yields to South Dakota.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MCDONALD (SD): Mr. Commander, Rick McDonald, chairman of the delegation from South Dakota. Mr. Commander, I request that the Chair recognize NECman Paul Evenson for the purpose of seconding the nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: The Chair recognizes Paul Evenson.

DELEGATE EVENSON (SD): National Commander Dellinger, fellow delegates, and distinguished guests, I am Paul Evenson, a duly registered delegate from the Department of South Dakota. I am truly honored to come before you today to second the nomination of not only a great friend but a father, a husband, and an outstanding Legionnaire. Mike and his family epitomize the qualities of a true American Legion family. Mike began his Legionnaire career in the same post as his father, John, a World War II veteran in Post 313 of Lebanon, Nebraska.

Mike's wife, Debbie, is an active Auxiliary member who has served as a district president and as department junior activities chairman. Mike and Debbie have five children, and they have all been involved in either the Sons of The American Legion or the Junior Auxiliary. We all have watched Mike and Debbie's children as they have grown up because it was always a huge priority for the Helm children to attend National Conventions, Washington conferences, and other Legion functions to witness The American Legion at work. The Helm children are high achievers. They have been taught strong Midwestern family values, and they know the importance of service to their God, their country, and their family.

Son Aaron and his wife Robie are graduates of West Point and are both serving with the 69th Air Defense Artillery in Kuwait. Daughter Beckie and husband Jaron are graduates of Kansas State and reside in San Antonio, Texas. Jacob is now a senior at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs and has his eye on a jet. Matthew is beginning his senior year at Kansas State and is in the Army ROTC program. And Timothy is a senior at Decatur High School. *(Applause)*

Mike has also always mentored other youth by serving in his church as an active officer and as a catechist, being a 4H leader and serving as a Cub Scout and Boy Scout Scoutmaster.

Mike's qualities as a son, a husband, a father, and as a Legionnaire make it very clear: His dedication and commitment to everything in his life will make him an outstanding American Legion commander. It is with great pride that I second the nomination of Mike Helm for the high office of national commander. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: I now call on the national adjutant for continuation of the roll call.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BEISCHEL: (AZ) Mr. Commander, Judi Beischel, delegation chairman from Arizona. Arizona was The American Legion's first Crisis Command Center. Mr. Commander, Arizona yields to Oregon.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MORRIS (OR): Mr. Commander, I am Mike Morris, chairman of the delegation from Oregon. Mr. Commander, I request that the Chair recognize Charlie Schmidt for the purpose of seconding the nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: The Chair recognizes Charlie Schmidt.

DELEGATE SCHMIDT (OR): Commander Dellinger, past national commanders, national officers, delegates and alternates to the 96th National Convention, my fellow Legionnaires, guests, and ladies and gentlemen, I'm Charles Schmidt, delegate from the Department of Oregon.

It is a special honor to stand before you this morning in support of a remarkable American who proudly and honorably served our nation as a soldier in the United States Army during the Vietnam era, a veteran who has for 43 years unselfishly given of himself in service to The American Legion and a Legionnaire who is prepared and ready to accept the highest honor our organization can bestow on any one of our members, that of national commander of The American Legion.

Candidate Michael D. Helm comes to us by way of the Department of Nebraska. Mike has spent his entire life in the Midwest with the exception of his time in his military service. Midwesterners are often described as those who embrace hard work and opportunity, those who never waver in the face of adversity, and those who never stop believing in the promise of America.

Mike Helm has carried these values throughout his life and many more that he has acquired along life's journey. All have served him well as a soldier, a postman, a Legionnaire, and as a husband and a father. I have no doubt that they will serve him well as national commander as well. By service to his post, county, district, department, and our national organization, as we have just heard, Mike Helm will bring over four decades of Legion service and experience to the office of national commander.

I observed his leadership abilities on numerous occasions as he served as our national vice commander, as Nebraska's National Executive Committeeman and alternate, as chairing our national VA&R and Foreign Relations Commissions, and serving on other important committees and commissions.

Consistently, I see Mike Helm's dedication and energy, his confidence, vision and that Midwest unwavering commitment to our Four Pillars, our five cardinal principles, and to the ten enduring phrases of our Constitution's preamble.

Mike Helm is prime to confront the challenges that may lay ahead for The American Legion. We have already experienced challenges that have tested our resolve. Sequestration and quality and accessible health care for America's veterans. Our resolutions to Congress have warned of downsizing our national defense, creating a hollow military. Our organization courageously and boldly stood up calling for change to the VA health care system. These challenges to our defense and veterans pillars will not be resolved overnight.

As Legionnaires, we must keep America focused on these and other veterans' issues and concerns. But Mike Helm is well-versed in these issues, and he will carry our messages forward, loud and clear. Under Mike Helm's leadership, The American Legion will stay the course, serving America and serving veterans as our founders mandated us 95 years ago.

My fellow Legionnaires, as a delegate to this Convention, it is my privilege and honor to second the nomination of a true American, of a Legionnaire and a friend, for national

commander of The American Legion, Michael D. Helm from the Department of Nebraska. ... *At this time a demonstration of support ensued.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: The adjutant will continue the roll call.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (CA): California! The great Golden State, home of Past National Commander Bruce Thiesen, home of Past President Nancy Brown-Parks, cast all our delegation votes for the next national commander, Mike Helm.

ACTING DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MCCURDY (CO): Commander, Frank McCurdy. I'm acting delegate chair from Colorado. Colorado rocks, and so does Mike Helm. We vote our entire delegate strength towards Mike Helm for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MURRAY (CT): Mr. Commander, Bob Murray, department commander and delegation chairman for the state of Connecticut, home of Sikorsky Helicopters and Electric Boat submarines and the UConn Huskies. We cast all of our delegate votes for Mike Helm.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ANDRES (DE): John Andres, delegation chairman for the small but generous state of Delaware. I affirm the nomination of Mike Helm for the high office of national commander.

DELEGATE HUFFY (DC): Warren Huffy, from our nation's capital, second the motion of Mike Helm as commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SCHWABE (FL): Mr. Chairman, Art Schwabe, delegate chairman for the state of Florida, home of the snowbirds, cast its votes for Mike Helm.

DELEGATE OWNBY (FR): Mr. Adjutant, H. Ownby, delegate to the 96th Convention, from the Department of France, the true home of The American Legion, cast all nine votes for Mike Helm.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GOODMAN (GA): Mr. Adjutant, Randy Goodman, delegation chairman from the great state of Georgia, cast all 56 votes for Mike Helm for the high office of national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SIEGFRIED (HI): Marvin Siegfried, delegation chairman from the Aloha State of Hawaii, proudly seconds the nomination of Mike Helm as our next national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ADAMS (ID): Ron Adams, delegation chairman from Idaho, famous for potatoes and supporting our veterans with our annual food convoys, Idaho truly is what America was, casts all our votes for Mike Helm.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IL): Illinois, the Prairie State of Illinois, seconds the nomination for Mike Helm for national commander.

DELEGATE HILTON (IN): Ken Hilton from Indianapolis. We cast all votes for Mike Helm for national commander. Thank you.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DEMAREST (IA): Jim Demarest, Delegation Chairman from the Tall Corn State of Iowa, proudly cast our votes for our friend, neighbor, and next national commander, Mike Helm.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SANNEMAN (KS): Gaylord Sanneman, delegation chairman from the great state of Kansas, cast all our votes for Mike Helm.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GOLEY (KY): Marty Goley, commander and delegation chairman from the great state of Kentucky for the home of 2017 National Convention and the home of the University of Kentucky Wildcats, second the nomination for Mike Helm for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JACKSON (LA): Louisiana Delegation Chairman Jim Jackson, casts 33 votes for Mike Helm for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HARGREAVES (ME): John Hargreaves, delegation chairman from the great state of Maine, proudly seconds the nomination of Mike Helm as national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BAKER (MD):Carolynn Baker, commander and delegation chairman. The great state of Maryland casts its 68 delegate votes for Mike Helm. And we invite

everybody to Baltimore for the 2015 National Convention to be held in Maryland next year. We look forward to seeing you.

DELEGATE BRAULT (MA): Louis Brault, senior vice commander, with Chairman Charles Towers, great state, home of Past National Commanders Paul Morin and Jake Comer, second the motion for Mike Helm for national commander.

DELEGATE WOOD (MX): Michael D. Wood, Department of Mexico. We cast all our votes for Michael D. Helm.

DELEGATE WALLACE (MI): Jim Wallace, commander, Great Lake State of Michigan, home of Past National Commander Tom Cadmus, votes its entire delegate strength for Mike Helm.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MN): Minnesota proudly seconds the nomination of Mike Helm.

DELEGATE GOSA (MS): Robert Gosa, NEC from Mississippi, the Hospitality State, proudly seconds the motion for Mike Helm as the national commander. Thank you.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GOODIN (MO): Tom Goodin, delegation chairman for the great state of Missouri, the Show Me State, home of six-star General "Black Jack" Pershing and five-star General Omar Bradley, seconds the nomination of Mike Helm.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ELLWEIN (MT): Dick Ellwein, delegation chairman from Montana, the Big Sky Country. Montana cast all our votes for Mike Helm for national commander.

DELEGATE MICHALSKI (NV): Ron Michalski, NEC, Department of Nevada casts all delegate votes for new national commander, Michael Helm.

DELEGATE ANDERSON (NH): Maurice Anderson, Department of New Hampshire, the Live Free or Die State, we proudly cast our delegation strength for Mike Helm for national commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NJ): New Jersey, home of the Baseball American Legion World Champions, casts all its votes for Mike Helm.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JARAMILLO (NM): Robert Jaramillo, delegation chairman for the state of New Mexico. We cast all our votes for Mike Helm.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GOVERNOR (NY): Mr. Commander, Ken Governor, chairman of the delegation of the great Department of New York. Mr. Commander, New York unanimously and enthusiastically seconds the nomination.

DELEGATE TOPPIN (NC): E.C. Toppin, North Carolina, home of the two great Legionnaires, Ray G. Smith, Jerry D. Hedrick, home of The American Legion Baseball World Series, cast all 53 votes for Mike Helm.

DELEGATE WEIBLE (ND): Don Weible, department commander, North Dakota, home of Past National Commander H.F. "Sparky" Gierke, cast all our delegate votes for Mike Helm. Thank you.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KAUFMAN (OH): Jeff Kaufman, delegation chairman for the Department of Ohio, proudly casts all our votes for Michael D. "Mike" Helm for national commander.

DELEGATE HAAS (PA): Denny Haas from the great Department of Pennsylvania, with the highest delegate count, cast all 188 delegate votes to Mike Helm.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SCHOLTEN (PI): Herbert Scholten, delegation chairman, Department of the Philippines. We unanimously cast our votes for Michael D. Helm.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN NARVAEZ (PR): Angel O. Narvaez, president of the delegation and state commander. We second the motion and highly give all our delegation votes to Mike Helm for national commander.

DELEGATE REED (RI): Leonard Reed, commander, Rhode Island. We cast all our 12 votes to Michael Helm for national commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (SC): The great state of South Carolina casts 31 votes for Mike Helm.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HENSLEY (TN): Mr. Chairman, Bob Hensley, delegate chairman from the great state of Tennessee, the Volunteer State, home of the Vols and the Lady Vols, casts all its 37 votes for candidate Mike Helm.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN FLEMING (TX): Jim Fleming, delegate chairman for the great state of Texas, home of Past National Commander John Brieden, casts all votes for Mike Helm.

DELEGATE WAGNER (UT): Dennis Wagner, vice commander, great state of Utah, home of our legendary William E. Christoffersen, National Executive Committeeman for 51 years, we cast all our votes for Michael D. Helm.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GRAY (VT): Richard Gray, commander and delegation chairman from the Green Mountain State, home of Ben & Jerry's and Green Mountain Coffee. We proudly cast all our votes for Michael Helm for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DIXON (VA): Mr. Adjutant, Linden Dixon, chairman of the delegation from Virginia. We proudly cast all of our delegate strength for Mike Helm.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WA): Mr. Adjutant, the great state of Washington, the Evergreen State, the real Washington, home of the Seattle Seahawks, proudly casts our entire delegate strength of 39 votes for Mike Helm.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BUCHANAN (WV): Mr. Chairman, Fred Buchanan, delegate chairman of the great state Almost Heaven West by God Virginia, home of Past National Commander Miles Epling, the Marshall University Thundering Herd, and the West Virginia Mountaineers, proudly casts its entire delegate strength for Mike Helm.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CHAPPELL (WI): Mr. Adjutant, Bob Chappell, delegation chairman, Department of Wisconsin. The Mighty Cheeseheads of Wisconsin, home of the greatest football team in the National Football League, casts all 70 ballots for Mike Helm.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN UHRIG (WY): Doug Uhrig, chairman of the delegation from Wyoming, is proud to second the nomination for Mike Helm for national commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, all departments in good standing are present.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: I now recognize from the floor microphone number one.

DELEGATE RUMSEY (NY): Mr. Commander, Susan Rumsey, delegate from New York. 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 Michael D. Helm 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 DELLINGER: There is a motion before us to suspend the rules of this Convention pertaining to the election of the National Commander and the nomination and election of national vice commanders, which rules shall be automatically reinstated at the conclusion of the election of national vice commanders. Is there a second? ...*Second*. Hearing a second, this motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor of the motion signify by saying aye. Opposed, Nay. Motion carries. I now recognize from the floor microphone number two.

DELEGATE MARTEL (FL): Mr. Commander, Paul Martel, delegate from the Department Florida and home of Past National Commander Clarence Hill. Mr. Commander, I move that the nominations for the national commander be closed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: 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 opposed signify by saying nay. Motion carries. I now recognize from the floor microphone number one.

DELEGATE SHREVE (GA): Mr. Commander, I'm Mark Shreve, a delegate from the great state of Georgia. Mr. Commander, I move that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention and that Michael D. Helm be elected national commander by acclamation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Is there a second? ...*Second*. Hearing a second. There is motion before us that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention and Michael D. Helm be elected national commander by acclamation. All those in favor of the motion signifying by saying aye. Opposed by saying nay. Motion carries. 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 Michael D. Helm as the national commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: I declare Michael D. Helm elected national commander of The American Legion. (*Applause*)

Will the sergeant-at-arms assist the new National Commander of The American Legion to the platform. National Executive Committeeman Jerry Landkamer from the Department of Nebraska and the commander's brother, Jim Helm, will escort him to the stage. (*Applause*)

Commander Helm, congratulations. This is a special day to share with your family, many of whom are with you today. But some members of your family were unable to be here because they are currently deployed in Kuwait. They have been watching your election via feed on the Internet. And now, commander, we are pleased to allow them to join us now. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome First Lieutenants Aaron and Robie Helm live from Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. (*Cheers and applause*)

AARON HELM: Dad, from across the world, Robie and I would like to wish you congratulations on your election as national commander of The American Legion. I know that your climb to the top has been a long one, full of hard work and dedication, and I am proud to have been with you for many steps along the way.

I may not remember my first National Convention. I was only one month old at the time, but I do remember many that I attended after that time and the countless state and local conventions, meetings, and volunteer hours. These events proved formative for my brothers, sister, and I as we grew in an environment that fostered important values such as patriotism, duty, and integrity. I attribute the fact that I am here now to you and what is now your organization for inspiring within us an enduring sense of love for our country.

To the members of The American Legion, thank you for providing that environment for myself and countless others. May the organization continue to prosper and grow in the coming year. I know that an entire year under the leadership and guidance of my dad might seem daunting for some, but just remember, I survived 26 of them so far, and I didn't turn out too bad. (*Laughter*) In reality, you are in excellent hands.

Once again, Dad, congratulations on your achievement. I know that you will be excellent. Thank you for being a great role model for my siblings and I.

ROBIE HELM: We love you and we can't wait to come home and see you soon. Congrats, Mike. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: 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 Mike, you know how privileged I am to have you, the fourth national commander that has served under Comer's clan. It is a great honor. Raise your right hand and repeat after me:

I, Michael D. Helm, do solemnly pledge myself, to perform faithfully and impartially the duties of the office of national commander of The American Legion of which I have just been assumed.

I further pledge that I will support and defend the Constitution of The United States of America and the National Constitution of The American Legion. And I further pledge that I am not a member of, nor do I subscribe to the principles of, any group opposed to our form of government, so help me God. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Ladies and gentlemen, the 2014-2015 national commander of The American Legion, Michael D. Helm. *(Cheers and applause)*

*... At this time, the delegation viewed a video.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: *Hello. My name is Mike Helm. I'm from the Department of Nebraska, and I'm from Jack Helt Post 313, a little post in southwest Nebraska. The year I was born, 1949, my mother and father moved to a farm close by my post. They had already had four children, and I was the fifth, and then following that we had three more. There were eight of us —four boys and four girls.*

*My older three brothers all served in the service. My oldest brother retired from the Special Forces. And my next brother, Fred, retired as a lieutenant colonel in the Army. And then my next brother, John, he was actually my first brother to go to Vietnam. Then my sisters are all involved in nursing and teaching and community-type service things. So Mom and Dad raised us that way.*

*I went to school in a little country school. There were two buildings, the first four grades in one building, fifth through eighth in the other building. I went to the seminary in my high school years. Then later I was drafted into the service, and then I volunteered for Airborne and eventually went to Ranger school. Then, of course, to the 82nd Airborne Division.*

*When I started out in The American Legion, when I came back from the service, I went to a farm sale. The post adjutant asked me to join The American Legion. I said I wanted to because my father was a member here.*

*I think the campaign showed me, as I've gone along and visited other departments, the great things that are really happening within The American Legion, individuals stepping forward and coming up with new ideas of how to serve the people within their own department or within their own post, whether it be helping veterans with PTSD or TBI, giving them a place to go to rehab, to working with the homeless program and feeding the homeless, just the reach-out that The American Legion is showing within those departments is a driving force for me. *(Applause)**

**Acceptance Speech: Newly Elected National Commander  
Michael D. Helm, Nebraska**

Today on this otherwise joyous occasion for me, a shadow falls over this convention in the passing of my great friend and mentor for many years. Jerry Hedrick has passed on to the great Legion Post in the Sky. Jerry Hedrick, the NECman from the great Department of North Carolina, was a presence in this organization for so many years that he has touched the lives of all of us in a very good way. Jerry was always positive. I don't believe I ever heard Jerry say a harsh word about anyone. He would look at an issue and give you an honest course of action that he thought was best for you and best for the organization. I know his wife, Marie, Adjutant Frank and the whole Department of North Carolina are saddened beyond words. And we all share that sadness. Jerry, my friend, let me just say this in paraphrasing St. Paul in his second Letter to Timothy: You have fought the good fight. You have finished the race. You have kept the faith. Your reward in heaven is certainly deserved. Rest well, my friend. Rest well. *(Applause)*

Now I would like to say that this is a humbling position that I find myself in as I congratulate and thank National Commander Dan Dellinger for a great year of service to The American Legion. You have polished and made shine The American Legion emblem as a great symbol for all to see. This Convention and all of our membership thank you. It would be a shame if we don't take advantage of your efforts. I promise you, we will not fail you. (*Applause*)

I want to thank Past National Commander Jake Comer for all of his support and guidance as I came up through the ranks. He has been a true mentor and friend not only of me but my entire family. My thoughts and prayers are with you as in a very short time you have lost two great friends in Dick and Jerry.

Let me now recognize my family. First, my wife. She knew from the start that I had a love and commitment to The American Legion family that was going to take precedence over our family from time to time. I want to thank her for the support she has given me over the years. My love, my wife, my honey bear, Debbie. I love you. (*Applause*)

Of course, you all watched our family grow over the years. It was always fun to come to a National Convention to see another of Mike and Deb's kids make the scene. First Aaron and his wife, Robie, both graduates of West Point. They are just finishing a deployment to Kuwait and will return to Fort Hood next month, and then Aaron will make a quick trip back home to rescue Viola from the hands of Timothy. Rebecca, who presented my Commander pin, and her husband, Jaron Cox, they are both graduates from K-State University in Manhattan and reside in San Antonio, Texas. Jacob is a senior this year at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. I will certainly be there when he graduates in May. My third son is Matthew. He is a sophomore at K-State in Manhattan, Kansas, and is in the Army ROTC program. And last is Timothy, who placed on my nametags. He is a senior at Decatur Community High School in Oberlin, Kansas.

I wish my mother and father were here. They came to enjoy National Conventions in their later years. My dad, John, loved the parade and finally quit coming when he couldn't stand and salute the Colors as they passed by. He has joined Post Everlasting. But my mother Helen is watching on Legion TV back home. Hi, mom. (*Applause*)

Let me real quick introduce my immediate family. My brother Jim and his wife, Janice, from McCook, Nebraska. My sister Kathy Brashears from Curtis, Nebraska. My sister CeAnne and husband Marty Rinehart from Ogallala, Nebraska. Their son, John Henry Rinehart, who is my Godson, from Colby, Kansas. My niece Natasha and her husband, Andrew Sloan, from Kernersville, North Carolina. And my nephew Andrew Helm from Athens, Alabama. Also, I have a sister in St. Joe, Missouri, and a brother in Seattle, Washington, and I have a deceased brother, Retired Lieutenant Colonel Fred, and my sister, Mary, who is also deceased.

Family is bigger than genetics, and growing up in the Helm family had a closeness with the Shobe family. We shared the same religion, ideals, joys, and sorrows over the years. And I'm happy to have Cindy Whitely here from Lawrence, Kansas, to share in this moment.

Let me get to my department. I just want to remember Wayne Davis from up in District 1. He was my first and most important mentor. He has gone on before us, but he was a great individual who always had time to be a part of my efforts.

I want to thank my campaign manager, Don Suchy, and his wife, Marge. They spent many hours on this campaign. He provided wise counsel to me as the campaign unfolded, and I will always be grateful for that. Thanks, Marge. And Don, just remember, you're not done yet. (*Laughter*)

Also, Doug Boldt and his wife, Mary Ann. They have been a great team in providing support and direction as we prepared the campaign rooms along the way.

You all know Past National Historian Bob Craig, who gave my nomination speech. He served as my finance officer. He has been a friend for a long time. Thanks, Bob.

I want to recognize Past National President Carol Van Kirk from Sutton, Nebraska. Her support and wise counsel has been very much appreciated. Our NECman, Jerry Landkamer, his wife Starla, and son Thomas. Our Alternate NEC, Bill Crosier. Leon Hagan and his wife, Faye. I would like to thank Adjutant Dave Salak and all of the department staff for their support. And I want to give special thanks for many years of support over the years to Sandy Steinkamp. She is



the rock at department that keeps us going. This is her first National Convention. Thanks, Charlie, for sharing her with us.

I also want to thank Eva Nollette and Virginia Nelson who provided the leadership and support of the Nebraska Auxiliary. Also Harold Thompson and Danny Smith for all of their help with the Sons of The American Legion.

And next I want to thank all of Team Nebraska. We didn't know everything there was to know about the commitment it takes to put together a campaign like this. I am not sure they would do it again, but they have done a great job. And I will only say thank you all for everything you did. We will have more time September 6 to say some more thanks in Kearney. I also want to thank District 9 for all of their help. We are a very small district, but they have put out the effort to make this day happen. I want to recognize Richard Baxter, Roger Floyd, and Joann Ward for their help. Thank you, Nebraska American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion, and Legion Riders, all. It took a lot of years to get here, and so many of you out there have been so supportive and so happy for me. And that extends well beyond my department. I mean all of the departments all across this great country. Thank you all so very much. I love you. *(Applause)*

Let me also recognize and congratulate National President Janet Jefford and Sons of The American Legion Commander Mike Moss on their recent election. *(Applause)* We have already sat down to plan a course of direction with The American Legion family along with The American Legion Riders.

One of the greatest documents in our organization is the Preamble to our Constitution that we recite in each of our meetings. I see it as a call to action. "For God and country we associate ourselves together for the following purposes, to uphold and defend ... to maintain ... to foster and perpetuate ... to preserve ... to inculcate ... to combat ... to make right ... to promote ... to safeguard and transmit ... to consecrate and sanctify." I love these words. The man that wrote them was Hamilton Fish, a founding father of this organization. He was a United States representative from New York from 1920 to 1945. He introduced the bill to establish the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. In my early years of The American Legion, I had occasion to meet Past National Commander Fish. He related the fact that he had met a man who knew General Lafayette of the American Revolution. I think that demonstrates what a young idea democracy is. Think about it. From Lafayette to someone to Past National Commander Fish to me.

Now think about how far democracy and freedom has brought this world in that short amount of time compared to the age of civilization. Certainly the footprint is large and more important today than ever. The American Legion has played a large role in making sure this nation stays that same course. That is the plan for this year: "Stay the course." And, no, I do not mean that we shouldn't raise the bar and constantly seek to improve. What I mean by "stay the course" is to continue to live and honor the great traditions and values established by our founders nearly a century ago. These policies and traditions that got us here will continue to guide us forward. First of all, we are a God and country organization, and we will not apologize for that. *(Applause)*

We know that a veteran is a citizen of this country who has offered his or her life to honor this nation's commitment to justice, freedom, and democracy and by that action has had his or her life radically and sometimes violently changed forever. We will not let this nation forget that we owe that individual respect and any help they need in making their lives whole again.

We address those needs with the Four Pillars of our organization. Take, for instance, veterans affairs and rehabilitation. Under the leadership of our national commander, we have drawn the line in the sand. We say now that the health care needs of the individual veteran must be met in a timely manner. We say the VA can do a better job in the claims and appeals process. At the same time, we will continue to seek out answers to what went wrong at the VA and why it went wrong. Those people involved will be held accountable. We know that what happened wasn't an accident or a circumstance. There is an entrenchment in VA that is not helpful to veterans' health care or compensation. We will find it and we will get rid of it. *(Applause)*

At the same time, we will continue to support the VA as a national provider of veterans' health care. We need our VA medical facilities because we know it can be and is the best care anywhere if administered properly. Those calling for the end of the VA and privatization of veterans' health care are wrong. We continue to see The American Legion as partners and friends of the VA. We know they can and will do better.

Also, a great concern we have is our national defense. We cannot continue to see the mounting crises erupting in the world and still think it is a prudent thing to reduce our military force and training. Those forces of evil and hate are enemies of our way of life. This nation must be ready to answer that challenge.

We will also continue our efforts to end illegal immigration. It is a national security issue of great importance. Fair and legal immigration is a good thing that has helped build this country into a great nation. We must continue that process. Anything else is a constant danger, especially amnesty proposals which seek to reward illegal behavior and penalize those who have waited patiently to immigrate the legal way.

We will continue to support our children & youth programs and Americanism programs. These programs are not only a challenge and adventure for our youths, they also make up the fabric that keeps us strong as a nation. This year we will also make a concerted effort in assimilation of citizenship. Hopefully we can utilize those posts across this great country that are near United States Citizenship and Immigration Service field offices to help in bringing legal immigrants to full citizenship. We were involved in that several years ago, and now is the time to renew our efforts.

I know the task ahead is full. We all know that it takes membership to do those things only we can do. Along with all you do in this area, I'm asking you to renew your efforts in renewals. We cannot as an organization grow if we recruit a new member and then fail to renew that member the following years. Right now we are losing at least ten percent of our membership through non-renewal. This has to stop. Your department has a membership recruiting team. It is time to have a department, district, and post retention team.

We continue to ask for better reporting of our post activities. The percentage of posts making the consolidated post report is increasing. But we are still lacking a lot of reports. My department, along with a few others, have been hitting the 100 percent mark. Let's make that a special effort this year. All district commanders should have that as a goal.

For the next year you will hear a lot about my new favorite number: four. And, no, I'm not referring to an errant drive on the golf course, a sport that I never had a passion for. So please don't be offended if I decline to hit the links with you. I am talking about \$4 million for programs that benefit our Four Pillars in all American Legion family programs and charities. And we do this using a 4-by-4, not a truck, but the four wheels that keep The American Legion family moving forward: The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary, the Sons of The American Legion and, of course, our American Legion Riders.

We are going to raise money, \$4 million, from all of our charitable programs, and we are going to do this for God and country. And, yes, I also believe in a 4 million member American Legion family. And we can do it if we work on the four R's: recruiting, revitalization, renewals and reconnecting.

First, look at our great charity programs. I have been involved in fundraising for so many different areas that I could not choose one best program. And I do believe in the family approach. Operation Comfort Warriors provides direct support for our wounded, injured, and ill soldiers, sailors, Marines, airmen, and Coast Guardsmen. Whether it is an Amazon gift card or a backpack full of DVDs, OCW is a great way for us to show our appreciation to those who have sacrificed on our behalf. Our partnership with Soldier's Wish also lends itself to great opportunities to tell our heroes how much we truly appreciate their service. Let's not forget the Child Welfare Foundation, The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund, Temporary Financial Assistance, and the Family Support Network.

Most veterans believe that the nicest thing you can do for them is to be kind to their families. The most common request of a soldier who is dying on the battlefield is: Tell my wife I

love her. Nothing will be appreciated by a veteran more than taking care of his or her family. And that's exactly what these programs are intended to do. The American Legion Auxiliary Foundation supports America's core values by providing additional resources necessary to ensure the success of Auxiliary programs and services such as Spirit of Youth Scholarship and veterans affairs & rehabilitation programs.

Just this week two hurricanes have formed — one in the Pacific and one in the Atlantic. Wildfires, tornadoes, and earthquakes will continue to happen and affect our members in American Legion posts. Commander Dellinger has done a terrific job in increasing awareness about the National Emergency Fund, and I know that I can count on your continued generous support of that great program. The Auxiliary Emergency Fund is a national grant assistance program that provides temporary emergency help to eligible members of The American Legion Auxiliary who have suffered a significant financial setback as the result of an act of nature or other personal crisis.

I'm leaving the choice of fundraising to you. All I ask is that you give. We will track the funding throughout the family, and I believe that we will see that total reach \$4 million.

America is paying attention to The American Legion, not just because we are right on the issues, but because we are doing these great things in our communities. We will always be about service first, but, folks, we can't provide the programs or the service without the membership. Practice those four Rs: Recruit every eligible veteran that you come in contact. Recruit their sons, grandsons, wives, daughters, and granddaughters into The American Legion family. You don't need to be near a military base to reconnect with servicemembers. Reserve and Guard units have deployed in record numbers since 9/11 and most are eligible for American Legion membership. Renewal efforts shouldn't just include those who left your post in the past year, but check back on those who might have left five or even ten years ago. They might have had a change of heart or simply forgot to renew because nobody was proactive enough to take an interest in them.

National Headquarters also offers plenty of resources available for posts that wish to revitalize. Think of it as a 5-Hour Energy shot for a tired post. Check out the resources available in the publications page of legion.org or call your membership division at national headquarters. We will have a banner ribbon for posts, units, and squadrons that reach 100 percent membership as a family. Hopefully each family member will help lift the other units of the family to that 100 percent level. I think this American Legion family approach to membership and to giving will be a plus for everyone.

In closing, I would like to again remind people to stay the course but carry a 4-iron, even if I do hate golf. God bless you all and God bless America. *(Applause)*

### **First Lady Presentation**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: 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. Helm on behalf of all of the past first ladies of The American Legion.

MRS. LUDWIG: Debbie, on behalf of all the former first ladies, I want to welcome you as our newest first lady, and extend our best wishes for the coming year. Godspeed. Congratulations.

MRS. HELM: Thank you. *(Applause)*

### **Election of National Vice Commanders**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Thank you, Mary. I now recognize microphone number two.

DELEGATE MOON (MN): Mr. Commander, Peggy Moon, delegate from Minnesota. 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 DELLINGER: There is a motion before us that nominations for the office of national vice commander be made from the floor. Do I have 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. Those opposed by nay. Motion carries. We will now entertain nominations for the offices of national vice commander from the floor. I recognize microphone number one.

DELEGATE MILLER (FR): Mr. Commander, John Miller, delegate from the Delegation of France. I request that you recognize Past National Commander Tony Jordan for the purposes of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Chair recognizes Past National Commander Anthony Jordan for the purpose of nomination.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER JORDAN: Commander Dellinger, my name is Anthony Jordan, past national commander of The American Legion, delegate to this 96th National Convention. I stand before you to place in nomination for national vice commander a Legionnaire that really needs no introduction, as many of you already know him for his knowledge and dedication and commitment to The American Legion.

A retired U.S. Air Force veteran and 39 years a member of The American Legion, at the post level he has held numerous positions, including post commander. On the department level, he's held many committee chairmanships. He's also a past department adjutant, department vice commander, and department commander in 1990-1992.

On the national level, he was the National Executive Committeeman, 1992 to 1994; Homeland and National Security Committee from 2008 to 2013; Unconventional Forces and Intelligence, 2013 to present; a member of FODPAL, Foreign and Outlying Departments and Posts of The American Legion; Past FODPAL president, 1998 to 1999; FODPAL secretary, 1999 to present. And a darn good one, I might add.

He knows how to communicate. I think his best friend is his computer, believe me. A charter member of the Department of France Past Commander's Club. He's also in the National Past National Commander's Club. Member of ANAVICUS and Ye Steivos.

Mr. Commander, it is with great pride I place in nomination the name of Doug Haggan from the Department of France for the high office of national vice commander of The American Legion for the year 2014-2015. Thank you. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: I now recognize microphone two.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SANNEMAN (KS): Mr. Commander, Gaylord Sanneman, chairman of the delegation from Kansas. Mr. Chairman, I request that you recognize Dave Warnken for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Chair recognizes Dave Warnken from Kansas for the purpose of nomination.

DELEGATE WARNKEN (KS): Good morning. My name is David O. Warnken, National Executive Committeeman from the great state of Kansas. I'm a duly registered delegate to this 96th National Convention of The American Legion. It is with great honor to stand before this convention and place the name of Paul O. Sanford in nomination for national vice commander.

Paul Sanford earned his membership eligibility by his honorable service in the United States Army from 1963 to 1969. He took his basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and AIT at Fort Carson, Colorado. In 1964 and 1965, he served 14 months in the Republic of South Korea as a radar specialist monitoring North Korea at the DMZ.

After his obligation of active duty was completed, he then was placed in inactive reserves with summer camp at Fort Riley, Kansas, and Camp Grayling in Michigan. He received his honorable discharge in 1969. Paul graduated from Paseo High School in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1958. He graduated from St. Mary of the Plains College in Dodge City, Kansas, in 1992. His professional life was spent as a social worker and drug abuse and alcohol counselor in social work investigating child abuse.

Paul is now retired and serving The American Legion in many capacities. Mr. Sanford has served The American Legion well. As district vice commander and district commander, he was responsible in motivating other leaders in obtaining 100 percent membership goals. As Department of Kansas commander, he made a difference motivating the blue cap Legionnaire to excel in all areas. He loves The American Legion and has always done what it takes to help his fellow veterans. Paul was chosen by the Department of Kansas to lead the Centennial Membership Committee in our state with a goal of an all-time high in membership by 2019.

Paul's dedication and drive to succeed is a strong attribute that will carry over in his national position. It will benefit wherever his travels may take him in the future. Paul has the complete and full support of the Department of Kansas to seek this office. It is a high honor to nominate Paul Sanford for the office of national vice commander for 2014-2015. Thank you. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: I recognize microphone number one.

DELEGATE JOYNER (NC): Mr. Commander, Jeff Joyner, delegation from the great state of North Carolina. Mr. Commander, I request you recognize Past Department Commander Patricia Harris for the purpose of nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Chair now recognizes Patricia Harris from North Carolina for the purpose of a nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HARRIS (NC): Good morning. National Commander, national vice commanders, national officers, guests and friends and delegates to this convention, I am Patricia A. Harris, delegation chairman for the great state of North Carolina. It is my honor to come before you to render a nomination for a great friend and Legionnaire, Richard William Neville.

Dick Neville is a U.S. Army veteran and has been a member of The American Legion for 40 years. Dick came to us from the Department of Minnesota where he served in various leadership positions. After moving to Clayton, North Carolina, his devotion to continue to be of service to The American Legion started when he and his wife, Sharon, became a part of the Legion family of Clayton Post 71.

He served in many levels of leadership in his post, district, division, and became our elected department commander in 2007 and 2008. Each time Dick reached a new level of leadership, he was continuing to build new leaders, and growing our membership was a very important part of his agenda for progress. And I know this personally.

In our department, we have a very successful student trooper program from the Law and Order Committee thanks to his leadership and his background in military police and law enforcement in Minnesota. Nationally, he has served on four committees. Currently he serves on the Veterans Employment & Preference Committee.

Dick Neville has been and still continues to be a motivator, a mentor, and he cares deeply for the veterans and the programs of The American Legion. As a family man, he is a devoted husband to Sharon, our department immediate past Auxiliary president. They share two daughters, Brenda and Sara, both members of Auxiliary Unit 71, and two sons, Glen and Chad, members of the Sons of The American Legion Squadron 71.

Dick has served on several committees, also past chef de gare and as a director of Chapter 71 Legion Riders. For 31 years Dick served in law enforcement, and his community involvement as past president of the Lions Club and he also volunteers with the Johnston County Teen Court.

Dick Neville has mentored many. And to this day where he saw potential in me, my life changed, and I know that he would do a great job serving with our national commander as a national vice commander. So it is with great pleasure that the entire Department of North Carolina stand behind this nomination for this high office of national vice commander for Dick Neville for 2014-2015. Thank you. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: I recognize microphone number two.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DIXON (VA): Mr. Commander, Linden Dixon, chairman of the delegation from Virginia. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize Brett Reistad for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Chair now recognizes Brett Reistad for purpose of nomination.

DELEGATE REISTAD (VA): National Commanders Dellinger and Helm, distinguished guests, and delegates to this convention, good morning. I'm Brett Reistad, delegate from the great Department of Virginia. It is my privilege to place into nomination for the office of national vice commander for 2014-2015 a friend and fellow legionnaire who has loyally served The American Legion with honor and distinction for the past 41 years.

William Robert "Bill" Bryant of Quantico Buck Keys Post 28 and formerly Culpeper Post 330 earned his eligibility in The American Legion through his Vietnam War-era service in the United States Marine Corps from 1965 to 1971, being honorably discharged as a non-commissioned officer.

While pursuing what would become a long and satisfying career of public service with the Virginia Department of Highway and Transportation, Bill devoted himself to service in The American Legion, rising through the many committees and chairs of posts and district offices and serving as commander at each level.

His service continued at the department level where Bill distinguished himself as a department commander, alternate National Executive Committeeman, and National Executive Committeeman. Additionally, Bill has served as director of Virginia American Legion Leadership College, vice chairman of our Internal Affairs Committee, and as a delegate to 31 National Conventions. He continues his service as a contributor and a mentor to all of us.

With this said, Bill has also found the time to serve his community as a church volunteer. At the national level of The American Legion, Bill has served as a tenured member, then vice chairman of the Public Relations Commission, and most recently as a member of the Aerospace Subcommittee. Bill is supported by his lovely wife and Past Department President Birdie Bryant, who is his staunchest advocate and herself a treasure of our American Legion family.

Bill is a proven leader who possesses all of the essential attributes, including the wisdom and experience to effectively represent The American Legion and our newly elected national commander. He is a can-do leader who believes in having fun while getting the job done.

Fellow Legionnaires, on behalf of the Department of Virginia, I thank you for your support of our candidate, Bill Bryant, a true Virginia gentleman. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Chair recognizes microphone one.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN UHRIG (WY): Mr. Commander, Doug Uhrig, chairman of the delegation from Wyoming. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize Past National Vice Commander Todd White for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Chair recognizes Todd White for the purpose of a nomination.

PAST NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER WHITE (WY): National Commander, national officers, delegates to this National Convention, I'm Todd White, an authorized delegate to this convention from the Department of Wyoming. It is with great pride and personal privilege that I come before you to introduce Gerald L. "Jake" Jacobs from the Department of Wyoming.

Jake earned his membership in The American Legion while serving in the United States Army from 1971 to 1974 during the Vietnam War. Jake served with the United States Readiness Command with top-secret clearance and is Airborne qualified. He attended jump school at MacDill Air Force Base attached to the 82nd Airborne and was a member of the Army All Forces Jump Team. As a senior communications specialist, he served on temporary duty status in several locations throughout the world during the service including Greece, Spain, Italy, England, Germany, Turkey, Crete, and in joint exercises with the Navy SEALs.

Jake is a 40-year member of The American Legion, and he served as post vice commander, post commander twice, district vice commander twice, district commander twice, and then at the department level. Jake has served on many of our department committees as well as serving as our second vice commander, our vice commander, and he served as our department commander in 2002-2003.

Jake has been very active at the national level of The American Legion, attending many national membership conferences in Indianapolis as well as national leadership conferences and has attended several National Conventions. He served for several years as a member of the National Public Relations Commission and has attended many of those meetings of the commission in Indianapolis, Washington, D.C., and at other National Conventions. He has served his four years as the alternate NEC for Wyoming and then four years as our National Executive Committeeman. He was selected as chairman of the National Executive Committee's Liaison to the National Public Relations Committee for two years. He also served two years on the Citizens Flag Alliance, and he is currently a member of the Media & Communication Commission.

Now, the Jacobs family is indeed an American Legion family, with his wife Jenny, daughter Crystal, and granddaughter Hannah as members of The American Legion Auxiliary and The American Legion Auxiliary Juniors. His grandson, Jacob, is a member of the Sons of The American Legion. And his son, Caleb, is a member of the Sons of The American Legion and also a member of The American Legion because of his service with the United States Army.

Jacobs has demonstrated a true caring for veterans and The American Legion time and time again whenever and wherever asked and does it without hesitation. He possesses the qualities of leadership, honesty, and integrity which are required for the position of national vice commander and I know will continue to be an asset to this national organization. Jake is committed to improving the benefits for veterans and their families, and I know he will continue that commitment in the future.

At this time, I wish to nominate Gerald L. "Jake" Jacobs for the office of national vice commander of The American Legion for 2014-2015. Thank you. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: I recognize microphone number two.

DELEGATE HILLIARD (OH): Mr. Commander, David Hilliard, delegate from the great state of Ohio. Mr. Commander, I move that the nominations for the office of national vice commander be closed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: 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-third vote. All those in favor signify by saying aye. Opposed? Motion carries. Chair now recognizes microphone number one.

DELEGATE LENOTTE (MA): Mr. Commander, John Lenotte, delegate from the Department of Massachusetts. Mr. Commander, I move that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this Convention and that Doug Haggan, Department of France; Paul O. Sanford, Department of Kansas; Richard W. Neville, Department of North Carolina; William R. Bryant, Department of Virginia; Gerald Jacobs, Department of Wyoming, be elected national vice commanders by acclamation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: We have a motion that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this convention and that Doug Haggan of France, Paul O. Sanford of Kansas, Richard W. Neville from North Carolina, William R. Bryant of Virginia, and Gerald L. Jacobs of Wyoming be elected national vice commanders by acclamation. 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. Those opposed? Motion carries. I now call on the national adjutant.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, as national adjutant for The American Legion, I cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention for Douglas C. Haggan, Paul O. Sanford, Richard W. Neville, William R. Bryant, and Gerald L. Jacobs for the office of national vice commander of The American Legion. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: I declare Douglas C. Haggan, Paul O. Sanford, Richard W. Neville, William R. Bryant, and Gerald L. Jacobs elected national vice commanders of The American Legion. (*Applause*)

Will the new national vice commanders come to the platform to be introduced and sworn in. Your new national vice commanders, Douglas C. Haggan, Paul O. Sanford, Richard W. Neville, William R. Bryant, Gerald L. Jacobs. Give them a big hand. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Gentlemen, please face me. 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 there is no rank, for we all serve as equals. We all are aiming for the same goals, the ideals of justice, freedom, democracy, and loyalty.

This means you should always employ the cardinal principles of The American Legion to all of those that we serve: The rehabilitation of all disabled veterans and the care of those who now suffering from wounds, disease and want, to include the care of their family members; the education of our children; educating citizens on the ideals of true Americanism; maintaining a strong national defense. In your travels representing The American Legion, always practice these four pillars in your promotion of service to the community, state and nation. Please raise your right hand and repeat after me.

*... At this time, the national vice commanders were administered the oath.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Congratulations, national vice commanders. Let's have another big hand for our national vice commanders. (*Applause*)

I now call on Past National Commander John Brieden of Texas to present the Colors to our incoming national commander.

### **Presentation: Colors to Newly Elected National Commander**

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER BRIEDEN: Thank you, commander. Distinguished Legionnaires and guests on the dais, distinguished guests and my fellow Legionnaires in the audience, would you please rise for the presentation of the Colors to National Commander Michael D. Helm by the six-time National Champion Color Guard of Post 472 of Houston, Texas. *... At this time the Colors were presented.*

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER BRIEDEN: Salute by the numbers. One! Two!

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

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER BRIEDEN: The audience may be seated. National Commander Helm, would you join me? That sounds pretty good, doesn't it? National Commander Helm.

In the 40-plus years you've been a member of The American Legion, you have served the post, county, district, department, and national levels, and in the numerous capacities at those levels of the organization, you've gained experience and knowledge to lead The American Legion. When you face hard decisions this coming year — and you will face hard decisions this year — seek inspiration and grounding in those Colors that you see.

Old Glory is the same "Star-Spangled Banner" that inspired Francis Scott Key and it's inspired all those who see her wherever she waves. Remember the oath you swore upon entering the service, to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. That is an obligation you still uphold.

The banner of The American Legion will bring to mind the Preamble to the Constitution of this great organization. And as you said a few moments ago in your acceptance speech, this



preamble says we associate ourselves together for the following purposes, and then it lists ten goals of The American Legion that was conceived by our founders and still hold true today.

The American Legion has contributed to America. In fact, has changed America. America would be a different place if there was no American Legion. In fact, I think it would be a poorer place. But America needs The American Legion today more than ever before. And, commander, you are the right man at the right time. Keep your eyes on these Colors and what they stand for. God bless you, Commander Helm, as you lead us in this coming year. Would the audience please rise.

Color Guard, return the Colors of our national commander of The American Legion to post. Once again, by the numbers. Hand Salute. One! Two!

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

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER BRIEDEN: Congratulations.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: This is an exciting time for any National Convention. We have elected a new national commander and look forward to a time of growth and community involvement. This is also the time when The American Legion Auxiliary elects a new president, as this important part of our American 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 Connecticut and believes in celebration of faith, family, and freedom. Eligible for membership through her father, World War II Army veteran William Lucas, she is also eligible through the service of her son, an Army veteran of Desert Storm. A 45-year member of the Auxiliary, she has held numerous positions at every level in the organization. Please give a warm American Legion welcome to National President of The American Legion Auxiliary Janet Jefford. *(Applause)*

**Greetings: Janet L. Jefford, Connecticut, National President  
The American Legion Auxiliary**

Thank you so much for that warm welcome. Commander Helm, on behalf of the over 800,000 members of The American Legion Auxiliary, I want to congratulate you on your election this morning, and I pledge to you that we are ready and willing to work with you and with Commander Moss and the entire American Legion family to grow our membership, to raise funds to support our programs, and to have another wonderful year of service to our veterans, our military, and our families. And I promise my personal pledge to help you reach that 4-by-4. A four million member-strong American Legion family raising \$4 million to support our programs. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: The man chosen to lead the Sons of The American Legion is a 21-year member of Squadron 21 in Golden, Colorado. Eligible for membership through his father's Korean War service in the Air Force, he has been a volunteer at the Denver VA and has served on the Fisher House Board of Directors. He has been married to his wife, Linda, for 38 years. They have three children and seven grandchildren. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion Mike Moss. *(Applause)*

**Greetings: Mike Moss, National Commander  
Sons of The American Legion**

Commander Helm, National President Jefford, it is going to be a pleasure this year to work with both of them. We are going to make our American Legion family stronger, we are going to continue building our bridges, building our links between our programs and our American Legion family, and more than ever we are going to increase our membership. On behalf of the 356,000 members of the Sons of The American Legion, I promise that we will stay with you all

together, we'll work as a family. And, again, I say thank you. It is going to be a pleasure working with you. Thank you. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Commander Moss, please remain with us for a few moments. Also, National Commander Helm and National President Jefford, please join us. Ladies and gentlemen, the national commander of The American Legion, the national president of The American Legion Auxiliary, and the national commander of the Sons of The American Legion. Give them a big hand. (*Applause*)

Just a reminder that the Post Convention National Executive Committee meeting will occur in the Convention Center, Room 213, immediately following adjournment. All the new national officers are to attend. Is there any further business to come before this convention? Please uncover as National Chaplain McClure offers the benediction.

