

PROCEEDINGS OF THE
104th NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES

[SUMMARY OF MINUTES]



San Antonio, Texas ::: August 23 - August 29, 2003

PROCEEDINGS
of the
104th ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES
(SUMMARY OF MINUTES)

San Antonio, Texas

August 23-29, 2003



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NATIONAL ENCAMPMENTS OF VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS; PROCEEDINGS

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

[Approved October 2, 1968.]

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

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

Honorable Dennis Hastert,
The Speaker U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: In conformance with the provisions of Public Law No. 620, 90th Congress, approved October 22, 1968, I am transmitting to you herewith the proceedings of the 104th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in San Antonio, Texas August 23-29, 2003, which is submitted for printing as a House document.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John J. Senk, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

JOHN J. SENK, JR.
Adjutant General

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

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

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

* indicates deceased

American Veterans of Foreign Service

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

American Veterans of Foreign Service

(Eastern Branch)

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

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

Army of the Philippines

1900-1901	Gen. Francis V. Greene *	.....Elected at Denver, Colorado.
1901-1902	Gen. Irving Hale *	.....Elected at Salt Lake City, Utah.
1902-1903	Gen. Irvin Hale *	.....Elected at Council Bluffs, Iowa.
1903-1904	Gen. Charles King *	.....Elected at St. Paul, Minnesota.
1904-1905	Gen. Wilder S. Metcalf *	.....Elected at St. Louis, Missouri.
1905-1906	Col. Alfred S. Frost *	.....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1906-1907	Gen. Arthur MacArthur *	.....Elected at Des Moines, Iowa.
1907-1908	Capt. H.A. Crow *	.....Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.
1908-1909	Maj. P.J.H. Farrell *	.....Elected at Galesburg, Illinois.
1909-1910	Col. Charles L. Jewett *	.....Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
1910-1911	A.H. Anderson *	.....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1911-1912	F. Warner Karling *	.....Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1912-1913	F. Warner Karling *	.....Elected at Lincoln, Nebraska.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

1913-1914	Rice W. Means*	.Elected at Denver, Colorado.
1914-1915	Thomas Crago *	.Elected at Pittsburg, Pennsylvania.
1915-1916	Gus Hartung*	.Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1916-1917	Albert Rabin*	.Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1917-1918	William Ralston*	.Elected at New York, New York.
1918-1919	F. Warner Karling*	.Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1919-1920	F. Warner Karling*	.Elected at Providence, Rhode Island.
1920-1921	Robert G. Woodside*	.Elected at Washington, D.C.
1921-1922	Robert G. Woodside*	.Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1922-1923	Tillinghast Huston*	.Elected at Seattle, Washington.
1923-1924	Gen. Lloyd M. Brett*	.Elected at Norfolk, Virginia.
1924-1925	John H. Dunn*	.Elected at Atlantic City, New Jersey.
1925-1926	Fred Stover*	.Elected at Tulsa, Oklahoma.
1926-1927	Theodore Stitt*	.Elected at El Paso, Texas.
1927-1928	Frank T. Strayer*	.Elected at Providence, Rhode Island.
1928-1929	Eugene P. Carver*	.Elected at Indianapolis, Indiana.
1929-1930	Kezekiah N. Duff*	.Elected at St. Paul, Minnesota.
1930-1931	Paul C. Wolman*	.Elected at Baltimore, Maryland.
1931-1932	Darold D. DeCoe*	.Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.
1932-1933	Adm. Robert E. Coontz*	.Elected at Sacramento, California.
1933-1934	James E. Van Zandt*	.Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
1934-1935	James E. Van Zandt*	.Elected at Louisville, Kentucky.
1935-1936	James E. Van Zandt*	.Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1936-1937	Bernard W. Kearny*	.Elected at Denver, Colorado.
1937-1938	Scott P. Squyres*	.Elected at Buffalo, New York.
1938-1939	Eugene I. Van Antwerp*	.Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1939-1940	Otis N. Brown*	.Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.
1940-1941	Joseph C. Menendez*	.Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1941-1942	Max Singer*	.Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1942-1943	Robert T. Merrill*	.Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1943-1944	Carl S. Schoeninger*	.Elected at New York, New York.
1944-1945	Jean A. Brunner*	.Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1945-1946	Joseph M. Stack*	.Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1946-1947	Louis E. Starr*	.Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.
1947-1948	Ray H. Brannaman*	.Elected at Cleveland, Ohio.
1948-1949	Lyall T. Beggs *	.Elected at St. Louis, Missouri..
1949-1950	Clyde A. Lewis	.Elected at Miami, Florida.
1950-1951	Charles C. Ralls*	.Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1951-1952	Frank C. Hilton	.Elected at New York, New York.
1952-1953	James W. Cothran*	.Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1953-1954	Wayne E. Richards*	.Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
1954-1955	Merton B. Tice*	.Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1955-1956	Timothy J. Murphy*	.Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.
1956-1957	Cooper T. Holt	.Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1957-1958	Richard L. Roudebush*	.Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.
1958-1959	John W. Mahan	.Elected at New York, New York.
1959-1960	Louis G. Feldmann*	.Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1960-1961	T.C. Connell*	.Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1961-1962	Robert E. Hansen	.Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.

1962-1963	Byron B. Gentry*	Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1963-1964	Joseph J Lombardo*	Elected at Seattle, Washinton.
1964-1965	John A Jenkins*	Elected at Cleveland, Ohio.
1965-1966	Andy Borg*	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1966-1967	Leslie M. Fry*	Elected at New York, New York.
1967-1968	Joseph A. Scerra*	Elected at New Olreans, Louisiana.
1968-1969	Richard W. Homan	Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1969-1970	Raymond A. Gallagher*	Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1970-1971	Herbert R. Rainwater*	Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.
1971-1972	Joseph L. Vicites*	Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1972-1973	Patrick E. Carr*	Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1973-1974	Ray R. Soden	Elected at New Olreans, Louisiana.
1974-1975	John J. Stang	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1975-1976	Thomas C. Walker	Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1976-1977	R.D. Smith Jr.....	Elected at New York, New York.
1977-1978	Dr. John Wasyluk.....	Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1978-1979	Eric Sandstrom	Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1979-1980	Howard E. Vander Clute Jr.*	Elected at New Olreans, Louisiana.
1980-1981	T.C. Selman*	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1980-1981	Arthur Fellwock.....	Succeeded T.C. Selman, Oct. 21, 1980.
1980-1981	Arthur Fellwock.....	Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1982-1983	James R. Currieo.....	Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1983-1984	Clifford G. Olson Jr.....	Elected at New Olreans, Louisiana.
1984-1985	Billy Ray Cameron	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1985-1986	John S. Staum.....	Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1986-1987	Norman G. Staab	Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1987-1988	Earl L. Stock*	Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1988-1989	Larry W. Rivers.....	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1989-1990	Walter G. Hogan	Elected at Las Vegas, Nevada.
1990-1991	James L. Kimery*	Elected at Baltimore, Maryland.
1991-1992	Robert E. Wallace	Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1992-1993	John M. Carney	Elected at Indianapolis, Indiana.
1993-1994	George R. Cramer	Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1994-1995	Allen F. "Gunner" Kent.....	Elected at Las Vegas, Nevada.
1995-1996	Paul A. Spera	Elected at Phoenix, Arizona.
1996-1997	James E. Nier.....	Elected at Louisville, Kentucky.
1997-1998	John E. Moon.....	Elected at Salt Lake City, Utah.
1998-1999	Thomas A. Pouliot.....	Elected at San Antonio, Texas
1999-2000	John W. Smart	Elected at Kansas City, Missouri
2000-2001	John F. Gwizdak	Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin
2001-2002	James N. Goldsmith	Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin
2002-2003	Raymond C. Sisk	Elected at Nashville, Tennessee
2003-2004	Edward S. Banas, Sr.....	Elected at San Antonio, Texas

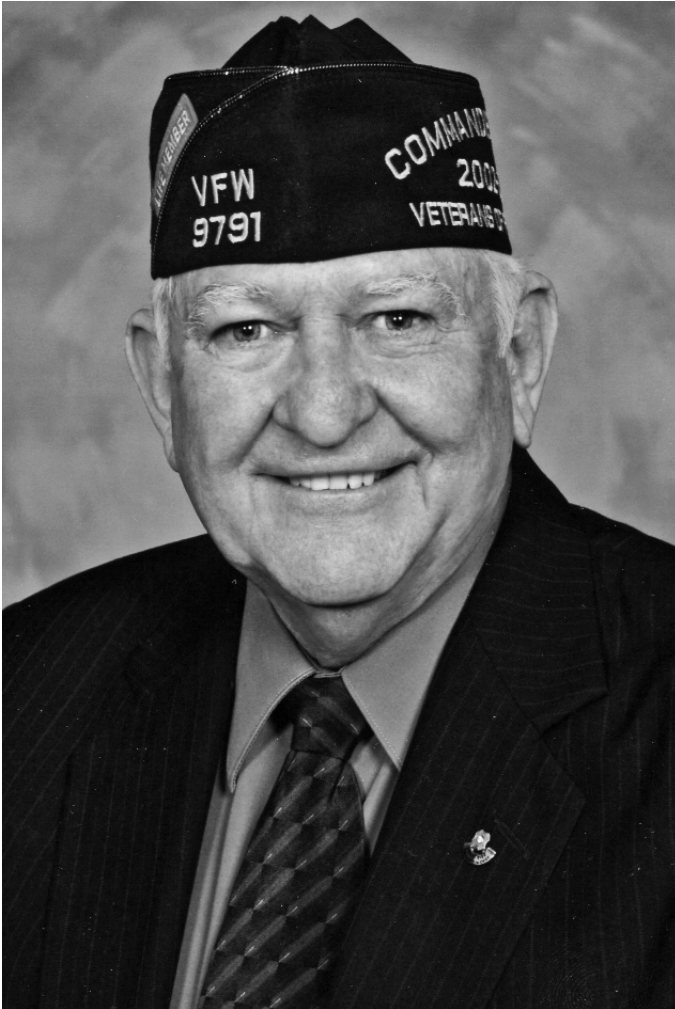
VFW NATIONAL OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS, 2002-2003

Commander-in-Chief	Raymond C. Sisk
Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief	Edward S. Banas, Sr.
Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief	John Furgess
Adjutant General	John J. Senk, Jr.
Quartermaster General	Joe L. Ridgley
Judge Advocate General	Donald Pierce
Surgeon General	Cornelio R. Hong, MD
National Chaplain	James D. Marrs, Sr.
National Chief of Staff	George C. Berthiaume
Inspector General	Darrell F. Bencken
Assistant Adjutant General, Deputy Executive Director, Washington Office	Robert E. Wallace
Assistant Adjutant General, Administration	Lawrence LeFebvre
Assistant Adjutant General, Membership	James R. Rowoldt
Assistant Adjutant General, Programs/Special Projects	Michael J. Gormalley
Assistant Adjutant General, Development	Ronald G. Browning
Assistant Quartermaster General	Lawrence M. Maher
Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General - Operations	Robert Crow
Director, Buddy Poppy & Member Services	Thomas L. Kissell
Director, Communications	Jerry Newberry
Director, Emblem & Supply Department	M.L. "Bud" Cale
Director, General Services	David L. Swindler
Director, Life Membership & Dues Processing	Robert A. Crider
Director, Military Assistance	Bud Haney
Director, Publications & Editor, VFW Magazine	Richard K. Kolb
Director/Chief Information Officer- Information Technology	Robert B. Greene
Director, VFW Properties	Billy R. Weissend
Director, Youth Development, Scholarship & Recognition	Gordon R. Thorson* Stephen Van Buskirk
Director, Administrative Services - Washington	Edward L. "Leo" Andrew
Director, Public Affairs - Washington	William G. Smith
Director, Employment Service	James N. Magill
Director, National Legislative Service	Dennis Cullinan
Director, National Security & Foreign Affairs	Robert Manhan
National Service Officer & Director, National Veterans Service	William Bradshaw
Manager, Information Technology	Alan F. Jones
Meeting & Events Coordinator	Vanessa Kane, CMP
Manager, Member Benefits	Kris Keller

*Retired

REGIONAL NATIONAL COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION MEMBERS,
2002-2003

DISTRICT 1	(ME NH)	Paul J. Chevalier
DISTRICT 2	(MA VT)	Samuel R. Haskins
DISTRICT 3	(MD, NJ)	Joseph F. Rosetta
DISTRICT 4	(DC DE EU)	Peter J. Mascetti, Jr.
DISTRICT 5	(IN MO)	Charles F. Thrower, Jr.
DISTRICT 6	(VA WV)	Paul T. Moore
DISTRICT 7	(TN KY)	Jeff A. Phillips
DISTRICT 8	(GA AL)	Richard Branson
DISTRICT 9	(SC NC)	William C. Cox
DISTRICT 10	(OK AR)	John Dilbeck
DISTRICT 11	(WI IA)	Robert C. Peters
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DISTRICT 19	(LA, MS)	Landry E. Saucier
DISTRICT 21	(MN NE)	Louie Mrozek
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DISTRICT F	(Michigan)	James A. Van Hauter
DISTRICT G	(California)	Steven D. Jacobs
DISTRICT H	(Texas)	Jimmie D. Cantrell
DISTRICT J	(Florida)	Richard J. Fitzgerald
Past Commander-in-Chief		James N. Goldsmith



Raymond C. Sisk
Commander-in-Chief
2002-2003



Edward S. Banas, Sr.
Commander-in-Chief
2003-2004

VFW NATIONAL OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS, 2003-2004

Commander-in-Chief	Edward S. Banas, Sr.
Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief	John Furgess
Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief	James R. Mueller
Adjutant General	John J. Senk, Jr.
Quartermaster General	Joe L. Ridgley
Judge Advocate General	Matthew M. "Fritz" Mihelcic
Surgeon General	C. O. "Doc" Bohlman, MD
National Chaplain	David B. Norris
National Chief of Staff	Frank A. Burchill
Inspector General	Joseph H. Gallant, Jr.
Assistant Adjutant General & Executive Director	
Washington Office	Robert E. Wallace
Assistant Adjutant General, Administration	Lawrence LeFebvre
Assistant Adjutant General, Development	Ronald G. Browning
Assistant Adjutant General, Programs/Special Projects	Michael J. Gormalley
Assistant Quartermaster General	Lawrence M. Maher
Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General-Operations	Robert W. Crow
Director/Chief Information Officer-Information Technology	Robert B. Greene
Director, Buddy Poppy & Member Services	Thomas L. Kissell
Director, Communications	Jerry L. Newberry
Director, Emblem & Supply Department	M.L. "Bud" Cale
Director, General Services	David L. Swindler
Director, Life Membership & Dues Processing	Robert A. Crider
Director, Membership	James R. Rowoldt
Director, Military Assistance	Buddy J. Haney
Director, Publications & Editor, VFW Magazine	Richard K. Kolb
Director, VFW Properties	Billy R. Weissend
Director, VFW Programs, Youth Development, Scholarship & Recognition	Stephen L. Van Buskirk
Director, Administration, Washington	Edward L. "Leo" Andrew
Director, Public Affairs, Washington	William G. Smith
Director, Employment Service	James N. Magill
Director, National Legislative Service	Dennis M. Cullinan
Director, National Security & Foreign Affairs	Robert D. Manhan
National Service Officer & Director, National Veterans Service	William L. Bradshaw
Manager, Information Technology	Alan F. Jones
Manager, National Convention & Meetings	Vanessa Kane, CMP

REGIONAL NATIONAL COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION MEMBERS,
2003-2004

DISTRICT 1	(ME, NH)	.....	Raymond R. Lupo
DISTRICT 2	(MA, VT)	.....	Samuel R. Haskins
DISTRICT 3	(MD, NJ)	.....	Charles A. Duffett, Jr.
DISTRICT 4	(DC, DE, EU)	.....	Peter J. Mascetti, Jr.
DISTRICT 5	(IN, MO)	.....	Roger E. Baker
DISTRICT 6	(VA, WV)	.....	Paul T. Moore
DISTRICT 7	(TN, KY)	.....	James E. O'Neill
DISTRICT 8	(GA, AL)	.....	*Richard Branson Ray E. Brooks
DISTRICT 9	(SC, NC)	.....	Lyn D. Dimery
DISTRICT 10	(OK, AR)	.....	*John Dilbeck Dean Derieg
DISTRICT 11	(WI, IA)	.....	Thomas J. Tradewell
DISTRICT 12	(SD, ND, WY)	.....	Larry L. Scudder
DISTRICT 13	(CO, KS)	.....	John R. Lewis
DISTRICT 14	(MT, WA, ID)	.....	Larry H. Longfellow
DISTRICT 15	(NM, AZ)	.....	John I. Halstead, Sr.
DISTRICT 16	(LAT AM/CAR, PAC, AK, HI)	.....	Frank S. Lamson
DISTRICT 17	(UT, NV, OR)	.....	Walter Lewis
DISTRICT 18	(CT, RI)	.....	Robert A. Stevens
DISTRICT 19	(LA, MS)	.....	Johnnie L. Richard
DISTRICT 21	(MN, NE)	.....	Gary C. Steckelberg
DISTRICT A	(Pennsylvania)	.....	Ronald G. Tyler, Sr.
DISTRICT B	(Illinois)	.....	William H. Regan
DISTRICT C	(New York)	.....	Anthony M. Ferrarese
DISTRICT D	(Ohio)	.....	Daniel N. Long
DISTRICT F	(Michigan)	.....	David S. Miller
DISTRICT G	(California)	.....	John L. Fitzke
DISTRICT H	(Texas)	.....	Jimmie D. Cantrell
DISTRICT J	(Florida)	.....	Harvey F. Eckhoff
Past Commander-in-Chief			.....Ray C. Sisk

*Deceased

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE 104TH NATIONAL
CONVENTION

OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

AUGUST 23-29, 2003

ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE
SUNDAY, AUGUST 24, 2003

(The Memorial Service of the 104th Annual Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center, San Antonio, Texas, was called to order at 8:30 o'clock a.m., with Commander-in-Chief Raymond C. Sisk, presiding. The Gold Star parents, Gold Star wives and Past National Chaplains were escorted by the Sergeants-at-Arms.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Sergeant-at-Arms, you will prepare the hall for the advancement and posting of the Colors.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BARRY HOFFMAN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. National Assistant Sergeants-at-Arms, Captain of the VFW National Honor Guard, prepare to advance, salute and post the American colors.

ADVANCE OF COLORS

(Whereupon, the VFW National Honor Guard advanced the Colors.)

INVOCATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: The Invocation this morning will be delivered by Deacon Amador Gonzalez, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and our National Anthem.

DEACON GONZALEZ: In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen. The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the holy spirit all be with you. Amen.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, welcome to our fair city. Today, I would like to pay tribute to all our compatriots from all of the branches of our armed forces, the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard and all the other parts of the services that are so secretive that we do not know that they exist, for all of those who have died, those who are dying, and those who will die in the defense of God and country so democracy and peace will prevail. We thank God and pray for them. So, now, let us bow for a moment of silence in their honor.

Let us pray. Almighty and eternal God, may your grace encompass all of us in love for the many unfortunate in poverty and misery, reduced to a condition of life unworthy human beings. Arouse in the hearts of all those that call you Father, a hunger and thirst for such justice and for fraternal charities in deeds and in truth.

Grant, O Lord, peace to our days, peace to our souls, peace to our families, peace to our country, and peace among nations. May the souls of our departed compatriots in arms rest in peace. We ask you to give them restful peace, O Lord, and thank you, Lord, for allowing all of us to gather for a safe and productive week.

I bless you all in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

(Whereupon, National Sergeant-at-Arms Hoffman led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Please be seated for the singing of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" by the Ladies Auxiliary Assistant National Soloist, Laura Sorey.

(Whereupon, Ladies Auxiliary National Assistant Soloist Laura Sorey sang "Battle Hymn of the Republic".)

MEMORIAL RITUAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Comrades, Ladies of the Auxiliary and Friends:

We have met at this time to commemorate our comrades of the United States Armed Forces who have answered the last call. The VFW Ritual provides that the audience shall refrain from applauding. The Chief of Staff will see there is no disturbance during the ceremonies.

NATIONAL CHIEF OF STAFF GEORGE BERTHIAUME: Commander-in-Chief, your order will be obeyed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I request that the National Chaplain preside over this service.

(National Chaplain James Marrs presided during the Memorial Service performed by the National Officers in accordance with the Ritual.)

(At the conclusion of the Memorial Service, Ladies Auxiliary National Assistant Soloist Laura Sorey sang "Sleep Soldier Boy.")

MEMORIAL ADDRESS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Our keynote speaker today is Colonel Edward K. Maney. He was a member of the 1975 graduating class of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. His military awards include the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal with Four Oak Leaf

Clusters, the Army Commendation Medal, and the Army Achievement Medal.

He served with distinction as the Command Chaplain of the 109th Theater Support Command in Tague, Korea, from June, 2000, to July, 2002. He was formerly the Military District of Washington Deputy Command Chaplain for two years, and Senior Army Chaplain at Arlington National Cemetery from 1996 to 1998.

Colonel Maney has been assigned as the Installation Chaplain of the U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Sam Houston, since July, 2002. At this time Colonel Edward K. Maney, United States Army.

COLONEL MANEY: First, giving honor to God, who is the head of my life and the power of all creation, to your beloved Commander-in-Chief and all distinguished guests and friends here today:

If you will allow me, I would like to read to you a portion from Psalms 91, David's Psalm 91, where it says, "He who dwells in the secret place of the most high shall abide under the shadow of almighty.

"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God in him I trust."

"Surely he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence.

"He shall cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you shall take refuge; his truth shall be your shield and buckler.

"You shall not be afraid of terror by night nor of the arrow that flies by day.

"Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noon day.

"A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you.

"Only with your eyes, you look and see the reward of the wicked.

"Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the most high, your dwelling place.

"No evil shall befall you, nor any plague come near your dwelling;

"For he shall give his angels charge over you, to keep you all your ways.

"In their hands, they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against the stone.

"You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent, you shall trample under foot.

"Because he has set his love upon me, therefore, I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known my name.

"He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.

"With long life I will satisfy him, and show him my salvation."

In God we trust. I would like to take a few minutes just to prod your thinking. We who are and have been soldiers, airmen, seamen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, who have served in uniform our country well, you have probably heard these words from the Psalms many times when we are in harm's way.

This is a book of scripture that I have often given to soldiers in my tenure as a chaplain, wherever we go, to remind them that it does not

matter how much you believe in God, but that God believes in you. We who serve and have served know that the best of our lives is in giving of ourselves, and we are reminded in this life that there is much to do as a soldier.

Our soldiers and armed forces are deployed worldwide right now in defense of freedom. There are many who say that we trust God. There are many who say that we sing the song

“God Bless America”, but I must remind you today that, yes, God has blessed us, but now America, it is time to bless God.

For in blessing God, it means that we acknowledge first and foremost his divine creative power in making us the nation that we are, where we find our strength in diversity and we find and relish in our history that we can overcome all of the obstacles of life.

It is by this strange commodity in humanity we call faith. Although theology may be in disagreement, we find that faith is one of those things that is inherent in every human being, and makes us who we are. For you see, when the beans and bullets run out for the soldier, he still has a weapon left, and it is called faith. And that faith makes a difference even in the worst case.

Just as Joshua Chamberlain on Little Round Top, when all of the munitions had been depleted and all of bravery had found its course, Colonel Chamberlain found one thing left in himself, inherent on that little hill, faith. With fixed bayonets, let's take on this enemy that will tend to destroy this nation.

I figure even after retirement, as I look forward to in four years, I will still be serving in some capacity, because the soldier in me tells me that there is an enemy yet unseen we must still contend with, an enemy of ignorance, an enemy of avarice greed, an enemy of distrust that we must take on even now.

There is no excuse. We cannot use age, we cannot use our economic status, we must use our faith to hold our country together. For if we do not do that now, then the soldiers, the sailors, the airmen and Marines that defend freedom and who have defended freedom have fought in vain.

There are many things on the horizon that tell us in my world where I call myself a spiritual warfare specialist that, in fact, there are things that are not flesh and blood that we wrestle with, that we contest with, that if we do not pay attention enough that they will come into fruition of our physical world and manifest themselves in such an evil way.

There is no institution on this side of heaven and without the touch of evil. Even our churches are mean and women of faith have brushed shoulders with the forces of darkness. But yet instill in our soldiers who are ingrained with a sense of commitment believing in the Constitution of the United States and believing in the faith imbued for them and believing in you who believe in them, still fight on.

No matter what the media may say about what the Pentagon is saying and the single leadership is saying, the bottom line is we can rest assured and stay on the battlefield because we trust that faith will win in the end. Faith in the almighty God, faith in the eternal but, nonetheless, this faith shall prevail.

Yes, America, you can still say you trust God. Be a blessing to him

in every way. Show him that you are still able to serve on a different battlefield. Serve in your communities, serve in your schools, serve in your church but, nonetheless, be the valiant soldier, sailor, airmen, Marine and Coast Guardsmen that made you who you are today, imbued with values that have made a difference for all in this land.

God bless you and God keep you, and may God ever reign as the supreme being of this universe, watching over us in his tender love. Amen.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much, Colonel. Please stand for the Benediction by Deacon Santiago Rodriguez.

BENEDICTION

DEACON SANTIAGO RODRIGUEZ: Heavenly Father, we thank you for bringing us together this morning, the day of the Lord, from different parts of the world, different parts of the United States. Come with our different cultures, different traditions to honor the 104th Annual Memorial Service of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

We remember all those veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice for our great country so we might remain a free nation. Today, we say thank you to them. They may be gone, but they will never be forgotten. Heavenly Father, we honor all those living veterans who continue the work of those who have gone before us. We thank also the Ladies Auxiliary for their hard work and dedication. We thank all those who made this memorial possible.

Heavenly God, we ask your blessings upon this great nation. We pray all this in your name. Amen.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Let's be seated for a special presentation, and then we will do the taps.

(Whereupon, a "Tribute to Soldiers" was presented at this time.)

RETIRING OF COLORS

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Please be seated until our Gold Star mothers are escorted from the room.

We would certainly like to give a special thank you to those who participated in our presentation today, the World War II veterans who actually served in the branches of service that they represented this morning. They are wearing uniforms from that era.

The Iraqi freedom veterans have all recently returned from Iraq and we pay a special tribute to them and we want to give thanks to the Silent Sixteen, the National VFW Champion Color Guard from Connecticut, for once again assisting us in our special presentation.

I hope you have enjoyed the Memorial Service.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 9:30 a.m.)

JOINT OPENING SESSION
MONDAY, AUGUST 25, 2003

(The Joint Opening Session of the 104th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the 90th National Convention of the Ladies Auxiliary, was called to order on Monday, August 25, 2003, at 8:00 a.m., in the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center, San Antonio, Texas, by Adjutant General John Senk.)

DEDICATION OF CONVENTION

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am John Senk, Adjutant General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Welcome to San Antonio.

At this time we would like to dedicate the 2003 VFW National Convention to those who made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom and to those who even now continue to battle terrorism around the world.

Joining us this morning are the Commanders and Auxiliary Presidents of the 2002-2003 Outstanding Community Service Posts. Won't you all please stand as a group and be recognized. Thank you for your hard work. (Applause)

This year 190 Commanders have earned the right to be called All American. Commanders, please stand and be recognized. Let's show them all our appreciation for a job well done. (Applause)

It is now time to officially open the 104th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Please welcome Past Commander-in-Chief and this year's National Convention Chairman, from the great state of Texas, James E. Nier. (Applause)

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Thanks, everyone. Good morning. I, too, would like to welcome you to the great state of Texas and San Antonio.

On behalf of myself and all who are working so diligently to make this convention a great success, I welcome you. We sincerely hope the time you spend with us will renew your pride in our nation, rededicate your commitment to America's veterans and bring new excitement to your work as a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary.

Please rise as we officially open this 104th National Convention with the advancing of the colors. National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will prepare the room to advance the colors.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BARRY HOFFMAN: Yes, sir.

ADVANCEMENT OF COLORS

(Whereupon, the National Honor Guard advanced the Colors at this time, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.)

INVOCATION

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: For this morning's Invocation, we have the National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the

United States, James D. Marrs, from South Dakota.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN JAMES MARRS: Be with us, O Lord, as we gather for this 104th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. May your wisdom and counsel guide us as we seek to develop and authorize programs to benefit all the veterans and the citizens of this great nation.

We thank you, our God, for your continued blessings to our peoples throughout this land. We thank you for the pioneers who opened the way, and for those who laid the foundations of our national life.

Grant that we may ever dedicate ourselves to the unfinished work they so nobly advanced, and give increased devotion to the cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion: That government of the people, by the people and for the people, shall not perish from the earth. With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for all who need our care, and to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

Teach us to think wisely and carefully before we speak, to act with courage and conviction for the good of all, and to deal charitably with one another that we may all continue to enjoy mutual respect. So may we serve you in spirit and truth, in your blessed name we pray. Amen.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Please remain standing as we all recite the Pledge of Allegiance and join together in the singing of the National Anthem and the posting of the Colors.

(Whereupon, the assembly gave the Pledge of Allegiance followed by singing the National Anthem.)

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will now post the colors.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BARRY HOFFMAN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, your order has been obeyed.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Thank you. You may be seated, please. The house lights will now dim for a special presentation.

VIDEO PRESENTATION

(Whereupon, a video presentation on Commander-in-Chief's year was presented at this time.)

INTRODUCTION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Thank you. I now have the pleasure to introduce a man who has dedicated much of his last 26 years to veterans and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He was elected VFW's Commander-in-Chief at the organization's 103rd National Convention in Nashville, Tennessee, August 30, 2002. He is the fourth Californian to hold this office.

Born in Marshall, Arkansas, he served in the United States Navy

from May, 1958, to May, 1961. He received the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for duty in the Taiwan Straits and of the coast of Vietnam. He also received the Republic of China 823rd Bombardment of Quemoy and Matsu Medal and Republic of China U.S. National Defense Badge. He joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars in 1975 at Post 97 in Bakersfield, and has held almost every office at the Post, District and Department levels, achieving All American Post Commander in 1988-89, and All American Department Commander in 1993-94.

He was elected to the VFW's National Council of Administration representing District G for a two-year term, 1995-1997. His National Committee appointments included the Americanism Committee, By-Laws and Ritual Committee, National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, POW-MIA Committee, and two years on the Budget Committee. He has served as National Chairman of the Hospital Committee and Vice Chairman of the National Security and Foreign Affairs, Hospital and the Veterans Employment and Training Committees. He has also served four years as National Coordinator for the National Veterans Golden Age Games.

He started his own trucking company in 1984, retiring in January of 1999. Under his leadership, that company was honored as VFW's "Outstanding Employer of the Year" in Category II in California.

He was appointed Chairman of the California Veterans Memorial Commission by Governor Pete Wilson and was named "Veteran of the Year" by the California Veterans Board in 1997.

He is a member of the American Legion, the Amvets, the Military Order of the Cootie and several other civic and fraternal organizations. He is currently a Life Member of VFW Post No. 9791 in Frazier Park, California.

Comrades, sisters, ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming a great veterans's advocate and the Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Ray Sisk, from the great State of California. (Applause)

Chief, here is your gavel and here is your bell, and I will put that down here. It is all yours, sir.

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE RICK PERRY, GOVERNOR OF TEXAS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much, Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Nier, from the great State of Texas.

At this time joining us today is the 47th Governor of Texas, the Honorable Rick Perry. A fifth-generation Texan, Governor Perry hails from Paint Creek, located on the high plains of West Texas.

He is the son of a World War II veteran, a former member of the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets and a veteran of the United States Air Force, having flown C-130 Tactical Aircraft around the globe from 1972 to 1977.

Please join me in welcoming the Governor of Texas, the Honorable Rick Perry.

GREETINGS - THE HONORABLE RICK PERRY, GOVERNOR OF TEXAS

GOVERNOR PERRY: Howdy, and good morning to you. Commander-in-Chief Sisk, thank you for your introduction, and to

Chairman Nier, thank you, sir, for being here with us, and all of you Veterans of Foreign Wars. You know, as a former Air Force pilot and a son of a World War II tail gunner, I want to tell you how proud I am to be standing here before you today, but also to welcome you to one of the great cities in the United States, San Antonio.

The people of Texas are honored by your presence. I will share with you in this state we have got a special love for our military men and women. Our major military installations, 17 of them, and we are mighty proud of each and every one of those installations.

But more importantly, we are proud of every one of those soldiers, sailors, airmen, whether they are current or former, who have offered their life and limb in the services to this country. Every one of you, we consider to be heroes. We will never forget what you did to keep America free, to rid the world of injustice, to bring renewed hope to millions of oppressed people.

In seeing each veteran in this room today, I am mindful of the heroes who could not be here, those who have made their last stand for freedom on foreign soil, on the high seas, in the skies above embattled nations, those are the heroes who never made it home.

May we remember them always. Not just on Memorial Day or on Veterans Day, but every day that we remember the freedoms that we have in this country. For those of you veterans who are with us today, a grateful nation remains indebted to you.

The veterans who offered their lives in service, who bear the scars of duty should always, always have a special place in our society. This nation must always honor its healthcare, its financial obligations to its veterans. In Texas, this last year we authorized half a billion dollars in bonds for veterans' housing loans and veterans' cemeteries, and we have taken another small step to repay our gratitude, allowing World War II veterans who left high school early for war to finally receive that high school diploma they so richly deserve.

We are honored today to have the Veterans of Foreign Wars in San Antonio. You are in our prayers as are those men and women who today serve us in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, off the coast of Liberia. May God protect them and always bless the land of the free and the home of the brave, and continue to bless this great country of America. Thank you for coming here and enjoy your stay in San Antonio. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF AMERICAN FLAG SET

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: It is now my pleasure to introduce Glenda Daniels, the Ladies Auxiliary National Patriotic Instructor, presenting a flag set to Governor Perry.

LADIES AUXILIARY NATIONAL PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTOR

DANIELS: It is a pleasure for the Ladies Auxiliary of the Veterans of Foreign Wars to proudly present to Honorable Rick Perry, Governor of the great State of Texas, this American flag to display in his office.

GOVERNOR PERRY: Thank you.

PRESENTATION OF VFW GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT AND CITATION
TO BETTY MORRIS, NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE LADIES AUXILIARY

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

Betty Morris was elected to the Auxiliary's highest office at the 89th National Convention in Nashville, Tennessee, on Friday, August 30, 2002.

Known as a "people lover," Betty built up the mentoring program, promoted broader participation in junior girls units, and initiated several new membership benefits and awards during her term of office. She also encouraged members to raise \$3 million for the Auxiliary Cancer Aid and Research Program for the 15th consecutive year. (Applause)

In her acceptance speech, she introduced her theme "Together Everyone Achieves Magic for our Veterans." Since its beginning in 1914, the Ladies Auxiliary has worked to assist veterans. Today the organization is also involved in various other endeavors, such as sponsoring scholarships and awards for students; donating goods and services to help the victims of violence, terrorism and natural disasters; and conducting a special birthday celebration on October 28 for the Statue of Liberty.

Betty is currently a life member of Darlington-Dublin Memorial Auxiliary No. 10146 in Darlington, Maryland.

She has an outstanding record of service to the Auxiliary on all levels of the organization having held numerous appointed and elected positions within the Ladies Auxiliary.

I am pleased to have had the chance to work with her this past year as she served as the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary. It has been an experience both of us will always remember.

For her service to the Auxiliary and to all veterans, we honor her today. Please welcome, from the great State of Maryland, a terrific lady and the recipient of the VFW Gold Medal of Merit, the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, my friend, my number one lady, Mrs. Betty Morris. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL JOHN SENK: The citation being presented by the Commander-in-Chief reads:

"Gold Medal of Merit and this Citation awarded to Betty Morris, in special recognition of her untiring dedication to our country and in sincere appreciation for her exhilarating leadership as evidenced by the exceptional contributions of the Ladies Auxiliary to the purposes and programs of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Her spirit of harmony epitomized her theme that 'Together Everyone Achieves Magic for Veterans.'

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the Official Seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 25th day of August, 2003." This has been signed by Ray Sisk, Commander-in-Chief, and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General.

RESPONSE - LADIES AUXILIARY NATIONAL PRESIDENT BETTY MORRIS

LADIES AUXILIARY NATIONAL PRESIDENT MORRIS: If anyone had told me that I was going to be nervous, I would say, "You don't know

what you are talking about. I am never nervous." Right now there are butterflies going around, but it is okay. My sisters understand. Comrades, I want you to, also.

Commander-in-Chief Sisk, National VFW Auxiliary Officers, Comrades, Sisters and Guests: Thank you for this very special award.

I am deeply honored and proud to have served as National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, particularly with such a dedicated Commander-in-Chief as Ray Sisk.

Our convention marks the end of the 89th year that the Ladies Auxiliary has partnered with the VFW and it was another year when we were called upon to do what we do best. I am proud to say that the Ladies Auxiliary donated \$804,800 to Operation Uplink. That is so our active duty military can call home.

I am proud to say that through our e-mail update we have been making each other aware of our members who have loved ones in Iraq and overseas so that we can show them our support. I am particularly proud of this next effort. A week ago we received a letter from a soldier in Iraq.

She had read the material given to her when she got an Operation Uplink card. She wondered if we could send supplies for the female soldiers. The Ladies Auxiliary's National Headquarters sent a few boxes, and I want to share her thank-you letter with you.

"The VFW families are angels that assist us in a time of need. It is good to know that there are people who care about our soldiers fighting the battle of freedom. At times, it seems like nobody cares and we are treated like nobody's children. We have a lot to deal with.

"For instance, no running water for showers, no flushing toilets, scorpions, campbell spiders and so forth. It is hard to stay motivated when you are unable to get basic items needed when families and friends who promised to support you before you deployed failed to do so.

"Please send what you can and we will appreciate it, especially the catalogues to order school clothes for our children who have been relocated because of our deployment. Thanks again and God bless you."

Comrades and sisters, I know that you will help us show our support for those brave soldiers. We are collecting items or donations all week until noon on Thursday in the Auxiliary National Headquarters' office. The general public has been invited to join us in this effort and, therefore, there will be a large container by the entrance to the Exhibit Hall.

Everything collected will be sent back to Kansas City on the truck and shipped overseas. I want to thank you in advance for your donations and for all that you do each year to help America's active duty military.

Commander-in-Chief Ray, I wish you and all the members of the VFW a very enjoyable convention, and I am sure that it will be a great one. God bless you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION TO THE 103RD NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much, Madam President. It is now my distinct pleasure to present a Certificate of

Appreciation to the 103rd National Convention Committee for their work in planning and conducting last year's National Convention, which was a heck of a good one.

Here to accept the award on behalf of the Committee is Cooper T. Holt, Past Commander-in-Chief and the Convention Committee Chairman for the 103rd Convention. Cooper T.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation reads: "Certificate of Appreciation presented to the 103rd National Convention Committee in sincere appreciation and grateful recognition of their dedicated and tireless efforts to insure the success of the 103rd National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States held in Nashville, Tennessee, August 24 - August 30, 2002." It has been signed by the Commander-in-Chief and the Adjutant General.

REMARKS - PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HOLT

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HOLT: Thank you ever so much, Commander-in-Chief Ray Sisk. I want you to know that I accept this beautiful citation on behalf of the entire membership of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Ladies Auxiliary in the Volunteer State of Tennessee.

First, I wish to express my appreciation to Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Goldsmith for selecting me as Chairman of the 103rd National Convention. Secondly, I wish to thank and to recognize the various chairmen of our National Convention Committee.

Outside of myself, Past State Commander John Scott served as Chairman Registration. State Adjutant Quartermaster Ronnie Davis served as Secretary- Treasurer, and he was the Chairman of our outstanding golf tournament held last year. William "Bill" McNary, Chairman of the Memorial Service. Past State Commander Jim O'Neill, Chairman of our Patriotic Rally. Carl Minnick was Chairman of the meeting halls, the signs and the flags that you saw all over that Opryland.

State Commander Tom Jackson was Chairman of the Contest and Military Activities. The next fellow had absolutely nothing to do at the convention last year, so we decided to make him our Transportation Committee, and I speak of our National Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Furgess. John Furgess did a good job. Jack Burns was chairman of the medical activities.

Commander-in-Chief, these individuals performed their duties during the 103rd National Convention far above and beyond the call of duty. In addition, these Committee Chairmen were responsible for recruiting more than 200 volunteers who truly made our 103rd Nashville Convention the tremendous success that all in attendance confirmed was the most successful ever.

I shall always be grateful to these volunteers for their efforts, for their love of our organization, and I am sure you agree with my assumption. Commander-in-Chief, I can assure all delegates at this convention that this certificate will be placed in a prominent spot in the offices at our state headquarters as a token of appreciation for all the hard work that the membership of our VFW and our wonderful Ladies Auxiliary did during that convention.

Because of the success of our national convention held in Opryland, in Nashville, Tennessee, I know that some day soon a future convention will welcome you with open arms. By the way, I speak of Opryland. If you will recall, when we left that convention last year, there were four unaccounted delegates that we just couldn't find anywhere.

Now, the hotel tells me, or the Opryland people tell me that they still are unaccounted for but they are still looking. (Laughter) So, again, Commander-in-Chief, thank you. May God continue to bless our VFW and continue to bless this beloved nation of ours. Thank you very much. (Applause)

GREETINGS - HONORABLE GEORGE W. BUSH

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: We now have a special video greeting from George W. Bush, President of the United States.

(Whereupon, the video presentation was presented as follows:)

"President Bush: Thank you all very much. I am honored at the invitation. I appreciate so very much the chance to address the 104th VFW National Convention. More than 2.6 million VFW members serve America's veterans at about 9,500 VFW Posts worldwide, and each year you provide more than 13 million hours of volunteerism to your country.

"America is grateful to each of you for your service in uniform and for your continuing service in your communities. Nearly two years ago, terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. Since then our nation has relied on the men and women of our military to confront great challenges.

"In the battle of Afghanistan, we destroyed the Taliban, many terrorists, and the camps where they trained. In Iraq, we removed a tyrant, cut off a source of terrorists' funding, and made certain that no terrorists network will gain weapons of mass destruction from the Iraq regime, because that regime is no more.

"In Afghanistan and Iraq, more than 50 million people, who once lived under tyranny, now live in freedom. The United States and our allies will complete our mission in Iraq and we will complete our mission in Afghanistan. We will keep our word to the peoples of those two nations.

"We will wage the war on terror against every enemy that plots against our forces and our people. I will never assume the restraint and good will of dangerous enemies when the lives of American citizens are at risk. As the men and women of our military respond to the threats of a new era, they deserve the very best equipment, training and support. We have increased the defense budget to ensure that our military has the resources to carry out its mission, and since I took office we have also dramatically increased the budget for veterans' health-care and have proposed even greater increases for 2004.

"Under the leadership of Tony Principi of Veterans Affairs, we are working every day to improve the level of service to our veterans. America owes a debt of gratitude to those who have worn our nation's uniform, and my admiration is determined to keep faith with those who have kept us free.

"America is a great nation, because it is filled with good people, just like all of you. I want to thank you for your service, thank you for your sacrifice, and may God bless you all and may God continue to bless

America.”

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: We are waiting on the Honorable Mayor of San Antonio. Will all the Vietnam veterans in this room and their families please rise. (Applause) I want everyone in this room standing to know that last year at our National Convention we honored the 40th anniversary of Vietnam with a full memorial service to Vietnam.

This year was the 50th anniversary of the Korean War. You know, as time goes by our staff tries to honor each war, but I feel like yesterday was rather a slap to myself and to the Vietnam veterans. To each one of you in this room, my heartfelt apology goes from me and the staff to you if your feelings have been hurt on this.

God only knows that we all know that Vietnam was just as big and an important war, if there is such a thing as an important war, as any of the rest of them. So, please, take our apologies because we mean it sincerely. Thank you very much.

INTRODUCTION OF GENERAL TENG, TSU-LIN, CHAIRMAN OF VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION, REPUBLIC OF CHINA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: At this time it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce one of our dignitaries. You know, one of the things that makes the Veterans of Foreign Wars unique is our close relationship with other veterans organizations around the world. Perhaps none of these relationships is warmer than our relationship with the Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China.

The Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China has been successful in creating employment and development programs that have provided immeasurable benefits to the military veterans of that nation. For more than 20 years, the VFW is proud to have been a part of encouraging those programs.

We are pleased to reaffirm our pledge of brotherhood and comradeship with this outstanding group this morning.

Please join me in welcoming the Chairman of the Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China, General Teng, Tsu-lin. General.

REMARKS BY GENERAL TENG, TSU-LIN

GENERAL TENG, TSU-LIN: Good morning. Commander-in- Chief Sisk, National President Morris, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I feel greatly honored to be invited to attend your 2003 National Convention held here in the great city of San Antonio. The President of my country, Mr. Chen, Shui-bian, and our Premier, Mr. Yu, Shyi-kun have asked me to extend this warm greeting and good wishes to you.

I understand that VFW and my organization, the Veterans Affairs Commission, or VAC of the Republic of China have been associated with each other for over 40 years.

For many years, we have exchanged visits and learned from each other's experiences in serving veterans. I am really happy that my very first overseas visit in my capacity as the VAC chairman is visiting VAC's first

brotherhood organization, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the most senior veterans organization of the United States.

Veterans gave the best part of their lives to defend the freedom, peace and security of their country. After retirement, they deserve a decent treatment and respectful support from their governments, as well as their fellow countrymen.

War is never our love, but when we have no choice but to face it in order to defend freedom and peace, we must serve our country and destroy the enemy. From the Spanish War, through World War I and II, Korean War, Vietnam War, up to Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom, you have upheld your pledge of duty, honor and country. You have defended your beloved country and saved the world from tyranny, a record that your children and children's children will be proud of.

Thanks to the efforts of VFW, the proud veterans of foreign wars are organized and work together for the dignity and benefits of their fellow veterans. We have so much to learn from your organization, experience and expertise. Above all, your accomplishments and spirits inspire us in our efforts to serve our own veterans. For this gift of inspiration I salute you and wish you a most successful annual convention. Thank you. (Applause)

MR. HONS SANG: Good morning again. To show our appreciation as well as respect for all the efforts that your Commander-in-Chief Ray Sisk has done in promotion of the friendship and cooperation between the VFW and the Republic of China, we have on behalf of the President of my country, Chen Shui-bian, to present him with an award of the Medal of Cloud and Banner. I take the pleasure to read the citation.

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

"In appreciation of his meritorious assistance, Commander-in-Chief Raymond D. Sisk is presented the Medal of Cloud and Banner with cravat by the Government of the Republic of China, in accordance with Article 11 of the Armed Forces Decoration Regulations." This has been signed by President Chen, Shui-bian, Mr. Yu, Shyi-kun, the Premier, and General Tang, Yao-ming, Minister of National Defense.

The medal is presented by General Teng, Tsu-lin, Minister of the VAC of China. (Applause) And to take Ronald Reagan's words, "You ain't seen nothing yet," the Minister has also brought with him a plaque to show the appreciation from the organization of the Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China. Here is the inscription of the plaque.

"Presented to Mr. Raymond C. Sisk, Commander-in-Chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In appreciation of his outstanding contributions to the enhancement of friendship and cooperation between Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China." This has been signed by General Teng, Tsu-lin, Minister of the Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China, on this date of August 25, in the year 2003. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you so much. General, thank you so very much for those gifts. You know, as I was receiving those it went through my mind that day before yesterday, 45 years ago, I was in

the sea around Quemoy and Matsu when the bombardment of the 823rd hit. I was a proud sailor aboard the USS Midway, the general quarters throttleman for number two engine room, and it was certainly our pleasure to have helped the Republic of China in their time of crisis.

INTRODUCTION OF CHANCEN FLICK, 2003 VOICE OF DEMOCRACY WINNER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: At this time I would like to introduce a young man that I am very, very proud of. You know, over the past 56 years, the Voice of Democracy contest has enabled high school students from across the country and overseas to think, write and speak for freedom and democracy.

These students compete for more than \$143,500 in national scholarships, not to mention the more than \$2.5 million in awards and scholarships given by Posts, Districts, Departments and their respective Ladies Auxiliaries.

These VFW scholarships enable many young Americans to continue their education in colleges and universities of their choice.

We are pleased to have with us today the 2003 First Place National Winner in the Voice of Democracy contest. He was a senior at Hammon Public School, in Hammon, Oklahoma, and was sponsored by VFW Post 3669 and Ladies Auxiliary in Elk City, Oklahoma, when he entered the contest.

Here to present his award-winning essay, "Freedom's Obligation," the 2003 First Place National Voice of Democracy winner and recipient of the \$25,000 T. C. Selman Memorial Scholarship, Chancen Flick, from Oklahoma. Chancen. (Applause)

PRESENTATION BY 2003 NATIONAL VOICE OF DEMOCRACY WINNER, CHANCEN FLICK

MR. FLICK: As John D. Rockefeller once said, "Every right implies a responsibility. Every opportunity, an obligation. Every possession, a duty."

Never before in the history of our nation have we as Americans had a greater responsibility, obligation, or duty to our country. American citizens owe a debt that can never be repaid. We must never forget about those brave men and women who put their life on the line, so that we could remain free.

What is freedom's obligation? When I started to prepare this speech, I thought I knew the answer to that paradoxical question - duty, honor, country. The old proud and the free, rah, rah, rah rhetoric. I know all the standard answers, probably better than most, because I love patriotism. But something was missing. I wanted more than just another pep talk. I wanted reality.

Who did I know that had paid freedom's price? I decided I would research those who had already been killed. As I spoke to veterans and their families, I found the painful reality I had been seeking. I had a lady look me in the eyes and say with fervor, "We are lucky to live in America!" This from a woman who lived the first four years of her married life waiting for a

husband to come home from World War II — this from a mother whose son died in Vietnam. It does not get more real than that.

Strangely enough, my perspective changed but my answer did not. In fact, I found that obligations to freedom are the same as they have been since our country was founded—duty, courage, honor, love of family, country, and responsibility to oneself.

I decided to focus on the highest debt that men and women are asked to pay, duty. Bear in mind that I am aware that not all of freedom's obligations are about war and fighting for our country. In fact, one of the major obligations that we owe is to maintain peace.

However, we do not live in a perfect world and conflicts will develop. Whether we believe a war is morally "just" has nothing to do with our own duties and abilities. As Stonewall Jackson once said, "Duty is ours, consequences are God's."

Many of the veterans I talked to were from the Vietnam era and most were a little hesitant to talk at first. I think that they still mistrust the American public who did not exactly give them a warm welcome home. These veterans had, for the most part, been young draftees, but they went willingly to serve their country, just as their fathers and brothers had done before. They ranged from desk clerks who never saw combat to foot soldiers who still carry small souvenirs of shrapnel that daily remind them of times and places they would rather forget.

But no matter what their part in that conflict, they all believed that they were fighting to keep all countries free from Communist oppression.

Lieutenant General Harold Moore and Joseph Galloway describe the sacrifice in their book, *We Were Soldiers, Once and Young*. "We were John F. Kennedy's young stalwarts. We told the world that Americans would 'pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship' in the defense of freedom. We were the down payment on that costly contract, but the man who signed it was not there when we fulfilled his promise.

John F. Kennedy waited for us on a hill in Arlington National Cemetery, and in time we came by the thousands to fill those slopes with our white marble markers and to ask on the murmur of the wind if that was truly the future he had envisioned for us."

I read and reread the book *The Passing of the Night* by Oklahoman Robert Risner, who was a POW for seven years. When I think of the implications of that powerful message, it still takes my breath away. For in the oppressed silence of nights, blacker than the imagination can even conceive, one courageous message ran strong and clear, freedom.

In the fear, squalor and tyranny of the Vietnam prison camps, tap code communication was the only trace left of the freedoms that our forefathers had promised. I would never have the nerve to ask a POW, "What is freedom's obligation?"

History and heroes have always fascinated me, and one of the facts that I have learned from history is that even though I am only 18, I walk among heroes. Do not let the clothes, haircuts and music of my generation fool you.

Ronald Reagan once said, "Freedom is a fragile thing and is never more than one generation away from extinction." Ours is not that generation! Do not be misled by our casual indifference — we are paying

attention.

Right now ours is a small world, filled with our own self-importance and arrogance, but when and if the time comes, we can and we will pay the debts that we accumulate. We will fight oppression on foreign battlefields and we will combat poverty, injustice and prejudice at home. We are Americans and we know freedom's obligation, because those who have gone before us have set a fine precedence. Send us the bill and we will pay promptly!!! Thank you.

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: What an outstanding young man. Something that is not in this script is something I am very pleased and proud of. I had the opportunity to be at Oklahoma's mid-winter when I first heard Chancen make this speech. I got up and talked about Operation Uplink at the banquet and this young man went to Elk City Wal-Mart and spent almost all of his money that he won in sending phone cards to our troops. Can you beat that. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF REAR ADMIRAL ANTHONY DYMCK
FOR PRESENTATION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF'S SPECIAL AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Together, British and American forces have endured the pain of battle, fought together as a single spirit, as well as shared and benefited as partners during peacetime.

We have shared a long-lasting and mutual friendship, and together our two nations have formed a bond that can't ever be broken. Through two world wars and again as allies in the war against terrorism, America has had no better friend than the United Kingdom.

In recognition of courage and valor displayed by forces of the United Kingdom in Iraq and in deep appreciation for the mutual assistance and cooperation of British military forces during the past and present centuries, the Veterans of Foreign Wars is pleased to present the VFW Commander-in-Chief Special Award to the United Kingdom Ministry of Defense.

Here to accept the award is Rear Admiral Anthony Dymock. Admiral.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The award being presented reads: "Commander-in-Chief's Special Award.

"The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is proud to recognize the invaluable role of the British military service in Iraq as part of the 'coalition of the willing.'

"Joint military operations of British and American forces in time of war have been the bulwark of our respective nations. In 1916 American forces served as part of a 'Coalition of the Willing' to end World War I. Again, in 1941 we joined Britain, already at war for two years, to end World War II. Today our countries again have joined military forces in a new form of warfare, the war on terrorism.

"Today the VFW formally recognizes and salutes the leadership and courage displayed in Iraq by the military forces of the United Kingdom in

their area of operation. While military operations are often ambiguous, uncertain and dangerous, the British forces exhibited the utmost professionalism in successfully completing their difficult mission, the hallmark traits of a well-trained, disciplined and dedicated force.

“The mutual cooperation and assistance that British and American military forces have shared for most of the past century contributed greatly to the rapid accomplishment of liberating the citizens of Iraq.

“On behalf of the 2.6 million members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary, we extend our thanks and continuing friendship for your role and determination to ensure certain common values of democracy and decency will be retained in this new century.”

RESPONSE - REAR ADMIRAL ANTHONY DYMCK

REAR ADMIRAL DYMCK: Commander-in-Chief, Distinguished Members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, on behalf of my Prime Minister, Tony Blair, the Secretary of State for Defense, Geoffrey Hoon, and all the members of the United Kingdom Armed Forces, may I start by thanking you for your invitation here today and for the very great honor that you have bestowed upon the United Kingdom in the presentation of the Commander-in-Chief's Special Award.