### **Benediction**

**Daniel A. McClure, Iowa, National Chaplain**

I'm going to answer a question that's been asked of me by a lot of folks. Last year we had to leave the National Convention because my wife had some emergency surgeries and stuff lying ahead of her. She's with me, and she's here today. And she's not as steady as she once was, but she's walking fine. She stands right down here. (*Applause*)

Now, when I graduated from seminary, one of the things I was told to do at Baptist seminary says: You must be able to pray or die at a moment's notice. I have been asked to pray a lot this year. No one has asked me to die yet. But there was a third thing, and The American Legion will not allow me to do this. I want to take a collection. (*Laughter*) Thank you, boss. Let's pray together, shall we?

Father, thank You so much for a tremendous year. Thank You so much for your obvious care in our lives and in the hands of our country. Father, as we get ready to go our separate ways, we'd ask that You might go before us, help us to serve You in our respective places. Have Your will and way in each and every thing that is going to be done in the future. Help us to bring honor and glory to You. Help us to put You in your place as number one in our nation. Thank You for the election of officers. We ask for Your wisdom for their year that lies ahead. Now go before us, dismiss us and, again, God bless America. For it is in Your holy name we pray. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Sherry Stanton, please retire the POW/MIA flag. ... *At this time the POW/MIA flag was retired.*

### **Retirement of Colors**

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: The color guard will retire the flag of the United States. The delegates will stand and hand salute on my command. Present arms! Two! ... *At this time the delegation stood and rendered a salute to the Colors.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: The time is now 12:18 p.m. I declare this 96th Annual National Convention of The American Legion adjourned, *sine die*.

... *At 12:18 p.m., the 96th Annual National Convention of The American Legion was adjourned.*

**2014 OFFICIAL AWARDS  
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:** Dr. Donald H. Jenkins, Chief, Trauma, Critical Care and General Surgery, Mayo Clinic

**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:** Michael Cuddyer - Colorado Rockies

**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:** Jake Meyers, Post 1, Omaha, NE (29 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:** Micah Brown, Post 15, Medford, OR (22 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:** Berryhill Post 165, Midland, MI

**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:** Sean Breen, 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: Dennis Barth – Coaches: Josh Copskey, William Gore, Steve Mondile and Michael Rucci, Brooklawn, NJ Post 72

**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:** Tanner Gross, Post 165, Midland, MI

**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:** Zion Benton NJROTC, Post 865, Zion, Illinois – Zachary Dumyahn, Justine Hamilton, Kevin Hamilton, Kayla Savage

**Precision Individual:** Isela Velazquez, R.L. Paschal JROTC, Post 569, Ft. Worth, TX

**Sporter Team:** Hardcore 4, Post 64, Monroe, GA  
Dana Bowen, Maggie Mason, Mary Pratt, Brandon Thomas

**Sporter Individual:** Sarah Osborn, Patriot Shooting Club of VA, Post 233, Richmond, VA

**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:** Sean Breen, Post 72, Brooklawn, NJ with a (.575 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 Pennsylvania

**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:** Sean Breen, Post 72, Brooklawn, NJ with (29 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:** Ryan Lowe (Post 134), Clearfield High School, Clearfield, UT

**Daniel J. O'Connor Award:** Awarded annually to that Department attaining the greatest number of percentage points compiled from information contained in the Consolidated Post Reports and supporting Department narrative. (Originally named the William Randolph Hearst Trophy)

**RECIPIENT:** Department of Virginia

**The American Legion and Scouting "Square Knot" Award:** This award is designed to recognize American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion members who are actively involved in the Scouting program. This award is not meant to be a selective or limited award, but one that is available to any American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion member who completes the requirements for the award. The Award is meant to recognize dedication and work required by an American Legion, American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion member to assist in furthering the Scouting program in The American Legion.

**RECIPIENT(s):** 2013 – George M. Harrison, David F. Jennemann, Jr., Larry E. Wittmayer, William H. Greenleaf, John De Young. 2014 – Thomas J. Pendergast, Charles A. Spitz, Gilbert C. Harper, Tim L. Liffbrig, Peter K. Walsh, Ronald L. Layman, Richard L. Hawkins, Bobby H. Barnes, Robert Wojcikowski, Ronald E. Foster, Russell W. Loquist, Randy B. Strickland, Peter R. De Kramer, Ralph Rivera, Bruce A. Winslow, Michael E. Jones, Richard L. Mills, Michael B. Quintin, Melvin Parsons, Kenneth C. Nichols, Thomas M. Mechler, Frederic M. Sieg, James A. Ashe, Leroy Williams, Lyle E. Miller, Jeffrey S. Burt, Horace, H. Robbins, Jr. (as of: 10/9/2014)

**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:** Martha Cothren, Educator, Joe T. Robinson High School, Little Rock, AR

**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):** *ANAVICUS* – Kosta Sourtzis, Larry Young, Randy Petrie, Roger Hamberg, Arlene Eaton, Charlotte Smith, Colin Luther, Jeanie Carroll-Allen, Henry Ludyka, Al Dunham, Ben McMurachy, W. (Bill) Todd, Lew King, Lloyd Wright, Jack Martin, Kathy Barber, John White, Cathy McGinnity, Paul Lee, Ronald Chaplin, Ghislain Desautels. *INDIVIDUAL* – Real Belanger and M. C. (Dick) Wells.

**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 Missouri, Nebraska, Rhode Island and Wisconsin

**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):** **Category I** North Carolina Food Service, Fayetteville, NC  
**2013** **Category II** L-3 Communications ASD, Ft. Bragg, NC  
**Winners** **Category III** M1 Support Services, Abilene, TX

*Note: The 2014 National Employer of Veterans Award Recipient(s) will not be announced until 2015 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):** **LVER of the Year:** Robert R. O'Keefe, Columbus, OH  
**2013** **DVOP of the Year:** Roy M. Fillion, Grand Forks, ND  
**Winners** **ES Office of the Year:** Brazos Valley Workforce Solutions, Bryan, TX

*Note: The 2014 National Employment Service Award Recipient(s) will not be announced until 2015 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):** Sioux Steel Company, Inc. , Sioux Falls, SD  
**2013 Winner**

*Note: The 2014 Enhance the Lives of Disabled Persons Award Recipient will not be announced until 2015 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):** The Society of St. Vincent de Paul North Idaho, Coeur d' Alene, ID

**2013 Winner**

*Note: The 2014 National Employer of Older Worker Award Recipient will not be announced until 2015 National Convention.*

**National DEPARTMENT History Contest Awards:** Awarded annually at the Fall Meeting of the National Executive Committee to those contestants entered in the National Department History Contest having submitted the One-Year History *Narrative* or *Yearbook* of the Department which best meets the standards established for that particular competition.

**RECIPIENT(s):** Department of North Carolina (**One-Year Narrative History**)  
 Department of Florida (**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**)  
 Alois-Dreikosen Post 469, Marathon, WI (**One-Year Yearbook History**)

**International Amity Award:** Awarded by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the National Executive Committee at such times and places as may be consistent and appropriate. It shall be awarded to specific individuals who shall be war veterans within the accepted meaning of the term and members of an authentic veteran organization established in the territory of any of the nations associated as war-time allies of the United States of America. It shall be awarded to such individuals in recognition of outstanding service in the field of veterans affairs and for service and contributions made in the development of international good will and comradeship between their organization and The American Legion.

**RECIPIENT(s):** None awarded for 2014

**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):** Honorable Jeff Miller, Florida Congressman, Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee

**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.

<b>RECIPIENT(s):</b>	<b>Category I</b>	Detachment of Rhode Island
<b>2014</b>	<b>Category II</b>	Detachment of Colorado
<b>Winners</b>	<b>Category III</b>	Detachment of Iowa
	<b>Category IV</b>	Detachment of Arizona
	<b>Category V</b>	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).

<b>RECIPIENT(s):</b>	<b>Category I</b>	None qualified
	<b>Category II</b>	None qualified
	<b>Category III</b>	None qualified
	<b>Category IV</b>	None qualified
	<b>Category V</b>	Department of Colorado
	<b>Category VI</b>	Departments of France

**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 South Dakota

**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 2014

**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:** Robert J. Ouellette, Sr., Department of Maryland

**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 2014

**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 Colorado

**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 Blake Abrecht

**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 Adam Scalesse

**The American Legion Merchant Marine Academy Award:** Awarded annually to that graduating midshipman of the Merchant Marine Academy, enrolled in the Pre-Commissioning Seminar Course, and selected by the Academy Faculty, as achieving the highest grade pertaining to a 1,000-word composition dealing with the subject of National Security.

**RECIPIENT:** Midshipman Nicholas J. Grippo

**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 Louis Tobergte

**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 Justin Chock

**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**

**Post Participation:**

**Individual Participation:**

**Category II**

**Post Participation:**

**Individual Participation:**

**Departments with 100,000 or more members:**

Department of California

Department of California

**Departments with 70,000 to 99,999 members:**

Department of Maryland

Department of Maryland



<b>Category III</b>	<b><u>Departments with 40,000 to 69,999 members:</u></b>
<b>Post Participation:</b>	None Submitted
<b>Individual Participation:</b>	None Submitted
<b>Category IV</b>	<b><u>Departments with 25,000 to 39,999 members:</u></b>
<b>Post Participation:</b>	Department of Washington
<b>Individual Participation:</b>	Department of Washington
<b>Category V</b>	<b><u>Departments with 10,000 to 24,999 members:</u></b>
<b>Post Participation:</b>	None Submitted
<b>Individual Participation:</b>	None Submitted
<b>Category VI</b>	<b><u>Departments with less than 10,000 members:</u></b>
<b>Post Participation:</b>	Department of Alaska
<b>Individual Participation:</b>	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:** Andrew D. Aninsman, Bensalem Township Police Department, Bucks County, PA

**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:** Sara A. Shaffer, Fire/Emergency Medical Services Department, Prince George's County, MD

**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, Colorado, Hawaii, Maryland and Minnesota.

**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:** Investigative Reporter -Thomas Brennan, The Daily News, Jacksonville, NC (Print Category); Investigative Reporter - Mark Flatten, Washington Examiner, Washington, DC (Online Category); WRC-TV, Washington, DC, Investigative Reporters: Tisha Thompson, Rick Yarborough, Jeff Piper (Broadcast Category).

**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:** Lt. Col. Oliver North, USMC (Ret.)

**The American Legion Patriot Award:** Awarded to an outstanding citizen who has demonstrated a profound and exceptional commitment to military personnel and their families.

**RECIPIENT(s):** The Honorable Bernard Sanders, United States Senate, Washington, DC  
The Honorable Jeff Miller, United States House of Representatives, Washington, DC

**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:** Spc. Cassandra Rousayne, Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD  
**Navy:** CE2 Porfirio Pimentel, Gulfport, MS  
**Marine Corps:** Cpl. Ricardo Gonzalez, FOP AP  
**Air Force:** SSgt. Jessica M. Day, Mountain Home, ID  
**Coast Guard:** OS3 Kristina L. Manson, Kodiak, AK

**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:** None awarded for 2014

**Glen R. Hillis Trophy:** Awarded annually to that Color Guard winning first prize in competition with all other Color Guards during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.

**RECIPIENT:** Harrisburg Color Guard, Post 472, Houston, Texas

**The Lemuel Bolles Trophy:** Awarded annually to that band winning first prize in competition with all other bands during the annual National Convention.

**RECIPIENT:** None awarded for 2014

**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 Minnesota

## The American Legion 95<sup>th</sup> Annual Report

### FOREWORD

The American Legion continued to have a strong year under the leadership of National Commander Daniel M. Dellinger, Virginia. 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	Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania
Clarence M. Bacon, Maryland	John A. Brieden, III, Texas
John P. Comer, Massachusetts	Thomas P. Cadmus, Michigan
Hon. H. F. Gierke, North Dakota	Thomas L. Bock, Colorado
Miles S. Epling, West Virginia	Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts
Robert S. Turner, Georgia	Martin F. 'Marty' Conatser, Illinois
Dominic D. DiFrancesco, Pennsylvania	Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Bruce Thiesen, California	David K. Rehbein, Iowa
William M. Detweiler, Louisiana	Clarence E. Hill, Florida
Daniel A. Ludwig, Minnesota	Jimmie L. Foster, Alaska
Joseph J. Frank, Missouri	Fang A. Wong, New York
Anthony G. Jordan, Maine	Richard M. Pedro, New York
Butch L. Miller, Virginia	James E. Koutz, Indiana
Hon. Alan G. Lance, Sr., Idaho	Daniel M. Dellinger, Virginia
Richard J. Santos, Maryland	

### National Executive Committeemen

Willis Frazier, Alabama	Mervin G. Gunderson, Montana
James E. Pisa, Alaska	Jerry Landkamer, Nebraska
S. Paul Griffin, Arizona	Dale R. Salmen, Nevada
James V. Bynum, Arkansas	Earlon L. Beale, New Hampshire
Alan C. Lennox, California	Daniel E. McCole, New Jersey
Francis W. McCurdy, Colorado	Felix M. Trujillo, New Mexico
Richard W. Anderson, Connecticut	Stanley H. Clark, New York
Larry J. Marcouillier, Delaware	Jerry L. Hedrick, North Carolina
Arturo Rivera, D.C.	Curtis O. Twete, North Dakota
Dennis R. Boland, Florida	William K. Balsler, Ohio
John H. Miller, France	John Wesley Benge, Oklahoma
Charles F. Wessinger, Georgia	Charles E. Schmidt, Oregon
Marvin R. Siegfried, Hawaii	Richard A. Coccimiglio, Pennsylvania
Thomas E. Mattice, Idaho	Herbert J. Scholten, Philippines
Larry W. Moore, Illinois	Ildefonso Colon, Jr., Puerto Rico
Paul I. Steward, Indiana	David A. Golde, Rhode Island
Bruce C. Feuerbach, Iowa	Mickey C. Taylor, South Carolina
David O. Warnken, Kansas	Paul A. Evenson, South Dakota
Randall Coffman, Kentucky	Charles R. Dorman, Tennessee
Charles D. Aucoin, Louisiana	James E. Prendergast, Texas
Paul A. L'Heureux, Maine	Terry D. Schow, Utah
David E. Winpiger, Maryland	Royal E. Sheeley, Vermont
Steven M. Jimmo, Massachusetts	Thomas E. Saunders, Virginia
Michael D. Wood, Mexico	William R. 'Bob' Wallace, Washington
John H. Skinner Michigan	William W. Kile, West Virginia
Raymond DeZurik, Minnesota	David L. Gough, Wisconsin
Robert E. Gosa, Mississippi	William R. Wright, III, Wyoming
Charles W. Goodin, Missouri	

### Alternate National Executive Committeemen

Hardwick Olin Hall, Alabama	Elbert D. White, Maryland
Harold Pawson, Alaska	Francis J. MacDonald, Massachusetts
Richard W. Perry, Arizona	Mark A. Walker, Mexico
Mary V. Erdman, Arkansas	Roger H. Webster, Michigan
Robert C. Brown, Jr., California	Marland A. Ronning, Minnesota
James M. Gates, Colorado	Steve Sweet, Mississippi
D. Joseph Jackson, Connecticut	Kenneth J. Goth, Missouri
Kenneth G. Whitman, Delaware	David M. McLean, Montana
Warren N. Cuffee, D.C.	William D. Crosier, Jr., Nebraska
Harry F. McDowell, Florida	Ronald L. Michalski, Nevada
H. Ownby, France	William R. Roy, Jr., New Hampshire
Charles E. French, Georgia	Charles K. Robbins, New Jersey
Charles A. Patterson, Hawaii	Virgil A. Brown, New Mexico
William Stevens, Idaho	William H. Burnett, New York
Wayne Wagner, Illinois	Coley A. Hunsucker, North Carolina
Jerry L. Jordon, Indiana	Robert L. Krause, North Dakota
Jerry D Sebben, Iowa	Robert J. Kimball, Ohio
Elgin Wahlborg, Kansas	William E. Lonkerd, Oklahoma
David L. King, Kentucky	Robert D. Liebenow, Oregon
Harold D. Burson, Louisiana	Robert C. Miller, Jr., Pennsylvania
Brenda D. Dearborn, Maine	John M. Hunt, Philippines

Edwin Vargas, Puerto Rico  
Robert D. Winston, Rhode Island  
Cecil F. Hennis, South Carolina  
James Huls, South Dakota  
Alvin R. Brown, Tennessee  
(vacant), Texas  
Allan C. Setterberg, Utah

Edward J. Brown, Vermont  
Michael F. Mitrione, Virginia  
Roy L. Layton, 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. 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.

Section 7. 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 affairs of The American Legion, and prescribe their duties and emoluments.

**REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER  
Douglas W. Wooddell, Colorado**

I was honored to be selected as the nominee from Colorado to be a candidate for National Vice Commander, and approved by the Western caucus as the candidate to the national convention in Houston. I was elected at the national convention 25-29 August 2013 in Houston as the Western Region National Vice Commander. The West has upheld the reputation of the "Best is the West" again this year with 5 of the 15 departments being over 100% membership and 6 of the top 10 as of delegate strength date. Thanks to the West for all you have done.

In Houston after the election I attended the post N.E.C. committee meeting and was briefed on current issues being address by The American Legion.

September 3<sup>rd</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> attended the Indianapolis training sessions, spent the 8<sup>th</sup> making phone calls to the western region department officers for introduction and membership boost. The 9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> I spent time at training sessions in Washington D.C. and a briefing on issues being addressed by the DC office. The 10<sup>th</sup> attended the Commanders Congressional Testimony. The 18<sup>th</sup> went to Post 19 in Greeley, Colorado to assist flood victims with clothing and equipment replacement, to give support where needed and to give out information on how they could apply for the National Emergency Fund. Went shopping with members from Post 19 to purchase clothing and supplies for the flood victims and distribute it to the emergency shelter in Greeley, Colorado.

October 4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> attended a membership workshop and Department D.E.C. meeting in Alaska. I was asked to talk about membership and the price of membership. We also discussed the advantages and disadvantages of giving membership to current members of the armed forces that are from Alaska. The 11<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> attended the fall meetings in Indianapolis. Attended the N.E.C. meeting and listened to reports on issues needing attention. The 25<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> attended the fall meeting of the Montana D.E.C. and spoke to the assembly about membership and its direct effect on the programs of The American Legion. Worked on a membership drive with some one on one contact in the area, went door to door talking with veterans. We also discussed the National Emergency Fund and how it helps veterans and those in need, attended the LEAD training session.

November 7<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> attended the fall meeting for the Department of Arizona. Addressed the general membership on the direct connection between membership and how successful legion programs are, the importance of membership and support to the local area with the many programs of The American Legion were also discussed. Membership workshop conferences and fund raisers were also discussed. The 20<sup>th</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> attended a membership workshop in Washington. The local post set up a calling bank and members were called and asked to join their local post. National had sent out staff to help with the workshop. The workshop was very successful and several hundred members were transferred.

December I attended the retirement ceremony for the adjutant of Arizona. Had a chance to again talk with members on membership and the importance of the different offices of The American Legion, we also discussed programs. Home for the holidays.

January 9<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> traveled to Idaho for their mid winter conference. Keynote speaker for their banquet, discussed programs of The American Legion and how it is directly connected with membership. Discussed the importance of increasing membership and its importance for the image of the Legion with Capitol Hill. January 17<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> attended mid-winter conference in Colorado. We attended the swearing in of over 100 new recruits for the Army and addressed the new inductees. Keynote speaker for the banquet and discussed the importance of membership on programs and the benefits available to legionnaires, also the importance membership has on our image in congress. January 24<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> attended mid-winter conference in Rawlins, Wyoming. Attended LEAD training and discussed membership and programs with members present.

February 5<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> traveled to Arizona for membership workshop and conference. Worked with local legionnaires on phone calling to transfer members from headquarters post to local posts. I addressed the members on the importance of legion programs and how we support veterans and their families. Membership drives everything in The American Legion. February 24<sup>th</sup> - March 1<sup>st</sup> traveled to Washington for a membership promotion and meetings with legionaries across the state. Visited Fairchild AFB and met with senior NCOs and discussed how the Legion supports the airmen and their families assigned to the base. We discussed programs and benefits available through The American Legion and the impact they have on the airmen on base. The next day we went to Ephrata Washington and met with members there, continued to Moses Lake and then to Wenatchee and visited the VA CBOC there and met with the staff and discussed their needs and operation. I addressed the members at all posts visited about programs and membership. The 27<sup>th</sup> visited Orting Soldiers home and talked with residences there, addressed members at the post on membership. February 28<sup>th</sup> toured USS Maine submarine at Bangor and discussed The American Legion with sailors at a luncheon. Visited the VAMC and attended dinner reception and again promoted membership and Legion programs.

March 12<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> visited an Oregon membership promotion and assisted in revitalizing of posts and districts in area. Addressed members at a dinner on programs and the connection with membership. March 15<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> traveled to California for spring DEC meeting, addressed group about increasing membership and membership promotion programs. March 21<sup>st</sup> traveled to Utah for dedication of new post home. Spoke to



members and local people about Legion programs and the need to have an active post in their community. The 22<sup>nd</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> traveled to Washington D.C. for the National VA&R Conference and visit to Capitol Hill and the Commanders Testimony to the congress.

April 12<sup>th</sup> attended the Child Welfare Foundation dinner in Colorado. The 26<sup>th</sup> I attended the homecoming of the commander for the Department of Colorado. Discussed the importance of the membership program that was worked in the department and how it helped the department reach its goal for the year.

May 5<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> attended the Spring Meetings in Indianapolis. Attended the NEC meeting to get an update on current issues and items of interest within The American Legion. The 16<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> attended LEAD training and membership promotion program in Colorado Springs, Colorado. May 24<sup>th</sup> marched in a POW-MIA walk during the Memorial Day Parade in Denver, Colorado. May 26<sup>th</sup> represented The American Legion at the graduation ceremony at The Air Force Academy. Presented The American Legion award to the cadet at the ceremony. May 27<sup>th</sup> attended New Mexico Boys State and addressed the students present on the importance of the program and how this week will be an everlasting memory for them as well as the friendships that will form and last for years.

June 7<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> attended Colorado Boys State and served as a senior advisor to the program. I addressed the students on the importance of the program and the lasting influence it will have on their life. June 20<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> attended the Department Convention in Fallon, Nevada. Installed the newly elected officers and addressed the general membership on the different programs of The American Legion and how they relate to membership. The importance of letting their community know who The American Legion is and how we contribute to our communities and the influence we have on Capitol Hill. June 26<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> attended the Department of New Mexico state convention. Discussed programs and how they can be used in New Mexico to make life better for each and every community. We talked about membership and why it is so important to every part of The American Legion.

July 19<sup>th</sup> traveled to New Mexico for the rededication of Post 7, adding the name of past Nat'l Vice Commander TJ Trevino to the post name. Gave greetings from the national organization and noted the importance of an active post in the community.

The Western region has started six new posts this year, 2 in California, 2 in Arizona, 1 in Colorado and 1 in Washington. This shows how hard officers in the West work, not to mention the huge amount of miles that need to be traveled to cover their departments. The West is the best and I am greatly honored to have served as the Vice Commander for this region. Thank you to all veterans that I met this past year and for all of your support and hospitality, this will be one of those years I shall never forget.

### **REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER Robert E. Newman, Indiana**

I have enjoyed this past year as a National Vice very much. It has been an honor to serve with Dan Dellinger an outstanding National Commander. There are so many people I owe a thank you to for their help in getting me to this high office that it would take this entire report to do so. I do however want to thank Garrett Indiana, Post 178, and The American Legion Department of Indiana. I want to give a special thank you to Jerry Hedrick and Dan Ludwig for their support of me this past year. Also the departments in the Central Region Who showed me the finest in Legion hospitality when I was in Departments. Last but not least to the National staff who helped me not only to do my job, but always went that extra mile to make my year successful. It was a challenging year for us in the Northern part of the country with one of the coldest and snowiest years on record. A summary of my visits are as follows:

September 2013

4-8 Training National Headquarters Indianapolis Indiana

- 8-1 Training National Headquarters Washington D.C.  
 10 National Commander's testimony before joint House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee
- October 2013  
 3-6 Department of Indiana Fall Conference  
 13 National Auxiliary President Reception Indianapolis Indiana  
 13-17 Fall N.E.C meeting Indianapolis Indiana
- November 2013  
 2 Present A.N.A.V.I.C.U.S scholarship Trine University Angola Indiana  
 9 Department of Wisconsin Veterans Day Parade  
 10-12 Washington D.C. Wreath laying at the Tomb of the Unknown and Wreath laying at Vietnam Memorial Wall.  
 15-17 Department of Illinois Egyptian Past Commander Club  
 18-19 Membership caravan Department of Indiana
- December 2013  
 6-8 Department of Kentucky District Membership and visit to a National Guard Family Christmas Party
- January 2014  
 9-18 Department of Illinois Membership Caravan  
 18-19 Department of Wisconsin Mid-Winter Conference  
 24-25 West Virginia Membership Caravan
- February 2014  
 11-16 Department of Indiana Membership Roundup  
 22-23 Indiana Post 369 Americanism Banquet Keynote Speaker  
 27-28 Department of Ohio Membership Roundup
- March 2014  
 1-2 Department of Ohio Membership Roundup  
 15 Speaker at Bluffton Indiana Post 111 Birthday  
 19 Speaker at Angola Indiana Post 31 Birthday  
 20 Speaker at Mitchell Indiana Post 250 Birthday  
 22-26 National Commander's testimony before joint House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee and Visit to Indiana's Senators and 3<sup>rd</sup> District Congressman Marlin Stutzman.  
 29 Speaker at Garrett Indiana Post 178 Birthday
- April 2014  
 2-5 Department of Indiana Joint Spring Conference  
 11-12 Department of Kentucky Spring Conference  
 17 Speaker at Lagrange Indiana Post 215 Past Commanders Dinner
- May 2014  
 4-8 National Executive Committee Meetings Indianapolis Indiana  
 21-23 Present Award at Naval Academy Annapolis Maryland  
 26 Memorial Day Speech Griffith Indiana Post 66 and Stoney Run County Park Hammond Indiana  
 31 Indiana State SAL Golf tournament Kokomo Indiana
- June 2014  
 1-2 State SAL Golf tournament Kokomo Indiana  
 7 Keynote Speaker at Dedication of a Veterans Memorial Butler Indiana Post 202
- 13-15 Department of Ohio Buckeye Boy's State Program  
 18 Indiana Boy's State Program  
 21-22 Indiana State Golf Tournament  
 26-29 Department of Michigan State Convention
- July 2014  
 10-13 Department of Indiana State Convention

August 2014  
22-28 National Convention Charlotte North Carolina

**REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER  
William A. Rakestraw, Jr., New Jersey**

I was elected National Vice Commander for 2013-2014 at The American Legion's 95<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention in Houston, Texas August 29, 2013. It has been an honor to serve as National Vice Commander under National Commander Dan Dellinger and represent our National Organization. I want to thank the Legionnaires of New Jersey for their support and endorsement of me for this opportunity.

Immediately after the convention I attended the NEC meeting and a meeting where I was introduced to the National Executive Committee.

September 3-7- I traveled to National Headquarters in Indianapolis for orientation. While there I received detailed briefings from all directors where we toured all facilities and was trained on how to conduct interviews with the media. On Saturday we called the Department Commanders, District Commanders, and County Commanders stressing the importance of membership.

September 8-11-I attended additional training at National Headquarters in the Washington, D.C. office. While there I attended National Commander Dan Dellinger's testimony before the joint session of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees and also met with Congressman Jon Runyan to discuss Veterans programs as it affects New Jersey.

October 25-26- I visited Mechanicsburg PA, where I attended their Legion College event.

November 1-3- I traveled to the Department of Rhode Island for the Commander's Testimonial Dinner and traveled throughout the state stressing membership.

November 11- I attended the NYC Veterans Day Parade.

November 22-24 - I attended the Department of Massachusetts for a membership event.

January 17-19- I visited the Department of Maine and was in attendance for their Mid-Winter Conference.

January 21-25- I traveled to Connecticut. The first two days for a membership event and on the 24&25, I attended a Testimonial Dinner.

March 23-26- I attended the Washington Conference in Washington D.C. I met with all of my department commanders from the North East Region to brainstorm on membership.

March 27- I went to the Dept. of D.C. for a membership promotion.

April 26- I visited the Department of Pennsylvania for the Department Commander's Testimonial Dinner.

June 5-8- I visited Massachusetts for the Department Convention.

June 10-14- I attended the New Jersey Department Convention.

June 19-21- I attended the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy for a Graduation Awards Ceremony.

June 26-28- I traveled to Vermont for the Department Convention.

For GOD, and Country

**REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER  
Wayne D. Strom, North Dakota**

First, I would like to thank the Department of North Dakota, my home Department and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Iowa and Missouri for giving me this opportunity to represent them as their National Vice Commander. It has

been a great honor to represent such fine Departments and the American Legion the largest and greatest Veterans organization in the World.

I was elected Vice Commander, Midwest Region at National Convention held in Houston, Texas August 23-29, 2013. After the election I attended the NEC meeting and then attended the National Headquarters Commission Directors meeting where I was introduced to the Directors. I received a binder with the contact information.

September 4-7, 2013 I attended briefings in Indianapolis. On the 4<sup>th</sup> we traveled to Building 2, the Geiger Operations Center. We met with Dick Holmes, Executive Director and had a tour of the building. Then we traveled back to National Headquarters for briefings with National Commander Dan Dellinger and National Adjutant Dan Wheeler. September 5-6<sup>th</sup> we received detailed briefings from all the Commission Directors and participated in media training. September 7<sup>th</sup> I made calls to the Department Commanders and District Commander in the 8 Departments of the Midwest Region.

On September the 8, 2013 I flew to Washington DC. September 9<sup>th</sup> I attend training at National Headquarters, Washington DC Office. September 10<sup>th</sup> I attended National Commander Dan Dellinger's Testimony before Joint Session of the House and Veterans' Affairs Committee.

October 14-17, 2013 I attended the Fall Meetings in Indianapolis, IN where I attended the NEC meeting and gave my address to the members of the NEC. October 15<sup>th</sup> I met with the Department Commanders from the Midwest Region for breakfast in the Executive Boardroom in the Sheraton Hotel so we could talk about the upcoming year to help improve membership and other issues of concern.

November 7, 2013 I was asked to be the keynote speaker at the Mayport-CG High School in Mayville ND, were they honored the Veterans of the area for Veterans Day. The gym was full with Veterans, school students and parents. Everyone was there to support the Veterans.

November 17-23, 2013 I attended the Department of Iowa for the Membership Rally. The 7 days we traveled the eastern part of the State of Iowa. Each Post I stop at I asked for them to remember Commander Dellinger's project this year, the NEF. I had the pleasure to present several plaques as I traveled around Iowa. Just to mention two, the first was to Jacob Pence for being the #1 in the Nation at American Legion Boys Nation that past summer. The second award was for the 2013 American Legion of Iowa Educator of the Year, Alex Vazquez.

December 6-8, 2013 I drove over to Minnesota to take part in the Pearl Harbor Membership Rally. I was invited to attend the Pearl Harbor Ceremony held in St Paul Minnesota and it was such a moving Ceremony. From there we traveled to Post 172 Osseo, MN for the Pearl Harbor Membership Rally and Banquet; I was the keynote speaker at the banquet.

January 16-18, 2014 I attended the Mid-Winter Conference in Kearney, NE. On Saturday morning I was the keynote speaker at their Joint Opening Session. On Saturday Evening they held their Oratorical Contest. All of the students did such a great job it was hard to pick a winner.

January 23-26, 2014 I attended the Mid-Winter Conference in Huron, SD. I attended their DEC meeting and the Go Getters supper in the evening. I was the keynote speaker at the Commanders Banquet on Saturday Night.

January 31, February 1-2, 2014 I attended Membership Promotion in Mandan, ND. The Department of North Dakota is my home Department. I attended the DEC Meeting in the morning. I spoke at the Joint Opening Session along with our next National Commander Mike Helm. On Saturday at 1:00 pm they held their Oratorical Contest and again we had great contestants.

February 14-16, 2014 I attended the Mid-Winter Conference in Des Moines, IA. On Friday I addressed the Joint Session of the American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of the American Legion. It was also great to be on stage with National

President of the Auxiliary, Nancy Brown-Park and Sons of the American Legion National Vice Commander, Randall Eicher. The Oratorical Contest was held on Sunday morning and the Contestants did a very good job as usual.

February 21-23, 2014 I attended the Spring Conference in Jefferson City, MO. On Saturday I gave my address to the Joint Session. I was able to sit in on the meetings that were held the three days of the Conference. On Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> they had a Four Chaplains Service; this was one of the most moving Ceremonies I have seen in a long time. I was at the Oratorical Contest and had the opportunity to hear the National Oratorical Champion, Ashwath Kumar of Columbia, MO. Ashwath, was sponsored by American Legion Post 202 and is a senior at David H. Hickman High School, Ashwath received \$18,000.00 college scholarship.

March 1-6, 2014 I attended the Membership Caravan/Central MO. I visited 18 Post in 5 days as I traveled Central MO. As I traveled the State of Missouri, I had the opportunity to visit the Cameron Veterans Home in Cameron MO. This is a state-of-the-art facility that opened in 2000; it is a beautiful home that services the Veterans of the great State of Missouri. I had the opportunity to go to Camp Valor Outdoors in Kingsville, MO. The mission of Camp Valor Outdoors is to recognize and honor our wounded veterans and their families. Maj. John T. Schwent, USMC, (Ret) and the men and women that volunteer to help at the Camp are the best of the best.

April 26-28, 2014 I traveled to Tulsa, OK for Post 1 rededication/membership event. It was so great to see Soldier's Wish and the many young volunteers work along side of the members of Post 1. I could see the great pride that the members of one of the oldest Posts in the American Legion had in this extreme makeover of their Post. They were able to sign up some of the young Veterans that will make Post 1 their home for themselves and their families.

May 6-8, 2014 I attended the Spring Meetings in Indianapolis, IN. I attended the Meeting of the National Executive Committee and reports were given by the Chairman from the Commissions. I gave my report on the Extreme Makeover of Post 1 in Tulsa Oklahoma. Wednesday, May 7<sup>th</sup> I attended the National Commander's Dinner for members of NEC and visiting Legionnaires.

May 16-18, 2014 I attended the Kansas Department Convention in Hutchinson, KS. I addressed the Joint Opening Session on Saturday morning. It was great to be on stage and listen to our next National Commander Mike Helm, National President Nancy Brown-Park and Bradley Schroenghamer Sons of the American Legion National Vice Commander. On Saturday afternoon my wife, Virginia, and myself were escorted to the Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center in Hutchinson, KS. What a beautiful Space Museum and all the exhibits and history in this one building. We enjoyed our 2-hr. tour.

May 26-28, 2014 I had the privilege to represent Commander Dan Dellinger and the American Legion at West Point Military Academy Awards Ceremony. This is a beautiful campus and to see the Cadets in full dress for the parade made me proud to say I'm an American. My wife and I seen the best of the best in West Point Military Academy and the hospitality was second to none. I presented a gift card to Cadet Louis S. Tobergte for outstanding achievement in Chemistry. Cadet Tobergte was number one in his Chemistry Class and number one in his Graduating Class.

June 26-29, 2014 I attended the North Dakota Department Convention in Minot, ND. On Friday night I brought greetings from National Commander, Dan Dellinger, thanking the Department of North Dakota for their support this past year. I attended many of the meetings that were held at the Convention and also the Go-Getters luncheon on Saturday noon. Saturday evening for the Commander and President Banquet I was the keynote speaker. The banquet hall was completely filled with Legionnaires Members, Auxiliary Members, Sons of the American Legion Members and guest.

July 4, 2014 I was invited to the Fourth of July Celebration in a small town of Park River ND. The town has a population of 1375 people and they estimate that over 2000

people from Park River and the surrounding area watched the parade that day. It was so great to see the patriotism in this town on the Fourth of July.

July 19, 2014 I was invited to speak in Buffalo ND for their community days. Buffalo is a town of 194 people and once again the patriotism was great. It would be nice if the large Cities could take some advice from these smaller Communities and show their patriotism the same way. Our country needs this to keep going in the right direction.

Again, I thank the Departments in the Mid-West Region for the great hospitality and the support you have given me this past year. Every Department and Post that I visited showed such great respect for the American Legion and the Veterans of the Country they all love so much. As long as we believe in God and Country we will never lose.

### **REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER**

**Paul E. Dillard, Texas**

I was elected National Vice Commander for 2013-2014 at The American Legion's 95<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention in Houston, Texas August 29, 2013. It has been an honor to serve as National Vice Commander under National Commander Dan Dellinger and represent our National Organization. I want to thank the great State of Texas for their support and endorsement of me for this opportunity.

Immediately after the convention I attended the NEC meeting and a meeting where I was introduced to National Headquarters Directors and received contact information.

September 3-7 I traveled to National Headquarters in Indianapolis for orientation. While there I received detailed briefings from all directors where we toured all facilities and was trained on how to conduct interviews with the media. On Saturday we called the Department Commanders, District Commanders, and County Commanders.

September 8-11 I attended additional training at National Headquarters in the Washington, D.C. office. While there I attended National Commander Dan Dellinger's testimony before the joint session of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees.

September 19-22 I attended North Carolina's Department Commanders Homecoming where I was the guest speaker. While there I visited the Department Headquarters in Raleigh and took a tour of the Capitol.

September 26 – 29 I visited the Department of Texas Fall Conference in Austin, Texas. I addressed the Department Executive Committee and the general membership.

September 30 – October 2 I traveled to Pflugerville, Texas and worked with the National Revitalization Team and 10<sup>th</sup> District members and chartered two new Posts.

October 12 – 17 I attended the fall meetings of The American Legion in Indianapolis, Indiana. While there I met with all twelve of my Department Commanders.

October 23 -24 I traveled to Dallas, Texas to meet with the National Revitalization Team and 5<sup>th</sup> District members for a membership drive.

October 25 – 27 I traveled to the Department of Virginia for their Fall Conference where I was guest speaker.

November 1 I traveled to Houston, Texas where I visited M D Anderson Hospital for the American Legion Auxiliary annual luncheon for their Cancer Research scholarship recipients.

November 8 – 10 I traveled to Lake Charles, Louisiana to participate in an unveiling of a statue in their Veteran's Memorial Park to honor a local hero killed in Viet Nam. While there I visited four local Posts.

November 13 – 17 I traveled to Georgia to participate in a District Revitalization in Duluth and Columbus.

November 21 – 24 I traveled to Arkansas to participate in a District Revitalization in Texarkana.

January 17 – 19 I traveled to New Orleans, Louisiana Mid-Winter Conference where I addressed the Department Executive Committee and the general membership.

January 24 – 26 I traveled to Murfreesboro, Tennessee to attend the Department of Tennessee Mid-Winter Conference where I addressed the Department Executive Committee and the general membership.

February 6 – 9 I traveled to Pensacola, Florida where I met the Department Commander and the National Executive Committeeman of Florida. We had a membership tour in the 1st District visiting several Posts and a V. A. facility. While there we toured the National Naval Aviation Museum.

February 11 – 16 Our membership tour and revitalization visit in North Carolina was cancelled due to weather.

March 7 – 10 I traveled to Columbus, South Carolina where I met with the Department Adjutant. We visited several Posts and discussed several ideas on promoting membership with them.

March 23-26 I attended the Washington Conference in Washington, D.C. Once again, I was in attendance for National Commander Dan Dellinger's testimony before the joint session of the House and Senate Veteran's Affairs Committee. I met with all of my Department Commanders that were there and I also participated in the wreath laying at the Viet Nam wall with National President Nancy Brown-Park,

April 3 – 6 I traveled to Roanoke, Virginia where I joined the membership caravan and National Commander Dan Dellinger. We visited many Posts throughout Virginia.

April 10-13 I traveled to Georgia for their Department Spring Conference and addressed their Executive Committee and general membership.

April 23 – 28 I traveled to Tennessee for a membership drive. Meeting with the Department Commander, Department Membership Chairman, and Department Adjutant, we toured three districts and worked on the 2013 members list that had not renewed for 2014. It was very successful, we renewed approximately 25%.

May 2 – 3 I attended the 4<sup>th</sup> District Spring Convention in Greenville, Texas as guest speaker.

May 4 – 8 I attended the spring meetings in Indianapolis, Indiana meeting with the Departments from my region.

May 14 – 18 I traveled to the Department of Alabama participating in a Job Fair and working with the National Revitalization Team and local members from the area.

May 19 – 21 I visited the United States Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut to present The American Legion Award to a graduating cadet who has excelled in athletics.

May 29 – June 1 I traveled to Greenville, South Carolina to participate in The Department of South Carolina Department Convention. I addressed the delegates of the convention and participated in their awards presentation.

June 12 – 15 I traveled to Orlando, Florida to participate in The Department of Florida Department Convention. I addressed the delegates of the convention and participated in swearing in the newly elected officers.

June 19 – 22 I traveled to Little Rock, Arkansas to participate in the Department Convention of Arkansas. I addressed the delegates of the convention and participated in a Roast of the outgoing commander.

July 8 – 13 I traveled to McAllen, Texas to attend my Department Convention of Texas. National Commander Dan Dellinger was there on his official visit. We took the National Commander on several Post visits.

Although membership is not where the Southeast Region had expected to be, we did have several Departments exceed their traditional membership over the previous year showing positive growth. I want to thank all of them for their efforts and encourage them to continue working on their 5 year membership plan.

It has been a privilege and an honor to serve as National Vice Commander of the Southeast Region in 2013-2014. I would like to thank all those that extended their hospitality and friendship to me during my term of office.

Building for Tomorrow – Today.

**REPORT OF THE NATIONAL CHAPLAIN**  
**Dr. Daniel A. McClure, Iowa**

Ch McClure was appointed as National Chaplain during the National Convention in Houston August 29, 2013.

Ch McClure hosted the annual Chaplains Conference held in Indianapolis September 27-29, 2013. The official American Legion chaplain's prayer book was reviewed and edited. Discussion was held regarding the use of Jesus' name in prayers and services and what influences could be offered by chaplains at all levels for their respective organizations. It was concluded that the role of chaplain needed some emphasis and that would be the responsibility of all chaplains at all levels to encourage positive change by becoming more actively involved and visible.

At the fall meeting in Indianapolis October 12-17, 2013, Ch McClure was officially sworn in as national chaplain. He gave the invocation for the Americanism Commission meeting and the NEC meeting and the benediction at the closing session.

On November 11, 2013 Vice Commander Wayne Satrom visited Washington Iowa and was the speaker at the Veterans Day dinner sponsored by Post 29 which is the home post of Ch McClure.

Ch McClure attended the Washington D C conference March 23-26, 2014 where he was the Senate Guest Chaplain March 26 opening the session with prayer.

Ch McClure served a finals judge for the oratorical contest finals held in Indianapolis April 6, 2014.

Ch McClure attended the Spring Meetings in Indianapolis May 4-8, 2014 where he opened the sessions with prayer and closed the meetings in the same manner.

On May 26, 2014 Ch McClure traveled to Boyden, Iowa where he was the speaker for the Memorial Day festivities.

From June 14 to June 21, 2014 Ch McClure attended Hawkeye Boy's State where he was a speaker and offered invocations and benedictions as well as assisting with the activities.

Ch McClure attended Boy's Nation in Washington DC July 18-21, 2014 where he spoke at the Memorial Service Sunday July 20 and assisted in laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns Monday July 21, 2014. He also was privileged to interact with several of the young men in attendance regarding faith and military experiences. He also attended the dinner at Greenbelt Post 136 in Maryland where the invocation and benediction were offered.

Through the course of his tenure as National Chaplain Ch McClure was featured in the "I am the Legion" article for the American Legion magazine, attended many funerals and memorial services, officiated at several funerals, visited veterans in two VA centers, attended several receptions and banquets while continuing his duties as the Department of Iowa Chaplain and the Dist 1 chaplain for Dist 1 Department of Iowa. Each Department Chaplain received personal greetings from Ch McClure and several comrades received get well or condolence greetings. Two departments forwarded their specific training used for district and post chaplains.

It has been a very real privilege and joy to serve the American Legion as chaplain this past year and I pray for our leadership daily which will continue. Thank you to the NEC for your confidence in me.

**REPORT OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIAN**  
**Charemon Dunham, South Dakota**

It has been a great honor and a privilege to be the National Historian for the year 2013-2014 for the world's largest and most respected volunteer service veteran's organization, The American Legion. I would like to thank our National Commander Daniel Dellinger for this honorable appointment.



As my first task as national historian, I updated the judge's instructions with the help of members of The National Association of Department Historians of The American Legion (NADHAL). I then oversaw the judging of the post and department histories in the national contest. Thank you to the historians for their many hours of hard work on preserving their histories.

As a department historian who has received awards in the first three places every year for 10 years and NADHAL President for two years, I can truly attest to the fact that completing the histories for the post and department is a very time-consuming task. It takes a year of many hours of dedicated hard work. The histories are an important part of the post and departments activities. The members of The National Association of Department Historians of The American Legion again did a great job of judging the best books submitted.

I would like to give a very special thanks to five members of NADHAL: Past National Historian Delfo Barabani of Massachusetts, who coordinated the judging of the contest; and Past National Historian Larry Rozier of North Carolina, who helped me conduct the orientation and training of the new department historians. Past National Historian Frazier Brinley of Connecticut; Dan Watrous of Ohio; and James Copher of Minnesota provided additional help.

Finally I would like recognize and express my sincere thanks to Howard Trace, Director of the Library and Museum, and his wonderful library staff for their help and support. Also to Lynda Lydick of the library staff who processed the paperwork for the judging of the contest. There were 26 instructors and judges for the contest.

As the 100th Anniversary of the American Legion is approaching, I challenged all departments to enroll their posts at the Legion's website <http://centennial.legion.org>. Posts are able to share their histories by word and picture with fellow legionnaires and the community.

There were nine department entries and twenty-eight post entries for judging in the four categories of the National History contest for the year 2012-13.

The results of the One-Year Department Narrative History Contest was:

First Award, Plaque, Department of Pennsylvania

There were no other participants in this category.

The results of the One-Year Department Yearbook History Contest were:

First Award, Plaque, Department of North Carolina

Second Award, Plaque, Department of Florida

Third Award, Plaque, Department of Ohio

The results of the One-Year Post Narrative History Contest were:

First Award, Plaque, Pony Express Post 359, Saint Joseph, MO

Second Award, Plaque, Frank B. Bartlett Post 7, Buckhannon, WV

Third Award, Plaque, Frank E. Booma Post 6, Portsmouth, NH

The results of the One-Year Post Yearbook History Contest were:

First Award, Plaque, Bella Vista Post 341, Bella Vista, AR

Second Award, Plaque, Charles S. Hatch Post 79, Berwick, ME

Third Award, Plaque, Julius L. Shryer Post 430, Durant, IA

Honorable Mention, Veterans Memorial Post 347, Lady Lake, FL

Honorable Mention, Montpelier Post 3, Montpelier, VT

Honorable Mention, Colonial Heights Post 284, Colonial Heights, VA

Since the contest, I received and responded to questions concerning the history contest, primarily what the posts could do to improve.

Additionally, I updated the Post Histories section in the "Post Officer's Guide and Manuel of Ceremonies" by added back the numbering system coordinating the judge's instructions with the judging standards which had accidentally been taken out. I also added a paragraph titled "American Legion 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration History". This

new paragraph mentions the website that was created for the celebration and encourages all posts to participate. The website helps posts show their pride in their posts.

I look forward to hosting the National Historian's Luncheon at Charlotte, North Carolina during our National Convention on Saturday, August 23. R. Jeffery Stoffer, Director of Media and Communications of the American Legion, will be the guest speaker. He will be talking to the Department Historians and guests about the American Legion's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary website. The website not only informs others about how our posts started, but also their currently activities by way of the post newsletter. It also has a place to list upcoming events.

I again wish to thank Howard Trace, Library and Museum Director, and his professional staff for their continuing dedication and support to The American Legion.

It has been a great honor to serve as the National Historian with National Commander Daniel Dellinger and his team. Additionally, it has been an honor to support the commander's theme for the year "Building for Tomorrow – Today."

**NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE  
P. B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland**

**Contracts**

The following two hundred thirty-two (232) contracts have been reviewed or prepared:

- (1) Articles of Agreement by and between The American Legion and The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Kentucky, Inc., covering the convocation of the 2017 Convention of The American Legion in the City of Louisville, State of Kentucky, 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 First Degree, LLC, to develop a marketing and fundraising campaign.
- (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 2014.
- (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 Quality Concepts 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 Dydacom 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 Hotel Elegante, Colorado Springs, Colorado, housing for 2015-2017 Junior Shooting Sports National Championships.
- (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 Wyndham Indianapolis West, housing for 2015-2017 Oratorical National Finals.
- (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 Fans 4 Truckers to use the American Legion Legacy Run for "JCCR" and "Driven to Honor" message (recognition for female veterans).
- (41) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and the Civilian Marksmanship Program for a portable electronic target scoring system for use during the 2014 American Legion Junior Air Rifle National Championships
- (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 Founding Fathers Products, LLC, an American beer manufacturer donating 50% of all net profits to participating posts.
- (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 Source2 for temporary staff used by Emblem Sales at the 2014 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) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and CAMMO, an American Military Spouses Choir performing at the national convention.
- (62) A Licensing Agreement by and between The American Legion and Dr. Pepper/Seven Up, Inc. to support Operation Comfort Warriors.
- (63) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and AdMate Software System for software for the magazine division.
- (64) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and SIRVA Worldwide, Inc. for a market plan to promote Legion programs on the Legion website.
- (65) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Motel 6 LLC to promote a member discount program on the Legion website.
- (66) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Blackline for software used by the Finance Division.
- (67) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Cleveland County ALWS Baseball, Inc. for the baseball tournaments.
- (68) 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.
- (69) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Fifth Estate Communications to inform young men about the legal requirement to register with the US Selective Service. They will be speaking to Boys State/Nation Directors and to American Legion Baseball State Directors at the Americanism and Children and Youth Conference.

- (70) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Military Advantage, Inc. (Military.com) for exchanging editorial content for mutual postings on respective websites.
- (71) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Old Jim Customs, LLC, for permission to use The American Legion name and emblem on their merchandise.
- (72) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Hilton Supply Management to supply US flags and state flags for their properties.
- (73) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and USA Shooting, arrange facility for contest participants during the 2014 Junior Air Rifle National Championship.
- (74) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and LifeStation as a member discount provider for home health-safety services.
- (75) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Valley River Inn for meeting rooms and housing during the American Legion Baseball 2014 Regional.
- (76) A Rental Agreement by and between The American Legion and Cintas Facility Services which supply janitorial supplies to the Geiger Operations Center.
- (77) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and National Forensic League for one year of logo and link placement on its website, ads in its magazine, booth space at its tournament and promotion of the Oratorical Contest.
- (78) A Leasing Agreement by and between The American Legion and Gordon Flesch Company, Inc. for GFC equipment for the mail room.
- (79) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and The Westin Charlotte for guest room accommodations during the 2014 national convention.
- (80) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and AnswerNet for call center services.
- (81) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Preferred Asphalt, Inc. for repaving and maintenance of the parking lot at the Geiger Operations Center.
- (82) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Picrow, Inc. for permission to use the name and emblem of The American Legion in a television production.
- (83) A Rental Agreement by and between The American Legion and Reliable Water Services for the rental of a water heater for the national headquarters building.

One hundred-forty-nine (149) 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
- 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

Bell and Howell, LLC  
Beta Graphics  
Brickmill Marketing Services  
Brown Printing Company  
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  
E H Direct  
Easy Purl, Inc.  
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  
Forum Communications Printing  
Freedom Graphic Systems  
Fry Communications, Inc.  
Fulfillment Xcellence, Inc.  
FXI  
G E Financial Assurance  
Gallagher Benefit Services  
Global Card Services  
GMAC  
Golden Rule Publishing  
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.  
 LTC Affinity Direct  
 LTCR Analytics IQ, Inc.  
 Magnet Direct  
 Mail Computer Services Direct  
 Mail Manager  
 Mailing Services of Pittsburgh  
 Mainstreet Media  
 MCS Direct  
 Media 1, LLC  
 Merkle, Inc.  
 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, Inc.  
 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 Heritage Company  
 The Hertz Corporation  
 The JAY Group, Inc.  
 The Mailing House  
 The Willow Group  
 TN Marketing  
 Torrington Telegram  
 Transamerica  
 TransAmerica Affinity Services, Inc.  
 Transcom  
 TransContinental Direct  
 Travalution, LLC  
 True North Companies  
 TXEN Partners, LLC  
 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**

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.

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 the 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. An emergency appeal to the Supreme Court was filed to prevent destruction until the final decision. The matter has been referred back to the Ninth Circuit for action. The Supreme Court will review after the circuit court decision.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
 DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS  
 WESTERN SECTION

Kevin Lucey, et at

Civil No. 10-30163-Map

v.

Prudential Insurance Co.

The American Legion is an amicus on the side of the plaintiffs against Prudential Insurance, which has the contract to underwrite the SGLI. When a service member dies on active duty, Prudential does not give a check to the beneficiary, usually the wife, as required by the law establishing the program. Prudential gives the beneficiary a checkbook with no guidance. Hence, the insurance company gets to keep all or part of the money (\$400,000.00) for many months. It adds approximately ½ of 1% interest per year to the account, but earns considerably more than 5% on the money. Plaintiffs want Prudential to follow the law, as we do. The VA objected to our joining the case. As a result, we discovered the VA had authorized the deviation from the requirements of the law.

Prudential has essentially admitted all the relevant facts. Hence, we 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.

The judge ruled in our favor on preliminary motion. The case will proceed.

IN THE  
SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

Lionel Guerra,  
*Petitioner,*

v.  
Eric K. Shinseki,  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs,  
*Respondent.*

No. 11-773

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.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA  
INDIANAPOLIS DIVISION

THE AMERICAN LEGION,

Plaintiff,

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

vs.

CURTIS HAMM and CAROLYN HAMM,

Defendants.

We have not yet joined this case. 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 was scheduled for August 20, 2013, but was 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  
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. At the most recent meeting of counsel, it appeared that the Girls State Corporation's position was weakening.

The case was settled by the defendant giving the plaintiffs everything they asked for.

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.

The court allowed The American Legion to intervene to protect the statue.

No. 2013-5042  
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE FEDERAL CIRCUIT

Kingdomware Technologies, Inc.,

Plaintiff-Appellant

v.

Case No. 12-CV-0173

United States,

Defendant-Appellee

The American Legion has filed an amicus brief supporting Kingdomware’s claim that the Veteran’s Administration violated the law when it denied the company the Veteran Owned Small Business status which would have caused a procurement contract to be awarded to it. VA claims it has met the 3% threshold and therefore the veteran’s preference does not apply. VA wishes to use a non veteran owned company.

The case will be scheduled for reargument.

SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT  
FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
NO. SJC-11317

JANE DOE AND JOHN DOE,  
INDIVIDUALLY AND AS PARENTS  
AND NEXT FRIENDS OF DOECHILD-1,  
DOECHILD-2, AND DOECHILD-3,  
AND THE AMERICAN HUMANIST  
ASSOCIATION,

Plaintiffs-Appellants,

No. SJC-11317

v.

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL  
SCHOOL DISTRICT, THE TOWN  
OF ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
AND DR. STEPHEN E. MILLS,  
AS SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS,

Defendants-Appellees,

AND

DANIEL JOYCE AND INGRID  
JOYCE, INDIVIDUALLY AND AS  
PARENTS AND NEXT FRIENDS OF  
D. JOYCE AND C. JOYCE, AND THE  
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS, A  
CONNECTICUT TAX-EXEMPT  
CORPORATION,

Defendants/Interveners-Appellees.

Plaintiffs have sued to remove the words “under God” from the Pledge of Allegiance, despite the fact that the language has been upheld consistently. The lower court correctly rejected plaintiff’s claim. The American Legion filed its brief at the appellate level.

The plaintiffs lost.

PHILADELPHIA COUNTY  
COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

ANGELA CAPIZZI-MULLAN, Administratrix of  
the Estate of POLINA KADIYSKA, deceased

Plaintiffs

v.

DEANDRE BARNES

and

AMERICAN LEGION POST 153 HOME  
ASSOCIATION a.k.a. or d/b/a American Legion  
Post 153 and/or Frantic Nightclub

and

THE AMERICAN LEGION

and

KELBAR, Inc. a.k.a. or d/b/a T-Barr’s Bar  
And/or T-Barr

Defendants

In this case, Plaintiff has sued the Post and National, bypassing the Department of Pennsylvania.

On March 18, 2012, Polina Kadiyska, a ballet student, was injured by a car driven by Deandre Barnes, an eighteen year old at the time. It is alleged that he had been drinking at the American Legion Post No. 153 Frantic Nightclub after hours. He was allegedly driving on S. Broad after the accident which allegedly involved hitting a number of cars; the driver fled on foot. He is now in the state correctional institution at Camp Hill, Pennsylvania. He may face additional charges.

The injured student was placed on life support which was discontinued March 19, 2012, when she died.

Counsel has been retained by our insurance company and preliminary objections filed under Pennsylvania law, because national has no control over departments and posts (36 USC §21704 (5)). Plaintiff's attorney didn't bother to check the law.

The driver testified at his deposition that he had never been to any Post of The American Legion and his insurance offered the policy limits which were accepted by the family which dropped the case. It is closed.

DEIDRA M. WILLIAMS	:PHILADELPHIA COUNTY
	:COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
and	:
	:OCTOBER TERM, 2013
CURTIS R. BROWN	:
	: NO.: 01398
v.	:
	:
AMOY ARCHER	:
	:
and	:
	:
AMERICAN LEGION	:
	:
and	:
	:
VETERANS HOME ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD POST NO. 204	:
	:
and	:
	:
VETERANS HOME ASSOCIATION OF PENN CENTRAL POST No. 204	:
	:
and	:
	:
HENRY MCILHENNY	:
	:

This is a claim for damages because the defendant, Amoy Archer, allegedly drank in a Legion post and then was involved in a car crash. The court granted our Motion to Dismiss based on our corporate charter's provision that we do not control departments and posts.

IN THE  
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE FOR THE FEDERAL CIRCUIT

BIRDEYE L. MIDDLETON,

*Claimant-Appellant,*

v.

No. 2013-07014

ERIC K. SHINSEKI, Secretary

Of Veterans Affairs,

*Respondent-Appelle.*

**Appeal from the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims  
In Case No. 10-4222, Judge Alan G. Lance, Sr.**

In this case, The American Legion is an amicus because the Veterans Administration has not been properly applying the proper rating. The veteran does not clearly meet the higher rating, but is significantly more disabled than the lower rating he was given. Since the veteran more nearly approximates the higher rating, the law says that is the one that should be awarded.

RICHARD RODKEY

PHILADELPHIA COUNTY  
COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

v.

SEPTEMBER TERM, 2013  
NO.: 004046

AMERICAN LEGION d/b/a THE AMERICAN  
LEGION AUXILIARY UNIT 372 and SONS OF  
AMERICAN LEGION SQUADRON 372 and  
AMERICAN LEGION, INC. PAUL REVERE  
LEBER POST 372

and

AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT  
OF PENNSYLVANIA, INC.

and

AMVETS 153 HOME ASSOCIATES

and

PAUL REVERE LEBER POST NUMBER  
THREE HUNDRED SEVENTY TWO OF  
THE AMERICAN LEGION

and

LEBER, PAUL REVERE POST NO 372 OF  
THE AMERICAN LEGION OF COLUMBIA  
PENNSYLVANIA

This is a slip and fall case in Columbia, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The case was brought in Philadelphia because of apparently higher awards. Plaintiff did this by alleging The American Legion did business in Philadelphia. The court refused our motion and preliminary objections without an opinion. We have to wait for Summary Judgment.



UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE  
DISTRICT OF MARYLAND

American Humanist Association,  
Steven Lowe, Fred Edwards,  
and Bishop McNeill

Case No. cv-14-550

*Plaintiffs,*

v.

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning  
Commission,

*Defendant.*

The American Humanist Association sued to compel destruction of the “Bladensburg Cross” which is on state land. It was erected on private property that was taken to enlarge a road intersection. It was erected by The American Legion in 1925 as a veteran’s memorial. One of the plaintiffs is “upset” to see it. National, the Department of Maryland and the Bladensburg post are amici and will file to protect the cross.

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF OKLAHOMA COUNTY  
STATE OF OKLAHOMA

OKLAHOMA AMERICAN LEGION  
CORPORATION, GEORGE T. NONAMAKER,  
and FREDRICK L. SPEIR,

Plaintiffs,

CJ-2014-1834

v.

THE AMERICAN LEGION,

Defendant.

The case was filed in the Oklahoma County Court, State of Oklahoma. The American Legion has removed it from the state court to the federal district for the Western District of Oklahoma.

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF OKLAHOMA  
OKLAHOMA CITY DIVISION

OKLAHOMA AMERICAN LEGION  
CORPORATION, GEORGE T. NONAMAKER,  
and FREDRICK L. SPEIR,

Plaintiffs,

v.

THE AMERICAN LEGION,

Defendant.

The status hearing is set for June 3, 2014, 2:30 p.m. Status and Discovery plan to be scheduled. Plaintiffs are claiming the national organization had no right to suspend charter.

The court ruled in favor the national organization because of the emergency nature of the violation in Oklahoma.

Plaintiff(s),	SUPERIOR COURT OF NEW JERSEY LAW DIVISION: BERGEN COUNTY
ROBERTA O'DOWD,	<i>CIVIL ACTION</i>

Defendant(s)	DOCKET NO.: BER-L4339-14
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AMERICAN LEGION POST 170 a/k/a  
AMERICAN LEGION ROCHELLE PARK  
POST 170, THE AMERICAN LEGION  
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS (sic),  
JOHN DOE I-X (said names being fictitious and  
unknown), JANE DOE I-X (said  
names being fictitious and unknown), ABC  
COMPANY (said names being fictitious and  
unknown) and XYZ CORP. (said names being  
fictitious and unknown),

This is a slip and fall case from a post kitchen at Post 170 Rochelle Park, New Jersey. The plaintiff named us as The American Legion National Headquarters. This is being corrected and more time was given to answer, which was accomplished. The matter was referred to our insurance company.

A Motion to Dismiss has been filed.

SUPERIOR COURT OF NEW JERSEY  
LAW DIVISION  
MONMOUTH COUNTY

American Humanist Association, and John Doe  
and Jane Doe, individually and as parents and  
next friends of Doechild,

Docket No. L-1317-14

Plaintiffs,

v.

Matawan-Aberdeen Regional School District  
and David M. Healy, in his capacity as  
Superintendent of Schools,

Defendants.

Plaintiffs have sued to remove the words “under God” from the Pledge of Allegiance, despite the fact that the language has been upheld consistently.

The American Legion has intervened and filed its brief.

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT  
FOR THE COUNTY OF SPOKANE

DAN PURCELL & IRITA WILLIAMS

Plaintiffs,

NO. 13202356-8

vs.

THE AMERICAN LEGION, a non-profit Corporation doing business in Washington, and WILLIAM POWELL, et UX, a marital community in Washington State.

Defendants

This case is a suit by former employees against the Department of Washington. Nevertheless, they named the national organization. This has been cancelled and the case is now named:

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON

DAN PURCELL AND IRITA  
WILLIAMS,

Plaintiffs,

NO. CV-13-0285-JLQ

v.

THE AMERICAN LEGION  
DEPARTMENT OF WASHINGTON,  
a non-profit Corporation doing  
business in Washington State, AND  
WILLIAM POWELL, et UX, a marital  
community in Washington state,

Defendants

No. 13-35770

IN THE  
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION  
FOUNDATION, INC.,

Plaintiff-Appellant,

v.

CHIP WEBER

and

UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE,  
Defendants-Appellees,

and

WILLIAM GLIDDEN, RAYMOND  
LEOPOLD, NORMAN DEFOREST,  
EUGENE THOMAS, and the  
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS  
(Kalispeill Council No. 1328),  
Intervenors-Appellees.

Appeal from the United States  
District Court for the District of  
Montana

Veterans of the U.S. Army’s 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division established a veteran’s memorial at the Whitefish Mountain Ski Resort. The memorial consists of a statue similar to memorials in the mountains of Europe where they fought. The plaintiff seeks to have the memorial destroyed. The American Legion has joined as an amicus to assist in the defense of the memorial.

2014-\_\_\_\_\_  
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE FEDERAL CIRCUIT  
Michael L. McKinney, et al.

Petitioners,

v.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs,

Respondent.

The American Legion has joined the National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSPP), the Military Order of the Purple Heart and the Vietnam Veterans of America to petition for a review of the Korean DMZ Agent Orange Regulation to correct an erroneous effective date that serves to bar benefits. It should be moved back from February 24, 2011, to November 1, 2004. The Veterans Administration has refused to allow benefits prior to February 24, 2011, as that was the date of the liberalized regulation even though the spraying was done in 1968 and 1969. An earlier regulation allowed a presumptive period of July 31, 1969 to August 31, 1971. We also desire a stay as all claims filed before February 24, 2011, pending the appeal.

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON  
FOR THE COUNTY OF MULTNOMAH

DAN R. HYATT

	Plaintiff,	No. 1401-00633
v.		FIRST AMENDED COUNTER
		CLAIM FOR DAMAGES
DANIEL A. BERNATH		\$15,000,000 DEMANDED
	Defendant	
		RACKEERING, UNFAIR
		BUSINESS PRACTICES,
DANIEL A. BERNATH		INTENTIONAL INFLICTION
		OF EMOTIONAL DISTRESS,
	Cross-Complainant,	DEFAMATION, COPYRIGHT
v.		INFRINGEMENT, NEGLIGENCE
		HIRING, SUPERVISION,
		TRAINING, BREACH OF
		CONTRACT

Dan R. Hyatt, The American Legion,  
Lars Larson, Alpha Media, Terence B. Hoey,  
NASA, aka National Aeronautics and Space  
Administration, The Social Security Administration,  
Brian Denson, The Oregonian,  
Advance Publications, Oregon Media Group  
Jason Ellenberg, Frank Bolden, Administrator  
National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
Mark C. Seavey, HMCS(FMF) aka Dan Thomas,  
Randy Ryder,  
Jon Lilyea,  
Guy H. Power, Don Shipley,  
Frank E. Caryl, Café Press,  
John W. White,  
Michael Davis aka Mike Hammer  
Gravel, Bellarmine College Preparatory

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE TWENTIETH JUDICIAL DISTRICT  
IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF LEE, FLORIDA

DANIEL A. BERNATH,	No.14-CA-001838
	Judge: Winesett, Sherra
Plaintiff,	

Vs.

SUMMONS

TERENCE B. HOEY, individually,  
DAN R. HYATT, individually,  
THE AMERICAN LEGION, business  
form unknown,  
MARK C. SEAVEY, individually,

Defendants.

This individual has not served the national organization, but claims he served an employee which is good enough. We are watching both cases and have local counsel. We will move to dismiss the Oregon case at the proper time and do the same to the Florida case if it is ever served. Bernath has repeatedly libeled The American Legion on

his website and in court filings. We will sue for an injunction and damages at the appropriate time.

#### **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 489 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 11 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 151 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 2013 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 2013 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. and American Legion Charities. In these capacities, 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 Administrative Services, which includes the following divisions: Finance, Human Resources, Maintenance, Media & Communications, and The American Legion Library and the Emil 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, 2013 through May 31, 2014**

Incoming Letters and parcels (distributed to Divisions for processing).....	1,112,699
Incoming Parcels .....	2,445
Outgoing Letters/Parcels (Exclusive of National Emblem Sales).....	12,636,303

**FREIGHT AND EXPRESS****June 1, 2013 through May 31, 2014**

Out – Cartons.....	8,339
Out – Pounds .....	92,318
UPS – In .....	1,762
UPS – Out.....	5,746

**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 941 items added this year include back issues of *The American Legion Magazine* beginning with the first issue published in 1919. Usage of the Digital Archive has increased by 35 percent over the previous year.

Conservation work was done on the painting "Fourth Liberty Loan" by John Scott Williams which is on display in the Emil A. Blackmore Museum. Work included removing the dirty and yellowed varnish from the painting, and then varnishing and inpainting, along with touch ups to the frame.

A number of researchers made extensive visits to the Library. Areas of research involved drum and bugle corps, World War I, veterans politics during and after World War II, veterans employment legislation, and Harry Colmery and the GI Bill.

Books, Pamphlets and <i>The American Legion Magazine</i> cataloged.....	1,381
Items Added to the Museum Collection .....	572
Items Prepared for Microfilming .....	10,888
Correspondence Written by National Historian.....	485
Correspondence Written by Staff .....	1,386
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Sent.....	856
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Received.....	330

**Significant Gifts to the National Headquarters Library**

Donated by the National Association of Department Historians of The American Legion (NADHAL): *MacArthur's War* by Bevin Alexander; *Swinging for the Fences* by Carl Paul Maggio; *Sergeant Stubby* by Ann Bausum; *Enduring Courage* by John F. Ross; *Toxic War* by Peter Sills; and *Single Handed* by James A. Drain, Sr.

Donated by Michael J. Knudson and Ann G. Knudson: *Ransom County's Loyal Defenders* and *Warriors in Khaki: Native American Doughboys from North Dakota*

Donated by Stephen A. Banks: *DRAFTED and SERVED: Edward "Skip" Swain – One Citizen Soldier's Experience in Vietnam*

Donated by Paula Stephenson: *Utah Vietnam War Stories*, a three part television series by the KUED-TV and PBS

Donated by Ambassador Ryszard Schnepf, Republic of Poland: *1<sup>st</sup> Polish Armoured Division*

Donated by Ron Darrah: *Roster of 62<sup>nd</sup> Engineers (4<sup>th</sup> Ry. Div. 13<sup>th</sup> G.D.Z. of A.) American Ex. Forces France 1918 – 1919*

Donated by Jim Whitfield: *National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial* by R. Eli Paul

Donated by Dr. Robert Thune: *The Military 100, A Ranking of the Most Influential Military Leaders of All Time* by Lt. Col. (Ret.) Michael Lee Lanning; and *Lemay: The Life and Wars of General Curtis Lamay* by Warren Kozak



Donated by Arthur Wilson: 1932 National Convention Program  
 Donated by R.J. 'Buzz' Blevins: Department of New York Narrative History  
 Donated by Harry P. Cirli, Jr.: George C. Evans Post 103 (CO) Post History  
 Donated by Dr. Robert Thune: *Eisenhower: In War and Peace* by Jean Edward Smith

### **Significant Gifts to the National Headquarters Museum**

Donated by Dr. Robert Thune: Reproductions of the Emancipation Proclamation; Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address; Lincoln Chronology; Grant's Letter to Lee; Washington's Inaugural Address; Definitive Treaty Between Great Britain and the United States; and United States presidents coin collection, Volume I of II (7 U.S. presidents)

Donated by Ron W. Wood: American Legion baseball signed by Joe DiMaggio; 1975 Region 7 miniature baseball bat; and 1975 Region 7 Tournament Program

Donated by John T. Dietz: *Kentucky Progress Magazine*, American Legion Edition, October 1929

Donated by Everett J. Pfile: American Legion School Award Medal, ca. between 1925 and 1951

Donated by J. R. Stillwell: Framed copy of the application for the first Sons of The American Legion Charter

Donated by Brett Reistad: 4 American Legion Posters: Buddies – Proud of it, 1919; Remember Poppy Day, 1945; Legionnaire, 1939; Welcome Buddy!, 1929 and 1 Newspaper page: Facts about The American Legion, August 7, 1919

Donated by Eugene R. Pytka: 1933 Auxiliary Emblem Catalog

Donated by Leah Bazarian Greene: American Legion cap, Post 336; Post card photo of Martin Safarian; Certificate signed by President Johnson and three poll tax receipts

Donated by Elizabeth Bladel: Minutes from the 1919 Paris Caucus of The American Legion

Donated by Betty J. Otto-Kretzer: Materials related to Page T. Otto and Betty Otto-Kretzer's participation in The American Legion and Auxiliary at Antietam Post No. 236; includes Legion cap and 40/8 caps, medals and badges; programs and reports

### **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 co-op fundraising program.

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 125,000 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 co-op fundraising program; and it prepares and processes in excess of 11 million pieces of outbound mail each year.

### **AMERICANISM COMMISSION**

**Richard W. Anderson, Connecticut, 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 and youth development, 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 Youth Cadet Law Enforcement, 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.

Additionally, the Americanism Commission has continued to be actively involved in legislative matters affecting our way of life. Among our legislative priorities are 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 Committee on Children & Youth and the Committee on Youth Education.

Following is a summary of several programs, which are the responsibility of the Americanism Commission and have been conducted during the 2013-2014 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 79 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 68<sup>th</sup> 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 79-year history, the program has graduated well over 1,840,000 young men.

Every year, each Boys State selects two outstanding graduates to represent them at American Legion Boys Nation. In 2014 the program was again held in Washington, D.C., July 18-26, 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. Matthew Ellow of Lacey's Spring, Alabama, was elected President and Louis Lombardo of Arlington, Texas, was elected Vice President of the 2014 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 77<sup>th</sup> Annual National Oratorical Finals Contest was held at Indianapolis, Indiana, in April 2014. The three finalists were: First place – Ashwath Kumar, Columbia, Missouri; second place – Brandon Posner, Doylestown, Pennsylvania; third place – Ellen Densmore, Denver, Colorado.

The American Legion continues to maintain a relationship with the National Speech and Debate Association, the nation's preeminent speech and debate organization. The American Legion had a booth at their National Tournament in Overland Park, Kansas, in June 2014. Nearly 200 elite speech and debate students and coaches provided contact information to The American Legion seeking information on the 2014-2015 Oratorical Contest. American Legion Oratorical Contest program manager Shayne Abrahams served as a judge in the National Speech and Debate Association's Original Oratory category and in the Original Oratory category national final.

### **Boy Scouts of America**

The American Legion charts 2,447 Scout units in communities across the country involving 64,864 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 Joseph Blaisse of Newton Square, Pennsylvania, as its 2014 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 Corey Castillo, Vinton, Louisiana; James Heuser, Towson, Maryland; and Luke Littman, Fredericksburg, Texas.

In addition, an estimated 8,000 certificates honoring new Eagle Scout recipients are distributed annually.

Over 544 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.

### **Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program**

There are currently seventeen departments that offer a Youth Cadet Law Enforcement 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/youthlaw](http://www.legion.org/youthlaw), 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 1,338 active clubs with almost 15,000 young people participating annually.

The 24th Annual Junior Air Rifle National Championship was conducted July 29 – August 3, 2014, at the USA Shooting range facility on the campus of the U.S. 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 1,701 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 2014 winners were Michael Steinel of New Philadelphia, Ohio (Precision) and Antonio Gross from Webster, New York (Sporter). Each received scholarships totaling \$5,000 from The American Legion and 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 2014-2015, awarded ten \$5,000 scholarships to recipients in six states to assist in furthering their education. This brings their cumulative total for the past 54 years to 902 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 2015-2016 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 19,000 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 was introduced in the 113<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **Troop and Family Support**

Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW): The American Legion Operation Comfort Warriors program supports wounded, injured, and ill service members and their families during times of recovery or transition and other times of need. The program fills in the voids of providing 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 help range of motion and offer camaraderie building.

Much of the equipment donated is to empower service members to engage in positive activities that will enhance and expedite their recovery, and help return them 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 in different facilities. Our goal is to support wounded, injured or ill service members in any manner we can during their recovery process to increase their likelihood of better outcomes.

Operation Comfort Warriors staff have 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), Marine Corp Air Ground Combat Center (CA), Fort Campbell (KY), Fort Riley (KS), Camp Pendleton (CA), Brooke Army Medical Center (TX), Navy Medical

Center San Diego (CA), Army Trials West Point (NY), VAMC Albuquerque (NM), 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 recovery process for wounded, injured, and ill service members. OCW provides outings 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 D.C. in which approximately 15 patients and their families go out to a steak dinner typically held at the National Press Club. Along with the steak dinner there are door prizes for the patients to show 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 \$2.3 million in donations and has donated well over \$1.2 million so far. We purchase items and outings based upon information from the facility or unit; we do not simply show up with random items. OCW staff completes extensive outreach efforts to the facilities and installations to find how we can specifically help them in their missions and support their particular programs. There are no one-size-fits-all solutions for wounded, injured, and ill service members, so there should not be a one-size-fits-all approach in our support of their service and sacrifices.

Family Support Network (FSN): 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](http://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.

### **American Legion Baseball**

American Legion Baseball marks its 89<sup>th</sup> season in 2014. Almost 70,000 players on 3,700 teams participated in this American Legion Americanism youth activity during the past year. The 2013 George W. Rulon American Legion Baseball Player of the Year is Anthony Harrold, from Brooklawn, New Jersey.

The American Legion Baseball World Series was held August 14-19, 2014, in Shelby, North Carolina, on Veterans Field at Keeter Stadium and was hosted by American Legion Post 82. The championship game was telecast live on ESPNU with all the other games webcast live 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-three Hall of Fame members played American Legion Baseball, including the 2014 Inductee Class of Greg Maddux, Tony La Russa, and Bobby Cox. 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.

### **Citizenship And Naturalization**

Citizenship & Naturalization efforts of Americanism include: developing new ideas and initiatives aimed at promoting grassroots involvement at the post level in understanding, appreciating and actively participating in the rights and responsibilities of American citizenship and American government; (2) developing new ideas and initiatives aimed at promoting grassroots involvement at the post level in assimilating prospective citizens/legal immigrants into local communities; and (3) monitoring and maintaining a portfolio of resolutions specific to the rights and responsibilities of American citizenship, and the assimilation and naturalization of prospective citizens/legal immigrants.

The Americanism Commission strongly urges Legion posts, districts and departments to vigorously undertake activities and collaborate with the U.S. Office of Citizenship and Immigration Services to help newly arriving immigrants become assimilated and seek citizenship.

### **COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & YOUTH**

**Herbert J. Petit, Jr., Louisiana, Chairman**

**Jason R. Kees, Illinois, Youth Welfare Manager**

The American Legion has been a staunch supporter of the children and youth of our nation since our founding in 1919. Our commitment to our nation's children continues to be a paramount concern for the Committee 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 has 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-six 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.

### **2013 – 2014 Programs**

**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 Committee on Children & Youth designated the Child Safety program as one of its annual programs. 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.

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. To help educate the public, the Committee on Children & Youth produces and distributes "Play it Safe," a brochure to inform parents about the six most common causes of death among children and prevention strategies.

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 may be preventable. The Committee 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 Committee 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 Committee on Children & Youth produces and distributes a brochure, "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 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 Committee 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.

Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA): 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 2013 – 2014 program year, the program aided 1,899 children with over \$881,805 in grants (see Table 2). 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 Committee on Children & Youth 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.

### **Legislative Efforts**

The initiation and support of worthwhile Children & Youth legislation is one means by which the Committee on Children & Youth has attempted to accomplish its goals during the 2013 – 2014 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 and decrease demand.

**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 2013 – 2014 Children & Youth legislative program. The American Legion's Committee on Children & Youth continually urges 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 91 years, the Committee on Children & Youth records activities from The American Legion Family, consisting of nearly 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, 2013 through May 31, 2014 and combined with these reports.

During the reporting period, The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation recorded \$584,418 in donations from members of The American Legion Family and individuals across the country. During the same period, our Temporary Financial Assistance program expended over \$881,805 in grants to 1,899 children of veterans. For the 2013 – 2014 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 \$17,989,388 (see Table 1) in expenditures and contributions to benefit the children of America.

### **COMMITTEE ON YOUTH EDUCATION**

**Mike Bredeck, Minnesota, Chairman**

**Michael Buss, Iowa, Deputy Director**

The Committee on Youth Education (formerly known as the National Committee on Education), was established in 1976, and 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; (3) to maintain contact with the educational community so that there may be an interchange of thinking between The American Legion/American Legion Auxiliary and educators, students, and other organizations concerned with the well being of education throughout the nation; and (4) such other purposes as may be assigned to it by the National Executive Committee.

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 17-21, 2014.

Following the terrorist attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, The American Legion established the September 11<sup>th</sup> 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, \$583,000 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 18,900 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.

Martha Cothren, an educator at Joe T. Robinson High School, Little Rock, Arkansas, received the 2014 American Legion National Education Award in recognition and appreciation for her dedication in honoring those who served in the United States military and enabling students to gain an in-depth understanding of the impact of serving our nation in our Armed Forces 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.

**Table No. 1**  
**Children & Youth Expenditures and Number of Children Served**

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	Total Legion Lines 3 thru 8
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>REGION 1</b>									
Connecticut	51%	\$1,478.80	\$4,025.28	\$16,729.00	\$6,662.00	\$26,369.00	\$5,536.00	8,322	\$60,800
Maine	56%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$116,180.00	\$16,075.00	\$160,864.00	\$9,175.00	5,347	\$262,294
Massachusetts	37%	\$1,683.02	\$1,132.50	\$22,718.00	\$26,025.00	\$43,157.00	\$6,814.00	7,291	\$100,530
New Hampshire	86%	\$0.00	\$3,024.63	\$42,749.00	\$38,443.00	\$123,457.00	\$6,225.00	12,901	\$213,899
Rhode Island	100%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$27,350.00	\$25,000.00	\$25,791.00	\$1,000.00	416	\$79,141
Vermont	96%	\$0.00	\$275.00	\$27,141.00	\$57,340.00	\$67,404.00	\$3,223.00	3,303	\$165,383
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>\$3,161.82</b>	<b>\$8,457.31</b>	<b>\$252,867.00</b>	<b>\$169,645.00</b>	<b>\$437,042.00</b>	<b>\$30,873.00</b>	<b>37,580</b>	<b>\$992,046</b>
<b>REGION 2</b>									
Delaware	62%	\$0.00	\$2,240.00	\$4,630.00	\$3,400.00	\$14,045.00	\$325.00	1,081	\$24,640
D.C.	45%	\$1,125.57	\$915.00	\$50.00	\$792.00	\$175.00	\$0.00	2	\$3,058
Maryland	88%	\$2,306.31	\$2,445.25	\$102,857.00	\$208,720.00	\$173,783.00	\$22,831.00	12,648	\$612,943
New Jersey	42%	\$4,210.86	\$3,683.18	\$68,874.00	\$87,579.00	\$160,502.00	\$21,932.00	1,331	\$346,781
New York	69%	\$4,838.69	\$7,318.94	\$711,784.00	\$325,713.00	\$978,245.00	\$117,359.00	201,744	\$2,145,259
Pennsylvania	54%	\$27,000.54	\$3,860.33	\$157,686.00	\$150,267.00	\$330,037.00	\$54,280.00	5,061	\$722,801
Virginia	99%	\$40,720.47	\$1,873.84	\$498,851.00	\$343,255.00	\$285,886.00	\$73,049.00	67,134	\$1,243,654
West Virginia	94%	\$21,897.06	\$408.07	\$23,651.00	\$12,325.00	\$115,929.00	\$8,155.00	13,824	\$182,365
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>\$102,108.50</b>	<b>\$22,550.61</b>	<b>\$1,668,383.00</b>	<b>\$1,132,055.00</b>	<b>\$2,058,672.00</b>	<b>\$287,931.00</b>	<b>302,825</b>	<b>\$5,181,600</b>
<b>REGION 3</b>									
Alabama	30%	\$2,980.00	\$5,127.35	\$36,645.00	\$16,505.00	\$20,850.00	\$4,581.00	1,255	\$86,688
Florida	96%	\$65,700.66	\$43,934.00	\$253,297.00	\$150,433.00	\$928,748.00	\$34,973.00	19,909	\$1,477,086
Georgia	87%	\$7,730.55	\$75.00	\$54,942.00	\$74,283.00	\$167,639.00	\$13,421.00	6,829	\$318,101
Kentucky	83%	\$7,596.66	\$1,265.50	\$57,984.00	\$51,369.00	\$107,869.00	\$2,817.00	2,210	\$228,901
North Carolina	48%	\$23,716.02	\$363.00	\$27,491.00	\$10,447.00	\$52,745.00	\$8,861.00	17,091	\$123,623
South Carolina	51%	\$6,149.30	\$2,050.45	\$8,369.00	\$18,185.00	\$22,755.00	\$6,279.00	993	\$63,788
Tennessee	56%	\$5,516.34	\$1,661.26	\$40,972.00	\$13,792.00	\$140,578.00	\$11,975.00	6,611	\$214,495
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>\$119,389.53</b>	<b>\$54,476.56</b>	<b>\$479,700.00</b>	<b>\$335,024.00</b>	<b>\$1,441,184.00</b>	<b>\$82,907.00</b>	<b>64,898</b>	<b>\$2,612,681</b>
<b>REGION 4</b>									
Arkansas	27%	\$1,297.14	\$3,300.85	\$178,402.00	\$3,563.00	\$124,289.00	\$1,372.00	27,055	\$310,224
Louisiana	42%	\$2,755.20	\$1,322.61	\$22,162.00	\$22,248.00	\$56,190.00	\$23,652.00	1,003	\$128,330
Mississippi	26%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10,927.00	\$8,300.00	\$19,124.00	\$2,000.00	840	\$40,351
Oklahoma	31%	\$178,607.38	\$0.00	\$16,258.00	\$22,000.00	\$42,857.00	\$14,323.00	6,231	\$274,045
Texas	59%	\$20,304.97	\$1,520.97	\$155,931.00	\$125,620.00	\$296,486.00	\$37,290.00	32,770	\$637,153
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>\$202,964.69</b>	<b>\$5,144.43</b>	<b>\$381,680.00</b>	<b>\$181,731.00</b>	<b>\$539,946.00</b>	<b>\$78,637.00</b>	<b>69,899</b>	<b>\$1,390,103</b>
<b>REGION 5</b>									
Illinois	41%	\$47,599.83	\$4,560.50	\$47,561.00	\$43,420.00	\$151,132.00	\$19,349.00	4,769	\$313,622
Indiana	56%	\$100,115.70	\$4,654.71	\$75,040.00	\$124,813.00	\$491,441.00	\$37,976.00	4,558	\$834,040
Michigan	8%	\$9,101.92	\$1,826.33	\$162,826.00	\$88,371.00	\$231,176.00	\$49,377.00	6,746	\$542,678
Missouri	100%	\$10,705.77	\$2,792.12	\$33,173.00	\$27,527.00	\$91,818.00	\$7,452.00	1,750	\$173,468
Ohio	83%	\$21,771.37	\$31,590.05	\$344,961.00	\$204,079.00	\$505,335.00	\$35,872.00	61,125	\$1,143,608
Wisconsin	100%	\$8,418.32	\$5,412.87	\$84,146.00	\$30,170.00	\$180,961.00	\$24,051.00	17,324	\$333,189
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>\$197,712.91</b>	<b>\$50,836.68</b>	<b>\$747,707.00</b>	<b>\$519,380.00</b>	<b>\$1,651,893.00</b>	<b>\$174,077.00</b>	<b>96,272</b>	<b>\$3,340,606</b>
<b>REGION 6</b>									
Iowa	64%	\$5,663.63	\$2,573.00	\$62,286.00	\$22,669.00	\$106,495.00	\$12,123.00	8,750	\$211,810
Kansas	68%	\$11,939.10	\$6,879.86	\$49,186.00	\$12,224.00	\$86,621.00	\$3,765.00	6,294	\$172,415
Minnesota	79%	\$650.00	\$3,834.52	\$183,064.00	\$168,477.00	\$245,396.00	\$18,168.00	25,759	\$619,590
Nebraska	100%	\$2,029.37	\$2,308.20	\$32,729.00	\$16,086.00	\$70,652.00	\$22,963.00	13,856	\$146,768
North Dakota	56%	\$1,408.50	\$2,240.45	\$46,410.00	\$15,905.00	\$73,998.00	\$5,226.00	2,102	\$145,188
South Dakota	63%	\$0.00	\$1,611.26	\$22,242.00	\$11,580.00	\$45,837.00	\$4,617.00	5,103	\$85,887
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>\$21,690.60</b>	<b>\$21,247.29</b>	<b>\$395,917.00</b>	<b>\$246,941.00</b>	<b>\$628,999.00</b>	<b>\$68,862.00</b>	<b>80,964</b>	<b>\$1,381,657</b>
<b>REGION 7</b>									
Arizona	77%	\$57,774.24	\$1,357.00	\$172,794.00	\$57,720.00	\$538,464.00	\$22,360.00	23,002	\$850,469
California	72%	\$8,072.95	\$6,912.49	\$345,420.00	\$65,613.00	\$415,360.00	\$35,285.00	33,545	\$876,663
Colorado	38%	\$15,899.75	\$969.00	\$19,843.00	\$34,188.00	\$54,672.00	\$7,335.00	1,657	\$132,907
Hawaii	14%	\$0.00	\$39.70	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,200.00	\$1,300.00	0	\$3,540
Nevada	49%	\$20,086.42	\$205.00	\$10,949.00	\$6,710.00	\$42,280.00	\$333.00	2,964	\$60,503
New Mexico	49%	\$13,515.01	\$2,418.28	\$99,242.00	\$67,914.00	\$110,695.00	\$46,131.00	6,340	\$339,915
Utah	19%	\$2,035.00	\$70.00	\$1,600.00	\$2,175.00	\$18,696.00	\$3,323.00	100	\$27,899
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>\$117,383.37</b>	<b>\$11,971.47</b>	<b>\$649,848.00</b>	<b>\$234,320.00</b>	<b>\$1,182,367.00</b>	<b>\$116,067.00</b>	<b>67,608</b>	<b>\$2,311,957</b>
<b>REGION 8</b>									
Alaska	75%	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$88,450.00	\$26,664.00	\$64,017.00	\$24,064.00	1,988	\$203,295
Idaho	80%	\$16,112.33	\$1,040.00	\$6,103.00	\$7,065.00	\$8,069.00	\$1,900.00	378	\$49,529
Montana	100%	\$9,109.70	\$613.83	\$6,793.00	\$15,740.00	\$49,963.00	\$2,623.00	34,935	\$84,843
Oregon	97%	\$51,681.07	\$2,043.00	\$26,234.00	\$8,475.00	\$27,492.00	\$2,491.00	1,114	\$117,416
Washington	59%	\$38,394.11	\$2,351.62	\$14,112.00	\$21,415.00	\$41,399.00	\$9,685.00	3,175	\$127,357
Wyoming	93%	\$768.62	\$6,615.15	\$700.00	\$6,171.00	\$2,873.00	\$948.00	33	\$17,076
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>\$116,068.83</b>	<b>\$11,763.60</b>	<b>\$141,392.00</b>	<b>\$85,650.00</b>	<b>\$193,833.00</b>	<b>\$41,711.00</b>	<b>42,173</b>	<b>\$590,315</b>
<b>REGION TOTALS:</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>\$880,477.25</b>	<b>\$187,447.85</b>	<b>\$4,617,494.00</b>	<b>\$2,903,546.00</b>	<b>\$8,132,836.00</b>	<b>\$889,165.00</b>	<b>752,319</b>	<b>\$17,610,966</b>
<b>FOREIGN</b>									
France	25%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0	\$0
Mexico	21%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0	\$0
Philippines	10%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4,625.00	\$625.00	\$5,565.00	\$3,400.00	2	\$14,215
Puerto Rico	3%	\$1,328.00	\$0.00	\$4,975.00	\$1,275.00	\$8,875.00	\$3,600.00	27	\$20,653
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>\$1,328.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>\$1,328</b>
<b>GRAND TOTALS:</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>\$881,805.25</b>	<b>\$187,447.85</b>	<b>\$4,617,494.00</b>	<b>\$2,903,546.00</b>	<b>\$8,132,836.00</b>	<b>\$889,165.00</b>	<b>752,319</b>	<b>\$17,989,388</b>

TABLE #1 REPORTING PERIOD: JUNE 1, 2013 - MAY 31, 2014

Child Welfare Foundation by National Legion \$3,030  
 Child Welfare Foundation by Auxiliary \$2,500  
 Child Welfare Foundation by BAO \$4,945  
 Child Welfare Foundation by Individuals \$20,172  
 Requests to Child Welfare Foundation \$345  
 C.W.F. by Sons of The American Legion \$346,099

**Total \$377,094**

TABLE NO. 2  
EXPENDITURES FROM NATIONAL TEMPORARY AID FUNDS TO DEPARTMENTS ACCORDING TO YEARS

	1926-45	1946-65	1966-85	1986-95	1996-2005	2006-2013*	June 2013 - May 2014	Grand Total
Alabama	29,191.33	51,167.06	76,790.45	152,617.32	137,824.69	73,544.96	\$2,960.00	524,105.81
Alaska	0.00	1,827.56	1,550.00	0.00	3,500.00	0.00	0.00	8,177.56
Arizona	26,061.70	8,732.00	21,380.31	192,830.21	299,526.72	321,974.87	357,774.24	919,300.00
Arkansas	33,973.20	26,982.22	2,881.07	55,034.98	16,181.81	16,307.79	\$1,207.14	151,508.01
California	30,106.15	16,028.45	1,550.00	7,559.00	30,034.44	167,320.77	\$8,072.86	260,668.76
Colorado	41,621.11	22,618.11	1,395.00	12,205.63	17,562.15	112,467.80	\$15,899.75	223,799.75
Connecticut	1,854.00	440.00	450.00	1,152.00	7,971.56	24,578.43	\$1,478.80	37,964.79
Delaware	2,032.00	1,000.00	475.00	2,635.00	8,487.64	4,481.00	\$0.00	19,133.64
DC	2,570.00	1,203.50	600.00	26,136.05	2,319.00	2,510.51	\$1,125.57	36,465.33
Florida	33,341.28	25,520.50	2,530.00	27,060.88	64,499.81	299,036.28	\$65,700.66	517,659.39
Georgia	69,694.07	86,064.42	4,805.00	8,498.51	12,951.80	42,524.30	\$7,730.55	232,558.05
Hawaii	870.00	0.00	900.00	0.00	6,168.40	2,787.87	\$0.00	10,706.37
Idaho	5,771.85	7,771.85	7,366.39	20,228.20	195,485.15	198,702.79	\$16,112.33	441,260.21
Illinois	30,220.79	4,343.53	10,525.73	62,128.66	276,545.19	140,199.13	\$47,569.83	601,562.76
Indiana	31,652.08	9,066.40	2,820.00	120,545.18	173,400.96	246,360.27	\$102,115.70	690,258.29
Iowa	17,403.08	597.00	3,928.45	13,782.47	227,865.82	124,914.65	\$5,963.63	394,245.10
Kansas	20,786.80	42,064.35	8,823.00	9,241.54	16,291.60	30,631.33	\$11,939.10	139,857.72
Kentucky	23,843.50	45,527.90	64,854.96	44,238.06	12,445.22	142,621.19	\$7,596.66	341,128.09
Louisiana	23,400.50	38,454.30	3,395.00	7,340.45	33,897.34	5,563.26	\$2,795.20	114,805.05
Maine	3,619.94	1,910.26	2,676.55	15,912.00	22,305.05	15,627.28	\$0.00	62,050.06
Maryland	5,887.00	3,390.57	3,383.00	4,770.00	31,620.94	19,030.74	\$2,306.31	70,388.56
Massachusetts	2,754.50	455.00	150.00	4,850.00	18,888.67	17,135.46	\$1,893.02	45,716.85
Michigan	23,695.33	33,291.24	15,346.62	14,012.24	52,676.66	52,404.01	\$9,101.92	200,716.22
Minnesota	8,610.77	23,322.79	11,840.33	137,879.21	89,538.19	35,962.00	\$650.00	307,533.35
Mississippi	40,293.63	63,254.14	117,892.56	51,214.88	94,261.79	53,867.50	\$0.00	410,784.50
Missouri	53,073.08	47,799.64	11,058.00	17,969.51	38,984.13	131,071.07	\$10,705.77	310,669.20
Montana	5,414.25	1,668.85	1,675.30	39,571.40	97,913.91	69,623.96	\$9,109.70	183,876.97
Nebraska	18,470.10	17,795.68	17,531.06	3,373.25	7,750.49	8,098.00	\$2,029.37	68,026.95
Nevada	585.00	786.00	7,272.00	965.00	18,818.94	34,216.10	\$20,086.42	80,739.46
New Hampshire	4,250.50	4,941.50	0.00	53,557.79	12,610.00	16,697.24	\$0.00	94,057.03
New Jersey	8,965.53	1,949.00	4,478.00	55,578.20	53,184.60	39,805.83	\$4,210.88	188,207.12
New Mexico	20,074.30	53,098.74	58,723.89	111,071.87	49,262.39	22,095.98	\$13,515.01	327,812.18
New York	7,887.54	4,803.00	1,150.00	33,784.24	83,432.27	38,074.64	\$4,838.69	174,970.28
North Carolina	46,597.50	81,019.60	9,740.00	20,750.18	60,774.55	161,546.55	\$23,716.02	432,146.40
North Dakota	26,017.46	11,788.21	5,771.32	8,469.40	11,426.94	10,447.03	\$1,408.60	73,358.85
Ohio	23,930.43	5,116.25	11,613.89	11,357.65	13,289.44	64,469.32	\$21,771.37	151,548.35
Oklahoma	40,458.05	65,406.47	88,956.03	156,914.06	203,764.51	260,129.68	\$178,607.38	994,237.08
Oregon	1,250.50	13,750.15	24,895.86	42,465.83	14,796.00	135,813.33	\$51,681.07	284,152.83
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	104,387.73	\$27,004.54	241,655.02
Puerto Rico	17,057.00	57,754.00	55,499.50	43,420.00	11,100.00	12,591.15	\$1,328.00	198,749.65
Rhode Island	1,562.00	1,541.00	1,050.00	18,659.38	16,152.72	5,049.00	\$0.00	43,995.00
South Carolina	68,453.05	26,893.34	5,339.00	500.00	13,610.18	65,179.39	\$6,149.20	185,824.24
South Dakota	42,430.27	16,362.05	725.00	30,686.38	5,358.30	1,000.00	\$0.00	96,562.00
Tennessee	31,144.77	54,813.20	20,604.30	59,068.79	36,561.35	67,447.89	\$6,516.34	271,996.84
Texas	35,373.50	47,392.43	26,714.50	7,694.14	31,404.75	177,426.59	\$20,304.97	346,591.48
Utah	11,125.48	3,248.00	3,396.00	12,014.42	14,034.34	27,644.02	\$2,035.00	73,497.26
Vermont	1,824.50	9,251.00	0.00	4,925.00	8,004.26	7,701.44	\$0.00	29,706.70
Virginia	45,310.31	28,037.78	17,836.00	31,930.40	95,509.94	247,879.85	\$40,729.47	476,233.75
Washington	3,378.00	427.50	625.00	68,884.89	811,131.89	577,428.40	\$38,384.11	1,198,287.58
West Virginia	27,629.98	11,395.94	3,460.00	17,750.68	40,628.59	52,925.77	\$21,897.06	175,688.02
Wisconsin	16,881.88	8,067.25	8,878.00	16,242.78	74,327.21	77,625.81	\$8,418.32	210,441.35
Wyoming	8,160.00	1,993.00	1,350.00	979.00	13,746.91	25,550.07	\$768.62	52,572.60
Other Dep'ts	660.00	173.50						833.50
Miscellaneous**	19,499.21							\$19,499.21
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,121,672.95</b>	<b>\$1,089,976.73</b>	<b>\$777,325.21</b>	<b>\$1,926,240.98</b>	<b>\$3,327,287.51</b>	<b>\$4,606,935.65</b>	<b>\$881,805.28</b>	<b>\$13,731,114.28</b>

\*Includes January 2012 - May 2013

\*\*For the year 1926-Department totals not available



**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 2013, the Board of Directors approved grants to 21 non-profit organizations in the amount of \$644,005 for projects to be completed in calendar year 2014. The organizations and amounts are as follows:

**American Legion Child Welfare Foundation Grants**

**Autism Speaks** of New York, New York, was awarded \$32,350 for their project, "100 Day Kit for Newly Diagnosed Families." This grant will provide information kits on Autism and will encourage early intervention and supportive services.

**Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation** of Baltimore, Maryland, was awarded \$25,000 for their project, "Healthy Choices, Healthy Children Booklets." This grant will produce booklets to assist adult mentors and law enforcement personnel in teaching teamwork, leadership, communication and personal responsibility to the kids they serve.

**Chadwick Center for Children and Families at Rady Children's Hospital** of San Diego, California, was awarded \$40,350 for their project, "Disseminating Best Practices for Preventing Child Abuse and Family Violence." This grant would provide a webcast of a multidisciplinary conference on child abuse, as well as brochures and email blasts.

**Children's Hospital & Medical Center Foundation** of Omaha, Nebraska, was awarded \$14,000 for their project, "Period of PURPLE Crying Injury Prevention Program." This grant will underwrite the production of an infant injury prevention program that will include the distribution of DVDs and educational booklets.

**Cornelia de Lange Syndrome Foundation** of Avon, Connecticut, was awarded \$18,287 for their project, "CdLS Education Toolkit for Parents and Professionals." This grant will provide toolkits, with information about this syndrome, to parents and professionals.

**Face the Future Foundation** of Chicago, Illinois, was awarded \$6,575 for their project entitled, "Family and Public Support Program for Children with Craniofacial Birth Defects." This grant will produce and distribute an informational video to assist parents with reducing their child's challenging behaviors and increase social and self-control skills.

**Father Flanagan's Boy's Home (aka Boys Town)** of Boys Town, Nebraska, was awarded \$35,500 for their project, "Boys Town National Hotline Online Awareness Campaign." This grant will fund an internet publicity campaign to promote awareness of the Boys Town National Hotline.

**Joe Foss Institute** of Scottsdale, Arizona, was awarded \$10,000 for their project, "Veterans Inspiring Patriotism Program." This grant will provide students with copies of the United States Constitution and Declaration of Independence.

**KS&A (Klinefelter Syndrome and Associates)** of Pine, Colorado, was awarded \$20,000 for their project "Genetic Information Kits for Newly Diagnosed Children with X and Y Chromosome Variations." This grant will provide informational booklets to parents of children with chromosome variation.

**National Alliance of Child Abuse Prevention Funds** of Seattle, Washington, was awarded \$25,260 for their project, "Bringing the Protective Factors to life in your Work – a Resource for Action." This grant will produce toolkits for trainers to educate professionals and caregivers to help prevent child abuse and neglect.

**National Autism Center** of Randolph, Massachusetts, was awarded \$50,000 for their project, "Evidence-Based Educational Interventions in Public School Settings for Children with ASD." This grant will produce and disseminate information to support an intervention program targeted towards schools and special education administrators.

**National Braille Press** of Boston, Massachusetts, was awarded \$18,500 for their project, "Just Enough to Know Better: A Braille Primer." This grant will produce a Braille primer for sighted parents to teach their blind children to read.

**Organization for Autism Research** of Arlington, Virginia, was awarded \$67,400 for their project, "Autism Tuned In." This grant will develop an interactive, web-based program to enhance the lives of children with autism.

**Partnership for Food Safety Education** of Arlington, Virginia, was awarded \$20,600 for their project, "Phase II of the BAC! Fighter National Youth Campaign." This grant will develop online resources to educate the public about food borne illnesses and safe food handling.

**Prevent Child Abuse America** of Chicago, Illinois, was awarded \$14,383 for their project, "Helping Offenders Prevent Child Abuse and Assist in Healthy Development of Families." This grant will underwrite the printing and distribution of a special baby journal aimed at preventing child abuse.

**Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide, Inc.** of Freehold, New Jersey, was awarded \$30,100 for their project, "Remote Delivery of Lifelines Suicide Prevention Program to Schools." This grant will promote Lifeline Suicide Prevention Program in public schools through online training.

**Songs of Love Foundation** of Forest Hills, New York, was awarded \$25,000 for their project, "Songs of Love Outreach Project." This grant will produce and disseminate brochures and update the organization's website to promote awareness of the services offered.

**The American Legion National Headquarters Americanism Division** of Indianapolis, Indiana, was awarded \$69,000 for their project, "The American Legion

National Oratorical Contest – A Constitutional Speech Contest.” This grant will provide scholarship money to participants in the national contest.

**The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, Gateway Chapter** of St. Louis, Missouri, was awarded \$5,000 for their project, “Pediatric Patient Out Reach.” This grant will provide booklets and hospital visitation kits for families with children diagnosed with leukemia and lymphoma.

**Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors** of Arlington, Virginia, was awarded \$26,500 for their project, “Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors Children’s Bereavement Guide.” This grant will produce and disseminate bereavement guidebooks.

**Young Marines** of Washington, District of Columbia, was awarded \$90,000 for their project, “Young Marines Drug Demand Reduction.” This grant will underwrite the purchase and dissemination of anti-drug literature and promotional items

During the 2013 – 2014 contribution year, donations exceeded \$584,418 with over \$346,099 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 4, 2014, 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.

#### **CONVENTION COMMISSION**

**Michael E. Walton, Illinois, Chairman**

**Bridget A. Robinson, CMP, Georgia, Director**

The 95th annual National Convention of The American Legion convened in Houston, Texas, August 23 – 29, 2013. National Commander, James “Jim” E. Koutz, of Indiana called the National Convention to order at 8:30AM on Tuesday, Aug. 27, 2013 welcoming Legionnaires to Houston and thanking them for their continuing service to our Country and to our veterans. The 95th annual National Convention began with SgtMaj Bryan B. Battaglia, USMC, Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff addressing nearly 6,000 American Legion Family members on Tuesday morning. A special guest to the Convention was The Honorable Vice President of The United States, Joe Biden. Later in the day, Rick Perry, Governor, State of Texas; Annise D. Parker, Mayor, State of Texas; the Honorable Eric K. Shinseki, Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; 2012–2013 Department Commander of Texas, Daniel A. Corbin and John D. Morris, President of the 2013 National Convention Corporation

welcomed Legionnaires to the National Convention. Other guest speakers addressing the 95th National Convention of The American Legion were The Honorable Jeff Miller, Chairman U.S. House Committee on Veterans Affairs; The Honorable Eric Shinseki, Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; The Honorable Al Green, United States House of Representatives; The Honorable Ted Cruz, United States Senate; Theodore Roosevelt, IV; Josue “Joe” Robles, President and CEO, USAA; Tico Perez, National Commissioner, Boy Scouts of America. Ms. Rita Cosby served as the master of ceremonies for the superb opening.

There were many highlights during the 2013 National Convention, but four events conducted at the National Convention deserve special mention. On Friday, Aug. 23 the Color Guard Contest took place the first day of convention. There were seven total Color Guard units that participated. The Patriotic Memorial Service, featuring BeBe Winans, and the annual parade, both held on Sunday, Aug. 25, were attended by nearly 2,000 and 4,000 American Legion Family members respectively. On Tuesday, Aug. 27, the National Commander’s Banquet for Distinguished Guests was held at the George R. Brown Convention Center. The banquet featured the Temptations Review 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 2013. 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:**

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

#### **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 \$1,622,140 for 2013. 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 2014 National Convention Program and the 2013 Annual Report.

**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 2013 and for the first three months of 2014.

January 1 to December 31, 2013

*(12 months)*

<i>Gross Sales</i> .....	<i>\$11,732,924</i>
<i>Cost of Goods Sold</i> .....	<i>6,275,435</i>
<i>Overhead</i> .....	<i>3,671,514</i>
<i>Operating Profit</i> .....	<i>1,785,975</i>
<i>Total number of 2013 orders processed was</i> .....	<i>102,762.</i>

January 1 to March 31, 2014

*(3 months)*

<i>Gross Sales</i> .....	<i>\$ 2,460,293</i>
<i>Cost of Goods Sold</i> .....	<i>1,296,058</i>
<i>Overhead</i> .....	<i>833,589</i>
<i>Operating Profit</i> .....	<i>330,646</i>
<i>Total orders processed for first 3 months of 2014 was</i> .....	<i>22,008</i>

**MARKETING COMMITTEE**

**George Lussier, Virginia, Chairman**  
**Scott Miller, Indiana, Deputy Director**

**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 assigned 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 89,200 American Legion family members became active members of the United Services Automobile Association (USAA) earning the Legion approximately \$11 million. New credit card activations bring the total number of credit cards activated since inception of the program in November, 2010, to 65,544 and the number of active credit cardholders continues to grow.

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 \$797,507 in 2013. The staff continues to research other insurance products to offer to members, posts, departments and to explore affinity/corporate relationships.

### **Non-Member Fundraising**

Our active donor file is giving approximately 1.9 times per year with an average gift of \$15. So far in 2014, The American Legion has mailed more than 2,500,000 acquisition appeals, resulting in acquiring more than 75,000 new donors and more than 62,000 non-donor prospect names. Our cost to acquire to date is \$6.30 per donor. This is \$1.80 per donor below last year's cost to acquire amount and represents an improvement of more than a 28%.

Our acquisition plan for the balance of the year has us mailing through November which will result in 2014 total pieces in the mail of about 4.5 million.

Our donor campaigns continue to perform as expected. Year-to-date, our house mailings have shown a 101% return on investment. This represents a return of \$2.01 for every dollar spent.

Year-to-date, the non-member donor program is ahead of budget by more than \$140,000. Since inception, the program has moved into the black and is on pace to finish 2014 at more than \$650,000 in cumulative net revenue (2010 – 2014).

### **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 2014 American Legion Charity Warriors Classic was held on June 13th at The Fort Golf Course in Indianapolis and netted \$30,000 to benefit Operation Comfort

Warriors. New this year was Warrior Appreciation Night; an event held the evening before the golf outing. This sponsored event recognized service members from Warrior Transition Units.

### **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 The American Legion through designated staff to maximize the value of gifts to The American Legion, while minimizing the costs and risks to The American 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.

This policy and procedures guide is reviewed annually and approved by both the Revenue Enhancement Committee and the Finance Commission.

### **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 American 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 American Legion policies and reaffirm The American 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 negotiated 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 negotiated amount. This program aims to maximize those funds raised for departments while achieving a breakeven for the national organization.

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)

Participation in the department fundraising program continues to grow. Seventeen departments have opted into the guarantee program.

### **100 Year Anniversary**

Looking ahead to The American Legion's 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary, staff has identified a number of 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.

### **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 three standing committees assigned to it for supervision and coordination: National Convention Resolutions Assignment Committee, Constitution and By-Laws Committee, and Membership & Post Activities Committee. The latter has separate reporting responsibilities to the National Convention and the National Executive Committee. In addition, the Commission oversees the American Legion Riders Advisory Committee to Internal Affairs.

The Internal Affairs Commission also provides program guidance for the following programs:

**Sons of The American Legion** — For the 40<sup>th</sup> 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 2013 with a record 356,170 members. This number represents .8% increase over the previous year. A total of 32 detachments achieved 100% membership.

Membership in the SAL for 2014 is expected to surpass that of 2013 and give them another “All Time High” for 2014 prior to National Convention in August 2014.

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 2013, the SAL provided over 320,509 volunteer hours in VA



homes and hospitals. Donations in cash and goods to these veterans exceeded \$1,162,282 nationwide. Other projects include Americanism programs of which \$1,986,638 was donated along with 762,831 hours of service. This was remarkable considering only 30% of the Squadrons submitted reports. The Sons have raised over \$36,099.16 in the year 2014 for the Child Welfare Foundation. The Sons also provided numerous grants through The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Since 1987, the SAL has contributed over six 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 American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund 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 National American Legion Riders 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 six national 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 1,500 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 eight major cross-country, multi-day motorcycle runs, traveling more than 10,000 miles and collecting nearly \$4,300,000 for college scholarships for the children of our servicemen and women who have died on active duty to our country. In 2013 The American Legion Legacy Run from Indianapolis, Indiana to the convention city of Houston, Texas raised \$764,000 for the Legacy Scholarship Fund.

**National Emergency Fund** — From January 1, 2013 through December 31, 2013, The American Legion provided \$393,730 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 \$296,550.

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 1<sup>st</sup> through May 31<sup>st</sup>.

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 2013 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 Training** — 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 is presented to each participant that has completed, at the minimum, eight hours of LEAD training.

### **NATIONAL CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS ASSIGNMENT COMMITTEE**

**C. Wayne Schrader, Illinois, Chairman**

The National Convention 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**

**Kenneth E. Orrock, South Dakota, 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 2.2 million members worldwide.

Membership - Final 2012 membership – 2,364,870

Final 2013 membership – 2,311,701

2014 membership as of July 28, 2014 – 2,203,030

#### **51st Annual National Membership Workshop**

The 51st Annual National Membership Workshop convened in Indianapolis on July 31-August 2, 2014, 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. When the workshop concluded, they are prepared to face day-to-day membership challenges with a better understanding of the Legion as it relates to potential members.

The goal of the workshop is to provide these essential membership workers with the tools, knowledge and desire to serve The American Legion's membership. Whether they are involved in membership recruitment or program implementation, the workshop teaches veterans to help veterans and provide communities the essential programs to maintain a quality of life for which all veterans fought and served to preserve.

**New Post Development/Revitalization** — The Membership & Post Activities Committee developed a training program in January 1996 designed to assist posts,

districts and departments in developing and revitalizing posts. The program provides training workshops to interested volunteers, along with practical field application.

The success of the program is evident, based on the revitalization and development of more than 2,750 American Legion posts in the past 18 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 the guidelines established.

**LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION**  
**Brett Reistad, Virginia, Chairman**  
**Louis Celli, Massachusetts, Director**

This report covers activities of the Legislative Commission from August 16, 2013 through August 15, 2014. During this period, the Commission met three (3) 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 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.

**113<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1st Session**

The FY 2014 appropriations process ground to a halt, when the deadline for passage of the 12 appropriations bills to fund federal programs – October 1, 2013 – passed. The House had passed 4 of the 12 spending bills, while the Senate has passed none.

Since none of the appropriations bills were enacted by the end of September, a continuing resolution was needed to keep the federal government running. On September 20, the House passed – by a vote of 230-189 – House Joint Resolution (HJ Res.) 59, a continuing resolution, which contained stop-gap funding for the entire federal government until December 15. One of the controversial provisions of this measure was an attempt to defund the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare.

The Senate passed the measure on September 27 by a 54-44 recorded vote. Prior to voting, the Senate scrubbed the Obamacare defunding provision from the House version. When HJ Res. 59 was returned to the House on September 29, the House passed the revised Senate version, but added a provision to delay implementation of the controversial program until January 1, 2015. The Senate refused to consider any changes to Obamacare. A government shutdown occurred on October 1.

After a three-week standoff, Congress passed and the President signed into law on October 17 stopgap legislation to fund the federal government through the middle of January, 2014 (PL 113-46). This pushed action on passage of funding for the balance of the year into the Second Session.

The American Legion participated in thirty congressional hearings during the First Session.

### **INTERNAL AFFAIRS**

Other casualties of the federal shutdown – which began October 1, 2013 – were a number of veterans’ memorials being cordoned off from public access (although such actions were never taken during previous federal shutdowns) by the National Park Service. These included the National World War II Memorial, the Vietnam Memorial, and the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial (the Iwo Jima Flag-Raising statute).

In response to these ridiculous acts, the House of Representatives on October 2 passed HJ Res. 70, entitled the “Open Our National Parks and Museums Act.” This measure would provide FY 2014 funding to the National Park Service, the various museums of the Smithsonian Institution, the National Gallery of Art, and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. The Senate refused to consider this bill for passage.

### **NATIONAL SECURITY**

On September 30, 2013 the President signed PL 113-39, the “Pay Our Military Act.” This bill’s passage was necessary to avoid any interruption of military pay because of the shutdown of the federal government. The House vote for passage on September 29 was 423-0, while the Senate approved the measure by unanimous consent the next day. This legislation ensured that all members of the armed forces – including active reservists and the Coast Guard – as well as DOD civilian employees and contractors receive their pay, whether the rest of the government is funded or not. Spending authority under the bill would end on January 1, 2015, or with the enactment of a regular or stopgap appropriations measure that includes military pay. The law’s provisions would be valid for the entirety of FY 2014 and would go into effect in any instance of a lapse in government funding affecting military pay during the fiscal year.

On December 26, 2013 President Obama enacted PL 113-66, the “National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2014.” The law authorizes \$632.8 billion for the Department of Defense and defense-related programs for Fiscal Year (FY) 2014, including \$80.7 billion for the war in Afghanistan and other overseas contingency activities. The authorization for regular defense funding is roughly equal to the president’s request but above the FY 2014 cap for defense set by the new budget deal (PL 113-67) signed on the same day. This means many programs may be funded below the NDAA-authorized levels.

Defense spending rose in response to the 9/11 attacks and as the United States went to war in Afghanistan and Iraq. Although those wars have ended or are winding down, (and war related spending is dropping dramatically), the Defense Department’s base non-war budget is still double what it was in 2000. To date, Congress has failed to pass reductions in base defense spending even though reductions have been mandated by deficit reduction legislation.

Lower defense spending began in 2011 when Congress enacted the “Budget Control Act” (PL 112-25) under which an increase in the national debt limit was predicated on an equal amount of spending cuts and deficit reduction. That law imposed spending caps through FY 2021 that would reduce the growth of projected defense spending over 10

years by \$450 billion. And because the joint deficit reduction committee created by that law failed to find another \$1.2 trillion in savings, a lower set of "sequestration" caps went into effect that reduced defense spending by \$490 billion through FY 2021. The first round of sequestration cuts occurred this year. Defense spending for FY 2013, which includes Energy Department nuclear activities and the national security activities of the Coast Guard, FBI, and other agencies, was cut by \$43 billion. Under the second year of sequestration, defense is to receive a \$21 billion cut from the sequester-reduced FY 2013 level.

However, the House and Senate Budget committee leaders agreed in December to roll back a portion of the sequester for two years, which would restore \$23 billion of defense spending for FY 2014 and \$9 billion for FY 2015. That measure, the "Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013" (PL 113-67) was signed by the President on the same day as the NDAA (December 26). This legislation establishes a \$520.5 billion cap for defense for FY 2014 (thereby providing defense with a \$2 billion increase over FY 2013) and \$521.3 billion for FY 2015. Please note: This legislation does not adjust the sequester-reduced defense caps for later years.

It is a source of great pride for the Armed Services Committees that Congress enacts an annual defense authorization bill before the end of the calendar year (Congress has passed an NDAA bill for the past 52 years). Thus, House and Senate Armed Services committee leaders negotiated a compromise measure that includes hundreds of provisions that were contained in each chamber's version of the bill.

The NDAA's \$552.1 billion authorization for non-war defense spending includes \$544.4 billion in discretionary spending and \$7.7 billion in mandatory funding. The total includes \$239 billion for operations and maintenance, \$146.2 billion for personnel costs, \$105.1 billion for procurement, and \$67.9 billion for research and development.

As this NDAA is an *authorization* bill, Congress will still have to enact defense *appropriations* legislation that funds what is included in the NDAA. The agreement's \$544.4 billion authorization for non-war discretionary spending, however, is \$24 billion more than the new FY 2014 discretionary cap for defense being set by PL 113-67 – and that cap must accommodate not only the funding for activities in this NDAA bill but other programs funded within the defense budget. Consequently, funding for many of the programs authorized by this NDAA bill is expected to be lower, perhaps significantly lower in some accounts, than their authorized levels when Congressional appropriators assemble the final FY 2014 defense appropriations bill.

### **VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION**

Under the provisions of PL 113-37 (outlined below), VA is authorized to provide grants to organizations that offer transitional housing to homeless veterans with special needs, including women, as well as single parents, the frail elderly and those with severe mental illnesses.

In addition, through the end of 2013, the VA will retain authority to provide allowances to disabled veterans who have been invited by the U.S. Olympic Committee to participate in the U.S. Paralympics program. The bill also will extend through December 31; the authority to provide VA grants to the USOC to plan, develop, manage and implement integrated adaptive sports programs for disabled veterans and service members.

In an effort to ensure continued operations by all divisions of VA, the House on October 3 passed HJ Res. 72, a bill entitled "Honoring Our Promise to America's Veterans Act." The vote for passage was 259-157. This bill would make appropriations for FY 2014 for veterans' benefits, specifically for entitlements and other mandatory payments whose budget authority was provided in PL 113-6 (the FY 2013 omnibus spending measure). The resolution would continue activities at the same rate of appropriations to maintain program levels under current law, through December 15, 2013. It also contained \$2.4 billion for the Veterans Benefits Administration for the

processing of veterans benefit claims. The Senate did not take up the measure, and again refused to consider any further “piecemeal” funding measures.

On October 28, the House of Representatives approved by a 404-2 vote the bill HR 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.

Also on October 28 the House passed by a vote of 404-1 HR 2189, a measure to 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;
- 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;
- Clarify methods for validating certain service considered to be active service by VA; and,
- 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.

On November 21, 2013 President Obama signed PL 113-52, legislation to provide a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) of 1.5 percent for eligible veterans and dependents. The veterans COLA affects several benefits, including veterans' service-connected disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses and children. The COLA is designed to offset inflation and other factors that lead to the rising cost of living over time. It matches the annual increase provided to Social Security recipients and is based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index.

On December 20, 2013, President Obama enacted PL 113-59, the *VA Expiring Authorities Extension Act of 2013*. The new law has a number of provisions, including:

- Authorization of appropriations to VA for payment of a monthly assistance allowance to disabled veterans and members of the Armed Forces training or competing for the U.S. Paralympic Team. This authority extends through FY 2015.
- Allows any entity with significant experience in managing large-scale adaptive sports programs to receive VA grants for planning, developing, managing, and implementing programs to provide adaptive sports opportunities for veterans and members. The law also extends funding assistance to include any such opportunities occurring during FY 2010 through FY 2016.
- Extends through 2014 VA authority to transport individuals to and from VA facilities in connection with vocational rehabilitation, counseling, examination, treatment, or care;
- Extends through 2014 VA authority to operate a regional office in the Republic of the Philippines;

- Extends through 2014 the VA requirement to provide nursing home care to any veteran with a service-connected disability rated at 70 percent or more and in need of such care;
- Extends through 2014 VA authority to provide treatment, rehabilitation, and related services for seriously mentally ill veterans;
- Extends through 2014 the temporary authority for the performance of VA medical disability examinations by contract physicians.

On December 26, 2013, the President signed PL 113-66, a measure which contained provisions from the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013. This legislation was an agreement between the chairmen of the House and Senate Budget committees for restoring some federal funding levels above sequester limits.

However, one provision in the measure – which was never made public or examined in a public hearing – reduced the cost-of-living adjustments of military retirees by one percent every year until they reach age 62. Opposition to this provision was immediate, and a wide range of veteran and military service organization – including The American Legion – called for a repeal of the offending provision, even though it does not go into effect until 2015.

### VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION

President Obama on September 30, 2013 signed into law PL 113-37, the *Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2013*. This measure would extend the VA's authority to provide grants and assistance to veterans under programs scheduled to with the beginning of fiscal year (FY) 2014.

This legislation includes extensions to provide grants to disabled veterans requiring housing modifications and to set policies for addressing defaults on VA home loan guarantees. The measure also will allow VA to continue collecting copayments for hospital and nursing home care from veterans, extend the department's authority to provide 30 additional specially adapted housing grants to veterans who have lost – or lost use of – one or more lower extremities and its authority to provide child care assistance for certain veterans receiving intensive health care services.

Under the bill, the Labor Department will maintain authority to run the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, which provides employment assistance to homeless veterans. The VA would be authorized to use FY 2014 funding to continue the Grant and Per Diem Program, to provide increased transitional housing assistance for homeless veterans and the Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program, which provides rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention assistance to at-risk veterans.

Other provisions contained in PL 113-59 (outlined above in the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation section) would address other areas affecting veterans. They include:

- Extends through 2014 VA authority to provide expanded services and housing assistance to homeless veterans;
- Extends through 2014 VA authority to provide treatment, rehabilitation, and related services for homeless veterans;
- Extends through 2014 the Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans; and,
- Extends through 2014 the Veterans' Advisory Commission on Education.

On October 28, 2013 the House passed by voice vote HR 2481, the *Veterans Economic Opportunity Act of 2013*. This measure 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.

### **113<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2nd Session**

The Second Session of the 113th Congress convened January 3, 2014. Major issues on the agenda for both chambers of interest to the Legion included the fight over the COLA reduction contained in the Ryan/Murray budget deal and the VA healthcare scandal. To date, The American Legion has participated in seventeen congressional hearings during the Second Session.

On March 4, the Obama Administration released its budget request for the FY 2015 federal budget, including VA. This proposal includes \$65.3 billion in VA discretionary funding – an increase of \$1.9 billion over FY 2014 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 which are an integral part of the FY 2015 budget's services to veterans include:

- \$7 billion to continue VA's focus on expanding and transforming mental health services for veterans to ensure accessible and patient-centered care;
- \$2.5 billion in funding for the Veterans Benefits Administration;
- \$1.6 billion to serve homeless and at-risk veterans, including \$500 million for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families and \$321 million for the HUD-VASH Supportive Housing program;
- \$562 million for major construction projects, an increase of \$220 million over current year funding, and \$495 million for minor construction, a reduction of \$220 million;
- \$173 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; and
- \$139 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.

In addition, the President's budget would create a Veterans Job Corps, an interagency body coordinated by VA, and transfer up to \$1 billion in mandatory funding over five years. Funding will enable veterans to leverage skills developed in the military in jobs on the country's public lands and in its communities, ranging from conservation and infrastructure projects to jobs such as park rangers, police officers, and firefighters. Legislation to create this Veterans Job Corps is still awaiting action by Congress.

### **AMERICANISM**

Since their introduction in 2013, House Joint Resolution (HJ Res.) 47 and Senate Joint Resolution (SJ Res.) 17 – flag protection legislation – have failed to garner a great deal of support in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. After being assigned to the House and Senate Judiciary committees, no hearings were held on either bill. The House measure had 29 cosponsors, while the Senate bill had 23 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 January 17, President Obama signed PL 113-76, the Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY 2014. This measure provides funding for federal government programs for the remainder of the fiscal year (which ends on September 30, 2014). Part of that measure funded programs of the Department of Justice. Specific areas of interest to The American Legion include:

- \$8.3 billion for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), an increase of \$232 million over FY 2013;
- \$2.73 billion for the U.S. Marshals Service;
- \$2.4 billion for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA);
- A total of \$2.2 billion was set aside for a number of various state and local grant programs. One program that has been a primary Legion concern since 1974 is the account for juvenile justice grants, which totals \$254.5 million. These grants address such concerns as child abuse, youth gangs and violence against children, missing / exploited children, and underage drinking; and,
- \$1.18 billion for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), an increase of \$47 million above FY 2013 enacted levels.

On May 30 the House by a vote of 321-87 approved HR 4660, a measure to fund the Departments of Commerce and Justice, and Science programs for FY 2015. A Senate companion measure, S 2437, was approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee on June 5. The Department of Justice (DOJ) would receive \$26.7 billion in funding for the upcoming fiscal year under the House measure, but \$28 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:

- \$8.3 billion for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in both bills;
- \$2.3 billion for state and local law enforcement and crime prevention grant programs in the Senate version, \$2.2 billion in the House measure;
- \$2.4 billion for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in the House measure, \$2 billion in the Senate 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 both versions; and,
- \$258 million for juvenile justice and mentoring grants in the Senate bill, \$224 million in the House version.

These measures are still in the preliminary stages of the legislative process.

### INTERNAL AFFAIRS

On June 30 President Obama enacted PL 113-123, the *World War II Memorial Prayer Act*. This bill – supported by The American Legion – would authorize the Interior Department to engrave a prayer on the National World War II Memorial that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt delivered on D-Day in 1944.

The engraving will be paid for by private donations, at no cost to the taxpayer. The measure will immortalize FDR's prayer on the World War II Memorial "so it becomes a permanent reminder of the sacrifice of not just those who fought in World War II, but also of the men and women who fight for us today and all those who lay down their lives for the cause of liberty," according to Sen. Rob Portman, the legislation sponsor.

### NATIONAL SECURITY

Under the provisions of PL 113-76, the Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY 2014 – signed by the President on January 17 – the military construction accounts would receive a total of \$9.8 billion. This amount includes \$1.5 billion for family housing projects, with another \$796 million slated for military medical treatment facilities. It

further appropriates \$666 million for the construction or alterations of Guard and Reserve facilities.

Other provisions in the law address Department of Defense (DOD) funding for the balance of the fiscal year. DOD appropriations include \$486.9 billion in the base budget and \$85.2 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations. Defense spending includes:

- \$128.8 billion for Personnel and pay accounts, including a 1 percent pay raise for all uniformed personnel, \$1.3 billion above the enacted FY 2013 levels;
- \$160 billion for Operations and Maintenance, \$13.6 billion below FY 2013;
- \$92.9 billion for Procurement accounts, \$7.5 billion below the enacted 2013 level;
- \$63 billion for Research & Development, \$6.9 billion below 2013 spending level; and,
- \$32.7 billion for DOD health and family programs. Overall, the legislation includes increased funding for cancer research, as well as traumatic brain injury and psychological health research and suicide prevention outreach programs.

According to the House Appropriations Committee, savings were found in a number of ways, including \$2 billion in rescissions of unused prior-year funding, \$867 million for the Working Capital Fund excess cash balances, and \$380 million for revised economic assumptions.

FY 2014 funding for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was contained in PL 113-76, the consolidated funding measure, and totaled \$39.3 billion, a reduction of \$336 million compared to FY 2013. Some of the major accounts which interest The American Legion are:

- \$10.6 billion for Customs & Border Protection, about \$111 million above last year's amount. This funding will allow for the highest operational force levels ever – nearly 21,400 Border Patrol agents and 23,775 CBP officers;
- \$10.2 billion was approved for the U.S. Coast Guard, \$463 million above the President's budget request;
- \$6.2 billion in funding for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), including \$2.5 billion for first responder grants and \$1.5 billion for state and local grants;
- \$5.3 billion for Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE), \$164 million below FY 2013 levels. ICE's areas of responsibility include human trafficking, child exploitation, cyber-crime, and drug smuggling. The bill also fully funded E-Verify, a program that helps companies check if their employees may legally work in this country;
- \$4.9 billion for the Transportation Security Agency (TSA), a decrease of \$225 million below FY 2013 enacted levels. This included funding for security enforcement, cargo inspections, intelligence functions, and increases for canine detention teams and privatized screening operations;
- \$1.6 billion for the Secret Service. It contained increased funding for cybersecurity investigations, rejected the President's proposed cuts to critical Secret Service staffing, and continued funding for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children which the President proposed to zero out.

The measure also included a prohibition on the transfer or release of detainees from Guantanamo Bay.

On April 30 the House of Representatives by a vote of 416-1 approved HR 4486, the FY 2015 Military Construction and Department of Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies spending bill. A total of \$6.6 billion in overall military construction is contained in the measure. This is a reduction of \$3.2 billion as compared to FY 2014 amounts. The steep cut reflected the need to prioritize military readiness given sequestration and budget caps.

During House consideration, several amendments were considered. One amendment, proposed by Rep. Jim Moran (VA) would have struck language from the measure barring funds from being used to construct, alter, or expand a facility in this country with the intent of housing detainees currently being held at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The amendment was rejected by a vote of 249-168.

An amendment introduced by Rep. Jon Runyan (NJ) would prohibit any funds allocated in the bill from being used to plan or execute an additional round of base realignment and closure. It was approved by a voice vote.

The House also approved by a voice vote an amendment introduced by Rep. Mike Turner (OH) that would designate an additional \$20 million in the defense-wide military construction account for an additional missile defense site to protect the U.S. from the threat of long-range ballistic missile attack.

On June 20, the House of Representatives passed HR 4870, the FY 2015 Defense Appropriations bill by a vote of 340-73 and sent it to the Senate for action. In total, the bill provides \$491 billion in discretionary funding, an increase of \$4.1 billion above FY 2014 and \$200 million above the President's request. In addition, the bill includes \$79.4 billion in Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) for the ongoing war efforts abroad, the same level assumed in the President's budget request. The defense appropriations bill largely mirrors the House-passed defense authorization bill for FY 2015 (HR 4435).

It should be noted that 85 percent of the contingency funds cannot be used until the Secretary of Defense provides Congress with a detailed spending plan for the account – including an assurance that no funds will be used in contravention of current-law notification requirements to Congress regarding transfers of Guantánamo detainees. The bill's appropriation for discretionary spending is consistent with the current cap for defense spending set by December's *Bipartisan Budget Act*, and is \$202 million above the president's request.

Provisions of interest to the Legion include:

- *Missile Defense*: Funding for continued deployment of a national missile defense system based in Alaska and California, as well as the Obama plan for missile defense in Europe, is about \$10 billion. It includes \$620 million for cooperative programs with Israel, \$347 million more than the request, of which \$351 million is for Israel's "Iron Dome" system.
- *Guantánamo*: HR 4870 continues to prohibit the use of DOD funds to transfer prisoners at the Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, detention center to the United States or its territories. It continues to prohibit the use of funds for the construction or modification of any facility in the U.S. to detain or imprison individuals currently being held at Guantánamo. In response to the recent exchange of Taliban detainees for Army Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl, it also bars the use of funds in contravention of provisions of the FY 2014 Defense Authorization Act (PL 113-66) that require congressional notification before the department may transfer any detainees from Guantánamo Bay.
- *Health*: \$31.6 billion is slated for the military health care program. Total includes added funds to address traumatic brain injuries and psychological health issues.
- *Aircraft*: \$14.1 billion for Navy aircraft, \$980 million more than requested, and \$12 billion for Air Force planes, \$504 million more than requested, including the following:
  - *F-35 Joint Strike Fighter* – \$5.8 billion for procurement of 38 JSF aircraft, \$479 million and four aircraft more than the president's request, and \$1.6 billion for continued research and development, equal to the request.
  - *P-8A Multimission Maritime Aircraft (Poseidon)* – \$2.1 billion for nine Multimission Maritime Aircraft (the Navy's next-generation, maritime,

- anti-surface warfare surveillance aircraft); \$125 million and one aircraft more than the president's request.
- EA-18G – \$1 billion in unrequested funds for 12 new EA-18G Airborne Electronic Attack aircraft.
  - V-22 Osprey – \$1.5 billion for 19 V-22 tilt-rotor aircraft for the Marines.
  - KC-46A Aerial Refueling Tanker – \$2.4 billion in procurement and development funds for a new refueling aerial tanker.
  - Army Helicopter Transfers – \$1.3 billion for 87 multiuse Black Hawks for the Army and National Guard, and it limits the Army's ability to transfer National Guard Apache helicopters to the Active Army.
  - Shipbuilding: \$14.3 billion for major Navy vessels, \$144 million less than requested, including the following:
    - New Attack Submarine – \$5.8 billion for construction for the next boats in the *Virginia* class of new attack submarines.
    - Aircraft Carriers – \$789 million in unrequested funds for refueling for the USS *George Washington* (CVN-73).
    - Littoral Combat Ship – \$951 million for two Littoral (coastal) Combat Ships, total is \$476 million and one ship less than requested.
    - DDG-51 Destroyers – \$2.7 billion for two DDG-51 vessels, equal to the request.
    - Ship Retention – \$540 million for the refurbishment of *Ticonderoga*-class cruisers and dock landing ships. The bill also restricts the number of ships the Navy had planned to take out of service (the Navy sought to take 11 cruisers out of service to modernize them).
  - Other Provisions:
    - US-Made Rocket Engines – \$222 million in unrequested funds to develop a made-in-America liquid-fueled rocket engine.
    - Sexual Assault – \$275 million, \$50 million more than current level.
    - Military Pay Raise – 1.8 percent pay increase for military personnel, 0.8-percentage-point increase over the president's request, and extends certain special pay and bonuses for active-duty and reserve personnel.
    - Heavy Armor Production Lines – \$120 million in unrequested funds to keep open production lines for the M-1 Abrams tank.

On July 17, the Senate Appropriations Committee passed by voice vote its version of HR 4870, the Department of Defense (DOD) Appropriations Act for fiscal year (FY) 2015. The bill provides \$549.3 billion in base and overseas contingency operation funding – compared to \$572 billion enacted in FY 2014 and \$550.7 billion in the President's FY 2015 budget request. The base budget appropriation is \$489.6 billion and there is \$59.7 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO), compared to \$85.2 billion for DOD OCO enacted in FY 2014.

The Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2015 contained the following provisions of interest to the Legion:

- Personnel:
  - One-percent pay raise for military and civilian personnel. It also follows through on Congress' reversal of the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) reduction by adding \$507.5 million to fully fund military retirement benefits;
  - \$200 million to maintain operations at commissaries (pending the commission on compensation report due next year);
  - \$25 million for the Special Victims' Counsel Program to provide victims of sexual assault with legal assistance and support;
  - \$3.6 million for Health Artifacts and Imaging Management Systems to support ongoing efforts between DOD and VA to manage veterans' health information and improve care.

- *Research and Development:*
- Increases both DOD's medical research budget and the Congressionally-directed medical research funding by \$789 million. The bill includes report language emphasizing collaboration between DOD and the National Institutes of Health in research efforts, and expresses concern on the shortage of mental health providers within DOD; and,
- \$257 million to basic (non-medical) research for the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).
- *Readiness program cuts:* Improving funds management: 57 percent of the cuts (\$6.6 billion) are due to excess prior year unobligated funding and forward financing; restoring acquisition accountability: 23 percent of the cuts (\$2.7 billion) are due to schedule delays, unit cost growth, troubled acquisition strategies, agreement by various DOD elements to these cuts, or poor contractor performance; maintaining program affordability: 11 percent of the cuts (\$1.3 billion) eliminate unnecessary growth in programs; and, 9 percent of the cuts (\$1.1 billion) are for duplication of programs, poor budget documentation, or terminated programs.
- *Other Readiness provisions include:*
  - \$1.9 billion for shortfalls, including \$1 billion for facility sustainment and \$360 million for depot maintenance;
  - \$1.3 billion to purchase 12 EA-18G Growlers, including \$100 million to support the production line;
  - \$848.7 million for modernization of CVN-73, USS *George Washington*.
  - \$621.6 million for Israeli missile defense programs, including \$351 million for Iron Dome;
  - \$338 million to maintain A-10 fleet and \$31 million to continue operations of the 31 E-3 AWACs radar aircraft;
  - \$293 million for various vehicles, including: \$120 million for the Abrams tank, \$75 million for the Improved Recovery Vehicle, \$61 million for Stryker vehicle development and production; \$37 million for the Bradley Fighting Vehicle;
  - \$80 million for Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) program for long-lead parts to purchase the final ship of the block buy next year, at this year's pricing; and,
  - Procurement of 34 F-35 Joint Strike Fighters (same as President's request).
- *Pentagon Reform provisions include:*
- Directing a \$20 million reduction to headquarters for the Office of the Secretary of Defense.
- Eliminating five-percent discount for tobacco and tobacco-related products sold at exchanges;
- Transferring funding to a new defense agency to take over the Prisoner of War/Missing in Action (POW/MIA) mission (consistent with a Senate Armed Services recommendation);
- Pay freeze for generals and admirals, and slowing growth of the basic allowance for housing (BAH), estimated savings of \$8.8 billion over five years;
- Report language that strengthens the third party audit process and requires DOD to better track outcomes of students receiving education funding; and,
- Directing DOD to report on the feasibility and cost of DOD assuming responsibility for conducting security clearance investigations for DOD personnel.

- *Operation and Maintenance*: \$165.8 billion. The bill supports personnel increases for intelligence and cyber mission areas.
- *Overseas Contingency Operations*: \$58.3 billion for DOD Overseas Contingency Operations. Significant items include:
  - \$4.1 billion for the training and sustainment of Afghanistan’s security forces;
  - \$2.9 billion for cooperative counterterrorism programs, to include expanded engagement with countries such as Jordan, Yemen, and Libya.;
  - \$1.4 billion for Department of State and \$46 million for DOD–Military Construction OCO;
  - Authorizes a DOD-led program to train and equip vetted elements of the Syrian opposition;
  - \$1 billion for the European Reassurance Initiative, part of the President’s OCO request to support the rotation of US Armed Forces through Europe and to increase training and equipment programs for European countries. The bill requires not less than \$30 million be spent in support of Baltic nations, and not less than \$75 million in support of Ukraine, both of which are substantial increases to current plans; and,
- \$1 billion for the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Account.

#### **VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION**

On January 29, 2014 The American Legion presented testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee in opposition to the COLA reduction. Part of the statement said, “The American Legion...understand[s] that preserving an attractive retirement system for the active and reserve components is critical to maintaining an effective all-volunteer force. Further, we cannot understand why Congress would seek to offset the effects of sequestration by targeting less than one quarter of 1 percent of the American population – that same one quarter of 1 percent who chose to dedicate nearly a quarter of a century of their lives to the rigors of military service which involved: moving their families every three to five 5 years, enduring multiple deployments, living on an income that was far less than their civilian peers, enduring physical and emotional stressors unlike any in the civilian sector, and swearing an oath to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States, against all enemies – without any question or mental reservation – even if it meant, their life.”

As a result of the controversy, Congress passed legislation to partially offset the COLA reduction. Signed by the President on February 15, PL 113-82 will ensure that the reduced annual cost-of-living adjustment to the retired pay of members and former members of the Armed Forces under the age of 62 required by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 will not apply to members or former members who joined the military prior to January 1, 2014. While this action is admirable, it still subjects some service members to the COLA reduction during their retirement. Our organization is still looking for avenues to bring about a complete repeal of the COLA reduction for military retirees.

On May 22, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved its version of HR 4486, a bill to fund VA operations for FY 2015. at \$158.6 billion, \$1.85 billion above the current year’s funding amounts. A total of \$93.5 billion will go to mandatory programs – compensation and pension, insurance, and VA housing accounts – while discretionary programs will receive \$65.1 billion, including \$55.6 billion in advance appropriations. The House of Representatives passed its version of HR 4486 on April 30, by a vote of 416-1.

The chart below indicates VA’s medical care accounts with FY 2015 VA discretionary funding, the President’s proposed FY 2016 advance appropriations for the medical care accounts, and the funding amounts passed by the House and Senate Appropriations committees.

	Final FY 2015 Advance Approps. PL 113-76	President's FY 2016 VA Advance Approps.	HR 4486, FY 2016 House Proposal	Draft bill, FY 2016 Senate Proposal
Medical Services	\$45.0 billion	\$47.6 billion	\$47.6 billion	\$47.6 billion
Medical Support & Compliance	\$5.9 billion	\$6.1 billion	\$6.1 billion	\$6.1 billion
Medical Facilities	\$4.7 billion	\$4.9 billion	\$4.9 billion	\$4.9 billion
Medical/Prosthetic Research #	\$586 million	\$589 million	\$589 million	\$589 million
Total Medical Care	\$56.2 billion	\$59.2 billion	\$59.2 billion	\$59.2 billion

# This account is \*not\* included in the advance appropriations calculations.

The chart below presents discretionary funding for non-medical VA programs, showing FY 2014, the President's FY 2015 proposal, and the funding amounts passed by the House and Senate Appropriations committees.

	Final FY 2014 VA Approps. PL 113-6	President's FY 2015 Budget Proposal	HR 4486, House FY 2015 Proposal	HR 4486, Senate FY 2015 Proposal
National Cemetery Administration	\$250 million	\$257 million	\$257 million	\$257 million
General Operating Expenses – VBA	\$2.5 billion	\$2.5 billion	\$2.5 billion	\$2.5 billion
Information Technology	\$3.7 billion	\$3.9 billion	\$3.9 billion	\$3.9 billion
Major Construction	\$342 million	\$562 million	\$562 million	\$562 million
Minor Construction	\$715 million	\$495 million	\$495 million	\$540 million
State Homes Construction Grants	\$85 million	\$80 million	\$80 million	\$100 million
State Cemetery Construction Grants	\$46 million	\$45 million	\$45 million	\$46 million

Other accounts in the measure which interest The American Legion include:

- \$75 million for the American Battle Monument Commission (ABMC) in the House bill, \$73 million in the Senate version;
- \$34 million for the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims the Senate measure, while the House version would appropriate \$31 million;
- \$66 million for Arlington National Cemetery in the Senate legislation, \$62 million in the House bill; and,
- \$63 million for operations, maintenance, and the capital plan for the Armed Forces Retirement Home in both versions.

On June 9 the House by a voice vote approved HR 2072, the "Demanding Accountability for Veterans Act of 2013." This measure 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.