It is with an enormous pleasure and gratitude that I accept this award. It certainly is not lost upon me, that I believe this is the first time that the Veterans of Foreign Wars have presented such an award to an organization outside the United States. It goes without saying that we are extremely touched and immensely proud to be honored in this way, and particularly by an organization as distinguished as the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

A few weeks ago I was privileged to be present on the floor of the House in the United States Capitol when Mr. Blair addressed the Joint Session of Congress. In his speech then, Mr. Blair said, “The real heroes are those brave servicemen and women, yours and ours, who fought the war and who risk their lives still in support of values which are not just those of the United Kingdom or the United States, but universal human values.”

On behalf of all those people who took part in Operation Iraqi Freedom, on behalf of their families and the families of the men who lost their lives in the campaign to rid the world of a despotic tyrant and a cruel regime, and in pursuit of freedom, thank you.

There can be no doubt that the world is a much better place without Saddam Hussein and his regime, but our work there is not yet finished. There remains much to be done in the rebuilding of Iraq, and as I speak now British and American servicemen are working alongside each other and risk their lives day by day as they strive to bring structure and normality to a once proud country that has had to endure long years of oppression and brutality.

This work now is just as vital as winning the war. It is a critical building block in the creation of lasting stability and peace in the Middle East. Two years ago following the terrible events of 11 September, Tony Blair announced that Britain stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the United States.

Today, as then, Great Britain is proud to stand shoulder to

shoulder alongside our friend and ally. The alliance and the friendship is hardly new. Over the last century, our countries have shared common goals and fought together in two World Wars, in Korea and Iraq in 1991, and most recently in Afghanistan.

Today, although the forces of Great Britain are somewhat smaller than those of the United States, we are about a tenth of your size, but I think quite well formed, nonetheless. We are no less committed to fighting the scourge of terrorism and we, like you, passionately believe that free nations should stand up and be counted in a concerted, combined and ongoing effort to make the world a safer place.

As the mother of your President so rightly said, "Making war is not nice, but the consequences of doing nothing are far, far worse." We would do well to remember that famous Cicero line, "We make war so we may live in peace."

To stand before just some of the over two million valiant members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars is a particular honor and pleasure, and I never cease to be impressed by your efforts to support both the active and the retired servicemen and women who have served your country in peace and war.

The fact that we are here today attending the 104th Convention is in itself a testament to the extraordinary achievements of your committees and volunteers. Whether it is providing assistance to veterans, helping the community or supporting active military personnel through the Military Assistance Program, the VFW is always there and providing a valuable and unique service.

Your work is similar to our own Royal British Legion, and it is interesting and very symbolic to me that both organizations share that most stirring of symbols, the flounders or Buddy Poppy. I suspect that the work of organizations such as the VFW and the Royal British Legion will have to continue to grow in importance as our servicemen and women are called upon more and more in the years ahead.

While interstate conflicts are perhaps becoming rarer, there is no doubt that trans-national and non-state actors will increasingly threaten the security of both our countries. The military will become increasingly focused and ever more engaged in encountering terrorism and weapon proliferation.

So, our shared values mean that the U.S. and the U.K. will, of course, continue hand in glove, and there can be no doubting of the U.S.-European link is always crucial. European allies through NATO and the United Nations will continue to have key roles to play in both defense and security.

If I may close again by referring to Tony Blair's recent comments: "If America and Europe and NATO are together, the rest of the world will follow." Thank you all for your country and the honor this award represents for my country. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE ED GARZA,
MAYOR OF SAN ANTONIO

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much, Admiral. You know, San Antonio is a city that the Veterans of Foreign Wars keeps returning to because of its remarkable hospitality and warm welcome. No

doubt when we all leave this great city it will be with a host of lasting memories.

Here to greet us today is the Mayor of the outstanding City of San Antonio, the Honorable Ed Garza.

GREETINGS - THE HONORABLE ED GARZA,
MAYOR OF SAN ANTONIO

MR. ED GARZA: Well, good morning. Bienvenido, welcome to San Antonio. We are very proud to be hosting the VFW National Convention here in San Antonio, Texas, also known as Military City USA. San Antonians are very proud of our military. We are proud of our military bases here as well as our military personnel both active and retired.

I think we are the second highest community for retirees of the military. So we welcome you here today and we say we hope to see you back. San Antonio has continued to play an important part in our military history. I mentioned the four military bases. We used to have five.

We have the first city base in the country where the site of San Antonio has partnered with our military to make our Brooks City Base the most efficiently run Air Force base in the country. We are also proud of our unique medical capabilities here with both the Brooks Army Medical Center and Wilford Hall Medical Center complexes that serve as trauma centers for both the local and for military personnel. So we are very proud to have you in San Antonio. We want you to feel at home. You probably will see many active military personnel roaming the Riverwalk. We encourage them to do that. This is a very serious time in our country's history and it is for that that we are even more supportive, and here in San Antonio we show our patriotism because it is the people like you, the men and women that put their life on the line, our veterans who have made the ultimate sacrifice and their families that we salute.

So, again, on behalf of the citizens of San Antonio, we welcome you. We are very thankful of what you, the veterans, have contributed to our community and we look forward to a stronger partnership in the years to come. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Now, Glenda Daniels, the Ladies Auxiliary National Patriotic Instructor, will present a Flag Set to Mayor Garza.

NATIONAL PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTOR DANIELS: The Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars proudly presents the Honorable Edward Garza, Mayor of San Antonio, the American Flag to be displayed in your office.

INTRODUCTION OF SENATOR JOHN KERRY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: We are honored to have with us this morning United States Senator John Kerry, one of nine candidates vying for the Democratic nomination to run for President in next year's election.

Now in his 4th term, Senator Kerry came to the Senate 19 years ago with an earned reputation for independence. He has worked to reform public education, strengthen the economy and advance America's foreign policy interests around the globe. But perhaps most important to this audience is his commitment to America's veterans.

Senator Kerry entered the Navy after graduation from Yale University, becoming a swift boat officer, serving on a gunboat in the Mekong Delta in Vietnam. He received a Silver Star, Bronze Star with Combat V, and three Purple Hearts for service in combat.

A Life Member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Senator Kerry says: "In this country, as citizen soldiers, we need to make the commitment to each other that we will never leave our veterans behind."

In the United States Senate, he has worked to make good on that commitment and has led the fight to investigate the fate of POW/MIAs in Vietnam, treat and compensate victims of Agent Orange and study the cause of war-related illnesses in Gulf War veterans, increase military pay and retirement benefits and protect and expand VA medical benefits.

Please give a warm welcome to fellow veteran and VFW comrade, the distinguished Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Senator John Kerry. (Applause)

REMARKS - SENATOR JOHN KERRY

SENATOR KERRY: I certainly appreciate that. Thank you very much. Ray, thank you very much for your generous words of introduction. My fellow VFW members, ladies and gentlemen, guests:

I am very proud to be here with all of you, 7,000 strong or so, I am told. There are almost as many of you here as there are on the California recall ballot, I think. I want to thank Ray Sisk and Betty Morris for their leadership, and Bob Wallace with whom I have had the pleasure of working closely over the years.

It is a great honor for me to be here to talk to you this morning. I will tell you public life these days has its ups and downs, benefits and minuses. I was walking through the airport in Boston not so long ago, and I saw this guy with a glimmer of recognition, and he looked over at me and I sort of tried to figure out do I just walk on or stop?

And he looks and yells, "Hey you, anybody ever tell you you look like that Kerry guy that we sent down to Washington?" I said, "Yeah, they tell me that all the time." He says, "It kind of makes you mad, don't it?" So it "ain't" all it is cracked up to be, folks.

But as a lifetime member of the VFW, I want to thank my own State Commander, John Martin of Massachusetts, along with Mary Ann Whalen. I am proud to be here with the Massachusetts delegates. I don't know where they are. A few of them are over here, maybe.

For those of you who don't know much about Massachusetts, Massachusetts is a Wampanoag Indian name. Translated it means "land of many Kennedys." If you believe that, I have got a bridge for you, too. (Laughter)

I kind of like to get a sense how many Marines am I looking at out here? How many Marines are out here? How many Air Force? There are not so many. How many Coast Guard? How many Army? And how many of the greatest service of all, the United States Navy? We have got a lot. How about National Guard? There are not so many. Well, I am honored to be here with you. We are outnumbered, obviously. The Army is in great numbers here which we understand.

That is why they are in the VFW. There could be no more fitting place to hold a VFW National Convention than here in San Antonio. It was here at the Menger Hotel's bar, which is only a short walk away from here, that Teddy Roosevelt recruited his Rough Riders and some say if you look carefully you can still see T.R.'s ghost roaming in the hotel's halls. But I reckon that is probably only true if you have been spending a couple of hours at the bar.

Either way, the spirit of his fellow soldiers lives on. It lives on in every single one of us here. Because when the troops came back from the Spanish-American conflict, they formed the clubs and the associations that eventually merged and created the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

For more than a century, the VFW has fought for those who served and carried on that service to the home front of our country. From the G.I. Bill to the National Cemetery system, from creating the VA to elevating it to Cabinet level, to the help that so many of you provided our United States Senate Committee to resolve the issue of POW/MIA, the VFW has made us a better America.

Whether it is mentoring young people, volunteering in hospitals, tutoring in schools or teaching children about patriotism, VFW members represent our highest values of citizenship and service to our nation. I am proud to be here with you.

Yet, I am also conscious that I come here at a time of transformation for our community of veterans. The greatest generation, our model, our role models, our examples, is passing their mantle to us because of God's clock, and they are passing it to the Vietnam and post-Vietnam generations.

Those who survived the beaches of Normandy, the sands of Iwo Jima and the Enchon Landing are now passing on. We are losing a thousand of them a day, 30,000 a month, but we know and we come here to celebrate that their service and their sacrifice will live as long as freedom does.

Today we stop again to thank them for their service. Year after year, we also welcome to our ranks new generations from the Gulf War, the Balkans and the war on terrorism, and we also say thank you to each and every one of them for their service, their sacrifice and their clear sense of duty.

In the last 30 years, those of us who were in Vietnam have grown older and hopefully wiser. But we have not forgotten nor will we ever forget the bonds of combat. We came back from the war to a country where so many never said thank you.

We banded together to press for government recognition of some of our urgent concerns, like the effects of Agent Orange and PTSD. What we have learned all points to one central truth that came to us first in the heat and the jungles halfway around the world, and that truth is we are all responsible for each other. Another lesson that we learned in Vietnam is that sometimes politics gets in the way of decisions that are best for the troops. We must never let that happen again. We know that sometimes abstract ideology doesn't taking account of a life of a grunt, the peril of a sailor in a patrol boat, or the airman in the belly of a plane, all trying to do right for their country and to survive.

Today we have every reason to be proud of our military, because they are the finest fighting force in all the world. We are grateful for the professionalism and the courage and the commitment with which they won decisive victories in Afghanistan and Iraq.

But as we know, all of us who are seasoned and tempered by war, all of us know that winning the military victory is only half the struggle. The mission will not be over until we win the peace and until the last man and the last woman come home. That is now very much at stake.

Let me put it plainly. In Iraq, even more than in Afghanistan, our post-war planning has failed to do the job and in the process we have overextended our troops and our reserves. Today a soldier in Iraq fears getting shot while getting a drink of water.

A squad at a checkpoint has to worry whether the old station wagon driving towards them is a mobile bomb. There are many lessons from Vietnam in that period. One of the important lessons is that when you decide to go to war, the only exit strategy is called victory, mission fully accomplished.

We must succeed ultimately in our goals in Iraq, because to not succeed would have extraordinary negative consequences for the war on terror. So with characteristics, American grit and determination, we will see this through and we will make America and the world safer and more secure as a result.

But another important lesson of Vietnam, and of surviving is the obligation that veterans feel to tell the truth when it matters the most, when the life and the safety of the troops depends on it. Above all, we learned that the interests of the grunts on the ground come before all politics and all ideology, and what we urgently need now is to protect our young men and women in uniform and America's role in the world with decisions that are based on professional military judgments and strategic vision, not politics, and not pride.

There are too many names on the Vietnam Wall in Washington because of the rationalizations and the willfulness of armchair strategies. So let me say in that spirit of truth, which we survivors need to speak, I believe, and I say this unequivocally, that a lack of planning and a lack of candor with the American people have placed our men and women in uniform in increased harm's way, and I believe it is wrong for our troops to be turned from warriors into police officers without the training, support and numbers that they need. And it is equally wrong to stubbornly refuse the offer of other nations to share the risks and the authority in Iraq.

One thing I know that unites all us of here today is our obligation to make the troops as safe and as comfortable as possible, and that means having enough troops on the ground from other countries also with enough training and ability to disarm those who stand in the way of completing our mission.

We must accomplish that goal. It is imperative to get the United Nations to help, not because of any politics, but because it just makes plain old American common sense to have as many nations carrying the burden and risk as possible. I want the targets taken off American soldiers as fast as possible, because that is how you protect the troops most effectively. By the way, since we are securing an Arab nation for Arab freedom, it would

be nice to see some Arabs in uniform sharing the struggle for freedom.

My friends, September 11th was our generation's December 7th, and the historic task that falls to us today is to unite nations across the world around shared values and against the common enemy. No one who seeks to assume the mantle of Commander-in-Chief can be anything but ready to do whatever it takes to make America safer and stronger.

This is not an issue for politics and partisanship, it is an issue of fundamental national security for our nation. Terrorism is the new Fascism. It is the new Communism, it is the new Totalitarianism, it is a grave and global threat to our values and our way of life.

Like World War II and the Cold War, it is not just a battle against nations, it is a competition of ideas, a test of whether freedom and democracy will win out over oppression and tyranny. Well, let's be clear. We can defeat radical terrorism, we must defeat radical terrorism, and we will defeat radical terrorism, and we will do it not just with hard words, but with the intelligence and the experience and the strength to make the right long-term decisions.

We know today even more clearly than before that we need to rebuild the global alliance against this global threat, standing together, sharing intelligence, fighting side by side, and with the threats that we face we can never cede our security to others.

But even a nation as great as the United States of America needs some friends in this world by our side. We need to inspire average citizens in Central America, Northern Iraq, Southern Africa, Southeast Asia to look to us for leadership and hope and to ensure that they see us as partners and as allies in the struggle for prosperity.

We need to realize that this war will not be fought only in the Middle East, but in the Midwest and all over America. Today the soldiers in our front lines are joined by fire fighters and police officers, and our first defenders, and according to a recent bipartisan panel led by former Republican Senator Warren Rudman, these first offenders are "drastically underfunded and dangerously unprepared."

Nearly two years after September 11th, the average fire department only has enough radios to equip half the fire fighters on a shift; breathing apparatus for only a third and nearly two-thirds of the fire houses are understaffed with more fire fighters and police officers being laid off.

My friends, we would not send troops into battle without the equipment and the strength that they need, and if we are serious about winning the war on terror we need to be more committed to the homeland security effort itself. Let me put it bluntly. If we can find the money to open fire houses in Baghdad, we certainly should not be shutting them down in cities across the United States of America.

We also come here as brothers and sisters in arms to make it clear that in this time of war, as at all times, we must do our part to care for those who have borne the burdens of battle. This is about keeping America's promise. It is about a national obligation.

It is about love of country, and to help and honor what we owe to those who defend it. This nation made a sacred covenant with those that drafted and those who enlisted, but the truth is that every day in America the status of too many veterans at the VA is breaking that covenant.

Just consider each year the VA budget is a struggle. Why? Every year we have to fight for dollars in health care that were promised and earned on distant shores. Every year new promises are made, even as old ones are broken. In recent weeks, the House of Representatives cut \$1.9 billion from VA health care.

This is morally wrong and it is a betrayal of that covenant and it must be reversed. It will be reversed if from this convention to the White House to the Senate and to the House we insist that those who sacrificed for the nation should not themselves be sacrificed because of misplaced priorities.

But even if we defeat this \$1.8 billion cut, the fight for veterans' health care will be far from over. The shameful reality, as so many veterans know, is that VA health care is in a constant state of crisis. Today over 130,000 veterans are waiting for care in VA facilities.

Over 50,000 veterans are waiting over six months for their first doctor's visit. We are told that things are better than they were, that a year ago more than 300,000 veterans were on the waiting list. But this progress only came after an entire so-called class of veterans were excluded from the system, Category 8, and by 2005 that group of excluded veterans will rise to more than 500,000 veterans without access to the VA system. I do not call that progress, I call that rationed health care.

Over the last seven years, spending on individual VA patients has actually decreased by an average of \$624. In the last year, VA enrollment increased by 15 percent while the spending increased by only seven percent. Now, we have a budget proposal for increased fees and co-payments designed to drive an additional one million veterans, including those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, out of the VA system.

I believe those veterans should be welcomed with open arms, not shown the door. No wonder that so many veterans have been forced to wait to use the VA pharmacy for a prescription written by outside physicians. We were told last spring to solve the problem the Veterans Department needed new legislation.

I worked with Senator Harkin and Congressman Leonard Boswell, a Vietnam veteran, to do it, and then in recent weeks before the legislation passed, access to the VA pharmacies was granted to veterans who had waited for 30 days for a prescription.

It is a long overdue policy and I applaud it, but we veterans need to ask the question why did it take us two years? Why was there a struggle? Why is this not automatic? Army Sergeant Vanessa Turner, in my home state of Massachusetts, became terribly ill while serving in Iraq. She was evacuated to Germany where doctors believed her death was eminent.

She is a fighter. She survived. She was medically retired from active duty. When she got home to Boston in early July, she was told that the local VA would examine her and begin treatment for the severe nerve damage in her leg in mid-October. She came back in July, began treatment in October.

In the meantime, if the pain was too great she should feel free to go to the emergency room of her local hospital. Her reactions, and I quote her, "It's easier to stay a soldier and be in harm's way than to come home and get care." Her story should make it clear to everyone in the country that just as we do not send our military into battle without the uniforms and

equipment that they need, we should not be neglecting to care for our troops and their families before, during and after war.

Yet 20 percent of our reservists and their families have no health-care coverage. The House of Representatives has passed a wrong headed provision, cutting their pay. At the same time that American soldiers are engaged in battle in Iraq, we have seen a proposal for substantial cuts in federal school aid for children of military families.

Just last week we learned something that should make everyone's blood boil. The troops in the field in Iraq and Afghanistan might have been about to get a pay cut. 148,000 troops in 127-degree heat, in danger of losing their lives every day, and they hear talk that their pay for combat or for separation might be reduced.

I believe that we need to make sure that our troops are paid enough so that we address the problems of retention and enlistment, and we should improve active-duty housing for soldiers and their families. As someone who has helped lead the fight on Gulf War illness, I know that we have to be more aggressive on health screenings for troops. They are required by law and they need to be given.

Now, everyone in this hall knows that duty in the field is not a vacation; the hardships go with the territory. There is something in the American spirit that knows how to deal with that. But all of us should be concerned by the reports coming out of Iraq in recent weeks about long delays in delivering needed supplies of water and housing materials.

In some cases this is because the private companies contracted by the Defense Department to supply the goods and services have decided themselves they will not operate in Iraq because their insurance companies believe it is too dangerous to do so. Well, someone should remind those private companies that our troops are in danger every day. They are not making a fat profit and they need clean water and they need it now. We should make certain they get it.

The issue here, my friends, is simple and fundamental. It is about the character of our country. I believe it is wrong to put the needs of our troops and the claims of our veterans behind a massive tax cut for the wealthiest Americans that is both unaffordable and unfair.

Never in its history, never in all the history of the United States have we passed a big tax cut in time of war. We have always believed in shared sacrifice and it is wrong, I believe, to pad the pockets of special interests before we fulfill our solemn obligations to those who have served their nation.

Recently in New Hampshire, I met a veteran by the name of Joey DeBois. He sat in a wheelchair, but no one stands prouder of their country in service than he does. Joey DeBois, like so many others, is being forced to pay for his own disability, because every additional dollar in VA disability is taken directly from his military retirement pay.

No other category of federal employee is subject to this kind of unfairness. It is plainly wrong, it is completely unacceptable, and we have heard repeated threats of a veto of any bill that remedies this injustice. I say there are plenty of places to cut back in government, but Joey DeBois and disabled vets are not one of them.

It is time to undue this unfairness and guarantee our veterans in this

country that they get concurrent receipt. Indeed, we all know that we have a special duty to all vets with disabilities. Today there are 280,000 veterans awaiting their disability rating; 108,000 are waiting on appeals of rating decisions.

We deserve, I believe, the opportunity to streamline the VA so that veterans hear back about their status and receive their benefits when they need them, not at some unspecified day pushed into the future. So for us today, the fight continues.

Every advancement, every recognition of veterans' valor, every time obligations have been kept, it is because veterans pushed for it. Agent Orange, Outreach Centers, the extension of the G.I. Bill, increased funding for the VA, all of these happened because veterans remembered their brothers and sisters and never stopped fighting to keep faith with the promise to veterans.

I believe that our veterans have fought enough and they should not have to fight year after year for the benefits that they have already earned. Veterans health-care should not depend on the yearly whim of budget cutters. They have earned those benefits, the benefits ought to be there, and we need to see that they are guaranteed as part of the ongoing budget process of the United States.

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

That warning alone should drive our government to do what is right for the veterans. But something even more is at issue now. We must honor not only those who have served but we must honor the ideal of service itself. Nothing that I would hope to do would be more vital than reconnecting America's public life to the ideal of full citizenship.

Too often today citizenship and duty are dismissed by some of our fellow Americans. They are somehow considered quaint and corny, fond memories of a forgotten past. But day after day for every member of the VFW, for everyone who has ever worn the uniform, for other patriots across this country, they are a way of life for millions of Americans.

They have sustained and strengthened our democracy for more than two centuries. I learned a lot about duty and obligation from my mother and father, as I am sure all of you did. My dad enlisted in the Army Air Corps in World War II. But I learned my greatest lessons about what it means to be an American citizen in a place just about as far away from America as you can get.

I volunteered for Vietnam after college, because I believed that I owed it to my country to do my duty as so many of you did. I served along a band of heroes on a gunboat in the Mekong Delta. Some of us had been to college and some out of high school.

But we grew up, literally grew up together on that tiny boat with a quarter-inch aluminum hull. Our boat was our sanctuary. It was a place for crossing the divides between California, South Carolina, Arkansas and Massachusetts. We were no longer the kid from South Carolina, the kid from Boston, we were just Americans together, all of us fighting under the same flag and praying to the same God and giving ourselves to something

bigger than each and every one of us individually.

We arrived as strangers but we left as brothers. We didn't think that we were special. We just thought we were doing our part. So if one day I have an opportunity to make these decisions as a Commander-in-Chief, I will not just bring to that profound responsibility the perspective of sitting in a situation room, I will bring the perspective of someone who has fought on the front lines, and I will ensure that America always has the best equipment, best training and best fighting force in the world.

For those of us who came home, and that is most everybody in this room, I believe that we who stand here today come home with a sense that every day is extra. We who have stood ground for our country carry the legacy of the brave soldiers who didn't make it back, whose names are on walls, in memorials, and in the hearts all around our country

It is their contribution that lights our way. It is up to us to keep faith with their sacrifice and to ensure that promises made are promises kept. I believe that in this moment of trial America is calling all of us veterans to service again, to reach for a cause that is bigger than ourselves, to remind our nation of the true meaning of the patriotism of honor and duty, of citizenship and service.

America needs your service, America needs you as veterans to lead the way, and I am proud to walk with you. Thank you very much for the honor of being here today.

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

INTRODUCTION OF SECRETARY OF DEFENSE DONALD RUMSFELD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I ask you to take your places, and I am sure you will want to hear what Secretary Rumsfeld has to say. It will be two minutes. Please be seated.

The Honorable Donald H. Rumsfeld became the 21st Secretary of Defense in January, 2001. Under the direction of the President, he has deployed American combat troops into Afghanistan and Iraq and American peacekeeping troops into Liberia. As Secretary, he has directed the military global war on terrorism.

At the same time, back in the Pentagon, Mr. Rumsfeld has taken the initiative to streamline and better integrate the National Guard and the Reserves with our active duty forces; is reviewing all active duty missions that could be better accomplished by the private sector and has asked Congress for sweeping authority to change the way the Department of Defense may use its federal civil service work force.

Mr. Rumsfeld brings an unusually high degree of energy, intelligence and experience to the job. Some highlights include the fact he was President Ford's Secretary of Defense, the U.S. Ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the military arm of the United Nations, and he was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for eight years.

Mr. Rumsfeld completed a successful military career in the Navy, first as an active duty aviator and later in the Navy Reserves where he retired as a Captain.

Mr. Rumsfeld has been the chairman of the worldwide pharmaceutical corporation, G. D. Serale & Company, the Chief Executive Officer of General Instruments Corporation and Chairman of Gilead Science, Incorporated.

The one thing Mr. Rumsfeld has not done in his 46 years of public service is address the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Therefore, it is my unique privilege and pleasure to introduce to you the Honorable Donald H. Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense.

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

REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE RUMSFELD

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE RUMSFELD: Thank you very much. Thank you very much. Commander-in-Chief Ray Sisk, thank you so much for that kind introduction and for your able leadership of this important organization. I appreciate your invitation to join you today a great deal. I thank you for that very warm welcome.

Admiral Dymock, I, too, want to join in expressing our appreciation to the people of your country and to the brave men and women serving in Iraq and in Operation Enduring Freedom as our coalition partners. They are doing a superb job. Thank you, sir. (Applause)

Veterans of Foreign Wars, is it an honor to stand before 6,000 American heroes. When America was threatened, when freedom adversaries were on the march, you answered your country's call. You stepped forward, risking your lives in far away mountains and arid deserts, in perilous skies and on the high seas to defend freedom and to liberate those trapped by tyranny and oppression.

Because of your courage and because of your willingness to serve, Americans still live as free people. Your country is grateful to you. I can assure you of this. Your legacy of courage, of honor and dedication to duty is alive and well in the men and women of today's armed forces.

At this moment brave soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen are following in your footsteps and risking their lives in the global war on terror. They are remarkable. I know that you share America's pride in their truly outstanding service.

In this time of conflicts, I suspect you also feel a special personal bond with each of them. You were showing your solidarity in many ways. More than 500 VFW Posts have adopted military units deployed in the global war on terror. Through Operation Uplink, members of the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary have distributed, I am told, over 3.5 million prepaid calling cards to our deployed forces.

Those efforts mean a great deal to the troops and to their families back home. I want to salute Bud Haney, the Director of VFW's Military Assistance Program, and Betty Morris, President of the Ladies Auxiliary, and the countless others who have worked so hard in recent months to support the troops. Thank you both so very much. (Applause)

To the men and women gathered here, I say thank you for standing up for our country. Thank you, most of all, for standing behind our troops.

They are without question the best in the world. What those courageous young people have accomplished in Iraq, Afghanistan, and across the globe is inspiring.

Think about it. Just five months ago, the Iraqi people lived lives of desperation. Death squads roamed the streets and thousands of men, women and children were murdered in cold blood, their remains to be piled into mass graves.

Today, the era of torture and mass graves is over. That regime is gone. The Iraqis are embracing new-found freedom and slowly reclaiming their country. Scores of our troops have chosen to re-enlist while still serving in Iraq.

Notwithstanding the hardships, and there are hardships to be sure, heat, exhaustion, death squads, dust storms, friends lost in combat, they know they are part of something truly important, and they are part of something truly important, let there be no doubt.

It is important for our nation, it is important for the countries where they are deployed, and it is important to the region, and we know it is important to this world. They liberated Iraq, removing the regime in less than a month, while sparing innocent civilians and preserving Iraq's infrastructure. It was a breath-taking accomplishment.

Today they continue to search for U.S. and Allied POWs from the 1991 Persian Gulf war, including Captain Scott Speicher. We will leave no one behind in Iraq, or any of those missing from World War II, Vietnam, Korea, the Cold War or other past conflicts.

Those who fight the global war on terror may be using weapons that are more lethal and more precise than any that were available to you. But their success is made possible by the same thing that made your success possible, the courage in their hearts and the conviction in their souls.

There is another thing that has not changed. We still face determined adversaries. We have seen in Iraq and Afghanistan the dead-enders are still with us, those remnants of the defeated regimes who go on fighting long after their cause is lost.

There are some today who are surprised that there are still pockets of resistance in Iraq, and they suggest that this represents some sort of a failure on the part of the coalition, but this is not the case. Indeed, I suspect that some of you in this hall today, especially those who served in Germany during World War II, or in the period immediately after the war, were not surprised that some Baathists have kept on fighting.

You will recall that some dead-enders fought on, during and after the defeat of the Nazi regime in Germany. Here is how war correspondent Martha Gellhorn described conditions in Germany after the arrival of allied forces. She said, "At night the Germans take pot shots at Americans or string wires across the roads, or they burn the houses of Germans who accept posts in the military government, or they booby trap ammunition, dumps or motorcycles, or anything that is likely to be touched."

One group of those dead-enders was known as werewolves. They and other Nazi regime remnants targeted Allied soldiers and they targeted Germans who cooperated with the Allied forces. Mayors were assassinated, including the American appointed mayor of Aachen, the first major German city to be liberated.

Children as young as ten were used as snipers. Radio broadcasts and leaflets warned Germans not to collaborate with the Allies. They plotted sabotage of factories, power plants, rail lines, they blew up police stations and government buildings, and they destroyed stocks of art and antiques that were stored by the Berlin Museum.

Does this sound familiar? Like the death squad in Iraq, they failed to stop the liberation of Germany, and they failed in arousing the population of Germany to widespread revolt. Indeed, as one historian put it, "Werewolf intimidation only increased public hatred of the Nazi regime." German civilians sometimes led allied troops straight to werewolf supply caches. The vast majority of the German people, like the vast majority of the Iraqi people, were glad to be rid of the tyrannical dictatorship. Today, the Nazi dead enders are largely forgotten, cast to the sidelines of history, because they comprised a failed resistance and managed to kill our allied forces in a war that saw millions fight and die.

But in Operation Iraqi Freedom, millions did not fight and die. That country was liberated with fewer casualties and less destruction than probably any war in modern history. So in light of that success, the resistance our coalition faces today may appear more significant than otherwise might have been the case.

There are differences to be sure. The challenges in Iraq today are in some respects more difficult. Unlike the Nazi regime, the Iraqi regime never surrendered. The surviving remnants disappeared into the population. In Iraq, moreover, we are dealing with not just regime remnants, but also with tens of thousands of criminals that were released from the jails by the regime before it fell, as well as terrorists and foreign fighters who have entered the country over the borders to try to oppose the coalition. They pose a challenge to be sure. But they also pose an opportunity.

Because coalition forces can deal with the terrorists now in Iraq instead of having to deal with those terrorists elsewhere, including the United States. So the threats our forces face today in Iraq are somewhat different, but the result will be the same.

The dead-enders in Germany failed just as the Baathists and the terrorists and foreign fighters in Iraq today will fail. Coalition forces are going after them, routing them out, capturing or killing them. They will be defeated, but it will take patience.

Another big difference is that with 24-hour news, each setback in Iraq is repeated and repeated and repeated as if it were 10 or 20 setbacks. The progress that is being made, and let there be no doubt solid progress is being made, is often not deemed sufficiently newsworthy to report.

But I believe the American people have a good center of gravity. They know that we are engaged in a difficult and dangerous war, that there will be setbacks as well as successes in Iraq and elsewhere across the globe, and that victory will require, as it always does, patience, persistence and sacrifice.

Fortunately, these are virtues that Americans have in abundance. Each of you here today is living proof of that truth, and with that arsenal of courage and conviction at our disposal the outcome of this war is not in doubt. We will prevail.

As we do so, we will make certain that our troops have everything

they need to fight and win the war on terror. Today, some are calling for an increase in strength, in the number of military forces we have under arms. Before I close, just let me comment briefly about this because as veterans you understand certainly better than any that our nation's most important resource is our people, the people that wear the nation's uniform.

The United States can afford whatever military force level is necessary and appropriate for our national security. I am advised that current analysis by the Joint Chiefs of Staff indicate that at the present time we have sufficient active and reserve forces to conduct and execute successfully the missions that have been assigned.

I know that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Dick Myers, will be joining you for this meeting later today. If at any time that were not the case, neither General Myers, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, or I would hesitate for a minute to recommend appropriate increases to the President of the United States. But absent such analysis, it seems to me that it would be a mistake to rush to such a conclusion.

I can assure you of one other thing. The number of troops currently in Iraq is the number of troops that the combatant Commander John Abazaid has asked for. He has been told directly by the President and by the Secretary of Defense if he believes that additional troops are needed he will have additional troops. Let there be no doubt.

In recent years, we have been fortunate to achieve increases in defense spending. But in every budget, as you-all know, the reality is that we have to make difficult choices. An increase in end strength would require cuts in other portions of the budget.

At the moment, the department is working on a number of initiatives, both to develop new capabilities to ease the stress on the force, and among other things we are working to improve the jointness of our forces. General Tommy Franks did a superb job in the Iraq War. He deserves the thanks and appreciation of the American people.

One of the interesting things he did do, and our forces did, they fought a truly joint war. It was not a matter of the Army, the Navy, the Air Force doing their job and trying to deconflict from each other. On the contrary, they were eminently connected at every level and the result was a leverage and a synergy that added force and lethality to what it was doing, and he deserves a great deal of credit for that.

So we are working to improve the jointness of our forces and to fix the deployment and re-deployment system so that it is faster, more nuanced and more respectful of our troops and their families. To invest in new information age, technologies, precision weapons, unmanned air and sea vehicles, and other less manpower intensive platforms and technologies.

To increase our intelligence capabilities, tear down our foreign commitments that have been there in some cases too long, and to review and adjust our global footprint so that it fits the 21st Century. We are doing these things and we are also working with Congress on legislation that will allow us to move uniform personnel out of non-military jobs.

If we could free up just a small fraction of the very large number of military people who are currently performing tasks that are not military tasks, we could increase end strength, active end strength, military uniformed end strength by as many as 20,000 to 25,000 troops.

Congress is currently considering legislation also that would permit

us to do this, the Defense Transformation Act. We need their help to provide us the flexibility necessary to get our uniform forces out of non-military tasks so they can fight the global war on terror.

But you can be sure of this also. It is vital that we have more troops, more tanks, more planes than are necessary as opposed to having one too few tank, plane or troop. Veterans, you are the greatest champions of men and women in uniform.

I salute your devotion to duty, your love of flag and love of country. Our nation is free today, our people are free today because brave veterans like you risked your lives on Omaha Beach, at Enchan, at Porkchop Hill, D'ngang and indeed more recently at An Nasiriyah, in Basrah and in Baghdad.

So, I thank you. I thank each of you and I thank your families. May God bless you and may God bless our wonderful country. Thank you very much.

...Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged rising ovation. ...

INTRODUCTION OF 2003 ALL AMERICAN COMMANDERS

ADJUTANT GENERAL JOHN SENK: One of the most prestigious awards earned as a Commander in the Veterans of Foreign Wars is to be named a member of the All American Commanders team.

Now, Commander-in-Chief Ray Sisk, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Furgess will present All American Commander awards to this elite group of commanders. Let us begin.

Alabama, Gregory K. Usrey, Post 2802; George H. Jones, Post 6073.

Alaska, Michael H. Donaldson, Post 9981.

Arkansas, Jerry J. Babin, Post 4515; Russ P. Harvell, Post 9095.

From the state of California, Louis F. Gemmill, Post 52; James J. Firpo, Post 90; Mahlon G. Hanson, Post 1525; Kenneth M. Murray, Post 2075; Michael Stadnick, Jr., Post 2521; Stanley J. Wengert, Post 3199; Daniel C. Specht, Post 3795; Thomas H. Flowers, Post 3982; Gerald L. Stewart, Sr., Post 4647; Theodore E. Streete, Post 7041; Leslie I. Raper, Post 8254; and William B. Jessup, Post 10040.

From Colorado, Orval L. Thompson, Post 984; Richard O. Whitmore, Post 3641; Charles M. Carolan, Post 4171; and Raymond L. Foster, Post 5061.

From the Department of Europe, Thomas C. Buffington, Post 8862; Milton L. Braxton, Jr., Post 10436.

From the Department of Florida, George L. Whitshire, Post 2473; Leland R. Fair, Post 3270; David M. Amberson, Post 5968; William C. Bloomquist, Post 7674; Howard I. Maas, Jr., Post 7909; Craig W. Stinson, Post 8108; Roger R. La Brie, Post 8255; Roland D. Witt, Post 10132; William J. Russell, Post 10141; and Jerry D. Robinson, Post 10180.

From the Department of Hawaii, Ralph E. Moore, Post 970; and John S. Chapman, Post 10154.

From the Department of Illinois, we have Ramon N. Calderon, Post 1293; Wallace W. Kraus, Post 4308; and Walter T. Michalski, Post 9649.

From the Department of Iowa we have Larry J. Bender, Post 788.

From the Department of Kansas, John R. Van Houden, Post 1186.

From the Department of Louisiana, Thomas J. Kijak, Post 5951.

From the Department of Maryland, Sammy A. Wickline, Post 6694.

From the Department of Michigan, Kenneth L. De Boer, Post 1146.

From the Department of Minnesota, Richard D. Asbury, Post 6316.

From the Department of Mississippi, Ivan W. Bangs, Post 2539, and Charles E. Fiske, Post 4272.

From Missouri, Fletcher O. Chasteen, Post 3838.

From the Department of Nebraska, Allan D. Diederich, Post 8334.

From New Hampshire, Timothy F. Grant, Post 1670.

From the Department of New Jersey, Richard C. Foster, Post 5343; Frank Di Lorenzo, Post 6257; and Charles A. Adelizzi, Post 8695.

Then from the Department of New Mexico, we have George A. Martinez, Sr., Post 401; George P. Prudencio, Post 7686; and Francisco L. Lujan, Post 9676.

From the Department of New York, Richard L. Stewart, Post 16; and Joseph E. Gordon, Jr., Post 6196.

From the Department of North Carolina, James R. Homesley, Post 5200; Oliver Coleman, Post 6018; Richard P. Green, Post 7318; and Lawrence K. Flood, Post 9103.

From the Department of Ohio, Richard R. Uzl, Jr., Post 7727.

From the Department of Oklahoma, Willie T. Womack, Post 1193.

From the Department of Oregon, William E. Pieters, Post 4108.

From the Pacific Areas, Buddy W. McGuire, Post 2485; and Edwin W. McGurk, Post 10033.

From the Department of Pennsylvania, Thomas M. C. Whitehouse, Post 1599.

From the Department of South Carolina, Michael E. Carlson, Post 3433; and Lyn D. Dimery, Post 10420.

South Dakota, Fredric W. Kuil, Post 628; and Patrick R. Condon, Post 1273.

From the Department of Texas, Robert L. Carter, Post 2034; Daniel L. West, Post 3413; Troy E. Nehls, Post 3903; Earl A. Baumann, Post 4372; Thomas J. Dempsey, Post 6796; Leroy Haynes, Jr., Post 6873; George B. Sparkman, Post 9181; and Lonnie Garza, Post 9186.

Utah, Lowell G. Didas, Post 4355.

From the Department of Virginia, Bernard T. Hanrahan, Post 392; and Ronald C. Laney, Post 1503.

From the Department of Washington, Phillip E. Krutsinger, Post 239; Frank L. Beard, Post 379; Rex L. Cook, Post 969; Richard G. Parks, Post 1263; Robert G. Leroy, Post 2995; Howard H. Shine, Post 3017; and William C. Weaver, Post 10018.

Wyoming, Pete Quinnell, Post 7756.

Idaho, James M. Mariman, Post 63, Co-Captain of the team.

From Kentucky, Michael G. Penney, Post 1191; and James F. Basham, Post 10281, Co-Captain of the team.

Indiana, Charles E. Lowe, Post 1114, Captain of the team.

INTRODUCTION OF ALL AMERICAN DISTRICT COMMANDERS

ADJUTANT GENERAL JOHN SENK: Now, the All American District Commanders.

From Arkansas, William A. Moore, Jr., District 12, Post 4515.

Colorado, John R. Lewis, District 2, Post 4061.

From Florida, John E. Pritchard, District 1, Post 706; Arnold W. Gruning, District 2, Post 3308; Dwight W. Pawul, District 10, Post 9226; Ronald L. Hess, District 18, Post 5405.

From Idaho, Thomas E. Monson, District 5, Post 63.

Indiana, William G. Price, District 8, Post 1114.

From Kentucky, Robert L. Pack, District 4, Post 10281.

From Michigan, David E. Prohaska, District 4, Post 4434; John Gubin, District 5, Post 9021; and Marshall G. Westover, District 6, Post 1138.

From Minnesota, James Evans, District 7, Post 5113.

Mississippi, Rodney G. Wilkinson, District 1, Post 2539.

From New Jersey we have Edward J. Pajor, District 6, Post 4374; Gary L. Stoop, District 8, Post 4589; Donald B. Tooker, District 12, Post 4715; and Fred G. Betteridge, District 17, Post 6257.

From New Mexico, George A. Martinez, Sr., District 2, Post 401.

From New York, Joseph F. Bernstein, District 3, Post 7466; and Jack G. Veazy, District 4, Post 2246.

From North Carolina, Willie Robertson, District 7, Post 10999; and Robert M. Gifford, District 9, Post 7318.

From Ohio, Warren D. Croxton, District 9, Post 2480.

From Oklahoma, Archie B. Newman, District 7, Post 10282.

From Pennsylvania, Wrayburn Reinsmith, District 18, Post 6168; Louis A. Huff, District 21, Post 6319; and Raymond M. Fern, District 29, Post 2754.

From Texas, Eliseo Cantu, Jr., District 6, Post 2397.

From Washington, John H. Palmer, Sr., District 16, Post 10882.

From California, Virgil L. Griffin, District 1, Post 3795; James S. Rosa, District 4, Post 1622; Frank X. Contreras, District 23, Post 8547; and Mike M. Maynor, District 13, Post 52, Co-Captain.

Illinois, Walter T. Michalski, District 5, Post 9649, Co-Captain.

The Pacific Areas, Laurence L. Lyons, District 3, Post 11016, Captain of the team, but he could not attend.

INTRODUCTION OF ALL AMERICAN DEPARTMENT COMMANDERS

ADJUTANT GENERAL JOHN SENK: The All American Department Commanders are as follows:

Alaska, Robert S. Watchus, Department Commander, Post 9365.

Arizona, Dennis E. Kane, Department Commander, Post 3513.

California, Gerald D. Anderson, Department Commander, Post 2835.

Colorado, Kenny R. Vegoren, Department Commander, Post 3917.

Delaware, George M. Ritchie, Department Commander, Post 7234.
 Europe, Todd H. Ota, Department Commander, Post 3885.
 Georgia, Dick D. Dickens, Department Commander, Post 6686.
 Hawaii, Nicholas S. T. Young, Department Commander, Post 1540.
 Idaho, Robert B. Finney, Department Commander, Post 63.
 Illinois, Charles R. Brimm, Department Commander, Post 6368.
 Iowa, Patrick J. Shanahan, Department Commander, Post 788.
 Kansas, Steven L. Phelps, Department Commander, Post 7972.
 Kentucky, Michael R. Allen, Department Commander, Post 10281.
 Latin America/Caribbean, Dannie Cooper, Department
 Commander, Post 3822.
 Michigan, David S. Miller, Department Commander, Post 3925.
 Mississippi, Johnnie L. Richard, Department Commander, Post
 2539.
 Montana, Robert C. Smith, Department Commander, Post 6774.
 Nebraska, Gerald L. Ludwig, Department Commander, Post 7998.
 Nevada, Douglas R. Creel, Department Commander, Post 6826.
 From New Hampshire, Eugene A. Pawlik, Sr., Department
 Commander, Post 1617.
 New Jersey, Pierre Lamereaux, Department Commander, Post
 2314.
 New Mexico, Andy E. Brito, Department Commander, Post 5890.
 New York, Karl R. Rohde, Department Commander, Post 1374.
 North Carolina, Raymond J. Yamrus, Department Commander, Post
 7318.
 North Dakota, Thomas G. Bernotas, Department Commander, Post
 4324.
 Oregon, Norman M. Henshen, Department Commander, Post
 7384.
 Pennsylvania, John A. Biedrzycki, Department Commander, Post
 418.
 Rhode Island, Robert E. Stevens, Jr., Department Commander, Post
 4487.
 South Carolina, M. Hugh Gunter, Jr., Department Commander, Post
 8738.
 South Dakota, Glen V. Walters, Department Commander, Post 628.
 From Utah, Glenn E. Silvis, Department Commander, Post 2379.
 Washington, Edwin F. Rasmussen, Department Commander, Post
 9430.
 Wyoming, Rodney A. Birkle, Department Commander, Post 3558.
 Florida, Patrick J. Love, Department Commander, Post 8203, Co-
 Captain of the Department All American team.
 Texas, Manfred J. Knapp, Department Commander, Post 2544, Co-
 Captain of the Department of All American team.
 Pacific Areas, Robert A. Keeley, Department Commander, Post
 9612, Captain of the All American team of the Department Commanders.
 Please be seated. Our next speaker is ready to come to the stage.
 We have a very distinguished speaker coming up in just a minute. I will ask
 you to leave the hall. Please come down and take your seats.
 This next speaker will receive the highest award the VFW has to

offer, the Dwight D. Eisenhower Award.

PRESENTATION OF THE 2003 DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER AWARD TO
DR. CONDOLEEZZA RICE, NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: You know, this morning we are making the 30th presentation of the VFW Dwight David Eisenhower Distinguished Service Award. Past recipients include Bob Hope, Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and most recently General Anthony Zinni.

This award is given to recognize an individual's extraordinary contributions and achievements to secure our nation from foreign threats, to advance our national interests abroad and to inspire national unity for these efforts, and by doing so, to advance toward the ultimate goal of world peace.

Our recipient this year is Dr. Condoleezza Rice. She was appointed President George W. Bush's National Security Advisor in January, 2001. In this capacity, Dr. Rice counsels the President on foreign policy, defense policy, diplomatic and military commitments and associated issues necessary to project America's interests, and when necessary, America's power worldwide.

Dr. Rice brings a great deal of practical experience and a wealth of technical knowledge to this multi-faceted position. In the early 1990s, she served in President George Bush's administration as Senior Director of Soviet and East European Affairs in the National Security Council, and later was appointed as Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

Before that appointment, Special Assistant to the Director of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Prior to joining the first President Bush's administration, she completed a six-year tenure as Provost at Stanford University. She was a Professor of Political Science there for 18 years. She doesn't even look that old.

Her academic awards and honorary doctorates are too numerous to cite here. Her many books and articles relating to international relations and foreign affairs have been widely published.

Dr. Rice was a member of the following Corporate Boards of Directors: Chevron, Hewlett-Packard and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

In recognition of Dr. Rice's distinguished record of public service, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is honored to present David Eisenhower Distinguished Service Award to Dr. Condoleezza Rice. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Condoleezza Rice.

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

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation reads, "Dwight David Eisenhower Award, Distinguished Service Medal and Citation awarded to

Dr. Condoleezza Rice, National Security Advisor.

"In special recognition and sincere appreciation for her innumerable contributions to our nation in the areas of academia, business and public service. Throughout her public life, Dr. Rice has demonstrated the uncommon ability to make sense of the nonsensical and to be a voice of reason in the most difficult of times. Her many governmental, academic and corporate postings are a clear testament to the immense faith placed in her by the American people. Dr. Rice's distinguished career as an educator, administrator and public servant, coupled with her intense personal discipline and moral courage, stands as a brilliant example to all Americans, and is truly in keeping with the ideals and traditions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 25th day of August, 2003.

Approved by the National Council of Administration." This has been signed by Ray R. Sisk, Commander-in-Chief, and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General.

RESPONSE - DR. CONDOLEEZZA RICE

DR. RICE: Thank you very, very much, and thank you for this opportunity to speak to you. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for presenting me the Dwight David Eisenhower Distinguished Service Award. It is a great honor to receive an award named for one of America's greatest soldiers, statesman, a man who helped to guide America and our allies to victory in a World War and then in a Cold War.

The values of service and sacrifice that Dwight Eisenhower embodied are also at the heart of this organization, and it is a great honor to be with you. For more than a century, you have been doing the important work of helping to ensure that our veterans and our active duty soldiers receive the respect and the benefits they deserve. In all your activities, you honor the dead by helping the living.

It is a privilege to be with you. To Ray Sisk, and to my State of California, the Commander-in-Chief of the VFW, and to Betty Morris of Maryland, National President of the Ladies Auxiliary, and to Bob Wallace, the Executive Director of the Washington office, I want to thank you and all the other distinguished members on the platform I have just had a chance to meet, for the tremendous work you do every day.

I know it is also a tremendous task to arrange something like this, and you have had more than enough administration officials and you are going to have a few more, and I know we can be a bit of a problem to take care of. So, thanks to all of the people who have put this tremendous convention together. It is a really an honor to be here.

It has been almost two years since the September 11th attacks and it is worth taking a moment to reflect and report on the strategy that America has pursued in responding to that awful day. No less than December 7, 1941, September 11th, 2001, forever changed the lives of every American and the strategic perspective of the United States.

That day produced an acute sense of our vulnerability to attacks,

touched in distant lands that come without warning, bringing tragedy to our shores. We have marked a real progress since September 11th, but we get regular reminders every day that the world continues to be an unsafe place.

Last week terrorists struck in Baghdad and Jerusalem, killing more than three dozen innocent people. These bombings confirmed that our enemies are engaged in a war on freedom, and that they will target all people living in freedom, including women and children or relief workers.

The ultimate goal of the terrorists is to impose a system based on tyranny and oppression, and they terrorize free people to break our spirit and our resolve. But we cannot and we will not shrink from this fight. Too much is at stake. The freedoms and the way of life that we hold sacred is at stake.

From the very beginning of this war on terror, President Bush has delivered a clear and consistent message to terrorists. In a speech just nine days after September 11th, he said, "Our war on terror begins with al-Qaida, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated."

And last week, after the bombing in Baghdad, he said, "Our will cannot be shaken. We will persevere through every hardship; we will continue this war on terror until the killers are brought to justice, and we will prevail."

The President has backed up these words with action. We have taken the fight to the terrorists themselves, using all the instruments of our national power to route out terror networks and to hold accountable states that harbor terrorists. The war on terror must be fought on the offense.

Defense of the homeland is a vital mission, but the President has been clear we will take this fight to them. We will not fight this in the cities of America, we will fight on their turf and we will win. As a result, nearly two-thirds of the al-Qaida senior leaders, operational managers and chief facilitators have been captured or killed, and the rest are on the run permanently.

That is a tribute to the skill of our troops and of our intelligence officers, many of whom have operated under extreme weather conditions on extended missions far from home. Routing the Taliban out of Afghanistan was the first battle because they had provided the home base and primary sanctuary for al-Qaeda. Today across the globe unparalleled law enforcement and intelligence cooperation efforts are underway, successfully breaking up and disrupting terrorist networks.

The United States and our many friends around the world are helping Afghans rebuild their country and form a representative government with democratic institutions so that Afghanistan is never again a haven for terrorism.

Confronting Saddam Hussein was also essential. His regime posed a threat to the security of the United States and to the security of the world. This was a regime that pursued, had used and possessed weapons of mass destruction. Saddam Hussein had linked to terrorists, had twice invaded other countries; he defied the international community and 17 United Nations resolutions for 12 years.

He gave every indication that he would never disarm and never comply with the just demands of the world. This threat could not be

allowed to remain and to grow. Now that Saddam Hussein's regime is gone, the people of Iraq are more free and seeing real progress.

Step by step, normal life in Iraq is being reborn. As basic services are restored in some cases beyond pre-war levels, transportation networks are being rebuilt, and the economy is being revived. Banks are opening in the country, and a new currency, this one without Saddam Hussein's picture, is being prepared.

America's servicemen and women working with Iraqis and coalition forces are helping to bring these improvements to the Iraqi people. Our troops in Baghdad and other cities are operating under difficult conditions and we are committed to providing them with the support they need to get this job done.

Saddam's removal means that people everywhere need no longer fear his weapons, his aggression, his cruelty. The war on terror is greatly served by the end of this source of instability in the world's most volatile region. Let me be very clear.

The terrorists know that a free Iraq can change the face of the Middle East. That is why they, together with the remnants of the old regime, are fighting as if this is a matter of life and death. It is a matter of life and death, and the terrorists will lose.

Already there are new opportunities for a different kind of Middle East. Despite the horrific events of recent days, we have seen progress towards peace for Israelis, Palestinians. At the Red Sea Summit in June, Israelis and Palestinians and neighboring Arab states united behind the vision of the President, a vision of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

Israeli leaders increasingly understand that it is in Israel's interest for Palestinians to govern themselves in a state that is viable, peaceful, democratic and committed to fighting terror. Israel has to fulfill its responsibility to help that peaceful change take place.

A new Palestinian leadership is emerging, too, that understands and says in both Arabic and English that terror is not a means to a Palestinian statehood but rather the greatest obstacle to statehood. Amidst this progress came last week's familiar images of bloodshed and violence by those who would use terror to destroy the hopes for peace. But the terrorists will not succeed.

Terrorist networks must be dismantled. President Bush remains committed to the course that he laid out at the Red Sea Summits, because it is the only course that will bring durable peace and security. Transforming the Middle East, however, will require a commitment of many years.

I do not mean that we will need to maintain a military presence in Iraq or in the Middle East, as was the case in Europe. But I do mean that America and our friends and allies must engage broadly throughout the region, across many fronts, including diplomatic, economic, cultural, in order to bring that transformation about.

And, as in Europe, our efforts must work in full partnership with the peoples of the region who share our commitment to human freedom. The transformation of the Middle East is in the final analysis the only guarantee that that volatile and troubled region will no longer produce

ideologies of hatred that lead men to fly airplanes into buildings in New York and Washington.

We must remain patient. When Americans begin a noble cause we finish it. We are 117 days from the end of major combat operations. That is simply not very long. There is an understandable tendency to look back, for instance, to Europe, to the post-war experience in Germany, and see only the successes.

But perhaps there are some of you who are here today who were there then, and you know that the road that was traveled was difficult. From 1945 to 1947, it was especially challenging. Germany was not immediately stable or prosperous, as its officers called werewolves engaged in sabotage and attacked coalition forces and local people cooperating with them, much like the Baathists or Saddam's Shi'ites do today.

It is also true that democracy is not easy, and that it takes time. The institutions of democracy are not the natural embodiment of humankind, but the values that undergird democracy are universal values. Our own history should remind us that the union of democratic principle and practice is always a work in progress.

When the Founding Fathers said, "We, the people," they didn't mean me. My ancestors were considered three-fifths of a man, but look at how far America has come. Now, knowing the difficulties of our own history, we should always be humbled in singing freedom's praises. But America's voice should never waver in speaking out on the side of people seeking freedom.

The people of the Middle East share the desire for freedom. We have an opportunity and an obligation to help them turn that desire into reality, and we must work with others to create a world where terror is shunned and hope is the providence of every living human.

That is our security challenge and the moral mission of our times. I am confident that we will meet this challenge because the central players will include America's men and women in uniform. Just as America's soldiers of yesteryear made priceless contributions to the security of Europe following World War II, and then to the security and prosperity of Asia in the next decades, the professionalism and commitment of our soldiers will help countries like Afghanistan and Iraq recover from years of tyranny and steadily move toward democracy and prosperity.