In addition, HR 2072 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 October 1, 2014;
- 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;
- Extend until October 1, 2018, loan guaranty fees for housing loans to veterans, and
- 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.

On June 10, the House of Representatives passed by a vote of 426-0 legislation that allows for VA-paid care for veterans at private facilities for two years. The measure, HR 4810, the “Veteran Access to Care Act,” directs the VA Secretary to enter into contracts for the provision of hospital care and medical services at non-VA facilities for VA patients with extended waiting times for appointments at VA facilities.

On June 11 the Senate by a vote of 93-3 approved S 2450, the “Veterans’ Access to Care through Choice, Accountability and Transparency Act.” The bill, a legislative collaboration by Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs Chairman Bernie Sanders (VT) and Sen. John McCain (AZ), would spend \$500 million on more doctors for the VA, as well as authorize leases for 26 new medical facilities. But until the expansion gets up and running, between now and 2016, VA recipients who run into long delays or live more than 40 miles from a clinic would be able to access private care facilities like community health centers or private hospitals. This measure also gives the VA secretary new authority to fire senior executives in addition to providing veterans greater options for seeking medical care.

House Veterans’ Affairs Committee Chairman Miller said of the situation, “This Congress has committed to erasing the backlog of vets that are waiting for care and setting up a pilot for those vets that live 40 miles outside of medical facilities. And it’s not going to be cheap. We know that.”

A conference committee was convened, the first formal joint HVAC and SVAC conference committee since 1999. After over a month of near stalemate, ultimately a compromise was reached and the conference committee report passed overwhelmingly in both bodies. H.R. 3230 became public law (P.L. 113-146), passing by votes of 420-5 in the House and 91-3 in the Senate. On August 7, 2014, President Obama signed the bill into law at a ceremony at nearby Fort Belvoir, attended by American Legion National Commander Daniel Dellinger and a large contingent of active duty service members and veterans.

The VA reform bill ultimately included over \$17 billion in funding for veterans’ programs, over \$10 billion of which was emergency spending not subject to the usual offsets required by the Pay as You Go Act. Key components of the bill included:

- Authority for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to fire Senior Executive Service management for poor performance.
- A “Veterans Choice Card” pilot program, managed through VA, which would allow veterans who have waited more than 30 days for care or who live outside a 40 mile radius from a VA facility to seek care from an approved set of providers in the private sector.
- Approximately \$5 billion in funding for additional physicians, support staff including nurses, and clinic funding, including leases for 27 Community Based Outreach Clinics (CBOCs) that The American Legion has been aggressively fighting for in Congress for over 18 months.
- Two commissions to study both the immediate problems with access in VA healthcare, as well as a top to bottom evaluation of the structure of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and whether it is properly set up to serve veterans without wasted bureaucracy.
- Additional support programs, including improved education benefits, and additional help for veterans suffering from the aftereffects of Military Sexual Trauma (MST).

All parties involved in pursuing this legislation, from Chairman Jeff Miller, to Chairman Bernie Sanders, to American Legion National Commander Daniel Dellinger have stressed repeatedly that, while this bill is an important step towards beginning much needed VA reform, it is far from a magic bullet to solve VA’s problems. All parties agree much closer scrutiny of VA, and of VA budgets will be required in the future to ensure VA is adhering to the spirit and principles of the legislation, as well as ensuring VA is adequately resourced to deliver care to veterans.

#### **VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION**

The consolidated appropriations bill for FY 2014 – PL 113-76 – includes funding for the Department of Labor, specifically for the Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS). Spending for VETS totals \$269.5 million. Funding for individual VETS accounts includes:

- \$175 million for Jobs for Veterans state grants, which fund DVOP and LVER personnel;
- \$39 million federal administrative costs;
- \$38.1 million to fund the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Programs;
- \$14 million to carry out the Transition Assistance Program (TAP); and,
- \$3.4 million to fund the operations of the National Veterans’ Employment and Training Services Institute (NVTI).

On February 3, the House approved HR 357 – *the GI Bill Tuition Fairness Act of 2013* – by a vote of 390-0, sending the measure to the Senate 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 22 President Obama enacted PL 113-128, the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*. The legislation represents a careful balancing of concerns to reach a

common goal that will benefit millions of Americans, including those with disabilities who face numerous challenges to workforce participation. For veterans, the legislation contains several major provisions of interest including:

- Representation on state and local workforce boards for organizations serving veterans with barriers to employment;
- Requirements that state workforce plans specify how they will implement priority of service for veterans;
- Funding to help veterans and people with disabilities navigate multiple service programs and activities;
- Looser Job Corps eligibility rules for veterans within six months of discharge; and
- Assurances that veterans with disabilities will be better served by state vocational rehabilitation programs.

### **MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**

**Benedict A. Lee, North Carolina, Chairman**

**Jeff Stoffer, Indiana, Director**

The newly created American Legion Media & Communications Commission oversees the majority of print and digital media products and channels delivered from National Headquarters. The commission also has oversight of the organization's media outreach program, including press conferences, appearances in national news, media alerts and support for key marketing initiatives and corporate relationships.

The flagship of the program is The American Legion Magazine, the nation's best read and most widely circulated veterans magazine. With a circulation of nearly 2.3 million households and a readership exceeding 3.2 million, The American Legion Magazine ranks No. 1 in readership frequency, according to independent research. That means subscribers have read four out of the last four or three out of the last four issues more often than readers of all other U.S. magazines. Its content is general interest, driven by the organization's main areas of engagement – patriotism, defense, veterans, children, youth, national and international affairs.

The integration of two former commissions, Magazine and Public Relations, and the addition of some marketing functions previously managed by the national Fundraising Division occurred in the first half of 2014.

The division draws most of its revenue from advertising sales into the magazine. In 2013, the year-end magazine sales figure was \$9,900,325, or nearly 91 percent of total advertising revenue. The percentage of ad sales from digital media assets, meanwhile, continues to grow, having more than doubled in the last three years. The bulk of the remainder of the division's operating revenue comes from a \$3 per member allocation.

The integration of the former Magazine Division with Public Relations and the addition of new marketing responsibilities represents no additional revenue for the new Media & Communications Division. However, the efficiency and effectiveness of a single realigned communications division were demonstrated clearly between late April and July 2014 when internal and external communications worked synergistically to produce an unprecedented wave of media awareness, from more than 70 million impressions in national broadcast, print and web media over the VA crisis, to near-record website visitation and strong growth in social media audience. The key metrics of this integrated approach are not necessarily dollars in revenue but eyes on brand, and an engaged audience.

The division's media assets can now be indexed as follows:

- Print. This category includes The American Legion Magazine, The American Legion Dispatch (monthly leadership newsletter), The American Legion

Annual Report, The American Legion National Convention Guide, several brochures and internal documents and additional print media as assigned from national leadership, including event programs, reports for Congress, and other specialty products. Additionally, the division fulfills editing and designing needs of nearly 200 brochures and documents associated with other National Headquarters divisions.

- Web. The American Legion national website at [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org) is the nation's most-visited veterans web platform and serves as a gateway to virtually all American Legion media products and channels. The site, which receives between 300,000 and 500,000 visits per month, offers news, videos and photography; transactional engagement through donations, membership and merchandising; entrance to special-interest microsites on such topics as the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The American Legion and Legiontown USA, where members are invited to fulfill their own content and share it; The American Legion Online Extension Institute training module; and the Burn Pit blog site, to name a few. Legion.org is also the entry point to the organization's interactive and transactional platform supporting American Legion Baseball. The American Legion's video vault, called LegionTV, also houses all of the organization's video content in one microsite.
- E-mail. The division produces a portfolio of popular e-newsletters, led by the weekly American Legion Online Update, which reaches more than 500,000 subscribers every Thursday with links to the top stories of the week on the Legion.org platform. Another e-newsletter with nearly as many subscribers is the National Commander's Message, which goes out twice monthly, typically to promote a particular subject of interest. The Online Update and the National Commander's Message receive open rates of over 30 percent on a frequent basis – a rate far above the industry standard. Other e-newsletters include Flag Alert, The American Legion Riders, Legislative Update, The American Legion Baseball Dugout, The American Legion Career Center and The American Legion Centennial.
- Social. The American Legion has a fast-growing tapestry of social media channels, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram and Pinterest. The Legion's Facebook community now has approximately 70,000 in its audience, and the national Twitter following is approximately 35,000.
- Mobile. The American Legion's mobile audience has shown dramatic increases in the past four months, doubling in the number of page views associated with smartphone and tablet users. The surge is attributed to a combination of the VA news and the redesigned website, which is much improved for the mobile user.
- Smartphone apps. The American Legion Media & Communications Division has produced and developed five smartphone mobile apps, including a general American Legion app introduced in 2014 that already has nearly 10,000 downloads; and American Legion Claims Coach app to help in the VA benefits process; which has more than 11,000 downloads; and American Legion World Series app and a Sons of the American Legion app.
- Physical. The American Legion Media & Communications Division produces a variety of physical displays, including parade floats, plaques, convention booths and other forms of physical media for the organization.
- Media Outreach. The division is responsible for the organization's outside media outreach program, which includes regular engagement with national broadcast, print and web media producers, the development and delivery of media events and press conferences, timely alerts and audience quantification.

- Marketing. In June 2014, the division assumed responsibility for a portion of the organization's marketing program, including support for Direct Response TV advertising, corporate relationship development and special projects.
- 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The American Legion Media & Communications Division is deeply involved in the organization's centennial program, including organizational structure, merchandising, promotion, media products and general support.

The goal of this integrated approach to American Legion media is to maximize efficiencies, resources and talents to deliver the organization's message in a well-branded, effective strategy that aims to improve awareness, generate membership, inform visitors, stimulate interactions and ease transactions. Overall, the media and communications program is built to replicate and represent the values and interests of The American Legion, from the individual member to the local post to the state department to the national headquarters, internal and external, and beyond.

**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, 2014.

**National Convention, Houston, Texas**

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 (FR), Chairman
Conservation of Natural Resources	E.C. Toppin (NC), Chairman

Following the joint session, the following convention committees met, held elections and dealt with the resolutions assigned to them:

Aerospace	Robert C. Weyenberg (WI), Chairman William Bryant (VA), Secretary
Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness	Charles E. Kruger (MN), Chairman Mel Goslar (IA), Secretary
Law and Order	George E. Wehrli (FL), Chairman James Chapman (VA), Secretary
Merchant Marine	Charles F. Moreland (FL), Chairman Charles P. Powell (VA), Secretary
Military Affairs	Leo F. Malloy (MA), Chairman Andrew Johnson (DC), Secretary
Naval Affairs	William B. Goede (MN), Chairman James Whitfield (MS), Secretary

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**

**Approved**

**Resolution No. 30: Support Fight Against Cyberspace Threats**

**Origin: Maryland**

**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; 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: National Security Committee**

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, Chairman, North Carolina

Referred to Standing Commission

**Resolution No. 60: Scrap Metal Exports**

**Origin: Ohio**

**Submitted by: National Security Committee**

#### AEROSPACE COMMITTEE

Robert C. Weyenberg, Chairman, Wisconsin

Approved

**Resolution No. 25: NASA Funding**

**Origin: Wisconsin**

**Submitted by: National Security Committee**

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: National Security Committee**

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: 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 Hames P. Simons**

**Origin: Kentucky**

**Submitted by: National Security Committee**

**(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 beyond and above 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 (All Citations and award documentation attached) 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, 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, 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 American Legion National 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.**

#### Consolidated

#### **Resolution No. 57: Reclassify Fort Hood Shooting**

**Origin: Massachusetts**

**Submitted by: National Security Committee**

**Consolidated with Resolution No. 27 (Texas)**

#### Referred to Standing Commission

#### **Resolution No. 52: Modify Battlefield Helmet**

**Origin: Pennsylvania**

**Submitted by: National Security Committee**

#### NAVAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

**William B. Goede, Chairman, 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 2012-2013 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.

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 2013**

An executive session of the National Security Commission met on October 14, 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 Past National Commanders Clarence Bacon of Maryland; Bob Spanogle of Michigan; Tony Jordan of Maine; and Clarence Hill of Florida. The National Security Commission was honored by their attendance and very appreciative of their participation in the commission's business discussions. The committee and council chairmen were introduced and thanked for their service. The commission paused to remember and honor recently departed Merchant Marine Chairman Chuck Moreland who served loyally in that capacity for a quarter century.

The commission proceeded to consider the three resolutions; two referred by the National Convention and one originated by the commission.

After review and discussion, two resolutions are recommended by the commission for approval: Modify Battlefield Helmet and Rescinding Obsolete Resolutions Dealing with National Security.

The recommended action on the third resolution is contained in Addendum A of this report. The commission also reviewed a proposed resolution on the Milk Creek burial site for troops of the 3rd and 5th Cavalry but deferred action at this time.

Following the consideration of resolutions, Chairman Schlee gave an in-depth presentation on the national security outlook covering the defense budget, sequestration, the government shutdown along with leading discussions on developing women-in-combat policies, the status of the War Powers Act and challenges facing the future of military compensation.

### **Defense Budget Update**

According to Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, under sequestration, DoD has two choices: capacity or capability. In a recent press conference he noted, "The basic trade-off is between capacity – measured in the number of Army brigades, Navy brigades, Air Force squadrons and Marine battalions – and capability, our ability to modernize weapons systems to maintain our military's technological edge."

The Pentagon has been examining several budget scenarios, and some changes may take effect even if the sequester-level spending caps are lifted. Highlights of potential actions outlined in DoD's new strategic review include:

- Smaller military and civilian pay raises.
- Reduce housing allowances and overseas cost-of-living allowances.
- Restrict military health coverage for working-age retirees under 65 who have access to civilian employer coverage.

- Eliminate eligibility for federal civilian pensions for retired service members in government jobs.
- End subsidies to the Defense Commissary System.
- Cuts to military pay and benefits have been unpopular with Congress, but that might change under budget realities.
- Cut active Army end strength from 570,000 to 490,000 by 2017.
- Cut active Marine Corps end strength from 202,000 to 174,000 by 2017.
- Reduce major headquarters budgets by 20 percent over five years.
- Reduce Navy aircraft carrier strike groups to eight or nine from the current 11.
- Cut up to five Air Force tactical aircraft squadrons.
- Shrink the Air Force's C-130 fleet.
- Retire older Air Force bombers.

Unfortunately budget analysts have warned that there is little will in Congress currently to reverse the sequester. The budget process over the coming months will likely be a continuation of the gridlock and dysfunction. "Anyone who was hoping for a more predictable budget outlook and for some relief from the turbulence of the past two years is in for a huge disappointment," says Senior Analyst Todd Harrison, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.

The commission plans to work with staff to develop stronger positions against sequestration and toward restoring full military funding and preeminent military might of the United States. Experts agree that training and readiness have been significantly degraded by the sweeping across-the-board cuts to the Department of Defense as a result of the sequester. The commission also collectively expressed support for a new brochure to be developed which will plainly and forcefully explain The American Legion's position on defense resourcing. In addition, the commission expressed the need for a new canvassing strategy when dealing with members of Congress and their staff in terms of communicating our adopted positions with a special emphasis on the unacceptable status of military funding under sequestration.

Looking toward the Washington Conference, the division staff received guidance to invite a number of elected officials to address the commission during the upcoming meetings in March. In particular, members named U.S. Rep. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon (CA) as a potential guest for the conference. The National Security Commission will focus on defense spending during the Washington Conference and how the sequester is damaging the very ability to defend this country and its vital national interests. The concept of a new resolution defining the vital interests of the United States was also well received. The staff will invite a number wounded and injured Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines who are recuperating at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center to sit in the front row of our conference meetings in March. Encouraging collaboration between the National Security Division and the Magazine to emphasize military funding and include more coverage of these massive and arbitrary cuts to the Armed Forces is another suggestion being offered by the commission. The commission would like to see staff continue to attend meetings, hearings and panel discussions in their effort to monitor any challenges facing adequate military budgets, compensation and benefits.

### **Women in Combat Roles**

Early in 2011, the Office of the Secretary of Defense was prompted by the FY11 National Defense Authorization Act to initiate a Women in Services Review. Each of the services were tasked to review laws, policies and regulations regarding the service of women members of the Armed Forces to determine if any revisions were needed to ensure women service members have an equitable opportunity to compete and excel in the Armed Forces. On January 24, 2013, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Martin Dempsey announced the rescission the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule and that the Department of

Defense (DoD) plans to remove gender-based barriers. On June, 18, 2013, the DoD announced plans for fully integrating women into front-line combat roles.

The American Legion strongly believes that the DoD and all branches of the military services must maintain the current physical and mental requirements and qualifications for acceptance into military service that have created the best and most respected military in the world. The mental and physical qualifications of all military personnel, regardless of gender or age, should be held to a single duty position specific standard depending on MOS and not be amended without Congressional authority. The American Legion requests Congress 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.” The American Legion believes that without such Congressional hearings and oversight there exists the distinct possibility that changes will be made which lessen the current standards or set a double standard, one for men and one for women, therefore, reducing our nation’s military effectiveness.

### **National Security Commission Reorganization**

A brief overview of the repurposing of the National Security Commission and its associated committees and council was also given by Chairman Schlee to conclude the meeting. An information sheet stating the new purposes of the National Security Commission and its seven committees and the Council was distributed to the commission attendees.

### **Joint Session**

On Tuesday, October 15, 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 Randall Fisher opened the meeting and welcomed Past National Commander John Brieden of Texas and Past National Commander Clarence Hill of Florida. The commissions were presented with a documentary on the life and death importance of properly equipping our Armed Forces with the most cutting edge innovations and technology for combating enemies who utilize asymmetrical warfare tactics. The program is entitled: *Bomb Hunters - Afghanistan*. This film demonstrated the research and development efforts that have recently given our troops the ability to adapt to the combat theater and a better chance to discover and destroy the enemy’s signature weapon known as the improvised explosive device (IED). The IED in particular, since 2001, is responsible for the deaths of approximately 1600 troops; over two thousand severely wounded troops requiring one or more amputations and approximately 236,000 cases traumatic brain injury.

With approximately 50,000 troops presently serving in harm’s way in Afghanistan, there have been 50 IED attacks against them since January and 16 troops lost their lives to IEDs already this month. This film demonstrates how research and development is essential for force protection and successfully combating the nation’s enemies while reminding us that this important work has been greatly hindered due to the sequester.

The National Security Commission thanks National Commander Dan Dellinger, our NEC Liaison and the distinguished members of the National Executive Committee for their continuing support.

### **Washington Conference 2014**

The National Security Commission convened on March 24<sup>th</sup> during the 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Washington Conference at the Washington Hilton, Washington, D.C. The following report is a summary of this session:

The commission was honored to welcome National Commander Daniel M. Dellinger and Past National Commander (PNC) Clarence Bacon.

### **POW/MIA Update**

The National Security Commission welcomed Major General (Ret) W. Montague Winfield, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Director of the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office; and Ann Mills-Griffiths, Chairman of the Board, National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia as guest speakers to provide the POW/MIA Update.

The speakers provided membership with very informative updates regarding the accounting efforts in Vietnam and Laos. Historically, Vietnam established a comprehensive wartime and post-war process to collect and retain information and remain; thus, unilateral effort by them to locate and return remains and provide records offered significant potential. Vietnam has taken many unilateral actions that are welcome and appreciated, but more can and should be done. In May, 2012, Hanoi responded to earlier commitments to provide long-sought archival records with relevant, case-related information, thanks to renewal of working-level efforts, as well as high level attention by the Departments of State and Defense. These and more recent actions offer real promise for greater success. Although first undertaken in northern Vietnam in 1985, joint field operations have dramatically changed and are now increasingly effective.

Vietnamese officials are participating with greater seriousness and professionalism, achieving increased results. The process now includes both U.S.-led Joint Excavation Teams and Vietnamese Recovery Teams (VRTs), led by Vietnamese and comprised of fewer U.S. Navy assets are increasingly allowed to participate in underwater survey and recovery operations.

Until recently, joint field operations in Laos were increasingly productive, even though more difficult than elsewhere. Accounting efforts had slowed due to recent Lao Government attempts to over-price payment for helicopter support and deny permission for ground transportation to accessible incident sites. Laos is now showing greater flexibility, has increased the number of U.S. personnel permitted in-country, is now allowing ground transportation to accessible sites, and has renewed a business license to a foreign company to provide reliable, smaller helicopter support. Most recently, the Lao Government agreed to permit the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) POW/MIA specialist from the Stony Beach Team to operate outside the confines of scheduled Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) field operations, but there are still some obstacles to access that need to be addressed. After overcoming successive budget crises, at least temporarily, the remaining obstacle to increasing the pace and scope of accounting efforts in Laos is having available a sufficient number of qualified scientists to lead recovery teams, a problem now being addressed by the Pacific Command (PACOM) and JPAC.

### **Business Session with Resolution Review and Recommendation.**

Following the guest speaker programs, Chairman Mike Schlee led the National Security Commission to formally address a resolution before the commission: Title: Congress to Investigate JPAC; Origin: Department of North Carolina. After a thorough discussion, the Commission voted and recommended the action of "receive and record." After the action on the resolution, Chairman Schlee directed the seven committee chairmen who each lead one of the following committees on Aerospace, Conventional Armed Forces, Foreign Relations, Law & Order and Homeland Security, Military Benefits & Quality of Life, National Guard & Reserve Forces, and Unconventional Forces & Intelligence to meet with their respective members in "break-out" sessions to conduct a cursory review of 86 resolutions (assigned as appropriate) which will be up for renewal at this year's national convention. During the committees' resolution review, Chairman Schlee led the Commission and the Council in a discussion covering the

aspects of the recently updated Outline of Authorization approved by the National Executive Committee last October. In conclusion, the group discussed potential legislation seeking improved mental health screenings at the point of entry into military service. The members agreed to conduct more research on the matters at hand.

Once the Business Session was adjourned, Law & Order Committee Chairman George Wehrli convened his fellow program judges who are charged with selecting the Regional Winners of the National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year and National Firefighter of the Year. The rules were reviewed and the group meticulously evaluated more than 41 application packets. Regional winners from each category were selected. The National Law Enforcement Officer Regional Winners are Andrew Anisman (PA); Gordan Beck (IL); Kevin Kinney (IA); Robert Carr (FL); and Scott Conger (OR). The National Firefighter of the Year Regional Winners are Peter O'Conner (MA); Sara Shaffer (MD); Angus Adolpho (ND); and Jason Dolph (AK).

### **National Executive Committee Meetings, Spring 2014**

The focus of this meeting was a discussion concerning a recent Defense Budget Briefing conducted by three guest speakers: Rep. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee; Major General Marcia Anderson, U.S. Army Reserve; and Major General James J. Jones, U.S. Air Force.

Rep. McKeon began the program by stating that recent major reductions in the U.S. military budget due to the Budget Control Act and sequestration aren't just a national issue; it's an international issue. Rep. McKeon emphasized that a reduced national defense budget will have long-reaching effects across the globe.

Rep. McKeon discussed the seriousness of the national defense budgets reductions and cited growing instability around the world including Russia's taking of Crimea; continued Middle East violence and turmoil; and China establishing a greater presence in countries around the world in the interest of energy, and trade along with strategic positioning. This, Rep. McKeon said, is making it very difficult for us to carry out commitments we've had around this world for a very, very long time. It would be very difficult now to protect Taiwan, he continued, and very difficult to defend Israel, very difficult to protect these very important agreements that we've made over the years to friends and allies around the world.

U.S. allies have come to him with their worries about the U.S.'s military capability,

Rep. McKeon said. "I meet with international leaders almost daily – people from other countries, defense ministers, legislators, prime ministers, kings," he said. "They ask me, 'Where is America? Are you going to be there when we need you?' They see us pulling back. They see for five years we've talked about this shift to the Pacific. They're concerned."

"Over our history, after every war, we've (reduced) our military," he said. "After World War II we did it. After Korea we did it. After Vietnam we did it. Some of you probably served at a time when the military was pretty hollow. You know how detrimental that is. So when we get called on to do something, you understand how the military works: They salute and do the best they can. But we've had a very defined strategy since World War II: to be able to fight two major contingencies at the same time. Over the last couple of years we've done away with that strategy. I cannot really tell you right now what our strategy is. I've asked and I've had it explained to me, but I can't explain it. Now it's kind of 'do the best we can with whatever budget we're given.'"

McKeon asked Legionnaires to help him in spreading the word to those unaware of how sequestration and other defense budget cuts can negatively impact the U.S. and its allies.

"What I'm asking you to do is tell your friends, your neighbors – those who haven't worn the uniform or those who have – explain to them how serious this situation is," he said. "We cannot solve our national financial problems on the backs of the military." McKeon, who has served in Congress since 1992, will retire after his term ends.

Major General Anderson started her discussion by citing the fact that Reserve forces make up slightly more than half of the total force of approximately 1 million soldiers. In fact, more than a third of the soldiers who have deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan have been reservists or national guardsmen.

Major General Anderson explained the plan to address the statutory budget caps. The Army has had to make difficult decisions about distribution of proposed cuts between the active force and the reserve force. The department's planned end strength reductions would at the end of fiscal year 2017 provide an active Army of 450,000, or 20 percent less from its wartime high of 569,000; an Army National Guard of 335,000, or 6 percent less than its wartime high of 354,000; and the U.S. Army Reserve at 180,000, or 10 percent less than its high of 205,000.

The Air Force is also tackling budgetary challenges posed by the security environment and declining resources, Major General Jones said.

In the fiscal year 2015 budget, the military does not have strategy-driven budget.

Major General Jones said the Air Force is being limited by the fiscal choices that are contained in the Budget Control Act and sequestration.

The Air Force kept its 2015 budget request at the target amount contained in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2014 and is still in need of the additional funds allotted to the Air Force in President Barack Obama's Opportunity, Growth and Security Initiative.

This is a \$26 billion initiative across the Department of Defense. It means approximately \$7 billion more for the Air Force's 2015 budget. If approved, these additional funds will principally be allocated for military readiness and modernization.

Balancing the readiness of today with the readiness of tomorrow will take some time. Sequestration knocked the service off-course, so funding flying hours and other readiness issues are a high priority in the Air Force budget request.

The Air Force will retire the A-10 Thunderbolt II close-air support aircraft. The U-2 reconnaissance aircraft also will be retired but the Air Force will retain the Global Hawk Block 30 unmanned aerial system. A round of base closures is needed, as requested by the defense secretary, to begin in 2017.

A return to sequestration in fiscal year 2016 is required under current legislation. This would mean the retirement of up to 80 more aircraft, including the KC-10 tanker fleet.

In addition, purchase of the F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighter would slow however combat air patrols with MQ-9 Reaper and MQ-1 Predator unmanned aerial systems will increase.

### **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](http://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:

#### **AEROSPACE COMMITTEE**

**Robert C. Weyenberg, Chairman, Wisconsin**

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 95th 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, Chairman, Minnesota**

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 2013 through June 2014, 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, 2013 through June 15, 2014, many Departments of The American Legion actively participated in the Blood Donor program. The leading departments included Minnesota, Maryland, Washington, New Mexico, and Alaska.

### **LAW AND ORDER COMMITTEE** **George W. Wehrli , Chairman, Florida**

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. Deputy Miste Strickland of Nashville, North Carolina was named as the 2013 National Law Officer of the Year and was presented with the honor at the 95<sup>th</sup> National Convention in Houston, Texas.

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. Deputy Chief Leslie Young of Danville, Pennsylvania was named as the 2013 National Firefighter of the Year and was presented with the National Firefighter of the Year Award at the 95<sup>th</sup> National Convention in Houston, Texas.

### **MERCHANT MARINE COMMITTEE** **Charles F. Moreland, Chairman, Florida**

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 95<sup>th</sup> 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, Chairman, Massachusetts**

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 94<sup>th</sup> 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, Chairman, France**

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 Utah. The American Legion presented several thousand ROTC Medals to ROTC students in 2013.

**NAVAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**  
**William B. Goede, Chairman, Minnesota**

Guided by resolutions adopted at the 95<sup>th</sup> 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.

**National Security Commission & Foreign Relations**  
**Commission, Committee and Council Update**

**Introduction**

The Centennial Task Force for the Future has recommended a number of changes to the Outline of Authorization that took effect upon adoption of an amendment to the National By-laws, Article I, Sections 5 and 6 by the National Convention in Houston, Texas August 27, 28, 29, 2013 in accordance with Resolution No. 1 (Spring NEC 2013). This Outline of Authorization shall supersede all prior versions of the Outline of Authorization. The National Executive Committee, acting on the recommendation of the

National Commander, shall make appointments to the affected commissions and committees at its regularly scheduled meeting in October 2013.

### **National Security Commission**

Purpose: The Commission's purpose is national security. It will have the authority to recommend policy on matters of national security, such as energy self-reliance, for the United States of America. Assigned to the National Security Commission for supervision and coordination are the Aerospace Committee, the Conventional Armed Forces Committee, the Foreign Relations Committee, the Law and Order & Homeland Security Committee, the Military Benefits & Quality of Life Committee, the National Guard & Reserve Forces Committee, the Unconventional Forces & Intelligence Committee, and the National Security Council. The commission, committees and council are subject to other purposes as may be assigned by the National Executive Committee.

#### **Aerospace Committee** **Robert C. Weyenberg, Chairman, Wisconsin**

Purpose:

- To consider and project the advancement of military and commercial aerospace technologies and programs to include space exploration and research;

#### **Conventional Armed Forces Committee** **Charles E. Kruger, Chairman, Minnesota**

Purpose:

- To review the budgets of the Departments of the Army, Navy (including the Marine Corps) and the Air Force;
- To recommend policies to ensure the United States armed forces are of sufficient numbers, with quality training and modern equipment, to counter any strategic threat from any nation, a combination or a terrorist threat to the United States of America and its allies.

#### **Foreign Relations Committee** **Randall Fisher, Chairman, Kentucky**

Purpose:

- To make recommendations regarding the Department of State, those being: (a) promoting peace and stability in regions of vital interest, (b) creating jobs at home by opening markets abroad, (c) assisting nations in establishing investment and export opportunities, and (d) bringing nations together and forging partnerships to address global problems such as terrorism, the spread of communicable disease, cross-border pollution, humanitarian crises, nuclear smuggling and narcotics trafficking.

#### **Law and Order & Homeland Security Committee** **George Wehrli, Chairman, Florida**

Purpose:

- To review the policies and objectives of the United States Department of Homeland Security and to make recommendations which relate to homeland security, the United States Coast Guard, the governmental and non-governmental roles in disaster management and recovery that enhance the internal and external security and the security of the borders of the United States;
- To review immigration policies as they may affect the internal and external security of the United States;
- To support and recognize the contributions of police, fire, and first responders.

**Military Benefits & Quality of Life Committee**  
**Melvin Smullen, Chairman, Maryland**

Purpose:

- To review compensation, retirement benefits, health care and quality-of-life issues for service personnel of the active, reserve and guard components of our nation's military and military retirees, as well their families and dependants;
- To make recommendations that will assure the quality of life of our armed forces personnel and military retirees.

**National Guard & Reserve Forces Committee**  
**William Goede, Chairman, Minnesota**

Purpose:

- To review the budgets of the National Guard and Reserve components of the armed services to ensure that the Guard and Reserve Forces have sufficient number of personnel for assigned missions both state and federal, sufficient budgets for training, as well as modern equipment to meet all obligations.

**Unconventional Forces & Intelligence Committee**  
**Douglas Haggan, Chairman, France**

Purpose:

- To review the budgets, as available, of the Special Operations Command and the Central Intelligence Agency as well as those of other intelligence agencies;
- To recommend policies as to sufficient personnel, quality training, modern equipment, and the sharing of intelligence between this command and all other intelligence agencies regarding national security, terrorist activity and strategic threats to our nation.

**National Security Council**

- To support the Commission to which assigned and to review and be familiar with the resolutions pertaining to the Commission and to be available from time to time at the request of the Commission Chairman or National Commander to participate in activities relative to the purposes of the Commission;
- May be asked to represent The American Legion at meetings of other like-minded organizations and to promote the programs and principles of The American Legion;
- At the National Commander's discretion, Council members may be called in to any regularly scheduled meeting of their parent Commission. Council members shall have voice but no vote.

**VETERANS AFFAIRS & 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, 2014.

The Ninety-fifth 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:

**2013 National Convention  
Houston, Texas**

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
75	Automatic Enrollment	VA&R
76	Reinstate Enrollment of Priority Group 8g Veterans into the Department of Veterans Affairs' Patient Enrollment System	VA&R
77	Advance Appropriations for all of the Department of Veterans Affairs' Discretionary Accounts	VA&R
78	Oppose any Reductions to the Department of Veterans Affairs' Budget due to Sequestration	VA&R
79	Veteran Discounts on Federally Funded Public Transportation	VA&R

**National Executive Committee Meeting  
October 16-17, 2013**

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
16	Dependency and Indemnity Compensation for Surviving Spouses	VA&R
17	Congress to Provide Back Pay to Veterans and their Dependents for any Government Lapse in Appropriations	VA&R
18	State Veterans Home Funding for Construction Grants	VA&R
19	Rescinding Resolutions from the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission	VA&R
20	Service Officers Participation in the Transition Goals, Plans and Success (GPS) Program	VA&R
21	Improvements to Department of Veterans Affairs' Women Veteran Programs	VA&R
22	Research to Develop a Blood Test to Detect Colorectal Cancer	VA&R

**National Executive Committee Meeting  
May 7-8, 2014**

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
14	Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability	VA&R
15	Department of Veterans Affairs Construction programs	VA&R

**Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission Meetings**

Members of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission held four meetings during the period August 26, 2013, through May 8, 2014.

The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee met on August 25, 2013, during the National Convention in Houston, TX 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 14-15, 2013, 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 16, 2013.

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission met for the 90<sup>th</sup> consecutive year in Washington, DC, on March 24, 2014, in conjunction with the 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Washington Conference.

### Annual National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Conference

The 91<sup>st</sup> Annual Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Conference was held at the Washington Hilton Hotel in Washington, D.C. on March 24, 2014.

National Commander Daniel Dellinger (OH) presented The American Legion Volunteer of the Year Award to Margaret Fields (VA). Conferees was addressed by Jonathan Clark, Congressional Staffer for US Congressman Jeff Miller of Florida's 1<sup>st</sup> District and Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, spoke on behalf of Chairman Miller to brief the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission members on VA's accountability and performance in regional offices and hospitals.

### VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES

From September 2013 - July 2014, The VA&R Division participated in a total of twenty five (25) hearings. Please refer to the following table for more information about the content and timeline of the hearings:

Date	Topic	Person Involved	Testimony
July 24, 2014	Restoring Trust: The View of the Acting Secretary and the Veterans Community	Verna Jones	Oral & Written
July 10, 2014	Service Should Not Lead to Suicide: Access to VA's Mental Health Care	Warren Goldstein	Oral & Written
June 5, 2014	Pending Legislation	Ian De Plaque	Oral & Written
May 29, 2014	Defined Expectations: Evaluating VA's Performance in the Servicemember Transition Process	Gerardo Avila	Oral & Written
May 15, 2014	The State of VA Health Care	National Commander Daniel Dellinger	Written
April 22, 2014	Construction Conundrums: A Review of Continued Delays and Cost Overruns at the Replacement Aurora, Colorado VAMC	Ralph Bozella	Oral & Written
April 10, 2014	Redness Posture	[None]	Written
April 9, 2014	A Continued Assessment of Delays in VA Medical Care and Preventable Veteran Death	National Commander Daniel Dellinger	Oral & Written
March 27, 2014	Access to Justice for those who Served	Ian DePlanque	Oral & Written
March 26, 2014	Pending Legislation	Zachary Hearn	Oral & Written
March 25, 2014	Pending Legislation	Davy Leghorn	Oral & Written
March 5, 2014	Pending Legislation	Steve Gonzalez	Oral & Written
February 20, 2014	An Examination of Veteran Access to Traditional Alternatives forms of Mental Health Therapy	[None]	Written
February 5, 2014	Beyond Transformation: Reviewing Current Status and Secondary Effects of BVA Technology	Zachary Hearn	Oral & Written
January 28, 2014	Recent Changes to the U.S. Military retirement System	[None]	Written
January 15, 2013	Vendors in the OR: VA's Failed Oversight of Surgical Implants	Roscoe Butler	Oral & Written

Date	Topic	Person Involved	Testimony
July 24, 2014	Restoring Trust: The View of the Acting Secretary and the Veterans Community	Verna Jones	Oral & Written
December 4, 2013	Ensuring Quality, Accuracy and Consistency on Complicated Issues	Zachary Hearn	Oral & Written
December 11, 2013	Contracting Away Accountability: Reverse Auctions in Federal Agency Acquisitions	Louis Celli	Oral & Written
November 20, 2013	Building VA's Future: Confronting Persistent Challenges in VA's Major Construction Lease Program	[None]	Written
November 4, 2013	Examining Higher Education Institutions' Services to Veterans	Albert Renteria	Oral & Written
October 30, 2013	Pending Legislation	[None]	Written
October 10, 2013	Between Peril and Promise: Facing the Dangers of VA's Skyrocketing Use of Prescription Painkillers to Treat Veterans	[None]	NA
September 11, 2013	Implementation Update: Fully Developed Claims	Verna Jones	Oral & Written
September 10, 2013	Legislative Priorities of The American Legion	National Commander Daniel Dellinger	Oral & Written
September 9, 2013	A Matter of Life and Death: Examining Preventable Deaths, Patient-Safety Issues and Bonuses for VA Execs who Oversaw them	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 War Era Benefits & Programs – A guide for Veterans and their Families
- 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](mailto:Wkennedy@legion.org).



### **2013 Report from the VA&R Cemetery Committee**

Members of the National Cemetery Committee met with Edward Lilley, Senior Field Service Representative to discuss issues, resolutions and updates for the National Cemetery Administration on March 24, 2014 in the Georgetown East, 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 more than 1,500 full time equivalent employees (FTEEs), with 74 percent of their employees being veterans (The highest % in any Federal agency). Of these employees, the NCA has more than 400 Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) veterans.

### **FY 2015 NCA Budget Request**

For FY2015, the National Cemetery Administration has requested \$257 million for operations and maintenance. The requested budget would expand access by opening two National Cemeteries in Florida and prepare to open two rural National Veterans Burial Grounds.

### **Burials**

In FY 2013, NCA performed 122,000 interments, processed 360,000 applications for headstones and markers, and furnished 8,995 Medallions and 712,700 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 2015 are expected to be about 128,100, a 13 percent increase.

### **Customer Satisfaction**

In February 2014, it was announced The NCA scored the highest rating ever in a prominent customer-satisfaction survey, beating out all other federal agencies and even top corporations with a score of 96 in the American Customer Satisfaction Index. The index, developed by the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business, measures customer satisfaction with the quality of U.S. goods and services across industries. The NCA has participated in the survey every three years since 2001, finishing first every time.

### **Resolutions**

The National Cemetery Committee has four resolutions up for renewal: Protection of Religious Rights and Ceremonies at National Cemetery Administration National and State Cemeteries, National Cemetery Administration, Extend Eligibility for National Cemetery Administration Medallion, and Urn Markers Provided by the National Cemetery Administration. All of the resolutions were approved by the Committee for renewal. The Committee voted to strike "within a 75-mile radius" from the last resolve clause from the resolution concerning The American Legion's policy on the National Cemetery Administration. The Committee also voted to draft a new resolution concerning the incident with families of five US service members who were killed during the weekend of October 4-6, 2013 in Afghanistan who were notified that they would not be receiving the \$100,000 benefit normally wired to relatives within 36 hours of the death. The "death gratuity" is intended to help cover funeral costs and help with immediate

living expense until survivor benefits typically begin. The states of Oregon, Missouri, and Illinois have volunteered to draft this resolution.

### **Rural Cemeteries**

There is still a very large population of Veterans that do not have the option of being buried in one of our nation's prestigious National Cemeteries in the state they call home. Several states with a combined Veteran population of approximately 1.8 million are not served by a National Cemetery. States without national cemeteries include Nevada, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Utah, and Wyoming.

### **National Cemetery Capacity**

In February 2014, it was announced that National cemeteries across the country are starting to reach capacity amid an increase in the number of veterans dying -- fueling a push for the government to approve new sites, particularly in states that don't have any. The VA plans to build five new cemeteries across the country, after lowering the population threshold required to build them. Also, the National Cemetery Administration is in the midst of the largest expansion since the Civil War and has made major progress toward achieving its strategic goal of providing an honored veteran's burial to 96 percent of the veteran population within 75 miles of where they live.

### **Government Shutdown Impact on NCA**

During the Government Shutdown in October 2013, burials continued at the National Cemeteries, but at a reduced rate. There were interment crews at each National Cemetery to conduct burials. NCA had to also restrict the number of interments at mid-range cemeteries to 8 per day, and were unable to process Presidential Memorial certificates.

### **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 NVLSP. 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. The staff attorneys have described

Dr. Gordon's reports as thorough and persuasive. Staff attorney at NVLSP, Patrick Berkshire stated: "I have to say your reports are some of the best I have ever read in my six years of doing this type of work."

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 192 cases. She has reviewed 90 cases and submitted written reports on 31 of these cases. The research and medical opinions provided by the Medical Consultant have resulted in numerous grants and remands for additional development. As an example, one of the claims concerning anxiety/panic attacks/depression due to sexual assault was increased to 70% with an overall disability of 90% and total and permanent un-employability, bringing the total to 100% with retroactive payment to 2004 equivalent to an award of \$100,000.00. The veteran, Mike Addington stated in his email: "Jeremy Ford and Dr. Gordon were certainly instrumental in Judge Peevey's ruling in my favor on appeal, and I want to again thank you all for your efforts. The appeal I just won was because the ATL RO only awarded me 10% after the Judge's decision. The RO's decision closes a lot of wounds and I am grateful to all concerned."

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.

#### **Insurance 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 869,000 policies in force as of June 30, 2014, with combined life insurance coverage of \$10.74 billion dollars. NSLI processes 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 2449 veterans with approximately \$306.4 million dollars of coverage in force. Currently these programs are operated out of the VA Insurance Center in Philadelphia, PA. The National Association of Insurance Commissioners approved the use of the 2001 Commissioners Standard Mortality Table as the new mortality standard for life insurance. Since the law allows the VA Secretary to set the mortality table for the VMLI program, VA began using the 2001 table, rather than the previous 1958 table, effective October 1, 2006. This reduced premiums for the program an average of 37 percent.

In addition to the life insurance programs directly operated by the DVA, the Department also has supervisory authority and responsibility over two other major government life insurance program issues. These are the Servicemember's Group Life Insurance (SGLI) and Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI) programs. These programs have provided insurance protection, since 1965 and 1970 respectively, to active duty and reserve military personnel (SGLI), spouses and dependents, and to separated veterans and to retired and separated reservists (VGLI). The SGLI and VGLI programs are

administered by the Prudential Insurance Company at a center in Roseland, NJ (the Office of Servicemembers Group Life Insurance – OSGLI), with all administration and other program expenses being paid by the policyholders from a portion of their insurance premiums, save for the extra hazard mortality experience of wartime periods when general tax revenues take over. These insurance issues are solely group Term insurance without dividends, disability benefits, or diverse types of permanent plans with equity values such as the individual policy contracts contained in the DVA's directly administered program. On June 30, 2014 SGLI provided some 5.34 million active duty and reserve personnel, spouses and dependents with more than \$ 1.2 trillion dollars of life insurance coverage, while VGLI covered some 425,000 veterans with insurance in excess of \$ 66 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 coverages still cannot, at present, be carried over into the VGLI program and cannot be doubled in the case of both parents being in service. However, while the member's SGLI is in force, spousal coverage can be converted to a private plan of insurance with a participating commercial company upon written application in the same manner as a VGLI policy may be so converted. The American Legion insurance unit presented supporting testimony at that time on these legislative changes as they improved greatly the range of financial options available to veterans in these programs, not only at the time of their separation from service, but in later years as their life situation changed as well, and as they permit the SGLI and VGLI programs to more effectively compete with private insurers who have the privilege of excluding applicants as desired and who may, in the case of certain military associations, be co-located on military bases.

New SGLI legislation was enacted in May 2005. Public Law (PL) 109-13, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Tsunami Relief of 2005, was signed into law May 11, 2005 and contained provisions for increases in the Dept. of Defense (DOD) Death Gratuity, for increases in the amount of maximum coverage under the Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program, and for a new SGLI group policy rider for Traumatic Injury Protection. The SGLI Traumatic Injury Protection Rider became effective December 1, 2005 and currently provides over \$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 those 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% applied for either the SGLI Disability Extension (free coverage for two years) or VGLI coverage. 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. For all programs the Department of Veterans Affairs administers and/or supervises 6.63 million insurance policies for military personnel, spouses, dependents and veterans, with in-force coverage of over \$ 1.28 trillion dollars.

In the Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (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 refunds 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 & 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 continue to be an American Legion legislative effort. Coordination has also been effected with the DVA Pension Center management in 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 July 2014, the VA Pension Maintenance Centers had 140,175 pending cases (64,763 in Philadelphia, 51,064 in St. Paul, and 24,348 in Milwaukee). Of these, The American Legion represented 21,837 cases (10,629 – Philadelphia, 4,733 – Milwaukee, and 6,475 - St. Paul).

For the period July 1, 2013 to end of July 2014 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: .....	19,977
Letters sent: .....	19,408
Disability insurance claims:.....	3,560
Death insurance claims: .....	585
Insurance folders reviewed: .....	3,427
In-force insurance policy accounts reviewed: .....	7,891
New insurance accounts – SDVI: .....	7,278
Telephone contacts: .....	8,428
Personal contacts: .....	6,502
Submittal memorandums & reports .....	5,912
DVA case responses processed: insurance, .....	23,868
Pension and debt management cases	
*Live claims, evidence and other submittals presented: .....	61,419

\* 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:.....	667
DMC & pension case audits:.....	19,372
DMC grants & denials:.....	2,132
New pension claims:.....	8,048
Other insurance transactions & inquiries:.....	3,738
Pension supporting submittals (ongoing cases):.....	15,035
Appeals.....	294
Other pension transactions & Inquiries.....	13,937

**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 or organization, the Deputy Director for Claims Service is responsible for the activities of the Board of Veterans' Appeals and Special Claims Unit, 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 administration assistants and twelve 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 unfair 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 City, UT.

The VA Pension Management 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 PMC's and the American Legion has representation to assist all claimants and DSO's; 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**

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 your 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 3600 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. Between the BDD Offices in Winston Salem, NC and Salt Lake City, UT we reviewed 554 BDD Claims with 3515 issues. Each claim required reviewing the rating, C&P examination, and service treatment records. Additional research was required of some of the cases. The BDD offices also received 237 phone calls from Veterans and Department Service Officers throughout the country requesting the status of a claim or questions concerning a rating. The offices provided an update for the status of the claim and provided options concerning the rating. Additionally, 21 veterans visited the offices with general VA benefit questions. The offices received and reviewed 1335 pieces of correspondence and represented 3 veterans at the Rating Board Hearing.

### **Board of Veterans Appeals**

This report reflects the activities of The American Legion's Board of Veterans' Appeals. The Office Manager of the Appeals Unit is Patricia (Patti) Senft since October 24, 2011 to the present.

During this period, our Appeals Representatives reviewed a total of 8,522, an increase of 21 percent over the previous year. Of those cases, 73.6 percent received a favorable decision, either granted or remanded, and 21.6 percent received denials.

As recorded in last year's report, the two most significant challenges for Fiscal Year 2013 and 2014 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 progress since 2013 ensuring its own staff and all VSO's are 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.

### **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 organizations 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 US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

The primary goal of this training program, which began in 1985, is to enhance the skills and effectiveness of accredited American Legion service officers. As opposed to previous years, the curriculum was broken into two tracks; beginning and advanced. The beginning track is for service officers with less than one year of experience. The advanced track is for all other service officers.

The departments' participation in and support for the program remains very high. During this reporting period, two schools were held; August 1 – 3, 2013 at the Sheraton City Center Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana and March 19 – 21, 2014 at the Washington Hilton in Washington, DC. Attendance was greatly appreciated with a combined number 301 in attendance.

#### **Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service**

The VAVS National Deputy Representative attended the sixty-eight meeting of the VAVS National Advisory Committee (NAC) that was held in Cary, North Carolina during April 23rd-25th. The American Legion's Deputy National Representative, Roscoe Butler, also serves as a member of the NAC Executive Committee. The goals and objectives of the 68th Annual Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) National Advisory Committee (NAC) Meeting and Conference were to:

- Provide the VAVS NAC an opportunity to conduct its business in a manner that assures achievement of all responsibilities mandated by its charter.
- Provide NAC orientation to new local and national VAVS Representatives and Deputies and new VAVS staff.
- Present to all member organization representatives an overview of current and pending VAVS policies and procedures.
- Foster full and open communications among the member organizations, their representatives, and the Voluntary Service Central Office and field staff.
- Provide the NAC member organizations with the educational and training programs designed to share information geared towards improving volunteer programs with special emphasis on methods to recruit, retain, motivate, and recognize volunteers.
- Furnish the NAC member organizations the opportunity to hear from VA leadership concerning key issues within the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Arrange for the NAC review of, and action on, recommendations.
- Honor the national recipient of the James H. Parke Memorial Youth Scholarship Award, Shannon Mathew, student volunteer at the Miami VA Healthcare System, Miami, Florida.
- Recognize Darlene Laughter, Chief, Voluntary Service, at the Charles George VA Medical Center, Asheville, North Carolina as the recipient of the Voluntary Service Award for Excellence.

- Recognize Alyce Knaflich, VAVS Representative, AMVETS, Charles George VA Medical Center, Asheville, North Carolina, as the VAVS NAC Female Volunteer of the Year and James Fortune, VAVS Representative, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Dayton VA Medical Center, Dayton, Ohio, as the VAVS NAC Male Volunteer of the Year.

Recognize the following award recipients for the American Spirit Awards: Fred Lesinski, Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center, Charleston, South Carolina, for Student Recruitment Category and Deborah Brookshire, Southern Arizona VA Health Care System, Tucson, Arizona, for Corporate Recruitment Category 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 loss of 320 volunteers, which resulted in a loss of 11,102 volunteer hours.

### **Veteran Affairs & Rehabilitation Health Policy Unit**

The Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation Health Policy Unit national staff includes: Roscoe Butler, Deputy Director for Health Care, Edward Lilley, Assistant Director for Health Care, Warren Goldstein, Assistant Director for TBI/PTSD, Derrick Redd, Senior Health Policy Representative, Wanda Kennedy, Administrative Assistant and two health policy positions, which are vacant

### **Veterans Crisis Command Centers**

In April 2014, CNN reported that at least 40 U.S. veterans died waiting for appointments at the Phoenix Veterans Affairs Health Care system, many of whom were placed on a secret waiting list.

For six months, CNN has been reporting on extended delays in health care appointments suffered by veterans across the country and who died while waiting for appointments and care. But the new revelations about the Phoenix VA are perhaps the most disturbing and striking to come to light thus far.

In response to this crisis, the VA&R Division dispatched a team of experts to Phoenix, AZ to pilot a Veterans Crisis Command Center to assist veterans and family members affected by the health-care scandal at the Phoenix VA Health Care System. Their mission was to provide work with veterans and provide them with health care, compensation, pension, disability indemnity compensation benefits as quickly as possible. In Phoenix, The American Legion, along with volunteers from the American Red Cross and VA employees was able to help 590 veterans and their families. Due to the success of the Phoenix VCCC, the program was extended to other cities to include Fayetteville, NC where we assisted 787 veterans and their families, and El Paso, Texas, where we assisted 410 veterans and their families. Additional VCCCs have been scheduled for other cities to include Ft. Collins, CO, July 14 – 18, 2014; St. Louis, MO, July 14 -18, 2014; Washington, Baltimore, July 28 –Aug 1, 2014; Clarksburg, WV, Aug 4 – 8, 2014; Hawaii, Sept. 8 – 12, 2014; White City, OR, Sept. 15 – 19, 2014; and Harlingen, TX, Sept. 22 -26, 2014.

The Health Policy Unit, along with the System Worth Saving Task Force, conducted 16 site visits at the following VA medical facilities: VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System-University Drive Campus (Pittsburgh, PA), Tennessee Valley Healthcare System-Nashville Campus (Nashville, TN), El Paso VA Healthcare System (El Paso, TX), Huntington VA Medical Center (Huntington, WV), Dwight D. Eisenhower VA Medical Center (Leavenworth, KS), VA Roseburg Healthcare System (Roseburg, OR), G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center (Jackson, MS), VA Butler Healthcare (Butler, PA), Atlanta VA Medical Center (Decatur, GA), VA North Texas Health Care System (Dallas, TX), Orlando VA Medical Center (Orlando, FL), Louis Stokes Cleveland VA

Medical Center (Cleveland, OH), William Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center (Columbia, SC), VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System (Ann Arbor, MI), VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System (Denver, CO), Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center (Indianapolis, IN).

### **TBI and PTSD Programs**

Members of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commissions' TBI and PTSD Committee met three times October 15, 2013 - June 24, 2014. The TBI and PTSD Committee met at 2:30 pm in Room 301 at The American Legion National Headquarters, 700 Pennsylvania Avenue, Indianapolis, Indiana.

The mission of the TBI and PTSD Committee is to continue from what was learned from the recent TBI and PTSD report, "*The War Within*", which is being well received by the media, military, and veteran community. There was a discussion regarding the committee's plans, initiatives, and next steps that will formulate the committee's focus. "*The Next Steps*" that the committee discussed for the upcoming year will include hosting a TBI and PTSD symposium to be held during the 2014 Washington Conference where policy makers, academia, service members, and veterans will attend to discuss TBI and PTSD treatments and therapies and their current effects on service members, veterans, and their families.

The committee also discussed several topics of interest for the upcoming year that will be analyzed and researched further by the committee and staff such as: Hyperbaric Oxygen treatments for TBI and PTSD; Complimentary Alternative Medicine treatments and therapies; the consequences of overprescribing medications and narcotics to service members and veterans; reviewing patient-centered care approaches for TBI and PTSD, and how service members and veterans who suffer from TBI and PTSD directly effects their caregiver.

Ian DePlanque, Deputy Director of Legislation provided the committee updates on current TBI and PTSD legislation to include an overview of the Chairman of the U.S. Senate Veterans Affairs Bernie Sanders (VT) proposed Senate bill (S.852) titled "*Veterans' Health Promotion Act of 2013*" which directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to designate and operate one center within each Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) that will be designated for complementary and alternative medicine research, education, and clinical activities.

Steve Brooks, Senior Editor for The American Legion discussed the process of developing a TBI and PTSD section on the Legion's website for videos, veteran interviews and follow-up, and to be a resource for veterans, service members, and their families to receive TBI and PTSD information. Closing remarks were provided to the committee and the meeting was adjourned 2014 Spring National Executive Committee Meeting

The TBI and PTSD Committee met on Monday, May 5, 2014 at 2:30pm in Room 301 at The American Legion National Headquarters, 700 Pennsylvania Avenue, Indianapolis, Indiana and the 7th Floor board room in the Washington, D.C. office.

Past National Commander and TBI and PTSD Committee Chairman William Detweiler provided an introduction and mission of the TBI and PTSD Committee. There was a discussion regarding the committee's plans, initiatives, topics of interest, and next steps that the committee will focus on.

There were three presentations that were made to the committee: Dr. Chrisanne Gordon, Chairwoman, Resurrecting Lives Foundation and Operation Resurrection presented on "TBI and PTSD veteran advocacy, research, treatment, and education", Dr. Jeff Greenberg, Ph.D. Senior Director Research, and Director of the Institute for the Advancement of Military and Veteran Healthcare for Data Recognition Corporation presented on the TBI and PTSD patient healthcare experiences survey, and Brigadier General (USA) ret. James Bauerle, Chairman, Indiana Military and Veterans Coalition

presented on “State legislation that would assist veterans and families who are suffering from TBI and PTSD.” TBI and PTSD Veteran Survey Presentation:

The American Legion in collaboration with Data Recognition Corporation in Washington, D.C. conducted an on-line TBI and PTSD veteran survey during the month of February 2014. The purpose of the survey was to explore the types of care, treatments, and therapies patients were receiving for their TBI and PTSD symptoms; the perceptions of the patients on the effectiveness of the treatments that they are receiving; and access the availability of complementary and alternative medical (CAM) treatments and therapies that are offered at the place veterans are receiving their health care.

The survey produced 14,734 views with nearly 480 per day; 3,209 people started the survey; 3,116 completions (nearly 22 percent of total viewers completed the survey); and very few veterans dropped out of the survey.

The characteristics and demographics of the respondents who participated in the survey were as follows:

- There were 90% of males (2,513) and 10% of females (271) who have completed the survey.
- Most of the respondents have served in the Army
- Most of the respondents had a service-connected disability
- Most of the respondents live in suburban communities
- Most respondents receive their TBI and PTSD care, therapies, and treatments in a VA medical center and not a private healthcare facility
- Most respondents receive their care through their primary care physician
- Most respondents have sleep problems as a common theme
- Most respondents said that their improvement was a 6 on a scale from 1-10.
- Most respondents have noticed no change in their symptoms following therapy sessions

The key findings that have been identified by respondents who took the survey expressed that they had common symptoms of anger, pain, sleep problems, anxiety, depression, and irritability. Twenty-five percent of the patients who were receiving multiple therapies for their PTSD symptoms endorsed the evidence-based models of care that they were receiving from the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

It appears that medications are still the front-line medical treatment and that some respondents indicated that they were taking up to 10 prescriptions for their TBI and PTSD symptoms. Respondents claimed that they had limited change following their treatments for TBI and PTSD. The survey also highlighted the several types of PTSD and TBI treatment types and therapies that patients were receiving. Nearly half of the people who have taken the survey have stated that they have spoken to their provider about complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) treatments and therapies and that have endorsed several of them such as meditation, relaxation, and stress reduction.

Thirty-percent of all respondents have terminated their treatments for their TBI and PTSD symptoms prior to completing them.

### **TBI and PTSD Symposium**

On Tuesday, June 24, 2014 The American Legion held a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symposium sponsored by Military.com titled “*Advancing the Care and Treatments for Veterans with TBI and PTSD*” at the Institute of Medicine National Academies of Science in Washington, D.C. The members of the TBI and PTSD Committee who were present were: PNC and Chairman Bill Detweiler, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation chairman, Ralph Bozella, and National Executive Committeemen (WV) Bill Kile.

The purpose of the symposium was to discuss the findings and recommendations from the TBI and PTSD Survey that was conducted in February 2014; hear directly from

service members, veterans and caregivers on their TBI and PTSD treatment and care; determine how the Administration, Congress, Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs are integrating complementary and alternative medical (CAM) treatments into medical care, therapies and treatments for veterans with TBI and PTSD. The participants and attendees of the symposium were members of The American Legion's TBI and PTSD Committee, American Legion National and Department leadership/members, Administration, Members of Congress (Committee Staffers), researchers, clinicians and policy makers from the DoD and VA, and representatives from Academia.

The symposium was divided by an Opening session; TBI discussion panel; PTSD discussion panel; Complementary and Alternative Medicine discussion panel; Caregiver and Family Support discussion panel; How to bridge the gap between evidence-based practices and adjunctive therapy discussion; and Closing session to discuss opportunities and next steps for the committee to focus on. Each of the panels had a moderator and each panelist discussed research, policy, implementation, and complementary and alternative medicine in the field of traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder in the care of servicemembers and veterans.

The goals of the symposium were to:

- share research, knowledge and best practices on complementary and alternative treatments for TBI and PTSD. To get experts from different communities – VA, DoD, academia and private practice – to talk about how these treatments can be integrated into current models of care used by medical providers.
- To promote holistic models of medical care to counter some current practices that are ineffective or even harmful to patients, such as the over-prescription of medications.
- To encourage VA and DoD to adopt policies for using complementary and alternative treatments in a standardized, system-wide manner. This will help to ensure that veterans and servicemembers get the same options for treatment – and more choices – at any military or VA hospital.

To explore ways in which VA and DoD can increase its support to families and caregivers of those who suffer from TBI and PTSD.

### **TBI and PTSD Survey**

Dr. Jeff Greenberg, Senior Director of Research and Director of the Institute for the Advancement of Military and Veteran Healthcare for Data Recognition in Washington, DC presented the overview and key findings of The American Legion survey of veterans who experience traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were officially released to the public the day of the symposium. The survey was a collaborative project between The American Legion and Data Recognition Corporation in Washington, DC. The survey was used to gather information regarding clinical experiences of veterans who have been clinically diagnosed with TBI and PTSD. The survey concentrated on four main areas:

- Types of treatments that were received
- Access to complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) treatments and therapies
- How veterans perceived their treatments regarding if their symptoms were improving or getting worse

The rationale of why veterans ended their mental health treatments early The survey was a web-based link and posted on The American Legion's website during the month of February 2014. The survey had 3,209 veterans who started the survey in which 3,116 veterans who have completed the survey. The survey consisted of veteran gender, era of service, number of deployments, diagnoses, access to care, access to treatments, therapies, medications, and examination of side effects. The American Legion will use this information to further advise the Administration to include the Departments of



Veterans Affairs and Defense as well as Congress in order to improve TBI and PTSD for servicemembers and veterans.

The key findings that have been identified by respondents expressed that they had common symptoms of anger, pain, sleep problems, anxiety, depression, and irritability. Twenty-five percent of the patients who were receiving multiple therapies for their PTSD symptoms endorsed the evidence-based models of care that they were receiving from the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

It appears that medications are still the front-line medical treatment and that some respondents indicated that they were taking up to 10 prescriptions for their TBI and PTSD symptoms. Respondents claimed that they had limited change following their treatments for TBI and PTSD. The survey also highlighted the several types of PTSD and TBI treatment types and therapies that patients were receiving. Nearly half of the people who have taken the survey have stated that they have spoken to their provider about CAM and that have endorsed several of them such as meditation, relaxation, and stress reduction.

Fifty-nine percent of the respondents reported either feeling no improvement or worse after undergoing treatments for their TBI and PTSD symptoms and thirty-percent of all respondents have terminated their treatments for their TBI and PTSD prior to completing them.

#### **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 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 must be submitted to the director of the national veterans affairs and rehabilitation commission, 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 individuals 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 cancelled.

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 401 requests for accreditation and 90 requests for cancellation were received from the Departments and submitted to VA For necessary action. As of June 30, 2014 there were 3,039 accredited representatives of the American Legion with 7 pending accreditation. Any questions concerning the proper procedure or regulations pertaining to

accreditation of individuals or their activities should be submitted to the Director for the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission in the Washington office.

### 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 attended various American Legion functions around the country such as: 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.

### Personnel and Organization

As of August 1, 2014, VA&R staffing is reported as follows;

Director.....	1
Secretary.....	3
Deputy Director for Health Care.....	1
Assistant Director for Health Care.....	1
Assistant Director for TBI/PTSD.....	1
Senior Health Policy Representative .....	1
Health Policy Representative.....	2
Deputy Director for Claims Services.....	1
Assistant Director for Claims Service.....	1
MEB/PEB Representative.....	1
Office Manager, Board of Vets Appeals.....	1
Appeals Representative .....	12
Secretaries.....	3
Medical Consultant.....	1
Total Personnel – Washington Office.....	30

### Satellite Offices

Insurance Field Office: Philadelphia, PA	
Chief of Insurance Activities .....	1
Pension Management Center: Philadelphia, PA .....	1
Debt Management Center/PMC St. Paul, MN	
Assistant Director .....	1
PMC Representative .....	1
Pension Management Center Milwaukee .....	1
Benefits Delivery at Discharge Winston Salem.....	1
Benefits Delivery at Discharge Salt Lake City .....	1
VA&R Total .....	37

### **Certificates of Appreciation**

Under authority of May 1958 NEC Resolution, we have continued the program of awarding a Certificate of Appreciation to officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs, upon their retirement or resignation, For Services Rendered and Cooperation Extended in Connection with The American Legion's Rehabilitation Program. Under criteria established in line with the enabling resolution, nominations for the award are submitted by Department or National officials of The American Legion twice a year. The nominations are considered by a committee of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission at meetings preceding the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference, and the National Convention. The Committee recommends to the Commission the names of those considered deserving of the Certificate.

One Certificates of Appreciation have been awarded during the period July 1, 2013, through June 30, 2014, for an overall total of 1,330 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.

Six Citations For Meritorious Service And Loyal Cooperation In The American Legion's Veterans Affairs And Rehabilitation Program Were Presented During The Period July 1, 2013 To June 30, 2014. Since This Type Of Recognition And Appreciation Began, 5,063 Citations For Meritorious Service Have Been Presented.

### **American Legion Auxiliary Nancy Brown-Park, National President**

American Legion Auxiliary members nationwide continued to "Pass It On" through their service to veterans.

A unit in Idaho developed a program called "New Direction," which helps homeless veterans take their first step to break free of that lifestyle and get back on track. They give them emergency food, shelter, and clothing according to their needs and connect them to agencies that help them with housing and make sure they are getting the benefits they qualify for. In Alaska, one unit member crocheted 2,000 hats for newborns and wounded warriors at the military hospital. The San Diego VAMC added an ASPIRE Center, which provides on-site counseling for male and female veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan who suffer from PTSD. The center has 40 beds that can be occupied from 3-6 months. This facility is the first in the nation.

In Maine, 350 veterans and 124 veterans' children were given new footwear with the help of the New Balance Shoe. In Connecticut, four units worked together to purchase six sets of washers and dryers for veterans transitional housing. In New York, Unit 1041 held a benefit for homeless female veterans and supported the homeless veterans program in western New York.

South Dakota has The Barakah House, a facility for homeless veterans. Auxiliary members donated both money and household items, as well as furniture, kitchen utensils, and other items to help veterans set up their home once they leave the facility. Minnesota's stand down totaled more than \$5,000 in donations and served more than 800 veterans. One unit held two sewing bees this year for veterans. Items sewed included a heart pillow, neck pillow, laundry bags, tote bags, and wheelchair bags.

In Illinois, one unit held two benefits with the Walter Payton Foundation for homeless veterans. In Wisconsin, Camp American Legion is a place where veterans can go for recuperation and therapy. A full week is hosted for female veterans only, and their members responded strongly with support by raising money to help with food, therapy, and recreation for the veterans.

Star-Spangled Service, Southern Style is what members of the Southern Division offered throughout the year. Juniors continued to be involved with the “Homeless, Not Helpless” sleeping mats program. The mats are made from hundreds of plastic bags. The Department of North Carolina logged more than 9,000 hours to make certain that at least some homeless veterans would not have to sleep on the ground. In Florida, two wounded veterans were given parcels of land on which they could produce vegetables and raise animals. Units came together and purchased gift cards to purchase supplies for the new land. A blueberry farm was created so the veterans could take care of the crop, and the blueberries were sold to raise money for the project. This American Legion Family is showing the spirit of goodwill.

Units are continuing to support stand downs, welcome-home events, deployment events, Christmas Gift Shops, veterans resource fairs, and parties and bingos at the VAMC, as well as fishing trips, dinners in their post homes, and many other things that provide support for our No. 1 priority – our veterans!

The Veterans Creative Arts Festival continues to be an excellent platform of therapy for veterans and their families. Local Creative Arts Festivals were held across the country. This year, the mini-grants totaled \$7,700 and went to six departments. We asked departments to report back to us and tell us what made them most proud. “I was most proud to see the veterans respond to receiving certificates and medals,” said one department representative. “They were very appreciative of the lunch. Most of all, they were appreciative of having an opportunity to showcase their talent.”

Pass It On was heard throughout the nation as our members shared their time, talent, finances, and love with veterans in many, many ways. Use this opportunity to ask others to join you in service to our veterans as the American Legion Auxiliary demonstrates Service Not Self!

**American Legion Auxiliary’s Impact Made Serving America’s Veterans:**

Hours Volunteered in Service to Veterans.....	4,581,330
Dollars Spent in Service to Veterans .....	\$13,878,738
Value of In-Kind Donations Received.....	\$5,750,178
# of Veterans Assisted .....	\$3,100,578
# of Veterans in the Classroom Presentations.....	11,889
# of New Home Service Volunteers .....	11,143
# of New Field Service Volunteers.....	15,063
Dollars Raised from Poppy Distribution.....	\$4,633,302
# of Veterans Who Made Poppies .....	2,569
Total Paid to Veterans Making Poppies.....	\$793,063

**VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION**

**Denise H. Rohan, Wisconsin, Chairman**  
**Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, Director**

This report covers the programs, activities and accomplishments of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission, its two standing committees (Employment and Veterans Preference and Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness), and the staff from July, 2013, through June 30, 2014. 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 National Veterans Employment & Education Commission is chaired by Denise H. Rohan (WI). The division consists of Director Joseph Sharpe, Jr., Deputy Director Mark Walker, Assistant Director Steve Gonzalez, Assistant Director Davy Leghorn, Assistant Director Samuel Jung, Administrative Assistant Jasmine Davis, and Administrative Assistant Doris Grooms.

National Veterans Employment & Education Commission

- \*Employment & Veterans Preference Committee
- \*Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness Committee
- \*Veterans Employment & Education Council
- \*Awards Subcommittee
- \*Small Business Task Force Advisory Board
- \*Homeless Veteran Task Force Advisory Board

**2013-2014 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 24, 2013, in the George R. Brown Convention Center, Room 352, Section D, Level Three, Houston, Texas, in conjunction with the Ninety-Fifth Annual National Convention. A report on that meeting was made to the National Executive Committee on Monday, August 26, 2013. 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 14-15, 2013. A complete report on that meeting appears in the Digest of Proceedings of the National Executive Committee, October 2013. *The Commission and subcommittee names were also changed to Veterans Employment & Education.*
- (3) At the 54<sup>th</sup> Washington Conference, on Monday, March 24, which was 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) The chairman of the commission met May 6, 2014, 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 6-7, 2014.

**Legislative Appearances**

A very important part of the work of the National Veterans Employment & Education 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, 2013 to July 31, 2014, on matters pertaining to the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission:

- On November 4, 2013, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on "Examining Higher Education Institutions' Services to Veterans."
- On March 25, 2014, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans' on various pieces of legislation regarding "Education Issues."
- On March 25, 2014, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, House Committee on Veterans Affairs' on

various pieces of legislation regarding “Treatment of veterans at VA Health Facilities.”

### **Administrative Activities**

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission and its two standing subcommittees on Employment and Veterans Preference and Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness 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 Veterans Employment & Education 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 Veterans Employment & Education Commission, Denise H. Rohan (WI), appointed a seven-person subcommittee to review all of the nominations that had been received during 2013 in the Employer of Veterans Awards Program.

The Commission’s Awards Subcommittee met to select the following National winners:

- **Large Employer:** North Carolina Food Service, North Carolina
- **Medium Size Employer:** L-3 Communications ASD, North Carolina
- **Small Employer:** M1 Support Services, Texas

### **Employment Service Awards**

Beginning in 1993, three awards have been presented to the Local Veterans Employment Representative of the Year, the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year, and the Employment Service Office of the Year. These awards are given in cooperation with local Job Service offices across the country, to recognize truly outstanding veteran-dedicated staff members.

#### **National winners are as follows:**

- **LVER of the Year:** Robert R. O’Keefe, Ohio
- **DVOP of the Year:** Roy M. Fillion, North Dakota
- **Employment Local Office:** Brazos Valley Workforce Solutions, Texas

#### **Other Awards:**

- **Enhance the Lives of the Disabled:** Sioux Steel Company, Inc. South Dakota

- **Employer of Older Workers:** The Society of St. Vincent de Paul North Idaho, Idaho
- **Homeless Veterans Outreach Award:** The American Legion Department of Oregon

#### **EMPLOYMENT & VETERANS PREFERENCE COMMITTEE**

**James Fratolillo, Massachusetts, 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 Posts and Departments appoint these employment chairpersons. Occasionally, Departments also appoint them at the County and District levels. Additionally, this committee is charged with promoting veterans' preference throughout the federal government and ensuring that agencies continue to observe all veterans' preference laws.

#### **VETERANS EDUCATION, OTHER BENEFITS & HOMELESSNESS COMMITTEE**

**John B. Sampson, New York, Chairman**

**Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, Director**

This committee is charged with ensuring that veterans educational benefits provided by the federal government are sufficient and that every generation of veterans has substantially the same as, or better benefits than, the previous generation. In addition, this committee is to ensure that all veterans receive the benefits to which they are entitled as recompense for their military service on behalf of a grateful nation while continuing to push for federal and local governments to allocate adequate resources to combat and ultimately eliminate veteran homelessness.

#### **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 American Legion is synonymous with veteran's education, being instrumental in the first and most recent GI Bill's passage and helping the modern-day veteran navigate the confusing world of education benefits. The main reason for the Post-9/11 GI Bill was that VA education benefits were no longer covering fast-rising tuition costs. Working with Congress, we stressed the need for a "21st century GI Bill" that would provide benefits worthy of our veterans and offer the same opportunities afforded to those who fought in World War II.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill only pays in-state tuition and eligible fees. Veterans who settle in states other than their state of residence upon separating from the service are initially charged "out-of-state" tuition, which means they must pay the difference between the resident and non-resident charges of that states tuition. Service members are not given the option to move to any state and establish residency prior to their separation from the armed forces, which can lead to financial burdens. State policies have adjusted in the last decade to allow active and reserve members to access in-state tuition rates, but separating service members (future veterans) must fulfill established residency time requirements to establish state residency and access in-state tuition rates.

Over the last couple of years, we have heard from countless veterans who, because of the nature of military service, often have a difficult time establishing residency for purposes of obtaining in-state tuition rates. 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. Because of this, many of our student-veterans are unable to use their GI Bill benefits at an institution of higher education of their choice or are required to pay thousands of dollars in out-of-pocket expenses in nonresidential tuition rates. Furthermore, public colleges and universities have significantly raised the costs of out-of-state tuition to offset decreasing revenues due to state budget cuts. Circumstances such as these pose significant challenges to using this important benefit.

Therefore, The American Legion has led a state-by-state initiative to introduce, advocate for and support state legislation that would waive the residency requirements for separating veteran's access to in-state tuition at public colleges and universities, regardless of their residency status. Veterans should not have to go into deep debt for their education just because their permanent residence is in another state or assume tremendous financial burdens due to the recent change in law which often capped GI Bill benefits far short of high out-of-state rates. The American Legion has advocated for and testified in support of federal legislation to grant in-state tuition, specifically, H.R. 357 and S. 257.

Due to The American Legion's aggressive stance on in-state tuition a provision regarding the issue was placed into H.R. 3230, the Veterans' Access to Care through Choice, Accountability, and Transparency Act of 2014. This part of the law (under Sec. 702) will grant in-state tuition for any veteran who transitioned out of the military no less than 90 days and no more than 3 years for the purpose of attending any public institution of higher learning. This important piece of legislation was signed on August 7, 2014, by President Obama. This new law takes effect on July 10, 2015.

### **Credentialing**

The civilian workforce increasingly relies upon credentialing as a way to regulate entry into certain occupations and to promote accountability for performance and public safety. Credentialing also offers benefits to the military, and can be used to promote recruiting, retention, and professional development. Promoting civilian credentialing of service members and veterans will enable them to demonstrate to employers the comparability and value of their military education, training, and experience. Returning veterans face a lengthy credentialing and licensing process that is required for them to transition their skills, training, and experience from the military to civilian workforce. Many industry areas require specific federal and state licenses and credentials, but do not recognize military training or experience. When civilian credentialing boards and employers fail to fully recognize military education, training, and experience, the service member, veteran, and America lose out. Veterans face reduced chances of obtaining a job on par with their skills and the civilian workforce cannot take full advantage of the extensive skills training in which our nation has so greatly invested.

The American Legion, in collaboration with the Department of Defense (DOD), National Governors Association (NGA), and National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), has undertaken an initiative to address this challenge to ease the transition into the civilian workforce for veterans and their families. The initiative's aim is to help service members receive licensure and academic credit for military education, training and experience. This initiative created strategies to accelerate credentialing processes for separating service members and veterans in high demand. The purpose was to increase credential attainment that leads to employment by veterans – especially Gulf War II veterans, who are experiencing the highest levels of unemployment – and reduce the number of Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Service members (UCX) claims and duration of time spent on UCX benefits.



The American Legion has been and continues to be a leading voice in advocacy for the unique job skills veterans bring to the table. In 1997, The American Legion commissioned the report “Study of Civilian Licensure and Certification for Veterans,” which detailed the problem while focusing on the areas of aircraft maintenance and healthcare. The American Legion continues to fight for a major overhaul of the licensure and certification policies as they relate to military job skills, on the national and state levels alike. The American Legion is working with credentialing and licensing agencies to help veterans receive credit for their experiences maximize their abilities and move quickly into productive careers. The American Legion help shape and support the VOW to Hire Heroes Act and the Veterans Skills to Jobs Act of 2012; however, work remains in a long march to improve career opportunities for those who have served in uniform.

After winning passage of several important credentialing bills on the federal level, The American Legion turned its focus on state legislatures, pushing for states to consider similar measures that allow military training and skills to fulfill requirements for professional certifications. Largely, the efforts have yielded great results, as 45 states have either passed credentialing legislation or are currently considering it. In all, 45 credentialing bills have been signed into law, and another 85 are in various stages of consideration in state legislatures around the nation.

Cooperation among The American Legion, state governments, private sector employers, institutions of higher learning and the federal government have been crucial to effect the necessary changes in policies and practices to fully recognize the education, training, and experience provided to transitioning veterans. The American Legion will continue to work with the White House, National Governors Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, government agencies such as the departments of Defense, Transportation, Energy, Labor, and others, as well as congressional representatives, military training commands, credentialing boards and the private sectors. Lastly, The American Legion has created toolkits to assist Legionnaires in advocating on a state-by-state basis to address the issues of credentialing.

### **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. The Department of Labor’s Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (DOL-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 current rate of unemployment in the United States is 6.2 percent. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans is 9.2 percent. The total number of unemployed veterans from the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is approximately 163,000, with a total of 603,000 unemployed veterans from all eras. The American Legion has collaborated with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (USCC), Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS), Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), various State Workforce Agencies and various corporate sponsors, in hosting numerous veteran specific Job Fairs across the nation. The '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 January 2013, The American Legion has hosted and participated in 118 Job Fairs with RecruitMilitary and USCC under the 'Hiring our Heroes' Initiative. In less than three years, Hiring Our Heroes — a joint initiative of The American Legion and USCC -- has helped more than 20,200 veterans, service members, and military spouses nationwide find jobs. USCC has hosted over 90 hiring events at Legion Posts and partnered with the Legion on nearly 200 others. 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.

The American Legion's National Veterans Employment & Education Division, through its relationships, continues to play a vital role in assisting American Legion Posts to produce successful Job Fairs, small business development workshops, and employment training services throughout America and, in turn, will change the tide of the high unemployment rate among veterans. The American Legion has a representative on the Department of Labor's Advisory Committee Veterans' Employment, Training and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO) and Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development. Lastly, The American Legion participates in the Veterans' Entrepreneurship's Task Force (VET-FORCE) business forums and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's Service Member's Affairs meetings.

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission encourages Departments to urge members to volunteer for any employment 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.

### **Veteran Entrepreneurship**

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission conducted a two-day entrepreneurial course, "For Her Entrepreneurship - Resources, Opportunities, Experiences & Support (For HEROES)," on Saturday, March 25 and Sunday March 25, in the Georgetown Room, Concourse Level of the Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C. Approximately 30 women veterans and military spouses participated in this event. Participants traveled from as far away as Florida, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, as well as Maryland and Virginia.

The two-day session intensive entrepreneurship course was created by The American Legion in partnership with the Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University. After completing this free course, participants now have the tools and knowledge they need to identify a business opportunity, draft a business plan and launch their new enterprise. The curriculum included an introduction to entrepreneurship and skills training, plus detailed information on resources and support programs designed specifically to aid participants working with the federal government. Business conceptualization, business plan formulation, financial planning, start-up funding, marketing and related topics were explored as well. Participants who completed the two-day course have been provided access to an eight-week online Foundations of Entrepreneurship course offered by IVMF. Completion of the course will require approximately 10 hours of study each week while walking participants through the fundamentals of developing a business plan.

In addition, Representative Michael Fitzpatrick's (PA) H.R. 2906, Fairness to Veterans for Infrastructure Investment Act of 2013 was discussed. 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 that 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.

Lastly, The American Legion's Small Business Task Force annual meeting convened on March 25, during the Washington Conference in the Washington Hilton, Monroe Room, Concourse Level. The meeting was chaired by Veterans Employment & Education Commission Chairman, Denise Rohan and co-chaired by The American Legion's Small Business Taskforce Chairman, Billy Jenkins. In attendance were national staff, Legionnaire small business owners, members of the Small Business Administration (SBA) and members of the House Small Business Committee. The members went over all Veterans Employment & Education Commission's resolutions germane to veteran-owned small business and solidified our stance on certain upcoming legislative policies. Most notably, the Taskforce voted unanimously against the Federal Strategic Sourcing Initiative (FSSI), which upon adoption would hurt all small businesses and establish a monopoly among the few that could participate.

The American Legion's Small Business Task Force is a consortium of accomplished veteran business owners who have volunteered to advise the Legion on legislative matters that pertain to veteran businesses. Its group of 30 members share their experiences -- ranging from the public and private sectors -- to help inform the Veterans Employment & Education Division on matters relating to federal contracting for veterans, procurement and other areas that affect veteran business owners.

### **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 subsequently pay 2.15 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 \$4,300. 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 Veterans Employment & Education Commission of The American Legion held a successful Homeless Veterans Roundtable on Monday, March 24, 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), Housing Assistance Council (HAC), National League of Cities (NLC), Department of Labor (DOL), U.S. VETS, Family Matters of Greater Washington (FMGW), and Community Solutions. Speakers included Anthony Love, Senior Advisor & Director Community Engagement, Homeless Programs, VA; Linda Charest, Base Realignment and Closure Coordinator/HUDVet, Office of Special Needs Assistance Program, HUD; John Driscoll, President/CEO, NCHV; Joseph Belden, Deputy Executive Director, HAC; Elisa Harig-Blaine, Principal Housing Associate, NLC; Kenneth Fenner, HVRP, Competitive Grants Lead, DOL; Linda Clark-Holland, Program Manager, and Raymond O'Pharrow, Workforce Coordinator, U.S.VETS; Joanna Truitt, Special

Projects Consultant, FMGW; and Jessica Venegas, Director of Strategic Partnership, Community Solutions.

During the Roundtable it was noted that VA and HUD reported 57,000 homeless veterans on a single night in January 2013 (2013 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. VA stated that they 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. The American Legion supports the VA's Five-Year Plan that will provide supportive services and physical and mental care to homeless veterans. Homelessness among veterans has declined each year since 2010. Between 2012 and 2013, veteran homelessness declined by 8 percent (or 4,770). Homelessness among veterans has declined by 24 percent (or 17,760) between 2009 and 2013.

In order to fully implement VA's pledge to end homelessness among veterans by 2015, Congress must continue making responsible investments in affordable housing and supportive services programs that move veterans and their families off the streets and into stable housing. These homeless assistance programs should be intended to serve all groups of low-income veterans – veterans at risk of becoming homeless, veterans who are homeless for a short time, and veterans and their families who have spent years without a place to call home.

With the affects of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is widely known the psychological stress, such as PTSD, TBI and other mental illnesses play a significant role in pushing a certain population of veterans into homelessness. Funding, along with grants that goes to homeless veterans programs and organizations that assist this vulnerable demographic are needed more than ever. Due to our work with homeless veterans and their families, The American Legion understands that homeless veterans need a sustained coordinated effort that provides secure housing and nutritious meals; essential physical healthcare, substance abuse aftercare and mental health counseling; as well as personal development and empowerment. Veterans also need job assessment, training and placement assistance. The American Legion believes all programs to assist homeless veterans must focus on helping veterans reach their highest level of self-management.

Furthermore, The American Legion directly provides housing for homeless veterans and their families, including facilities in Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Connecticut. One of the goals of The American Legion is to help bring federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, faith-based institutions 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 and shelters into gainful employment and/or independent living.

### **AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY**

**National President**

**Nancy Brown-Park, California**

I've mentioned before that my journey with the American Legion Auxiliary started when I was just 4 days old. My dad was a post commander. My mom was a department president. And I was the little girl hanging around the post at social functions, distributing poppies each May and standing at attention during somber Veterans Day ceremonies. Sixty-five years later, I'm still doing all of those things, and they all mean so much more. Even though my parents are gone, they passed on their values of patriotism and service. They also left me with a great big family that continues to guide my actions today – The American Legion Family.

This year, my Legion Family has come to mean even more to me. Over the past 12 months, I have been honored to serve alongside American Legion National Commander Daniel M. Dellinger and Sons of The American Legion National Commander Joseph W. Gladden. It was a tough year for America's veterans, and I was honored to see firsthand the passion and protective nature the Legion has when our country's veterans are not treated with the respect they deserve – the respect they earned by serving their country. The American Legion was the first to speak up years ago regarding VA claims backlogs and waiting times at VA medical facilities, so when further investigation uncovered just how serious the health care crisis was for our veterans, the American public and media looked to The American Legion for leadership and answers. The constant media attention the Legion received this year fills me with mixed emotions – complete sadness over how our veterans have been treated, but also immense pride that the Legion Family has demanded that the VA and our government step up and make the necessary changes to the VA system.

The respect for and impact of The American Legion Family goes well beyond America's borders. Representing the Legion Family alongside National Commander Dellinger in South Korea, Taiwan, Germany, and Normandy, it's clear that our active-duty military and veterans around the world rely on The American Legion to be their voice and strong arm when needed.

And the responsibilities of the Legion Family belong not just to its national leaders, but to all of us. It is up to each of us to make the time and effort to stay abreast of veterans issues, to understand and serve the needs of our veterans, servicemembers, and military families, and to let our representatives in Washington, D.C., know about the Legion's legislative priorities and the needs of veterans in our own states and communities.

Though my term as national president is coming to an end, I am honored that so many of you took my "Pass It On" challenge to heart. I have been so impressed with the ideas you have shared with me and the outstanding work you do each day to make life better for our veterans, servicemembers, and military families. I have seen a huge surge in actions by our members to retain our current members and reach out to new ones. Growing our membership is the ultimate goal in passing on our passion to future generations.

I am so grateful to the national officers, chairmen, and department presidents who helped move our organization forward this year, and to each and every one of you for passing on our love, respect, and support to those we serve. What we do as an organization really does make a difference, and it all starts with you.

**National Vice President  
Janet Jefford, Connecticut**

It was a wonderful year working with National President Nancy as she encouraged all of us to "pass on" our love for the American Legion Auxiliary and our service to its mission. It was a lot more work than I ever expected, but it was also very rewarding.

The year was off to a busy start with the Commander's Testimony in September followed by The American Legion Fall Meetings and President Nancy's Homecoming in October. And what a wonderful time we all had in California! The highlights for me were a visit to the Ronald Reagan Library, a wonderful evening at the Long Beach post, and representing the Auxiliary at Nancy's banquet.

October ended with an unforgettable week at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Reno. Being able to talk to these veterans and hear their expressions of thanks and gratitude for all the work they witness being done by Auxiliary volunteers in VA facilities helps you realize the huge importance and impact we have as an organization. The culmination of the week was the stage show at the MGM Grand Theater, one of the largest stages in America.

I also had the opportunity to represent the Auxiliary at the Veterans Day celebration in Indianapolis and at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., where I presented a varsity swimming award, MVP, to a graduating midshipman. Along with National Secretary Dubbie and Bob Reeg from the Washington, D.C. office, I spent three days at Gettysburg learning more about the Franklin Project and how the Auxiliary can participate in making a year of service an expectation for all young people.

By far, the most important thing I was privileged to play a role in was the development of a new strategic plan for the Auxiliary. Inspired by Nancy's leadership, the Long Range Strategic Planning Committee engaged Christina Drouin, president of the Center for Strategic Planning, to develop the new plan. She then facilitated the Million Member Task Force to develop the strategies and initiatives around Goal 1: Attain a million members by the ALA's centennial in 2019. In March, the NEC approved the new Centennial Plan to guide the organization over the next five years as we approach our 100th anniversary.

Late March through the beginning of May was by far the busiest time. It began with the Washington DC Conference followed by the DC Briefings which provided an opportunity to meet with The American Legion staff in Washington to learn how we can help advance the programs and legislative agenda of the Legion. Two weeks later, the 2014-2015 national chairmen met in Indianapolis to plan the year, followed by the Department Leadership National Conference. Again, the DLNC was an opportunity for upcoming department leadership to learn more about the strategic planning process and how to write their own plans based on the national plan.

The term as national vice president is a time to learn and a time to plan. Participating in finance meetings and ALA Foundation meetings, along with meetings with National Headquarters staff, has helped me to appreciate how efficiently our organization is run. It has also, hopefully, prepared me for the year ahead.

It indeed has been a pleasure serving as national vice president under the direction of President Nancy. I hope I have contributed to helping Nancy pass on her message of helping us realize why it is so important that the American Legion Auxiliary remains a vibrant and growing organization. To quote Nancy: "If not us, who? If not now, when?"

**National Secretary**  
**Mary "Dubbie" Buckler, Indiana**

It's been a big year at National Headquarters (NHQ) – many big multi-year projects culminated in some big achievements. Nearly 4 years in the making, the ALA Department Operations Guide was published and a free 500-page copy provided to each department. The revised ALA National Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules was adopted last August, formatted, printed and is downloadable. After 2 years the ALA Branding Guide was published, and includes requirements for proper use of the trademarked emblem and name. The ALA Foundation grant process was established, and several applications reviewed. The "Members Only" website portal launched, and another multi-year project to transition our national website into a responsive website for smartphone users will soon. The positive feedback has been tremendous, as all this is on top of the daily whirlwind of business and supporting our membership.

The ALA Awareness Campaign went full bore with a new ALA PR Tool Kit, plus the new 60-second ALA TV ads ran in May and nationwide in November via national Cable TV, reaching over 45 million viewers by women age 35+. When we were on-air, interest and ALA awareness increased. Off-air, awareness plummeted. The findings helped shape ALA Centennial Plan Goal 5 – increase ALA brand awareness and loyalty.

Our ALA Call to Service Corps AmeriCorps/VISTA Consortium reached a 5-year milestone: \$4.3million in grants to ALA NHQ and 200 VISTAs placed in the ALA, several departments, and some 40 Consortium organizations. We are the broker of these resources resulting in greatly expanded national awareness about the ALA – who we are,

what we do, and why we matter. And, without a development director for the past 5 years, ALA NHQ has raised nearly \$7 million in outside revenue over that time period from new sources, and that excludes ongoing member support.

Our audits again earned highest marks. We were externally audited on our national finances, NHQ financial processes, federal grant compliance, Foundation's finances, benefits, and the magazine, plus had our first external IT audit review. Your NHQ received stellar findings, and no regulatory or watchdog group criticism.

The ALA 2019 Centennial Plan's 5 Goals adopted by the NEC in March are the driving force in everything we do at NHQ. Resourcing the Plan's strategies that support departments requires investing in ourselves from our reserve funds and looking at the adequacy of our dues structure. Achieving organizational effectiveness is essential for attaining Goal 1 – a million members in 5 years. Goal 2 is foster a culture of good will, Goal 3 is to develop leadership and goal 4 is strengthen departments. We've already done some big things aimed at Goals 3 and 4 such as the Department Operations Guide, ALA Girls State Program & Operations Guide, and additional training for departments and units.

Goal 2 - fostering an internal culture of good will – requires being good and doing good. A huge problem negatively impacting department organizational effectiveness is the high turnover in department secretaries – 60% in 2 years. Department secretaries are part of the department leadership team; frequent office management turnover is costly to the department, NHQ, and our ALA reputation. ALA NHQ and ALA departments are important service organizations and business centers requiring knowledgeable management that only comes with continuity of the executive management team. People are joining less, and those who 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. Let the spirit of good will lead us.

**National Treasurer  
Marta Hedding, Indiana**

In the second fiscal year after the \$4 senior dues increase took effect, the organization can be proud that both the FY13 and FY14 budgets were the first truly balanced budgets in a decade. But as our external auditor predicted, the dues increase was just a temporary fix; the proposed FY15 budget projects a deficit.

In FY12, dues covered just 53% of member and program services, with more than half of that just to produce and mail the magazine. In FY13, after the increase went into effect, dues still only covered 66% of member and program services, with more than one-third of that for the magazine. Dues are projected to cover just 63% of those services in FY14.

Looking ahead, we need to do 1 of 2 things pretty quickly:

Immediately reverse the membership decline: Membership is 24,000 behind this time last year. Just to cover the deficit projected for FY15, we need 20,000 additional adult members.

Begin raising dues in smaller increments, to keep ahead of increased costs and the trend of declining membership: Our external auditor has advised we need to do just that. We cannot allow ourselves to get into the same situation as 3 years ago – going 17 years without adjusting dues. We need to fulfill our fiduciary responsibility and adjust our dues structure so that each year we can sufficiently fund our budgets annually adopted.

The ALA Centennial Plan is all about where we need to be in 5 years, so can we get practical and also dream a little? With the cost of national meetings and events nearing \$2 million annually, rising as much as 15% per year, is there a more cost effective way to engage and communicate with members?

Junior dues barely even cover the cost of the national Junior meeting let alone the cost of other Junior activities. Only about 50 girls participate - that's one-tenth of 1% of



our Juniors. At a cost of nearly \$950 per girl attending, is there a better way to engage Junior members that would benefit more Juniors? And what about some of our other events? Do we really need to meet face to face in Washington DC, costing the national organization more than \$1000 per attendee? What about leveraging technology, utilizing a variety of e-learning tools to engage and inform more members from all generations?

Everything in the Centennial Plan requires technology in some way, as do many of the strategies developed by the Million-Member Task Force. We're proud that in the last five years, we've vastly improved our technical capabilities and continue to make great strides that benefit more members. The ALA Management Information System (ALAMIS) is working well for a growing number of users at the department, district, and unit level. Nearly 800 users are now supported by a 2-person National Headquarters IT team – remarkable. A new member portal on the website, tied to ALAMIS, was recently launched and a responsive website for smart phone and tablet users is planned for release later this year. It won't be long until members can pay renewal dues on-line. And our goal is that eventually new members will be able to join online too.

This leap in technical functionality has enabled us to be more efficient and cost-effective in many ways. Could we do more with technology to not only save time and resources for the entire organization, but also provide an improved experience for our members? Seems practical and worth considering, don't you think?

**American Legion Auxiliary Foundation  
Linda Boone, Oregon**

The American Legion Auxiliary Foundation is in its seventh year and building momentum!

Fundraising efforts have focused on:

- wall calendar direct mail piece to known donors
- stained-glass National Cathedral window ornament available for a cumulative donation of \$250
- Veteran Projects Fund grants highlighted by the national president
- Tribute, recognition, and memorial donation opportunities online

Planned giving opportunities by individuals have been promoted through articles in Auxiliary magazine, websites, newsletters, and national meeting presentations. The excellent Planned Giving Guide developed by National Headquarters staff helps individuals in estate planning. We encourage members to think of the ALA Foundation along with their units and departments as they plan how to sustain their commitment to the mission of this wonderful organization.

Grants provided this year made possible by our supporters' generous donations were varied and mission-focused. Veterans Creative Arts Festival grants were awarded to:

- Department of Iowa, VA Central Iowa, \$750
- Department of Maryland, Perry Point VAMC, \$500
- Department of Vermont, White River VAMC, \$1,500
- Department of New York, Syracuse VAMC, \$750
- Department of Illinois, Illiana Healthcare System, \$2,500

The ALA Foundation aided a district in accessing grant funds by using the Foundation's 501(c)(3) IRS status. This \$500 pass-through grant went to District 20 in the Department of California.

The Veteran Projects Fund, championed by National President Nancy, received donations that enabled the following grants to be awarded:

- Department of Illinois – VA Hospital Hand Bells Music Therapy Project: \$2,633
- Department of Delaware – Home of the Brave for homeless veterans, repair of siding and insulation: \$6,000

- Department of Connecticut – washers and dryers for veteran residences: \$1,600
- Department of California – iTunes gift cards for national president to distribute during overseas visits with servicemembers: \$1,250

This is the first year the ALA Foundation had enough funds to invest. The Foundation ended FY13 with net assets of \$484,000. An investment policy has been adopted that reflects the ALA policy, and an investment advisory firm has been engaged.