In both nations our troops face difficult conditions and human sacrifice is always hard. America appreciates that sacrifice. We do not take it for granted. We thank God for those who have been willing to give their lives in the cause of freedom.

Every one of America's soldiers, like many of you, took an oath to defend this nation. There is no higher calling. America and the world are a better place, thanks to your labors. All of you are a part of a rich military tradition that reaches back more than two centuries, and which is being carried forward now by our men and women in uniform today.

There is a common bond of duty and honor among those who have served, and a respect for those who have marched down the same path. A sergeant with the 82nd Airborne, who is stationed in Iraq, captured the spirit in a moving letter that he recently wrote to America's veterans.

This sergeant wrote: "With the longing of home in our heart, we do hear what needs to be done so that the generations that follow mine will

know of the freedom I have enjoyed for so long. Through your blood and sweat, we have the America that is, and I will give my all to make sure that that is how it will be. From this generation to the ones that came before, I thank you," he said.

On behalf of President Bush and all of us in the administration, I thank you for all that you have done to advance human freedom in the United States and in the world.

Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Ladies and gentlemen, please rise as we have our Closing Prayer by Reverend Marrs.

BENEDICTION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN MARRS: Let us go forth into the world in peace and dedicated to the purposes of this great veterans organization and to the service of our nation and to you our God. Let us hold fast that which is good, render to no man evil for evil, strengthen the faint-hearted, support the weak, help the needy and the afflicted, honor all men, especially the veterans of our country. And may God's blessings be upon us and remain with us always. Amen.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: At this time we will be in recess until tomorrow morning for the Business Session.

(Whereupon, the meeting was recessed at 11:30 a.m.)

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS BANQUET
AUGUST 25, 2003

(The Distinguished Guests Banquet of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, meeting in the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center, San Antonio, Texas, was called to order at 7:00 p.m., by Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BARRY HOFFMAN: Comrades, ladies and gentlemen, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to announce the National Officers and the National Officers of the Ladies Auxiliary and distinguished guests for today's program. Please rise and join me in a warm welcome for our head table guests.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the 104th VFW National Convention Banquet.

I am Ed Banas, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the VFW and your Master of Ceremonies for the evening. I hope all of you have enjoyed your day here in San Antonio. We are pleased to have you with us this evening, especially the VFW National and Department leaders, and our VFW Ladies Auxiliary leadership and members.

We are honored by the presence of our distinguished guests, and I will introduce them to you following the dinner. Please stand for our Invocation and remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem.

INVOCATION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN MARRS: Let us thank our God for our nation, those who serve now our country in various activities, and particularly in the military, for these veterans and their families here gathered and represented elsewhere. Let us pray.

Almighty God, giver of all good things, we thank you for the natural majesty and beauty of this land that restoreth, though often we destroy them. We thank you for the resources of this nation that makes us rich, even though we may exploit them.

We thank you for the men and women who have made this country strong. They are models for us, though we often fall short of them. We thank you for the torch of liberty which has been lit in their hand. It has drawn people from every nation and we often are hidden from its lights.

We thank you for the faith that we have inherited in all its rich variety, it sustains our life, though we have been faithless at times again and again. Help us, O, Lord, to finish the good work here begun, and those who have gone before and particularly those who have served in the time of conflict offering their life as well as their time.

Strengthen our efforts to blot out our ignorance and prejudice and to abolish poverty and crime, bring the day when all our people with many voices and one united force will glorify your holy name. We come to you in this moment because we believe you are our God and we are your people, and that you are the creator and sustainer of life, acknowledge every good and perfect gift which comes down from above, and know all

that we have comes from your divine gifts of hand.

We thank you for this food of which we are about to partake and for the fellowship of the table. We ask your blessings as we partake and as we restrengthen to go forward and teach us always to be mindful of your loving kindness and tender mercies. Amen.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: We will now have the Pledge of Allegiance.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND NATIONAL ANTHEM

(Whereupon, Sergeant-at-Arms Hoffman led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Ladies and gentlemen, please be seated. Let's give the group Campanas de America a warm VFW welcome, and we thank you for their rendition of the National Anthem and for providing tonight's musical entertainment. (Applause)

(Whereupon, dinner was served at this time.)

INTRODUCTION OF DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome, again. It is now my pleasure to introduce our head table guests. I shall begin at the lower tier. Please stand when introduced and remain standing and, audience, please hold your applause until I have completed the entire lower tier.

Starting on my left, Judge Advocate General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Donald Pierce, and his wife Laura, from Florida.

The Secretary-Treasurer of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Ladies Auxiliary Celia Davis, and her husband, Ken, from Missouri.

Junior Vice President of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Ladies Auxiliary Joanne Ott, and her husband, Steve, from Ohio. We are certainly pleased to welcome the Commanding Officer of the Joint Task Force Full Accounting, Brigadier General Steven Redmon, United States Air Force, from Hawaii.

Our next guest has been endorsed by the Big Ten Conference as our incoming Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for 2003-2004, James Mueller, and his wife, Patricia, from Missouri.

We are certainly pleased to have with us this evening the Minister of Veterans Affairs, Commission of the Republic of China, General Teng, Tsu-lin, from Taipei, Taiwan.

Also the Director of Overseas Liaison Section for the Veterans Affairs Commission, Hons Sang from Taipei, Taiwan.

It is my pleasure to present the Executive Director of the American Battle Monuments Commission, Colonel Kenneth Pond, United States Army, Retired.

I am especially pleased to present to you this evening the individual who has distinguished himself as this year's VFW National Recruiter of the Year, Mr. Bruce Withers, and his wife, Honey, from Germany.

Chief of Staff of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, George C. Berthiaume, and his wife, Judy, from Washington.

Inspector General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Mr. Darrell F. Bencken, and his wife, Marjorie, from Kansas.

Surgeon General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Dr. Cornelius R. Hong, and his wife, Bonnie, from Connecticut. Now, let's give them all a warm VFW welcome. (Applause) Thank you very much.

I shall now introduce our guests at the upper tier, and to my far left, National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, James D. Marrs, Sr., and his wife Jean, from South Dakota.

Senior Vice-President of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Ladies Auxiliary, Evelyn McCune, and her husband, Don, from Kansas.

It is a pleasure to introduce the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense and Director of Defense Prisoner of War, Missing Personnel Office, the Honorable Jerry D. Jennings.

Next is the Adjutant General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, John Senk, and his wife Madelyn, from New Jersey.

We are pleased to have with us tonight the Commander, Air Education and Training Command, from Randolph Air Force Base right here, General Donald G. Cook, United States Air Force, and his wife, Diane.

I am sure, ladies and gentlemen, you will agree that the success of the 104th National Convention in San Antonio is due to the outstanding work of the National Convention Chairman, Past Commander-in-Chief James Nier, and his wife, Kimmie, from Texas.

I am pleased and proud to present my wife this year, Sandra Banas, from Connecticut.

Now, for our guests at the upper tier, to my right, we are delighted to have with us our next guest. She will perform at the Patriotic Rally tomorrow and also receive our Hall of Fame Award on Wednesday, Christy Lane, and her husband Lee Stroller.

Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Joe Ridgley from Missouri.

We are especially honored to welcome our next guest, the defense attache and the head of the British Defense Staff in Washington, D.C., who represents the United Kingdom's Ministry of Defense, it is my pleasure to present Rear Admiral Anthony Dymock.

I am also please to present the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary, Betty Morris, and her husband, Zarnoff, from Maryland.

It is my pleasure to introduce the VFW Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Vete John Furgess, and his wife, Alma, from Tennessee.

It is indeed a great honor to have with us tonight a distinguished member of the President's Cabinet, and I am pleased to present the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Anthony "Tony" Principi.

Our next guest is the wife of our Armed Forces Award's recipient this evening, and I am pleased to present Mrs. Mary Jo Myers.

I will skip the next guest for the time being, and we are certainly pleased that the Commander-in-Chief's daughter could join us tonight, Ms. Sandra Tipken.

I shall skip the next individual for the time being also, and now may we give them all a warm greeting. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RAYMOND SISK

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: It is now my pleasure to introduce a gentleman who has served America's veterans for many years. It has been a privilege for me to be a part of his "Service, Honor, Pride" leadership team for the past year. He has been a source of pride and inspiration to all of us. I know that many others share in their gratitude for a man who has done so much for so many.

Ray is a man who has dedicated his entire adult life to the service of others. He is a staunch veterans advocate, a tireless worker and is passionate in his beliefs. And, as we all know, he isn't shy about speaking his mind when it comes to taking care of the nation's veterans and their families.

He was elected to the position of VFW Commander-in-Chief at the 103rd National Convention in Nashville, Tennessee, on August 30, 2002.

Born in Marshall, Arkansas, he served in the United States Navy from May, 1958, to May, 1961. He received the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for Duty in the Taiwan Straits and off the coast of Vietnam. He also received the Republic of China 823rd Bombardment of Quemoy and Matsu Medal and Republic of China U.S. National Defense Badge.

He joined the VFW in 1975 at Post 97 in Bakersfield, California, and has held almost every office at the Post, District and Department levels, achieving All American Post Commander in 1988-89, and All American Department Commander in 1993-94.

He was elected to the VFW's National Council of Administration representing District G for a two-year term, 1995-1997. His National Committee appointments include the Americanism Committee, By-Laws and Ritual Committee, National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, POW-MIA Committee, and two years on the Budget Committee.

He has served as National Chairman of the Hospital Committee and Vice Chairman of the National Security and Foreign Affairs, Hospital, and the Veterans Employment and Training Committees. He has also served four years as National Coordinator for the National Veterans Golden Age Games.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join with me in proudly welcoming our Commander-in-Chief, Ray Sisk.

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

INTRODUCTION OF LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT BETTY MORRIS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas, who will shortly be called Commander-in-Chief.

It is now my distinct pleasure to introduce the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Betty Morris was elected National President of the 700,000-member Ladies Auxiliary at its 89th National Convention in Nashville, Tennessee, on August 30, 2002.

During her term of office, Betty, who is known as a “people lover” built up the mentoring program, promoted broader participation in Junior Girls Units, and initiated several new membership benefits and awards during her term of office. She also encouraged members to raise \$3 million for the Auxiliary Cancer Aid and Research Program for the 15th consecutive year.

During her term she has demonstrated exceptional strength and commitment as she led the Ladies Auxiliary to new heights of patriotism and service to our country.

Betty leaves a legacy of firm commitment and dedication to those we serve. I am pleased to have had the chance to work with her during her year as National President of the Ladies Auxiliary. It has been an experience both of us will always remember.

Please welcome, from the great state of Maryland, the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Mrs. Betty Morris.

REMARKS - LADIES AUXILIARY NATIONAL PRESIDENT BETTY MORRIS

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT MORRIS: Commander-in-Chief Sisk, National VFW and Auxiliary Officers, Comrades, Sisters and Special Guests:

Tonight I want to take a moment to thank all of you for once again coming through when America needed you. Members from Auxiliaries and Posts all around the country have been sending care packages and pre-paid long-distance telephone cards to those serving in Iraq and elsewhere around the world. Your response to help those deployed continue to make me extremely proud that I am a member of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

For 89 years now, the members of the Ladies Auxiliary have tried to be good citizens by being there to help, whether it is sponsoring cancer research, whether it is writing letters to our Congressmen, whether it is donating blankets to the homeless, sending care packages to our troops, or cheering hospitalized veterans. All of us want to carry on that tradition of service.

This year the Auxiliary’s achievements elevated that service to a new standard. I want to thank all of our special guests here tonight for helping us celebrate an outstanding year of service to America’s veterans, their families and our country. I hope you enjoy tonight’s festivities. Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF THE 2003 VFW ARMED FORCES AWARD TO GENERAL RICHARD B. MYERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you, Betty. Thank you very much. I really mean when I say this, what a sincere privilege it has been to the Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and to have a National President like Betty Morris. Betty, you have been a God send to the Ladies Auxiliary and to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and we love you dearly. (Applause)

I am pleased and honored to introduce General Richard B. Myers, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff here to accept the VFW 2003 Armed Forces Award.

General Myers serves as the principal military advisor to the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the National Security Council.

The 15th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Myers took the high profile position on October 1, 2001, just 20 days after the 9/11 attacks on America and just six days before U.S. military forces began bombing Afghanistan.

A proud Kansan, General Myers possesses military experience that includes operational command and leadership positions coupled with a reputation of being an intelligent, caring and skillful leader.

General Myers entered the Air Force in 1965 through the Reserve Officer Training Corps Program at Kansas State University. A Command Pilot with more than 4,100 flying hours, General Myers has served in a variety of Air Force and joint assignments.

Previously, he served as Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Before coming to Washington as the Joint Chiefs of Staff Vice Chairman, General Myers was Commander-in-Chief, North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Space Command at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado. He also served as Commander, Pacific Air Forces, Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, and Commander U.S. Forces Japan, and 5th Air Force at Yokota Air Base in Japan.

From flying jet fighters in Vietnam to the present day, General Myers has faced many challenges. Today, prosecuting the war on terrorism, providing for homeland security, enhancing readiness and modernizing the armed forces being issues of utmost national importance, General Myers is the confident leader who can accomplish the goals set forth and guide our nation's armed forces into the 21st Century.

What a pleasure for me to introduce a person with qualifications that he has, and I want you to please join me in giving a warm welcome to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard B. Myers of the United States Air Force.

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

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: "National Armed Forces Award, Gold Medal and Citation, awarded to General Richard B. Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"In special recognition of outstanding service and devotion to our nation's ideals as displayed through a long and distinguished military career. From his entry into the United States Air Force in 1965, through his many Air Force and Joint assignments and culminating in his appointment to the position of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 2001, General Myers has served his nation and his fellow man around the world with integrity and distinction in the finest traditions of the United States Armed Forces and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 25th day of August, 2003. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief Ray Sisk and the Adjutant General, John J. Senk, Jr.

RESPONSE AND PRINCIPAL ADDRESS - GENERAL RICHARD MYERS

GENERAL MYERS: I didn't know if they were ever going to let me talk. (Laughter) Ray, I want to thank you so much for this honor, and I have got to tell you I will gratefully accept this award but only on behalf of today's soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, DOD civilians, all those who serve. It is really for them.

Secretary Principi, it is nice to be with you again today, Deputy Assistant Secretary Jennings, to our Commander-in-Chief Ray Sisk, it is good to be with you again, sir. Other officers from the VFW National Headquarters, my hometown of Kansas City, to President Betty and her husband, Zarnoff Morris, and the National Officers of the Ladies Auxiliary, it is great to be with you as well.

To my fellow flag officers and general officers, to include my good friend General Cook and his wife Diane, since we have served together on more than one occasion, but most recently at Peterson Air Force Base. To the many other distinguished guests that are present tonight, ladies and gentlemen, let me tell you it is truly a pleasure to be here.

First off, I would like to thank those folks at the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary for your support of veterans and families across this nation, for your outstanding community service and for your support of all of us in the armed forces today. I say thank you very much.

You were heroes when it was your time in uniform, and in my view you are still heroes who have led this country after your military service as well. I hope you are enjoying San Antonio. What a magnificent town with a very rich heritage, some of the musical heritage that we heard earlier.

You have got to be a little careful if you have not found out already about Texas pride. A few minutes ago out in the entryway, I heard a couple of veterans shooting the breeze. I believe one was from Post 13 up in Boston. Anybody here from Boston? Oh, they are still awake. That is very good, Boston.

The other was apparently from the local Post right here in San Antonio, Post 76. The conversation kind of went like this. The Texan was apparently trying to educate the Bostonian about the heroes of the Alamo. He said, "You know, I would say they were braver than any person from your part of the country." The Bostonian said, "I suppose you have never heard of Paul Revere." The Texan said, "Oh, yeah, isn't he the guy who ran for help?" (Laughter)

Now, I am in trouble with both the Northeast and my friends here in Texas. I would like to take a moment and recognize someone who could tell a joke much better than I will ever be able to tell a joke. In fact, much better than anybody.

Although he spent almost 50 years in combat theaters and wore various uniforms, he wasn't actually a veteran, but he was honored by Congress in 1997 with the title of Honorary Veteran of the United States Armed Forces, and this was, of course, Bob Hope, who our nation lost last month.

From 1941 to 1990, G.I. Bob selflessly entertained our troops and others with the USO, and probably many of you in this audience actually witnessed one of those shows. His historic and heroic legacy lives on, and I personally saw this last Christmas when Drew Carey and Roger Clemmons accompanied me, along with some other USO folks, to visit our folks in the Middle East.

Bob used to sing, as you all know, "Thanks for the Memories," but it is really the veterans, I think, who will be eternally grateful for the memories of that man's selfless dedication. I really do mean it.

Back to the topic of what I want to talk about, it is great to be here tonight. Sharing memories with veterans is a tremendous reminder to me and a reminder to many, a reminder that while the challenges we face are absolutely enormous, those of us who serve today are not alone.

We have inherited a great legacy of honorable service and support from all those who have served before. Your motto, "To Honor the Dead by Helping the Living" is an inspiration not only to new veterans whom you assist as they return back to civilian life, but also to all those who remain in the forest.

What I would like to do now is tell you just a little bit about what is going on in Iraq. As you all are well aware, we had ended Saddam Hussein's brutal regime in a matter of weeks. But since the end of major combat operations, Iraq truly does remain a dangerous place and certainly there are many challenges ahead and much more hard work to accomplish.

Our servicemen and women still go bravely into harm's way every day. Together we mourn every single loss, every body that is wounded. While major combat operations are over, we are still on the offensive in rooting out the former regime loyalists, Saddam, the Baathists, the criminals, as well as foreign fighters, and everyone else who wants freedom to fail in Iraq.

We have captured thousands of tons of munitions, including rocket-propelled grenades, shoulder-fired missile mortars, rifles and other weapons, many of which were stored in schools and hospitals, and in mosques. We have captured and killed hundreds of former regime leaders and other bad actors.

If you remember that deck of cards, we have now captured 42 of the 55 faces that were in that deck of cards. The latest is the King of Spades, so-called "Chemical Ali". I heard somebody quip the other day it is getting hard for them to hold a staff meeting these days because we have got so many of them behind bars.

The deaths of Uday and Qusay Hussein sent a particularly important signal to the Iraqi people. That signal is that we will not let Saddam or his supporters bring back their reign of terror. The Iraqi people understood that. In fact, right after those two despicable people were killed, the number of Iraqis coming forward to report former regime loyalists and weapons caches increased dramatically. They frankly weren't afraid anymore.

I just returned from Iraq where I was last month, and I want to tell you how very encouraged I am by what I saw. For example, Major General Raymond Odierno, the Commander of the 4th Infantry Division, told me that one of his soldiers in basically a routine operation went into this house and there was somebody there to greet him. Somebody had a shotgun. He

fired that shotgun at this soldier.

Fortunately, he was wearing his Kevlar vest and breastplate, so what it did was knock him back on his rear end. Now, think about that for a minute. You have just entered a house and somebody with a shotgun has tried to shoot you in the chest. You are lying on your butt — I think most of you understand that term — and you are still fully armed.

What would you do? Well, I can tell you what this soldier did. He got up and calmly disarmed this individual, handcuffed him and led him away. To me, that exemplifies the kind of professionalism and discipline that we see in our troops and those are the kinds of decisions our servicemen and women make every day in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and around the world. You can be so proud of their professionalism that we see every day in every action they take.

Saddam Hussein left a horrible legacy to the Iraqi people, a legacy of fear, corruption, a crippled economy and a very deteriorated infrastructure. But in a matter of just a few months America's sons and daughters, with help from a big coalition to include our friends from the United Kingdom, represented so ably by their attache here tonight, they are making an amazing difference in the lives of this newly-liberated land.

Let me give you some examples. There are over 30,000 Iraqi police officers now on the beat. They are working hard to establish law and order in Iraq. Our forces are providing training to many of them, including training in ethics, in addition to training on how to be a police officer.

Hundreds of their courts are now up and running, and our military lawyers are advising the Iraqis on how to conduct fair trials. The majority of the banks have been conducting transactions and the Iraqi Central Bank is now paying salaries to police, school teachers, hospital staff, utility workers, and so on.

Our forces are helping to safeguard the vaults. We have helped deliver over a million tons of food and thousands of tons of medical supplies. Of course, there are still many challenges and much room for improvement, but there is no food or medical crisis in Iraq despite some of the dire predictions earlier.

Nearly all of Iraq's hospitals and clinics are again treating patients. Our forces are providing security for many of them, and some sadly have lost their lives defending these medical facilities. Almost all of the schools are open again. Our forces have helped repair and, in fact, rebuild some of them. They are now being used for education instead of storing weapons, and education isn't taught with a Baathist political agenda anymore.

Our troops are rebuilding bridges, restoring village well water, rescuing homeless children from the streets, handing out candy and stuffed animals in medical clinics. I could go on and on. I think the number, as of about last week, is over 5,000 different projects that our troops have done at the same time they are trying to bring security to Iraq.

The point is that our forces and coalition forces are making a very real difference. They are providing not only security, but also the foundations of prosperity, freedom of expression, justice, education and medical care. Most importantly, they are helping to provide hope, provide hope for the future. They are doing it in and under some very trying circumstances day in and day out.

There are over 2,000 U.S. patrols conducted every single day and night in Iraq. We have many troops out there doing extremely dangerous missions at what we call at the point end of the sphere. Many of you know what we are talking about. We also have many troops who are doing construction and reconstruction at the point end of the shovel, if you will.

So no matter what their mission, they are doing a fantastic job. Every day they go beyond what is asked of them finding new ways to make things better. That is because character and compassion now just as much as 30, 40, 50 years ago are as much a part of the American armed forces as courage and combat capability.

I will tell you a story that speaks volumes, not only about their reputation, the reputation of our armed forces, but about heroism that continues on. Maybe you have seen this picture, and it will come up in just a minute.

Private First Class Joe Dryer enlisted right after September 11th. His father was a New York City Police Officer. His three brothers were New York City Police Officers, one of whom had his partner lose his life in the events of September 11th.

Once he learned his brothers were all safe, he decided to do something for his country, so he signed up for a hitch. Now, he is a medic in the 3rd Infantry Division. His unit was involved in a fire fight shortly after going across the Kuwait border into Iraq.

An Iraqi family was caught in the cross-fire and one of their sons was injured. During a lull in the action, Private Dryer ran out and the Iraqi boy's father handed the boy to him. A historic photograph, as you can see, was taken that has become a very symbol of the "Faces of Valor" in our Military Times newspapers.

PFC Joe Dryer would insist that he was no hero, he just happened to be there doing the right thing. Frankly, I have heard that before from many Americans, many of you in this room for many generations always insisting that I was no hero. My point is too many of you are too modest, modest to a fault sometimes.

But if you think about this picture for a minute, this Iraqi father had probably never met an American soldier before. He didn't hesitate for a second to trust this soldier with the thing he cared most about. That is the reputation the United States Armed Forces have.

The U.S. military's reputation here at home has been the subject of many studies and reports in recent years. One of these cites a Gallup poll that shows the vast majority of Americans, 79 percent, have a great deal of confidence in our armed forces.

According to this poll, more Americans trust the military than the government, the medical community, the clergy. They are certainly heroes in all those different occupations and callings. But I am sure thankful that the armed forces are still recognized by today's American public.

Now, I, for one, believe that all those who served, to include our DOD civilians, are worthy of that trust. Their courage and valor in Iraq, Afghanistan for me is all the proof I need. But I would also argue that this reputation was not built in one conflict, one term of service, or in one generation.

This trust that I am talking about is part of your legacy, the legacy

of heroes who have served types of wars and conflicts, and even in times of peace. Military service has not always been popular, but regardless you were steadily adding to the firm foundation that this trust rests upon today. For that, those of us serving today owe you our thanks. As you know, the war on terrorism is far from over. We are still conducting operations not only in Iraq but, as I said, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, and many other places around the world. While we have disrupted much of the al-Qaeda leadership, their training camps, their safe havens, international terrorists are still adaptive, they are still very shrewd and they are still evil as we witnessed less than a week ago with the bombing of the U.N. Headquarters in Baghdad, and almost at the same time the bus bombing in Jerusalem.

This enemy is not like any enemy we have ever fought before. As President Bush recently said, "They fear progress and they hate peace." We senior leaders in the U.S. armed forces owe it to our troops to set them up for success. We all owe it to our nation to stamp out this terrorism that is so contemptuous of the innocent, both in America and abroad, against our allies and our partners in this fight.

So, we are looking at how we organize, train and equip our forces, and we need to get much better at working with other agencies not only inside our own government but between our coalition and our allies and all our partners.

Let me tell you one thing. We are as focused and as committed as we can be, and there should be no doubt that we will not fail in our mission. You know, it is really probably not enough to just be patriotic. You can stir up patriotic feelings in almost any nation.

What is also important and probably most important to Americans is that our country tries to do the right thing, that we are just, we are moral and we are fair. If you believe as I do, that our society and all free societies everywhere have not been threatened by terrorists like this for at least since World War II, if you believe that terrorists are going after our fundamental values and beliefs, if you believe that we have got to take this fight to the enemy while adapting and changing to deal with that very real threat, then you understand what drives me every day, you also understand what drives our service members.

Simply because they want to be like you, the heroes of yesterday, to keep our nation safe and to continue protecting citizens of this great country. You threw them the torch and they want to hold it high. The American writer Bernard Malamud once wrote "Without heroes we are all plain people, and we don't know how far we can go."

You heroes of the past are one of the most important reasons this country is so prosperous and so blessed, not just for your wartime service but also for the way since 1899 that veterans have helped veterans. Since 1940, that widows, wives, mothers, sisters and daughters of veterans have played such prominent roles.

You are the voice of democracy and the link to our great past. Of course, there are many unknowns in all our futures, but there are few things I am absolutely positive of. The first thing I am sure of is that the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary, as the oldest major veterans organization in America, as it has always been in the past will continue to serve all veterans and their families because, first of all, it is the right thing to do for those who have

served their country and the cause of freedom

The second thing that I am absolutely sure of that all our sailors, soldiers, airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, DOD civilians will prove over and over again that they are indeed worthy of the nation's and for that matter the world's trust and esteem. I hope you are as proud of them as I am.

Thank you for this award that I accept on their behalf. May God bless you and your families and may God bless America. Thank you.

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much. It doesn't have a place here for remarks in this script, but I must remark tonight that what a joyous occasion to have our Joint Chiefs of Staff to be here with us tonight and deliver that resounding speech. I very much appreciate it, General. Thank you for being here and for being our guest, and for accepting our award. (Applause)

I want to thank our Secretary of Veterans Affairs, my good friend, Tony Principi, who attended, our good friend from Great Britain, our wonderful comrades from the Republic of China, for each and every one of you that have attended this banquet tonight. It is a joyous occasion on our 104th Convention to have an opportunity to share with you some of these fine people that we have with us tonight.

I want to thank you so much for coming, and at this time I will once again call upon our National Chaplain, James D. Marrs, Jr., for the Benediction. Chaplain Marrs.

BENEDICTION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN MARRS: Let us pray. God, grant to the living, grace, to the departed, rest, to the nation, peace, to us and all your servants the promise of everlasting life. Light to guide us on our way, courage to support us and your blessing to unite us in service to you, our God, and this, our country.

And in the ancient prayer, the Lord bless us and keep us, the Lord make his face to shine upon us, and be gracious unto us. The Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us peace this night and forever. Amen.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: This concludes our program.

(The meeting was duly adjourned at 8:45 p.m.)

FIRST BUSINESS SESSION
TUESDAY MORNING, AUGUST 26, 2003

(The First Business Session of the 104th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, was called to order in the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center, San Antonio, Texas, at 8:00 a.m., by Commander-in-Chief Sisk.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Comrade Sergeant-at-Arms, it is now 8:00 a.m. and time for our Business Session to start. Will you prepare the room for the opening ceremonies.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BARRY HOFFMAN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief.

(National Sergeant-at-Arms Barry Hoffman led the Convention in the Salute to the Colors and the Pledge of Allegiance, and National Chaplain James Marrs gave the Opening Prayer.)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BARRY HOFFMAN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, your order has been obeyed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much, Sergeant-at-Arms. Good morning, comrades. Welcome to our 104th Business Session.

At this time I would like a report of the Convention Rules by John Staum, Vice-Chairman.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON CONVENTION RULES

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN STAUM: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Sisk. Good morning, comrades. This is a Report of the Committee on Convention Rules to the 104th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, in San Antonio, Texas.

Your Committee on Convention met Sunday afternoon, August 24, 2003, and agreed on the following recommendations, which are respectfully submitted for your consideration.

1. That, in accordance with the National By-Laws and Manual of Procedure, and with the exceptions noted below, Demeter's Manual shall be recognized as parliamentary authority for this Convention.
2. That when a registered delegate desires to make a motion or address the Convention, he shall rise, address the Chair as "Comrade Commander-in-Chief," and after being recognized, shall state his name, Post number and Department, before proceeding.
3. A registered delegate shall be permitted to speak but twice on any one subject, or any pending resolution for a period of 10 minutes each, except by consent of two-thirds of the voting strength of the Convention present; provided, that chairman of Convention Committees may speak as frequently as necessary in connection with reports of their Committees; and in the

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

4. All resolutions offered by individual registered delegates must bear the endorsement of the Department Commander or in his absence the Department Adjutant. All resolutions must be submitted to the office of the Adjutant General for numbering and referral to Committee no later than 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, August 27, 2003, and must be accompanied by a written explanation as to why the resolution was not presented to the Department Convention for consideration.
5. All resolutions offered on the floor of the Convention, or otherwise, shall be in writing, and shall automatically, and without reading, be referred to the Adjutant General for assignment to the proper Committee.
6. Committee chairmen, in reporting on resolutions referred to their Committee, shall first read those resolutions on which favorable action is recommended. Specific resolutions shall be set aside for individual action at the request of any delegate, the others being voted upon collectively.

After action has been taken on all such resolutions, the chairman shall read the number and title of those resolutions which the Committee has disapproved. A resolution disapproved by the Committee shall be automatically rejected unless a motion is made and seconded that it be approved, in which case it shall be brought up for debate and Convention action.

7. This Convention will not consider any resolution dealing with race, creed or religion, or endorse anyone for public office. This Convention will not consider any resolution calling for the expenditure or appropriation of organization funds.
8. This Convention will not consider any resolution endorsing legislation sponsored by any other veterans organization, or requesting us to join with any other organization in sponsoring legislation not expressly proposed by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.
9. No person not a duly registered delegate or member of the National Convention shall participate in debate, directly or indirectly, or on any subject before the Convention.
10. Unit rule of voting shall not be allowed in this Convention.
11. Voting strength shall be determined as those delegates registered as of the close of the credentials registration booth the previous day and as reported to the National Convention each morning.

The Department Commanders will receive, prior to the beginning of each Business Session, a list of Posts that have properly registered delegates. Only delegates representing those Posts listed on the report will be accorded voting privileges.

12. On roll calls, the Department Commander of each delegation shall poll his delegation's registered delegates on the floor and shall announce the vote of his delegation.
13. Registered delegates of a delegation may arrive at a vote in any manner they see fit, but shall announce it in terms of full units and not in terms of a fractional part of a vote.
14. Reconsideration of a motion or resolution upon which final disposition has been made shall not be allowed after the session at which it was acted on has been recessed, unless the body is notified of such contemplated action prior to the close of that session.
15. When the report of the Department Commander of the delegation is not acceptable to all registered delegates of the delegation and a poll of the Department registered delegates is demanded by three registered delegates of said Department, the Adjutant General shall poll the registered delegates, without discussion of question.
16. Voting shall be by acclamation, except when a roll call be demanded by ten registered delegates representing Posts in ten separate Departments, or by order of the Commander-in-Chief.
17. Nominating speeches for the National Officers shall be limited to five minutes each. Not more than two seconding speeches shall be made for any candidate and such speeches shall not exceed two minutes each. Nomination and election of National Officers will be held according to the Congressional Charter, By-Laws and Manual of Procedure, Article VI, Section 609.
18. Registered delegates and persons recognized by the Chair shall be entitled to a respectful hearing, and the Chair shall have the authority to clear the gallery or the floor or have the Sergeant-at-Arms escort from the floor any person or persons who may create any disturbances which interfere with the orderly procedure of the Convention.
19. Consent of two-thirds of the voting strength of the Convention present is necessary for suspension of the rules of this Convention.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I move that the rules be accepted.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Commander-in-Chief, John J. Senk, Jr., Post 335, New Jersey, seconds the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: You have a motion and a second to accept the convention rules. Any discussion on the motion? Any discussion on the motion? Any discussion on the motion? All those in will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it. It is so ordered.

We will now have the report of the Convention Credentials by David Butters.

REPORT OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS (Post 475 - Delaware): I am David

Butters, Registration Chairman and a delegate from Post 475, Newark, Delaware. I am before you to report the number of delegates registering at credentials as of the close of business 4:00 p.m. yesterday, August 25, 2003.

Total delegates, 10,897. Total Department Commanders, 54. Total Past Commanders-in-Chief, 26. Total National Officers, 36. That is for a grand total of 11,103.

Delegates registering at credentials today will be added to tomorrow's totals up to the maximum authorized per Post.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much, David.

We will now have a report from the Committee on National By-Laws, the Manual of Procedure and Ritual by Chairman Art Fellwock from Indiana.

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

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ARTHUR FELLWOCK: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. My name is Art Fellwock, Past Commander-in-Chief, a member of Evansville, Indiana, VFW Post 1114. First of all, I want to tell you, comrades, how great the vice-chairman was on this Committee. Tom Pouliot is so well-knowledged, and whenever we would call on him for something, he had it. I want to recognize the vice-chairman at the present time, Tom Pouliot.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TOM POULIOT: Thank you, comrade.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FELLWOCK: We also were assisted in that Committee by two other Past Commanders-in-Chief who were there for guidance. They were "Bulldog" Smith of Georgia and John Stang of Kansas, who were there to make sure everything went right.

We met Sunday afternoon and everybody who was there at this Committee meeting knows that we had a very lively discussion, a lot of pros and cons went back and forth. It was open and much discussion went on. We covered this very thoroughly and we have some recommendations which we are going to put to the floor at this time.

If you have your sheet here, and I imagine most of you do, you will see that we are talking first about the by-laws. I am going to read the by-laws that were adopted or accepted.

B-1 was accepted. That deletes the words "first class mail." In other words, you can send out notices to your Posts without being first class mail.

B-1, approved. Also approved was B-5. B-5 extends the time that a District can have a convention from 60 days to 75 days. B-5, we recommend for adoption. I make a motion at this time that we adopt B-1 and B-5.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF POULIOT: Tom Pouliot, Past Commander-in-Chief, Post 1116, Montana, a delegate, seconds the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I have a motion and a second for the adoption of B-1 and B-5 question on the motion? Any question on the motion? Any question on the motion? Hearing none, all those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no." The "ayes" have it.

It is so ordered.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FELLWOCK: I shall now read the by-laws which the Committee rejected. They are: B-2, B-3, B-4, B-6, B-7, B-8, B-9 and B-10.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Anybody at the microphone want to set any of those aside?

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 - Florida): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I ask that B-8 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Which one?

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 - Florida): I ask that B-8 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: B-8 is set aside.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Department of Europe): Commander-in-Chief, Dean White, Post 27, Department of Europe, requests B-2 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: B-2 will be set aside. Are there any others to be set aside? If not, B-8 was set aside first. Do I hear a motion to accept B-8?

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 - Florida): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Benny Bachand, a delegate from Post 4287, Orlando, Florida. I move the adoption of B-8.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I have a motion for the adoption of B-8. Do I hear a second?

COMRADE GLEN GARDNER (Post 3359 - Texas): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Glen Gardner, a delegate from Post 3359, Garland, Texas. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: We have a motion and a second for the acceptance of B-8. Under discussion, the chairman will make the comment, and then we will have discussion.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FELLWOCK: I am going to ask Tom Pouliot to give the recommendation from the Committee in regards to why we disapproved this one.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF POULIOT: Comrades, B-8 would include in our by-laws our four conferences. Right now our four conferences are separately handled and conducted by each of the conferences, and this proposal would put the conference system, all four conferences in our by-laws.

I guess part of the reasons that people rejected this or recommended rejection is that if it "ain't" broke, then don't fix it. But the other thing is once we get the conferences in our by-laws, then they can be amended. It could be amended by three out of the four conferences. They might start fiddling around with your conference and you might not want that. So that was the reasoning and the discussion that went on in our meeting.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I recognize Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 - Florida): Delegates to this convention, this may be one of the most important votes that you take here today, not only today but for the future of this organization. There is going to be a lot said that you should not vote for this conference adoption.

There is going to be a lot of objections, because there are a lot of people here who do not want to see the delegates of this convention to have a voice in the selection of the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. There are two main sections that are involved in this.

One of the objections is going to be there is too much regulation of the conferences. This by-law does for the conferences what it does for Posts, the Districts, the County Councils, the Departments and the National Organization, it regulates it. It governs it, it gives the rules, it gives it structure, which it has never had.

Fifty years ago or so there was a gentleman's agreement, conferences were born, and it was decided there would be a rotation system to allow people to run for office for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Each conference has a voting system separated and different than anybody else's.

But by and large the only persons who decide the Junior Vice Commanders-in-Chief are the State Commanders of those respective Departments based on a voting system within the conferences. The delegates to this convention do not get to vote for the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. That is the right that you said last year you wanted.

Those people who will be opposed to this conference adoption last year came to this floor and said the delegates ought to decide who the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief is, not the conferences. But today they are going to come to you and say this is not what we want you to do. We want the conferences to decide who is the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

If you look at this by-law, it gives structure, it governs how conferences should be run just like every Post, District, County Council and Department. There is nothing wrong with asking the conferences to be part of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Within this by-law, it specifically states that the rotation for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief would be by conferences, but you, the delegates to this convention, would decide. The candidates for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief would have to come to your conference and explain to you why they should be elected as the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief and, therefore, then the Commander-in-Chief.

This is what we fought for. This is what many of our comrades died for is the right to vote. I would think every delegate in this convention would want the right to vote, the right to decide the future of our organization. That is what this is about.

So I want you to think strongly and loudly and deeply into your hearts and decide which way you want this organization and the future of our organization to go. That is to decide to vote for the adoption of this B-8 and decide once and for all the conferences, just like everybody else, belongs as part of our VFW and that you, the delegates, get to decide who the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief ought to be. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much, comrade.
Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE KEN MEAD (Post 3513 - Arizona): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I rise in opposition to this by-law change. Benny gave us a good speech, but this by-law change, the way it is written, is full of holes. I think we are going to get into some real trouble if we bring this into the by-laws

this year the way it is written.

I will give you just one example. Item 2 says the purposes of the conferences, and it states it is of concern and to select candidates for national offices. The only candidate that this directs is the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief How are we going to bring up the Chaplain, the J.A., and the Surgeon General? They are not even addressed in this by-law change.

As far as the voting goes, and what Benny said about the State Commander, in the Western Conference, the states get together individually and vote and the Commander of the Department casts the vote. He doesn't determine; he casts the vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much.

Recognizing Microphone No. 1.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF PAUL SPERA (Post 144-Massachusetts): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Paul Spera, delegate from North End Post 144, Boston, Massachusetts. I rise in opposition to this by-law change. The comment made by Past Commander-in-Chief Tom Pouliot is correct. If it is not broken, it doesn't need to be fixed.

If we had been having this discussion three years ago, the arguments may have had some validity; may have. But the last two years on the floor of the National Convention have proven that the system that is in place works. Two years ago the Eastern States Conference chose a candidate, presented that candidate to the convention.

A comrade from the Eastern States Conference believed that he would make a better Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, and according to the by-laws any member of the organization in good standing can run for the office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, which he did.

Strange as it may seem, in opposition to what the first speaker would have you believe, the delegates to the convention voted for their choice for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. They had a choice, they exercised their right and they voted and elected a Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

Last year, a similar situation. Two candidates were vying for the office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Once again, lo and behold, the delegates to the convention exercised their right and voted, and the delegates elected the candidate who would be the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief under the system that we have in place today. They had the opportunity to choose the candidate they wanted.

Beyond that, at what point are we going to say that a candidate from a small state, with limited resources, must find a way to raise tens of thousands of dollars to not only travel through his conference to present himself on a weekly or monthly and sometimes on a daily basis to delegates in that conference, and instead is going to have to raise tens of thousands of dollars to make a quick trip out to the Western Conference or a quick trip out to the Southern Conference, or to the Big Ten if it is someone from the East.

At what point does the delegate then say wait a minute, I don't have to go to South Dakota. I only have to go to Illinois. I don't have to go to Arizona, I only have to go to California. I don't have to go to South Carolina, I only have to go to Florida or Texas, because that is where the

votes are.

Do you think they are going to come to the small states? They are going to go where the votes are. Do you think you are going to have a chance to meet that candidate any more than you do now? I think not. It "ain't" broke. There is nothing to fix. The system works. It has worked from the beginning.

The previous speaker mentioned Judge Advocate General, Surgeon General, Chaplain. Are they also going to have to travel to the other three conferences? Are they also going to have to start raising thousands of dollars? The system works. Leave it alone. Defeat this.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you.

Recognizing Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE PRESS GARRIS (Post 2615 - North Carolina): I am Press Garris, a delegate from Post 2615, Goldsboro, North Carolina. There is nothing I can add to what my esteemed comrade and our Past Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera has said. It has been explained thoroughly by Past Commander-in-Chief Tom Pouliot.

Paul Spera has elaborated on it and I can tell you that I personally stand opposed to this as does my delegation from North Carolina. I will just rephrase the very thing that Paul Spera said. If it isn't broke, don't fix it. I cannot elaborate. Paul covered all the bases on this thing. I just wanted you to know I stand in opposition to it for the reasons that he explained. That's all I have to say, Chief, on that.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you.

Recognizing Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE VICTOR FUENTEALBA (Post 9083 - Maryland): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Victor Fuentealba, Post 9083, Department of Maryland. I rise in opposition to this proposed change for two reasons, the one that has been mentioned before, that the change is completely unnecessary because the present system works very effectively.

Under our by-laws, at the present time, there is no problem with any member who wishes to seek national office, being a candidate for office. The way our conferences are being operated under their own sets of by-laws, it has worked very, very well throughout the years.

I believe it would be a mistake to adopt this by-law and incorporate the conferences in the by-laws for the large number of provisions, some of which are totally unnecessary, and which restrict the activities of the conferences. I would urge the delegates to vote this down.

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

Recognizing Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE JERRY MISERANDINO (Post 127 - District of Columbia): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Jerry Miserandino, a delegate from Post 127 out of the great Department of the District of Columbia. I rise in support of this resolution. We all heard if it "ain't" broke, don't fix it or don't mess with it.

We had a candidate two years ago, that was me, who ran off the floor dead to challenge the way the conference system elected their delegates and presented their delegates to the conferences. I traveled to all the conferences. It cost me less to travel to the conferences and present myself to those Departments at their conferences than what it did to travel

among my own conference.

The other thing you have to look at, comrades, is the control that the political bosses have. I have paid the price as I was so eloquently explained what the price would be, that I would have no career left in the VFW if I continued to campaign, if I continued to go to the floor.

I know there was pressure put on the Department saying that we will take your appointments away if you don't stick with the conference system. He is trying to break the conference system. So, comrades, last year was fine. We could break the conference system.

The South had two candidates, but they had a candidate who certain political bosses did not like. So the pressure was on. The election should come to the floor. The candidates for election to the office of National Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief should go to all the conferences and say,

"Look, here are my credentials. This is who I am and this is where I believe the organization should go, and I can take it there if you would support me."

So, Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I rise in support of this resolution and urge the delegates don't give up their right to vote but to vote in the affirmative. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much.

Recognizing Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE GLEN GARDNER (Post 3359 - Texas): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Glen Gardner, Post 3359, Garland, Texas. I stand in favor of this proposed by-law for one reason and one reason only, the delegates sitting on this convention floor. Each and every delegate sitting on this convention floor represents their Department, their Post.

They have the right as they did last year to vote for who will be the next Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of this organization. I believe our by-laws give them those rights. I believe the conference system takes that right away from them, and I believe this gives it back to them and, therefore, I stand in favor of this proposed by-law change. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you, Glen.

Recognizing Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DAVID NORRIS (Post 52 - California): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I call for the question.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Is there any more discussion on this motion in favor of, which is the motion?

Recognizing our Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief at Microphone No. 3.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Commander-in-Chief, if you ask for some discussion in favor, I am not in favor. Am I allowed to speak against?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I am sorry. I can't hear you.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: I said I am not in favor of the motion, but am I allowed to address the convention?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Certainly, you are allowed to address this delegation.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: I am Ed Banas,

Post 10004, Department of Connecticut. I speak against this motion, comrades, and I will speak about it very, very clearly because to break the conference system the way it is dilutes many, many things.

First of all, for decades we and each of our individual conferences have been entrusted to come forth with what we consider to be the best candidate for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. When you look around in the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the most solemn thing that any one of us has as an individual is our word, because it is a bond, and once we break our word and break our bond we have no value.

When a conference puts a candidate up, it means that that conference in total supports the person they have brought forward as their candidate for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. So, if you have a candidate that you endorse from your conference and he is forced to go to all of the other conferences, it dilutes the strength of the conference that you have because for many, many years, some may call it a gentleman's agreement, we have agreed as a conference to support the candidate that an individual conference in rotation has unanimously endorsed.

There may be many more ramifications to this than the written words speak today because everything is subject to change. Should this thing be passed, it would allow itself to be diluted over a period of years. Those of you who are here may not be there then and we may be doing something very, very bad to our organization by taking away that regional strength each year when a conference has the right to present their candidate.

When the conference brings the candidate to the floor, in essence, he is elected by the delegates at the convention because they either rise or do what they did a few years ago, but if everything is smooth and running and functioning correctly in a conference, and their candidate comes forth, then he is a valid, honest candidate put up, projected and promoted by the people in his conference.

So, if you vote in favor of this, you will in actuality dilute your own strength as a conference. I rise against this motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you. Is there any more debate in favor of this motion?

I recognize Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE ED SIMMONS (Post 9539 - South Carolina): I rise in favor of this motion. It is a very small point. As it stands right now, the conference systems are not recognized at all in the national by-laws and, therefore, are a nonexistent entity.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 - Florida): As I said in the opening, you are going to hear a lot of reasons, a lot of excuses why the delegates should not do this. I have to respectfully disagree with our Past Commander-in-Chief and with our Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. It is broke; it is broke. It is broke all over the place.

As our Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief said, generally, the gentleman's agreement has been that if the conferences bring forth a candidate everyone accepts it. Well, that didn't happen last year. The endorsed candidate of the Southern Conference did not get elected last year at this convention, so the precedent has already been set for this

organization. So it is broke.

I ask for a roll-call vote, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: All right. I am going to end debate now. We are getting the same speakers back. We are going to end debate. We have been asked for a roll-call vote. Are there ten delegates from ten Departments that would like to ask for this roll-call vote?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE GLEN GARDNER (Post 3359 - Texas): I ask for a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Recognizing Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE LINCOLN SAVOIE (Post 5153 - Louisiana): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Lincoln Savoie, Department Commander of Louisiana, Post 5153, requests a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE CLARENCE NAIRMORE (Post 668 - Alabama): I request a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE JERRY BEAIRD (Post 3006 - Mississippi): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Jerry Beard, Post 3006, Mississippi. I call for a roll-call vote, please.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE JERRY MISERANDINO (Post 127 - District of Columbia): I call for a roll-call vote, please.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Department of Europe): I request a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE FRANK PAGE (Post 7968 - Department of Arizona): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Frank Page, Post 7968, Department of Arizona, a delegate to this convention asks for a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE RICHARD PETERSON (Department of Washington): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Richard Peterson, Department of Washington, requests a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE GARY PFAFF (Department of Ohio): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Gary Pfaff, Commander of the Department of Ohio, requests a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DON WASP (Post 6563 - Department of Europe): I request a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: That is ten delegates that have asked for a roll-call vote according to our National by-laws. That is going to be the order of the day. So we will go into a roll-call vote. The Adjutant General will call the roll and we will tally the votes.

The motion that we are voting on is for the adoption of B-8. If you vote "yes", you are voting for B-8. If you vote "no", you are rejecting it.

Comrade Adjutant General, call the roll.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 - Florida): Do we have any tally sheets?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: The tally sheets are coming out. Let's take a two-minute break while the tally sheets are coming out.

...Recess. ...

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I call us back to order.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 - Florida): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, may I make a point of order?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Yes.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 - Florida): I think the delegates need to make sure that each delegate here has a voice in the decision of their state. I want to make sure that every delegate understands that they have a voice in their state in determining how their state is going to cast their ballots.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I would certainly hope that when they register as a delegate they are aware of that, comrade.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 - Florida): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: You must have a delegate card that says "registered" on it to have a vote on this. I do believe our time is up. Does everybody have their tally sheets? Does everybody have their tally sheets? At this time we will go into the roll-call vote, Adjutant General.

...As Adjutant General Senk called the roll, the following votes were cast: ...

NAME	YES	NO
Commander-in-Chief Raymond Sisk		X
Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas		X
Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Furgess		X
Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr.		X
Quartermaster General Joe L. Ridgley	(Abstained)	
Judge Advocate General Donald Pierce		X
Surgeon General Cornelio Hong		X
National Chaplain James D. Marrs, Sr.		X
National Chief of Staff George Berthiaume		X
Inspector General Darrell Bencken		X
District No. 1 - Paul J. Chevalier		
District No. 2 - Samuel R. Haskins		X
District No. 3 - Joseph F. Rosetta		
District No. 4 - Peter Mascetti		
District No. 5 - Charles F. Thrower, Jr.		
District No. 6 - Paul Moore		X
District No. 7 - Jeff A. Phillips		
District No. 8 - Richard Branson		X
District No. 9 - Cleve Cox		X
District No. 10 - John Dilbeck		
District No. 11 - Robert C. Peters		X
District No. 12 - Larry Scudder	X	
District No. 13 - Richard N. Weston		X

District No. 14 - Larry Longfellow		X
District No. 15 - Tyrone M. Benson		
District No. 16 - Frank Lamson		X
District No. 17 - Johnnie B. Janes		X
District No. 18 - Robert A. Stevens		X
District No. 19 - Landry E. Saucier	X	
District No. 21 - Louie Mrozek		X
District A - Neale H. Deibler	X	
District B - Donald L. Porter	X	
District C - Jack I. Simons		
District D - Daniel Long	X	
District F - James A. Van Hauter		X
District G - Steven D. Jacobs		
District H - Jimmie Cantrell		X
District J - Richard Fitzgerald	X	
STATE	YES	NO
Alabama		140
Alaska		77
Arizona		213
Arkansas	142	48
California	38	477
Colorado		219
Connecticut		150
Delaware	5	109
District of Columbia	31	
Department of Europe	58	30
Florida	654	
Georgia	7	164
Hawaii	3	35
Idaho		70
Illinois		556
Indiana		311
Iowa		128
Kansas		270
Kentucky		119
Latin America/Caribbean		22
Louisiana	131	4
Maine		85
Maryland		298
Massachusetts		301
Michigan		374
Minnesota	4	253
Mississippi	73	
Missouri		255
Montana		61
Nebraska		150
Nevada		81
New Hampshire		84
New Jersey		256

New Mexico		141
New York		288
North Carolina		209
North Dakota	37	97
Ohio	536	64
Oklahoma		170
Oregon	9	82
Pacific Areas		96
Pennsylvania		595
Rhode Island		59
South Carolina	126	52
South Dakota	110	49
Tennessee		148
Texas	688	
Utah		45
Vermont		109
Virginia		164
Washington	16	217
West Virginia		146
Wisconsin	13	245
Wyoming		39

PAST COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

George R. Cramer	-		X
James R. Currieo	-		X
Arthur Fellwock	-		X
James Goldsmith	-		X
John Gwizdak	-		X
Robert Hansen	-		X
Walter Hogan	-		X
Allen F. Kent	-		X
Clyde A. Lewis	-		X
John E. Moon	-	X	
James E. Nier	-	X	
Clifford G. Olson	-		X
Thomas Pouliot	-		X
Eric Sandstrom	-		X
John W. Smart	-		X
Ray Soden	-		X
Paul A. Spera	-		X
John S. Staum	-		X
Robert E. Wallace	-		X
John Wasylik	-		X

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Chief, it will take just a minute or two to get a tally for you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: For all of those of you who are tallying it takes a two-thirds majority to amend the by-laws. There is not two-thirds there. So this motion has not been adopted as the motion was

put forth. B-8 is rejected.

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE ANTHONY PRINCIPI, SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: We are very pleased to have with us this morning the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Anthony J. Principi.

Appointed by President Bush and confirmed as the nation's fourth Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Mr. Principi brings to this key cabinet post a wealth of experience as a veterans advocate.

A naval veteran of the Vietnam War, Mr. Principi served as Deputy Director of Veterans Affairs from 1989 to 1992. He was named Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs by then President George Bush and served until 1993.

He served as Chief Counsel and Staff Director to the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs from 1984 to 1988.

In 1996, Mr. Principi was appointed chair of the Senate Committee on Service Members and Veterans Transition Assistance. This Committee reviews services and benefits for veterans and members of the military.

A strong veterans advocate, he oversees the nation's largest health-care system, a system with an annual budget of \$51 billion, and a work force of some 219,000 people at hundreds of medical centers, clinics and national cemeteries.

Please give a warm welcome to a VFW Life Member and Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Anthony Principi.

REMARKS - THE HONORABLE ANTHONY PRINCIPI

MR. PRINCIPI: Thank you very much. Commander-in-Chief Sisk, Distinguished Officers of the VFW, Executive Director Wallace, members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, my Fellow Veterans, Honored Guests:

Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Sisk for that very kind introduction. I consider it a high privilege to be with you in San Antonio. As always, the VFW's warm reception and your ever present hospitality makes me feel more like family than a guest.

Ray Sisk has been the VFW family's unerring leader during a very challenging year, and I commend his extraordinary stewardship that inspires our fellow VFW members to daily recommit themselves to service in the name of men and women whose love of freedom and dedication to democracy raised up America to greatness. Ray, my fellow VFW members and I are fortunate to have the benefit of your outstanding leadership and friendship. On behalf of all of us at the VA, I thank you.

I also wish to express my thanks to your Executive Director, Bob Wallace, and your entire Washington team for their great collaboration and cooperation with us as an advocacy on behalf of the veterans in the Halls of Congress and at the White House. They do a tremendous job. I am certainly very grateful to them for all of their assistance and their tenacity over the years.

Of course, to the individual members of the VFW, for your tremendous service in uniform, but equally importantly when you hung up your uniforms you continued to serve America, your fellow veterans and your communities, and we are grateful.

I would be remiss if I did not also offer my thanks once again for VFW support of Operation Uplink. Now, more than ever, the young men and women stationed overseas, particularly those whose rotation home delayed, need to stay in touch with their families.

I know how much it means to me when I hear from my two active duty sons, so it is not difficult to imagine how important Operation Uplink is to the thousands upon thousands of deployed troops and their families and loved ones. As Veterans of Foreign Wars, we are bound together by so much history.

It can be a history rich with heroism and selflessness that many of us saw every day of our combat tours. It can also be the kind of quiet history that documents the work of our military in times of peace. Today America is at war with the enemy that has no compunction about killing and terrorizing men, women and children, not only in our own country as we saw on September 11th, but in any country that embraces the basic rights bestowed on all humanity by a power much greater than any tyrant.

It is incredible when we saw what they did to the humanitarian workers in Baghdad when they bombed the U.N. Headquarters and killed so many people bringing relief and hope to the people of Iraq. America's veterans know such evil, they know such an enemy, and we have seen what it can do to anyone who chooses peace over tyranny.

Just as heroes were forged in the Battle of the Bulge, at Chosen Reservoir, heroes will continue to emerge from the wars of the 21st Century, the war against terror fought on our home front and in the mountains and deserts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Our magnificent young men and women in uniform, sons and daughters, and even our grandchildren, are standing tall in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans, off the coast of Liberia, and along the Korean DMZ. I am very proud that two of my sons served in Iraq at the height of the war. As a father, I learned what it is like to have children in combat. As a Cabinet Secretary, it brought a renewed dedication to my work.

I look back at my own service in Vietnam with great pride and the band of brothers we were. We were and will remain a band of brothers for all time. I also look back with sadness for the friends and colleagues I lost. Those two feelings, pride and sadness, remind me that America's destiny is to strive immediately as one nation, united in the name of peace, never forgetting and always honoring the sacrifices of the citizen soldiers who died in freedom's arms.

As proud as I am to be a Vietnam veteran, I am even more proud and humbled to be of service as Secretary of Veterans Affairs to our nation's 25 million veterans. The roster of men and women who earn the honored title of veteran grows every day as our nation's 21st Century soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen return from campaigns in the far-flung corners of the globe, much as you and I returned home from our tours of duty around the globe.

Since the Iraq war began, I have tried to find time to visit wounded

soldiers and Marines at Bethesda Naval Hospital and Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington as they have returned back from Iraq. It breaks my heart to see these young men and women with such disabling wounds, but it is also an inspiration to see the courage in their faces, to know that they only want to get back into the fight. They want to be back with their Marines and they want to be back with their soldiers.

I want to tell you a story about one young Marine I met at Bethesda. He was all alone, only 18 years old, a young corporal in the Marine Corps, badly wounded, shot four times at the Battle of An Nasiriyah. He could barely talk and he had no family with him, so I tried to spend a few extra minutes talking to him and holding his hand and comforting him and telling him how much America appreciated his service and his sacrifice.

Before I left, I placed a book on his chest and I said, "When you get better I want you to read this book from cover to cover because you earned every benefit in it." I squeezed his hand and I went on to the next Marine in his room and spent a few minutes with him and his parents and sisters as they were grieving, as he was badly wounded at An Nasiriyah as well.

When I left the room, I saw this young Marine had managed to pick up the book and was reading it. I was so happy. I went over to him and I said, "I am so pleased to see that you have taken my advice and are reading the book." He could barely talk, but he kept pointing to one provision, and he said to me in whispered tones, "That is all I want; that is all I want."

So I tried to understand what he was saying and what he was pointing to. I looked down and the provision in the book was the provision that allowed him to become a United States citizen by virtue of his service in the military in combat.

Of course, it was difficult not to get welled up with emotion at that point in time, and I just could barely tell him that we would make that happen. I thought to myself, how blessed America is to have men and women who come from every community in America, from small towns and farms, the big cities, or even from distant shores and are willing to sacrifice their lives to bring freedom to an oppressed people, willing to sacrifice their lives for the right and honor to be called an American citizen, reflected how fortunate I am to serve such magnificent men and women as this, to aid in their transition to civilian life, and if they were ill to make them whole again.

I am very proud that a few days after my visit the President went out to Bethesda and made this young Marine a United States citizen. That really made his day and it made all of our day. (Applause)

Most importantly, I want to be certain that the VA is ready for them and their buddies when they arrive home at one of our medical centers or one of our clinics bearing their own red badges of courage. Today's VA health administration is ready for them in ways that are almost unrecognizable from my days in Vietnam. It most certainly is not the VA that my immigrant dad, a World War II veteran, knew when he was a VA patient. The today's wounded serviceman or woman is in a generation of veterans who experience a VA that has revamped to reflect the latest research discoveries, medical technology, clinical and surgical practices, and a

wonderful prescription pharmaceutical benefit program.

Today VA hospitals and clinics are community and national resources, led by a great Under Secretary of Health now, Bob Roswell, along with thousands of doctors and wonderful VA nurses dedicated to restoring veterans to healthy and productive lives.

I think we can be very proud of the VA. We are not perfect, but the VA has come a long way, and they have come a long way because of our constant advocacy in making sure that the VA stays on the cutting edge. However, today we are experiencing what I call the perfect storm.

I don't know if you saw the movie "The Perfect Storm", but our waves are larger than the waves off the Newfoundland coast, a combination of eligibility reform, a generous prescription drug benefit program, improved access to care through 850 outpatient clinics, and vast improvements to our quality and customer satisfaction have caused this profound growth and demand for VA health care like never before.

We have grown from 2.9 million users just a few years ago to close to 5 million today. There is no doubt that we have great challenges ahead of us and many of them are financial. But I am very proud of the budget increases we have received over the past few years. They would not have been possible again without your advocacy, the support of the President and our Congress.

Three years ago, on October 1st, 2001, the VA budget stood at \$48 billion. On October 1st, just a few short weeks away, our budget will reach \$64 billion. That is a 32-percent increase. That is historic in the history of the VA; a budget larger than the entire defense budget of our closest ally, Great Britain.

The President's proposed budget for '04 represents the greatest percentage increase after the Defense Department of any department in our government Can I use more? You bet I can. With VFW's advocacy in Washington and in Congressional Districts around the country, I know that a caring nation will allow us to prevail.

But I am very proud of our leadership team's willingness to go back toe to toe with the Office of Management and Budget to achieve such large increases, and so I am thankful to you, I am thankful to the President, and I am thankful to the members of Congress.

It is true that with this great demand for care, you know better than I that we have experienced waiting lists in some parts of the country. I am pleased to report that we are making substantial progress in bringing down those waiting lists and we will redouble our efforts to ensure that there are no waiting lists, that veterans don't have to wait more than 30 days for a primary-care appointment by the end of this fiscal year.

I believe with this redoubling of our efforts we will be able to get veterans in quickly. Waiting lists are also frustrating veterans who have until now had to make appointments sometimes months in advance with their VA doctors to receive prescription drugs the veterans already had from their own private physicians.

"Why", these veterans ask, "Mr. Secretary, must we be subjected to such unreasonable delays just to have a prescription filled?" The short answer is you shouldn't. I recently instituted a new prescription policy that should benefit about 200,000 veterans on waiting lists who have been

waiting more than 30 days to see a VA primary care physician.

The program covers veterans who are enrolled for VA care before July 25th, who asked for an initial appointment with the physician before that date and who will still be waiting longer than 30 days for that appointment. They will be able to bring their prescriptions to the VA and have them filled without having to wait in line to see another physician and go through a second battery of lab tests.

It is not an instant panacea, but I believe it will help reduce the waiting list by allowing some veterans who seek only our prescription drugs to get them, thereby, freeing up our doctors and nurses so that they can focus on veterans who do not have a physician and need our care.

I intend to monitor this program very carefully to determine its usefulness in reducing waiting times. Depending upon the outcome, I will make the decision to continue the program and possibly expand it if that is what the veterans need.

Making certain that those veterans who need care will have the best possible access to that care is one of the major factors behind CARES, the Capital Acts of Realignment for Enhanced Services began by my predecessor, and I have decided to continue.

As you know, we have witnessed revolutionary changes in health care over the past several decades. Advanced technology and medical diagnosis, surgery and treatment, new drug therapies, tele-medicine, telemetry, digital radiology have re-defined how medicine is practiced in America.

Procedures that once required long inpatient hospital stays can now be done in an ambulatory setting. I perceive the day when certain procedures can be done in the comfort of the veteran's own home. Over the past several years we have opened close to 850 outpatient clinics and we need to do more to bring medical care closer to the veteran's home.

The choice is clear. Is the VA to be on the cutting edge of this revolution or the trailing edge of the century gone by? I choose the former and I ask you to join with me as we try to transform our VA health-care system for the 21st Century.

GAO testimony before Congress showed that we are wasting \$1 million a day, \$365 million in a year, \$3.6 billion over ten years of heating and maintaining excess infrastructure. The goal of CARES is to identify the infrastructure the VA will need in the 21st Century and for the 21st Century veterans.

I look forward to the Commission's recommendations, and I thank the VFW for your constructive input as CARES progresses. Shortly, the Commission will be around the country holding hearings. I believe they have already started. The CARES Commission is helped by Ebb Alvarez, the first pilot shot down over Vietnam, who spent eight years in the Hanoi Hilton. There is no one that can compare in his commitment to America's veterans.

The Marine I met at Bethesda and the other Marines and soldiers will also need disability compensation when they come home, and vocational rehabilitation. Last year our inventory of rating related claims for disability compensation and pension peaked at 432,000. Today the number stands at less than 270,000, even though we receive on the average an additional 60,000 new or reopened claims each and every month of the

year.

A year ago it took an average of 233 days to decide a claim. Today it takes less than 160 days. So we are making progress towards achieving our goal, but we must stay the course, we must stay focused to bring that backlog of disability comp claims down to the size where we can adjudicate claims every 100 days.

When I came to the VA in 2001, one of my highest priorities was to ensure that our National Cemeteries were properly revered as national shrines. With America's veterans passing on at the rate of 1800 veterans each and every day of the year, we must assure their families and the nation that our commitment to them is eternal.

Since last year we have started work on or actually begun interment at six new National Cemeteries, Atlanta, Detroit, Miami, Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, Pittsburgh and Sacramento. All six of these cemeteries will be complete and opened by 2006, the most aggressive schedule since the Civil War. But they are only the vanguard of tomorrow's national shrines.

We will continue to prepare the final resting places for our nation's defenders and we will not flag in our commitment to honor them in death as they honored America in life. Once again, I thank the VFW for your support and your service. I am privileged to stand at the helm of America's premier agency, cast with honoring your service and your sacrifices.

One of my great heroes is a veteran of the Civil War. He was wounded three times at the Battle of Bulls Bluff, Chancellorsville and Antietam. After the war, he became one of America's greatest philosophers and most esteemed jurists on the United States Supreme Court. His name is Oliver Wendell Holmes.

At a reunion of his former regiment, much like you are here this week, actually 30 years after the war he spoke to his regiment, and this is part of what he said. "As I look into your eyes, I feel as I always do, that a great trial in your youth made you different, made all of us different from what we could have been without it. It made us feel the brotherhood of man; it made us citizens of the world and not of a little town, and best of all it made us believe in something else besides doing the best for ourselves and getting all the loaves and fishes we could."

Today, I stand before friends and colleagues and comrades, and I look into your eyes, men and women whose service in uniform and foreign wars have earned you the honored title of American veteran. Your bravery and dedication entitled you to the eternal gratitude of your fellow countrymen and women.

Your example of courage, of loyalty and continued good citizenship and volunteerism after leaving the services provides great strength and comfort to your families, to your communities and to this great land we call America. Although we no longer serve in uniform, the spirit of our service lives on to inspire our troops throughout the world today, because our cause is eternal.

In Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Korea and in every corner of the world in need of the light of freedom, young men and women in uniform like my sons and the sons and daughters of so many Americans are ready to uphold the values for which you and I fought, ready to catch and hold high the torch of liberty that you and our comrades have thrown them, and ready to

earn the respect and honor and love that you, yourselves, once earned through your service to this great land of America.

The VFW, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, is a national resource. It must continue to grow and thrive and be a resource for our America's veterans and for our nation. May God bless our great land and all the men and women who defend her. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. We are always pleased to have you at a VFW function.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL BY-LAWS,
MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL (Cont'd.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: For those of you earlier that weren't tallying on B-8, B-8 "yes" was 2,791; "no" was 8,256.

We had B-2 set aside.

I recognize Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Department of Europe): I move the adoption of B-2.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I have a motion for the adoption of B-2.

I recognize Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE PETER LUSTE (Post 8862 - Europe): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: We now have a motion and a second for the adoption of B-2. We will let the chair explain the reason for the rejection.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TOM POULIOT: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. B-2 relates to the requirement to be a United States citizen to be a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. This proposed amendment would do away with the citizenship requirement. I guess enough said.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Is there any discussion?

I recognize Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Europe): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, this by-law amendment needs to be adopted because it is a disservice to all those veterans who have honorably served in the United States armed forces, earned the prerequisite campaign medal and otherwise meet all the criteria to be members of this fine organization.

The history of the VFW from its concept did not include a citizenship requirement. Citizenship was instituted into the by-laws at a later date. We need to return, and I have heard this so often from our leadership, to the core values of the VFW.

We need to recognize those veterans of the armed forces regardless of their citizenship who have fought, sacrificed, some even dying for the United States of America, and allow them into our fine organization. They have earned the right, they deserve the right. Thank you, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you.

Recognizing Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE MICHAEL DePAULO (Post 5988 - Massachusetts):

Good morning, Commander-in-Chief. I am Michael DePaulo, Post 5988, a delegate to this convention. I rise in support of adopting B-2 for a number of reasons. In 1946 or 1948, as a knee-jerk reaction to the Communist scare in post-World War II, the ban or the requirement to be a U.S. citizen was included.

The five founders of the Veterans of Foreign Wars never intended that. In fact, two of them were not even U.S. citizens. There are 35,000 Canadians who served in Vietnam in U.S. uniforms because they believed in the mission. They are cared for and followed by V.A. health care for those that are eligible, but yet they can't join the VFW.

I was in Canterbury, Australia, recently at the Hall of Heroes and there is an Australian Sergeant down there who was single-handedly responsible for saving the life of an infantry company in combat. He has the Medal of Honor. He cannot join the VFW.

To go ahead and to say or to put erroneous information out there, or to appear to hype emotions, saying you have got to be a citizen, you have got to be a citizen, which you have to be, what you have to do is you have to have served in the armed forces of this republic honorably and to have put yourself in harm's way in support.

They take the same oath that you took, Chief, and the same oath that I take in support of the Constitution of these United States of America. To say they can't belong to the VFW after they did their duty honorably, from my point of view, is totally unconscionable. Thank you, Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much.

COMRADE BRUCE WITHERS (Post 10436 - Department of Europe): The precedent has been set. What did Honorable Principi say this morning when that soldier who fought for our country, a non-U.S. citizen, is now given a U.S. citizenship? What about the rest of the people that fought for this country, were wounded and weren't awarded a U.S. citizenship?

I think the time has come. The precedent has been set. Let's take this out of our by-laws and let's let everybody that served this country, that served in our armed forces, become a member of this great organization.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE CLAUDIO PEDERY (Post 5471 - District of Columbia): Good morning. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I come from the smallest Department in the whole VFW, but we are the strongest city in the world, Washington, D.C. I would like to congratulate the proponents of this resolution. It is high time that we recognize the sacrifices of non-U.S. legal immigrants. To give you a history, once you migrate to this great country, the United States of America, the first letter you get from the government is from the Selective Service asking you to register. Thank you.

One thing more, Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I was wondering even before, was it all right to die for this country and yet we are denied membership in the VFW? Thank you, sir. I move for the approval of this by-law.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you.

Recognizing Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE PETER LUSTE (Post 8862 - Department of Europe):

I rise to speak in support of this resolution. If you give me a few moments, I would like to address it from my own experience. This is called the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. We accept veterans.

We do not have in the label citizens. I do understand what happens as historical values, what was happening during that time. However, the individuals that have been during that time drafted into the military service, sailors, soldiers, airmen, marines, coast guard, did not ask to come in. They performed the duty.

They went through and then they obtained citizenship afterwards, because of the time frame. I, myself, was drafted, performed my duty, became a veteran, and then I was allowed to become a citizen. I do recall my oath that I had to give at the time I was sworn in as a soldier.

It did say that I am supposed to give my life in the defense of the country. I guess if someone gives that oath he should be able to be trusted to become a veteran of the foreign wars of the United States. Thank you for your attention.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much. Seeing no one else at the microphones — yes, I will recognize

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE PAT BEAMER (Post 4351 - Florida): Commander-in-Chief, I stand in opposition to this. It seems that the people are saying that if the member is not a citizen, serves in the U.S. military, he cannot be a member of the VFW. That is not the case.

If he serves in military as a non-citizen, subsequently becomes a citizen, he is very much eligible for membership in the VFW. My attitude on this is if he served in the U.S. military as a non-citizen, subsequently chooses to remain a non-citizen, then he should not be a member of the VFW. Thank you, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you. Seeing no one at the microphones, we are going to call for a vote on

Resolution B-2. We have a motion to accept and a second. If you vote “yes”, then B-2 will be accepted. If you vote “no”, it will be rejected.

All in favor of the motion of accepting B-2, signify by the usual sign of “aye”; all those opposed “no”. There is no doubt in the chair’s mind. The nays have it. It is so ordered.

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE JIM MARSHALL, CONGRESSMAN OF GEORGIA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I am pleased this morning to introduce a member of Congress who is a true friend of America’s veterans. In fact, he is a veteran himself. Now in his first term in the United States Congress, Congressman Jim Marshall has brought with him an earned reputation for honesty, integrity and hard work.

Although enrolled at Princeton University, in 1968 Jim felt compelled by a sense of duty and fairness to enlist in the army and volunteer for infantry combat duty in Vietnam, where he served as an Airborne-Ranger Reconnaissance Platoon Sergeant. He was wounded and decorated for heroism in ground combat.

Congressman Marshall has worked with the VFW and with leaders

of other veterans service organizations to change the law so that retired military veterans with a service-connected disability and 20 years of honorable service can receive both their full, earned military retired pay and VA disability compensation.

Legislation to allow disabled military veterans to concurrently receive both retirement and disability compensation has been introduced in every Congress since 1987. This issue remains a priority goal with the Veterans of Foreign Wars and we are honored to have the strong support of Jim Marshall for concurrent receipt.

Congressman Marshall serves on the House Armed Services Committee, the House Committee on Agriculture and the House Committee on Small Business.

My comrades, please give a warm welcome to a fellow veteran, an outstanding Congressman, someone who is looking after our interest, Jim Marshall, from the great state of Georgia. (Applause)

REMARKS - CONGRESSMAN JIM MARSHALL

CONGRESSMAN MARSHALL: Thank you, fellows. I have got a lavalier mike and I am going to walk out here on the front, because this is an audience participation exercise. You guys from California, you are going to like it. But before I start out, I need to say hello to my mates from Georgia.

I am a Life Member of Post 658 in Macon, Georgia. I have got my State Adjutant, my Commander-in-Chief and former Commander-in-Chief all up here with me. A lot of you flew out here and I always get a kick out of the stewardess when she gets on the microphone and she starts giving you all kinds of instructions about what is going to happen when the plane crashes.

I kind of think it could be pretty simple, you just bend over and grab your legs and kiss something goodbye. She has got to go through a whole lot of stuff. One of the things she says is that she says children under the age of 14 are not permitted to sit in an exit aisle next to the door, the emergency door. Then she goes on.

Now, that is the one with the extra leg room. She goes on and she says, "If you are somebody who is not able to deal with removing the exit door, let us know and we will move you to another seat." Now, I want to see the first man raise his hand and say I want to sit with the kids. I mean, you just don't, right?

Here is the audience participation part of it. I am going to throw quarters at the California guys. Somebody from Georgia likes to throw things at California. I have got quarters right here and I have to ask you-all whether or not you can still catch. I am not sure whether you can still catch, but you can still duck.

Everybody remembers how to duck. I don't want somebody suing me over tossing quarters. Every time I say concurrent receipt, I am going to toss a quarter. You almost caught it, too. It helps in understanding where we are on the discharge petition that you-all have heard about if I would like to give you a little bit of history.

I was raised in an army family and my father and grandfather were

both officers, both combat wounded, both disabled, both military retirees. I dropped out of Princeton and enlisted, went to Vietnam, got wounded, got shrapnel in my leg.

Twenty-one months, one day later, I am out of the Army. I am back in school. I get disability benefits. I have been getting disability benefits since 1970. I get on with my life, and in the year 2000 I run for Congress, get whipped, run for Congress again in the year 2002.

When you are running for Congress, one of the things that happens, lots of groups come to see you and they ask you what your view is going to be on different subjects. Military officers came to see me and they asked me about concurrent receipt. I almost hit that guy. I did hit him to be alert up here. I don't expect much from guys from California, but don't let me hurt you.

So they asked me about concurrent receipt. The first thing I say is, "What is that?" I don't know what it is. Here I am a veteran that has been getting disability benefits and I didn't know what concurrent receipt is. That is the first problem I see. I have two more quarters. I have got a lot of quarters, fellows. You caught one there. That is good.

They explained it to me. Here is what they said. If I had stayed in the military for a career, which I could have done and retired, I wouldn't get disability benefits. I served my country more, get less. That is like somebody saying two plus two equals five. It is kind of hard to grasp it. I finally got the concept.

I get elected. I am honored to serve, I am on the Armed Services Committee. One of the other things, and one of the first things that happens is they send around a bunch of legislation and ask you whether or not you will co-sponsor this legislation.

One of the pieces of legislation that comes around to me is House Resolution 303. Many of you-all know that piece of legislation. It has been sitting around basically since 1987. During the last Congress, 402 members of Congress signed on as co-sponsors of that legislation. We only have 435 people in the entire Congress. So, you have 402 signed on to the legislation. Nothing happens.

During the last Congress, many of you will remember this, what happened was on the House side they put something in the defense authorization bill. On the Senate side, they put something in the defense authorization bill.

All of a sudden there was a Conference Committee and they come up with this bright idea of combat-related special compensation; combat-related special compensation. Now, what we are going to do is to take all the disabled military retirees and we are going to discriminate from one to another and treat them differently as if that is something that is right, as if that is something that is defensible.

I don't know all this history, by the way, by the time this thing comes across my desk. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out if you are about the 300th person to sign this thing as a co-sponsor it ought to pass, right? So, I started asking around why hasn't this passed?

It gets bottled up in Committee. How do you get around the Committee, how do you get around the leadership? You can file a discharge petition. So I filed a discharge petition. Now, that is something that gets the

leadership upset.

Well, I can't tell you how many times I did push-ups in the military because I got somebody upset. So, I really don't care about the leadership. The discharge petition is a device that gets around the Committee process. All we need is 218 signatures.

If you get 218 signatures on the petition, it forces a vote on 303. I am a freshman Democrat and I am trying to force a vote on a piece of legislation written by senior Republicans, bipartisan, right? We have got 202 signatures, fellows, 202. We need 16 more. There is no reason why we should not get those 16.

Now, why haven't some additional people signed on? Many of you in this room have probably written your member of Congress or talked to your member of Congress. If your member of Congress is a co-sponsor, then you kind of expect they had signed on to the petition, right, and they would go ahead and force a vote on this thing so we can get it over with and get it done, do it right, that should have been done a long time ago?

There are various excuses that are offered. Now, the legitimate excuse is the one that you are not going to hear. I want to take you back to when you were kids. I know when I was a kid and I was hanging out with my buddies, and it got to be about 9:00 or 10:00 o'clock at night I had to go home because my mama said go home.

I didn't tell my buddies it was because my mama said I had to do something. I would say, "Oh, I have got to go, guys." You are not going to hear a member of Congress say, "I can't do what I have told you time and time and time again I am going to do, because my leadership said don't do it." That is like saying your mama said to go home. You can't say that.

So, what other kinds of excuses are you going to hear? Well, one of the excuses is we can't afford it, right? We just can't afford it. So I got to thinking about that. Let's see, there are a whole bunch of members of Congress in the House who voted for a budget that proposed a \$720 billion tax cut. They are on record this year voting for a \$720 billion tax cut.

What did we do? We passed a \$320 billion tax cut. I voted for it. I know the figure. There is a lot of room there. There are a bunch of members of Congress that voted for a \$550 billion tax cut this year. What did they do? \$320 billion. That is \$200 billion of room.

There are a lot of members of Congress, and this is the one that really got me, there are a lot of members of Congress who voted for complete elimination of the estate tax. Now, just last year a couple of college professors from Boston College estimated how much that is going to cost us.

Here is their estimate. On the average per year, over the next 50 years, the range is \$157 billion a year to \$784 billion each year. And guess what? A whole bunch of folks voted for that. And we can't afford to take care of this concurrent receipt problem? Why not?

I think there is a problem with the name, fellows, men and women. There is a problem calling it concurrent receipt. One of the reasons why complete elimination of the estate tax has moved so far along is because of some very wealthy folks paid some very good lobbyists a lot of money to get everybody to say what? Death tax, right?

You have all heard of death tax, right? Have you heard of the death

tax? There is no such thing. But everybody has heard of it. When you hear of it you instinctively know it is wrong. So here is what I would like you to do. I would like us to quit saying concurrent receipt and I would like you to start using the term disabled veterans tax. That is what it is. It is a tax on disabled veterans.

It is a decision by this country to take away 100 percent of your disability benefits. Disabled American veterans have been treated wrong by this country for years. So, I want you to use the term disabled veterans tax. Don't use the term concurrent receipt.

Here is what I would like you to do for training purposes, the death tax, how do you get everybody to say the death tax? They actually had pizza funds in certain offices. You had a pizza fund. If you were a staffer and you said inheritance tax or estate tax, you had to put a dollar in the pizza fund.

Guess what, after a while you figured it out and you said death tax. That is why I have my quarters. I want everybody to agree that for the balance of the convention if you hear somebody say concurrent receipt, he owes you a quarter.

Does everybody agree? You have got to pay somebody a quarter every time you use the term concurrent receipt. If somebody says no, wait a minute, you are talking about disabled veterans tax, we are going to start using that term because that is what it is and people understand that one.

Now, let's do a little training. Are you ready? Everybody together, you-all have got to help me out here: disabled veterans tax, disabled veterans tax, disabled veterans tax. Concurrent receipt. That is pretty good. I figured a whole bunch of you-all would get fooled and I was going to get a bunch of money.

The disabled veterans tax, the excuses, money doesn't cut it. To help you out where money is concerned, you can go to my Web site. If you have got a pen and you want to jot the Web site down, go to my Web site and what I have done is I have listed all the co-sponsors of 302. I have listed everybody who signed the petition and the people who have not signed the petition. I have listed the votes, because this was an easy one. I listed the votes on complete elimination of the estate tax. You just can't have it both ways. It is a matter of priorities here.

Where are your priorities? Are we going to cut the disabled veterans tax or are we going to totally eliminate the estate tax? That is fine with me to totally eliminate the estate tax, but let's do that on down the road after we have taken care of some other problems, and this problem should come for any member of Congress way ahead of that one. And everybody here knows that.

Now, one of the other excuses that you are going to hear, like I say, they are not going to say mama told them not to do it, they are going to have to come up with something else. How about this? It is a partisan effort. That is all this is is petty politics.

The response to that is it is partisan if you make it partisan. This has never been a partisan issue. This has been an issue of right or wrong and any veteran ought to be able to get up and tell somebody that. It has got nothing to do with Democrat or Republican, it is what is right or what is wrong.

What other excuses are you going to hear? Well, this is not part of

the normal Committee process. We are going to disrupt the normal process of the House. Now, that is kind of like the leadership is going to be upset. It doesn't bother me. Does it bother you?

By the way, the discharge petition process that we are using is part of the rules of the House. It is designed to get things out of Committee that have been bottled up that should not have been bottled up, things like this one that has been co-sponsored by so many folks.

My Web site is www.house.gov/marshall. I will give you a fax number also, because I would like you, as you get responses, as you get information that would be helpful to the cause here, fax that information to me. Fax the responses, excuses that have been given to you to 202-225-3013. That is 202-225-3013.

Let me finish with this. It was an incredible honor for me to serve my country in the military. It wasn't anybody else leaving Princeton University and volunteering for Vietnam in 1968 after the Tet Offensive, I can tell you that. I feel like I did the right thing.

It is an incredible honor for me to be able to stand up here in front of all of you and talk about this issue. Thank you for your service. Your service isn't over. You have millions of veterans that are depending upon you to make something happen on this issues.

I am a freshman Democrat. There is no way I can make this happen. If it happens, it happens because of the pressure, the demands that are put forth by all of you as leaders working through your groups. As I go around and I talk about this, I get lots of different ideas.

There are veterans who are out there right now in malls with petitions, petitions signed to end the veterans tax, the disabled veterans tax. There is one fellow who is going to put a sandwich board on and he is going to stand out in front of his Congressman's office.

Hey, look, if I can stand up here and walk around like I am doing right now, then surely some of you can put a sandwich board on and go see your local Congressman. That will wind up getting press. There are members of Congress who are concerned about re-election.

There are members of Congress who have decided they are going to run for Senate and they are going to run for Governor. Those folks should be on board with this issue, because if veterans really get organized, veterans can make the difference in their election.

You can't have somebody time after time after time get up in front of you and say I am with you, I am going to take care of this problem, and then have them wimp out right now and back them in the future. You are letting your team down if you do that.

You-all, it is a real honor. I would love to be a part of making this thing happen. But if it happens, it happens because of all of you. This is audience participation. I was first sergeant of ranger school. We started with 194 students per sergeant and we ended with 69.

People were grumpy as hell. I had to get up there and I had to say things like this, Company 8, right face, forward, march, double time. The Navy guys wouldn't understand that, but the rest of you do. It is double time. We have a unique opportunity to fix a problem that has been around for over a century. If it gets fixed, it is because you fixed it.

God bless you all. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON, SENATOR OF TEXAS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much, Congressman.

It is a special honor for me to introduce to you the distinguished United States Senator from the great state of Texas, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison.

Senator Hutchison was elected as the first woman to represent Texas in the U.S. Senate in 1993. Seven years later, more than 4 million Texans re-elected her to a second full term, the largest number of votes ever garnered in the state.

Senator Hutchison is a leading voice on foreign policy and national security issues and serves as a delegate to the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, commonly known as the Helsinki Commission.

As Chairman of the Military Construction Subcommittee and member of the Defense Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee, she plays a vital role in shaping America's defense policies.

As a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, the Senator has fought for funding and recognition of the Gulf War illness so veterans can receive treatment. Please join me in a warm VFW welcome for Texas Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison. (Applause)

REMARKS - SENATOR KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON

SENATOR HUTCHISON: Thank you very much. Well, thank you very much. I am pleased to be another person to welcome you to my great state of Texas and to the wonderful city of San Antonio. Last month I was privileged to christen the new class of Navy ships, the USS San Antonio, an amphibious assault ship.

As the sponsor, I broke a bottle of Texas sparkling wine across the ship's bow. After a couple of tries, the bottle broke on the bow and all over me. The New Orleans paper ran a photo of me completely soaked, head to toe, with the headline, "Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison Accidentally Christened Herself."

I will try to make less of a splash today. There is no city in America with greater ties to our military than San Antonio. This is the place that Colonel William Barrett Travis wrote the letter from the Alamo, asking for reinforcements. His famous letter ended with the words, "I shall never surrender or retreat."

That phrase has come to symbolize the spirit of our American fighting men and women. On Sunday, I returned from a trip with Senator John McCain to visit our troops in Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan. I wanted to personally tell them how much we all appreciate what they are doing.

You are not surprised, of course, at what a great job every one of them is doing in their respective theaters. They are so proud to serve our country. The time that I got the most choked up, we were standing on the black tarmac of Baghdad Airport, complete darkness because we were going to take off with no light whatsoever from the plane or from the airport, and I was meeting with a group of Texans, and it was our first day in Baghdad.

The U.N. had just been bombed at their headquarters in Baghdad. Everyone was very sober. One of the troops said, "Senator, you take care of yourself." I thought that guy is on the front line every day. He doesn't know when he walks across the tarmac or walks down the street or if he is in a helicopter if he is in somebody's sight. I said, "You take care of yourself. America is depending on you."

As I went from place to place in Iraq and in Afghanistan, I am reminded of a quote I read from one of my really good friends who lives in San Antonio, T. R. Fehrenbach, from his wonderful book "This Kind of War", which he wrote about Korea. He said, "I may fly over a land forever, you may bomb it, itemize it, pluralize it, and whip it clean of life, but if you desire to defend it, protect it and keep it for civilization, you must do that on this ground, the way the Roman legions did by putting your young men in the mud."

Those words written nearly 40 years ago are as true today as they were when each of you served. Living conditions for our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan are spartan. But American troops have an uncanny way of making a temporary home out of absolutely nothing.

Working conditions, on the other hand, are not just spartan, they are deadly. The job is filled with danger. We are reminded of this every day in the news. Our thoughts today are with the families of those who have been killed during this war and we pray the attacks against our troops will stop.

Because when you get down to it, we are doing great things in Iraq. Our troops are helping the Iraqis establish security by seizing weapons, arresting Saddam Hussein's thugs, hiring police and forming an Iraqi army. They are trying to rebuild Iraq's economy by restoring the oil fields.

They have started setting up an Iraqi Governing Council. They are helping a nation recover from decades of tyranny. But the biggest success is reflected in the words that Iraqis shouted as our troops went from Basrah to Baghdad: "Hello, freedom. Hello, freedom," because Americans are the beacon of freedom throughout the world.

It is what you stood for when you fought in places you had never heard of before. But this is our mantra, that we would protect freedom for the whole world by standing firm when freedom is threatened. Places like Corregidor, Kasaan, Midway, Mogadishu, Porkchop Hill, 73 Easting, and Kuwait City. In those places you stood for freedom.

Your service has made it possible for us to gather today while our nation is at war, but we are safely gathering to honor the memory of those who did not return. Some of you probably had one of your friends or buddies die right next to you. Some never lived to become veterans or even see their firstborn child.

They were soldiers like Army Specialist James Keel from Comfort, Texas, who died in the ambush of the 507th Maintenance Company in Iraq last March. A month later his wife had their first child, a son. There are many like him in your lives, I know.

They sacrificed everything and deserve to be remembered. Iraq and Afghanistan are not the only countries where we have troops. We are spread throughout the world. On any given day there are U.S. service members in more than 100 countries strengthening our ties to those nations.

When they hang up their uniforms, the Veterans of Foreign Wars will attract a new generation of combat veterans for your 9,000 Posts worldwide. They will continue your tradition of over 100 years of service.

Before I close, I want to mention one other special fallen soldier who never wore a uniform, but he served his country through foreign wars throughout his lifetime. His name is Bob Hope. Many of you knew him better than any of us. He was called the Ambassador of Laughter for our GIs.

Your tribute to him on your Web site is most touching. He said throughout his life that of all the awards he ever received, his biggest salute was when you made him an honorary veteran.

I want to close with a conversation that I had with one of the fathers of the young men who was killed in Iraq. He said, "Senator, the only thing that would make losing my son worse is if my son died in vain." It is those words that strengthen our resolve to see it through, to assure that we are successful in putting Iraq and Afghanistan back together.

Some people at the grocery store, the drugstore counter say, "What are we doing over there" as if it had no relations to the United States. But, in fact, just like those of you who were in World War II or the Korean War, we are there for the United States security interests.

We are there to kill the terrorists and wipe them out on their turf so they will never return to our country again. Freedom from terror is at stake and failure is not an option. Thank you for your service to our country. Every one of you has had a part in our way of life and our leadership in the world for freedom as a way of life.

Every one of you and every one of our young men in the hundred places around the world they are as we speak are doing the same thing. I love them, I respect them, and as long as I am in the United States Senate we will never forget your service nor theirs. Thank you very much. God bless you and God bless America. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF FERNANDO "FRED" GARCIA, SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE MILITARY ORDER OF THE COOTIE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: You know, a trip to almost any V.A. Hospital will reveal the importance of the work of the Military Order of the Cootie. Each year the Cooties spend thousands of hours bringing a moment of pleasure to our hospitalized veterans. Their commitment to "Keep 'em Smiling in Beds of White" is a grand tribute to the service and sacrifice of all veterans.

Our next guest was elected Supreme Commander of the Military Order of the Cootie at that organization's 83rd Supreme Scratch in Nashville in August of 2002. Please join me in welcoming the Supreme Commander of the Military Order of the Cootie of the United States of America, Fernando "Fred" Garcia.

RESPONSE - MOC SUPREME COMMANDER FRED GARCIA

MOC SUPREME COMMANDER GARCIA: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. It is indeed an honor and a pleasure to be here in

front of this delegation and to speak. Commander-in-Chief and your staff, I thank you for this opportunity.

As you well know, we have three major missions in our organization. The first one is to “keep ‘em smiling in beds of white” which we try to do every year. The second one is to assist and help with the children at our National Home. The third one is to bolster the help of the membership and everything in the VFW. Those are our big missions.

Everywhere I go, a lot of people ask me who are the Cooties? The only way I can answer that is it is all the officers, chairmen, Post Commanders, District Commanders of this organization. That is who the Cooties are; you are the Cooties; the VFW is the Cooties.

With that, being a short speaker and not being very well indoctrinated in how to speak in public, when I first took this job I went to a school teacher to see if she could help me n speaking. She said, “Fred, I can only tell you three things that you should never forget. One is if you are ever asked to speak, speak loud so you will be heard. Stand tall so you will be recognized, and sit down so you will be appreciated.”

With that, Comrades and Cooties, I will leave you for today. Thank you. (Applause)

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL BY-LAWS, MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL (Cont'd.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: At this time, I would like to call back the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the By-Laws and Manual of Procedure Committee.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FELLWOCK: We are back to the sheet here. We have completed the work in regards to the by-laws. We will now turn to proposed amendments to the Manual of Procedure.

The Committee recommended adoption of M-1, M-2, M-5 and M-8.

I am Art Fellwock, Past Commander-in-Chief, a member of Evansville, Indiana, Post No. 1114, and I make a motion that we adopt M-1, M-2, M-5 and M-8.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TOM POULIOT: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: We have a motion and a second. Do we have any set asides?

I recognize Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE FROSTY HULSEY (Post 1949 - Washington): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Frosty Hulsey, Acting State Commander of the Department of Washington, Post 1949. This is out of order since there is a motion on the floor, but I wanted to doubt the vote on Amendment B-2 and move for a roll-call vote when the opportunity presents itself.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: That is out of order completely. B-2 was defeated very soundly. It takes a two-thirds majority to win, and if you would like we will do a voice vote again so there will not be any doubt in your mind. We will be voting on B-2 again.

All those in favor of B-2 signify by the usual sign of “aye”; all those opposed to B-2 by the sign of “no.” Is there a doubt in your mind,

Department Commander of Washington? There is none in the chair's mind.

COMRADE FROSTY HULSEY (Post 1949 - Washington): No, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Do we have any set asides?

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE RON RUSKO (Post 9460 - Connecticut): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I wish not to set anything aside, I wish to make a motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I am sorry. I couldn't hear you.

COMRADE RON RUSKO (Post 9460 - Connecticut): Commander-in-Chief, I do not wish to set any of them aside, I wish to make a motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Oh, you wish to make a motion? Well, we already have a motion and a second on the floor. It is open for discussion. If there is no discussion —

COMRADE RON RUSKO (Post 9460 - Connecticut): Commander-in-Chief, it has nothing to do with what you were proposing. My motion shall be different from that. That is why I am standing back a little bit. You can vote on this motion and then I can make mine.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: We are voting on M-1, M-2, M-5 and M-8 for approval. That is the motion on the floor and there is a second. Does everybody understand the motion? Is there any discussion on this? If not, all those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; all those opposed "no."

The "ayes" have it. It is so ordered.

Now, do you have something on one of the rejections?

COMRADE RON RUSKO (Post 9460 - Connecticut): No, Comrade Commander-in-Chief. It applies to all of the Manual of Procedure. I think this would be the proper time, if you would allow me, to make such a motion. I am Ron Rusko, Post 9460, Connecticut.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: As soon as we finish the report of the Committee I will be happy to listen to your motion, if you have nothing on what we have here in black and white.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FELLWOCK: The ones that the Committee recommends for rejection are M-3, M-4, M-6 and M-7.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Are there any set asides? If not, they are automatically rejected. I would be very happy to listen to your motion. Oh, I am sorry. We have got one more under the Ritual and then I will be glad to listen to you.

Excuse me.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FELLWOCK: We have one under Ritual, R-1. The Committee recommends rejection.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Is there a set aside on that? Hearing none, it is automatically rejected. Is that it?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FELLWOCK: Yes.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I would like to dismiss the Committee on the By-Law Amendments, Manual of Procedure and Ritual, and thank you very much for your service. I am certainly not trying to put you down. If you want to make a motion, get up there and do it. You have as much right to make one as I do.

COMRADE RON RUSKO (Post 9460 - Connecticut): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I rise to make a motion regarding the Manual of

Procedure, and my motion, and I will make it, I think it is the right thing to do, as Jim Goldsmith would say. I move that at the 105th National Convention that delegates to this convention be allowed to amend those Manual of Procedure parts that do not affect the by-laws both in Committee and on the National convention floor.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I understand your motion. I believe that your motion is out of order because you are asking us to do something that affects the 105th convention and it doesn't have anything whatsoever to do with this convention.

COMRADE RON RUSKO (Post 9460 - Connecticut): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, that is why I was holding back, because in all fairness, and I think we need a second first to discuss this.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: No, I think the motion is out of order. There will be no discussion.

COMRADE RON RUSKO (Post 9460 - Connecticut): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, we have the right to amend the Manual of Procedure, but through some glitch we have not been able to do that on the floor or in Committee because they said it was prior notification.

That is incorrect and in all fairness to the delegates I am saying starting with the 105th National Convention they should have that right because it does take a two-thirds majority vote in force of custom. Because we are doing it wrong all these years, it takes a two-thirds vote to make it right, and at that point, at the 105th National Convention, we can do it right. These good comrades would be able to change or amend the Manual of Procedure not affecting the by-laws.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: It would be so simple for you to put in an amendment for that, Ron. You are on the By-Laws Committee, are you not?

COMRADE RON RUSKO (Post 0460 - Connecticut): Yes, I am, Comrade Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Why didn't we have a resolution for that, then?

COMRADE RON RUSKO (Post 9460 - Connecticut): It will not require a resolution, Commander-in-Chief. All it will require is a simple vote at the 105th National Convention at the beginning, but at least these good comrades will know when they receive this green paper, or whatever color it will be next year, that when they read the Manual of Procedure parts they have the right to amend them.

It is listed on the back of the green paper that they do have that right. But we have never conformed to that. So, because of that, it now takes a two-thirds majority vote to allow us to do that. That is all I am saying, Comrade Commander-in-Chief.

It can't be done today and it can be done at the beginning of next year's convention, but at least these comrades now know that they do have the right to change the Manual of Procedure or amend it on the floor as long as it does not affect the by-law it is explaining.

PARLIAMENTARIAN ED BURNHAM: The present by-laws and Manual of Procedure provide what you are suggesting, so I don't see any need for an amendment unless you want to change that, which you would need to present an amendment at our next convention for consideration.

Right now we are operating in accordance with the By-Laws and Manual of Procedure.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: According to what I am reading here on the back, it says that, "The explanatory information in the Manual of Procedure may be amended by the National Convention as long as it does not conflict with the corresponding by-law. Such amendments only require a majority vote."

COMRADE RON RUSKO (Post 9460 - Connecticut): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I could not agree with you more, but somebody just tried in Committee yesterday to amend the Manual of Procedure. They were told they couldn't do that because it takes a two-thirds vote, and it took prior notification.

What I am trying to explain, Comrade Commander-in-Chief, is because we have done that for so long and denied the opportunity to, in fact, amend that Manual of Procedure, it now takes, according to the Demeter's Manual, a two-thirds vote of this convention to change it back so we can, in fact, adhere to this.

We have not been allowed to amend any Manual of Procedure in Committee or on this floor. It now takes a vote to change it back to allow us to do that. I know it is confusing.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE KEN MEAD (Post 3513 - Arizona): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Ken Mead, Post 3513, Arizona, and Chairman of the By-Law Review Committee. I would suggest that the comrade come to the By-Law Review Committee meeting in Washington and discuss that with this Committee. We can bring it forth to the next convention if there are any modifications to be made.

COMRADE RON RUSKO (Post 9460 - Connecticut): Commander-in-Chief, I would agree to that. I withdraw my motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much, Ron.

PRESENTATION OF PLAQUE TO ALL KOREAN WAR VETERANS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: At this time we would like to make a presentation of a plaque to the Korea War Past Commanders-in-Chief and to all the Korea War veterans in this room today. If Past Commanders-in-Chief Staum, Olson, Wayslik, Hogan and Currieo please come forward.

This plaque reads: "Award of appreciation presented to the Korean War veterans in sincere appreciation for your commitment, dedication and devotion to duty in preserving freedom and democracy for the people of South Korea."

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, would all the Korean War veterans in this hall please stand and be recognized. (Applause)

We are also giving "The Battles of the Korean War," a magazine to all of our Past Commanders-in-Chief. We have extra copies of these for each Korean War veteran if they will ask for it and stop by Publications and see Robert Wagner and pick up your free magazine, all you Korean War veterans. Thank you-all so much for service well rendered to America.

...Whereupon, the assembly extended a

prolonged standing ovation. ...

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I think most of you know we just commemorated the 50th Anniversary of the signing of the Korean Armistice on July 27, 2003. So, as a tribute to the Korean War veterans, the VFW magazine published a three-year series of articles.

Those articles were consolidated into a book called "Battles of the Korean War," and this book is an ideal gift for your local public and school libraries, as well as any Korean War veteran. Like I said, if you would like a copy, please stop by the VFW publication booth and see Robert Widherr. He will be happy to assist you.

INTRODUCTION OF KENNETH POND, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Five years ago, the VFW launched a massive campaign to fulfill a \$7.5 million pledge to the World War II Memorial. The VFW has remained committed to this effort and is proud of its role in working to accomplish the completion of this important tribute to those who served during World War II.

Last year the Veterans of Foreign Wars presented a check for \$850,000 as the final installment, completing our pledge of \$7.5 million. Next year, the dream of having a memorial dedicated to those who served so valiantly during World War II, will come true when the memorial is dedicated. Today I am proud to introduce the Executive Director of the American Battle Monuments Commission, Kenneth S. Pond.

REMARKS OF KENNETH S. POND, THE AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

MR. POND: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Ray Sisk and distinguished members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. It is always a pleasure for me to get out of Washington and to attend this convention and to swap stories with fellow veterans, and to share with you our progress on the World War II Memorial.

Speaking of stories, I was telling a couple of the guys last night at the bar that when I was a Deputy Commander of the Southern European Task Force, I was having a very bad day and I had to move very quickly to another part of the installation, so I grabbed the phone myself and I called up and I said, "Send my damn jeep up and send it up now."

At the other end I heard, "Hell, no, come get it yourself." I said, "Do you know who you are talking to? This is the Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff of the Southern European Task Force." On the other end of the line was this voice saying, "Do you know who you are talking to?" I said, "No." He said, "Bye." (Laughter)

I will tell you what I know, I was never able to get ahead of those young guys. For years, we have sung the same tune when we came down, and we have told you it is coming, but we need your help to get over one more hurdle. Then we came back and we said, "Well, maybe just one more hurdle."

And then we came back and we said, "Well, maybe just one more hurdle." The hurdles kept coming. We also have received hundreds of calls and letters from World War II veterans asking us if the memorial to their sacrifice and achievement would ever be built.

Well, today I bring you good news. I bring you a simple message. Your National World War II Memorial is on schedule and it is on budget, and it has 28 weeks to go until it is completed. You heard me right, 11 years of public hearings, fund raising, design, construction, going to court, going to lower courts, going all the way to the Supreme Court, having the United States Congress pass a law and the President signed the law.

And he said in my presence, "I am going to see that this memorial is built." From that time on, we started handling the brick and mortar and the stone to get it done. It has been a struggle to this point. As you well know, we couldn't have gotten this far without the VFW.

We are especially grateful to Commander-in-Chief Ray Sisk and to all of his predecessors, and to the staff in Kansas City and to the staff in Washington, particularly Bob Wallace, Leo Andrew and Bill Smith, who have helped us through some very critical stages.

To the VFW, I say the American Battle Monuments Commission and the World War II veterans will be forever grateful to you for what you did to get us to where we are today. We have raised \$192 million for the memorial. I must thank Senator Bob Dole and Fred Smith, the CEO of FedEx, who were our co-chairs of the fund drive, and Tom Hanks, our national spokesman, the VFW and their push, the widespread support from Americans all over the country, and also a wonderful AMBC staff who stayed with it all the way.

The money we raised is more than enough to cover the memorial. I am not a fund-raiser by trade, but I know a remarkable achievement when I see one. When I see corporations, veterans organizations, individuals from every corner of America come together so quickly and donate so much money in such a quick fashion, it tells me that it is a real tribute to the appreciation the American people have for the sacrifice of our World War II generation.

I don't have to remind you, as your Commander-in-Chief has just said, the VFW was one of our top contributors with over \$7.5 million for this cause. Of all of the people and of all of the corporations in the country, the VFW was the second one in giving the most money. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

A lot of work has been done at the construction site since I reported to you last year, and in keeping with the old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words, I brought a short video to show you firsthand the progress that is being made.

But before I get the video on, let me tell you that we have a World War II registry which will permit all who served in the war, at home and overseas, to have their names permanently associated with the memorial that honors their service.

Now, if you have got a pencil, a 1-800 number is going to appear at the beginning and at the end. If you miss it there, we have given the number to your VFW staff. If you miss it there, the VFW has it on their Web site. So you will have all of these opportunities.

Without me talking further, let's show you where we are. Please roll the film.

(Whereupon, the video on the World War II Memorial was presented at this time.)

When we dedicate the Memorial, it will mark the end of a long road to victory. I want to take a moment now to recognize those who service the memorial commemorates. I would like to have all of the World War II veterans in the audience to stand, please.

If you will do me a favor, if you will stand just a minute or two, I want to talk to you. The great English philosopher, John Stewart Mills, said, "War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest thing. A man who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing he cares more about than his own personal safety is a miserable creature who has no chance of being free."

Well, thank God, we have you to stand up and fight for our freedom. You heard the guns, you felt the fear, you saw the dead and you made the sacrifice for freedom. Ordinary men who did extraordinary things, you are truly the greatest generation who ever lived. You did nothing less than save the world. We salute you and we thank you for all you have done to make the United States of America the greatest nation on earth.

On 29 May, 2004, we will dedicate the World War II Memorial, a memorial whose beauty will take its place next to Lincoln, Washington, Jefferson on the National Mall. We are not building this memorial for you, but in your honor. We build it for your children and your children's children, and all the future generations to remember throughout eternity what you did for freedom during democracy's darkest hours.

We look forward to seeing you in May at the World War II Memorial dedication. You have my word. It will be a magnificent memorial. You will see this for yourself. God bless you, God bless the VFW and God bless America, the land of the free, but only so long as it remains the home of the brave. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF HARVEY KLEE, CHAPEL OF FOUR CHAPLAINS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much. The story of the heroic acts of four Army Chaplains on board the troop transport ship U.S.A.T. Dorchester is known to all.

Those brave men provided us with an example of the ultimate act of unselfish courage, one that inspired us during our years of military service and continues to influence our lives. Today we are pleased to welcome Harvey Klee, Esquire, of the Chapel of Four Chaplains for a special presentation.

PRESENTATION BY HARVEY KLEE, CHAPEL OF FOUR CHAPLAINS

MR. KLEE: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Officers and Members of the VFW, and Distinguished Guests:

No tradition of American society is more precious to or characteristic of our culture than that of voluntarily reaching out to neighbors in need and such selfless service is part of both our civic and religious heritage.

The Chapel of Four Chaplains, a national non-profit organization,

is founded upon one shining manifestation of our heritage: that of the four Army Chaplains who after giving their life jackets to soldiers who had none, linked arms with one another and went down with the U.S.A.T. Dorchester after it was torpedoed on February 3, 1943.

This historic event began a torpedoed junction, the U-boat infested in icy water of the North Atlantic during World War II. On January 23, 1943, the U.S.A.T. Dorchester, which is an old coastal steamer quickly pressed into military service, left New York Harbor bound for Greenland.

Three Coast Guard cutters escorted the Dorchester, two patrolled the flanks, the third, the Tampa, was 3,000 yards out front. Most of the men were seasick, green with nausea. The weather was bitterly cold with gale-force winds, ice beginning up on the decks, slowing the Dorchester to ten knots.

Moving among them were four Army chaplains, George L. Fox, Alexander D. Goode, Clark V. Poling, and John T. Washington. The chaplains talked with and listened to the men, soothing apprehensions, offering encouragement, sharing jokes about their concern, and their camaraderie with the men and one another, they brought solace.

On February 2, 1943, the Tampa detected the presence of a submarine. She dropped back and swept the periphery of the convoy but failed to find the submarine's position. That evening the Tampa returned to the patrol area up front and the other ships followed.

The captain ordered the men to sleep in their clothing with life jackets close at hand. They were only 150 miles from Greenland. With daylight there would be air cover from the American base. It was just after midnight on February 3, 1943, an enemy submarine fired a torpedo toward Dorchester's flank and the missile exploded in the boiler room, destroying the electric supply and releasing suffocating clouds of steam and ammonia gas.

Many on board died instantly. Some were trapped below deck, others jolted from their bunks, groped and stumbled their way to the decks of the stricken vessel. Taking on water rapidly, the ship began listing to starboard. Overcrowded lifeboats capsized.

Rafts drifted away before anyone could reach them. Men clung to the rail frozen with fear, unable to let go and plunged into the dark churning water far below. The testimony of survivors tells us that the sole order and the only fragment of hope in this chaos came from the four chaplains who calmly guided men to their boat stations.

They opened the storage locker and distributed life jackets. Then they coached men with frozen fear over the side. Soon that supply of life jackets was exhausted. Several survivors report watching in awe as the four chaplains either gave away or forced upon other young men their own life jackets.

These four men of God had given away their only means of savings themselves in order to save others. The chaplains gathered together and led the men around them in prayer and a hymn. They linked their arms together as the slant of the deck became severe, and just that way with their arms linked in brotherhood and their heads bowed in prayer they sank beneath the waves. It was a heroic act.

It was not the only heroic act aboard the Dorchester, but it was especially significant because of the identity of these four young men, two

Protestants, a Catholic and Jew. Today, as it has these many years, the Chapel of Four Chaplains serves the memory of these brave men and carries their message of inter-faith, cooperation and selfless service to every part of our country.

And to recognize and encourage acts of volunteerism, brotherhood and sacrifice among Americans of every age and the Chapel established the Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion program. The bronze medallion, and accompanying plaque, is an award given by the Chapel in recognition of an exceptional selfless service on the part of an individual which contributes to the well-being of others at the national or world level.

In the spirit of inter-faith cooperation, I am proud to present the Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion to our Commander-in-Chief Ray Sisk.

The inscription on the plaque reads "The Chapel of Four Chaplains is pleased to present the Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion to Ray Sisk on August 26, 2003, in recognition of your service to all people regardless of race or faith. This award symbolizes to all Americans and for all time the unity of this nation founded upon the fatherhood of our God."

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you so much.

MR. HARVEY KLEE: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF "CONSECUTIVE YEAR OF MEMBERSHIP" CITATION TO DEPARTMENT OF ARIZONA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: For 36 years, the members of the Department of Arizona have worked together as a team to increase VFW membership throughout the state.