Most of the funds donated to the Foundation since its incorporation in 2007 have been put in an endowment fund. That is our base, and the interest from that endowment will be used to support the mission – to support ALA programs.

FY13 was the first time the ALA Foundation had any interest income to grant to the Auxiliary. It was not very much, but our expectation is for the donor base to grow, with your help, to ensure more funds are available to grant to the Auxiliary. For the first grant, it was \$2,550! Investments are on track to have a modest increase at the conclusion of FY14.

There are open positions on the ALA Foundation Board of Directors, and we encourage anyone interested in helping to build the Foundation to consider applying. We need individuals who have some experience in philanthropy and fundraising and would like to serve on the national level. See “Ways to Give” on the ALA Foundation website at [www.ALAFoundation.org](http://www.ALAFoundation.org) for details on the application process.

Thank you to all of our donors for supporting the growth of the ALA Foundation that will ensure funds are available to provide services to our nation’s veterans.

### **National Chaplain Shelley Riggs, Ohio**

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son. That whosoever believeth in Him, shall not perish but have everlasting life! John 3:16

What a humbling experience it has been to be your spiritual leader this past year. It has truly enriched my life. In the words of Helen Keller, “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” Auxiliary chaplains across the country, from the department to the district to the unit level, have certainly come together to serve one another and our veterans.

The year began with the Chaplains Conference in Indianapolis in September. What a rewarding experience it was to meet some of the chaplains in attendance and exchange our thoughts and put together a plan of action for all. It was interesting to see that some chaplains are re-elected year after year, and yet for some, it is a step toward holding other department offices.

Social media continues to strengthen among the chaplains. We use the chaplains Facebook group ([www.facebook.com/groups/alachaplains](http://www.facebook.com/groups/alachaplains)) to ask for prayers or share important messages. This year, I shared many inspirational quotes on the chaplains Facebook group. If you haven’t already joined this group, I encourage you to do so.

Also this year, I returned to an old format for the Reflections page in Auxiliary magazine. I received positive comments from doing this, and I believe it was quite useful for the units to use at their monthly meetings.

Although I did not ask for year-end reports, I received 19 reports from department chaplains. They reported being busy giving prayers at the beginning and ending of meetings, participating in memorial services, draping charters, Chapel of Four Chaplains programs, preparing food for grieving families, sending get-well cards and sympathy cards, grace cards, and services for special holidays. One unit even has a memorial garden at its post.

“Don’t take American freedom for granted; our veterans fought for it!”

A couple of interesting stories: the chaplain from Oklahoma was fortunate to go on an Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. with WWII veterans from her state. The Department of North Carolina put Bible verses in the newspaper and read scriptures on

the radio. The Department of Virginia chaplain put together inspirational postcards with the quote “A caring visit, a smile, a kind word and a prayer!” And finally, from the Department of Tennessee: Lynda Winkles, department chaplain, passed away this year and was a candidate for national chaplain. She had a special project for the Chapel of Four Chaplains: She had asked her department to save a penny a day. They donated \$1,510 to the Chapel of Four Chaplains in her memory.

“If God is all you have, you have all you need.” –John 14:8

It has been an honor serving as National Chaplain, from conducting the Chaplains Conference in Indianapolis, giving prayers at the Washington DC Conference, and finishing my term here in Charlotte at National Convention.

“Laughter is timeless, imagination has no age, and dreams are forever!” –Walt Disney

I have received many prayers for National President Nancy’s prayer book, and they continue to come in daily. To everyone who sent in a report, prayer, or poem, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. It has been such an inspiring year to serve as your spiritual leader.

“Choices, Chances, Changes: You must make a CHOICE to take a CHANCE, or your life will never CHANGE!”

We must remember why we joined this great organization and who has gone before us...for God and country! Please continue to pray for our children, schools, communities, veterans, and America!

May God’s blessing and grace shine upon everyone!

**National Historian  
Sharon Doran, Arizona**

The famous author Pearl S. Buck said that “If you want to understand today, then you have to search yesterday.” You may very well ask what this has to do with the recording of the 2013-2014 year for the American Legion Auxiliary. It is hoped that by the time this history has been completed, we will be able to look back on it and use it as a measuring tool to see if we have accomplished what we have set out to do. Did we fulfill our mission? Was our vision justified?

The role of historian is to accurately record the events taking place and to “Pass It On” for future generations. I believe our department historians are fulfilling this mission. Many have called and emailed questions on how to write the narrative. I am happy to have obliged them and hoped that I gave them good information. Our division national vice presidents worked with me during the year, summarizing travels throughout their divisions. It has been a great pleasure to work with them.

It is interesting to read the various ways each department fulfills its mission. The Department of North Dakota made 313 heart pillows to take to the Fargo Veterans Administration Hospital, and \$1,500 was collected for the department president’s “Security Blanket” project. Other units hosted fishing tournaments and painted the local bowling alley for Make A Difference Day and apparently are mean sewing machines, making lap robes, bibs, wheelchair/walker bags, and pillow cases for the VA home. It goes on and on – I mean really ... that’s what they do on the long winter days and nights.

The Department of Florida is “Cruising for Unity” aboard the USS Auxiliary. They are sponsoring a cruise. The funds from its cruise will help the department to continue boot camps, workshops, ABC schools, UD&R and more for their members. Units hosted Operation Homecoming Dinners and programs for returning military personnel, held Gold Star Mothers tea events and filled 13 boxes to ship to deployed Armed Forces personnel. The department president did a lot of “cruising.” What else do you do in Florida.

The Department of Arizona lifted its voices as members got into the swing of “Voices that Care for our Veterans and their Families.” The department president’s

special project was the Creative Arts program. A “Decorate the Pig” challenge was passed throughout the districts and units, with each one collecting money and adding to the pig’s attire. The department is big on VA hospitals, veterans homes, stand downs, and the USO.

These are only a few of the wonderful reports that department historians sent. Without them, there would be no history to Pass It On. The phrase “The pen is mightier than the sword” was coined by English author Edward Bulwer-Lytton in 1839. Let’s Pass It On and keep the ink flowing.

**Central Division National Vice President  
Donna Ray, Ohio**

As this year comes to a close, I have been so fortunate to meet so many wonderful members in the Central Division, and the feeling of belonging as a family member was amazing. Each department worked for Service Not Self. The theme of “Pass It On” was utilized in all aspects of The American Legion Family. It is a pleasure to pass on what department presidents had as special projects and the outcomes. Each department has had roundups, membership orientations, public awareness, and much more. In planning and supporting the programs, it shows that all of their efforts paid off.

Illinois President Judy’s special project was the Fisher House at Hines VA in Chicago and Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis, where the Southern Illinois Veterans get medical attention, and Operation Warm Troops, which is a relatively new program started by an Air Force nurse and a member of Edwardsville Illinois American Legion and Auxiliary. Members saw the need for blankets, socks, stocking caps, sweatsuits, T-shirts, nylon jogging suits, flannel shirts, and a few jackets and money for shipping and mailed them to Germany where nurses work. More than 200 boxes were shipped and appreciated by those injured while serving our country. All the above items were donated for Operation Warm Troops.

Indiana – Juniors made a huge impact in Community Service, AEF, Creative Arts, and held bingos at veterans homes. President Carol’s project was raising funds for remodeling at Indiana Veterans Home Motel and Residents’ Quarters. Second project was to raise funds for visual and hearing communications.

Iowa – Many hands participated in the Quilts of Valor project. More than 80 quilts were made by the department. Many members gathered in various locations all across the state in October for Make A Difference Day to make quilts and activity bags. The activity bags are for children accompanying their parents or grandparents visiting VA facilities. The bags contain coloring books, colors, stickers, or other items the children can use while they wait.

Kansas – President Karon’s special project was raising funds for suicide prevention and the PTSD affecting our military and veterans. Another project is Operation: Military Kids. The program provides multiple copies of the book Little Champ for use in classrooms. Each chapter has activities at the end to further help children understand the feelings, insecurities, fears, etc., that military children may be feeling.

Michigan – President Sandra did a terrific job with membership. Sandra’s special project this year was the Freedom Center. I had the honor of visiting with Freedom Center Director Charlotte Tripp and watched as \$6,000 was given to the center, and an additional \$6,000 was given during the convention, totaling \$12,000 to help our veterans being deployed.

Missouri – President Barbara’s project was USOs in Missouri. They served their country and continue to serve their communities. Several veterans fairs were held, Quilts of Valor presentations, veterans homes, Jefferson Barracks and Creative Arts Festival.

Ohio – President Vicky’s special project was “Survivors of Fallen Heroes – Family Group.” The project helped military families that have lost a spouse, child, or parent to death. The camp is a collaborative effort of the American Legion Auxiliary, SOS –

Survivors Outreach Services (works with our Gold Star families,) and Operation Military Kids in Columbus. In the beginning, Vicky's goal was to send 25 families, and as of May 31, they were able to send 18 families. The camp will take place in October 2014. One of the families attending will be Myles Eckert's family. He is the young man who found a \$20 bill and gave it to a soldier because he reminded him of his dad. President Vicky had the opportunity to present Myles and his family a certificate to attend the camp.

West Virginia – President Debra's special project was "Bonnie's Bus," a mobile mammography unit that goes all over West Virginia. It serves all West Virginia women and men with or without insurance. Debra's goal was to save one life, and, to date, they have collected \$2,500. She set a goal to stay in touch with the units and districts on a weekly basis.

Wisconsin – President Joyce's special project was Share Your Life through Organ Donation. Joyce and her husband talked at a workshop about their experience as a donor of their son's organs and the recipient of Leo's heart to a young man named John who shared his perspective as an organ recipient. John introduced Doug, a Children's Organ Transplant Association (COTA) representative, who talked about military children in need of transplants and how COTA supports this need. Share Your Life grant donations were \$9,676. Grants given were \$3,000 to two veteran organ recipients, \$2,000 to COTA, earmarked for Wisconsin Military Children in need, \$2,000 to Restoring Hope Transplant House, earmarked for veterans in need, before/after transplant, and \$2,676 carried over to the 2014-2015 ALA fiscal year to cover veteran Share Your Life grant requests.

**Eastern Division National Vice President  
Margaret "Maggie" McMahon, New Jersey**

"Pass It On" is a very fitting theme. This year, I was able to spread the word to the Eastern Division about the importance of passing on their passion for the ALA and to let Junior members know why they belong to this organization.

I am a third-generation Auxiliary member and Past Department President because the passion and desire to do whatever I can to help veterans was passed down from generation to generation.

I tried to express to members how important it is to pass down their knowledge to other to keep the organization growing.

There is a place for everyone in this organization, and age doesn't matter. What matters is our passion for our veterans. It is an honor to belong to this organization and the Eastern Division.

The passion of our members shows in the hard work they put into our programs and membership. These women have put their heart and soul into membership, and it paid off!

By taking the personal approach and calling members and reaching to those who needed a helping hand, the Eastern Division is No. 1 in membership!

Congratulations to every member of the division, and THANK YOU!

Thank you for allowing me to be Eastern Division national vice president, for all your hospitality, and for making me feel at home no matter what department I was visiting.

Always remember that we represent every veteran: past, present, and future. If we are not here for them, who will be?

Never forget that we need to be here for each other because if we are not here for each other, who will be?

**Northwestern Division National Vice President  
Patricia “Pat” Steranka, Colorado**

The Northwestern Division has been exceptionally busy this year with membership work. We have many challenges since our states are so large and spread out, but our division managed to keep ahead in membership for a large part of the year. I am exceptionally proud of their efforts.

On a personal level, my travels began this year at the national president’s homecoming. What an event that was! It was really nice to get to know everyone better and to share Nancy’s message of “Pass It On.” The California American Legion Family really worked hard and succeeded in putting together an exceptional program.

I was able to attend Mission Training in Hartford, Conn. The national organization did an exceptional job of putting the training together and getting all present to stay focused and participate. I wish that every unit could have the opportunity to attend this training.

I traveled in January to the Colorado, Wyoming, and North Dakota mid-year conferences. In all three of those state meetings, I talked about the Plan of Action and how utilizing the Plan can make Auxiliary programs succeed even more. I encouraged report writing as well. All three states are really working hard to take care of our military, their families, participate in their communities, take care of children and youth – all while working on membership as well.

The Washington DC Conference gave us an exceptional opportunity to talk to the offices of our senators and representatives about veterans issues. All officials were very receptive to the message and gave us insight into what they are working on.

In Nebraska, I spoke about the strategic plan and encouraged members to write their own goals to help them utilize the strategic plan and increase our membership by 2019 to 1 million.

Overall, this has been a really rewarding year of service to our veterans, their families, the community, children, and youth and seeing how each state reaches those goals and how hard they work on them. North Dakota had a mountain of pillows for veterans, the Colorado Juniors were collecting and painting pillows for veterans, and all were sending boxes to servicemembers. Wyoming sent cards to soldiers, and Nebraska collected quilts. It simply boggles the mind how many and varied ways everyone is serving. I am really proud of the Northwestern Division. Everyone has challenges, but I feel that the members of the Northwestern Division are exceptional and are giving their all.

**Southern Division National Vice President  
Angela Kilcrease, Mississippi**

Our love for veterans and military families drives us to greater heights of service. Through day-to-day interactions and travels across the mighty Southern Division, I heard firsthand many positive stories of service given and untiring efforts made on behalf our great organization.

The Department of Florida went “Cruising for Unity” at full speed ahead. Their service to homeless veterans is most noteworthy, particularly the creation of “Project Suds” by Unit 163 in Melbourne.

Units in the Department of Texas clocked in 234,984 volunteer hours and collectively donated more than \$100,008 to help 384,869 veterans, active-duty military and their families.

Virginia’s successful Walk, Run & Roll event at Virginia Beach in March raised more than \$19,100 to purchase more than 30 oversized wheelchairs with custom

orthopedic cushions for VA Medical Centers and veteran care facilities in Virginia, Washington, D.C., and West Virginia.

Kentucky's Public Relations program ingeniously used social media to track units' good news for reporting purposes.

South Carolina spent \$155,482.56 in support of veterans in their state and volunteered 40,026 hours for ALA programs.

Led by Oklahoma Unit 34, El Reno High School students again participated in the Gifts For Yank, a 65-year tradition. Each homeroom class competed to collect the most donations, wrapped gifts, and then delivered them personally to the Oklahoma VA Hospital's 150 patients.

President Rose Blanchard's special project for Mississippi established a fund specifically for in-state veterans' needs, raising more than \$5,500 to date and donating another \$1,500 to the national president's special project.

Arkansas President Betty Minor chose a truly unique special project – supporting a VA chaplains program in North Little Rock that offers marriage counseling service for military couples in need.

Tennessee President Charlotte Connors and members raised funds for a unique need for a disabled warrior, called The Trackchair, which can be used for hunting or outdoor excursions. The department raised \$12,600 and presented a customized chair to Brian Robbins of Knoxville at its convention in June.

On behalf of the 14 departments in the Southern Division, we thank Division Membership Chairman Barbara Stoffer for her enthusiasm during the year. She never let us give up and charged us to be Positively Southern every day.

Hardworking North Carolina led the pack for many months, revving its engines, but our big gun, Florida, kept nipping at their heels until they rose to the top. Louisiana President Elda Doucet's famous hats and original songs kept her department motivated for renewals and rejoins. Many congrats and thanks go to our departments for their commitment to membership this year.

A 500-word report in this publication doesn't begin to tell the complete story of the many accomplishments of the Positively Southern Division. It has been an incredible journey of inspiration. I'm humbled by this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to serve the greatest members I've ever met this year. We truly accentuated the positive as a team! Thanks, Y'ALL!

**Western Division National Vice President  
Ginger Cox, Arizona**

My term as the Western Division national vice president was filled with much pride and joy in the service and devotion that the western states have provided to our veterans, their families, communities, and to our children. It was gratifying to see the many ways that our departments carried through with the Auxiliary programs successfully. Our departments reached out and went above and beyond, working membership to reach new heights once again.

Alaska served veterans by volunteering at VAs, helping wounded warriors and elderly veterans, and raising funds for the Creative Arts Festival. Members prepared care packages, wrote letters, contacted legislators, and assisted with send-offs and welcome-home events for deployed military. Many units organized and delivered Hero Packs and promoted ALA KIDDS. Members participated in the huge Community Service project, Walk, Run & Roll.

Arizona holds Gift Shops at the three VAMCs. Units hold special fundraisers for the Creative Arts Festival and provide countless hours volunteering and participating in stand downs, Honor Flights, Operation: Military Kids, coupon clipping, and sending CARE packages to our military. A unit received the Family Program Community Purple Award as it was recognized as the National Community Partner of the Year.

California has been Shooting “HOOPS” (Honoring Our Opportunity to Provide Services) for our veterans. Members reached out to active-duty spouses to assist with daily needs. Family support was provided with babysitting and financial support. Members volunteered at the USOs in their airports. Juniors made thank-you notes that are distributed to troops abroad and to those returning home. Members volunteered and assisted veterans by holding stand downs, homeless outreach, and Creative Arts Festivals. Unit members held Heroes to Hometowns activities and donated to Operation Comfort Warriors. Members continue to support Fisher Houses.

Nevada continues working Auxiliary programs and membership with great enthusiasm and devotion.

New Mexico visits VA hospitals and nursing homes while supplying patients with lap robes and comfort items. Units held Christmas parties for underprivileged children, provided school supplies, participated in Coats for Kids, Toys for Tots, and the Children’s Special Olympics. Units welcomed more than 1,000 troops home from deployments, giving them Pocket Flags or challenge coins.

Oregon has ongoing events and shows its dedication in assisting veterans all over the state. The department president encouraged total TEAM work with the Legion Family.

Utah’s visit brought much joy as I participated in its Gift Shop. I was provided a tour of the VA facility and visited many veterans and their families.

Washington provides programs with great concern to keep the interest and participation of all members.

Hawaii and Idaho members are very dedicated to supporting our great organization.

It has been a great year in the Western Division, and I appreciate the continued success demonstrated by all. Thank you for your friendship and the wonderful memories. God bless you all, and God bless America.

**Americanism Committee**  
**Martha Lee Thatcher, Ohio, Chairman**

American Legion Auxiliary members are true patriots, and they are proud to belong to the world’s largest women’s patriotic service organization. They show their pride by displaying Honor Their Service buttons with a photo of the family members whose service to our country gave them eligibility. Unit members across the nation have become an integral part of their communities, spreading the word about who we are, what we do, and why we matter. They have established a working relationship with their schools and have become the go-to organization for flag etiquette and proper flag disposal.

Many units worked in schools as a Legion Family, combining ALA Americanism and Education programs to demonstrate flag folding and the origin and meaning of the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem. Students were given the opportunity to ask veterans questions regarding their service. The Department of North Carolina added a new element by offering a variety of skits tailored to the age of the audience: skits that asked “What is an American?” to kindergarteners through third-graders with students dressed as animals – what a clever way to introduce a discussion about diversity. They also presented “The Writing of our Constitution,” a skit with characters dressed as our founding fathers and as representatives of the 13 colonies.

The Department of Oklahoma discovered that including Junior members in the presentation of its Americanism Program created interest and increased attendance at events. The picture shown at left of Honorary National Junior President India Archer singing the National Anthem at Albuquerque’s Veteran Park is Americanism in action and why including Juniors in Americanism activities is a win-win situation for all involved.

Units nationwide participated in the Pocket Flag program and found that partnering with Juniors, SAL members, or community groups such as Girl Scouts or 4-H clubs



increased the production and success of their projects. The Department of Washington is one example: Unit 81 mailed 2,000 Pocket Flags to active-duty troops and folded an additional 5,000 in readiness to ship when troops from Naval Station Everett deployed.

A striking number of Auxiliary members marched in parades as members of the Color Guard, while many units reported decorating the graves of veterans on Memorial Day. One example is the Department of Tennessee, which distributed 3,756 flags and placed flags on the graves of 8,309 veterans.

I am pleased to report that units in all five divisions supported the national Americanism Essay Contest by supplying both public and parochial schools with the information needed to participate. In the Department of Pennsylvania, 3,156 children entered the contest where students were asked, "How can I show my pride in being an American?" It was a thought-provoking and rewarding experience to read the essays written by students in grades three through eight. In a similar vein, the Department of Maryland conducts its annual statewide naturalization ceremony. This year, the event resulted in 77 new citizens.

Get Out the Vote was promoted in many communities where post homes served as town hall meeting venues, and unit members served as poll workers and provided transportation to help their neighbors exercise their right to vote. Units nationwide supported The American Legion's Oratorical Contest, Junior Shooting Sports, and promoted Legion Baseball. A number of units supported the amendment to protect our United States flag from desecration with programs in schools, attending political rallies, and writing to their senators and representatives.

Attala County Unit 44 in Kosciusko, Miss., was the first to begin this unique, visually stirring activity: inscribing flags that had draped the caskets of honorably discharged veterans with an additional patch listing name and service history of the individual. On Memorial Day and Veterans Day, nearly 700 casket flags rustled in the wind on the hillside above Veterans Memorial Boulevard. It was an awesome sight and served to give these veterans the final salute they earned and deserved.

### **Auxiliary Emergency Fund Committee Karen Boehler, Colorado, Chairman**

Job loss, illness, family crises, droughts and floods, extreme cold spells, tornadoes, wildfires, hurricanes – ALA members came to the rescue, passing help and hope to our own.

It's difficult to read the travails of our ALA sisters in need, but it's so gratifying to pass on your support! To those 140 members granted AEF funds this year, our prayer is that this gift, along with assistance from others, has allowed life to return to a place of normalcy.

A small committee at ALA National Headquarters confidentially evaluates each request submitted. 118 members were given financial assistance grants; 22 received disaster grants. Were you one of those assisted? Thanks for allowing ALA members to help out. Were you a donor? So you may more fully appreciate the impact of your selfless giving, ponder these comments from AEF recipients: "I didn't know where else to turn. Thank the Lord for the generous Auxiliary ladies." "I didn't even know about this fund, but it was there for me in my time of need." "I couldn't have imagined losing my home that way. The bright spark this grant gave me added joy to my life when I could find little else about which to be happy." There was also the longtime member who had neglected to pay her dues. When a wildfire consumed her home and all possessions, it was difficult, but necessary, to deny her help because she wasn't a member when the crisis occurred.

Thirty departments reported about AEF activities and achievements this past year. Department presidents in Iowa and Illinois focused on AEF as their presidential projects, and it paid dividends! Nebraska continued the AEF mantra of "Members Helping

Members” in its quest for AEF contributions. Florida’s rough waters enticed members to find (for a small fee) the Golden Key in order to win a treasure chest’s contents. Individuals from the department were recognized for their participation. Virginia’s Silly Tax Form was a clever and well-received way to “assess” members for AEF! Memorial contributions and donations honoring individuals or events were encouraged. Connecticut’s AEF chairman arrived at convention in a clown suit, collecting money. Units were also creative in their fundraising with monthly newsletters, raffles, craft fairs, dinners, meeting collections, bingo, bake sales, Mardi Gras celebrations, Penny Wars, and matching donations.

Multiple times this year, I was queried: “There are so many ALA funds needing our donations. How do we decide where to give our money?” Each ALA program merits your dollars! A \$1 contribution per member to the AEF would’ve netted more than \$690,000. Thanks, Unit 1 in Washington, D.C., for doing just that! As Mother Teresa said, “Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love.”

\$137,850 donated to AEF: 140 members granted \$199,967. While donating is a small thing for many of us, to those for whom we cared, it was a great thing! Thank you, everyone!

**Cavalcade of Memories Committee**  
**Kenya Ostermeier, Indiana, Chairman**

American biographer and historian David McCullough has said, “History is who we are and why we are the way we are.” The American Legion Auxiliary possesses a very rich history, one that began nearly 100 years ago. This history not only shows why we are the way we are, but that what we do really matters. It comes to life through photos, artwork, recordings, videos, scrapbooks, and artifacts. Since its beginning in 1972 with Ellen Randall as the national committee’s first chairman, the Cavalcade of Memories has been displaying, with honor, these items of national interest.

American Legion Auxiliary departments and units are honoring their history as well. In New Mexico, a Junior member has been mentored to be her unit’s historian. She is creating a Cavalcade/Historian scrapbook for her unit of all of their functions, ensuring that the necessary skills to carry on the Auxiliary legacy will be passed on.

Units in the Department of Minnesota have been collecting stories from their members. Unit 25 uncovered a story involving three Auxiliary sisters who took turns caring for their eight orphaned siblings during the early 1960s following the sudden deaths of both parents.

The Department of Florida put a new twist on engaging its district and unit Cavalcade of Memories chairmen. Instead of an end-of-the-year report, members designed a treasure hunt of sorts. A different rhyming clue was sent each month. Following was February’s clue:

An exhibit of your memories is what you’ll do  
When you make a display at your  
post home or library too!  
Your local school or public buildings  
are also great places,  
To expose your history to new faces.  
If you can think of a new place to  
exhibit our past  
Send it to me to share with the mass.

A charm bracelet was awarded for the first clue solved. For every subsequent clue solved, a charm was awarded, up to a maximum of five.

The Department of Indiana recently relocated its office. Several Auxiliary departments have also tackled this task and can relate some real horror stories, especially when talking about packing the Cavalcade. The important message to those who have a

Cavalcade of Memories at the department and unit levels: Make sure you have an inventory of those items. An inventory can come in quite handy when packing and unpacking. Once it is created, be sure to review it on an annual basis to make sure it is current.

Units in the Department of Oklahoma have been constructing inventories as well as learning the ins and outs of creating digital records. They are also working toward preserving their collection by rotating and refreshing their displays, creating displays that are attractive and interesting.

And while it is good to take care of our mementos, it is always nice to lend a helping hand to others. The Department of Missouri reports that some of its units have been helping Legion members organize their collectibles.

By preserving our history, we show the world the things we have accomplished for our veterans, servicemembers, and their families. We do what we do because it's work that needs to be done. As Mr. McCullough said, "Real success is finding your lifework in the work that you love." Let's continue to preserve our history and Pass It On so that the present and future generations continue the work that began in 1919.

**Liaison to Child Welfare Foundation  
Linda Newsome, Maryland, Chairman**

At its annual meeting in October 2013, the board of directors approved \$644,005 in grants to 21 nonprofit organizations for projects to be completed in calendar year 2014. 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:

Autism Speaks of New York, New York, was awarded \$32,350 for their project, "100 Day Kit for Newly Diagnosed Families." This grant will provide information kits on Autism and will encourage early intervention and supportive services.

Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation of Baltimore, Maryland, was awarded \$25,000 for their project, "Healthy Choices, Healthy Children Booklets." This grant will produce booklets to assist adult mentors and law enforcement personnel in teaching teamwork, leadership, communication and personal responsibility to the kids they serve.

Chadwick Center for Children and Families at Rady Children's Hospital of San Diego, California, was awarded \$40,350 for their project, "Disseminating Best Practices for Preventing Child Abuse and Family Violence." This grant would provide a webcast of a multidisciplinary conference on child abuse, as well as brochures and email blasts.

Children's Hospital & Medical Center Foundation of Omaha, Nebraska, was awarded \$14,000 for their project, "Period of PURPLE Crying Injury Prevention Program." This grant will underwrite the production of an infant injury prevention program that will include the distribution of DVDs and educational booklets.

Cornelia de Lange Syndrome Foundation of Avon, Connecticut, was awarded \$18,287 for their project, "CdLS Education Toolkit for Parents and Professionals." This grant will provide toolkits, with information about this syndrome, to parents and professionals.

Face the Future Foundation of Chicago, Illinois, was awarded \$6,575 for their project entitled, "Family and Public Support Program for Children with Craniofacial Birth Defects." This grant will produce and distribute

an informational video to assist parents with reducing their child's challenging behaviors and increase social and self-control skills.

Father Flanagan's Boy's Home (aka Boys Town) of Boys Town, Nebraska, was awarded \$35,500 for their project, "Boys Town National Hotline Online Awareness Campaign." This grant will fund an internet publicity campaign to promote awareness of the Boys Town National Hotline.

Joe Foss Institute of Scottsdale, Arizona, was awarded \$10,000 for their project, "Veterans Inspiring Patriotism Program." This grant will provide students with copies of the United States Constitution and Declaration of Independence.

KS&A (Klinefelter Syndrome and Associates) of Pine, Colorado, was awarded \$20,000 for their project "Genetic Information Kits for Newly Diagnosed Children with X and Y Chromosome Variations." This grant will provide informational booklets to parents of children with chromosome variation.

National Alliance of Child Abuse Prevention Funds of Seattle, Washington, was awarded \$25,260 for their project, "Bringing the Protective Factors to life in your Work – a Resource for Action." This grant will produce toolkits for trainers to educate professionals and caregivers to help prevent child abuse and neglect.

National Autism Center of Randolph, Massachusetts, was awarded \$50,000 for their project, "Evidence-Based Educational Interventions in Public School Settings for Children with ASD." This grant will produce and disseminate information to support an intervention program targeted towards schools and special education administrators.

National Braille Press of Boston, Massachusetts, was awarded \$18,500 for their project, "Just Enough to Know Better: A Braille Primer." This grant will produce a Braille primer for sighted parents to teach their blind children to read.

Organization for Autism Research of Arlington, Virginia, was awarded \$67,400 for their project, "Autism Tuned In." This grant will develop an interactive, web-based program to enhance the lives of children with autism.

Partnership for Food Safety Education of Arlington, Virginia, was awarded \$20,600 for their project, "Phase II of the BAC! Fighter National Youth Campaign." This grant will develop online resources to educate the public about foodborne illnesses and safe food handling.

Prevent Child Abuse America of Chicago, Illinois, was awarded \$14,383 for their project, "Helping Offenders Prevent Child Abuse and Assist in Healthy Development of Families." This grant will underwrite the printing and distribution of a special baby journal aimed at preventing child abuse.

Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide, Inc. of Freehold, New Jersey, was awarded \$30,100 for their project, "Remote Delivery of Lifelines Suicide Prevention Program to Schools." This grant will promote Lifeline Suicide Prevention Program in public schools through online training.

Songs of Love Foundation of Forest Hills, New York, was awarded \$25,000 for their project, "Songs of Love Outreach Project." This grant will produce and disseminate brochures and update the organization's website to promote awareness of the services offered.

The American Legion National Headquarters Americanism Division of Indianapolis, Indiana, was awarded \$69,000 for their project, "The American Legion National Oratorical Contest – A Constitutional Speech Contest." This grant will provide scholarship money to participants in the national contest.

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, Gateway Chapter of St. Louis, Missouri, was awarded \$5,000 for their project, "Pediatric Patient Out Reach." This grant will provide booklets and hospital visitation kits for families with children diagnosed with leukemia and lymphoma.

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors of Arlington, Virginia, was awarded \$26,500 for their project, "Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors Children's Bereavement Guide." This grant will produce and disseminate bereavement guidebooks.

Young Marines of Washington, District of Columbia, was awarded \$90,000 for their project, "Young Marines Drug Demand Reduction." This grant will underwrite the purchase and dissemination of anti-drug literature and promotional items.

During calendar year 2013, donations exceeded \$691,927, with more than \$399,239 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 4, 2014, 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** **Mary Davis, Washington, Chairman**

"In fairy tales, the children are saved by caring adults. We need more caring adults in the lives of our children," Donna Shalala, former U.S. Secretary of Health & Human Services. As nurturers, we wrap our arms around our children to give them a warm, loving environment in which to grow into happy, productive adults.

All across America, Auxiliary members wrapped their arms around America's children by participating in a wide range of caring Children & Youth programs. Members of South Carolina Unit 191 adopted an elementary school in which 98 percent of the students live at or below poverty level. The unit provided school supplies and personal items for 530 children. In Florida, a unit coordinated with a local school to provide backpacks with school supplies and arranged for the health department to come in and administer necessary immunizations. They also provided free haircuts for the 700 students. South Dakota members filled bags with pens, pencils, notebooks, and a treat for children housed in a local domestic violence shelter.

Units in Iowa put together children's activity bags for several VA hospitals. The bags were given to children accompanying veteran family members to their VA medical appointments.

West Virginia filled "blessing bags" with coloring books and crayons, toothbrushes and toothpaste, and nutritious snacks which were prepared and provided to children in the homeless shelter. Raising children today is a true challenge. Drugs, violence, guns, depression, and bullying are just a few of the dangers children face. Units in Montana made anti-bullying cookies and donated to the "Streetlight" program in Arizona which is dedicated to helping prevent child trafficking. In Nebraska, a unit hosted a seminar on the dangers of talking to strangers with the state patrol and county sheriff as guest speakers. Vermont units made raffle baskets with proceeds going to teen suicide and alcohol prevention. Oregon Unit 110 provided gifts for 33 National Guard children. Washington Unit 53 partnered with two local military newspapers to take part in an outreach for military children whose parents were about to deploy, proving the perfect platform for the ALA program Kids of Deployed are Heroes 2 (KDH2). Each child received an "I'm a Hero 2" button to help them realize that we honor not only their deploying parent, but their sacrifices too. In New Mexico, military children spent one day experiencing firsthand the rigors their military parents experienced when preparing for deployment. Parents reported that this program helped their children understand what their parents go through. Members in Michigan purchased G.I. Josh dogs for children of deployed troops. Units nationwide provided backpacks and supplies for Operation: Military Kids.

While there isn't enough space to list all the great accomplishments of every unit, suffice it to say, as we finish out this year, we continue to "Pass It On" through our actions in support of our mission to protect and serve the youth of America.

**Community Service Committee**  
**Susan Britton, New York, Chairman**

The desire to “Pass It On” within the Community Service Committee has been tremendous this year. Community Service encompasses a wide range of activities, and our members have proven that we can walk, run, or even roll into action wherever our assistance is needed.

Both national objectives were met with dynamic results! Numerous departments and units hosted Walk, Run & Roll events, bringing new recognition to the American Legion Auxiliary name within those communities. Approximately \$58,000 was raised from these events to accomplish the goal of assisting our veterans.

We partnered with other community organizations to promote our mission as well as assisted with homeless and in-need families. These partnerships included Blue and Gold Star Mothers, first responder groups, fire departments, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, rescue missions, Habitat for Humanity, the USO and Toys for Tots. California Unit 598 purchased a motor home and placed it on a unit member’s property, taking a homeless veteran off the street and providing a safe place to live.

Members provided overwhelming support on national days of service with projects sparking community-wide interest. Special projects were initiated on Make A Difference Day, Veterans Day, September 11, Presidents’ Day, Memorial Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and Independence Day. One Iowa day of service project was Quilts of Valor, which included a weekend quilt retreat. Community beautification projects were reported as well, bringing recognition to the ALA as a proud community partner.

Departments and units embraced the opportunity to assist with job fairs. Hosting informational tables at Legion-sponsored and U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation-sponsored events promoted the ALA and offered the opportunity to provide economic security for veterans and military spouses through potential employment.

In addition, e-mentoring became popular as members created meaningful mentoring relationships with military spouses. Our life experiences and career expertise are worth passing on to those striving for success.

Following the landslide tragedy in Oso, Wash., several units and the Department of Washington stepped up and spearheaded food carts, housing, and fundraising efforts for those in need. The National Guard was deployed to assist, and The American Legion Family fed frontline rescue workers for weeks.

Stand downs for homeless veterans created opportunities to collect and distribute clothing as well as provide meals and various services for those in dire need. In Colorado, local elementary school students collected clothing and learned the importance of helping those who served our country.

Welcome-home and send-off events allowed us to recognize our troops and show appreciation for their service. The placing of flags, plants, and flowers at veterans and community cemeteries were reported, and Wreaths Across America continued to be a popular holiday project.

Our members have shown great pride and dedication by working together in their communities and demonstrated that we make the world a better place as we continue a Pass It On tradition.

**Constitution & Bylaws Committee**  
**Kathy Dungan, Mississippi, Chairman**

The American Legion Auxiliary’s Constitution, Bylaws and Standing Rules are vital to our existence as a nonprofit organization, ensuring effective governance. In an effort to strive for greater transparency and disclosure, the national delegation adopted an updated Constitution, Bylaws and Standing Rules at the 2013 National Convention.

One reason prompting the revision was a mandate by Congress to increase regulation and oversight of nonprofits. It was imperative for us to eliminate amending these documents every year. Overall, the documents were streamlined so that most of the “process,” “detail,” and “policy” type things were moved to the Standing Rules, providing more flexibility for the organization and keeping it updated without having to amend it every year.

This year, departments and units were challenged to update their Constitution, Bylaws and Standing Rules to conform to National’s governing documents. Department of Oklahoma Chairman Charlene Marshall summed up this year’s work by saying, “This has been one of the most challenging and exciting committees that I have worked on.” Was it exciting? Yes. Challenging? Definitely! But our members were up to the task and did an excellent job.

The Department of Delaware made updating its Constitution & Bylaws a No. 1 priority. They held teleconferences so members could call in to ask questions about the changes.

Usually, the Department of Georgia has only two or three members on its committee. This year, department officers plus a representative from each district served, guaranteeing representation and input from the entire membership.

The Department of Indiana had a very busy year. In addition to updating its department Constitution & Bylaws, members assisted units and districts in revising their governing documents. As a result, approximately 40 units updated their Constitution, Bylaws and Standing Rules.

The Department of Kentucky held workshops, generating interest from members on how to update and utilize their governing documents.

The Department of New Hampshire worked diligently with units and districts striving to have uniform Constitution & Bylaws. The importance of having a Code of Ethics was stressed.

Susan Lee, department chairman for Virginia, developed an Excel spreadsheet containing contact information for each unit and dates last amended of all unit Constitution & Bylaws on file. A flash drive will be passed on to Susan’s successor with this valuable information. Through correspondence, units were encouraged to update, or at least start, the process of updating their governing documents.

Members are encouraged to familiarize themselves with governing documents, which provide the foundation and structure necessary to govern our organization, setting out procedure, rules, policies, and protocol.

One member remarked, “Without a strong foundation, a house could develop cracks.” So true! Our organization has a strong foundation, and we must remain that way if we desire to carry out our mission for future generations.

### **Education Committee** **Diane Duscheck, Wisconsin, Chairman**

American Legion Auxiliary members focused their attention on educational and scholarship opportunities for military children and veterans, and broadened their scope to embrace all children in their communities. Federal cuts in education funding, high unemployment rates, and mounting student loans place a growing burden on the shoulders of both the students who wish to attain higher education and their parents.

The theme of American Education Week was “Great Public Schools: A Basic Right and Our Responsibility.” Entire school staffs were recognized for their part in making the school the best environment it could possibly be for children. Teachers, secretaries, janitors, and lunchroom cooks and dishwashers were shown sincere appreciation with notes, treats, and lunches. Mayors and village board presidents signed proclamations in recognition of American Education Week and the vital role schools play in our communities. Auxiliary members teamed with school staffs to enrich student learning

through literacy programs, volunteered in classrooms, and collected BoxTops For Education, soup labels and pop tabs. School supplies like pencils, rulers, paper, erasers, craft supplies, backpacks and tissues were provided through Give 10 To Education.

Scholarships were at the forefront of fundraising as Auxiliary members used many creative ideas to provide them. Funds were raised through plays, yard sales, dinners, and raffles. High school students, veterans, and children of servicemembers were steered toward appropriate scholarship applications. Word of scholarship opportunities was spread through personal contact, brochures, newspaper articles, and public service announcements on television. These monies have allowed many veterans and young adults to receive technical training and/or a college degree.

Many units assisted and supported veterans pursuing higher education and vocational education by collaborating with Student Veterans of America. Veterans attending college were introduced to The American Legion Family when post homes were opened as locations for Student Veterans of America meetings, special meals, off-campus events, and get-togethers with The American Legion Family.

School children gained respect and awe for the sacrifices of our military heroes via Veterans in the Classroom. Veterans were welcomed into classrooms for Veterans Day, Memorial Day, and additional school days to enlighten students on what a veteran is and to share some of their wartime experiences. Veterans were graciously greeted by students and were asked probing questions by curious school children. The shared experience was as gratifying for the veterans as it was for the school children who expressed thanks to the veterans for their sacrifices.

Throughout the promotion of educational activities, units involved their Public Relations Committee and the local media. American Education Week proclamations, advertisements for fundraisers, and photos of scholarship presentations and Veterans in the Classroom provided information to the public, showing how the American Legion Auxiliary passes on its generosity and promotes the betterment of the community.

### **Finance Committee** **Nicole Clapp, Iowa, Chairman**

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 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 ALA National organization is meeting nonprofit benchmarks and governmental mandates.

One member of the National Finance Committee is also designated to serve as liaison to the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Board, and another committee member is designated as liaison to the American Legion Auxiliary National Audit Committee.

The fiscal performance of the national organization for the 2013-2014 fiscal year has been positive. With sufficient revenue stemming from the dues increase adopted at the 2011 national convention that became effective with the 2013 membership year, plus the positive performance of our investments, we were able to enhance the Department Leadership National Conference by continuing to underwrite the costs for three department representatives to attend; maintain department visits by the national division vice presidents; and fund the national ALA Public Awareness campaign. The successful fundraising efforts by our direct mail vendor continued this fiscal year with three appeals



designated for the American Legion Auxiliary and one for the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation. Fiscal year donations as of May 31, 2014, totaled a net \$235,000, \$10,000 greater than the net guaranteed by the direct mail vendor. The analysis of 2013 direct mail donations indicated 212,000 gifts were received; of those gifts, half came from ALA members and half came from nonmembers. Therefore, just as many gifts came from donors outside the ALA, a tremendous source of external support for our organization!

In fiscal year 2014, the number of people applying for Auxiliary USAA Credit Cards continued to increase. As of May 2014, 4,130 Auxiliary USAA Credit Cards had been issued, and \$9.5M had been charged by Auxiliary USAA Credit Card cardholders. Based on the growth in the number of cards issued and cardholder usage, the Auxiliary USAA Credit Card Program royalty revenue shared with departments in fiscal year 2014 is expected to be \$12,500. Please consider obtaining an Auxiliary USAA Credit Card and charge (...responsibly, of course!).

Your National Finance Committee believes in the value and knowledge gained by members through ALA mission trainings. This past fall more than 250 members attended these training sessions. As a committee we support the future of such learning opportunities with the unveiling of department-specific trainings this fiscal year.

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**  
**Trish Ward, Kansas, Chairman**

It's a program like no other: one that creates passion for the political process, involves interactive participation, develops strong character and is life-changing for both members and the young women who attend – it's American Legion Auxiliary Girls State, and, as the song appropriately says, "The best state in the land."

Departments got creative and innovative when approaching the task of establishing mock governments and making them realistic for participants. Thanks to support at their state house, debates by the citizens in Rhode Island take place on the actual Senate or House floor and are recorded and shown on local public television. Visitors are able to walk by and witness citizens passionately debating their legislation. Indiana, Kentucky, and Louisiana have implemented electronic voting, mock trials are held in Arkansas and Montana, and speakers who range from a variety of different backgrounds and occupations are invited and engaged.

"Pass It On" and "Pay It Forward" are themes that resonated deeply with the American Legion Auxiliary Girls State department chairmen who developed and initiated projects to assist those less fortunate and the men and women who serve our country. Making service projects a primary component to the ALA Girls State experience, the teams chose a variety of organizations to support. The Department of Pennsylvania recognized the problem of veteran homelessness and provided food and supplies to "Vets Helping Vets," an organization that assists struggling and homeless veterans in the Philadelphia area. "Operation Warm Troops" is Illinois' way of saying "thanks" to the military by supplying socks, blankets, hats, and sweats to injured servicemembers while they are in transit. New Mexico packs school kits for children of the New Mexico State National Guard, and, in Mississippi, the local food pantry gets a healthy supply of canned goods to stock its shelves. VA hospitals across the country received messages of gratitude and comfort items, and, in Tennessee, the ALA Girls State chorus visits the Nashville Veterans Hospital and sings to patients. Whether it's supporting the local veterans domiciliary with phone cards in Alaska, or providing toiletries and support to the PIER Center at the Long Beach VA in California, the generosity of ALA Girls State citizens made life a little brighter for those in crisis or harm's way.

Many departments found time to weave a membership component into their activities and encourage young women eligible for Auxiliary membership to join and stay connected to the ALA Girls State experience. New members were engaged, the eUnit concept was actively embraced, and citizens were encouraged to consider membership and the American Legion Auxiliary as a relevant choice when seeking volunteer opportunities.

Changing lives in a positive way is a culture of conduct in the American Legion Auxiliary, and through the ALA Girls State Program, nearly 16,000 young women's lives are positively changed every year. Experiencing the political process coupled with a focus on citizenship, attention to America's core values, teaching the importance of patriotism and giving back in a volunteer spirit remain the program's fundamental mission and primary purpose. "Raise your voices, Raise them high, Sing to Girls State, and here's why – Look to ALA Girls State, and you'll find tomorrow's leaders of mankind."

**Junior Activities Committee  
Monique Batiste, Louisiana, Chairman**

Junior members of the American Legion Auxiliary are the future of our organization. We must engage, motivate, and encourage them to continue to work the Auxiliary's programs. Allow Juniors to come up with their own ideas and use their creativity to work those programs. Sometimes, we have to think outside the box or add a twist to the program to catch their attention.

This year, Junior members nationwide embraced the introduction of the "Mean Stinks" Anti-Bullying project. They made blue pinky promises, promoted the Junior Activities Program at their schools and in their communities by sharing the project with others, making them aware of the ongoing problem children have with bullies and how everyone can join together to bring awareness. By painting our pinkies blue this year, when asked why or what it represented, Junior and senior members could share our program and our mission. National President Nancy went to the White House with blue nail polish on and was asked about it. That was her opportunity to share just one of the many things our Junior members did this year along with all of the work they do for our veterans, their families, and within our communities.

Department of Delaware Juniors adopted the female veterans facility Home for the Brave and donated bedding and toys for the veterans' children this year. They also held a Christmas dinner and gave a gifts dinner in honor of veterans. Juniors from the Department of Florida worked 1,687 hours in different ALA programs. Unit 12 packed and distributed hygiene kits for homeless veterans, and Unit 142 prepared 15 holiday meals for military families. Unit 7 from the Department of South Carolina cut and sent coupons to our troops. Department of Tennessee Juniors donated 51 lap blankets to a local VAMC and made 196 cards and treat bags for veterans. Tennessee Juniors also recruited nine new Junior members! Thirty-two Junior members in the Department of California served 1,263 veterans and worked 1,702 volunteer hours. A Department of Oregon Junior worked and completed all objectives in the Plan of Action.

Our Junior members have been extremely busy this year serving veterans and working the Auxiliary's programs. We must continue to encourage them. Remind them that they are leaders. Help build confidence in them to continue to lead and be positive role models for other Junior members and youth in their communities.

I am very proud of every Junior member and all they have accomplished this year. Thank you to all unit and department Junior Activities chairmen for their dedication to this program. Good leaders make great leaders. It's because of you and your leadership that our Junior members will continue to pass along the spirit of Service Not Self.

**Leadership Committee**  
**Coral May Grout, Massachusetts, Chairman**

Leadership chairmen have worked throughout the year in their departments to provide programs and activities to build present and future leaders within our organization. Each department's program was different, yet most shared several areas in common.

Departments supported the online leadership courses for senior and Junior members. 1,360 senior members and 100 Junior members completed the courses. And, the national Leadership Committee developed additional online "courses," along with answer sheets in four areas: civility, parliamentary procedure, duties and responsibilities of officers, and protocol.

Many departments recognized that leadership includes "passing on" information. Some departments developed handbooks for chairmen to use and give to the incoming chairmen. Other departments worked with units and districts to encourage the development of notebooks or handbooks in the same format as those within departments. Several departments indicated that the new handbook distributed at the Department Leadership National Conference in Indianapolis in May would be helpful in developing officers and leaders.

The national organization and many departments initiated or continued training opportunities. The national organization sponsored three Mission Training events in the Eastern, Western, and Southern divisions. In addition, departments enthusiastically endorsed the initiative to hold department-specific training sessions, some in conjunction with The American Legion and Sons of The American Legion. Twelve departments held mini-workshops on specific topics. One department held a leadership rally which was attended by 54 members. Districts often offered training by using what officers had learned at their department trainings. In fact, 38 department chairmen reported that they held leadership development training in one format or another.