Each member of the Department of Arizona can take pride in their many years of dedication and hard work that went into reaching a very significant milestone.

Now, in recognition of those efforts, I would like to call on Dennis Kane, the Immediate Past All-American Department Commander of Arizona, to accept this "Consecutive Years of Membership Growth" citation.

I certainly want to congratulate from my own Western Conference the great Department of Arizona for its 36th year of continuous growth in membership.

ADJUTANT GENERAL JOHN SENK: The citation reads, "Certificate of Commendation presented to the Department of Arizona.

"In recognition of 36 consecutive years of membership growth, evidencing the attainment of over three decades of continuous membership gain by a Department of Veterans of Foreign Wars." This has been signed by the Commander-in-Chief and the Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE - COMRADE DENNIS KANE

COMRADE DENNIS KANE: Thank you, Chief. On behalf of the Posts and membership of Arizona, I am glad to accept this award. Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Banas, we are working on 37. We are well ahead of where we were last year. On behalf of State Commander Frank Page, I know he will be really happy to stand up here and get number 37.

Commander-in-Chief, it has been my pleasure working with you

this year and congratulations on a fantastic year. Once again, thank you for the award.

PRESENTATION OF MEMBERSHIP RECRUITER AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: It is now my privilege to give some Membership Recruiter Awards. I would like to stress the importance of recruiting as well as rewarding those individuals who worked so hard to recruit new, reinstated or MIP members into the VFW.

The winner of the National Recruiter of the Year Award for 2002-2003 for recruiting the most new or reinstated members, excluding MIP, is Bruce A. Withers, member of Kitzingen Post No. 10436, Kitzingen, Germany.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation reads, "National Recruiter of the Year Award presented to Bruce A. Withers in sincere appreciation and grateful recognition of your outstanding service in the VFW Membership Program.

"Your exceptional initiative and untiring effort during the 2002-2003 membership year contributed immeasurably toward the National membership goal of recruiting 180,000 new or reinstated members.

"You are commended for your professional achievements and recognized for your dedication to the goals of the 'Service-Honor-Pride' team.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 26th day of August, 2003." This has been signed by Raymond Sisk, Commander-in-Chief, and John J Senk, Jr., Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE - COMRADE BRUCE WITHERS

COMRADE BRUCE WITHERS (Post 10436 - Europe): Thank you very much, comrades. I accept this award on behalf of the Department of Europe.

I would like to thank my Department Commanders, Past Department Commander Todd Oda, and my present Department Commander Dean White for giving me the opportunity to travel all over, leave my wife.

She didn't see me very much. She loves the garden, though, and she gets out when I am gone and she gets these flowers going, and that's it. I get out to do my VFW stuff. I would like to leave you with just one thought in mind. It is my motto: "If you don't ask, you will never know." So, you have got to get out there and ask them. Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF THE MIP RECRUITER OF THE YEAR AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: The winner of the Military Initiative Program Recruiter of the Year Award, for recruiting the most new active duty, reserve or National Guard members is John R. Lewis, member of Royal Gorge Post No. 4061, located in Canon City, Colorado. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation reads: "MIP Recruiter of the Year Award presented to John R. Lewis in sincere appreciation and

grateful recognition of your outstanding service in the VFW Military Initiative Program.

"Your exceptional initiative and untiring effort during the 2002-2003 membership year contributed immeasurably by personally signing up over 1,500 new MIP members.

"You are commended for your professional achievements and recognized for your dedication to the goals of the 'Service-Honor-Pride' team." This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief Sisk and the Adjutant General.

REMARKS - COMRADE JOHN R. LEWIS

COMRADE JOHN LEWIS (Post 4061 - Colorado): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I accept this honor today, because this has given me a chance this last year to speak to some 13,000 troops that left from Fort Carson to go into Afghanistan. I have introduced the Veterans of Foreign Wars and told them how proud we are of them, and I have thanked them for what they are doing.

I have been there to welcome the ones who have come back and tell them the same thing. I would like to tell you about one incident. I was sitting down in part of Fort Carson talking to the soldiers when a young lady came up with a little girl.

She said to me, "Do they have anything here for the women?" I said, "Yes, they have Auxiliaries in the Posts." I explained to her that she could go over to these Posts and talk to them about joining the Auxiliary. I said, "Has your husband been in the service?" She said, "Yes, he has." I said, "Has he served overseas?" She said, "Yes, he has. He was killed two weeks ago."

PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL CONVENTION RECRUITER AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: We are proud of the individual who is the recipient of the National Convention Recruiter Award, and it is presented to Jerry D. Spence, a member of Hill 303 Memorial Post 10033 in Taegue, Korea. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "National Convention Recruiter Award presented to Jerry D. Spence in sincere appreciation and grateful recognition of your outstanding service in the VFW Membership Program.

"Your exceptional initiative and untiring effort during the 2002-2003 membership year contributed immeasurably toward the National membership goal of recruiting 180,000 new or reinstated members.

"You are commended for your professional achievements and recognized for your dedication to the goals of the 'Service-Honor-Pride' team.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 26th day of August, 2003." This has been signed by the Commander-in-Chief and the Adjutant General.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much, Adjutant General.

I would like now to call for the report of the Committee on Finance and Internal Organization. The chairman is Ray Soden from Illinois and the Vice-Chairman is Jim Nier from the great state of Texas and your convention chairman.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RAY SODEN: Thank you very much, Commander-in-Chief. To all the delegates, it is still good morning. First and foremost, I want to thank the Chief for appointing an outstanding Committee to work with, but above all giving me a great Vice-Chairman to work with, the man who is hosting this convention and doing an outstanding job, Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Nier. (Applause)

Our Committee was very consistent in all of their thinking and all of their conclusions. We had five resolutions. All were rejected. We did not endorse one resolution. I will read all of the resolutions, the title and number of those that were rejected.

Resolution No. 201, and if you wish to have one set aside, please come to the microphone and do so. Resolution 201, No More VFW-PAC Endorsements. That was rejected.

Resolution 202, Merchant Marines and Their Eligibility. This was rejected.

Resolution No. 203, National and State/Department Vietnam Veteran of the Year VFW Cap, was rejected.

Resolution No. 204, Approval to Accept Air and Space Campaign Medal. This was also rejected.

Resolution No. 205, Issuance of Life Membership to Prisoners of War. This was rejected.

Commander-in-Chief, that concludes our resolutions and their positions. All have been rejected.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Looking at the microphones, I don't see any set asides. They are rejected. Thank you so much for your service.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SODEN: Thank you for allowing me to serve as chairman.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I now dismiss both of you and your Committee.

We will now have a report of the Committee on General Resolutions. The Chairman is Paul Spera. If either Jim Goldsmith or Norm Staab, who are the vice-chairmen, would like to come up, fine. If not, thanks for your service. Go ahead.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF PAUL SPERA: Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief and Comrades. Our Committee met yesterday at 2:00 p.m. We had a total of 12 resolutions. After deliberation we came up with some recommendations. I would first like to offer my thanks to the Commander-in-Chief for the opportunity to be the chairman of this Committee. I would also like to offer my thanks to the three vice-chairmen

who were on my Committee, Past Commander-in-Chief Norman Staab, Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Goldsmith, and Past Commander-in-Chief Cooper T. Holt. Also for his assistance as a member of the Committee, the Past Commander-in-Chief from Washington State.

At this time what I will do is I will read the numbers of those resolutions that were recommended for adoption. They are Resolutions Nos. 301, 303, 307, 311 and 312.

The Committee recommends adoption of those five resolutions. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I move for the adoption of those resolutions.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Do I hear a second?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF COOPER HOLT: I second it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: We have a motion and a second for the adoption of those resolutions. Any question on the motion? Any question on the motion? If not, all those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no." The "ayes" have it. Those resolutions are adopted.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you. Comrades, we had two Committee recommendations for adoption with amendments. The first one is Resolution No. 302. The amendment was to amend the resolution in the first "Be It Resolved" by removing the language "to fly the flag at half staff."

So the "Be It Resolved" would be, "Be It Resolved, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we go on record designating February 1st as American Heroes and Space Remembrance Day and urge federal agencies, as well as all Americans, to mark the day with appropriate ceremonies."

I move for the adoption of this resolution, as amended.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF COOPER HOLT: I second it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I have a motion and a second by Cooper T. Holt. You have heard the motion. Any question on the motion? Any question on the motion? If not, all those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no." The "ayes" have it. It is so ordered.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF PAUL SPERA: Resolution No. 310, the Committee recommends adoption with an amendment, and the amendment would amend the resolution in the "Be It Resolved" by changing the word "issue" to "reissue."

The resolved would then read: "Be It Resolved, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we request the United States Postal Service to reissue a stamp commemorating Medal of Honor recipients."

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I move for the adoption, as amended.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF COOPER HOLT: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I have a motion and a second. Any question on the motion? Any question on the motion? If not, all those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no." The "ayes" have it. It is so ordered.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF PAUL SPERA: The following resolutions have been recommended for rejection: Resolution No. 304; Resolution No. 305; Resolution No. 306; Resolution No. 308; and

Resolution No. 309.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Does anyone wish a set aside on any of those resolutions?

I recognize Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE CHRIS KOZAKIEWICZ (Post 9907 - Arizona): I would like Resolution 309 set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: 309?

COMRADE CHRIS KOZAKIEWICZ (Post 9907 - Arizona): Yes, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: That has been set aside. Any others? If not, comrade, you need to make a motion to accept the resolution, then.

COMRADE CHRIS KOZAKIEWICZ (Post 9907 - Arizona): I would like to make a motion that we accept Resolution 309.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I have a motion on the floor. I am sorry. I have no second. It dies for the lack of a second. Seeing no one else at the microphones, those resolutions are rejected as per the Committee.

I would like to thank the Committee for a great job.

We will now have the report of the Committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs. The chairman is John Smart, and vice-chairman is Bob Currieo.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN SMART: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. Good morning, comrades. I will submit this report to you for the record. Per your request and your orders, our meeting was held at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, August 24th. Your instructions were followed.

A roll call was taken and a portion of my Committee was divided into the POW/MIA Committee. I would like to thank vice-chairman of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, James Currieo, from the great Post 9972 of Arizona, and I also would like to recognize at this time the chairman of the POW/MIA Subcommittee, Past Commander-in-Chief John F. Gwizdak, from VFW Post 5080, Georgia, and vice-chairman of the POW/MIA Subcommittee, Walter G. Hogan, Post 6498, Wisconsin.

I would like to especially thank the staff advisor Bob Manhan, the Director of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee. We had some very important distinguished guests, including Minister Teng from the great Republic of China of the VAC, and we thanked him on behalf of the VFW for the continuous support they give to their veterans.

At this time we will read to you by numbers the resolutions that were adopted and passed at our Committee. Then we will go to amendments and the rejections, and then into the POW/MIA Committee report. Approved for adoption:

Resolutions 403, 405, 406, 411, 413, 414, 416, 417, 422, 423, 424, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 437, 438, 440, 442, 443, 444, 447, 449, 451, 454, 456, 461 and 470.

I will now read to you the resolutions that were approved, as amended. I may add most of these were amended before they came to the Committee. They are:

Resolutions 404, 408, 409, 412, 415, 419, 420, 421, 426, 427, 434, 441, 446, 448, 455, 457, 458, 459, 462, 466, 469, 471 and 472.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, at this time I move that we adopt the resolutions passed by our Committee.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES CURRIEO (Post 9972-Arizona): I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you, Commanders-in-Chief. We have a motion and a second. Is there anyone that has a set aside? Hearing none, all those in favor of adoption will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no." It is so ordered.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES CURRIEO: Comrades, I will now present to you nine resolutions the Committee recommended for rejection. Most of these resolutions were rejected because they have already been accomplished or they are covered under other resolutions. If you have any questions, we will answer those for you.

Beginning with 407, recommended rejected. It has already been accomplished in Public Law 106.398.

Resolution 410, this has also been accomplished in three National Defense Authorization Acts.

Resolution 436, this has also been accomplished through various U.N. Resolutions and parallel U.S. Congressional efforts.

Resolution 452, Restore Vieques Naval Range to Full Use. That naval range and that facility has already been returned to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

No. 463, that has been covered under Resolution 471.

No. 464, that has also been accomplished under Public Law 107.206.

Resolution 468, this involves Representative McDermott in his trip to Iraq, and the reason for rejection, basically, we cannot limit anyone, members of Congress or anyone else, the right to criticize or make comments on any issues. That would be violating the First Amendment of the Constitution.

Resolution 473, this has already been accomplished.

No. 475, Grant Five-Star Rank to Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, this was rejected. Neither the submitted resolution nor the cited Senate Bill S-84 provided any factual information to establish another World War II type five-star rank to a fleet admiral.

This completes the resolutions that were recommended for rejection, Commander.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: You have heard the resolutions submitted for rejection. Are there any set asides? Seeing no one at any microphone, those are rejected.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN SMART: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, that completes our report on National Security and Foreign Affairs.

At this time I would like to call on Past Commander-in-Chief John Gwizdak, and Vice-Chairman Walter Hogan to give their report on the POW/MIA Subcommittee.

REPORT OF POW-MIA SUBCOMMITTEE

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN GWIZDAK: Commander-

in-Chief Sisk, I report that the POW-MIA Subcommittee convened in Room 202 of the Convention Center on Monday, August 25th, at 1:00 p.m. Your instructions were read and procedures were discussed.

The designated members from the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee met to consider the resolutions as specifically applied to the POW-MIA issue. The Subcommittee listened to two guest speakers, the Honorable Jerry Jennings, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense and Director of Defense POW Missing Persons Office from Washington, D.C., and Brigadier General Steven J. Redmond, Commander of Joint Task Force for Full Accounting from Camp H.M. Smith in Hawaii. Mr. Jennings provided the Subcommittee with an update on the recent activities and initiatives of the Defense Prisoners of War Missing Personnel Office.

He was followed by General Redmond, who provided an overview and update of the Joint Task Force Full Accounting activities for this year. I take this opportunity to thank the members of the POW-MIA Subcommittee, Past Commander-in-Chief Walter G. Hogan of Post 6498 of Wisconsin, our Vice-Chairman, and Advisor Bob Manhan, Director of National Security and Foreign Affairs, for their active participation.

Commander, with your permission, I will begin the POW-MIA Subcommittee's report. If any of the delegates have any set asides for discussion, please so indicate after I have completed each segment of the report. I will now proceed by reading the resolution numbers that the Committee recommended for approval as written.

Resolution No. 401, Support Public Awareness Projects.

Resolution No. 425, Support Former POW Slave Labor Claims Against Japanese Firms.

Resolution 450, Drape the Caskets of Fallen American Warriors with the Flag of the United States.

Resolution 453, Accounting and Release of POW-MIA Information.

Those are the four resolutions that we have recommended for approval. I move at this time that they be approved.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF WALTER HOGAN: Commander-in-Chief, Wally Hogan, a delegate from Post 6498, Wisconsin, seconds the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you, Past Commanders-in-Chief. Seeing no one at the microphone, I assume there are no set asides. All those in favor for adoption will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no." The "ayes" have it. Those were adopted.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN GWIZDAK: I will now read the resolution numbers that the Committee recommends for approval, as amended. Resolution 402, Seek Opportunities to Resolve the Korean War POW-MIA Issue.

Resolution 418, Assist Vietnam's Recovery of MIAs as a Sign of Good Faith.

Resolution 433, Interment of an Unknown from Vietnam.

Resolution 435, Increase Central Identification Laboratory Capability.

Resolution 439, A Full Accounting for Commander Speicher.

Resolution 445, Display the POW-MIA Flag.

Resolution No. 460, No Time Restraints for POW-MIA Accounting.

Resolution 465, Support of H.R. 103 to establish a House Select

Committee on POW-MIA Affairs.

Resolution 474, Amend VA POW-MIA Criteria.

Those are the resolutions recommended for approval, as amended. I move their adoption at this time.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF WALTER HOGAN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you, Commanders-in-Chief. Seeing no one at the microphones to have a set aside, all those in favor of the resolutions, as amended, signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no." The "ayes" have it. It is so ordered.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN GWIZDAK: I will now read the resolution that the Committee recommends for rejection. The resolution is 467, Increased Information Flow from DPMO, and our reason for rejection is that the DPMO is presently providing all the information this resolution has asked for.

The additional information must come from the respective military casualty service offices. There is a system in place, and if we try to go with the resolution as it was written, it would require DPMO to release information prior to letting the Military Casualty Service Office know and that could cause a disruption and also it could cause a problem with the family by being notified.

So, Commander-in-Chief, that is the resolution that we are recommending for rejection. That is Resolution No. 467.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Seeing no one at the microphones, it is rejected.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN GWIZDAK: That completes our report, Commander.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Comrade Chairman and Vice-Chairman, thank you so much for a job well done. Thanks to your Committee and you are all relieved.

Is George Cramer in the audience? Chief, this might be a good time to get up here and give your report. We will now have a report from the Committee on Veterans Service Resolutions by Chairman George Cramer and Vice-Chairman Gunner Kent.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GEORGE CRAMER: Commander-in-Chief Sisk, I report that your Convention Committee on Veterans Service Resolutions convened at 2:00 o'clock on Sunday. Your instructions were read, roll call taken, and preliminary matters were discussed. The Committee was divided into three Subcommittees to carefully deliberate each of the 92 resolutions that were assigned.

The Subcommittees were established as follows:

Subcommittee 1, Medical Programs and Veterans Benefits and Entitlements, chaired by Tom Hanson from Minnesota, and Vice-Chairman Bob Craft from Wyoming. The staff advisors were Richard Roarke, Sid Daniels, Rene Allen, Paul Hayden and George Estray.

Subcommittee 2 on Employment was chaired by Tom Kimball from Maryland and Vice-Chairman Les Capello from Alabama, with their staff advisor as Jim Magill.

Subcommittee 3, Other Benefits, was chaired by Ken Thie from Florida, Vice-Chairman Joe Valesquez from California. The Staff Advisors were John McNeill, Larry Burman, Fred Burns, Wendy Lawrence and Bill Crawford.

Before proceeding to the report, I wish to take a moment to express the Committee's appreciation to Bill Bradshaw, Director of National Veterans Service, Jim Magill, Director of Veterans Employment, and Dennis Cullinan, Director of National Legislative Services.

I wish to also take this opportunity to thank my Co-Chairman Past Commander-in-Chief Gunner Kent from Arizona for serving on this very important Convention Committee, and to Bill Dozier, Field Representative, National Veterans Service.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, with your permission I will begin the Committee's report by presenting those resolutions that the Committee recommended to be approved as written. Past Commander-in-Chief Kent will proceed to report the Committee's resolutions that were approved as amended. And, finally, I will conclude the report by presenting the resolutions that the Committee recommended for rejection.

Are you ready? Now, there are 92 resolutions. I will be slowly reading the resolution number. If you wish for me to read the title as well, I am sure you will let me know.

Those recommended approved as written: Nos. 601, 603, 604, 605, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 641, 642, 644, 645, 655, 663, 664, 684, 685, 692.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief and delegates to the 104th National Convention of the VFW, I move to accept the resolutions that were read for approval as written.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ALLEN KENT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Gunner Kent, Past Commander-in-Chief, Department of Arizona, I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I recognize Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE MIKE MUSGROVE (Post 2350 - Nevada): I request that Resolution 692 be read since it is not in the booklet.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Very well.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GEORGE CRAMER: Commander-in-Chief, our apologies. This was a last-minute resolution that was submitted by our Commander-in-Chief. Do you want me to read it in its entirety or just the "Be It Resolved"? I will read the last "Whereas," and then the "Be It Resolved." Is that okay with everybody?

The last "Whereas," "The qualification of the Boise VA Regional Office on the grounds of the Boise Medical Center has been identified in the veterans integrated network Vision 12 capital assets reassignment for enhanced service market plan, but it has been eliminated without stated reason from the VA's National CARES Plan.

"Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we oppose renewing the lease for the current VA Regional Office located in Boise and urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to make funds available for design development, architectural planning and

construction for a new VA regional office building in concert with the overall VA plan for qualification of regional offices on VA Medical Center campuses.”

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Now, are there any set asides? If not, all those in favor of adoption of those recommended by the Committee signify by the usual sign of “aye”; those opposed “no”. The “ayes” have it. Those are adopted.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ALLEN KENT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief and delegates, I will now read the resolutions recommended to be approved, as amended.

They are Resolutions 602, 606, 640, 646, 648, 649, 650, 657, 660, 662, 668, 669, 671, 680, 682, 686 and 689.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I move for acceptance of the resolutions just read that were approved, as amended.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GEORGE CRAMER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, George Cramer, Co-Chairman of the Committee and a member of VFW Post 6869, North Riverside, Illinois, seconds the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: We have a motion and a second to accept those resolutions, as amended. Seeing no one at the microphones, all those in favor will signify by the usual sign of “aye”; those opposed “no.” The “ayes” have it. It is so ordered.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GEORGE CRAMER: I will read now the numbers of those resolutions we recommended rejected Basically, they have been recommended for rejection because you have already adopted a previous resolution that is probably better or because the resolution has something in it that has already been accomplished. Are you ready? Those resolutions recommended for rejection are:

Nos. 624, 643, 647, 651, 652, 653, 654, 656, 658, 659, 661, 665, 666, 667, 670, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 681, 683, 687, 688, 690, 691.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief and delegates, those are the resolutions recommended for rejection.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you. You have heard a list of the resolutions that have been recommended for rejection. Seeing no one at the microphones for a set aside, those resolutions are rejected.

Comrade Commanders-in-Chief Kent and Cramer, I thank you so much and your Committee for a job well done. You are now relieved of your duties.

At this time for some announcements, I will call on Adjutant General Senk.

...Convention announcements. ...

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you, Comrade Adjutant General. At this time, Sergeant-at-Arms, we will have our closing ceremonies for recess.

(Whereupon, National Chaplain James Marrs gave the Closing Prayer from the Ritual.)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Comrade Commander-

in-Chief, your order has been obeyed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much, Sergeant-at-Arms. This session is recessed until 9:00 a.m. in the morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 12:05p.m.)

SECOND BUSINESS SESSION
WEDNESDAY MORNING, AUGUST 27, 2003

(The Second Business Session of the 104th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center, San Antonio, Texas, was called to order at 9:00 a.m., with Commander-in-Chief Ray Sisk presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Comrade Sergeant-at-Arms, please prepare the room for the opening ceremonies.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN MARRS: The prayer is written by one of the speakers this week in commemoration of 9-11. I think it is very appropriate as we reflect upon some of those parts of our Obligation as members of the VFW.

Ever faithful God, in death we are reminded of precious birth right of life and liberty you endued in your American people. You have shown once again that these gifts must never be taken for granted.

We pledge to those whom you have called home and ask of you patience to measure our lust for action, resolve to strengthen our obligation to lead, wisdom to illuminate our pursuit of justice and strength in defense of liberty.

We seek your special blessings today for those who stand as the sword and shield protecting many from the eternities of a few. Our enduring prayer is that you shall always guide our labors and that our battles shall always be just.

We pray this day, Heavenly Father, the prayer our nation learned at another time, a righteous struggle and noble cause, America's enduring prayer. Not that God will be on our side, but always, O Lord, that America will be on your side. Amen.

(Whereupon, National Sergeant-at-Arms Hoffman led the assembly in the Salute to the Colors and the Pledge of Allegiance.)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, your order has been obeyed, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much, Sergeant-at-Arms.

We will now have a report from the Credentials Committee by Chairman David Butters.

REPORT OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS (Post 475 - New Jersey): Commander-in-Chief, as of the close of business yesterday, August 26, the total delegates registering their credentials is 11,356. The total Department Commanders 54; total Past Commanders-in-Chief 26; total National Officers 36. That is for a grand total of 11,472.

PRESENTATION OF 2003 VFW AMERICANISM AWARD
TO DARRYL WORLEY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much, David. Good morning to you, my comrades. This next introduction that I am going to make is a very special introduction as far as I am concerned. It is a young man that we are honoring here this morning that has done an outstanding job in his field.

Darryl Worley has become very well known for his incredible musical talent. So huge is his talent, he was nominated as Best New Male Vocalist on the Academy of Country Music Awards show.

His mega hit, "Have You Forgotten," soared off the charts, and is a moving reminder of the tragic events that occurred on 9-11, and of how important the men and women serving in the military are to all of us.

What isn't so well known about Darryl is the fact that he has taken time from his busy schedule and career just so he could travel to Afghanistan to visit and to entertain our troops.

Because of his inspiring and patriotic recording and his unwavering support of the men and women serving in our military, we are honoring him this morning with the VFW Americanism Award.

Please join me in welcoming country music star and a great American, Darryl Worley.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation presented reads, "Americanism Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Darryl Worley in special recognition and sincere appreciation of his commitment to supporting the service members of this nation. As a musician, Darryl Worley has been nominated as Best New Male Vocalist by the Academy of Country Music, but more importantly, as a citizen, he has shown a willingness to sacrifice both personally and professionally in the name of United States service members.

"His USO tour through Kuwait and Afghanistan touched thousands of lives, and his song 'Have You Forgotten' has served to keep fresh in our minds the notion that freedom is not free. Darryl Worley has served his nation and his fellow citizens around the world with integrity, talent and honesty in the finest traditions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 27th day of August, 2003. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by Ray Sisk, Commander-in-Chief, and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE - DARRYL WORLEY

MR. WORLEY: Thank you. Any time you are accepting an award like this you have a thousand things that you want to say and you usually leave out 999 of them. I want to be sure today that you understand how much it means to me to be here in your presence. The award is something that I will always cherish. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. It is an absolute honor and pleasure and privilege to be here with you.

I grew up playing music in the VFW halls of West Tennessee and

North Mississippi and North Alabama, so I have to also thank you guys for the training, the good training, learning how to entertain people down in that area of the country.

I want you to know, and I don't want you to misunderstand this when I say it, sometimes it feels a bit strange when people give you awards and honor you for doing something that should come natural to all of us as Americans. And if anybody in the world would understand what I mean by that, I know you would, because I feel pretty small today being up here speaking to a bunch of wonderful men and women who have placed their lives on the line so that this country can continue to be free and safe, the way it is for us to live here in the United States.

We plan to go back again this year for the Christmas holidays to Afghanistan. This time we are going to stop over in Baghdad and do a little street dance, and then head on down to the Persian Gulf.

I would like to close my remarks by saying that sometimes I am saddened nowadays when I speak to the younger generation and I realize that maybe their parents didn't take it very serious when it came time to talk about why this country is what it is today, or maybe their history teacher was worried too much about football practice.

But my parents did a good job of that, and I just want to tell you guys that my song "Have You Forgotten" would have never been if it had not been for the wonderful people in the United States military, present and past. And I for one have not forgotten. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: What a great American. With this award also goes a \$5,000 honorarium. Darryl is donating that \$5,000 to the Freedom Alliance Scholarship Fund. (Applause)

MR. WORLEY: Did you already tell them what we are doing?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Yes, I did.

MR. WORLEY: That is very kind of you and we are going to send that on up to the Freedom Alliance.

PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION TO ABBOTT LABORATORIES, INC.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you so much for being with us. (Applause) We are moving right along this morning.

For more than a century, Abbott Laboratories has been working to advance health care for people worldwide. Abbott has been an innovator behind meeting the world's greatest medical needs such as cancer, infectious diseases, HIV, diabetes, women's health, obesity, immunology and cardiovascular disease.

Named as one of "America's most admired companies" every year since 1984 by Fortune magazine, Abbott contributes millions dollars annually to health and human service organizations, and sponsors programs that enhance health education and access to health care for people in need.

Since 1997, Abbott Laboratories has been integral to the success of the VFW Health Fair, donating more than \$135,000 worth of reagents used in more than 7,000 medical screening tests that have contributed to life-saving findings for hundreds of our members.

In special recognition of their generosity and continued medical

support for the VFW's Health Fair, I am proud to present to Abbott Laboratories, a Certificate of Appreciation. Here to accept the award is Matthew Weinstein, United States Product Manager for Cancer and Transplants.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "Certificate of Appreciation awarded to Abbott Laboratories, Inc., in special recognition and grateful recognition of continuing medical support provided to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Annual Convention Health Fair. Since 1997, Abbott Laboratories has donated over \$135,000 worth of PSA, Hepatitis C, Cholesterol and Glucose reagents used at the National convention health screenings. These donations have allowed the VFW to conduct nearly 7,000 screening tests which resulted in potentially life-saving findings for a number of our members. Through their generosity, Abbott Laboratories has rendered an invaluable contribution to the health education and screening efforts of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 27th day of August, 2003." It has been signed by the Commander-in-Chief and the Adjutant General.

RESPONSE - MR. MATTHEW WEINSTEIN, ABBOTT LABORATORIES

MR. WEINSTEIN: Calvin Coolidge made a statement saying that no one is honored for what they receive. Honor is the reward for he who gives. In that way we are humbled to receive this award from a group of people that in this age of hyperbole can rightfully be called heroes.

On behalf of our Board of Directors, our Chief Executive Officer Miles White and the over 80,000 colleagues and co-workers in Abbott Laboratories worldwide, we very much appreciate being recognized for what we view as our duty to you who have sacrificed so much for the health and well-being of our country, our company, and all of our colleagues.

So again, I could regale you with our contributions and our efforts that were made throughout World War II, through Vietnam and Korea, and even back to World War I to keep veterans and active-duty military personnel healthy and alive, but rather I would just simply like to say thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF HONORABLE MICHAEL D. BROWN, UNDER SECRETARY EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Michael D. Brown was nominated by President George Bush as the first Under Secretary of Emergency Preparedness and Response in the newly-created Department of Homeland Security in January, 2003. Mr. Brown coordinates federal disaster relief activities, including implementation of the Federal Response Plan, which authorizes the response and recovery operations of 26 federal agencies and departments, as well as the American Red Cross. He also oversees the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration, and initiates proactive mitigation activities.

Mr. Brown also assists the Secretary of Homeland Security ensure

the effectiveness of emergency responders, and direct the national stockpile, the national disaster medical system and the nuclear incident response team.

Today, Under Secretary Brown is here to co-sign a statement of affiliation between the Department of Homeland Security and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. A portion of the statement of affiliation reads as follows:

“The Department of Homeland Security and the Veterans of Foreign Wars view community safety and the principle of service to our country as top priorities for their respective organizations and for the American people. As such, our organizations have come together to provide mutual support for Citizen Corps.”

Under the direction of the Department of Homeland Security, Citizen Corps is a community-based initiative to engage all citizens in homeland security and family preparedness through public education and outreach, training opportunities, and volunteer programs.

Programs under the Citizen Corps umbrella include federally-sponsored programs and other activities that share the same goal of helping communities prevent, prepare for, and respond to terrorism, crime, public health issues and disasters of all kinds. It encourages all Americans to take an active role in building safer, stronger and better-prepared communities.

Please welcome the Honorable Michael Brown. (Applause)

REMARKS - MR. MICHAEL BROWN

MR. BROWN: Thank you. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Sisk, for that kind introduction. I also would like to express my appreciation to Adjutant General John Senk, Quartermaster General Joe Ridgley, Edward Banas, the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, and John Furgess, the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for being here today.

Thanks to Mike Gormalley and his staff at the VFW for working with FEMA's Citizen Corps to make this day possible. Obviously, congratulations on the success of your 104th National Convention. Finally, let me offer my heartfelt thanks to every veteran in this room and to every family member of a veteran. Your service to our country is appreciated, it is respected and it sets an example for current and future generations.

Let me just add, don't forget those future generations. They need to know what you have done and they need to know that we are here today because of what you have done. The VFW describes its bond among members as a common sense of duty and a common belief in a cause higher than self.

You know, President Bush expressed a similar sentiment in his call for volunteerism. The President asked every American to give just two years of service over their lifetime in service to their communities and service to their country.

He did that and created the USA Freedom Corps to foster a culture of service, citizenship and responsibility for decades to come. Under the umbrella of USA Freedom Corps, he created Citizen Corps to help make our country safer, stronger and better prepared.

You know, when an American asks, “What can I do to help protect the homeland,” Citizen Corps answers: “There are opportunities to join

Citizen Corps Councils, receive training as a Community Emergency Response Team member, sign up for Neighborhood Watch, volunteer for a police department, or if you are a doctor or a nurse, join the Medical Research Corps.”

There is no question that the President’s vision was a necessary initiative. We just had simply no idea as to what extent it would be needed. Just take a look, for example, at the past couple of weeks. We braced for Hurricane Erica as she moved toward our Gulf Coast.

We assessed and reacted quickly as the Northeast and the Midwest went completely dark with blackouts, even though the immediate cause of those blackouts was unknown. We continue to this day to fight wildfires throughout the Rocky Mountain and the Western regions.

Those fires are still raging today. Although not on our soil, we grew tents as bombings erupted in Jerusalem and Baghdad. Everyone can help our communities and our country prepare for and respond to emergencies. Everyone can help strengthen our communities by making sure that our families are prepared for any emergency that might affect them.

Many of us are already doing our part. Many of us are doing so through Citizen Corps. For example, in one year, we have grown from less than 10 state councils to 50 state and territorial councils. We have grown from 100 local councils to more than 700 local councils.

We have transformed those community emergency response teams from a train the trainer course offered a couple of times a year, to a program aimed at training over 400,000 people in a two-year period. We are on track to meet that goal.

Homeland Security, through FEMA, has issued nearly \$36 million in grants to state and local governments to jump start the CERT programs. These CERT teams train citizens to prepare their communities, making them ready for any hazard that might occur.

Secretary Ridge and the President understand this all hazard approach. Part of my job is to let people know how to be ready. The advice that we can put to use is advice that we can use no matter what the threat. If we can get all citizens to prepare for damaging potentially deadly effects of fire, flood, hurricanes or, God forbid, terrorism, then they are prepared for anything, including terrorism.

Just last week in Dallas, I met with the International Association of Fire Chiefs, thousands of Fire Chiefs from around the United States. Preparation, individual preparation eases the burden on the first responders like those Fire Chiefs when they are responding to an emergency.

I want you to help me prepare our communities. It is an honor for me to welcome the VFW into the family of Citizen Corps as an affiliate. You have a distinguished record of working programs that do just that. Look at what you have done with America’s promise, Make a Difference Day and the National Youth Service Day.

It is my privilege on behalf of the President of the United States to welcome you as a partner in Citizen Corps. We look forward to accomplishing great things together for communities across the country. Today you are joining other national affiliates to promote the concepts of homeland security.

You are combining your efforts with other reputable organizations

like the American Red Cross, the American Radio Relay League and the National Fire Protection Association, the National Volunteer Fire Council, the Points of Life Foundation, and many others.

We need our affiliates' advice, we need your experience, we need your ideas. The VFW, with 9,000 Posts worldwide, brings so much to this partnership. Communities can gather in VFW Posts for informational meetings or to assembly preparedness kits. The possibilities from this affiliation are truly endless, they are truly tremendous.

Before I ask Commander-in-Chief Sisk and Adjutant General Senk to join me in signing this affiliation, I want to digress from my prepared remarks for just a second. I know that Secretary Rumsfeld and Dr. Rice and others have thanked you for your service to your country.

But I want in addition to thanking you for your service to your country, I want to ask you to serve one more time. We are truly in a battle for the freedom of this country. We need your help. We need you to join up. We need you to take this preparedness campaign to every Post that you serve, to every local community that you live in, to every rural burgh, to every place where you live where families gather, we need you to join the war on terrorism.

You are leaders in your community. You can form Citizen Corps Councils in every Post. You can help people prepare in your communities for wildfires, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, whatever you face. In doing so, you have made this country stronger.

Think back to the blackout. In those pictures we saw of people in New York City after the blackout, looking for candles, flashlights, looking for a battery-powered radio, looking for a can opener that you didn't have to plug in, you can teach people about that.

By joining Citizen Corps, by creating councils in your Posts and your communities, you can prepare folks for any kind of hazard. Now, when you do, you prepare them for the next 9-11 if that were to happen. We pray and believe it will not, but those tornadoes and those hurricanes, and those floods will, and you can help prepare your local community. So, I am thanking you for your service, but I am asking you on behalf of the President to serve one more time. Thank you.

Commander-in-Chief Sisk, before we sign the document, let me present to you a token of our appreciation to the VFW for joining this effort and to my heartfelt thanks for everything that you are doing.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

MR. BROWN: We appreciate the VFW.

PRESENTATION OF THE 2003 AVIATION AND SPACE AWARD TO CREW OF THE SPACE SHUTTLE COLUMBIA, POSTHUMOUSLY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: America's journey into space has not been without risk or peril for those who challenge the stars. Possessing the same pioneer spirit and vision as generations of explorers who came before them, they reached high into the sky not for their own glory, but for the betterment of all of mankind. The crew of Columbia were enthusiastic in their endeavors.

Crew members Kalpana Chawla, Rick Husband, William McCool,

Michael Anderson, David Brown, Laurel Clark and Ilan Ramon sought and gained new knowledge from the universe that lies beyond the bounds of earth. Their intrepid spirit and sense of purpose will serve to inspire future generations of space pioneers for years to come.

Here to accept the VFW 2003 Aviation Space Award on behalf of the crew of Space Shuttle Columbia is James Jennings, Assistant Deputy Administrator of NASA. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "Aviation and Space Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded posthumously to the crew of the Space Shuttle Columbia in sincere appreciation and special recognition of the extreme sacrifice made by Rick Husband, William McCool, Michael Anderson, David Brown, Kalpana Chawla, Laurel Blair Salton Clark and Ilan Ramon, the crew members of the Space Shuttle Columbia, which disintegrated upon re-entry to Earth's atmosphere on February 1st, 2003. Their willingness to place their lives in danger in the pursuit of knowledge, on behalf of the human race, stands as a shining example of selfless service and commitment to duty. The tragic loss of their lives serves to remind us always of the dangers faced daily by those who serve our nation. Their lives and actions were truly in keeping with the finest traditions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 27th day of August, 2003. Approved by the National Council of Administration." This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief Raymond Sisk and Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Mr. Jennings, before your remarks, there is also an honorarium for the Aviation and Space Award, and I would like to give this to you on behalf of the crew of the Space Shuttle Columbia.

RESPONSE - MR. JAMES JENNINGS

MR. JENNINGS: Thank you very much. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Sisk, for that gracious introduction. Good morning to everyone. I am honored to represent Administrator Sean O'Keefe at this prestigious event and to accept on behalf of NASA and the families of the courageous STS-107 astronauts, the Veterans of Foreign Wars Aviation and Space Award.

As Adjutant General John Senk just stated, the citation of this year's VFW Aviation and Space and Technology Award offers a profound thanks of willingness of the veterans of STS-107 to pursue knowledge on behalf of the human race, which stands as a shining example of the selfless service and commitment to duty.

Service and duty, these are indeed the characteristics that vividly stand out as we honor seven remarkable crew members of STS-107: Rick Husband, William McCool, Mike Anderson, David Brown, Kalpana Chawla, Laurel Clark and Ilan Ramon, now join a company of space explorers as our Mercury astronauts, the Apollo crew, Neal Armstrong, the Challenger crew and the astronaut who first flew Columbia some 22 years ago as recipients of this prestigious VFW Aviation and Space Award.

On their 16-day mission of exploration and discovery, this dream team of astronauts functioned at the top of their game. Working non-stop

in high spirit to gain, as you so eloquently stated, knowledge on behalf of all humanity. Commander Rickover said it best during the mission.

"This crew has performed marvelously," he told Mission Control, "I really love seeing a team come together." There is so much to remember about this crew, but I won't go into that at this time. Each one of them had a specific personality and gave back to their communities and their country in special ways.

Friends, I know that many of you have made your own unique contribution to our nation's leadership in aviation over the 100 years of flight which we are celebrating this year. We, therefore, are truly honored that the pioneers in this room have recognized Rick Husband, William McCool, Michael Anderson, David Brown, Kalpana Chawla, Laurel Clark and Ilan Ramon as kindred spirits, as men and women of enormous character and fellow trailblazers in the unending quest to explore the new horizon.

It is with tremendous appreciation for the enduring contribution of these remarkable explorers that I accept on behalf of NASA and their families the VFW Aviation and Space Award. Thank you very much. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF 2003 VFW HALL OF FAME AWARD TO CRISTY LANE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: The next person that I am going to introduce you heard yesterday at our Patriotic Rally. This is our Hall of Fame Award.

Cristy Lane is often remembered for recording "One Day at a Time," one of the biggest-selling gospel songs of all time. Since launching her musical career at the age of 17, she has continued to be one of America's most beloved recording artists. Cristy has many devout fans, especially within the veteran community, and for good reason.

In 1969, Ms. Lane took her talents to Vietnam where she performed 120 shows for our troops. On more than one occasion, Cristy put her life on the line and, in fact, was involved in a helicopter crash that left her stranded in the midst of a major ground battle. She continued to demonstrate her commitment to American servicemen and women when she returned to the states by performing at military bases nationwide.

Cristy Lane has a strong love for our country and for those who have and continue to serve in the military. Her patriotic pride can easily be felt when listening to her CD, "Celebrate America," a shining example of patriotic music.

All of us admire her courage, dedication and spirit. What is not scripted in here is the many, many things that she has done. She is one of America's best recording artists, in my opinion. So many times when I have felt maybe alone a little bit, and perhaps you have felt the same way, the recording "One Day at a Time" has uplifted your spirit and made you a better human being. For that beautiful song, we thank Ms. Lane.

I would like to introduce to you now the recipient of the 2003 VFW Hall of Fame Award, Ms. Cristy Lane.

...Whereupon, the assembly extended a

prolonged standing ovation. ...

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation being presented reads: "Hall of Fame Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Cristy Lane in special recognition of a lifetime of supporting our nation's warriors through uniquely positive musical performances. Beginning in 1969 with 120 shows in Vietnam, and continuing with performances throughout Midwestern military bases, Cristy has brought joy, a positive message and comfort from home to hundreds of thousands of soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines. Moreover, her recordings and biography have provided inspiration to millions of our citizens. Cristy has served her nation and her fellow citizens around the world with integrity, talent and honesty in 'One day at a time.'

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 27th day of August, 2003. Approved by the National Council of Administration." This has been signed by Raymond Sisk, Commander-in-Chief, and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: What a wonderful, wonderful American we have here. We have an honorarium that goes with the Hall of Fame Award of \$5,000. I would like for the comrades to know that Ms. Lane has donated this back to Operation Uplink for our troops. (Applause)

RESPONSE - MS. CRISTY LANE

MS. LANE: Thank you. Can you hear me? Oh, this is such a wonderful honor to be here with you today. Commander-in-Chief Sisk, Adjutant General John J. Senk and Larry LeFebvre, I thank you for inviting me, and each and every one of you.

I have no prepared speech, but I will tell you a little bit about myself. I come from a small town in Illinois, East Peoria, Illinois, and I had three children and was married before I knew that someone liked to hear me sing, my husband. He started sending little tapes around and people didn't listen.

But it took a long, long time. I did a lot of fairs and shows around the area. But then something happened in 1969 that changed my life forever. I took my first plane trip to Vietnam. I entertained the troops over there, and what wonderful, wonderful young men they were.

I would sit around and talk with them, let them tell me what they were doing and where they were from. If I just gave them a little moment in time to forget what they were there for, then that really mattered to me. I went to places that I never thought a housewife would ever go. But I am not one for long speeches, and I do want to thank each and every one of you again for such an honor. I will treasure it all my life.

I leave you with my philosophy of life: "Take it one day at a time." Thank you, Lee. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL VETERANS SERVICE POST SERVICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR AWARD TO DELBERT SHELLEY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: This year we are pleased to present

the National Veterans Service Post Service Officer of the Year Award to a man who has dedicated himself to serving America's veterans and their families. The award is presented annually to the Post Service Officer who demonstrates exceptional efforts in assisting veterans and their dependents.

The Post Service Officer is an important resource and serves as that vital link between the veteran, the Department Service Officer and the Department of Veterans Affairs. To be effective, a Service Officer must be knowledgeable, caring and, above all, compassionate.

Mr. Delbert Roger Shelley, of VFW Post 6786 in Eureka, Montana, has been selected in this year's competition as the VFW Outstanding Post Service Officer of the Year. Roger serves in one of the most densely veteran populated regions of Montana. His willingness to make personal visits to house-bound veterans and surviving family members to assist them in preparing claims for benefits has enhanced his reputation as a professional and caring service officer.

Please give a warm VFW thanks and welcome to our VFW Post Service Officer of the Year Award recipient, Delbert Roger Shelley. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "VFW Post Service Officer of the Year Award 2002-2003, presented to Delbert Roger Shelley, VFW Post 6786, in special recognition of your exemplary achievements in support of the veterans' service mission and programs of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States as the Post Service Officer of the Year.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 27th day of August, 2003." This has been signed by the Commander-in-Chief and the Adjutant General.

RESPONSE - COMRADE DELBERT SHELLEY

COMRADE SHELLEY: Thank you. This is really an honor. I would like to thank everyone from National for helping with this award and especially Bob Schwegel, the Department Service Officer from the great state of Montana. Thank you, guys. I appreciate it. It is a great honor.

INTRODUCTION OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL MICHAEL D. MCGINTY, USAF (RET.) CEO, AIR FORCE AID SOCIETY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Somebody said I am going awfully fast. I said I am really glad. I hope you are, too.

This morning, I am pleased to present our next distinguished speaker, Lieutenant General Michael McGinty. Currently, Mike McGinty is the CEO of the Air Force Aid Society. AFAS is a non-profit organization with a proud history of helping Air Force people and their families.

Prior to his retirement from active duty, General McGinty served as Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel, Headquarters, U.S. Air Force. He served as the Senior Air Force Officer responsible for comprehensive plans and policies covering all life cycles of military and civilian personnel management, education and training, compensation and resource allocation.

The General entered the Air Force in 1965 as a distinguished graduate of the University of Minnesota Reserve Officer Training Program.

He has commanded an Air Force fighter wing and the Air Force Military Personnel Center. He is a command pilot with more than 3,500 hours, principally in fighter aircraft. He flew 115 combat missions in Southeast Asia, including 100 over North Vietnam.

General McGinty has lent valuable advice and assistance to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He has contributed greatly to our successful efforts to provide support to the men and women who are currently serving in the armed forces. Let's give a warm VFW welcome to Lieutenant General Michael D. McGinty. (Applause)

REMARKS - LIEUTENANT GENERAL MICHAEL D. MCGINTY

LIEUTENANT GENERAL MCGINTY: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Sisk. As a fellow life member of this great VFW organization, it is again a pleasure to be with you this year to thank you on behalf of all the members of the military, the Army, Navy, Air Force, the Marine Corps and the Coast Guard, and their families for all of the help that you have provided to them over the last 12 very difficult and challenging months.

If you could bring up that first slide, please. When I say the VFW, I mean all the moving pieces of the VFW. I mean the "VFW" the Ladies Auxiliary, the VFW Foundation, all of those different moving pieces when I use the word "VFW." As General Myers said Monday night, your support has been absolutely outstanding. It has really, really done a lot to help the troops, and you have so much to be proud of.

We still don't have this first slide up there, do we? As the bottom line of that slide says, "You sure have a lot to be proud of." And I hope to show you that with some pictures, because a picture is worth a thousand words. You have continued to support the military families in so many ways.

Pictured on the screens you see family members looking over a selection of goodies that you have shipped to bases around the world. These are goodies that are donated to the VFW Foundation from major corporations around the United States.

It was just about 17 months ago that Ed Banas and I walked in a meeting down here in San Antonio with the family support people carrying a bag and saying these kinds of goodies are going to be headed your way. So, in just 17 months, Ed, we have done well.

The VFW has done a great job. You have also, as you are well aware, helped the families stay connected with your phone card program. Last Christmas, and again in June, everybody serving overseas, officers, enlisted, TDY, PCS, Guard, reserve or active, got a phone call to call home.

I think it was 660,000 phone cards were sent out in June. So that is a lot of good conversations between military members and their families. You helped support the deploying troops as they were getting ready to go fight the war. You guys were there.

On the left, you see a deploying troop writing a note to his family back home on stationery and cards provided by the VFW. On the right-hand side you see some troops getting some snacks and food as they were deploying. You provided snacks and food both at the stateside bases and as the one in the picture shows, that is Aviano Air Base in Northern Italy.

There is no passenger terminal at Aviano Air Base, but thousands of troops were deployed there for refueling stops. We converted a hangar into a passenger terminal, and the family support people passed out some refreshments for the troops that were going through there. You provided funding to make that possible so that those troops could be taken care of.

I suspect there are many people in here like myself that last Thursday night might have seen that ABC documentary film on the Marine Corps. I think it was Foxtrot Bravo 52 that they followed them from Camp Pendleton over to Iraq, and told their story in fighting the war.

If you saw that, and even if you didn't, there was a first sergeant, Ed Smith. He had his 20 years in the service, in the Marine Corps. He had his retirement papers in, but because of the war his retirement was put on hold and he deployed with his company.

As you saw in that documentary, Ed Smith was gravely wounded by a gunshot and they lost him. You know, I felt a little bit better knowing that when that Marine company deployed out of Camp Pendleton through March Air Reserve Air Base, and you guys were there providing food, that Ed Smith left the United States on his last trip in style and was well taken care of. So, that is really a job well done by the VFW.

If I could have the next picture, please. As the war was ready to be cranked up, we have an air base, and some of you probably know Incirlik Air Base in Turkey. That is way, way out in the eastern side of Turkey. We had family members over there.

We had to evacuate the families before the war started. The evacuation route was to Rhein-Main Air Base, Germany, for a refueling stop, and then on into the Charleston Air Force Base in South Carolina. Obviously, the families were leaving everything behind, including their loved ones, and they didn't know what the future would hold.

They didn't know whether they would get back to Turkey or what would happen, or how soon they would see the rest of their families. But as the airplanes left and the regimen, the VFW had arranged and had goodies there. Here you see some of the children of the evacuating families enjoying some of your VFW support.

If I would have the next picture, please. You have continued to support the families of the troops that were deployed, the ones that were left behind at home. On the top left you see a family member picking up some of the goodies that your VFW Foundation gets from the various corporations.

On the right-hand side you see some of our troops at McGuire Air Force Base picking up goodies at your warehouse that you use in your warehouse base for distribution to the families. On the lower left, you see a picnic for family members who are waiting. You see them stopping by to pick up some of the VFW goodies.

The next pictures, please. On the top left, this is more family pictures. You see a couple of the kids that were evacuated from Incirlik, and they received some of those goodies. I think the smile on their faces tell a great story. On the top right, one of your big, big donors, provided thousands and thousands of children's books. That is the picture that shows the distribution of those children's books at Bolling Air Force Base in Washington, D.C.

On the lower right-hand side you see another family picnic for the families waiting for their loved ones to return. This one was at Ramstein Air Force Base in Germany. You can see a table of VFW goodies and they are picking up something to take home to remember the occasion.

Finally, on the lower left, you see one of our family support people preparing some goodie bags for distribution to the families. The bottom line is your efforts. Your efforts have truly made a lot of family members feel good, and I guarantee you your efforts have put a lot of smiles on their faces.

The next picture, please. Around the world, and this is really important, around the world VFW and VFW Ladies Auxiliary members are personally involved in helping the troops and their families. On the left you see a member from your Anchorage, Alaska, Post who helped the sergeant that is pictured there when he encountered some dependent transportation problems. You can see the smile on his face. That was good work by the Anchorage, Alaska, folks.

On the right-hand side, you see a member of your European Post Kaiserslautern, with the goodie boxes that arrived in December at the Ramstein Air Force Base just before Christmas for the troops. I could give you many, many other examples of the help you have provided.

If there is an Abilene, Texas, group here today, you just had a wonderful dinner for the returning troops. The list just goes on and on and on. I don't want to take all the time, but rest assured that the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary have hundreds of examples of how they are supporting the troops and their families.

If I could have the next slide, I will show you one of my very favorite stories. That is providing clothing for the sick and wounded. This is truly a great success story for the VFW and your corporate partners. Just after the war started in March, I received an urgent e-mail from our family support people at Ramstein.

It said there is an urgent need for clothing for the sick and wounded troops coming through Germany. If you are not familiar with it, the Air Force operates the Air-Vac system and the closest medical center to treat the wounded and sick was the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Kaiserslautern right adjacent to Ramstein.

Well, these troops were arriving either wounded or sick, with dirty BDUs on or with maybe a pair of hospital pajamas. But when they marched into Iraq, they took all their personal stuff and put it in a box, so they didn't have any personal clothes. Most of them didn't even have any money. So, this was an urgent appeal for some clothing to help these troops.

I picked up the phone and I called Ron Browning and Mike Myer, my two contacts at the Foundation. I said that I need some help. I told them what was going on. I am pleased to say that working with their corporate sponsors, your corporate sponsors, that within two days, that was a Wednesday, by Friday there was underwear, T-shirts, sweatsuits, socks and shoes arriving at the Kaiserslautern Medical Center. There were 3,000 sweatsuits delivered that day. There were 3,000 sweatsuits to take care of the sick and wounded. That was just an absolutely wonderful story. One of the problems was shoes, because shoes come in so many different sizes and widths.

One of your corporate sponsors, Wal-Mart, let the folks at Ramstein use a Wal-Mart credit card to go to the base exchange and buy shoes. They charged \$11,000 worth of shoes on a Wal-Mart credit card so that these troops could have shoes and socks to wear coming home.

So, this is truly a real success story. You have got a lot of good press out of it. You see in the picture a couple of the ambulatory troops picking out the clothing. Again, it is the speed with which this VFW organization responded to that urgent need that is absolutely amazing. I mean, it rolled my socks down.

Two days after I make a phone call, you have got 3,000 sweatsuits arriving at Kaiserslautern. That is pretty darn impressive. I know the Air Force can't move that fast and we are a lot faster than the other services. You knew I would get that in somewhere.

If we could have the next slide, please. You are continuing to support the troops that are still over there fighting. You know, there is lots and lots of offers of stuff to send to the troops that are still fighting, but the distribution system in getting it there is kind of clogged.

So your VFW Foundation contacted Central Commander, General Frank's old command down in Tampa, Florida. They said,

"General, tell us what the troops need." He had a Command Chief, a Sergeant Brown, I think, that went in and said, okay, we need these kinds of things and these kinds of things, and these kinds, and these kinds of things.

Well, then your Foundation went to work with your corporate sponsors to find those kind of things. Because then it would be easier to get them over there, because you were giving Central Command exactly what they wanted. So, the first shipment was 28,000 pounds of Baby Wipes.

If I could have that next picture, please. You see the 28,000 pounds of Baby Wipes being loaded by a forklift on a semi. I guarantee you 28,000 pounds of Baby Wipes is one heck of a lot of Baby Wipes. I made the comment last night, and this will probably get me in trouble this morning again that we spent a lot of time crossing out Baby Wipes and putting Manly Men's Wipes on there so that the Marines would use them. That is twice. (Laughter)

En route right now, it should be arriving, it was shipped a couple of weeks ago, those Baby Wipes went by Opportune Air. I am not quite sure how it happened, and I probably don't even want to know, but we had them delivered to Charleston. There was a wonderful guy that works in the Aerial Port Squadron there and the next thing I know they are on a C-17 headed to Baghdad International.

So, it was wonderful. They hiccuped a little bit on the tonnage. So the next thing that these characters in your Foundation came up with was 42,000 pounds of Kool-Aid. Well, that is a lot to put on one plane. So they switched us over to Sealift.

So now, we have shipped sea vans full of stuff. Why do they want Kool-Aid? There are two reasons. First of all, the water probably doesn't taste very good, and you can put a package of pre-sweetened Kool-Aid into the water and it tastes a little better.

Secondly, as GIs have done forever, they like to hand stuff to the kids. A package of pre-sweetened Kool-Aid is pretty easy to hand to the kids. It is a lot easier to carry around than candy bars that would melt in

115-degree weather. So, there were 42,000 pounds of Kool-Aid and 2,900 pounds of playing cards that are just about to arrive in Kuwait and then go up into the country.

In the first two weeks of September, we will be shipping another sea van. This one is going to be full of different things. It is going to have some of that new hand cleanser that you can use where you don't have to have soap and water, and it cleans and disinfects your hands.

There is going to be some magic stuff for your feet so you can clean your feet and put some lotion on them, along with perhaps some more Kool-Aid and some snacks and stuff like that. All this will go in a sea van and be on its way in the first two weeks in September.

I guarantee you from the feedback I am getting the troops really, really appreciate your efforts in getting them this stuff. I guess more importantly, knowing that you are back here in the states supporting what they are doing over in the war zone.

It is pretty darn hard on them over there and that leads me to my last picture. I don't have to say much about this picture. I think it says it all. It is the troops saying thanks to all of you. It is right from Afghanistan to the VFW. So I will end where I started by saying that the troops, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and the Coast Guard and their families all really, really want to thank the VFW, all portions of the VFW for your great support.

As I said in the beginning, and I hope as these pictures have now shown you, you have so very, very much to be proud of. Ed, it just started 17 months ago. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you, comrades.

We now have a presentation from the chairman of the Political Action Committee, Bob Maxwell.

PRESENTATION BY POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE

COMRADE ROBERT MAXWELL: Good morning. Comrade Commander-in-Chief and officers on the dais, good morning. To that great delegation from my home department, California, thank you for doing just a super job last night — last year, and last night, maybe, too, but last year. You made our State Commander All American. That hasn't happened for a while. That is great news.

I would like at this time to introduce my partner, the Director of the Ladies Auxiliary of the PAC, Cortena Barnes. Cortina, would you like to say a few words before we make the presentation?

MS. CORTINA BARNES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, comrades. Thank you for allowing me to come before you this morning. Thank you to the Commander. I would like to say that the Ladies Auxiliary is very pleased to help support you in this worthy cause, the VFW-PAC. We truly believe in this cause as you do and we will continue to support you in this. Thank you. (Applause)

COMRADE ROBERT MAXWELL: This afternoon at 2:00 o'clock, in Room 209, there is a workshop on the PAC. I urge you to attend that and help us once again double our efforts this next year. This year we did just that, we doubled the amount of contributions.

We are so happy and we are very proud of ourselves and for all

those that helped us. But the ones that really played an important part was the Ladies Auxiliary, and we just can't ignore that.

Chief, I appreciate very much the opportunity to serve on the PAC Committee. I love the job and I hope we have done the job acceptably. At this time we would like to give to you our highest award, the Golden Eagle. It reads, "Golden Eagle Award honors Raymond Sisk, Commander-in-Chief, for exceptional support in 2002-2003." We really did have exceptional support. Thank you so much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you so much for that beautiful award, PAC Committee. At this time we have a couple of announcements from the Adjutant General.

...Convention announcements. ...

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much, Adjutant General. We actually had another speaker that has not shown up this morning, so I am going to give everybody a treat.

Sergeant-at-Arms, please prepare the room for the recess of this business convention until tomorrow morning at 9:00 o'clock.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief.

(Whereupon, the Salute to the Colors was given at this time followed by the Benediction by National Chaplain Marrs.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Commander-in-Chief, your order has been obeyed, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you, Comrade Sergeant-at-Arms. This business session is recessed until 9:00 a.m. in the morning.

(Whereupon, the session was recessed at 10:15 a.m.)

THIRD BUSINESS SESSION
THURSDAY MORNING, AUGUST 28, 2003

(The Third Business Session of the 104th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center, San Antonio, Texas, was called to order at 9:00 o'clock a.m., with Commander-in-Chief Raymond Sisk presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Comrade Sergeant-at-Arms, please prepare the convention hall for our opening ceremonies.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief.

(Whereupon, Sergeant-at-Arms Hoffman led the convention in the Salute to the Colors, followed by the Opening Prayer by National Chaplain Marrs, and the Pledge of Allegiance.)

PRESENTATION BY DEPARTMENT OF COLORADO AND
ADOLPH COORS BREWING COMPANY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas, you will join me here. They have a presentation to you and I, Ed, from the Department of Colorado Commander Ronald Lattin, Sr., Senior Vice Commander Robert E. Clemmons, and Junior Vice Commander Darrell Anderson.

COMRADE RONALD LATTIN: Good morning, comrades. Over the years the Coors Brewing Company has commissioned 38 paintings honoring the U.S. Armed Forces. All 38 have been published in a booklet called "The Defenders of Freedom." It is a great privilege and my single honor to present to Commander-in-Chief Ray Sisk and Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas, on behalf of more than 23,000 VFW members in the Department of Colorado and on behalf of the Adolph Coors Brewing Company a copy of "The Defenders of Freedom," personally signed by Peter Coors, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Adolph Coors Brewing Company of Golden, Colorado.

This book was commissioned with the sole intentions of paying tribute to those who bravely sacrificed so much for our nation. Every painting in this book was commissioned by Coors Brewing Company, and Coors is donating all the proceeds from the sale of this book to the USO.

This book is one of the greatest testaments of dedication of Peter Coors and the Coors family to our country's veterans. The author, Warren Hutchinson, could not be here today because of illness. We have the books available at vendor space 142. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you. In case you think we left the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief out, we didn't. He already has one.

May I have a report of the Convention Credentials Committee by David Butters.

REPORT OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS (Post 475 - New Jersey): As of the close of business yesterday, August 27, 2003, the total delegates registering their credentials are 11,580. The total Department Commanders 54. The total Past Commanders-in-Chief 26. The total National Officers 37. That is for a grand total of 11,696.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you. At this time I am going to have to leave and go visit the Ladies Auxiliary meeting. Comrade Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, the podium is yours.

(Whereupon, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Banas assumed the chair.)

INTRODUCTION OF CALVIN CRANE - THE LONG WAY HOME PROJECT

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: For many years, films and television have misrepresented the image of the Vietnam veteran. Negative stereotyping has led many to believe those who served in Vietnam did so in a less-than-honorable way. We all know that nothing could be further from the truth.

For our next guest, the quest to tell the truth about the Vietnam veteran became a personal crusade, and from that quest, comrades, "The Long Way Home Project" was born. Here to present a short introductory video about "The Long Way Home Project" is Mr. Calvin Crane. (Applause)

REMARKS - CALVIN CRANE

MR. CALVIN CRANE: Thank you, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. With me on the stage this morning is my wife and producer of this series, Crystal Crane. She is the proud daughter of a Vietnam veteran. I should say at this time thanks also to National Adjutant General John Senk and Jerry Newberry in our National Office for making time at this convention.

Of course, to Publisher Richard Kolb for the feature article in the March issue of the VFW magazine, and the thousands of you, and many of you in the audience who responded, our grateful thanks. Over the next ten years alone, another 50 million new voters will graduate from high school, and what their thoughts are about the Vietnam War, the disparities, and the sacrifices of our soldiers and their families.

Within this room is the power to change that. So come by and see us at Booth 142 and invest in our country's future. We have got copies of the series and information on how to continue the work that you have already begun. What we would like to show you at this time is a short clip from part one of the series that is called "Men Versus Myth," the film that honors Vietnam veterans.

(Whereupon, the video was shown at this time.)

MR. CRANE: Thank you very much. I would just like to say once

again thanks so much to all the Vietnam and VFW members that have written us letters. We are very grateful to have heard from you and we have got a mission now. We are in about 250 high schools with this material, and we only have about 25,000 to go. So we have got a big challenge. Welcome home. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF JAMES C. GATES DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Thank you very much. It is now my distinct honor to present the prestigious James C. Gates Distinguished Service Award to Michael J. Graber, Sr., Director of Veterans' Program, Impact Services Corporation, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Mr. Graber joined Impact Services Corporation in 1993. Today, his responsibilities include the direct supervision of practices and service delivery for all programs operated by Impact for Veterans.

The level of commitment and energy demonstrated by Mr. Graber reflects the non-traditional nature of the services he manages in rendering effective support to homeless and unemployed veterans such as job preparation and placement; supportive housing programs and street outreach services. He is often required to be present at night and on weekends in addition to a full conventional work week.

Mr. Graber exhibits a true passion for assisting less fortunate veterans. He is a tireless advocate of the unemployed and homeless veterans as well as their families. Please welcome Mr. Michael Graber, Sr. (Applause) With your award, sir, this morning is an honorarium for \$1,000.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "James C. Gates Distinguished Service Award presented to Michael J. Graber, Sr., Director of Veterans' Program Veterans Services Department of Impact Services Corporation, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in recognition of your extraordinary achievement and exceptional leadership in advancing employment opportunities for our nation's veterans and distinguished service in promoting the goals and objectives of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 28th day of August, 2003." This has been signed by the Commander-in-Chief and the Adjutant General.

RESPONSE - MR. MICHAEL GRABER

MR. MICHAEL GRABER: Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. Where are the people from Pennsylvania here today? I just want to say a few words in terms of what it means to be a veteran, I am a U.S. Navy veteran and a U.S. Army veteran, and working with veterans is probably the greatest privilege of my life.

I would like for all of you to note today that there are hundreds of thousands of veterans in this country that to this day as I speak are unemployed, are broke, are in the street and in various levels of transition. My singular mission is to help defeat those numbers and bring those numbers down so that one day we hopefully will eliminate homelessness and unemployment among the veterans of the armed forces of the United

States. Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL LARGE EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Dyncorp Technical Services, the Large Employer of the Year.

The VFW is now honored to bestow its Large Employer of the Year Award to Dyncorp Technical Services located at Fort Rucker, Alabama.

Since 1988, Dyncorp Technical Services has provided aircraft repair, maintenance, logistics support and other aircraft related services at the U.S. Army aviation facility on Fort Rucker, Alabama.

Dyncorp has consistently demonstrated its appreciation of the unique skills and abilities our nation's veterans possess.

Dyncorp is a veteran-friendly work environment, with veterans making up over half of its work force. Most impressive is that almost 50 percent of nearly 700 new employees hired last year were veterans and many of those were veterans having service-connected disabilities.

Dyncorp has made it a practice of listing all new jobs with the State Employment Office in Ozark, Alabama, and considers all qualified veterans first, for every job opening.

Accepting the Large Employer of the Year Award is Mr. Tom Walker, Vice President/Division Manager, Dyncorp Technical Services, Fort Rucker, Alabama. (Applause)

Sir, if it is okay to call you Tom, along with this award for your corporation is an honorarium for \$1,000.

MR. TOM WALKER: Thank you very much.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "National Large Employer of the Year Award presented to Fort Rucker Division, Dyncorp Technical Services, Fort Rucker, Alabama, in recognition and grateful appreciation for meritorious service in effecting a very comprehensive policy toward recruitment, employment and promotion of veterans.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 28th day of August, 2003." This has been signed by the Commander-in-Chief and the Adjutant General.

RESPONSE - COMRADE TOM WALKER

COMRADE WALKER: Thank you very much. What a privilege it is for me to be here. Next to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and my family, nothing is more important to me than the fact that I, too, am a veteran of 26 years to serve our country in the United States Army.

Dyncorp has been in the business of servicing aircraft throughout the Vietnam War, in fact, and in Alabama we maintain about 624 helicopters. We have about 3,100 employees. As was mentioned earlier, about half of those are veterans and about 711 of them are disabled veterans. Likewise, we have just about that many from Vietnam. So again, it is a privilege for me to be here. I salute you and God bless you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL SMALL EMPLOYER OF YEAR AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Thank you very much, sir. TRW Office of Killeen, Small Employer of the Year.

It is now my honor to present the VFW Small Employer of the Year Award to the TRW Office in Killeen, Texas.

The TRW Office in Killeen, Texas, was established in 1996 as the primary contractor providing doctrine and training support at Fort Hood, Texas.

To accomplish its mission, TRW has a total work force of 62 employees, all from the Killeen, Fort Hood area. Of those 62 employees, 58 are veterans. In addition, 39 percent of TRW's employees are service-connected disabled veterans. TRW has set a pace that will be hard for any employer to match in today's business world.

Accepting the Small Employer of the Year Award for the TRW, Killeen, Texas, office, is Shirley DeGrote.

Along with the award, Shirley, is a \$1,000 honorarium. Thank you for being with us this morning.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "National Small Employer of the Year Award presented to Killeen TRW, Killeen, Texas, in recognition and grateful appreciation for meritorious service in effecting a very comprehensive policy toward the recruitment, employment and promotion of veterans.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 28th day of August, 2003." This has been signed by the Commander-in-Chief and the Adjutant General.

RESPONSE - COMRADE SHIRLEY DeGROTE

COMRADE DeGROTE: Good morning. I am Shirley DeGrote, and I am a Bosnia Training Team Chief for TRW. We are now known as Northrup-Grumman Mission System. We have been bought out. I am also a lieutenant colonel in the Texas Army National Guard, and I have been a VFW member since my service in Operation Desert Storm. (Applause)

Thank you for having me here today. We continue to have our success at Fort Hood. We are up to 125 employees right now, and 95 percent of those are veterans of the United States military. Every one of our veterans has served in the most powerful organization that the world has ever seen and they have experienced being a part of something that is bigger than themselves. They understand what loyalty, duty, courage and integrity are, and when things get tough those are the kind of people that I want working beside me.

On behalf of our employees, I want to thank the VFW for the honorarium. I want to let you know what we intend to do with it. We are going to donate one-half of it back to the Operation Uplink program that provides phone cards to our servicemen overseas. I personally distributed some of those Operation Uplink cards to my soldiers in Bosnia three years ago, and I know how important it is for them to be able to call home and not worry about what the bill is going to be. It is a great program and we are thrilled to do this.

We are going to keep the other half and use it to help out our veterans employees at TRW Mission Systems. Again, thank you so much and everybody have a great day. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OFFICE AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Oregon Employment Department, Bend Field Office, National Employment Service Award.

We are honored to recognize the Bend Field office, Veterans Section of the Oregon Employment Department, as this year's National Employment Service Award.

The veterans' section of the Bend Field office has demonstrated exceptional skills and qualities in their assistance to veterans in the local community. Utilizing print and electronic media, the Bend Field office excels in reaching out to veterans.

The Bend Field office even went so far as to erect billboards promoting employment services to veterans. This type of proactive assistance in aiding veterans to discover employment opportunities and establish themselves again in the work force is reflective of the superior efforts and initiatives of the Bend Field office.

Here to accept the National Employment Service Award for the Bend Field office is recently retired Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist Michael "Rocky" Barker.

With that, Michael, is a \$1,000 honorarium. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "National Employment Service Office Award presented to Bend Field Office Oregon Employment Department, Bend, Oregon, in recognition and appreciation for meritorious professional employment service rendered to veterans.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 28th day of August, 2003." This has been signed by the Commander-in-Chief and the Adjutant General.

RESPONSE - MR. MICHAEL BARKER

MR. BARKER: Good morning. It is an honor to be here in such distinguished company. I would just like to let everyone know that this award should be shared with the veterans across the country who do a marvelous job. It just so happens that our office in Bend, Oregon, it has just been a pleasure to work with them.

The entire staff has a passion and understanding of the veterans. We work to overcome the various employment that they experience, and it has been again a very rewarding experience. Thank you.

PRESENTATION OF VFW DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES GOLDSMITH

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Perhaps no one else in our organization typifies that type of "Let's Get It Done" attitude than the next person we are about to honor. James N. Goldsmith has left an

indelible mark upon his department and to all within his state who have come to rely on his knowledge and expertise. As former VFW Commander-in-Chief, James Goldsmith was unequaled in his unwavering commitment and loyalty to America's veterans. Throughout his year as Commander-in-Chief, Jim proved to be an aggressive spokesman for the VFW and for all those we serve.

For that, and much more, we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to him. I ask you to please join me in honoring James N. Goldsmith.

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

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "Distinguished Service Medal and this citation awarded to James N. Goldsmith, Commander-in-Chief, 2001-2002, in sincere appreciation and special recognition of his total commitment and dedication to the highest ideals of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, and his continuing efforts in support of its programs and purposes. His leadership during the 2001-2002 administrative year enabled the VFW to 'Reach Out' and assist our nation's true heroes, America's veterans.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 28th day of August, 2003."

This has been signed by the Commander-in-Chief and the Adjutant General.

RESPONSE - PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES GOLDSMITH

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GOLDSMITH: Good morning. I stand here proudly to accept this honor on behalf of all of you who made this honor available. Let me say, first, I want to introduce a very special person and she probably knows more of you people than I know, my sister, Barb Appleby.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the great Department of Michigan for all of their support they have given me over the last several years to bring me to the leadership of this organization. The two people that I served under, John Smart, as Commander-in-Chief, and John Gwizdak, as the Senior Vice, you couldn't have given me two better people than Ray Sisk as my Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief and Ed Banas, my Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

You know, longevity, and I have had a few years in this organization, somewhere around 37 of them, most of them in a leadership role from the Post level to the National level. It has been said about longevity in an organization, it gives you an opportunity to receive many awards that are probably not warranted nor is it deserved.

But at the same token, it gives you an opportunity to upset a lot of people. As my year as Commander-in-Chief went along, and it didn't take too long, three days after my homecoming, September 11th happened. That was an event that changed the demographics of this organization.

It changed the world never to be the same again. When John Senk sent me the letter saying I was going to receive this award, I said, "You are

going to give me an award for failure”, for I was the Commander-in-Chief that had a deficit budget of \$2.6 million and dropped more membership than any Commander-in-Chief of this organization.

John responded, “You know, Chief, not every Commander-in-Chief served this organization when America came under attack.” So I went back home after my term of office and I was able to look myself in the mirror, as I told many of you to do, and I have never had any problem because I felt I did the very best thing that I was capable of doing. To this day, I still feel that way. (Applause)

I say we felt the ramifications in our organization, and two years ago when I stood before you and used the words, “It was the right thing to do.” Over this week, you have listened to the speakers and you have listened to all our programs, and you have heard that again because we do the right things, because it is the right thing to do.

I have concerns about this organization and the new breed of veterans that are eligible for our organization. Are we opening the doors and welcoming them like we should be? We could not make the same mistakes that we made with some of the Vietnam veterans and some of the Desert Storm veterans.

The new regimes that are coming in that are eligible for our organization are different. As John Gwizdak would say, “unique and different.” For the new members that are coming in to our Posts, and I don’t say this derogatory, either, are much, much more educated than when we joined the organization.

Their music is different, their hair is different, their dress is different. They have body piercing. Some of them look like they fell into a tackle box. Let me tell you this. As you heard from your Voice of Democracy student, they are good solid people.

If you bring them into your Posts and put up with their music and their different dress codes and their different cultures, if you ask them, they will probably open their lap-top and show you how to use it. They are pretty good and they are solid people.

You know, we must open our doors; we must open our doors. We have an opportunity as the National Organization, that goes down to the state level, with all the programs that we have, you take Operation Uplink, I don’t think there is a G.I. serving in this country of ours or overseas that has not had one of our Operation Uplink cards. My friends, that is a selling point.

I am concerned about the finances of this organization and so are the staffs in the Kansas City and Washington offices. We must do something about that. You know, let me say this, too. I may have concerns as all of you have, but, my friends, we belong to one of the greatest organizations in the whole world. (Applause)

For me to stand here and receive this award today, I can tell you this, I am very proud of every one of you and I am proud of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Thank you for this award and may the good Lord continue to bless and watch over each and every one of you. Thank you.

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

PRESENTATION OF VFW DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO GORDON THORSON

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Thank you, Past Commander-in-Chief. The VFW is known for its many programs that benefit the community. Of all the things VFW programs accomplish for so many people, perhaps none are more important than those that serve our nation's young people. The entire organization takes pride in our ability to successfully deliver VFW programs wherever and whenever needed.

An integral part of the VFW programs are those people who work at National Headquarters to provide support and assistance to the various Departments and Posts. Through the years one person has played an important role to ensure delivery of VFW programs.

Before assuming the position as Director of VFW Programs, Youth Development, Scholarship and Recognition, Mr. Gordon Thorson was appointed Director of Voice of Democracy and Youth Activities during the 1988-1989 program year, and in September, 1989, was also appointed Director of Safety Programs.

Prior to assuming these duties, he served as a claims consultant, an appeals consultant and as special assistant for legislation in our Washington, D.C. office. Gordon's many years of service as an employee of the VFW is testimony to his commitment and dedication to his community, his nation and to the organization. Please join me in honoring Mr. Gordon Thorson. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "Distinguished Service Medal and this Citation awarded to Gordon R. Thorson in sincere appreciation and grateful recognition of 19 years of exceptional service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars as a dedicated employee, fulfilling the positions of claims and appeals consultant, special assistant for legislation, administrative assistant to the Adjutant General and National Director of Youth Development, Scholarship and Recognition. His commitment to the goals and objectives of the VFW, along with the professionalism with which he performed his duties, is in keeping with the highest traditions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States."

I want to just take a moment to say that Gordon did an excellent job in our Voice of Democracy Program. It is a little better because Gordon spent some time there and overhauled it. Thank you.

RESPONSE - COMRADE GORDON THORSON

COMRADE THORSON: Good morning, fellow veterans. Thank you so much. Thank you for all the service and all the help you gave me through the years and gave to these programs through the years. You know, I remember back over 35 years ago I went to serve our country, proudly went to serve our country in Vietnam.

I came back still in uniform, realizing that I was eligible to join this organization. I was very proud. I can still remember the day when I walked into the VFW Post, still in uniform, and signed on the dotted line and became a member of this organization. That was on November 11, 1970. I have been a proud member ever since.

You know, after serving my country and having a chance to benefit

from that service, going to college, serving in my local VFW Post, I was given the opportunity, as mentioned earlier, to go to work in our Washington office. Back on September 1, 1984, I was hired by Past Commander-in-Chief Cooper T. Holt to serve our great organization as an appeals consultant, and then as a claims consultant, and then I had a chance to work on our legislative team.

Continuing that service, Past Commanders-in-Chief Cooper Holt and Howard Vander Clute gave me the opportunity to come to Kansas City and serve our organization further as a director and as Director of the Youth Programs. I look back in those years and I look back in the past 14 years, and I really had a great opportunity to develop our youth programs, the Voice of Democracy program, patriot pin, and a lot of that came from the support of a fellow I worked for during that period of time, Benny Bachand, Assistant Adjutant General Benny Bachand.

So, today I stand before you and I want to thank especially Past Commander-in-Chief Cooper T. Holt. Are you in the audience, Cooper T.? I am sorry, he isn't, but please pass the word that in my mind he is a very special man and I thank him for hiring me so I could start having this opportunity.

I think back at Howard Vander Clute who is now departed, and I thank him for his vision and his wisdom in giving me the opportunity to advance in the organization. I thank Benny Bachand for all the support he gave me through the years and stood by my side and gave me encouragement.

Most of all, when I look at this organization and I think about all those people that had given me help, I also think of our staff in our Washington office, the staff in our National Headquarters in Kansas City, good people. You have some wonderful, dedicated employees in all of them.

I really cherish the memories of serving next to them. Standing by my side today is my greatest supporter, Vickie, my wife. (Applause) Many times she traveled with me. In fact, sometimes I remember speaking at your different banquets, and sometimes we would get return invites.

I think the reason most of the time was you wanted to see my wife, Vickie, again and not me. But we came back and she always came with us. She so enjoyed what was going on in our organization.

The biggest thank you, though, needs to go to all of you, my fellow veterans. As I traveled this organization and now as I have retired, I will never forget all the support you gave to the programs of our organization. What you have done with the Voice of Democracy and patriots pin and our other youth efforts goes beyond anything that I can ever imagine.

Thank you. Thank you, my fellow veterans.

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

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Gordon, thank you very much for all the service you have given to us and there must be thousands of young men and women who will never forget you for helping them through all the things that you have done for them in the Voice of Democracy Program.

Behind me, Gordon, just returning from the Ladies Auxiliary, who wants to congratulate you personally, is the Commander-in-Chief Ray Sisk.

(Whereupon, Commander-in-Chief Sisk assumed the chair at this time.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Gordon, congratulations. Thank you so much for what you have done for the VFW.

INTRODUCTION OF NATIONAL AUXILIARY PRESIDENT BETTY MORRIS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I just came back from visiting the Ladies Auxiliary, and it was apparent how successful their convention has been. I am extremely pleased that here to visit our convention today is a lady that I was proud to serve with for the past year.

She has worked tirelessly on behalf of the Ladies Auxiliary for many years, and has left a successful legacy for others to follow for years to come. I admire her deeply and I want you to know she is not only a wonderful National President, but she is a great friend.

This is a lady who has started out with me when I was the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, and we have done many things together that the Ladies Auxiliary had never done before. I am very pleased and proud to have with us, and I would like for you to please give a warm VFW welcome to a great lady and the President of our Ladies Auxiliary, Betty Morris, from the great state of Maryland. (Applause)

REMARKS - LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT MORRIS: Thank you. Commander-in-Chief Sisk, National Officers and VFW Members:

It is a privilege for me to be here with you this morning and to have this opportunity to greet you one more time as your National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. I want to thank you for the items you have donated during this convention to send overseas.

We appreciate all of you who have joined with the Auxiliary members so we could adequately respond to the special requests. As you know, my theme this year was "Together Everyone Achieves Magic for our Veterans." I want to thank you for making our 89th year of service together a year of teamwork.

I want to thank you for your cooperation on the projects that we conduct together each year. We have achieved great victories for veterans and for our communities. On the one program that is uniquely the Ladies Auxiliary, I want to share the wonderful news that we topped \$3 million in our cancer aid and research for the fifteenth year in a row. (Applause) I must say a plea came out to the comrades and you responded. Thank you so much.

Now, I must congratulate all of you for achieving 100 percent in membership. On behalf of the 660,671 members of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I say bravo. I want to thank those of you who

have signed up members for the Ladies Auxiliary during the year. We appreciate it.

Finally, I want to tell you that I am very proud of the VFW and Ladies Auxiliary's response to the war in Iraq and the ongoing war on terrorism. The members of the Auxiliary are very proud of our legacy of service and look forward to many more years working together for our veterans and for America.

I particularly want to thank Ray. It has been an honor to serve with you. As a token of my appreciation, I would like to present this flag set to you. One last word, I shall never forget the greatest organization in the world, and that is none other than the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. God bless you. (Applause)

VISIT FROM NATIONAL HOME REPRESENTATIVES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: You know, one of the proud icons of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and our Ladies Auxiliary is the VFW National Home at Eaton Rapids, Michigan. The National Home is a profound example of veterans helping veterans.

Today the home provides comfortable housing and a caring staff designed to give children a safe nurturing environment. This morning we are honored to have Representatives from our National Home. Please welcome Mary Sears, President, Board of Trustees, for the VFW National Home for Children.

REMARKS BY NATIONAL HOME REPRESENTATIVE MARY SEARS

MS. MARY SEARS: To National Commander-in-Chief Ray Sisk and other National Officers, Department Officers and our Special Comrades, thank you.

Commander-in-Chief Sisk, it is my honor and my pleasure to address the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars today at your 104th National Convention. As President of the Board of Trustees of the VFW National Home for Children, I bring to you the greetings and gratitude of my fellow trustees, some of whom are with us today in the audience and some of whom are right here on the stage with me now.

I would like to introduce Vice-President of the Board, Louie Cooper, Dana Hussey, Mel Garrett, Ben Pernol, John Hamilton, Doc Bohlman and Margaret Fessmire. Many of you may be aware that our National Commander-in-Chief Ray, during his term of office, serves as an ex-officio member of the National Home Board.

We all want to thank Commander-in-Chief Sisk for the wonderful support he has shown for the home during his term. This year Commander-in-Chief Sisk joins in partnership with our Ladies Auxiliary, Betty Morris, to provide support and endorsement of the National Home "It's All About the Children" campaign. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Sisk.

Also, this summer Commander-in-Chief Sisk made an official visit to the National Home to meet and greet the children and staff and to tour the campus. He spent time with the staff and children and even played a while on the playground with our toddlers from the National Home nursery.

He had lunch with the children, families, staff and dignitaries from the surrounding communities, and took the time to tour the newly-renovated National Home cemetery section. Commander-in-Chief Sisk was also able to tour the two homes so generously supported by his own Department of California, and to meet the families who were living there. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Sisk, for your visit and kind words. Our national home family was strengthened and encouraged.

Adjutant General John Senk and Quartermaster General Joe Ridgley also serve as ex-officio members of the National Home Board. John and Joe have faithfully served the home, regularly attending the quarterly board meetings by sending representatives when their VFW duties prevented them from traveling to Michigan. Both provide valuable insight and counsel in their roles as trustees. Joe is currently serving as chair of the Finance Committee and has been invaluable in helping me this year. John and Joe, we thank you both very much.

I am also delighted to bring to you greetings of our children, the families and staff of the National Home so generously supported by you, the members of the greatest organization in the world. Since 1925, your organization has donated money, time and talent in support of the National Home.

You have been faithful to our cause and your efforts have certainly borne fruit. Children raised at the National Home live in nearly every state in the country. They are doctors, teachers and mechanics, factory workers and housewives. They have children and grandchildren of their own.

Through your commitment to the National Home, you have literally raised thousands of solid patriotic citizens who live all over our great country. In today's world, the National Home is needed more than ever before. How do I know that? I know it because we have a waiting list of families, your families, your children, your grandchildren looking to come to the home in Eaton Rapids, Michigan.

These families in need of our help are not strangers to you. They are yours, and because they are, they are ours. I know the National Home is relevant in today's world just as the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary were founded to serve veterans.

The National Home was established to serve their families and in doing so honor veterans and their sacrifices. Just as men and women serve in harm's way in over 100 countries today, the families of today's veterans will continue to need our assistance today and into the future.

But in order for us to continue to provide the help to veterans' children and their families that is your heritage, we must continue to ask for your help. In 1925, the VFW made the commitment. Many of you have also made a personal commitment of support through our Life Membership of the National Home.

Through your personal support and that of your Posts and Departments, you have done so much to maintain the National Home. Now, I challenge you to do just a little bit more. Due to these difficult economic times, revenues at the National Home are way down. Times are hard for your National Home just as they are hard for many of you and for your Posts. So even as I thank you for all you have done this past year and for the past 78 years, I ask you to remember that commitment you made as

an organization and as individual members and to honor it.

Why? Because there are still families and children that need your help. Fellow veterans, we are pleased to honor and serve. I ask you when you return to your Posts and Departments, that you do just a little more, one more dinner, one more bingo, one more pancake breakfast, or one more something and send your donations to the National Home.

Please send your donations to our unrestricted fund. That is where we are in dire need of the money at this time for use in the general fund. Our greatest need is for daily operating expenses. Your donation will be so much appreciated and with it you will be planting seeds for our future in helping to make America strong.

In concluding my remarks, I want to thank those Departments that have made the commitment to the National Home even stronger in the past year by their sponsorship of a house at the National Home. In January, 2003, VFW Post 1772 took on the sponsorship of the New Hampshire house. Thank you, New Hampshire.

In March, 2003, the Department of Arizona took on sponsorship of the Arizona house. Thank you, Arizona. I am pleased to announce publicly at this convention that our host Department, the Department of Texas, has formally agreed to the sponsorship of what is known as the Texas-Oklahoma house. Thank you, Texas.

That means that for the first time in many, many years every house of the National Home is being sponsored. What an accomplishment. We know that the sponsoring Departments, Posts, Pup Tents could not undertake this responsibility without the support of the Posts and members, and we appreciate this, each and every one of you.

Will all the National Home Chairmen please stand and be recognized. We couldn't do this without you. I thank you all. (Applause)

Now, it is my privilege to introduce to you a very special guest with us today, an alumni of the VFW National Home for Children. Direct from Camp Lejeune, Marine Corps Staff Sergeant Matt Lightner.

REMARKS BY STAFF SERGEANT MATT LIGHTNER

SERGEANT LIGHTNER: Good morning. You guys are quiet. Good morning. I hear Marines out there. Good. I am here today because I want to share a little story with you. One, it is an honor to be here before the VFW. You are one of the finest organizations in America.

The story I want to share is about my life. It is a personal story, kind of short. Back in 1985, our house was burned to the ground. I came from a large family and we were running out of places to live. We lived at our grandmother's house in Napoleon, Michigan, and she was old, she couldn't take care of us.

She was 69 years old, and it was hard because there were ten of us to take care of at the time. We lived there for two years, and we were facing foster care. Our dad knew if we were placed in foster care we were going to be split up and sent all over the State of Michigan and probably never see each other again.

Well, his goal was to keep us together. My dad, he is here today, sitting in the front row. He is a Vietnam veteran. He found out about the

National Home for Children and applied for our residency, and Post 823 out of Jackson, Michigan, sponsored us to live out there.

Is there anybody here from Post 823? The day they came out to pick us up, I remember it. I will never forget the day. They came out in the National Home for Children van and two house parents got out. They greeted us. We loaded up our stuff into a van, which we all of us had about one bag apiece, because that was all we owned at the time.

We turned around and we headed down the road, and the housemother, she turns around and said, "Let me lay down some ground rules." I thought, oh, great, what did I just get myself into? She said, "No swearing, no fighting, respect," things like that. They were good, though.

We got to the National Home that morning and after we got settled into our Wisconsin cottage, that is the house I grew up in. Thank you, Wisconsin. It is a very nice house. After we got settled in, we went out into the neighborhood on campus there at the VFW National Home and we started to look around and find out what it is all about.

All the children in the neighborhood came out to greet us. They wanted to meet us, introduced themselves and invited us to play in their games, all in the same day. It became very clear that they weren't doing that because we were the new kids on the block or the fresh meat, as you would like to put it, they were doing that because they wanted to welcome us to the National Home family. That is exactly what they did.

After that we became a part of the National Home family for life. All the children at the National Home became my brothers and sisters and ultimately you are their parents. It is because of what you did and do for us. You take care of us. You took care of me when I was out there.

I learned a lot of things when I was living out there. I learned about values, I learned about morals, I learned to respect your elders. We learned about patriotism. Every day before we would go to school we would take the American flag and the flag of the state for the house we lived in and we would raise it on the flag pole. Each cottage has a flag pole.

I also learned about responsibility, and I want to share that lesson with you real quickly. Kevin DeYoung was a case manager of mine. I was in the Independent Living Program. Basically, the Independent Living Program is a program where you learn to transition to the outside world.

I was a senior in high school living in the program. Kevin was working with me. I had a car and I took it to school. One day I was late as seniors usually are. I skipped the first class, got there late, and I knew they were going to send a letter to Kevin DeYoung saying that I had missed class.

So me being the clever guy I was, always trying to get out of trouble, I went to Kevin DeYoung to tell him ahead of time. I said, "Kevin, I was late for school this morning. I am sorry." Instead of lecturing me for three hours on responsibility and why I was wrong and what I should do to fix it, he simply looked at me and said, "Well, I guess you are going to be a little behind on your studies." That is all he said.

It dawned on me after he told me that that I realized that I am responsible for what I do and that nobody else is going to take responsibility for that. No matter what background I have or what I have done in the past, I am responsible for what I do now. That day I learned that lesson well.

Since leaving the National Home, I joined the military. I started out in the Army. I was in field artillery, king of battle. I did that for two years as

a reservist. After that I got bored with the Army, because that is the Army. I decided I wanted to be a United States Marine. So I enlisted.

I went to Okinawa for a couple of years and got stationed back here at stateside at Camp Lejeune. When I got out in '99 off of active duty, I went back to college and I finished. I graduated in 2001 with a bachelor in criminal justice and a minor in psychology.

In January of this year I was called to active duty in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. I have been on active duty since. Now, I would not be where I am today, a recently-married man who just bought a house in Wilmington, I couldn't have done any of this if it had not been for everything that you have done for the National Home and for me while I was living out there.

It is not just me, it is all the children out there. It is my brothers and sisters. I moved out there with eleven, and you have really, really made a difference in our lives. I know my father is grateful, grateful for everything that the VFW has done, because it kept us together as a family. It even made us a bigger family, the people I see here today.

I want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything that you have done and thank you on behalf of Danielle Lightner, Kathy Lightner, Heidi Lightner, Paul Lightner, Aaron, Ryan, Kevin, Rebecca, Jason and Sandy. Those are my brothers and sisters that you have impacted. God bless you all. You have a good day.

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

MS. MARY SEARS: Thank you, Matt. The National Home is extremely fortunate to have a dedicated staff during these difficult economic times. They are serving the organization in caring for your children just as you would have with love. It is my pleasure to introduce to you today the Interim Executive Director of the VFW National Home for Children, Patrice Greene.

REMARKS BY INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PATRICE GREENE

INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREENE: Thank you. Thank you, President Sears. Commander-in-Chief Sisk, good morning. I want to say to you that you have given the National Home some wonderful support during your year of service, and we thank you for that. By that fine young individual that you just met, I know that you know that it has all been worth it, that it is a good thing.

It is an honor to be here representing the VFW National Home for Children at this, your 104th National Convention. I bring to you-all the greetings and the thanks of your National Home children, families and staff. As you can see by the caliber of this young man that was standing before you here today, and by the young people you have met this week of the National Home, you are making a difference in America's future.

As a member of the National Home staff for over 14 years, I can tell you this from my personal experience. I have seen children come to the home with very difficult and sometimes heartbreaking life stories, children

who fell through the cracks and who were not able to get the help from overburdened government agencies.

I have had the privilege of seeing them get the best of love and care because of what you and your comrades and sisters have done. I have seen them thrive and go on to become successful and happy adults with new families of their own.

The home is regularly visited by alumni from all over the country. As Mary Sears told you, they are doctors, teachers, auto mechanics, factory workers, business owners and members of the United States military. They are moms, they are dads, they are grandmothers and they are grandfathers, and they are raising their children and grandchildren to be fine upstanding individuals.

Through your commitment and your support, your service and your dreams, you have helped to make all this possible. If you could see firsthand what I have seen and others who have visited the National Home have seen, you would be so proud of your contributions.

But now take a moment to contemplate a future without opportunities for our children to grow up to be fine adults that are respectful, hard-working, smart and happy, a future without the light of possibilities. If you or your families couldn't be there to love, care for and build up your child, what would you give to be assured that they could grow up like Matt and his sisters and brothers have done?

We all have caught ourselves at times taking things for granted. You heard Matt's testimony and I can assure you that the children and the families that you have helped at the National Home do not take you for granted. During these challenging economic times, it would be easy to take for granted that somebody else will provide the light for our veterans' children and families.

But will there be that someone? Government budgets are shrinking, Social Service programs are being cut with no end in sight. It would be easy to take for granted that the National Home will always be there. But will it? During this convention, you have heard about the current state of our nation and of our armed forces, about the needs and the importance of honoring and serving our veterans' families, about our active duty military personnel who are our sons and our daughters and our grandchildren.

You have heard about their needs and their struggles as they serve in harm's way today. You have heard about the future of America. By your commitment made over 78 years ago to create and support the National Home, you stepped forward to meet the needs of the veterans and their families.

Member by member, Post by Post, Auxiliary by Auxiliary, and dollar by dollar, you joined forces and you made it happen. You are amazing. You were needed then and you are needed even more today. Through your National Home, you provide the light for a veteran's child to grow into a fine upstanding citizen.

Continue to provide the light by giving to the home and encourage others to give. Don't wait. Don't take it for granted that somebody else is going to provide the light. The light is in your hands; the light is in your hands. Thank you so much for your service, for your generosity, for your leadership, and for the love that you have for the children and for the

National Home. Thank you.

Now, it is my pleasure to introduce to you the 2003-2004 Buddy Poppy Girl. She did not want me to call her a child. She is Carlyssa Redman.

REMARKS BY 2003-2004 BUDDY POPPY GIRL

BUDDY POPPY GIRL CARLYSSA REDMAN: Hi. My name is Carlyssa Redman. I am 11 years old and in the sixth grade. I have lived at the VFW National Home for one and a half years. I live in the California-Nevada house. I play basketball, soccer, the saxophone and piano. My favorite song that I have learned to play on the piano is called "The Caravan."

I started playing the saxophone in September, 2002. I have liked basketball and soccer since I was five years old. I like to trade bikes with my friends. I was in 4-H and had a pig. My pig's name was Homer. Homer liked to eat carrots and bananas. Homer also liked to chew on corncobs. Homer was a Yorkshire Cross. In July, I sold Homer at the Eaton County Fair. I got third place for his meat and fifth place for showmanship. Homer weighed 238 pounds.

When I grow up, I want to be an artist, a pro skate boarder or a pro basketball player. My favorite subject in school is math. My favorite computer game is "The Sense" and my favorite food is chicken fingers. I like to draw. I have two brothers and three sisters. I have one niece named Madison.

I am Irish, German, Scottish, Polish and Indian. I live with my mom, Tammy, my sister, Casey, and my brother, Ben. My brothers are Ryan and Ben. My sisters are Stacy, Rachel and Casey. My dad's name is Chris. All my brothers and sisters have red hair except for Ryan and Stacy.

My best friend's name is Jesse. My great-grandpa was in World War I in France. I like being a Buddy Poppy Girl because I may be part of helping veterans and their families. Thank you for listening to me to tell you about my family. (Applause)

MS. MARY SEARS: Many of you signed up for the drawing for the free trip, "It's All About the Children" sweepstakes. We had many entries and many donations. We thank you. The winner yesterday from the ladies was a lady from West Virginia, and the winner today is Robert King from Muskegon, Michigan. You will have a trip to the National Home, the beautiful trip at Christmas. Thank you all for your help.

INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREENE: If you will indulge us, we have one more thing to do. We want to thank Commander-in-Chief Sisk for his year of service at the National Home, and we have a gift to present to him to be opened here today.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you, Carlyssa, for this.

INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREENE: That is a new Life Member shirt.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: This is a beautiful jewelry box.

INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREENE: To help keep his memories of this year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you so much. To our

National Home, let's always remember them. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF PAST COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: At this time I would like to introduce some comrades that you-all know and have admired over the years. I personally want to thank them for the great service they have done for this organization during their term as Commander-in-Chief. I would like to recognize each and every one that is here at this convention this year.

Starting with our Senior Chief, Clyde Lewis from New York, who served 1949-'50.

1958-'59, John W. "Jack" Mahan.

1961-'62, Robert E. "Bob" Hanson.

1973-'74, Ray Soden from Illinois.

1974-'75, John Stang from Kansas.

1977-'78, Dr. John Wasylik from Ohio.

1978-1979, Eric Sandstrom from Washington.

October, 1980 to 1982, Arthur J. Fellwock from Indiana.

1982-'83, James R. "Bob" Currieo from Arizona.

1983-'84, Clifford G. Olson from Massachusetts.

1985-'86, John S. Staum from Minnesota.

1986-'87, Norman G. Staab from Kansas.

1988-'89, Larry Rivers from Louisiana.

1989-'90, Walter G. "Wally" Hogan from Wisconsin.

1991-'92, Robert E. Wallace from New Jersey.

1992-'93, John Carney from Florida.

1993-'94, a very special Chief to me because he was my Chief as Department Commander of California, George R. Cramer from Illinois.

In 1994-'95, Allen F. "Gunner" Kent from Arizona.

1995-'96, one of the small guys, Paul A. Spera from Massachusetts.

1996-'97, James E. Nier from Texas.

1997-'98, John E. Moon from Ohio.

1998-'99, Thomas A. Pouliot from Montana.

1999-2000, John W. Smart from New Hampshire.

2000-2001, John F. Gwizdak from Georgia.

2001-2002, James N. Goldsmith from Michigan.

Thank you so much, Past Commanders-in-Chief, for what you continue to do for this organization.

INTRODUCTION OF NATIONAL SERGEANTS-AT-ARMS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: My comrades, at this time you see standing behind me our Sergeants-at-Arms. I want to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to a group of comrades we see annually at our National Convention. They come to this convention, they are the very first ones up early in the morning and the first ones in the hall.

They arrange for the seating on special occasions, and they keep order in the hall. They try to seat everybody and maintain order that is necessary during the meeting itself. These Sergeants-at-Arms don't get a lot of money for this. It is obvious to me that it is a labor of love, and I am sure

that everyone recognizes the outstanding job that they do.

It is my privilege to introduce the National Sergeant-at-Arms from Post 6240, the Department of Kansas, Barry Hoffman. Barry has been a Sergeant for 15 years. After the convention, his rank changes to Colonel as he serves with the Kansas National Guard as their Counter Drug Coordinator. Again, Barry, our National Sergeant-at-Arms, thank you so much for a great job well done. (Applause)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Keith McDonald has been a Sergeant for nine years and is a member of Post 2275 in California. He is retired from the United States Navy and is a Past All American Post Commander. Keith McDonald. Thank you, Keith.

Gary Barringer, Post 9134, has been a Sergeant for eight years. He is a Past Department Commander of North Carolina and works as a technician for the North Carolina National Guard. Gary Barringer. Thank you, Gary.

Joe Schirmers has been a Sergeant for 41 years and is a member of Post 407 in Minnesota. He is retired from the Great Northern Railroad, and listen to this, comrades. He has over 46,000 hours of volunteer service at VA hospitals. (Applause) Joe, thank you.

The next Sergeant to be introduced is a Vietnam veteran who served with the United States Navy. He is from the Department of Florida, where he retired from the St. Petersburg Police Department after 25 years, and that is Ed Villuame.

Thank you, Ed.

Another member of the Sergeants-at-Arms is a former Air Force Sergeant from Massachusetts, a Past District Commander, five-time All American State Post Quartermaster, and in 1982 was selected by the National Organization as a Young Veteran of the Year, Brian O'Brien. Thank you, Brian.

The newest member, Jim Galen, from Michigan, is a Past All State Commander, a Post Quartermaster for 16 years, and is employed as an assembly technician for General Motors. Thank you, Jim, for your service.

You know, these are the comrades that every time everything goes wrong, unfortunately, we start screaming at them. If something goes right, there is a lot of times we forget to say thank you. At this time I want to publicly say thank you to each and every one of you.

Each member of this team does a great job and I am so proud of each and every one of them because, comrades, you have handled yourselves like professionals. I am honored to have had the opportunity to serve with each and every one of you. Thanks so much on behalf of all of us for what you do for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. My comrades, let's show them how much we appreciate our Sergeants-at-Arms at this time.

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

ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS OF THE NATIONAL BUDDY POPPY CONTEST

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: At this time for the Buddy Poppy

Awards, I would like to call on our Director, Tom Kissell.

DIRECTOR TOM KISSELL: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. At this time it is a pleasure to announce the Department divisional winners that have exceeded and surpassed their three years in total distribution, along with their Ladies Auxiliary.

Representing Division 1, First Place, the Department of South Dakota and its Ladies Auxiliary. I would ask that the Department Commander and/or his representative, whoever is present, to accept this award from our Commander-in-Chief.

First Place, Division 1, is the Department of South Dakota.

Division 2, the Department of Alaska and its Ladies Auxiliary.

Division 3, the Department of New Hampshire and its Ladies Auxiliary.

Division 4, the Department of Oregon and its Ladies Auxiliary.

First Place, Division 5, the Department of Rhode Island and its Ladies Auxiliary.

Division 6, Department of Nevada and its Ladies Auxiliary.

Division 7, the Department of Alabama and its Ladies Auxiliary.

Division 8, the Department of Hawaii and its Ladies Auxiliary.

Division 9, the Department of the Europe.

I would ask that the Immediate Past Commander from the great state of California, Jerry Anderson, and Jane Maxwell, the Immediate Past President, if she is in the audience, both please come forward.

At this time, ladies and gentlemen, it gives me a great deal of pleasure and, Commander-in-Chief, you will be especially proud of this, to introduce the recipient of Over One Million Club Award for 2003. The Over One Million Club was established several years ago to pay special recognition to the Departments whose Buddy distribution equalled or exceeded one million in total sales.

This year's loan recipient is the Department of California, who led the nation in total distribution, 1,038,500 poppies. (Applause)

Now, Commander-in-Chief, I would like to announce the winners of the Buddy Poppy Display Contest.

CATEGORY 1 - PUBLIC PROMOTION OF POPPY CAMPAIGN

First Place, Casas Adobes Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 10188, Tucson, Arizona.

Second Place, Category 1, John M. Bliss Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 628, Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Third Place, Category 1, Robert W. Young Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 8805, Hopewell Township, Pennsylvania.

Honorable Mention, Category 1, Maurice K. Langberg, Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 10066, Jensen Beach, Florida.

The Director's Award is Crookston Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 1902, Crookston, Minnesota.

CATEGORY 2 - MEMORIAL OR INSPIRATIONAL DISPLAYS

First Place, Leonard Stark Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 3543, Heber Springs, Arkansas.

Second Place, Category 2, John M. Bliss Post and Ladies Auxiliary

No. 628, Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Third Place, Category 2, Ramer Brown Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 10056, Dubois, Wyoming.

Honorable Mention, Category 2, the Don Cherry Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 4083, Geneseo, Illinois.

CATEGORY 3 - ARTISTIC OR DECORATIVE USE OF POPPIES

First Place, Howard M. Black Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 1508, Elsinore, California.

Second Place, Category 3, Arthur W. Jones Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 7564, West Fargo, North Dakota.

Third Place, James W. McCartney Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 6765, Wanaque, New Jersey.

Honorable Mention Chief Pontiac Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 1690, Cahokia, Illinois.

CATEGORY 4 - MEMORIAL OR INSPIRATIONAL DISPLAYS, JUNIOR GIRLS UNITS/SONS OF THE VFW

First Place, Champaign County Junior Girls Unit No. 5520, Champaign, Illinois.

Second Place for Category 4, the Narrows Bridge Junior Girls Unit No. 10018, Tacoma, Washington.

Third Place, the Yingling-Ridgely Junior Girls Unit No. 7472, Ellicott City, Maryland.

Honorable Mention for Category 4, the Pierce Dant Hamblin Junior Girls Unit No. 3167, Williamsburg, Kentucky.

Special thanks to our National Chairman John Lowe, from the great state of California, and to his counterpart from the Ladies Auxiliary, Ms. Barbara Williams from the Department of the District of Columbia. Commander-in-Chief, that completes my report.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much, Tom. For the purposes of a motion and some announcements, our Adjutant General.

MOTION REGARDING PROCEEDINGS OF 104TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Thank you, Chief. Commander-in-Chief, I move that the proceedings of the Veterans of Foreign Wars' 104th National Convention be submitted to the Speaker of the House of Representatives for printing as a House document in accordance with Public Law No. 620, 90th Congress, approved October 2, 1968, Title 44 of the United States Code, Section 1332.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Ed Banas, Post 10004, Connecticut, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: We have a motion and a second. Any question on the motion? Any question on the motion? Any question on the motion? If not, all those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no." The "ayes" have it. It is so ordered.

NOMINATIONS FOR NATIONAL HOME TRUSTEES

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Commander-in-Chief, the following have been nominated for National Home Trustees for their upcoming election.

From the Second National Home District, encompassing Europe, New Jersey and New York, Melvin Garrett, Post 6396, New York.

The Third National Home District, encompassing Delaware, D.C., Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands, Charles Byceline, Post 6704, Pennsylvania, and Neale Deibler, Post 6493, Pennsylvania.

Fourth National Home District, Maryland, Ohio and West Virginia, Betty C. Morris, Auxiliary to VFW Post 10146, Maryland. Roger D. Taylor, Post 2873, Ohio.

NOMINATION OF OFFICERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you, Comrade Adjutant General. We are now going into the nominations for our National Officers. At this time do we have anyone in nomination for Commander-in-Chief for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States?

I would like to call upon Ron Rusakiewicz, Post 9460, Connecticut, for his nomination.

NOMINATION FOR COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMRADE RON RUSAKIEWICZ (Post 9460 - Connecticut): Thank you very much, Comrade Commander-in-Chief. I want to thank each and every one of you here today for the opportunity to come before you and participate in our great election process.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief Sisk, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Banas, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Furgess, to all the National elected and appointed officers, for those of you who serve on our Council of Administration for the National Organization, and certainly to you State Commanders who are now molding your Departments for a great future in your state; to those of you who serve in the trenches, each and every one of you who are a District Commander, County Council Commander, a Post Commander, and certainly each and every one of you who are delegates to this our great 104th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States:

I would like to say a special welcome to my delegation from the Department of Connecticut, and there are two other gentlemen in the room whom every year are here, year after year, and as we come here into what I believe are hallowed halls to discuss our business, these two gentlemen, and I was sitting up front and looking at them, Connecticut is up front again, you know, and I was looking at them and I kind of thought of the Maytag repairman.

But they provide a great service to us each and every year, and I speak of our court stenographer, John Bowen, and the gentleman who makes us all look so good on the silver screen, Marty Blackman. This is for you, gentlemen, for all you do for us. (Applause)

Did I miss anybody in the hall. My love of this organization is no greater or stronger than yours, nor is it any less. Those are the words that you heard two years ago when our then candidate for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief from the Eastern States Conference came before each and every one of your conferences to ask you for the support in his election.

I want to tell you that he believes in those words from his heart as much now as when he spoke them to you then, because he knows that those words fortify his position that each and every one of us in this room and those who belong to the VFW are but a team, Team VFW.

As a team, we must all go forward to continue the work that we do to serve our community, to serve our valued veterans, to serve our nation and, more importantly, to serve those who at this moment are deployed around the world guarding the gates of our freedom.

You know, by virtue of you electing him two years ago, many of you have had the opportunity in your Departments to meet with him, to get to know him better, to sit and listen to his ideals for the VFW, to hear the plans he proposes for the furtherance of this organization, and most of all his view and ideas how we should implement all of the programs that we employ in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. I thought I knew him pretty well. He was my Junior Vice Commander when I was State Commander of the Department of Connecticut. But in the last two years I have had the opportunity to stand behind that man and listen to him as he spoke to people who now don the uniform of our United States military.

As he spoke to them, I was extremely impressed with the knowledge of the history that he has of their unit. He would speak to them individually and tell them where their unit served, in what conflict and what war, and what they did. But, you know something, it wasn't important for him to impress me. It was important for an ambassador from the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States to impress them. And that he did.

You know, he ended each and every one of his talks with the same words. He said to them, "When your mission is finished and when your job is done, we in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States intend on welcoming you home and honor you as America's new century of heroes."

I believe he said those words for two reasons. Number one, as Jim Goldsmith would say, "It is the right thing to do in the VFW." The second reason subliminally, as a former Vietnam veteran he is absolutely convinced that when our government sends any of our young men and women, our sons and daughters, anywhere over this globe to defend our freedoms, our interest and our homeland, that they should never, ever, ever receive such a lousy welcome home like our Vietnam veterans did.