Mentoring new members and officers proved to be yet another way to prepare and inform members about the American Legion Auxiliary and its programs and operations. Thirty-one departments reported information on these activities. Sometimes, members or officers conducted the mentoring for new members or officers; at other times, mentoring was part of a workshop or handbook. Five departments reported that officers "pass on" leadership information, which is updated annually. What a wonderful way to provide information to develop future leaders.

Leadership is not a dry subject. Our members who attended various training sessions learned this firsthand. Team-building activities, communication activities, and information-sharing all took place in enjoyable ways. Some departments combined Leadership with other programs to expand information and support. Three departments worked to expand The American Legion Family through participation in both the American Legion Auxiliary online leadership course and The American Legion's online leadership course. Seventy-seven members completed both.

Fourteen department reports included comments regarding the resources available to departments and members at [www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org). These departments downloaded materials and shared. They also reported that information from the website was presented and shared at department conferences and meetings. Twenty-six departments included leadership information topics in newspapers in collaboration with The American Legion, department newsletters, memorandums, handouts, and online through department Auxiliary websites.

**Legislative Committee**  
**Melanie Taylor, California, Chairman**

The Legislative Committee year began immediately following the Washington DC Conference in February 2013. Auxiliary chairmen met with The American Legion and sat in on presentations and briefings made by Warrior Gateway, National Military Family Association, Blue Star Families, VA Volunteer Service Director, Veterans Crisis Line, Service Nation, The American Legion VA&R Commission and National Economics Commission.

Because the American Legion Auxiliary's Legislative Program mirrors that of The American Legion by supporting the Legion's priorities, The American Legion officials provided the listing and explanations of the Legislative Point Papers for the 113th Congress, which was shared with members nationwide in the February 2014 issue of Auxiliary magazine.

The American Legion Auxiliary was also invited to attend American Legion National Commander Daniel M. Dellinger's testimony before a joint session of the Senate and House of Representatives. The Congressional members were very supportive of Commander Dellinger's message and asked how they could help support veterans.

The Auxiliary revised the Legislative Advocacy Guide in September 2013, thereby helping our Auxiliary members to become competent and informed while advocating for veterans, military, and their families.

This year at the Washington DC Conference, the entire Legion Family met together to discuss The American Legion Legislative Priorities Sheet before heading to Capitol Hill to meet with their individual senators and representatives.

Again this year, we stressed the importance of establishing the Auxiliary's National Legislative Council. Departments were asked to submit names of Auxiliary members who had a personal relationship with their congressional leaders and who would make that call when time was of the essence and action was needed immediately.

The Pass It On National American Legion Auxiliary Legislative Facebook Group was created in August 2013. The administrator could accept members into the group and thereafter, and they could post files or photos. There were 385 members who joined the group. Posts were made up of articles suggested by The American Legion News Center, American Legion news releases, photos of members in legislative action, reports of legislation in the news related to veterans and military, American Legion Auxiliary news releases, and the monthly eNews and eBulletins from members of the Legislative Committee.

West Virginia reported that its Girls State director and two West Virginia Girls State senators worked with Congresswoman Capito and Sen. Manchin on a new bill that was passed at Girls Nation 2013. The bill "Educate Nurses: Heal Veterans Act" was designed to increase the number of psychiatric mental health practitioners to improve the quality of care provided to veterans, servicemembers, and their families.

The Department of New York reported it attended legislative breakfasts where state and local representatives were in attendance in order to advocate for veteran issues. Members also attended the Annual Hill Day in their state.

And California petitioned for Assembly Bill 639 to restructure existing funds which would help multifamily housing, specifically focusing on veterans who were homeless or at risk for homelessness.

American Legion Auxiliary members will continue to take action when called upon.

**Membership Committee**  
**Kathy Daudistel, Kentucky, Chairman**

The year started off with a huge challenge from President Nancy – Race to a Million members by 2019!

In addition to this challenge, it was announced that the main focus for the year would be on renewals! New members will always be important, but keeping our current members engaged and rejoining former members ensures the vitality of our organization. By working to improve our communication among current members, we enable ourselves to pass on the American Legion Auxiliary's legacy. Informed members are more likely to see the value and explain the impact of our organization to new members. Educated members are able to better educate new members.

At the Department Leadership National Conference in May 2013, attendees were asked to write three things that they have in common with each other and three things that make them different. These notes were placed on paper links and joined together to form a single paper chain. As the commonalities and differences were reviewed, the attendees began to realize that we really do have a lot in common regardless of differences. By joining together for one common purpose and working together as a team, we can make a difference.

J.W. Mathers Jr. Unit 163 of Melbourne, Fla., exemplified the teamwork attitude when they started Project Suds. President Ann King-Smith and fellow unit members helped collect and distribute coats to the homeless. Afterward, Ann started wondering how they would keep their coats clean. She began making phone calls and discovered there truly was a need and rallied her unit to fill that void. Together, they came up with the idea to help homeless veterans wash and dry their clothes in a friendly and safe environment. They meet at Flamingo Laundry in Melbourne every Tuesday with quarters, breakfast, and cleaning supplies. Many good things have come out of this endeavor. Together, The American Legion Family works to raise money and awareness for the project. The community assists with donations and fundraisers, and other communities are starting their own Project Suds. As an added bonus, Unit 163 has signed up 45 new members.

This is just one of the success stories; there are many more from all around the country.

Remember what Maya Angelou said: "People will forget what you said; people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Engage members, and they will stay! Together, we can and do make a significant difference. Together, we will win the RACE TO A MILLION.

**National Security Committee**  
**Marie Goede, Minnesota, Chairman**

"The future depends on what we do in the present." – Mahatma Gandhi

While troops are protecting our freedoms, the American Legion Auxiliary is taking care of our homefront. Units and departments from north to south and east to west participated in numerous ways in the National Security Program. Units assisted families while their servicemembers were deployed in several ways that include, but are not limited to, mailing Christmas cards, distributing Blue Star Banners, honoring POW/MIAs, providing training for the CERT program, and ensuring that the needs of military families were met.

A unit in Delaware adopted Tim, a wounded warrior at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. Recently, he was moved into an apartment, and the unit purchased a vacuum cleaner and microwave oven for him. The ROTC program is an integral part of a unit from Massachusetts. They provide a color guard at various events. This unit's members spend countless hours volunteering and sending 15,000 packages to our troops. New York had 2,200 members volunteer for various National Security activities. Collectively, they donated 17,599 hours of their time valued at \$383,484 and spent \$994,581 on goods, products, and postage, serving 3,918 people.

One of Ohio's goals was to promote awareness in the military. Illinois worked hard to ensure that their units had a successful year. They made plans for an annual patriotic conference.

One member of Ole Semling Unit in North Dakota donated her time and supplies to embroider 100 security blankets that were used as a fundraiser. Her needlework took about 50 hours. Bibles were also sent to chaplains from every branch of the military requesting them. In Minnesota, units participated in the Yellow Ribbon Program by providing meals for families in the area. Cookies were also delivered to families of deployed soldiers. One unit in Colorado continues to host a weekly group session for Vietnam veterans, complete with snacks and a listening ear. Their sessions provide a wonderful weekly refuge.

The Southern Division had 100 percent reporting. Several of these states reported projects or programs that were unusual or different. Georgia crocheted 525 lap blankets and made 242 cloth bags for veterans in wheelchairs. Texas reported a special project called Moms 2 B Baby Shower. The project was held for active-duty female soldiers or wives of active soldiers who were expecting.

Washington reported that one unit purchased tickets for wounded warriors to attend an AAA baseball game. Another unit helped organize and provide for the needs of the National Guard while they were working at the Oso mudslide. Their ability to pull together the community and military families is a real lesson in cooperation that we all try to emulate throughout the year.

The future looks bright for the American Legion Auxiliary National Security Program. Units demonstrated their allegiance and commitment to veterans and those currently deployed across the world. We continue to Pass It On for God and country.

**Past Presidents Parley Committee  
Peggy Thomas, Virginia, Chairman**

Past Presidents Parley members are dedicated women who made a commitment to the American Legion Auxiliary when they served as president of their unit, department, or the national organization. These women are continuing to go out of their comfort zones to share their knowledge with those following in their footsteps.

All phases of the Past Presidents Parley Plan of Action were supported throughout the 2013-2014 administrative year. Past presidents reconnected through the formation of several Parleys and by mentoring new members and leaders. Due to their mentoring, our organization's ideas, principles, values, and purpose were preserved for future generations. In reading these reports, it is evident these members accepted the challenge to "Pass It On" to their fellow Auxiliary members and to the community at large.

Past Presidents Parley members emphasized the need to help our female veterans, especially patients in VA hospitals. Some members just spent time with these hospitalized veterans so they would not feel alone or forgotten. These members reached out and touched the lives of veterans as they gifted and honored not only hospitalized veterans but active-duty servicewomen during social and other events.

At the 94th National Convention, one female servicemember from each branch of the Armed Forces will be given a special recognition. The Auxiliary's Salute to Servicewomen Award is our way of saying thank-you to these very special women.

Presenting the Unit Member of the Year Award is always an exciting part of this committee. These are members who have never served higher than unit president but have done an outstanding job in living Service Not Self. They work at their units, posts, and in their communities helping veterans and military families.

Many nursing scholarships were presented during this past administrative year. Parley members are very much aware of the needs facing young people and female veterans today as they are trying to enter schools that prepare them for a medical career. The nursing scholarship is provided to help alleviate the shortage of nurses and medical

personnel, both in the military and civilian arenas. The reports received reflect that many fundraisers were held to support these scholarships.

As no report is required for this committee, many departments did not report, and the actual monetary value of scholarships provided and direct aid to veterans is unknown. However, the departments reporting showed a great deal of money had been donated to both scholarships and veterans.

The opportunity to chair this committee and work with the Parley committee has been a rewarding experience. The dedication of these women never ceases to amaze me as they continue to serve through this wonderful patriotic organization. This committee urges all Parley members to continue to "Pass it On."

**Poppy Committee**  
**Brenda Collins, South Carolina, Chairman**

The Poppy Program is spreading across the United States thanks to the enthusiastic help of American Legion Auxiliary members. As this program grows, it will continue to make people everywhere understand the importance of that special red flower.

American Legion Auxiliary members have told the story of Moina Michael, "The Poppy Lady," during visits to schools and churches across the nation, heightening awareness of the Poppy Program and generating interest among our young people. All Americans need to be aware of the importance of honoring our servicemen and women, both fallen and alive.

The American Legion Auxiliary is working hard to create a widespread epidemic of "poppy fever." In many departments, school children in the second through 12th grades created poppy posters. Division winners will be posted at [www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org).

Little Miss Poppy and Miss Poppy candidates submitted scrapbooks of the projects in which they participated for the year; these projects included distributing poppies with their local units, placing poppies on headstones of deceased veterans, and visiting nursing homes to hand-deliver a poppy to each veteran.

Several departments reported that their ALA Girls State delegates wore poppy corsages made by Auxiliary members after learning about the history of the poppy and hearing the poem "In Flanders Field" by World War I veteran Col. John McCrae. Other departments held poppy wreath ceremonies and decorated bulletin boards with the names of veteran family members.

As a result of an amendment to Resolution 20 made by The American Legion National Executive Committee in May 2014, the American Legion Auxiliary is now able to help more veterans and military members and their families with medical and financial needs.

A local business donated \$10,000 to a Wisconsin American Legion Auxiliary unit to fund projects designed to help people remember and honor our veterans. A Midwest American Legion Auxiliary unit has given more than \$12,000 to four veterans who needed help and support. Hundreds of thousands of dollars and countless hours have been selflessly donated by American Legion Auxiliary members nationwide to support veterans and show gratitude for their contribution to our freedom.

Resolution 20 also allowed the American Legion Auxiliary to make poppies from materials other than crepe paper. American Legion Auxiliary members are very artistic and talented, and they have created many unique poppies. The Department of California has given us a red felt poppy, and South Carolina has created a crocheted poppy. Alaska had a Poppy Boot Project this year: Auxiliary members decorated combat boots, work boots and cowboy boots with poppies. They even baked a poppy boot cake!

Thank you, President Nancy, for appointing me Poppy chairman and allowing me to play such an active role in this year of great changes and growth for the American Legion Auxiliary's Poppy Program.

**Public Relations Committee**  
**Lisa Williamson, Alaska, Chairman**

The American Legion Auxiliary's visibility has grown this year, and many resources can share in that accomplishment. We began the administrative year with the national public awareness campaign's second phase. We continued to promote and add to the ALA's Public Relations Guide & Tips for Volunteer Recruitment, better known as the "PR Toolkit," and the ALA Branding Guide.

In smaller towns, the main media outlet is still local newspapers. Those smaller newspapers are usually very generous in publishing activities in which the ALA is involved. Units in Wyoming, New Jersey, and Maine are getting positive results in local newspaper publications.

To help provide concise information for submission to local newspapers, a host of news releases and letters to the editor are provided at [www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org), and we've received many positive responses about them.

Many departments are utilizing a spreadsheet to keep track of media contacts, as the PR Toolkit suggests, as well as nurturing the contacts and keeping the list updated.

A positive example of good media contacts occurred in Maine this year: CentralMaine.com staff writer Michael Shepard reported that Maine veterans find a creative outlet by attending the Maine Creative Arts Festival. His story focused on World War II veteran Leroy Peasley, who read two poems inspired by his service. In the first, Mr. Peasley recounted burying a fellow Marine at sea near Iwo Jima, the site of one of the bloodiest battles in WWII Pacific theater.

"I don't have that many more years, but to be able to come up and tell my story, I can thank the Auxiliary, these angels of mercy, because they've taken us veterans who had problems after our service and showed us that they care," Mr. Peasley said afterward.

Several departments reported that they have been able to garner attention with their local cable television and radio stations. Department of Maryland President Anselma Obremski reported on her 30-minute interview on a local cable program, Veterans Forum, where she provided information on the many ALA programs, including Membership, Girls State, and more.

A New Hampshire unit president has a standing monthly engagement with a local talk radio show where she promotes ALA events.

The American Legion Auxiliary 5-Year Centennial Plan has five goals, and one being "With The American Legion, Build Brand Loyalty." Public Relations is a critical element in obtaining this goal.

To build on the momentum this year and to aid in accomplishing the strategic plan, don't forget that the national website has a host of branded materials from flyer and newsletter templates to posters and banners, from brochures to donation can labels, from PowerPoint templates to how-to sheets on Facebook and Twitter use.

The Public Relations Program plays a huge part in everything we do to create awareness and visibility for the American Legion Auxiliary. By Passing It On, we let others know who we are, what we do, and why we matter.

**Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee**  
**Sharon Conatser, Illinois, Chairman**

Auxiliary members nationwide continued to "Pass It On" through their service to veterans.

A unit in Idaho developed a program called "New Direction," which helps homeless veterans take their first step to break free of that lifestyle and get back on track. They give them emergency food, shelter, and clothing according to their needs and connect them to agencies that help them with housing and make sure they are getting the benefits they qualify for. In Alaska, one unit member crocheted 2,000 hats for newborns and wounded



warriors at the military hospital. The San Diego VAMC added an ASPIRE Center, which provides on-site counseling for male and female veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan who suffer from PTSD. The center has 40 beds that can be occupied from 3-6 months. This facility is the first in the nation.

In Maine, 350 veterans and 124 veterans' children were given new footwear with the help of the New Balance Shoe. In Connecticut, four units worked together to purchase six sets of washers and dryers for veterans transitional housing. In New York, Unit 1041 held a benefit for homeless female veterans and supported the homeless veterans program in western New York.

South Dakota has The Barakah House, a facility for homeless veterans. Auxiliary members donate both money and household items, as well as furniture, kitchen utensils, and other items to help veterans set up their home once they leave the facility. Minnesota's stand down totaled more than \$5,000 in donations and served more than 800 veterans. One unit held two sewing bees this year for veterans. Items sewed included a heart pillow, neck pillow, laundry bags, tote bags, and wheelchair bags.

In Illinois, one unit held two benefits with the Walter Payton Foundation for homeless veterans. In Wisconsin, Camp American Legion is a place where veterans can go for recuperation and therapy. A full week is hosted for female veterans only, and their members responded strongly with support by raising money to help with food, therapy, and recreation for the veterans.

Star-Spangled Service, Southern Style is what members of the Southern Division offered throughout the year. Juniors continued to be involved with the "Homeless, Not Helpless" sleeping mats program. The mats are made from hundreds of plastic bags. The Department of North Carolina logged more than 9,000 hours to make certain that at least some homeless veterans would not have to sleep on the ground. In Florida, two wounded veterans were given parcels of land on which they could produce vegetables and raise animals. Units came together and purchased gift cards to purchase supplies for the new land. A blueberry farm was created so the veterans could take care of the crop, and the blueberries were sold to raise money for the project. This American Legion Family is showing the spirit of goodwill.

Units are continuing to support stand downs, welcome-home events, deployment events, Christmas Gift Shops, veterans resource fairs, and parties and bingos at the VAMC, as well as fishing trips, dinners in their post homes, and many other things that provide support for our No. 1 priority – our veterans!

The Veterans Creative Arts Festival continues to be an excellent platform of therapy for veterans and their families. Local Creative Arts Festivals were held across the country. This year, the mini-grants totaled \$7,700 and went to six departments. We asked departments to report back to us and tell us what made them most proud. "I was most proud to see the veterans respond to receiving certificates and medals," said one department representative. "They were very appreciative of the lunch. Most of all, they were appreciative of having an opportunity to showcase their talent."

Pass It On was heard throughout the nation as our members shared their time, talent, finances, and love with veterans in many, many ways. Use this opportunity to ask others to join you in service to our veterans as we demonstrate Service Not Self!





## Report of Independent Auditors



Crowe Horwath LLP  
Independent Member Crowe Horwath International

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, 2013 and 2012, 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, 2013 and 2012, 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

Indianapolis, Indiana  
May 1, 2014

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**The American Legion National Headquarters Consolidated  
Statements of Financial Position Dec. 31, 2013 and 2012**

	2013	2012
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,671,772	\$ 1,033,107
Accounts receivable	2,676,580	2,993,618
Interest receivable	658,669	612,903
Prepaid expenses and deposits	1,113,149	1,405,730
Deferred membership expense	4,243,253	8,800,894
Inventory	2,528,224	2,349,567
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	19,185	30,818
Beneficial interest in trust	255,127	285,278
	<u>13,165,959</u>	<u>17,511,915</u>
Investments		
General	16,672,525	18,904,098
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved Funds	29,994,122	31,488,276
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership fund	19,375,836	22,723,445
Samsung scholarship fund	8,155,301	8,649,457
Building funds	5,041,826	5,368,173
Sept. 11 Memorial scholarship fund	7,317,762	7,602,261
Special account – Endowment Fund	2,249,177	2,335,892
General account – Endowment Fund	6,991,793	7,139,303
National Emergency Fund	2,578,343	2,898,152
Other	4,940,809	3,073,599
	<u>103,317,494</u>	<u>110,182,656</u>
Property, plant and equipment, net	5,892,107	6,422,688
	<u>\$ 122,375,560</u>	<u>\$ 134,117,259</u>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Accounts payable	\$ 2,261,174	\$ 1,669,375
Scholarships payable	1,045,025	1,180,690
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	216,386	197,985
Deferred income	671,849	1,048,513
Deferred dues income	22,118,520	22,523,486
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	5,601,353	7,762,082
Accrued vacation benefits	1,038,409	1,087,919
Accrued pension expense	3,686,558	7,986,848
Other liabilities	718,132	526,569
Notes payable	1,394,749	1,459,498
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life membership	18,571,364	19,416,267
Life memberships due to state and local posts	18,709,473	19,548,842
	<u>76,032,992</u>	<u>84,408,074</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
Unrestricted	17,919,546	21,317,044
Temporarily restricted	15,774,508	15,618,259
Permanently restricted	12,648,514	12,773,882
Total net assets	<u>46,342,568</u>	<u>49,709,185</u>
	<u>\$ 122,375,560</u>	<u>\$ 134,117,259</u>

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

**The American Legion National Headquarters Consolidated  
Statement of Activities Year Ended Dec. 31, 2013**

	<u>Unrestricted</u>	<u>Temporarily Restricted</u>	<u>Permanently Restricted</u>	<u>Total</u>
<b>Revenue, gains and other support</b>				
National member dues	\$ 26,654,751	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 26,654,751
Direct membership solicitations	9,883,114	-	-	9,883,114
Member service fees income	888,211	-	-	888,211
Affinity income	3,183,472	-	-	3,183,472
Sales of emblem items	11,705,925	-	-	11,705,925
Advertising	10,745,474	-	-	10,745,474
Contributions	4,969,619	2,489,869	156,188	7,615,676
Label and printing fees	1,562,454	-	-	1,562,454
Interest and dividends, net of trustee fees of \$276,172	1,891,381	828,237	-	2,719,618
Net realized gains (losses)	140,048	(6,850)	(206)	132,992
Other	2,437,632	-	-	2,437,632
	<u>74,062,081</u>	<u>3,311,256</u>	<u>155,982</u>	<u>77,529,319</u>
Net assets released from restriction	1,548,723	(1,548,723)	-	-
Total revenues, gains, and other support	<u>75,610,804</u>	<u>1,762,533</u>	<u>155,982</u>	<u>77,529,319</u>
<b>Expenses</b>				
Salaries	15,589,187	-	-	15,589,187
Employee benefits	3,487,348	-	-	3,487,348
Cost of sales – Legion	6,252,946	-	-	6,252,946
Department and magazine costs	2,581,581	-	-	2,581,581
Direct publications	12,279,710	-	-	12,279,710
Executive and staff travel	3,238,110	-	-	3,238,110
Commission and committee	1,864,766	-	-	1,864,766
Printing and postage	8,228,511	-	-	8,228,511
Scholarships, grants and awards	2,681,906	-	-	2,681,906
Office and other operating	14,742,128	-	-	14,742,128
Occupancy and usage	2,136,461	-	-	2,136,461
Special projects and programs	1,702,425	-	-	1,702,425
	<u>74,785,079</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>74,785,079</u>
Change in net assets from operations	825,725	1,762,533	155,982	2,744,240
Net unrealized losses - investments	(4,798,832)	(1,606,284)	(281,350)	(6,686,466)
Net change in PUFL	(2,846,311)	-	-	(2,846,311)
Amortization of pension loss	(1,707,475)	-	-	(1,707,475)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	5,129,395	-	-	5,129,395
<b>Change in net assets</b>	<u>(3,397,498)</u>	<u>156,249</u>	<u>(125,368)</u>	<u>(3,366,617)</u>
Net assets, beginning of year	21,317,044	15,618,259	12,773,882	49,709,185
<b>Net assets, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 17,919,546</u>	<u>\$ 15,774,508</u>	<u>\$ 12,648,514</u>	<u>\$ 46,342,568</u>

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

**The American Legion National Headquarters**  
**Statement of Activities Year Ended Dec. 31, 2012**

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
<b>Revenue, gains and other support</b>				
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
	<u>73,024,245</u>	<u>2,704,321</u>	<u>118,960</u>	<u>75,847,526</u>
Net assets released from restriction	1,123,454	(1,123,454)	-	-
Total revenues, gains, and other support	<u>74,147,699</u>	<u>1,580,867</u>	<u>118,960</u>	<u>75,847,526</u>
<b>Expenses</b>				
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
	<u>73,291,491</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>73,291,491</u>
Change in net assets from operations	856,208	1,580,867	118,960	2,556,035
Net unrealized gains (losses) - investments	619,224	381,425	(8,511)	992,138
Net change in PUFLL	(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)
<b>Change in net assets</b>	<u>(6,340,096)</u>	<u>1,962,292</u>	<u>110,449</u>	<u>(4,267,355)</u>
Net assets, beginning of year	<u>27,657,140</u>	<u>13,655,967</u>	<u>12,663,433</u>	<u>53,976,540</u>
<b>Net assets, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 21,317,044</u>	<u>\$ 15,618,259</u>	<u>\$ 12,773,882</u>	<u>\$ 49,709,185</u>

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

**The American Legion National Headquarters Consolidated  
Statements of Cash Flows Years Ended Dec. 31, 2013 and 2012**

	<u>2013</u>	<u>2012</u>
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>		
Change in net assets	\$ (3,366,617)	\$ (4,267,355)
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash from operating activities		
Depreciation expense	925,255	1,042,774
Loss on disposal of property and equipment	840	6,095
Bad debt expense	1,166	-
Realized gain on sale of investments	(132,992)	(225,885)
Unrealized (gain) loss on investments	6,686,466	(992,138)
Net change in Paid-Up-For-Life annuity	2,846,311	2,154,663
Amortization of pension loss	1,707,475	1,209,526
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	(5,129,395)	4,451,339
Contributions restricted for long-term purposes	(156,188)	(56,529)
Accounts receivable	315,872	(699,633)
Interest receivable	(45,766)	(7,004)
Prepaid expenses and deposits	292,581	(168,081)
Deferred membership expense	4,557,641	(83,712)
Inventories	(178,657)	84,402
Beneficial interest in trust	30,151	31,620
Accounts and scholarships payable	456,134	(772,628)
Deferred income	(7,454,541)	(4,950,243)
Accrued pension expense	(878,370)	(977,815)
Other accrued liabilities	142,053	389,163
Net cash from operating activities	<u>619,419</u>	<u>(3,831,441)</u>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>		
Purchase of property and equipment	(395,514)	(1,299,686)
Purchase of investments	(57,085,066)	(100,791,360)
Sales and maturities of investments	57,396,754	104,271,418
Investments in affiliate (CFA)	11,633	8,347
Net cash from investing activities	<u>(72,193)</u>	<u>2,188,719</u>
<b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>		
Contributions restricted for long-term purposes	156,188	56,529
Repayment on notes payable	(1,459,498)	(218,869)
Proceeds on notes payable	1,394,749	-
Net cash from financing activities	<u>91,439</u>	<u>(162,340)</u>
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	638,665	(1,805,062)
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	<u>1,033,107</u>	<u>2,838,169</u>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents, end of year</b>	<b>\$ <u>1,671,772</u></b>	<b>\$ <u>1,033,107</u></b>
Supplemental cash flows information		
Interest paid	204,054	83,688

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

## The American Legion National Headquarters Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements Dec. 31 2013 and 2012

### 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."

Nearly 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 Boys Nation.

**Principles of Consolidation:** The consolidated financial statements include the accounts of The American Legion National Headquarters, The American Legion Charities ("ALC"), The American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation ("ALEF"), and the National Emergency Fund ("NEF") (collectively, "the Legion"). All material 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 revenue and releases from restrictions.

**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 were participating in the FDIC's transaction account guarantee program. Under this program non-interest bearing and certain low interest accounts were 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.

**Accounts Receivable and Allowance for Uncollectible Accounts:** The Legion bills members, posts, and departments for dues and bills agencies for advertising in the Legion magazine. Interest is not normally charged on receivables. Management establishes a reserve for losses on its accounts based on historic loss experience and current economic conditions. Losses are charged off to the reserve when management deems further collection efforts will not produce additional recoveries. Management estimated that no allowance was necessary for the years ended December 31, 2013 and 2012.

**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, 2013 and 2012.

**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 2013 and 2012, the Legion incurred no tax expense.

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.



## The American Legion National Headquarters Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements Dec. 31, 2013 and 2012

For the years ended December 31, 2013 and 2012, 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 2010. 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, 2013 and 2012.

**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, 2013, to determine the need for any adjustments or disclosures to the audited financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2013. Management has performed their analysis through May 1, 2014, 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 (\$11,633) and (\$8,347) in 2013 and 2012, 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 2013 and 2012.

### 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 2.38% discount rate in 2013 and a 2.64% discount rate in 2012, the present value of future benefits expected to be received by the ALEF is estimated to be \$255,127 and \$285,278 at December 31, 2013 and 2012, 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 and agency obligations, asset backed securities, corporate bonds, and state 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 16.

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)

**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, 2013 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	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 255,127
Money market accounts	14,917,708	-	-
U.S. Government obligations	-	47,095,058	-
State and municipal bonds	-	14,183,223	-
Corporate bonds	-	27,121,505	-
	<b>\$ 14,917,708</b>	<b>\$ 88,399,786</b>	<b>\$ 255,127</b>

	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	-
	<b>\$ 10,436,511</b>	<b>\$ 99,746,145</b>	<b>\$ 285,278</b>

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, 2013 and 2012:

Beneficial Interest in Trust	
Beginning balance, Jan. 1, 2013	\$ 285,278
Change in value of split-interest agreements	9,525
Distributions from trust	(39,676)
Ending balance, Dec. 31, 2013	\$ 255,127
Beneficial Interest in Trust	
Beginning balance, Jan. 1, 2012	\$ 316,898
Change in value of split-interest agreements	8,056
Distributions from trust	(39,676)
Ending balance, Dec. 31, 2012	\$ 285,278

#### NOTE 6 – PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT

The Legion's property and equipment, and the related accumulated depreciation at December 31, 2013 and 2012 are as follows:

	2013	2012
Washington, D.C., real estate		
Land	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000
Building	5,603,402	5,603,402
Indianapolis real estate		
Land	389,264	389,264
Building	3,999,495	3,879,173
Construction in progress	55,454	78,733
Furniture, fixtures and equipment		
National Headquarters, Indianapolis	6,853,277	6,824,830
Washington, D.C.	765,627	845,302
	17,746,519	17,700,704
Less accumulated depreciation	(11,854,412)	(11,278,016)
	\$ 5,892,107	\$ 6,422,688

Depreciation expense for the years ended, December 31, 2013 and 2012 was \$925,255 and \$1,042,774, respectively.

#### NOTE 7 – REVOLVING LINE OF CREDIT

The Legion has an unsecured line of credit agreement with a bank in the amount of \$5,000,000. Borrowings on the line accrue interest at an annual rate of 1.35% plus the 30-day London Inter Bank Offered Rate (LIBOR). During the year and at December 31, 2013 and 2012, there were no borrowings on the revolving line of credit. The line of credit expires in December 2014.

#### NOTE 8 – LONG-TERM DEBT

In 2012, the Legion had long-term debt on its facility for emblem sales, information technology, and member benefits. The debt required monthly principal and interest payments of \$25,213, had a stated interest rate of 5.3%, and a final due date of August 1, 2018. In 2013, the Legion refinanced its long-term debt. This debt is payable in monthly installments of \$15,200 plus interest, beginning January 1, 2014 with final payment due December 3, 2020. The stated interest rate is 1.35% plus the 30-day London Inter Bank Offered Rate (LIBOR). The outstanding balance on long-term debt is \$1,394,749 and \$1,459,498 as of December 31, 2013 and 2012.

The future maturities of the long-term debt are as follows:

2014	182,400
2015	187,200
2016	193,200
2017	199,200
2018	205,200
Thereafter	427,549
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,394,749</b>

Interest expense was \$204,054 and \$83,688 for the years ended December 31, 2013 and 2012, respectively.

As a strategy to mitigate exposure to the risk of interest rate fluctuations, the Legion entered into an interest rate swap agreement on the long-term debt on December 3, 2013. This interest rate swap has been designated as a derivative and provides for the Legion to receive interest from the counterparty at the 30-day LIBOR rate plus 1.35% and to pay interest to the counterparty at fixed rate of 2.98% on a notional amount of \$1,394,749 at December 31, 2013. The interest rate swap matures in 2020. Under the agreement, the Legion pays or receives the net interest amount monthly, with the monthly settlements included in interest expense. No interest was paid during 2013 as the first monthly settlement is due in January 2014.

#### NOTE 9 – LEASES

The Legion has several non-cancelable operating leases, primarily for facilities, computer equipment, and copiers that expire at various dates through the year 2017. Rent expense under these leases for the years ended December 31, 2013 and 2012 was \$425,074 and \$494,582, respectively.

Minimum lease commitments are as follows:

2014	462,473
2015	455,216
2016	413,097
2017	185,243
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,516,029</b>

In addition, the Legion has a lease with the State of Indiana for rental of the National Headquarters building in Indianapolis which expired on June 30, 2013. The Legion is operating on a month-to-month basis until a new lease agreement extending the lease term is finalized. 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 2013 and 2012 was \$943,173 and \$948,840 respectively. Insurance coverage is included in the Legion's general insurance policy.

#### NOTE 10 – 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.

## The American Legion National Headquarters Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements Dec. 31, 2013 and 2012

### NOTE 11 – 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 2013 and 2012.

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 12 – TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

Temporarily restricted net assets are donor-restricted for specific purposes.

At December 31, 2013 and 2012 the restricted purposes are as follows:

	2013	2012
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	\$1,010,583	\$1,049,265
Samsung scholarships	1,630,584	2,361,349
American Legacy fund	7,979,924	7,601,563
National Emergency Fund	3,073,134	3,352,924
Boy Scouts	467,899	467,899
Operation Comfort Warriors	1,192,864	582,126
Others	419,520	203,133
	<b>\$15,774,508</b>	<b>\$15,618,259</b>

### NOTE 13 – 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.

	2013	2012
Purpose restrictions accomplished		
Overseas graves decoration	\$32,945	\$56,851
Scholarships and grants (including relief aid)	909,462	694,017
Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation and Children & Youth programs	606,316	372,586
	<b>\$1,548,723</b>	<b>\$1,123,454</b>

### NOTE 14 – PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

Permanently restricted net assets represent donor-restricted gifts that have been invested and are to be maintained in perpetuity. Income from the Samsung scholarship fund is to be used to fund undergraduate scholarships for descendants 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, 2013 and 2012 the permanently restricted net assets are as follows:

	2013	2012
Samsung scholarships	\$ 5,000,000	\$ 5,000,000
American Legion Endowment Fund	7,648,514	7,773,882
	<b>\$12,648,514</b>	<b>\$ 12,773,882</b>

### NOTE 15 – 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) net 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, 2013:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Donor restricted endowment funds	\$ -	\$1,630,584	\$12,648,514	\$14,279,098

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	\$12,773,882	\$15,176,074

Changes in endowment net assets for the year ended December 31, 2013:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Net assets, beginning of year	\$ -	\$2,402,192	\$12,773,882	\$15,176,074
Investment loss				
Investment income, net of fees	-	463,117	-	463,117
Net depreciation (realized and unrealized)	-	(754,438)	(281,556)	(1,035,994)
Total investment loss	-	\$(291,321)	\$(281,556)	\$(572,877)
New gifts	-	-	156,188	156,188
Appropriation of endowment assets for expenditure	-	(480,287)	-	(480,287)
Net assets, end of year	\$ -	\$1,630,584	\$12,648,514	\$14,279,098

*Changes in endowment net assets for the year December 31, 2012:*

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Net assets, beginning of year	\$ -	\$2,101,778	\$12,663,433	\$14,765,211
Investment return				
Investment income, net of fees	-	488,481	-	488,481
Net appreciation (realized and unrealized)	-	266,075	53,920	319,995
<b>Total investment return</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$754,556</b>	<b>\$53,920</b>	<b>\$808,476</b>
New gifts	-	-	56,529	56,529
Appropriation of endowment assets for expenditure	-	(454,142)	-	(454,142)
<b>Net assets, end of year</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$2,402,192</b>	<b>\$12,773,882</b>	<b>\$15,176,074</b>

**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:** Realized and unrealized gains/losses are 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 16 – 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 \$396,495 and \$387,124 in 2013 and 2012, 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, 2013 and 2012:

	2013	2012
Benefit obligation	\$ (53,995,406)	\$ (56,386,015)
Fair value of plan assets	50,308,848	48,399,167
<b>Funded status</b>	<b>\$ (3,686,558)</b>	<b>\$ (7,986,848)</b>
Interest cost	\$ 2,282,923	\$ 2,602,150
Actual loss (return) on assets	(4,793,264)	(3,382,597)
Amortization of prior service costs	121,085	121,085
Amortization of loss	1,707,475	1,209,526
Difference between expected and actual return on assets	1,510,866	(318,453)
<b>Net periodic pension cost</b>	<b>\$ 829,105</b>	<b>\$ 231,711</b>
Net loss	\$ (5,008,310)	\$ 4,572,424
Prior service cost	(121,085)	(121,085)
<b>Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost</b>	<b>\$ (5,129,395)</b>	<b>\$ 4,451,399</b>
Prepaid benefit cost	\$ 13,450,928	\$ 14,280,033
Accumulated benefit obligation	53,995,406	56,386,015
Vested benefit obligation	53,992,693	56,233,191
Net periodic pension cost	829,105	231,711
<b>Benefits paid</b>	<b>2,883,583</b>	<b>2,796,599</b>
<b>Measurement date</b>	<b>12/31/2013</b>	<b>12/31/2012</b>

*Estimated future benefit payments:*

2014	3,284,556
2015	3,371,240
2016	3,457,848
2017	3,514,331
2018	3,544,446
2019-2023	17,363,092

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, 2013 and 2012 are as follows. See Note 5 for descriptions of inputs for each type of asset.

## The American Legion National Headquarters Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements Dec. 31, 2013 and 2012

	Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2013, 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	\$2,783,798	\$ -	\$ -
U.S. Government and agency obligations	-	10,702,087	-
Asset backed securities	-	4,617,555	-
Municipal bonds	-	1,433,701	-
Corporate bonds	-	10,992,195	-
Common stock			
Materials	755,089	-	-
Industrials	2,189,744	-	-
Consumer discretionary	2,562,238	-	-
Consumer staples	765,285	-	-
Energy	2,478,504	-	-
Health care	1,724,568	-	-
Financials	5,564,075	-	-
Telecommunication	223,824	-	-
Technology	3,133,789	-	-
Utilities	120,627	-	-
Other	67,904	-	-
Accrued interest	193,865	-	-
	\$22,563,310	\$27,745,538	\$ -

	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	1,811,728	-	-
Financials	3,337,489	-	-
Telecommunication	342,505	-	-
Technology	1,924,469	-	-
Utilities	515,346	-	-
Other	490,602	-	-
Accrued interest	220,767	-	-
	\$16,754,583	\$31,644,584	\$ -

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	2013	2012
Discount rate	4.45%	4.16%
Expected return on plan assets	7.00%	7.00%
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 \$1,245,308 and \$121,085, respectively.

### NOTE 17 – FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

The following represents a functional breakdown of the Legion's expenses by program and supporting services:

	2013	2012
<b>Program services</b>		
Veterans programs and services	\$35,043,406	\$34,357,211
Americanism, Children & Youth activities	4,804,864	4,469,397
	\$39,848,270	\$38,826,608
<b>Supporting services</b>		
Management and general	16,882,530	17,267,299
Member development	12,735,733	11,934,376
Fundraising	5,318,546	5,263,208
	\$34,936,809	\$34,464,883
	<b>\$74,785,079</b>	<b>\$73,291,491</b>

Member development includes direct response advertising expense of \$10,246,445 and \$8,794,493 for the years ended December 31, 2013 and 2012.

### NOTE 18 – 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 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 Dec. 31, 2013**

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Charities	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Eliminations	Total
<b>ASSETS</b>						
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,166,168	\$ 4,920	\$ 107,625	\$ 393,059	\$ -	\$ 1,671,772
Accounts receivable	2,776,054	-	1,333	80,569	(181,376)	2,676,580
Interest receivable	588,251	7,601	41,654	21,163	-	658,669
Prepaid expenses and deposits	1,111,344	-	1,805	-	-	1,113,149
Deferred membership expense	4,243,253	-	-	-	-	4,243,253
Due from American Legion Endowment Fund	2,000,000	-	-	-	(2,000,000)	-
Inventory	2,528,224	-	-	-	-	2,528,224
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	19,185	-	-	-	-	19,185
Beneficial interest in trust	-	-	255,127	-	-	255,127
	<u>14,432,479</u>	<u>12,521</u>	<u>407,544</u>	<u>494,791</u>	<u>(2,181,376)</u>	<u>13,165,959</u>
Investments						
General	16,672,525	-	-	-	-	16,672,525
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved funds	29,994,122	-	-	-	-	29,994,122
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership fund	19,375,836	-	-	-	-	19,375,836
Samsung scholarship fund	8,155,301	-	-	-	-	8,155,301
Building funds	5,041,826	-	-	-	-	5,041,826
Sept. 11 Memorial scholarship fund	7,317,762	-	-	-	-	7,317,762
Special account – Endowment Fund	-	-	2,249,177	-	-	2,249,177
General account – Endowment Fund	-	-	6,991,793	-	-	6,991,793
National Emergency Fund	-	-	-	2,578,343	-	2,578,343
Other	3,132,626	1,808,183	-	-	-	4,940,809
	<u>89,689,998</u>	<u>1,808,183</u>	<u>9,240,970</u>	<u>2,578,343</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>103,317,494</u>
Property, plant and equipment, net	5,892,107	-	-	-	-	5,892,107
	<u>\$ 110,014,584</u>	<u>\$ 1,820,704</u>	<u>\$ 9,648,514</u>	<u>\$ 3,073,134</u>	<u>\$ (2,181,376)</u>	<u>\$ 122,375,560</u>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>						
Accounts payable	\$ 2,298,406	\$ 144,144	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (181,376)	\$ 2,261,174
Scholarships payable	1,045,025	-	-	-	-	1,045,025
Accounts payable – Legion	-	-	2,000,000	-	(2,000,000)	-
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	216,386	-	-	-	-	216,386
Deferred income	671,849	-	-	-	-	671,849
Deferred dues income	22,118,520	-	-	-	-	22,118,520
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	5,601,353	-	-	-	-	5,601,353
Accrued vacation benefits	1,038,409	-	-	-	-	1,038,409
Accrued pension expense	3,686,558	-	-	-	-	3,686,558
Other liabilities	718,132	-	-	-	-	718,132
Notes payable	1,394,749	-	-	-	-	1,394,749
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life Membership	18,571,364	-	-	-	-	18,571,364
Life memberships due to state and local posts	18,709,473	-	-	-	-	18,709,473
	<u>76,070,224</u>	<u>144,144</u>	<u>2,000,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(2,181,376)</u>	<u>76,032,992</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>						
Unrestricted	17,435,900	483,646	-	-	-	17,919,546
Temporarily restricted	11,508,460	1,192,914	-	3,073,134	-	15,774,508
Permanently restricted	5,000,000	-	7,648,514	-	-	12,648,514
	<u>33,944,360</u>	<u>1,676,560</u>	<u>7,648,514</u>	<u>3,073,134</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>46,342,568</u>
Total net assets	<u>\$ 110,014,584</u>	<u>\$ 1,820,704</u>	<u>\$ 9,648,514</u>	<u>\$ 3,073,134</u>	<u>\$ (2,181,376)</u>	<u>\$ 122,375,560</u>

## Supplementary Information: The American Legion National Headquarters Consolidating Statement of Financial Position Dec. 31, 2012

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Charities	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Eliminations	Total
<b>ASSETS</b>						
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 625,190	\$ -	\$ 7,592	\$ 400,325	\$ -	\$ 1,033,107
Accounts receivable	2,993,818	28,800	1,005	38,608	(68,413)	2,993,818
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
	<u>18,747,034</u>	<u>28,914</u>	<u>349,607</u>	<u>454,773</u>	<u>(2,068,413)</u>	<u>17,511,915</u>
Investments	18,904,098	-	-	-	-	18,904,098
General	-	-	-	-	-	-
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved funds	31,488,276	-	-	-	-	31,488,276
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	2,970,834	102,765	-	-	-	3,073,599
	<u>97,706,544</u>	<u>102,765</u>	<u>9,475,195</u>	<u>2,898,152</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>110,182,656</u>
Property, plant and equipment, net	6,422,688	-	-	-	-	6,422,688
	<u>\$ 122,876,266</u>	<u>\$ 131,679</u>	<u>\$ 9,824,802</u>	<u>\$ 3,352,925</u>	<u>\$ (2,068,413)</u>	<u>\$ 134,117,259</u>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>						
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	526,569	-	-	-	-	526,569
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	19,548,842	-	-	-	-	19,548,842
	<u>84,476,486</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,000,000</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>(2,068,413)</u>	<u>84,408,074</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>						
Unrestricted	21,175,288	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	<u>38,399,780</u>	<u>131,679</u>	<u>7,824,802</u>	<u>3,352,924</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>49,709,185</u>
	<u>\$ 122,876,266</u>	<u>\$ 131,679</u>	<u>\$ 9,824,802</u>	<u>\$ 3,352,925</u>	<u>\$ (2,068,413)</u>	<u>\$ 134,117,259</u>

## Supplementary Information: The American Legion Headquarters Consolidating Statement of Activities Year Ended Dec 31, 2013

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Charities	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Eliminations	Total
<b>Revenue, gains and other support</b>						
National member dues	\$ 26,654,751	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-	\$ 26,654,751
Direct membership solicitation	9,883,114	-	-	-	-	9,883,114
Member service fees income	888,211	-	-	-	-	888,211
Affinity income	3,183,472	-	-	-	-	3,183,472
Sales of emblem items	11,705,925	-	-	-	-	11,705,925
Advertising	10,745,474	-	-	-	-	10,745,474
Contributions	5,631,965	1,336,622	234,154	471,317	(58,382)	7,615,676
Label and printing fees	1,562,454	-	-	-	-	1,562,454
Interest and dividends, net of fees	2,364,052	9,114	258,587	87,865	-	2,719,618
Net realized gains (losses)	134,575	-	(1,246)	(337)	-	132,992
American Legion Endowment	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fund income	137,755	-	-	-	(137,755)	-
Other	2,437,632	-	-	-	-	2,437,632
	<u>75,329,380</u>	<u>1,345,736</u>	<u>491,495</u>	<u>558,845</u>	<u>(196,137)</u>	<u>77,529,319</u>
<b>Expenses</b>						
Salaries	15,589,187	-	-	-	-	15,589,187
Employee benefits	3,487,348	-	-	-	-	3,487,348
Cost of sales - Legion	6,252,946	-	-	-	-	6,252,946
Department and magazine costs	2,581,581	-	-	-	-	2,581,581
Direct publications	12,279,710	-	-	-	-	12,279,710
Executive and staff travel	3,233,272	-	4,838	-	-	3,238,110
Commission and committee	1,864,766	-	-	-	-	1,864,766
Printing and postage	8,228,511	-	-	-	-	8,228,511
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,763,601	337,732	137,755	638,955	(196,137)	2,681,906
Office and other operating	14,587,432	158	153,751	787	-	14,742,128
Occupancy and usage	2,136,461	-	-	-	-	2,136,461
Special projects and programs	1,702,425	-	-	-	-	1,702,425
	<u>73,707,240</u>	<u>337,890</u>	<u>296,344</u>	<u>639,742</u>	<u>(196,137)</u>	<u>74,785,079</u>
Change in net assets from operations	1,622,140	1,007,846	195,151	(80,897)	-	2,744,240
Net unrealized losses - investments	(6,059,312)	(56,822)	(371,439)	(198,893)	-	(6,686,466)
Net change in PUFL	(2,846,311)	-	-	-	-	(2,846,311)
Amortization of pension loss	(1,707,475)	-	-	-	-	(1,707,475)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	5,129,395	-	-	-	-	5,129,395
Transfers	(593,857)	593,857	-	-	-	-
<b>Change in net assets</b>	(4,455,420)	1,544,881	(176,288)	(279,790)	-	(3,366,617)
Net assets, beginning of year	<u>38,399,780</u>	<u>131,679</u>	<u>7,824,802</u>	<u>3,352,924</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>49,709,185</u>
<b>Net assets, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 33,944,360</u>	<u>\$ 1,676,560</u>	<u>\$ 7,648,514</u>	<u>\$ 3,073,134</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 46,342,568</u>



**Supplementary Information: The American Legion  
Headquarters Consolidating Statement  
of Activities Year Ended Dec. 31, 2012**

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
<b>Revenue, gains and other support</b>				
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
	<u>73,024,245</u>	<u>2,704,321</u>	<u>118,960</u>	<u>75,847,526</u>
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
<b>Expenses</b>				
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
	<u>73,291,491</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>73,291,491</u>
Change in net assets from operations	856,208	1,580,867	118,960	2,556,035
Net unrealized gains (losses) - 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)
<b>Change in net assets</b>	(6,340,096)	1,962,292	110,449	(4,267,355)
Net assets, beginning of year	<u>27,657,140</u>	<u>13,655,967</u>	<u>12,663,433</u>	<u>53,976,540</u>
<b>Net assets, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 21,317,044</u>	<u>\$ 15,618,259</u>	<u>\$ 12,773,882</u>	<u>\$ 49,709,185</u>