You know, we have been blessed in the VFW. We have had nothing but outstanding Commanders-in-Chief, and each one of them that came to that office came with a different niche, a little something different that they brought to that table. Three that come to mind are John Gwizdak from the State of Georgia. He was the best motivational speaker I have ever heard in my lifetime.

He was a gentleman's gentleman from the great Commonwealth of Massachusetts, God rest his soul, Joe Scerra. When he came to the podium and took the microphone, he would say to each and every one of us, "It is now time to sing for my supper."

Then there is Ray Soden. He literally came to this microphone and sang for his supper. He was the best darn singing Commander-in-Chief we ever had. Now, comrades, I must admit to you the candidate that I am about to nominate cannot hold a candle to the singing of Past Chief Ray Soden.

He is kind of like a Willie Nelson with a bad case of laryngitis. But singing for his supper he will. And he will sing with the best of them. He will provide the information, the knowledge and the encouragement to all who he addresses to pass on the message of programs that we in the VFW embrace, and I think most importantly to each and every one of us in this room.

He will tell those in our government that have possession of those keys that can lock or unlock a door to a VA medical facility in this nation, that that door must stay open, and anyone who can call themselves a veteran has an inherent right to walk through that door and get timely, competent, compassionate medical health care from that system because they earned it. It was promised to them, they deserved it, and by God they ought to get it.

As we enter a new year and a new administration, there is no doubt in our mind that our Chief Executive Officer, the Commander-in-Chief, will serve with distinction, honor and pride, and carry out all the duties and tasks put before him because he has the courage and conviction with you together as a team to face any new challenge, any new obstacle that may come before this beloved organization.

So my fellow comrades, I am proud and I am extremely pleased to place in nomination the name of a man for the highest office that we afford, the Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States from the great state of Connecticut, Mr. Edward S. Banas, Sr.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: For the purpose of a second, Richard A. Cyr from Jewett City, Connecticut, Post 10004.

COMRADE RICHARD CYR (Post 10004 - Connecticut): My name is Richard Cyr. I am from Post 10004, Jewett City, Connecticut. On behalf of its entire membership, it is my pleasure to second the nomination of Ed Banas as Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: For the purpose of a second, Dominic Romano, Department of Connecticut Quartermaster, Post 7330, Oakville, Connecticut.

COMRADE DOMINIC ROMANO (Post 7330 - Connecticut): I am deeply honored to second the nomination of Edward Banas for Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: And for the purpose of a second, George Cramer, Past Commander-in-Chief, of Post 6869, North Riverside, Illinois.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GEORGE CRAMER (Post 6869- Illinois): Good morning. I am George Cramer, a delegate from Post 6869, North Riverside, Illinois, and Past Commander-in-Chief. It is an honor for me to have the opportunity to rise this morning and present a comrade who early on made his commitment to service to our organization, and through the many years he has served as a team player for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

He has climbed that mountain and tomorrow we will elect him to that pinnacle of success. It is a privilege for me to have the opportunity to second the nomination of Edward Banas of the great Department of Connecticut for Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for 2003-2004.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much. Are there any other nominations for Commander-in-Chief? Are there any other nominations for Commander-in-Chief? Are there any other nominations for Commander-in-Chief? If not, nominations will remain open until tomorrow.

Nominations are now open for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Nominating John Furgess is John F. Gwizdak, Past Commander-in-Chief, Post 5080, Lake City, Georgia.

NOMINATION OF SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN GWIZDAK (Post 5080-Georgia): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, John Gwizdak, a delegate from Post 5080, Lake City, Georgia. Comrade Commander-in-Chief and to your elected and appointed officers, all the dignitaries and, of course, the delegates registered to this 104th Convention.

John was born at Langley Field, Virginia, in 1943, and was raised in Nashville, Tennessee. He and his wife, Alma, have three daughters and nine grandchildren. John received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business from Middle Tennessee State University in 1965.

He is also a graduate of the U.S. Army Management School and the United States Army Commanding General Staff at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He was named as the Military Science ROTC Distinguished Alumnus of Middle Tennessee State University in 1990.

He has served for several years as Vice-Chairman of Davis County Veterans Coordinating Council. John is a graduate of the ROTC program at MTSU, a Vietnam veteran. He served in the United States Americal Division at Chu Lai during 1967-1968.

He served with the Tennessee Army National Guard from 1970 through 1999, a total of 28 years, both active and guard service, and retired at the rank of colonel. John joined West Nashville VFW Post in 1970 and served through the chairs to the Post Commander, serving also as District Commander of District 6 with excellent results.

John served as State Commander of the Department of Tennessee Veterans of Foreign Wars in 1978-1979. He was also the first Vietnam veteran to hold that position in the State of Tennessee. John served on the VFW National Council of Administration from District 7, representing the States of Tennessee and Kentucky '99 through '01.

He remains very active in his Post and takes very special pride in having been a long-time Chairman of the Voice of Democracy. He has served on numerous National Committees and vice-chairman and chairman on many of them. He has served as the co-editor of the VFW state newspaper in Tennessee. He writes a weekly column in a Nashville newspaper called Veterans View, and he has done that now for 23 years and serves as co-editor of that paper, which is entitled Westview. John has also been host and producer of Vets Point, a weekly Nashville cable television

program.

For his community involvement, in 1983 he was named Belleview Citizen of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce. He was named Outstanding Young American in 1975, and Young Veteran of the Year in 1979. He has been Chairman of the Belleview Baptist Church, which has an exchange bowl for the last 19 years.

He has helped organize Nashville's Operation Stand Down since its beginning in 1993, and accepted a national award in Washington from the U.S. Department of Labor on behalf of those accomplishments in 1999. Of course, he served as the Tennessee Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program.

He also just recently retired from after completing 20 years as the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs Assistant Commissioner, and again his love for veterans was demonstrated during those 20 years. He is a person of action and a comrade well suited to be placed in our chairs in this National Organization.

If there are criteria to serve in the chairs, and one of them is to demonstrate the ability to perform at the next highest level, he has achieved that. If moral integrity and standards are to be that of a character of a person who serves in these chairs, he possesses those.

He has been to 30 states and five countries. You have found him as a person of integrity, you have found him as a person that understands the veteran issues of our country. You have also found out that he is a veteran's veteran and he is down to earth.

It is my honor and privilege to nominate for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the ensuing year, and I place in nomination at this time the name of John Furgess from Tennessee.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: For the purpose of a second, Ronnie Davis, Department of Tennessee Adjutant-Quartermaster.

COMRADE RONNIE DAVIS (Post 1618 - Tennessee): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Sisk. Distinguished head table guests, comrades, and especially you, the veterans here today, it is a great privilege for me to stand before you here to second this nomination of a man that I have grown to know over the past 25 years on a personal level.

I had the opportunity to watch him progress through the chairs of the State of Tennessee. Not only that, I had the opportunity to watch him serve his fellow veterans and their families as Assistant Commissioner of Veterans Affairs. He has traveled, as previously stated, to 30 states in this great nation of ours, and will be traveling to many more in the days and months to come.

I am sure that you will come to know him as I do, as a veterans' advocate. There is no doubt in my mind that John Furgess will be a vital part of the Banas-Furgess-Mueller team of 2003-2004. It is with great pride that I second the nomination of John Furgess.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Are there any other nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Are there any other nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Are there any other nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Hearing none, nominations will remain open until tomorrow.

Nominations are now open for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, and nominating James Mueller will be James N. Goldsmith, Past Commander-in-Chief from Michigan.

NOMINATION OF JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES GOLDSMITH (Post 4139-Michigan): Thank you, Raymond. Once again, good morning. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to stand here and nominate a great American, the endorsed candidate from the Big Ten Conference for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of this great organization.

Jim's eligibility for the Veterans of Foreign Wars comes from his service in the Republic of South Vietnam from February, '68, to October, '68. He was a senior heavy-duty truck driver with the 446th Transportation Company, 57th Transportation Battalion.

Jim participated in the evacuation of Special Forces in the Mountain Yard Crises from around the Kasaan area. Following his return from Vietnam in 1970, he joined VFW Post 5077 in the 9th District of the Department of Missouri. In 1971, Jim was elected Senior Vice Commander and proceeded to revive the Voice of Democracy Program at his Post and in his community.

In 1972, Jim was elected Post Commander and the membership went 50 members over the quota. Jim also has served as Post Quartermaster for eight years. Seven of those years he was All-State Quartermaster. In 1982, he received the J. C. Busch Proficiency Award for Outstanding Post Quartermaster of the Year in Missouri. In 1987, Jim was again elected Post Commander and received the All-State Commander's Award.

On the District level, he served in various chairs and offices. He was unable to serve as District Commander because of his working the evening shift. In 1980, Jim was named Young Veteran of the Year by the Department of Missouri. In 1986 through 1989, he served as Department Inspector, and in '86 he was named Outstanding State Officer of the Year.

In 1989, Jim was elected State Surgeon and moved through the state chairs. He was elected Commander in 1993, and became All-American Department Commander of the great State of Missouri. In 1984, Jim was appointed National Aide-de-Camp and in 1986 was appointed Assistant Inspector General.

In the year 1994-'95, he served as National Chairman of the Voice of Democracy Committee. In '95-'96, he served as National Vice-President of Youth Activities and Committees. In 1997-'99, Jim was elected National Council member of District 5 representing the great states of Missouri and Indiana.

At our 100th Anniversary in Kansas City, Missouri, Jim was selected as the National Convention Chairman for the National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars held in that great city of Kansas City. In the year 2000-2001, he served as National Vice-Chairman of the Citizenship, Education and Community Service Award.

He also served on the following National Committees: National Security and Foreign Affairs, General Resolutions, Veterans Service, Homeless Veterans, Buddy Poppy, Youth Activities, Voice of Democracy, By-

Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual, and the list goes on.

Jim has been very active in his community of O'Fallon, Missouri. In 1980, he served as the city's 4th of July Parade Chairman and continued in that capacity over the last 20 years. The O'Fallon Chamber of Commerce selected him as Person of the Year in 1984.

Also in that same year Governor Christopher Bond appointed Jim to serve as State Chairman for the National Flag Day. Jim serves as a member on that Citizens Committee for the O'Fallon Fire Protection District. He serves on the Advisory Board and has served on the panel for selection and promotion of the rank of the Fire Department personnel.

He has worked for the passage of bond issues and tax hikes for the Fire Department Pension Program. In '94, Jim was presented an award for his outstanding loyalty and support of the O'Fallon Fire Protection District. In 2000, the city named Jim Mueller Volunteer of the Year for O'Fallon, Missouri.

Jim has been active in his church, serving as President of the Men's Club, planning fall festivals and dinners. He serves on the Committee as head of the ushers, planning worship services for the past 15 years. Jim is a member of the Knights of Columbus in St. Paul, Missouri, for the past 20 years.

He is a Life Member of AmVets Post 108, the American Legion Post 388, and the Military Order of the Cootie's Pup Tent No. 5. Jim is retired from General Motors after 35 years. He was employed in the Parts Division for General Motors. Jim and Pat have been married for 39 years and they have two children, Christine of California and Jason of O'Fallon, Missouri.

My friends and delegates, it gives me great pleasure to present to you the next Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, a true veteran's veteran, one that will make a great leader for this organization, James R. Mueller from the great state of Missouri. I nominate Mr. Mueller for that position.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: For the purpose of a second, I will recognize George Cramer, Past Commander-in-Chief, from Illinois.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CRAMER (Post 6869-Illinois): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. Distinguished guests on the dais and delegates to the 104th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I am George Cramer, VFW Post 6869, North Riverside, Illinois.

Once again, it is an honor for me to have the opportunity to present a comrade of our organization who has toiled in the vineyards, worked in the trenches and continues to stand up and speak out in behalf of all issues and programs of our great organization.

He, too, has climbed that mountain and achieved that pinnacle of success as an All-American. Proudly, I stand before you to second the nomination of Jim Mueller of the great Department of Missouri for the high office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Are there any other nominations for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Are there any other nominations for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Are there any other nominations for the office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Hearing none, nominations will remain open until tomorrow.

Nominations are now open for Quartermaster General. I recognize Billy McCarthy from Massachusetts to nominate Joe Ridgley.

NOMINATION OF QUARTERMASTER GENERAL

COMRADE BILLY McCARTHY (Post 864 - Massachusetts): Joe Ridgley was elected Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States in March, 1995. Prior to assuming that position, he has served as Assistant Quartermaster General since April, 1991.

Joe began his employment in the VFW National Headquarters in 1976. In 25 years he also served in Life Membership, Purchasing, Per Capita Tax and the VFW Emblem & Supply Department. Joe served on active duty with the United States Navy from 1970 to 1975, with two deployments to Vietnam.

Following the end of the Vietnam War, he attended the Navy Supply Corps School in Athens, Georgia. He subsequently served as the supply officer of the USS Schenectady, LST 1185. He received a Letter of Commendation for his service.

Joe earned a Bachelor's Degree in Science and Business Administration from the University of Missouri in 1970, and attended the Graduate School of Business at the University of Missouri in Kansas City. Joe is a Life Member of VFW Post 8220.

Standing behind me are the Quartermasters from all the conferences in the United States. Therefore, it is my honor and privilege to place in nomination the name of Joe Ridgley for Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Commander-in-Chief, I place the name of Joe Ridgley in nomination for Quartermaster General of the VFW. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: For the purpose of a second, I recognize Precilla Wilkewitz.

SISTER PRECILLA WILKEWITZ (Post 4224 - Louisiana): Thank you, Chief. Joining me at the podium are the State Quartermasters from the different conferences. From the Western Conference, we have John Lowe. From the Eastern Conference, Stan King; and from the Big Ten Conference, we have Dave Havelly. I am Precilla Wilkewitz from the Southern Conference representing Post 4224 in Louisiana.

We are proud to be the seconders for Joe Ridgley for the office of National Quartermaster General at the 104th National Convention. As Quartermasters, we have had dealings with the Quartermaster's office and with Joe Ridgley for the past eight years as he has served as the Quartermaster General.

We know the responsibilities Joe faces on a daily basis. He is responsible to the membership of this organization. Time after time, Joe has had to make decisions or the betterment of the organization. Sometimes he has had to disappoint some for the good of the majority.

He stands guard over our assets and knows well the responsibilities we entrusted in him. He is a credit to the foundation of the VFW. His integrity is unquestionable. We are honored to be the seconders for Joe Ridgley as the Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the 2003-2004 year. We ask for your support and vote. Thank you, comrades.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Are there any other nominations for Quartermaster General? Are there any other nominations for Quartermaster General? Any other nominations for Quartermaster General? Hearing none, the nominations will remain open until tomorrow.

Now, accepting nominations for Judge Advocate General, and for the purpose of a nomination, we have Terry Vance, Post 9789, Fairbury, Illinois.

NOMINATION OF JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL

COMRADE TERRY VANCE (Post 9789 - Illinois): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I am Terry Vance, Department Commander of Illinois, a delegate from Post 9789, Fairbury, Illinois. It is indeed an honor to stand before you, the delegates at the 104th National Convention here in San Antonio, Texas.

Matthew "Fritz" Mihelcic is currently the Deputy Chief Counsel for Headquarters, Air Force Communications Agency, and the Air Force's only Information Technology law office assisting bases all over the world. With over 18 years of legal experience, he has also been in private practice, served as a State Administrative Law Judge, and has taught law courses at several universities as an adjunct professor.

He is a member of the Illinois Bar, the Missouri Bar, the United States Tax Court, and the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, along with other legal affiliations.

While serving as a judge in civilian life, he enlisted in the Air National Guard as his way of giving back to his country. Called to active duty, Fritz earned his eligibility for the VFW by serving in the Persian Gulf War, 1990-1991, as a Desert Operations security specialist.

He was medically discharged at the rank of Staff Sergeant as a result of combat injuries sustained during the war. He received numerous personal awards and decorations, but he is most proud of the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with "V" for valor he and his squad earned during the fighting.

"Fritz" joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars in 1991, and is currently a Life Member of Millstadt VFW Post 7980 in Millstadt, Illinois. Since 1999, he has been the Department of Illinois State Judge Advocate, Chairman of the By-Laws and Resolutions Committee, and also holds Judge Advocate positions for both his District and Post.

At the National level, he has served on the By-Laws and Resolutions Committees, the National Security Committee, the Financial and Internal Organization Committee, and the By-Laws and Manual of Procedure Committee.

He graduated from the University of Illinois in 1982 with a degree in philosophy and received his law degree in 1985 from St. Louis University. He has also completed Air Command and Staff College, with a major in Military Operational Art and Science. In 2001, he was selected to be in both the International Who's Who of Professionals and Lexington's Who's Who of Business Leaders and Professionals.

Comrades, it gives me a great deal of pleasure and a sense of pride to nominate Matthew "Fritz" Mihelcic for the position of Judge Advocate

General for the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the 2003-2004 year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: For the purpose of a second for Judge Advocate General, George Cramer, Past Commander-in-Chief from Illinois.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CRAMER (Post 6869-Illinois): Good morning, Comrade Commander-in-Chief, distinguished guests on the dais and delegates to the 104th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I am George Cramer, a delegate from Post 6869, North Riverside, Illinois. Matthew "Fritz" Mihelcic has distinguished himself as a sergeant in the military in the Persian Gulf, a civilian attorney with the Air Force and as the Judge Advocate for the Department of Illinois.

His high standards and exemplary performance not only led to his selection as the 131st Tactical Fighter Wing Airman of the Year, but also as the Air Force Association Airman of the Year.

As Deputy Chief Counsel for the Air Force Communications Agency, he has been selected as the Air Force Attorney of the Year on numerous occasions.

As the legal assistant and advisor to the Commander of the Department of Illinois, he has volunteered countless hours of time offering his legal expertise at all levels of our organization, as well as in the private sector.

It is with great pleasure that I second the nomination of Matthew "Fritz" Mihelcic for the position of Judge Advocate General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Are there any other nominations for Judge Advocate General? Are there any other nominations for Judge Advocate General? Any other nominations for Judge Advocate General? Hearing none, the nominations for Judge Advocate General will remain open until tomorrow. For Surgeon General, nominating "Doc" Bohlman is Cleve Cox from North Carolina.

NOMINATION OF SURGEON GENERAL

COMRADE WILLIAM COX (Post 7383 - North Carolina): My name is William C. Cox. I am a delegate from Post 7383 in Cary, North Carolina. I am pleased to nominate Dr. Curtis Bohlman for Surgeon General. Dr. Bohlman is certainly qualified for this position as he has been a practicing physician since 1965.

He earned his eligibility to belong to our organization as a flight surgeon and served with the First Marine Air Wing in Vietnam in 1966'-67. Dr. Bohlman has the endorsement of his own Southern Conference and the other three conferences. I am pleased to nominate Dr. Curtis O. Bohlman for Surgeon General.

For the purpose of a second, the Department of Oklahoma Commander, Robert McGill.

COMRADE ROBERT MCGILL (Post 4876 - Oklahoma): Good morning. I am honored to be standing before such an esteemed group of individuals, and I am also doubly honored to be up here to second the nomination of an individual that I consider a friend.

You have heard the term before, that he exemplifies the term of veteran's veteran. So, it is with great honor and pride that I stand before you and second the nomination of Curtis "Doc" Bohlman for Surgeon General for the ensuing year. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Are there any other nominations for Surgeon General? Are there any other nominations for Surgeon General? Are there any other nominations for Surgeon General? If not, the nominations for Surgeon General will remain open until tomorrow.

For National Chaplain, nomination for David Norris by Tom Pouliot from Montana.

NOMINATION OF NATIONAL CHAPLAIN

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF THOMAS POULIOT (Post 1116-Montana): Comrades, I didn't think we were finished with that last nomination, because George Cramer had not come up to second the nomination. (Laughter)

I am proud to introduce to you the candidate for National Chaplain for 2003-2004, a U.S. Army veteran, David Norris, from California. He joined in Okinawa while he was still active duty military, and I am most pleased with all of his activities over the many years, but especially his recruiting honors over all of his VFW career.

He received the National Aide-de-Camp recruiting honors while he was a member of Okinawa Post 9723. He has served as Department of California's State Chaplain for the last two years, and has been awarded an Honorary Doctor of Divinity degree and was granted the title of Reverend in 2001.

He has been ordained and granted his credentials of ministry. I am most proud of the fact that our comrade continues to be a very active VFW member in addition to his responsibilities as chaplain. Some of his accomplishments are that he helped charter the Wheeling Niland Post 6254 in West Virginia, and was its Quartermaster, Senior Vice and Commander.

He transferred to California, to Tracy Post 1537, and has served there as Quartermaster, Senior Vice and Commander. He was All-State Post Commander. He was Captain of the All-State Post Quartermasters, and was an All-American Post Commander in 1996-'97.

He then served in the 13th District of California, serving as District Commander, and he was Captain of the All-State District Commanders that year and was an All-American District Commander. He received the National Century Recruiting Award for signing up over 250 members in 1999 and 2000.

He has been nominated and has received many national appointments. For those of you who do not know him, I would like to have David Norris stand now so you may recognize our candidate for National Chaplain. It is my pleasure at this time to place in nomination the name of David Norris for National Chaplain for the year 2003-2004.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: For the purpose of a second, we will recognize Jerry Anderson, Past Department Commander of California.

COMRADE JERRY ANDERSON (Post 2835 - California): Comrade

Commander-in-Chief, I am Jerry G. Anderson, a delegate from Post 2835, Department of California. It is definitely an honor and a privilege for me to stand here before you and second the nomination of David R. Norris, a dedicated individual who has worked hard in the Department of California and for the National Veterans of Foreign Wars. David, as you heard, was an All-American Post Commander, and an All-American District Commander, and through his efforts as Chaplain and the other duties he has held in the Department of California, he has always done a hundred percent and never, ever lost the integrity of any office he held for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. It is my honor and privilege to second David R. Norris for National Chaplain for the 2003-2004 year. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Are there any other nominations for National Chaplain? Are there any other nominations for National Chaplain? Are there any other nominations for National Chaplain? Hearing none, the nominations for our National Chaplain will remain open until tomorrow.

At this time, Sergeant-at-Arms, prepare the room for recess until tomorrow.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief.

(Whereupon, National Chaplain James Marrs gave the Benediction at this time followed by the Salute to the Colors.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, your order has been obeyed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much, Comrade Sergeant-at-Arms. This convention is in recess until 9:00 a.m. in the morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 11:35 a.m.)

FOURTH BUSINESS SESSION
FRIDAY MORNING, AUGUST 29, 2003

(The Fourth Business Session of the 104th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center, San Antonio, Texas, was called to order at 9:00 a.m., with Commander-in-Chief Raymond Sisk presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Comrade Sergeant-at-Arms, please prepare the room for the Opening Ceremonies.

SALUTE TO COLORS AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. All rise, please.

OPENING PRAYER

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Comrade National Chaplain.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN MARRS: Earlier in the week I used the prayer that was written by a contemporary veteran. This morning I am using a prayer that was made by our first veteran. Do you wonder who that was? He was the first in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen. So may we join in the thoughts that he offered at this time.

Almighty God, we make our earnest prayer that thou will keep the United States in that holy protection. That thou will entwine the hearts of the citizens to cultivate the spirit of subordination and obedience to government, and entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another, and for their fellow citizens of the United States at large.

Finally, that thou will most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy and to demean ourselves with clarity, humility and specifically temper of mind, which were the characteristics of the divine author of our best religion and without humbly intimidation of whose example in these things we can never hope to be a happy mutation. Grant us application, we beseech Thee. In your blessed name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

(Whereupon, the Pledge of Allegiance was given at this time.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, your order has been obeyed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you, Comrade Sergeant-at-Arms.

May we have our final report of the Credentials Committee at this time by David Butters.

FINAL REPORT OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS (Post 475 - New Jersey): As of the close of business yesterday, August 28, 2003, the delegates registered, registering their credentials for this 104th Convention are: 11,645; total Department Commanders, 54; total Commanders-in-Chief, 26; total officers, 36. That is for a grand total of 11,761. Commander-in-Chief, this concludes my report.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much. You are relieved.

COMPLETION OF CONVENTION BUSINESS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: At this time I would ask the General Resolutions Committee, is there anything else to be brought before this convention? If not, you are relieved.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: We are going into the Election of Officers. Nominations are now open for Commander-in-Chief. Yesterday the nomination was for Edward Banas from the great state of Connecticut for Commander-in-Chief. Are there any other nominations for the Commander-in-Chief's position? Are there any other nominations for the Commander-in-Chief's position? Are there any other nominations for the Commander-in-Chief's position?

COMRADE ED BURNHAM (Post 1724 - Connecticut): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Ed Burnham, Post 1724, Connecticut. I move that the nominations be closed and that the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for Edward Banas as Commander-in-Chief, 2003-2004.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Is there a second?

COMRADE LARRY LeFEBVRE (Post 552 - Michigan): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Larry LeFebvre, Post 552, Michigan. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: All those in favor of the motion will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no." The motion is ordered.

Comrade Adjutant General, do your duty.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Commander-in-Chief, it is a singular honor for me to cast one unanimous ballot for the election of Edward S. Banas, Sr., as the Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for 2003-2004.

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Comrades and Sisters in this convention hall, I would like to present to you the Commander-in-Chief-Elect for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Edward S. Banas, Sr.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT BANAS: Thank you very much, Ray. It is a miracle. Thank you very much from the bottom of my heart. I reserve all my comments until I give my acceptance speech. For all those that have been behind me, in front of me and on my side, thank you very much. Let the show continue.

I will say this, I have a whole group of family members, my wife this year, Sandra, my daughter Andrea, and her friend from Minnesota. Also Mr. and Mrs. Richard Cyr have been by our side and traveled with us all across America. I have my son-in-law and daughter, Jimmy and Renee.

Jimmy is just home from Kuwait. He is on a ten-day leave. His general let him come. He is just here for ten days and leaves next week to go back to Kuwait. My one and only sister, Frances, and her son, Michael. Thank you very much. Let's let the show continue. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you, Ed. Nominated yesterday for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief was a comrade from Tennessee, John Furgess. I would ask is there any other nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Are there any other nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Are there any other nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief? If not, nominations are now closed.

COMRADE TOM JACKSON (Post 684 - Tennessee): Commander-in-Chief, I am Tom Jackson, VFW Post 684, in Memphis, Tennessee, presently serving as Department Commander. I move that nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief cease and that the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for John Furgess as Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the 2003-2004 year.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN GWIZDAK (Post 5080-Georgia): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, John Gwizdak, Post 5080, Lake City, Georgia, and a delegate to this convention. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: We have a motion and a second for a unanimous ballot for John Furgess for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Is there any question on that motion? Any question on the motion? Any question on the motion? Hearing none, all those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no." The "ayes" have it. It is so ordered.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: It is a high honor for me to have the opportunity to cast one unanimous ballot for the election of John Furgess for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I now present to you the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect from the Southern Conference, John Furgess.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT FURGESS: Thank you, Ray, very much. Thank you, comrades, for this great honor and for this great challenge. With courage and conviction, the Veterans of Foreign Wars begins our 105th year of service to our communities, to your states and to our great nation from Newburgh in New York, to Ontario in California, from Biloxi in Mississippi, to Wasilla, Alaska, and from West Nashville, Tennessee, to Boise, Idaho, we once again begin this great journey of service.

Thank you, each of you, for who you are and for what you do as a

loyal member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Let there be no doubt, comrades, membership in the VFW is as important this year as it ever has been. We need you, comrades, and we need more just like you. They are out there. Most need just to be asked.

We need your help. Sick and needy veterans need your help, and our young men and women in uniform around the world need your help. The youth of America need your help. There is much to be done. There is much we will do. Team VFW courage and conviction, so let us continue the march.

Please now help me recognize my wonderful wife of 32 years, Alma, for all of her love and support. (Applause)

Thank you, Alma. May God bless you, comrades, and may God bless this great organization of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and may God bless these great and wonderful United States of America. Thank you so much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much. Yesterday the name of James Mueller was placed in nomination for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Are there any other nominations for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Are there any other nominations for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Are there any other nominations?

COMRADE GLENN DAVIS (Post 4294 - Missouri): Commander-in-Chief, Glenn Davis, Post 4294, Charleston, presently Commander of the Department of Missouri. I move that the nominations be closed and the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for James Mueller for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for 2003-2004.

COMRADE PAUL JONES (Post 2866 - Missouri): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: We have a motion and a second to unanimously elect James Mueller as Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Any question on the motion? Any question on the motion? Any question on the motion? All in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it. It is so ordered.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: It is a privilege to cast one unanimous ballot for the election of James Mueller for the high office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the 2003-2004 year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I now present to you your choice for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, James Mueller.

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT MUELLER: To our Commander-in-Chief-Elect Ed Banas, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect John Furgess, National Officers, Directors, National Council Members, Past Commanders-in-Chief, Department Commanders and Officers, Delegates to the 104th National Convention, my Fellow Comrades and Friends:

Never in my life have I felt more humble than I do right now standing before you here this morning as your choice for this high office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. All I can say is thank you, thank you, thank you. This is the day for our Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas, but I

would ask you to please allow me to acknowledge, first of all, my Department, the Department of the "Show Me State" of Missouri, and especially the 9th District and my home Post 5077, O'Fallon, Missouri. Comrade Missourians, would you please rise? I would like to thank you for your love and support over the past couple of years. Thanks to all of you. You are the best.

If you would allow me to introduce my family that is with me this morning. I have my brothers here in case I passed out. They were all going to carry me around. I am the oldest and they let me know that. I am not necessarily the wisest sometimes and they tell me that.

But this morning I have my brother, Ken, my brothers Ron, John and Bob; my sister, Bonnie, and her husband, and my nephew, Tim. Our daughter Christy and her fiance live in California. They had a business thing they had to take care of. They had to fly to Florida. They were not able to be here. My son, Jason and his wife had other business. My mother, who is 89, was planning on coming but she thought she would slow us down, so she had to give up and not be here.

I would like to next introduce the greatest friend that I have, my constant supporter and the person who has made me whole for the last 40 years, my wife, Pat. I have been so lucky that she has put up with me these many years. I love you very much.

Commander-in-Chief-Elect Ed Banas and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect John Furgess, I pledge my support and loyalty, but I freely give you my friendship. I am looking forward to doing my part in the year 2003-2004, the year of courage and conviction, a year of great success. I am proud to be part of the team of the VFW.

In closing, let me tell you I am deeply humbled, a little bit proud, a whole lot happy. May God bless all of you and may God bless this great country of ours. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Placed in nomination yesterday for Quartermaster General was the name of Joe Ridgley from the great state of Missouri. Are there any more nominations for Quartermaster General? Are there any other nominations for Quartermaster General? Are there any other nominations for Quartermaster General?

COMRADE GLENN DAVIS (Post 4294 - Missouri): Commander-in-Chief, I move that the nominations be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for Joe Ridgley for Quartermaster General.

COMRADE PAUL CONNORS (Post 36 - Massachusetts): Commander-in-Chief, Paul Connors, VFW Post 36, State Quartermaster for the Department of Missouri, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: We have a motion and a second to unanimously elect Joe Ridgley to the high office of Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Any question on the motion? Any question on the motion? All in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; all those opposed "no." The "ayes" have it. It is so ordered.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Chief, it is an honor for me to cast one unanimous ballot for a gentleman that I have worked with for 25 years, one unanimous ballot for election of Joe L. Ridgley for the high office of Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I now present to you our Quartermaster General-Elect of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United

States, Joe Ridgley.

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL-ELECT RIDGLEY: My comrades, working for this organization never gets to be old hat. I appreciate all the confidence and all the support you have all given me for the last nine years as Quartermaster General, and almost 28 years working for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

All I can offer you as Quartermaster General is my honesty, my integrity and my sincere belief in ethics. I look forward to working with Ed Banas as Commander-in-Chief and his Team VFW. I will do everything I can to support him and all the officers, and this organization.

I also would like to introduce my wife of 33 years, Judy, and I am glad she is here with me today. The only other thing that I ask of you-all, you comrades, when you go back to your Departments and back to your Posts, is not just to think about next year, but to think about the vision of this organization and go back and work on having a successful year next year as the vision of the future for this organization. Thank you all very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you, Joe. Yesterday for Judge Advocate General, the name of Matthew Mihelcic was placed in nomination. Are there any other nominations for Judge Advocate General? Are there any other nominations for Judge Advocate General? Any other nominations for Judge Advocate General?

COMRADE TERRY VANCE (Post 9789 - Illinois): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Terry Vance, Post 9789, Department Commander of the State of Illinois, I move that nominations be closed for Judge Advocate General and that the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for Fritz Mihelcic from the great state of Illinois.

COMRADE ROBERT MAGILL (Post 4763 - Illinois): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: We have a motion and a second for a unanimous ballot. Any question on the motion? Any question on the motion? Any question on the motion? Hearing none, all those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no." The "ayes" have it. It is so ordered.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The Adjutant General is pleased to cast one unanimous ballot for the election of Matthew "Fritz" Mihelcic for the high office of Judge Advocate General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I now present to you our Judge Advocate General-Elect for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States "Fritz" Mihelcic.

JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL-ELECT MIHELIC: Thank you, comrades and friends. This is a great organization and I am so proud to be a part of it. Heartfelt thanks to all my friends from Illinois who got me here, but most importantly to my wife, Pamela, who was able to make it in. Thank you, honey. I love you. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Yesterday the name of C. O. Bohlman, "Doc" Bohlman, our friend, was placed in nomination for Surgeon General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Are there any other nominations for Surgeon General? Are there any other

nominations for Surgeon General? Are there any other nominations for Surgeon General?

COMRADE LARRY LeFEBVRE (Post 552 - Michigan): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Larry LeFebvre, Post 552, Michigan. I move that the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for "Doc" Bohlman for the position of Surgeon General for the 2003-2004 year.

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL RIDGLEY: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I proudly second the nomination for "Doc" Bohlman as Surgeon General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: We have a motion and a second for a unanimous ballot to be cast for "Doc" Bohlman from Oklahoma for Surgeon General. All in favor of that motion signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no." The "ayes" have it. It is so ordered.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: It is a privilege to cast one unanimous ballot for the election of Dr. C. O. Bohlman for the high office of Surgeon General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I now present to you Surgeon General-Elect of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, "Doc" Bohlman from the great state of Oklahoma.

SURGEON GENERAL-ELECT BOHLMAN: Thank you, Chief, and thank you, comrades. I am honored to be elected your Surgeon General and to become a member of the Banas-Furgess-Mueller team. Thank you for this opportunity. Thank you for all you continue to do in your communities but, most of all, thank you for all you did to become eligible to be a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

I would like to recognize my wife, Juanita. I am glad she is able to be here. She is keeping a tight schedule this morning. She is to be installed as the National Soloist for the Ladies Auxiliary just any minute. I am pleased she could be here. Thank you, comrades, and God bless you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Yesterday the name of David B. Norris was placed in nomination for National Chaplain. Are there any other nominations for National Chaplain? Are there any other nominations for National Chaplain? Are there any other nominations for National Chaplain?

COMRADE RICHARD EUBANK (Post 4647 - California): Commander-in-Chief, I move that the nominations be closed and that the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for David Norris for the position of National Chaplain for the year 2003-2004.

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

COMRADE EDWARD BURNHAM (Post 1724 - Connecticut): I am privileged to second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you, Ed. We have a motion and a second for a unanimous ballot to be cast for David Norris as National Chaplain. Any question on the motion? Any question on the motion? Any question on the motion? Hearing none, all in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no." The "ayes" have it, and it is so ordered.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The Adjutant General casts one unanimous ballot for the election of David B. Norris for the high office of Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Comrades and sisters, I now present to you your choice for Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States from California, David Norris. (Applause)

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN-ELECT NORRIS: Comrades, I stand before you this morning as a humble person. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever believe when I joined this organization in 1968 as a teenager, I would be standing up here.

I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I will do everything in my power to make sure that God blesses all of you, brings all of our comrades that are overseas protecting this country now back safe. At this time I would like to introduce my wife Sandra. Again, thank you, God bless you all, travel safely.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Is there anybody that can detect a little hint of nervousness there?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT BANAS: It is all over the place.

REMARKS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Well, for everybody. You know, since I am still the Chief, I am going to make my remarks now, because I am afraid that our Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief may not let me here shortly. You know, I also want to thank everybody in this room for the wonderful, wonderful job that you have accomplished this year.

We have set some goals this year that we certainly want to see fulfilled next year, particularly our membership. I am so very pleased and proud to have had the opportunity to serve as your Commander-in-Chief, and our nation has been 100 percent in membership for the first time since 1991.

I have an awful lot of people to thank for a wonderful year. Certainly, I would like to thank the members of my Post, Post 9791, Frazier Park, California, my great Department of California, my 9th District, and to all the comrades from the Western Conference who saw fit this year to honor the Commander-in-Chief's position with 17 All-American Department Commanders out of 70.

So many have done so much for this organization over the years, and I, too, have tried to contribute to the betterment of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. I have tried very hard and I am certainly not sad today to see this come to an end for me.

My body is tired, but I have had a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful ride. I want to thank each and every Department that I have had an opportunity to visit for all the courtesies and all of the acknowledgements and the gifts that they have bestowed upon me as a person.

I have always said in every Department I have gone to, and I will say it again today, when I see you tomorrow I hope that you will remember that I am Ray Sisk and that I am your comrade. You don't have to call me Chief. I know who I am. I know where I came from and I thank all of you for knowing where you came from. (Applause)

I would personally like to thank the Adjutant General and his staff in Kansas City, and our Executive Director of the Washington Office and his staff for all they do on a daily basis for the VFW. I would like to thank Joe

Ridgley, Larry Maher from the Quartermaster General side, and your staff for a fantastic year.

To my Senior Vice and Junior Vice, what a year. Thank you so much for your help. To our Judge Advocate General from Florida, Don Pierce, to our National Chaplain, James Marrs, to our Chief of Staff, Corky Berthiaume, and to my Inspector General Darrell Bencken from Kansas, to all the officers and to all of my Department Commanders, what a fantastic year we have had.

We have set a goal that this year's team, I know, is going to match. I am so very proud of all of you. I am very proud to have had an opportunity to serve. I want to thank our National Sergeants for what they do each and every day, and I would like to thank our Honor Guard for their participation in our conventions, and especially on Memorial Day and Veterans Day in Washington, D.C.

So, to all of you that have done something for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and each and every one of you have done a lot, thank you so much for your service to this great organization, because we all know that it is the greatest veterans organization in the world.

We wish success to our line officers. I want to thank the Cooties this year for what they have done. They are going to have a new Supreme installed, and he is one of my very best friends, Joe Velasquez from California. What a pleasure, Joe. Thanks to all the Cooties for what they do for the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

So I just wanted to have an opportunity to say to our Council members, to our Department Commanders, and in particular to all of you that are coming in either on the Council or have already assumed leadership in your Departments, have a great year.

Don't do it for Ed Banas, Jim Furgess or Jim Mueller, you do it, as Jim Goldsmith used to say, it is the right thing to do. As long as we continue to serve our organization with service, honor, pride, we will be just exactly where we need to be as an organization. Thank you so very much for allowing me to be your Commander-in-Chief.

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

PLACEMENT OF CAPS, PINS AND BADGES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: All right. Thank you. Gosh, you are going to bring tears here if you are not careful. Now, for the placement of caps on our elected and appointed officers, it is my pleasure to introduce for his cap, our Commander-in-Chief-Elect to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Ed Banas, and his wife, Sandra. It is my pleasure to place the Commander-in-Chief's pin on Ed Banas.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT BANAS: Thank you, Ray.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Our Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect John Furgess from Tennessee will be capped by his wife, Alma.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT BANAS: Following the tradition for 103 years, John Furgess, I surrender my Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief's pin to you. Wear it in good health, and travel safely, comrade.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT FURGESS: Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: And placing the cap on our Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect is his wife, Pat Mueller.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ELECT FURGESS: This is a beautiful piece of jewelry. As the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, I know you will wear it with pride and honor. Congratulations.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: And placing the cap on our Quartermaster General Joe Ridgley is his lovely wife, Judy.

Placing the cap on our National Judge Advocate General is his wife, Pam.

For the cap placement for our wonderful "Doc" Bohlman is his wife, Juanita.

Placing the cap on our National Chaplain is his wife, Sandy.

Placing the cap on our Chief-of-Staff will be Joyce Birchill, the wife of Frank, who is our new Chief of Staff once you approve him, of course.

Appointed to be our National Inspector General is Joe Gallant. Placing his cap is Ginger Haney.

Even though our Adjutant General forgot his cap, at this time I would like for Madelyn to please come up and recap him.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF COUNCIL MEMBERS-ELECT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: We will now have the announcement of National Council Members-Elect by the Adjutant General. You will be presented your caps by Commander-in-Chief-Elect Banas.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Sergeant-at-Arms, will you, please, escort the Commander-in-Chief-Elect to the front. Commander-in-Chief-Elect Banas will now present the incoming Council members with their caps and badges.

From Council District No. 1, representing Maine and New Hampshire, Raymond R. Lupo, Post 1761 in Maine.

Council District No. 3, representing Maryland and New Jersey, Charles A. Duffett, Jr., Post 62, New Jersey.

Representing District No. 5, Indiana and Missouri, Roger E. Baker, Post 6841, Indiana.

District No. 7, Tennessee and Kentucky, James E. O'Neill, Post 4641, Tennessee.

District No. 9, representing South Carolina and North Carolina, Lyn D. Dimery, Post 10420, South Carolina.

District No. 11, representing Wisconsin and Iowa, Thomas J. Tradewell, Post 4698, Wisconsin.

District No. 13, representing Kansas and Colorado, John R. Lewis, Post 4061, Colorado.

District No. 15, representing New Mexico and Arizona, John I. Halstead, Sr., Post 3632, Arizona.

District No. 17, Utah, Nevada and Oregon, Walter Lewis, Post 1002, Nevada.

District No. 19, representing Louisiana and Mississippi, Johnnie L. Richard, Post 2539 in Mississippi.

District No. 21, representing Minnesota and Nebraska, Gary C. Steckelberg, Post 4719 in Nebraska.

Representing District A, Pennsylvania, Ronald G. Tyler, Sr., Post 1462, Pennsylvania.

Representing District B, Illinois, William H. Regan, Post 2377, Illinois.

Representing District C, New York, Anthony Ferrarese, Post 16 in New York.

Representing District F, Michigan, David S. Miller, Post 3925 in Michigan.

Representing District No. G, California, John L. Fitzke, Post 6158, California.

And District J, representing Florida, Harvey F. Eckhoff, Post 7674, Florida.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF APPOINTMENTS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: We will now have the Announcement of the Appointments by the Commander-in-Chief-Elect.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT BANAS: The following announcement of appointments:

Appointed as Adjutant General, John J. Senk, Jr.,

National Chief of Staff, from the Department of Maryland, Frank A. Burchill.

Inspector General, from the Department of Maine, Joseph H. Gallant, Jr.

And most certainly National Sergeant-at-Arms, Barry Hoffman.

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: We will now go into the Installation of Officers. National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will escort the Installing Officer to a position on my right.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. Commander-in-Chief, I have the distinct honor to present to you Past Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera, who has been officially appointed as the Installing Officer for the National Convention, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much, Comrade Sergeant-at-Arms. I now introduce to you Past Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera from the great state of Massachusetts, who has been officially appointed as the Installing Officer.

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the term for which you and your subordinates were elected or appointed has now expired. It is my duty to ascertain the following: have the officers for the ensuing year been duly elected?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: They have.

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: Have the books of the Adjutant General and Quartermaster General been examined and approved by the National Council of Administration?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: They have.

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: Does the Adjutant General have on file proof for all officers to be installed during this installation?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: He has.

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: I will remind any officer not having proof of eligibility on file and not being installed at this time, that the by-laws prescribe that you must within 60 days of election or appointment submit to the Adjutant General for his file a copy of your proof of eligibility.

Are the funds in the hands of the Quartermaster General ready to be turned over to his successor when duly installed?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: They are.

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: Have you the charter in your possession?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: I have.

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: You will now surrender the gavel to me. Past Commander-in-Chief Sisk, you now have been relieved of your duties as Commander-in-Chief of this organization. It is proper to remind you that in assuming the role of Past Commander-in-Chief it will be your duty and privilege to counsel and otherwise assist your successor through the experiences you have gained during your term of office.

You will now station yourself at my right. Sergeant-at-Arms, you will now present the officers-elect at the alter as the Adjutant General reads the list of officers to be installed.

NATIONAL SERGEANT AT ARMS HOFFMAN: Yes, sir. National Assistant Sergeants-at-Arms, escort the chair officers to the alter.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, John Furgess.

Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, James R. Mueller.

Adjutant General, John J. Senk, Jr.

Quartermaster General, Joe L. Ridgley.

Judge Advocate General, Matthew M. "Fritz" Mihelcic.

Surgeon General, Dr. Curtis Bohlman.

National Chaplain, David B. Norris.

Chief of Staff, Frank A. Burchill.

Inspector General, Joseph H. Gallant, Jr.

District No. 1, Raymond R. Lupo.

District No. 2, Samuel R. Haskins.

District No. 3, Charles A. Duffett, Jr.

District No. 4, Peter J. Mascetti, Jr.

District No. 5, Roger E. Baker.

District No. 6, Paul T. Moore.

District No. 7, James E. O'Neill.

District No. 8, Richard Branson.

District No. 9, Lyn D. Dimery.

District No. 10, John Dilbeck (absent)

District No. 11, Thomas J. Tradewell.

District No. 12, Larry L. Scudder.

District No. 13, John R. Lewis.

District No. 14, Larry H. Longfellow.

District No. 15, John I. Halstead, Jr.

District No. 16, Frank S. Lamson.
District No. 17, Walter Lewis.
District No. 18, Robert A. Stevens.
District No. 19, Johnnie L. Richard.
District No. 21, Gary C. Steckelberg.
District A, Ronald G. Tyler, Sr.
District B, William H. Regan.
District C, Anthony M. Ferrarese.
District D, Daniel N. Long.
District F, David S. Miller.
District G, John L. Fitzke.
District H, Jimmie D. Cantrell
District J, Harvey F. Eckhoff.
Past Commander-in-Chief, Ray C. Sisk.
Commander-in-Chief, Edward S. Banas, Sr.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Comrade Installing Officer of the National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, all the officers-elect are in the proper place for administration of the oath, sir.

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: Thank you. National Officers-Elect of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I will administer to you the Officers' Obligation. You will raise your right hand, touch the flag of our country with your left hand and repeat after me.

(Whereupon, the following Officers' Obligation was given at this time: "I do hereby solemnly promise that I will faithfully discharge to the best of my ability the duties of the office to which I have been elected or appointed, according to the Constitution, By-Laws and Ritual of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. I solemnly promise that at the close of the term to which I have been elected or appointed, or sooner if so ordered by proper authority, I will surrender immediately to only the duly authorized person or persons, all records, money, or other properties of this organization in my possession or under my control. All this I freely promise, upon my honor, as a loyal citizen of our great Republic. So help me God.")

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: As you were. Comrade Chaplain.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN MARRS: Almighty God, our God and divine protector, give Thy blessings upon these our comrades who now become fellow officers.

We beseech Thee, O Lord, who are ever present among us. Grant the wisdom unto them so that during their deliberations they continue to favor Thee, our glorious country and the veterans' organization. May Thy strength sustain them, may Thy power preserve them, may Thy hand protect them in the faithful and fruitful performance of their duties. Amen.

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: Sergeant-at-Arms, you will now escort the officers to their respective stations.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Yes, sir.

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: National Officers of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, you now occupy the position of honor to which your comrades have elected you. Learn well the responsibilities

entrusted so you may intelligently discharge the duties you are to undertake.

The Constitution, By-Laws and Ritual of our organization prescribe in detail the duties of your respective offices. By virtue of the confidence placed in you through your election or appointment, we assume that you will acquaint yourselves thoroughly with your duties.

National Council of Administration members, face the dais. The audience will please rise. National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will present the Commander-in-Chief-Elect to my station.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Yes, sir, Past Commander-in-Chief. I present to you Edward S. Banas, Sr., Commander-in-Chief-Elect of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief-Elect Edward S. Banas, Sr., before administering your Obligation, it is proper to remind you of certain duties. You will be held personally responsible for the Charter of this organization. At the end of your term of office, you will deliver it to the officer appointed to install your successor.

It is your duty as National Commander-in-Chief to see that all National Officers perform their duties to the best of their ability. You shall keep yourself informed on all proposed legislation which may affect the welfare of potential and actual comrades of this organization, and strive for adoption of only those measures which will be beneficial.

You will be required to devote all of your time to the many duties of your office. You are expected to make a special study of the Constitution, By-Laws and Ritual of this organization so that you may render firm and impartial decisions on important questions referred to you.

As Commander-in-Chief, you will be regarded by your comrades and by the general public as typifying wise and vigorous leadership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. May all of your efforts and accomplishments bring credit to your administration and to our organization.

Comrade Edward S. Banas, Sr., are you willing and ready to assume your solemn Obligation?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT BANAS: I am.

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: You will raise your right hand, touch the flag of our country with your left hand, give your name as I touch your hand, and repeat after me.

(Whereupon, Commander-in-Chief-Elect Banas received the following Obligation: "In the presence of Almighty God and the Officers and Delegates of this Order here assembled, I, Edward S. Banas, Sr., do hereby solemnly promise that I will faithfully discharge to the best of my ability, the duties of the office of Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, to which I have been elected in accordance with the Constitution, Ritual and By-Laws of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. I solemnly promise that at the close of the term to which I have been elected, or sooner if so ordered by proper authority, I will surrender immediately to only the duly authorized person or persons, the National Charter, all records, money and other properties of this organization in my possession or under my control.

"I do further solemnly promise that I will be fair and impartial in my actions towards all comrades, and I will always strive to promote the

best interests of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. So help me God.”)

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: As you were. The Council members may be seated. The audience may be seated. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I now place in your possession our charter. Also, I present you with this gavel, which is the emblem of your authority. Use it firmly but with discretion.

All National Officers, you will stretch forth your right hand and repeat after me: “Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas, Sr., to you I pledge my sincere allegiance.”

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, officers and delegates of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I now proclaim the National Officers duly installed and this organization in working order for the ensuing year. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LAPEL PIN AND GOLD LIFE MEMBERSHIP CARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Thank you very much, comrades. Just a little more business. I know you can hear me and I hope you will listen. Before we do this, I have a very special presentation for my friend and our Immediate Past Commander-in-Chief Ray Sisk, whom I would like to come up to the podium.

Ray, on behalf of the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I present you with this solid gold Life Membership Card.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Solid?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Solid, absolutely.(Applause) You will allow me the privilege to pin on your lapel the most dignified Past Commander-in-Chief’s pin. Thank you for your service to our great organization, Ray. You are not a bleeder, are you, Ray?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Not yet.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: We have a special presentation before the acceptance speech from the Whitman, Massachusetts Post. If you are here, please come down quickly. One thing that each and every one of you should know is that today is not just a very special day for Ed Banas and everyone else who is installed, and all your family members, but for someone who has a love no greater than any of us, but certainly no less of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, someone who has dedicated most of his life to the Veterans of Foreign Wars and his country is celebrating his 84th birthday today, the marathon runner, Edward Burnham. (Applause)

COMRADE EDWARD BURNHAM (Post 1774 - Connecticut): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. Thank you, comrades. It pays to be this old.

(Whereupon, the assembly sang “Happy Birthday” to Comrade Burnham at this time.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: The Whitman Post from Massachusetts is not here, but they had a special presentation to kick the year off with an \$8,000 donation to Operation Uplink. That is a pretty good way to start. (Applause)

ACCEPTANCE ADDRESS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Good morning, comrades and guests. I know you can hear me, so I hope you will take a minute and listen. Past Commander-in-Chief Sisk, Distinguished National Officers and Guests, Comrades:

It is truly an overwhelming honor to be elected Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. I humbly follow in the footsteps of giants and I thank you for the trust that you, the delegates of the 104th National Convention, have placed in me.

I would like to recognize all of you individually. However, time will not allow me to do so. With that in mind, I would like to recognize a few, certainly, my Post 10004, in a little community called Jewett City, Connecticut; my great District No. 4, my great Department of Connecticut, the great Eastern States Conference, and our true partners, the Ladies Auxiliary, and especially their National President Evelyn McCune, and most importantly my wife, Sandra, and my family.

Comrades, "By your magnificent wartime service you have defended America's freedom and security. Today as veterans you serve with equal tenacity devoting brain and heart to the task of keeping our country strong." President John F. Kennedy's words continue to ring true today.

As I speak, thousands of American soldiers are engaged in Afghanistan and Iraq in a fight for freedom and security, just as you and I once were. A fight for the right of all people, not just Americans, to live in a world free of terror and fear.

Those of you in this room today understand that fight. You understand that it takes courage and conviction to never chafe at the burden of our obligations or the agony of our choices, that standing for freedom is a conviction to ourselves and our own commitment to mankind.

As such, you understand the price of freedom. Let those of us in the room today and all Team VFW members around the globe be the ones to introduce those who don't understand that price, to the veteran who has lost a limb but not his dignity, or the mother and father that have been told their son daughter would never be coming home, or the young wife learning her husband will be disabled forever, or the child that has lost a parent so that he or she may grow up in a secure and free country.

This is the price of freedom. It is incumbent upon us, the leaders of this great veterans' service organization, to deliver this message with courage and conviction. After all, that is why you and I continue to serve today "devoting brain and heart" to the VFW's missions of caring for veterans, promoting a strong national defense, displaying patriotism and providing community service.

Our organization has focused excellence into all of these areas and this year will be no different. As veterans' advocates we are on the front lines of improving and protecting the benefits and entitlements of our nation's veterans. We are the veterans' voice on Capitol Hill and while our battlefields may have shifted from the sands of Iwo Jima to the Hall of Congress that does not mean that we are any less resolved to accomplish

our mission today than we were then.

With over 100,000 veterans currently waiting six months or more to see a doctor, it makes me sick to think that convicted criminals get better access to health care than some veterans.

All veterans must be entitled to a full continuum of health-care benefits to include long-time care and a prescription drug benefit than is better than Medicare.

That is why it is critically important for us to remain steadfast in our fight to secure full funding for the VA health-care system through mandatory funding or some other guaranteed funding mechanism. After all, no member of Congress or the Administration has to wait for their health care. Why should America's veterans?

At the same time we will remain actively involved with the VA as they consider what the future of the VA health-care system will be under the Capital Assets Realignment for Enhanced Services, CARES program. We will study the proposals carefully by analyzing how their realignment will impact local veterans. Team VFW will not let the CARES program turn into an access reduction program.

It is also important for us to ensure that as VA works to reduce the veterans' benefit claims backlog that they do not sacrifice quality for quantity.

For our part we will be rolling out a training and quality assurance division in our National Veterans Service Department designed to enhance the professionalism and accountability of our nationwide network of service officers as they work to ensure veterans and their dependents receive all due entitlements.

Sadly, many of our World War II and Korean veterans are passing away before they ever receive their entitlements. If you will permit this indulgence, I would also like to take a moment and pay tribute to my heroes, the men and women of the World War II and Korean generation. Please stand and be remembered. I ask that the audience please hold your applause until I have finished my tribute.

Remembering that their todays are not like their yesterdays, America's World War II and Korean veterans did not serve their country for profit. Remembering that their sacrifice deserves to be memorialized into something more meaningful than bronze and marble.

They fought for an ideal, the enduring ideal of freedom and that has been the force behind all of America's excursions. Freedom that is the cause for which each and every one of them stood for in harm's way to defend. We may look at some of the World War II and Korean veterans here today, and see hair going gray, some spreading stomachs and a few bent shoulders. These, my friends, are just the wounds of time, a foe no man has ever conquered.

But, let's stop for a moment and think. You will see the heroes I am talking about, see their baby faces, their dreams, ambitions, many of them their voices. Just reaching a mature tone, waving goodbye to their families and sweethearts from green troop trains all across America on the way to war. Yes, you heroes put your lives between America and war machines, intent on destroying us.

You bought our future and you paid to do this with limbs, minds and lives. We won't forget, because you were magnificent. They say life is

just one generation, but a reputation last forever. And as long as history is written your reputation will be forever. We love you.

It is my understanding that World War II and Korean veterans are passing away at a rate of 1,800 a day. The National Cemetery System must accommodate these departed heroes in the dignified manner they are entitled to.

A moment ago I spoke of men and women currently engaged in fighting overseas. Not only do we advocate for veterans, we advocate for those men and women on active duty and in the Guard and Reserves, as well as our military retirees. A strong national defense is essential to our way of life as Americans.

To the members of our armed forces, I say we love you, we support you, we are proud of you and while you are serving us we are serving you. We have and always will fight for an improved quality of life for you and your families, because we were once in your shoes and we understand the sacrifices you make to serve us. You deserve better pay, housing, health care and education for you and your dependents.

We, of the VFW, will not rest until all of that is achieved. Looking internally, the VFW is an organization in transition. We will re-evaluate who we are, what we do, and how we do it without ever losing focus of our core mission and values so that we remain the veterans' organization of choice.

Team VFW will be the catalyst to change the face of our organization and resolve our membership issues by developing groundbreaking recruiting initiatives that appeal to a new generation of veterans so we reflect not only our proud past but our noble future.

When members of America's armed forces return home from overseas we want them as members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Let's be realistic. We need new members. Our membership is older and dying off faster than we can enlist new members. We are not the owners of the VFW, only keepers of the key.

It is a changing world out there and as the world changes we must be willing to change with it. If we are not to shoulder the burden of leadership in the veterans and military community, then who will? The alternatives are neither pleasant nor acceptable.

Great organizations which fail to meet their responsibilities are consigned to the dust bins of history. That is why when these heroes return from Korea, Iraq or Afghanistan I want you to put your hand out and welcome them back home. May they receive an Operation Uplink card or help from our Military Assistance Program, but either way encourage them to join our great organization and get involved in any of the numerous programs that the VFW offers. From Buddy Poppy to the Voice of Democracy, our programs and community service speak of who we are as an organization.

We are an organization that is faced with many challenges, yet we possess many blessings. Together Team VFW can succeed in making this a vibrant organization for another century. My friends, it is once again time to focus all of our grass roots efforts towards the upcoming presidential primaries in a few short months. This is our opportunity to have our voices heard and our faces seen.

We need to let the presidential candidates know that providing

affordable and accessible health care to our nation's veterans is a responsibility that they simply cannot abandon. We need to let them know that veterans deserve timely quality decisions on their disability claims. We need to let them know that it is time to do away with the disabled veterans tax.

We need to let them know that as Commander-in-Chief of the finest fighting force the world has ever witnessed they will inherit an awesome responsibility. We need to remind them to never forget those MIA/POWs who did not make it home. We need to let them know that veterans vote and we vote for those who support us not only by words, but also be deeds.

Only by becoming involved can Team VFW deliver these messages. In this upcoming year, I will bring courage and conviction to my duties. Along with Senior Vice Furgess and Junior Vice Mueller and National President Evelyn McCune we will ensure that America keeps her promise to you.

Words cannot express my gratitude to you for this most distinguished honor that you have bestowed upon me this morning.

On behalf of proud traditions and future things to come for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, from the bottom of my heart thank you for sharing this morning together.

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: In an attempt to close the convention, I will recognize Microphone No. 1.

CLOSING CEREMONIES

COMRADE LARRY LeFEBVRE (Post 552 - Michigan): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Larry LeFebvre, a delegate from Post 552, Michigan. There being no further business to come before this convention and the officers having been duly elected and installed for the ensuing year, I move that the 104th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States be closed sine die.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I am John Furgess from Tennessee. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: All those in favor will say "aye." This convention is closed.

Sergeant, please complete the closure.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. Comrade National Chaplain.

(Whereupon, National Chaplain Norris gave the Closing Prayer from the Ritual.)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Comrades and Sisters, attention, please. The Captain of the Honor Guard, please retire the American Colors.

(Whereupon, the Honor Guard retired the Colors at this time.)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the Closing Ceremonies for this National Convention have been performed, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Thank you, Sergeant-at-Arms. I now declare the convention closed sine die. Travel safely.

(Whereupon, the convention was duly adjourned at 11:10 a.m., sine die.)

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO
NATIONAL BY-LAWS AND MANUAL OF
PROCEDURE AND RITUAL CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON
NATIONAL BY-LAWS, MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL**

B-1

Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee

Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

SECTION 202 – BY-LAWS.

Amend Section 202, National By-Laws, by deleting the words “by first class mail” in the last sentence thereof. (Approved)

B-2

Proposed by Department of Europe

SECTION 101 - - ELIGIBILITY.

Amend Section 101, National By-Laws, by deleting in the first paragraph “(1)” on the third line, after the word “membership”, replacing the “semi-colon” after the words “Congressional Charter” on the seventh line with a “comma”, and deleting the words, “and (2) who is a citizen of the United States”, in its entirety. (Disapproved)

B-3

Proposed by Departments of South Dakota and Texas

SECTION 102 – APPLICATIONS – AFFILIATION OF NEW MEMBERS.

Amend Section 102, National By-Laws, by deleting the last three sentences in the second paragraph in their entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

“Membership in more than one Post in the same Department is prohibited. Any person who is or becomes a member of more than one Post in the same Department shall elect to remain in the Post of his choice and surrender membership in any other Post. In the event no election is made, the Commander-in-Chief or his designee shall assign the member to a Post in the same Department.” (Disapproved)

B-4

Proposed by Department of Kansas

SECTION 213 – ARREARAGES.

Amend Section 213, National By-Laws, by adding the following paragraph to the end of the section:

“The Post Commander of a Post in arrears for National, Department, County Council or District dues, or failing to have the office of Quartermaster properly bonded in accordance with Section 703, or failing to submit properly completed quarterly Post Trustees Report of Audit or Post Election Report shall be deprived of representation in County Council meetings, District meetings and conventions and Department conventions. Such representation shall be restored promptly upon proper adjustment of deficiencies.” (Disapproved)

B-5

Proposed by Department of South Dakota

SECTION 405 – CONVENTIONS.

Amend Section 405, National By-Laws, by deleting all therein and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

“Each District shall hold an annual District Convention for the purpose of electing District officers and for the transaction of business; such Convention to be held not less than ten (10) days not more than seventy-five (75) days prior to the convening of the Department Convention.” (Approved)

B-6

Proposed by Department of Nevada

SECTION 419 – VOTING.

Amend Section 419, National By-Laws, by adding the following as paragraph four (4):

“With the consent of the District Convention each District member in good standing shall be entitled on one vote. Only members of the District shall be entitled to vote at District meetings or District Conventions.” (Disapproved)

B-7

Proposed by Department of Texas

SECTION 419 – VOTING.

Amend Section 419, National By-Laws, by adding the following paragraph after the paragraph one (1):

“A District may, by the adoption of a by-law, utilize a system of voting other than the delegate procedure which would allow each member of the District in attendance at the District meeting to cast an individual vote for all issues including officers which may come before the convention.” (Disapproved)

B-8

Proposed by Departments Florida, South Dakota, Texas, Washington

Amend Article V, National By-Laws, by adding the following after Section 521:

“SECTION 522 – CONFERENCES (DIVISIONAL SOCIETIES).

Formation, Chartering.

For the purposes set forth in this section only, Departments shall be organized into Conferences. There shall be four (4) Conferences; Eastern, Southern, Western and Big Ten.

The Eastern Conference shall consist of the Departments of:

Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Europe, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont.

The Southern Conference shall consist of the Departments of: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.

The Western Conference shall consist of the Departments of: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, Pacific Areas, Latin America/Caribbean, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

The Big Ten Conference shall consist of the Departments of: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

Upon the request of a newly chartered Department or a Provisional Department, and with the concurrence of the affected Conference, the National Council of Administration is authorized to assign a newly chartered Department or a Provisional Department to a Conference. The National Council of Administration may also authorize a transfer of a Department from one Conference to another Conference, provided that the Department and each of the affected Conferences give their written concurrence. Otherwise, a Department may only be organized into a different Conference by amendment to these By-Laws.

(2) Purposes of Conferences.

Conferences are organized to permit the Departments organized therein to coordinate their respective efforts in attaining the objectives of this Organization, confer regarding matters of mutual interest and concern and select candidates for national offices. Commencing with election year 2004 each Conference, on a rotating basis (West – East – South – Big 10), shall provide a candidate or candidates for the office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Election of the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief shall be as prescribed in Section 609 of the Manual of Procedure. Conferences shall have no power or authority to direct or administer the affairs of the National Organization,

Department, District, County Council or Post or otherwise recommend or establish rules and regulations governing them, except as specifically set forth in these By-Laws.

Charters.

Charters of Conferences shall be authorized by the National Council of Administration, signed by the Commander-in-Chief and countersigned by the Adjutant General. No Conference shall be recognized or function as such unless acting under an unforfeited charter.

Governing Body; Composition.

Each Conference shall be governed by its Conference Meetings. A Conference Meeting shall consist of delegates appointed or elected by Departments. Conference By-Laws shall prescribe the manner in which the number of delegates shall be established. Each Department shall determine the manner in which its delegates shall be selected and the manner in which the Department shall exercise its voting strength.

By-Laws

Each Conference shall adopt By-Laws governing the Conference, provided such By-Laws may not conflict with the Congressional Charter, By-Laws, Manual of Procedure, Ritual or laws and usages of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. By-Laws in place and any amendments approved by a Conference shall be forwarded as provided in the Manual of Procedure.

(d) Conference Meetings; Quorum; Caucuses.

Each Conference shall have at least one meeting each year called an Annual Meeting. Conferences may hold additional Meetings or call Special Meetings as prescribed by Conference By-Laws. The times for Conference Meetings shall be prescribed by Conference By-Laws.

The minimum number of Departments to be represented and minimum number of delegates to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at a Conference Meeting shall be prescribed in Conference By-Laws.

Each Conference shall conduct at least one Caucus Meeting during the National Convention. Conference By-Laws shall prescribe the manner in which the number of delegates shall be established. Each Department shall determine the manner in which its delegates shall be selected and the manner in which the Department shall exercise its voting strength.

Surrender or Forfeiture of Charter.

Voluntary Surrender. A Conference may voluntarily surrender its charter only upon a vote at a Conference Meeting after due notice of such proposition is given, in writing, to every Department organized into the Conference and to the Commander-in-Chief. If two-thirds (2/3) of the Departments vote to surrender the charter, the Conference Chairman shall, within thirty (30) days, request that the Commander-in-Chief cancel the charter. For purposes of this section, voting shall be by unit rule and each Department shall have but one vote.

Disposition of Property. In case of surrender or forfeiture of a charter, all of the property of the Conference, including books of record and papers and money belonging to it, shall be immediately recovered by the Commander-in-Chief and turned over to the Quartermaster General in trust for disposition as directed by the National Council of Administration for the purposes set forth in the Congressional Charter.

In case of surrender or forfeiture of a charter, the National Council of Administration in the case of trust funds or trust property, or both, shall carry out the intent and purposes of such trust to the extent of such funds or property, or both.

(f) Suspension and Revocation of Charter.

Actions by the Commander-in-Chief – Suspension. The Commander-in-Chief may suspend the charter of a Conference for a period of up to sixty (60) days for the same reasons and in the same manner as a Department Charter may be suspended pursuant to Section 509.

(2) **Action by the Commander-in-Chief – Revocation.** The Commander-in-Chief may cancel or revoke the charter of a Conference for the same reasons as Department charters may be canceled or revoked pursuant to Section 509. Before the Commander-in-Chief may cancel or revoke the charter of a Conference, the Conference Chairman and the Commander of each Department in the Conference shall be notified in writing of the proposed cancellation or revocation and of the grounds therefore. Unless the Conference Chairman or at least five (5) Department Commanders of Departments in the Conference notify the Commander-in-Chief in writing within fifteen (15) days of the receipt of notice from the Commander-in-Chief that a hearing is desired, the cancellation or revocation of charter shall be effected. In the event that a hearing is requested, said hearing shall be held within thirty (30) days of the receipt of the notice that a hearing is desired, at a time and place and in a manner designated by the Commander-in-Chief, and shall be before the Commander-in-Chief.

Representatives of the Conference shall be permitted to present evidence in its behalf. The Commander-in-Chief shall thereafter, and within thirty (30) days, decide the matter.

If the Conference is not already under a suspension at the time that the notice of proposed cancellation or revocation is given, the Conference shall thereafter be under suspension as provided above, and the Commander-in-Chief shall appoint trustees who shall act in the manner herein provided for a suspended Conference.

(3) Appeal to the National Council of Administration. In the event that the Commander-in-Chief should determine, after hearing, that the Conference charter should be revoked and canceled, the Conference or at least five (5) Department Commanders of Departments within the Conference, may appeal said revocation and cancellation to the National Council of Administration. Such an appeal shall be in the manner prescribed for an appeal to the National Council of Administration under Section 109 of these By-Laws and the Manual of Procedure.

(4) Establishment of Trusteeship. Upon the imposition of any suspension of charter under this Section, the Commander-In-Chief shall establish a trusteeship consisting of from three to fifteen trustees. Said trusteeship shall be conducted in the manner prescribed for Departments in suspension pursuant to Section 509.

In the event of cancellation or revocation of a Conference charter, disposition of its property and trust funds shall be as provided for surrender or forfeiture of charter in the manner prescribed for Departments under Section 508.

(g) Conference Dues.

Each Conference may assess dues pursuant to Conference By-Laws. Dues shall be assessed against Departments in the Conference and not against members in the respective Departments. Conferences may, by Conference By-Laws, establish penalties for nonpayment of Conference dues or other financial obligations, including loss of voting privileges.

(h) Solicitation: Fund-raising.

Conferences shall not be permitted to solicit funds or donations nor shall Conferences be permitted to engage in any fund-raising activity other than activities incident to the conduct of Conference Meetings.

Eligibility to Office.

Any member in good standing in a Post in a Department within the Conference shall be eligible to any Conference office, provided that no

member shall hold two elective Conference offices at the same time. Conference officers, elected or appointed, may concurrently hold offices other than Conference offices.

Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

The elective officers of each Conferences shall be the Conference Chairman,

one or more Vice Chairmen, and the Treasurer. Conference By-Laws may provide for the election or appointment of a Conference Secretary, Chaplain and Sergeant-at-Arms. There shall be no other elective or appointed Conference officers.

In accordance with Conference By-Laws, the Conference may elect or the Conference Chairman may appoint such chairmen and committees as may be required or otherwise necessary to carry out the responsibilities and functions of the Conference.

(3) No officer, committee chairman or committee member shall be paid a salary or other compensation for his services, provided, however, the Conference may authorize the reimbursement of reasonable and necessary expenses incurred by such persons related to conducting Conference business.

(4) Conference officers, elected and appointed, shall submit proof of eligibility to the Secretary. Conference officers shall not be installed or assume the duties of their office until proof of eligibility has been submitted and properly reviewed. Such proof of eligibility shall be open to and reviewed by the Conference Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer prior to installation to office. In the event an elected or appointed officer fails to submit proof of eligibility within sixty (60) days of election or appointment, any right of the officer to hold the office shall be forfeited and the office declared vacant.

Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.

Conference officers shall be nominated, elected or appointed, and installed in the manner prescribed in Conference By-Laws. The term of office of Conference officers shall be one (1) year.

An officer elected and installed shall continue to hold office for the period for which elected and until his successor is installed, unless the position is declared vacant pursuant to provisions in Conference By-Laws. Appointed officers and committee members shall hold office during the pleasure of the appointing officer. An officer or committee member must remain in good standing in a Post in a Department in the Conference.

Officers, Duties and Obligations.

The conference officers, elective and appointive, shall have such duties and obligations as prescribed in these By-Laws, the Ritual and Manual of Procedure and such other duties and obligations as may be prescribed in Conference By-Laws not inconsistent with these By-Laws.

Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers.

The manner of removal of elective officers and filling of vacancies shall be prescribed in the Conference By-Laws.

Voting.

Each Conference shall adopt Conference By-Laws setting forth the manner of voting at Conference Meetings and in conducting elections.

Incorporation of Provisions Applicable to Departments

Except as otherwise provided herein, for purposes of the following By-Laws, and corresponding provisions of the Manual of Procedure, the regulations applicable to Departments shall apply to Conferences in like manner:

- Section 105
- Section 702
- Section 703
- Section 707
- Section 708
- Section 709
- Section 719
- Section 720
- Section 805

Miscellaneous Provisions.

(1) A Department aggrieved by a decision of the Conference Chairman or Conference with respect to matters within the purview of the Conference shall have the right to appeal to the Commander-in-Chief.

(2) Conferences may incorporate in the same manner and under the same terms as other units, pursuant to Section 708, provided that the Conference may select a state of incorporation. Conferences may organize corporations for the purpose of conducting meetings pursuant to Section 708.

A Conference shall be a unit for purposes other than Section 709 of these

By-Laws, as provided in Section 720 of these By-Laws.

(4) Conference Meetings shall be governed by the provisions of Section 1001 of the Manual of Procedure. Unless otherwise provided in

Conference By-Laws, the Order of Business shall be as provided in Section 1002 of the Manual of Procedure.”

(Disapproved)

B-9

Proposed by Department of Ohio

SECTION 610 - - OFFICERS, POWERS AND DUTIES.

Amend Section 610 (d) (14), National By-Laws, by deleting all therein and substituting in lieu thereof the following:

“Annual Budget. Prepare a tentative budget for the financial operations of the ensuing year. Said budget shall set forth all anticipated income and estimated expenses. It shall set forth the amount of all compensation to be received by each of the following officers for the ensuing year: (1) Commander-in-Chief; (2) Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief; (3) Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief; (4) Quartermaster General; (5) Judge Advocate General; (6) Surgeon General; (7) Chaplain; and (8) Adjutant General. Restricted funds shall be budgeted separately in every instance, and the budget shall be in balance. The tentative budget shall be submitted to the Commander-in-Chief for consideration after closing of the books following the National Convention and final action must be taken on the adoption of the budget at the first stated meeting of the National Council of Administration and, when adopted, the budget shall be the expenditure guide for the ensuing year.

Not later than thirty (30) days after the first meeting of the National Council of Administration, he shall forward to all Department Commanders and all Post Commanders a detailed copy of the national budget adopted by the National Council of Administration for their information.”

(Disapproved)

B-10

Proposed by Department of Michigan

SECTION 709 – CONTROL OF UNITS.

Amend Section 709, National By-Laws, by deleting the word “Post” from lines one, three, seven and nine in paragraph four (4).

Amend further, Section 709, by inserting after paragraph 4 the following paragraph:

“A Post may own property jointly or in common with another entity (“Entity”), including other veteran’s organizations and/or may participate in an arrangement whereby the funds of such Post are expended for the ownership of property, creation of a new entity (“New Entity”), or operation of an activity with an Entity for the joint use of such Post and such Entity if either of the following two criteria are met:

Control of Dissolution:

the control over such property or control over a New Entity created remains with the Post;

upon dissolution the investment made by the Post is a priority distribution after payment of creditors; and

the insurance as set forth under Section 709 is obtained.

Department Approval: Upon application by any Post the Department is authorized to adopt and approve any other criteria that is acceptable by the Department.” (Disapproved)

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE MANUAL OF PROCEDURE

The following amendments, published in accordance with Article XIV of the By-Laws,

are proposed for consideration at the 104th National Convention in accordance with Article XIV, Section 1401 of the Manual of Procedure.

M-1

Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee

Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

SECTION 218 – OFFICERS AND CHAIRMEN, DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS.

Amend Section 218 (a) (1) (j), Manual of Procedure, by deleting the word “members” and replacing in lieu thereof the following:

“veterans” (Approved)

M-2

Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee

Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

SECTION 517 – OFFICERS AND CHAIRMEN, DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS.

Amend Section 517 (a) (1) (j), Manual of Procedure, by deleting the word “members” and replacing in lieu thereof the following:

“veterans” (Approved)

M-3

Proposed by Department of Europe

SECTION 101 - - ELIGIBILITY.

Amend Section 101, Manual of Procedure, by deleting the word “three” in the second sentence and substituting in lieu thereof the word “two”.

Amend further the section by deleting “citizenship (2)” in line four and deleting “(3)” in line five, substituting in lieu thereof “(2)”.
(Disapproved)

M-4

Proposed by Department of California

SECTION 103 – ELECTION, NOTIFICATION, OBLIGATION.

Amend Section 103 of the Manual of Procedure, by deleting the fourth and fifth lines of the second paragraph, “With respect to applications

of National Members-at-Large, or Department Members-at-Large, the Adjutant General or Department Adjutant shall make a careful review of the facts set forth on the application card and other bona fide evidence of eligibility. Such bona fide evidence shall be any form or document attesting to honorable and overseas service and the appropriate campaign ribbon if applicable” and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

“With respect to applications of National Members-at-Large, or Department Members-at-Large, the Adjutant General or the Department Adjutant shall require such Members-at-Large, to include Military Initiative Program recruits, to provide documented proof of eligibility exactly as required by individual posts.

Such bona fide evidence shall be any evidence of eligibility, or document attesting to honorable and overseas service other than the signature of the applicant.”

(Disapproved)

M-5

Proposed by Department of Florida

SECTION 103 – ELECTION, NOTIFICATION, OBLIGATION.

Amend Section 103, Manual of Procedure, by deleting these sentences in paragraph two (2) “With respect to applications of National Members-at-Large, or Department Members-at-Large, the Adjutant General or the Department Adjutant shall require such Members-at-Large, to include Military initiative Program recruits, to provide documented proof of eligibility exactly as required by individual Posts. Such bona fide evidence shall be any evidence of eligibility, or document attesting to honorable and overseas service other than the signature of the applicant” and insert in lieu thereof the following:

“With respect to applications of National Members-at-Large, or Department Members-at-Large, the Adjutant General or the Department Adjutant shall make a careful review of the facts set forth on the application card or other evidence of eligibility.”

(Approved)

M-6

Proposed by Department of Ohio

SECTION 218 – OFFICERS AND CHAIRMEN, DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS.

Amend Section 218, Manual of Procedure, by deleting **(i)** under subsection **(5) Duty of Quartermaster** in its entirety pertaining to post dues reserve fund. (Disapproved)

M-7

Proposed by Departments Florida, South Dakota, Texas, Washington

Amend Article V, Manual of Procedure, by adding the following after Section 521:

“SECTION 522 – CONFERENCES (DIVISIONAL SOCIETIES).

Formation, Chartering.

For certain limited purposes, Departments may be organized into Conferences which shall have authority to act only in furtherance of those purposes. Unlike Posts and Departments, a Conference is not an organization of members, but an organization of the Departments making up the Conference. Each Department retains all of its power and authority and the corresponding duties and obligations, except to the limited extent that a Conference may act as provided in the By-Laws and Manual of Procedure.

Governing Body; Composition.

By-Laws.

A Conference may adopt or amend By-Laws at an Annual Conference Meeting. Copies of By-Laws, including amendments, adopted by a Conference shall be forwarded to the Commander-in-Chief. No By-Laws or amendments adopted by a Conference shall become effective until reviewed by the Commander-in-Chief or his designee for compliance with the Congressional Charter, By-Laws, Manual of Procedure, Ritual or laws and usages of the Veterans of

Foreign Wars of the United States.

For purposes of determining the two-thirds (2/3) vote necessary to adopt or amend Conference By-Laws, Department voting shall be governed by unit rule, notwithstanding other provisions in Conference By-Laws.

Conference Meetings; Quorum; Authorized Attendees; Caucuses.

In the event Conference By-Laws provide for special meetings, the By-Laws shall also provide for notice in writing to Departments of the time and place of such meeting and the business to be transacted, such notice to be given in sufficient time to afford a reasonable opportunity for attendance. No business shall be transacted at any special meeting except that for which the meeting was called.

Surrender or Forfeiture of Charter.

Suspension and Revocation of Charter.

Conference Dues.

Solicitation; Fund-raising.

With respect to fund-raising activities incident to the conduct of Conference Meetings, such activities may only be undertaken with a prior vote of a Conference Meeting. The Conference shall assure that solicitations, activities and projects do not violate any applicable governmental law, ordinance or regulation nor bring or tend to bring opprobrium or embarrassment upon the Conference, the Departments organized into it or the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. The name, seals, badges and emblems of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall not be used in connection with any solicitations, activities or projects not in compliance with the foregoing.

Fund-raising organizations or individuals conducting solicitations, activities or projects for a profit incident to a Conference Meeting shall not be engaged or used by a Conference for such purpose unless pursuant to a written agreement.

Eligibility to Office.

Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees

Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.

Conference officers shall be nominated and elected by ballot or roll call at the annual Conference Meeting in a manner, which shall be prescribed in Conference By-Laws.

Conference officers shall be installed before adjournment of the annual Conference Meeting. The installation shall be conducted by a member in good standing. The Conference Chairman shall select the installing officer.

Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations.

Duties of Conference Chairman.

Among the duties of a Conference Chairman, he shall:

Preside at all meetings of the Conference, conducting such meetings in accordance with Article X of the By-Laws and Manual of Procedure and other applicable parliamentary procedures.

Enforce strict observance of the laws and usages of this organization, including Conference By-Laws and the Congressional Charter, National By-Laws, Ritual and Manual of Procedure and all lawful orders from proper authorities.

Insist that Conference business and activities are conducted in such a manner that they do not violate any applicable governmental law, ordinance or regulation nor bring or tend to bring opprobrium of embarrassment on the Conference or the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Decide all questions of law and usage governing the activities of the

Conference, subject to an appeal pursuant to these By-Laws.

Approve all expenditure vouchers for Conference funds drawn upon the Treasurer, before the same shall be paid, and countersign all checks for the

disbursement of Conference funds, unless Conference By-Laws otherwise provide.

Assure that the office of Conference Treasurer is bonded according to Section 703 of these By-Laws. The bond premium shall be paid from the funds of the Conference.

Assure that all reports are correctly prepared and that all the business of the

Conference is handled with dispatch.

Enforce Conference and National Convention mandates and perform all other duties required of him by the Conference and Conference By-Laws, the National Convention and the National By-Laws, Ritual and Manual of Procedure and the laws and usages of the organization or orders from proper authority.

Failure without just cause to perform these duties may result in removal from office.

Duty of Conference Vice Chairman.

The Conference Vice Chairmen shall assist the Conference Chairman in preserving order, preside in the absence of the Conference Chairman, provide such advice and assistance as may be required and perform such other duties as are usually incident to such office or may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of the organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

Duty of Conference Treasurer.

Among the duties of a Conference Treasurer, he shall:

Receipt and Custody of Funds and Other Property.

Receive and properly account for all monies due and payable to the Conference, as the By-Laws provide and give an official written receipt for all monies, other than checks, received by him. He shall be the official accountable officer of the Conference and the Treasurer of all Committees of the Conference handling funds and in his care shall be placed all securities, funds and accountable property of the Conference.

Disbursement of Funds.

Expend conference funds only upon proper authorization of the Conference or in accordance with Conference By-Laws.

Checks Countersigned.

All checks for the expenditure of Conference funds shall be numbered in sequence, and in addition to the signature of the Treasurer, shall be countersigned by the Conference Chairman, unless otherwise provided in Conference By-Laws.

d. **Bond.**

Give good and sufficient security, in accordance with Section 703 and in an amount established in Conference By-Laws for the faithful discharge of his duties, the cost of which shall be paid from Conference funds.

Reports – Financial.

Immediately following the close of the fiscal year, prepare in detail a final statement of all monies received and expended during the year, together with cash balances at the beginning and end of the year, a statement of funds and cash and bank balances, and a statement as to the financial worth of the Conference.

f. Transfer of Records and Funds.

He shall transfer to his successor in office, without delay, all books, records, papers, monies and other property of the Conference in his possession or under his control.

General.

Comply with, and perform all other duties required of him by the the Conference, Conference By-Laws, Conference Chairman, National Convention and the National By-Laws, Ritual and Manual of Procedure, the laws and usages of the organization and lawful orders from proper authority and perform such other duties as may be incident to his office.

Duty of Conference Secretary.

Among the duties of a Conference Secretary, he shall:

Correspondence.

Be the official corresponding officer for the Conference. He shall attest to all official communications and reports with his signature and the seal of the Conference.

Files.

Maintain complete files for the following:
Correspondence.
Copies of the Proof of Eligibility submitted by officers pursuant to Section 522j.
Such other files as may be directed by the Conference.

Minutes.

Assure that a complete record is made of the minutes of all meetings of the Conference and preserve and distribute copies of same as directed. He

shall call the roll or, under his supervision, cause the same to be called at all official meetings and shall read to the body assembled, or cause to be read under his supervision, all official communications, resolutions, or other information pertinent to the meeting and consistent with the records of his office.

Reports.

As directed by the Conference Chairman or Conference Meeting, compile and render such reports and data as is consistent with the general duties of his office, insofar as his records will permit.

Transfer of Records.

He shall transfer to his successor in office, without delay, all books, records, papers and other property of the Conference in his possession or under his control.

General.

Comply with, and perform all other duties required of him by the Conference, Conference By-Laws, Conference Chairman, National Convention and the National By-Laws, Ritual and Manual of Procedure, the laws and usages of the organization and lawful orders from proper authority and perform such other duties as may be incident to his office.

Duty of Conference Chaplain.

The Conference Chaplain shall, during the Conference Meeting, see that fitting tribute is paid to our departed comrades. He shall perform such other duties as may be usually incident to his office or as may from time to time be required of him by the laws and usages of the organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers.

Voting.

Incorporation of Provisions Applicable to Departments.

Miscellaneous Provisions

Candidates for National Office.

Candidates for National Office shall not campaign outside their

Conference

before August 1 of the year preceding the election. Travel outside the candidates home conference for campaign purposes, by the candidate or others representing the candidate or acting on his behalf, shall be limited to regular meetings of the various Conferences, Department Conventions and the National Convention. (Disapproved)

M-8

Proposed by Department of California

SECTION 803 – MANUFACTURE AND USE OF SEALS, EMBLEMS, BADGES, INSIGNIA AND UNIFORMS

Amend Section 803 of the Manual of Procedure, to include the following addition after the paragraph titled “Official Uniform”:

“Shirt. A white shirt (short or long sleeve) as part of the official uniform, may have insignia and/or patches available from the Emblem and Supply Department, attached as follows: Embroidered emblem pocket/shoulder patch may be placed, centered on the left sleeve, one-half of one inch to one inch (1/2”-1”) down from the shoulder seam.

American flag patches may be placed on either both sleeves or the right sleeve, centered on the sleeve(s) one-half of one inch to one inch (1/2”-1) down from the shoulder seam.

Collar pins, VFW and unit number, may be placed as follows: VFW pin(s) on left or on both collar tabs so that the bottom is parallel to the ground one-half of one inch to one inch (1/2”-1”) above the tip; the Unit Number Pin, if used, on the right collar tab so that the bottom is parallel to the ground, one-half of one inch to one inch (1/2”-1) above the tip.” (Approved)

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE RITUAL

R-1

Proposed by Department of Europe

Amend the Ritual by deleting the words “and a citizen of our great republic” and placing a period after the words “true

comrade” in the member’s obligation on page 22, the initiation obligation on page 33, and new post member’s obligation on page 44.

Amend further the Ritual by deleting the words “loyal citizen of our great republic” and inserting the words “true comrade” in the officer’s obligation on page 47, page 51 and page 60.
(Disapproved)

104th National Convention
**RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION**

No. 201 (Department of Minnesota)—No More VFW PAC Endorsements
Rejected

No. 202 (Department of Montana —Merchant Marines
Rejected

*No. 203 (Department of New York)—National and State/Department
Vietnam Veteran of the Year VFW Cap*
Rejected

*No. 204 (Department of California—Approval to Accept Air and Space
Campaign Medal*
Rejected

*No. 205 (Department of California—Issuance of Life Membership to
Prisoners of War*
Rejected

**RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE
ON GENERAL RESOLUTIONS**

No. 301 (Commander-in-Chief) —National Infantry Museum

Resolved, that a fitting tribute to the “Queen of Battle”, the United States infantry, be located at Fort Benning, Georgia, the home of the infantry; and

Further resolved, that the mission of the new National Infantry Museum will be to make the infantry story of hardship, sacrifice, determination and success accessible to all Americans and visitors to our great nation and to preserve artifacts of that story; and

Further resolved, that we encourage and urge all VFW members to support the new National Infantry Museum at Fort Benning, Georgia.

*No. 302 (Department of Massachusetts) —American Heroes of Space
Remembrance Day*

Resolved, that we go on record designating February 1st as “American Heroes of Space Remembrance Day” and urge federal agencies, as well as all Americans, and to mark the day with appropriate ceremonies; and

Further resolved, that we urge the President of the United States and Congress to take necessary action forthwith.

No. 303(Department of Georgia) —Support Congressional Recognition for Additional National Recognition/Memorial Days

Resolved, that we support the Congressional recognition of the following national recognition/memorial days:

1. December 31st of each year as National World War II Recognition/Memorial Day, as this was the official end to WWII in 1946.
2. January 27th of each year as National Viet Nam Recognition/Memorial Day, as this was the official signing of the Viet Nam Peace Accord in 1973.
3. April 11th of each year as National Persian Gulf War Recognition/Memorial Day, as this was the official cease fire day in 1991 of the Persian Gulf War.

No. 304(Department of Idaho) —Compliance with Public Law 106-65 (Title 10 United States Code, Section 4683) Security of Ceremonial Weapons

Rejected

No. 305(Department of Pacific Areas) —Recognition of a Non-Veteran’s Organization by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

Rejected

No. 306(Department of Texas) —Support for Progressive Supranuclear Palsy Research

Rejected

No. 307(Department of Virginia) —Oppose Foreign Manufacture of American Flags

Resolved, that we seek legislation through the United States Congress to prohibit the importation of foreign made flags of the United States.

No. 308(Department of Virginia) —Commending 911 Telecommunications

Specialists
Rejected

No. 309(Department of Virginia) — Supporting a Special Education Category in the Veterans of Foreign Wars Patriot Pen Essay Program
Rejected

No. 310(Department of Nevada) — Stamp to Honor Medal of Honor Recipients

Resolved, that we request the United States Postal Service to re-issue a stamp commemorating Medal of Honor Recipients.

No. 311(Department of Nevada) — Reissue Existing Postal Stamp Honor the Veteran

Resolved, that we request the United States Postal Service to re-issue the stamp.

No. 312(Department of California) — Restoration of Traditional Day of Observance of Memorial Day

Resolved, that we endorse the efforts of the Congress to restore the date of May 30 as Memorial Day regardless of what day of the week it falls and call on the people of the United States to observe Memorial Day on May 30 each and every year.

RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

No. 401(Commander-in-Chief) — Support Public Awareness Projects

Resolved, that we will:

- (a) Ensure routine distribution to the field of pertinent, credible and responsible information and reports such as those provided on a routine basis by the VFW National Security & Foreign Affairs Department and, as requested, to provide such information about other POW/MIA organizations as may be needed by the Departments.
- (b) Encourage participation in the program by veterans groups of other friendly nations such as our NATO and Far Eastern allies.
- (c) Encourage exchange of information among state POW/MIA chairmen to include publishing up-to-date lists of POW/MIA chairmen; and

Further resolved, that each Department exercise maximum initia-

tive to maintain the vitality and thrust of the POW/MIA program at Department levels by encouraging such actions as:

- (a) The display of the black POW/MIA flag, subordinate to the U.S. flag, at any function at which it is proper to fly the U.S. flag.
- (b) Encourage support of information exchange at Post levels.
- (c) Appoint an interested member at the Post level to act as the POW/MIA project officer; and

Further resolved, that we support the annual POW/MIA Recognition Day and the annual National Former POW Recognition Day.

No. 402(Commander-in-Chief) —Seek Opportunities to Resolve the Korean War POW/MIA Issue

Resolved, that we urge North Korea to continue to honor the arrangement with the U.S. for 2003 so that joint recovery activities in North Korea may continue in 2003 and 2004, and the process of accounting for Americans still missing from the Korean War can continue; and

Further resolved, that with renewed vigor, we urge the U.S. and Republic of Korea governments in coordination with the United Nations Command (UNC) Korea to increase their contact with the North Korea and Chinese governments, to pursue and expand the current joint effort to include the possible “live” POW issue and thus seek new opportunities to resolve this humanitarian issue as soon as possible; and

Further resolved, that in coordination with the UNC Korea and the government of the Republic of Korea, we urge the U.S. government to conduct UNC repatriation ceremonies for remains recovered in North Korea at a suitable location in the Republic of Korea in lieu of conducting UNC repatriation ceremonies at Yokota Air Base, Japan.

No. 403(Commander-in-Chief) —Investigate the Attack on the U.S.S. Liberty

Resolved, that we call upon Congress to immediately investigate the attack on the U.S.S. Liberty that was perpetrated by the armed forces of the State of Israel on June 8, 1967, in order to determine the truth behind the attack.

No. 404(Commander-in-Chief) —Remain United with Allies to Preserve Freedom and Security

Resolved, that the lessons of the Cold War, Gulf War, wars of the Afghanistan and Iraq and terrorist attacks taught us that our peace, our free-

dom and our security can best be achieved by remaining united in common purpose with our many allies and friends whereby we share both the danger and security burden by maintaining a national defense and in combination with our allies and friends remain capable of defeating those strong present and future threats.

No. 405(Commander-in-Chief) —Limit Foreign Ownership of U.S. Businesses and Properties

Resolved, that we urge the Congress to enact legislation to restrict foreign ownership of United States corporations, companies, businesses and property, and industrial technologies and/or processes, which could become vital or sensitive to the national security of the U.S. and which will protect the economy of the United States.

No. 406(Commander-in-Chief) —Take Action on the Illegal Immigration Problem

Resolved, that we urge the President and the Congress to expand and strengthen the office of Homeland Security, the Customs and Immigration Services, the Border Patrol and the U.S. Coast Guard, and enact all measures as necessary to prevent illegal aliens from entering the United States; and

Further resolved, when required, that well trained and supervised military resources be employed to assist other government agencies in stopping the flow of illegal aliens into the country.

No. 407(Commander-in-Chief) —Support Western Hemisphere Institute for Defense Cooperation

Rejected

No. 408(Commander-in-Chief) —Punish Terrorists and Support the War on Terrorism

Resolved, that we continue to urge decisive action in the war on terrorism by:

- (a) Staying on the offensive in the war on terrorism.
- (b) Urging our allies to join the coalition in the war on terrorism and taking offensive action against terrorist groups and support taking positive actions against those “rogue or outlaw states” guilty of inciting, harboring, or aiding and abetting terrorists.
- (c) Holding all countries accountable for the security of American

citizens traveling within their borders.

No. 409(Commander-in-Chief) —Ballistic Missile Defense is a National Security Priority

Resolved, that we support the development and deployment of a ballistic missile defense that is effective to protect our country, our deployed military forces, our friends, and our allies as soon as possible as a high priority national security requirement.

No. 410(Commander-in-Chief) —Honoring Those who Serve
Rejected

No. 411(Commander-in-Chief) —Oppose Lifting the Defense Department Ban on Homosexuals in the Armed Forces

Resolved, that we urge the Department of Defense to review the current, “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy and replace it with a policy more consistent with the intent of Public Law 103-160.

No. 412(Commander-in-Chief) —Maintain An Effective U.S. Coast Guard

Resolved, that we urge the Congress and the Administration to provide the funding necessary for modernization, recapitalization, and increased homeland security, and parity of the Coast Guard to carry out its mission and enable the Service to take full advantage of modern information technology, including but not limited to, drug interdiction and enforcement, pollution control, maritime safety, search and rescue missions, and maintaining military readiness as well as its many other duties and responsibilities.

No. 413(Commander-in-Chief) —Standing Firm for Democracy and Liberty

Resolved, that we will always stand firm for democracy, and in furtherance of the ideals of liberty and freedom, we support a foreign policy that nourishes democracy, freedom, and liberty throughout the world, and a domestic policy that maintains our superior military strength to protect our liberty and our national interests throughout the world and defend us against those enemies who wish to destroy our country and our way of life.

No. 414(Commander-in-Chief) —National Strategy of Peace Through Strength

Resolved, that we continue to support a national strategy of peace

through strength, the general principles of which should be:

- (a) Maintaining a strong economy at home and protecting our domestic and overseas energy resources and vital raw materials.
- (b) Maintaining an American military presence in Europe and Asia to stabilize the military balance in these regions and help our friends and allies to defend themselves from aggression.
- (c) Maintaining such strategic, nuclear and conventional military forces (including active, Reserve and National Guard components) trained and equipped with such high technology weapons and equipment and with sufficient bases and infrastructure, which in the judgment of our military leaders are more than equal to the current threats and adequate to meet our current defense requirements.
- (d) Helping formerly communist controlled countries in their process of converting to freely elected democratic governments.
- (e) Maintaining effective security and intelligence capabilities to prevent strategic surprise from any quarter.
- (f) Employing the leadership necessary to inspire, focus and unite the national will and international unity to further our goal of peace and freedom.
- (g) Maintaining alliances as required by our national strategy, protect our national interests, support our friends and promote peace.

No. 415(Commander-in-Chief) —Strengthen Intelligence Agencies and Capabilities

Resolved, that we reject any further reductions in our national intelligence agencies, and instead support appropriate coordination, expansion and funding to ensure that we will have adequate intelligence capabilities that provide appropriate warnings of future and political, military, economic or technological threats that would increase the risks to our national security and vital national interests abroad and that Congress appropriate necessary funds to strengthen the intelligence agencies and services.

No. 416(Commander-in-Chief) —Support for the Republic of Korea

Resolved, that we urge the government of the United States to increase its military aid and assistance to the Republic of Korea by providing modern state of the art weapons and technology to safeguard its freedom, and promote security in the Asia/Pacific region; and

Further resolved, that we urge the United States government, in

concert with its allies, to bring pressure to bear on North Korea to comply with the “nuclear safeguard accord” of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to be a responsible country in the community of nations and to come to the table for peaceful dialogue directly between South and North Korea.

No. 417(Commander-in-Chief) —Support withdrawal from Bosnia-Herzegovina

Resolved, we support the view that unless unforeseen circumstances arise, the U.S. forces assigned to Operation Joint Forge should be gradually withdrawn from Bosnia-Herzegovina while transferring remaining responsibilities to other NATO members.

No. 418(Commander-in-Chief) —Assist Vietnam’s Recovery of MIAs as a Sign of Good Faith

Resolved, that at each level of the VFW—National, Department, District, and Post—strenuous efforts be made to collect any information, which might be of value in determining the fate of Vietnam’s 200,000 MIAs and of assistance in the recovery of their remains; and

Further resolved, that VFW National Headquarters publicize this effort and provide Departments with materials which might be used in further publicizing our efforts, and that the VFW Washington Office act as the collecting point and repository of all such information obtained from our members and the public at large; and

Further resolved, that on subsequent trips to the region by VFW national officers, information collected on Vietnamese casualties is turned over to Vietnamese authorities as an expression of our desire to assist them in recovering their MIAs and to encourage their greater effort in helping us reach the fullest possible accounting of our MIAs.

No. 419(Commander-in-Chief) —Oppose U. S. Forces Under Foreign Command

Resolved, that we urge the Administration and Congress to re-examine Presidential Decision Directive 25 to determine if any Constitutional authority has been misused, and if so, to take appropriate corrective action.

No. 420(Commander-in-Chief) —Support for the Republic of China on Taiwan

Resolved, that we urge the President and the Congress of the United States to adhere strictly to the concepts of the Taiwan Relations Act by approving the sale to the Republic of China on Taiwan such state-of-the-art military equipment, weapons and technology as may be necessary to maintain adequate defense capabilities to provide for military balance and stability in the region.

No. 421(Commander-in-Chief) —Re-Designate the Position of Secretary of the Navy as the Secretary of the Navy and Marine Corps

Resolved, that we support legislation to re-designate the position of the Secretary of the Navy to Secretary of the Navy and Marine Corps.

No. 422(Commander-in-Chief) —Retain the Selective Service

Resolved, that we support the ongoing existence of the Selective Service System and its necessary programs in its stand-by status and urge the United States Congress to provide the funds necessary to retain the Selective Service System; and

Further resolved, that we urge the Congress to shift appropriations oversight for the Selective Service System from the VA-HUD and Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittees to the Defense Appropriations Subcommittees of the House and Senate.

No. 423(Commander-in-Chief) —Monitor the Panama Canal Carefully

Resolved, that we urge the President and the Congress to closely monitor conditions in the Republic of Panama, and be prepared to take the steps necessary to protect the Panama Canal and to ensure continued safe and efficient freedom of passage through it, and to continuously evaluate the conditions of Panama and the region with a view toward balancing the concerns and interests of Panama, its neighbors and the United States.

No. 424(Commander-in-Chief) —Keeping Faith with the American Military

Resolved, that we urge the Department of Defense and the Department of State to initiate changes to the Status of Forces Agreements, the Geneva Conventions and other international agreements to improve the legal protections for United States military personnel and their families serving in foreign countries; and

Further resolved, that we urge the Department of Defense and the Department of State to periodically provide written, factual assurances to the Congress, the public and the military services that legal protections

have been put in place to bring to trial those guilty of murder, execution or assassination of members of our military service in foreign lands; and

Further resolved, that we urge the Congress of the United States and the Administration to find a solution and take the necessary steps to ensure that the El Salvadoran murderers of LTC Picket and CPL Dawson are brought to trial and punished.

No. 425(Commander-in-Chief) —Support Former POW Slave Labor Claims Against Japanese Firms

Resolved, that we support fair and just compensation for the injuries suffered by all American POWs at the hands of their Japanese captors, and the slave labor they were forced to perform by private Japanese companies during World War II; and

Further resolved, that we urge the Administration to work with all parties involved in this issue to resolve the claims of these former POWs in an expeditious manner.

No. 426(Commander-in-Chief) —NATO Enlargement

Resolved, we support the enlargement of the NATO Alliance and the extension of the United States mutual defense commitment to the countries that are chosen for membership and invited to join NATO at the Summit in Prague as it is important to the future security of Europe, our own vital interest in the region as well as world peace.

No. 427(Commander-in-Chief) —Restore Economic Sanctions Against North Korea

Resolved, that we support restoring economic sanctions against North Korea because North Korea has pulled back from various confidence building steps it had agreed to with South Korea following the historic summit, and contributes to instability in the Middle East and South Asia through its aggressive sales of arms, missiles, and technology; and

Further resolved, that we urge the Administration and the Congress of the United States to closely review North Korean activities and behavior, and closely consult with the Republic of Korea and our other allies in the region before considering any significant policy changes with North Korea.

No. 428(Commander-in-Chief) —Tighten U.S. Policy on High Technology Exports

Resolved, that we strongly urge the President and the Congress to

refrain from exporting American advanced “dual-use” technologies and supercomputers to China and Russia, and strengthen the rules that limit the export of American “dual-use” technologies to any country that poses a possible ballistic missile, weapon of mass destruction, or other significant threat to the U.S. and our allies and friends; and

Further resolved, that we strongly urge the Administration to deny authorization and stop any U.S. commercial activity that facilitates the improvement of Chinese ballistic missile capability, and provides any information or technology that would provide new military capability, including any long-range missile technology, to any country that poses a significant threat to our nation and our allies and friends.

No. 429(Commander-in-Chief) —Take Action Against Countries that Proliferate Ballistic Missile Technology and Weapons of Mass Destruction

Resolved, that we urge the Administration and the Congress to take appropriate actions against any country that proliferates ballistic missiles, related technologies, and/or weapons of mass destruction to any potentially hostile or rogue states or terrorist groups that may seek to target the United States or our allies and friends with these weapons.

No. 430(Commander-in-Chief) —Increase the Defense Budget

Resolved, that we urge the Administration and the Congress to take continuing steps this year to increase defense spending to a realistic level to address the immediate areas of short-term funding to include any wartime spending needed for actions particularly in the Middle East and/or Northern Asia, and to aggressively pursue the war against international terrorism.

No. 431(Commander-in-Chief) —Support Increased Shipbuilding for the U.S. Navy

Resolved, that we urge the Administration and Congress to immediately increase Navy shipbuilding to the point where the U.S. can at least sustain and possibly increase the current number of ships in the fleet; and

Further resolved, that we urge the Administration and the Congress of the United States to closely review the results of the latest studies and restore the U.S. Navy fleet to the level that is required to support our national military strategy, achieve our national objectives, and adequately protect the United States without an unnecessary level of risk.

No. 432(Commander-in-Chief) —Support of Self-Determination for Puerto Rico

Resolved, that we urge the President of the United States and the Congress to enact legislation that supports self-determination for Puerto Rico by defining the political status options available to United States citizens of Puerto Rico and authorizing a plebiscite to provide an opportunity for Puerto Ricans to make an informed decision regarding the island's political future.

No. 433(Commander-in-Chief) —Interment of An Unknown from Vietnam

Resolved, that we support the fullest possible accounting of missing service members from past wars, and therefore, we support the interment of another Vietnam War's unknown's remains in the crypt at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery only if it can be proven that those remains will never be identified.

No. 434(Commander-in-Chief) —Improve Military Readiness

Resolved, that we fully support all Congressional action this fiscal year to authorize and appropriate additional defense money to more quickly improve modernization, munitions, additional tactical air and bomber wings and increase readiness and chemical/biological protections.

No. 435(Commander-in-Chief) —Increase Central Identification Laboratory Capability

Resolved, that we urge the Department of Defense to continue a comprehensive review of the Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CILHI) to include its mission, tasks, work load, operational requirements, and resources to determine if any additional changes in structure are required, and if necessary, increase its budget and the number of personnel assigned; and

Further resolved, that we urge the Administration and Congress to accelerate CILHI's building program in the military construction budget in order to begin the construction of new permanent facilities for CILHI at Hickam Air Force Base as soon as possible.

No. 436(Commander-in-Chief) —Support the Kosovo Peace Agreement
Rejected

No. 437(Commander-in-Chief) —Strengthen Security at Department of

Energy (DOE) Laboratories

Resolved, that we call upon the Administration and Congress to ensure that the provisions of the Department of Energy Reform Law is fully implemented; and

Further resolved, that we urge the Administration and Congress to periodically review the implementation of these improved security measures at Department of Energy nuclear laboratories in order to preserve our national security against the threat of foreign espionage and prevent any further loss of the nation's nuclear secrets to other countries or groups.

No. 438(Commander-in-Chief) —Increase Military Base Pay and Entitlements

Resolved, that we support all congressional efforts to increase entitlements and continue annual pay raises for all grades and ranks that are higher than inflation until the 10 percent pay gap is closed in order to assist in maintaining recruitment and retention goals and improve the quality of life of service members and their families.

No. 439(Commander-in-Chief) —A Full Accounting for Commander Speicher

Resolved, that we urge the Administration and Congress to continue an aggressive investigation into Commander Speicher's fate until either he is recovered alive, his remains are recovered and identified, or until a full accounting of his fate can be determined; and

Further resolved, that we urge the government of Iraq to cooperate with the United States in the effort to account for Commander Speicher.

No. 440(Commander-in-Chief) —U.S. Response to Chinese Actions

Resolved, that we urge the Administration to maintain a policy that demonstrates resolve and leadership in responding to the challenge of China's proliferation of weapons and ballistic missile technology, increased military spending and modernization of its armed forces including increased ballistic missile forces, and its anti-missile defense campaign aimed at the United States and its allies in Asia; and

Further resolved, that we urge the Administration to offer a full assessment of China's future missile development plans to Congress and the American people; and

Further resolved, we urge the Administration to encourage the Chinese government to respect the laws of international air space and abide

by the 1998 U.S. - China Agreement aimed at preventing incidents at sea.

No. 441(Commander-in-Chief) —Condemn Terrorist Attack on America

Resolved, that we (1) Call for increased resources in the war to eradicate terrorism; (2) Support the determination of the President, in close consultation with Congress, to bring to justice and punish the perpetrators of these attacks as well as their sponsors; and (3) Call for fullest possible support to our military forces and their families as they protect the United States and our national interests and prepare for whatever tasks and missions the President may assign to them.

No. 442(Commander-in-Chief) —Award the American Defense Service Medal for Operation Noble Eagle

Resolved, that we urge Congress to approve and the President to sign legislation that awards the American Defense Service Medal to those military service members who served in Operation Noble Eagle.

No. 443(Commander-in-Chief) —Support the Nation’s War on Drugs

Resolved, that we urge the Administration and Congress to review the National Drug Control Strategy and determine if changes are required to apply increased emphasis, energy, and resources towards winning the war on drugs by taking action to reduce the demand for drugs and reducing the flow of illegal drugs into our country.

No. 444(Commander-in-Chief) —Support F-22 Fighter Aircraft Program

Resolved, that we urge the Congress of the United States to provide full funding to the U.S. Air Force F-22 fighter aircraft program to ensure that the armed forces of the United States always achieve air superiority in any future incident, conflict, or war.

No. 445(Commander-in-Chief) —Display the POW/MIA Flag

Resolved, we urge the government of the United States to strictly enforce the existing public law and require all government agencies to fly the POW/MIA flag on the required occasions as well as everyday the American flag is displayed; and

Further resolved, that we encourage the Secretary General of the United Nations to request that the POW/MIA flag be flown at the U.N. Headquarters in New York City as a reminder to all member nations that many persons are still missing from past wars.

No. 446(Commander-in-Chief) —Retention of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences of the Department of Defense (DoD)

Resolved, that we petition the Congress of the United States of America to guarantee continuation of the USUHS.

No. 447(Commander-in-Chief) —Award the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for Operation Enduring Freedom

Resolved, that we petition the Congress of the United States to award an Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for service on Operation Enduring Freedom, commencing on September 11, 2001, and continuing until the operation ends to all members of the armed forces serving or having served on this operation.

No. 448(Commander-in-Chief) —Improve theater Ballistic Missile Defense

Resolved, that we urge the administration and the Congress of the United States to work together to field a capable and reliable theater ballistic missile defense system to protect deployed U.S. military forces and their families as soon as possible.

No. 449(Commander-in-Chief) —Support the Death Penalty for Acts of Treason, in War and Peace, Against the United States of America

Resolved, that when justified by the nature of the crime, we support capital punishment for those who commit acts of espionage or treason against this nation; and

Further resolved, that we support federal laws that allow the courts to sentence those convicted of treason or espionage against the United States in accordance with the nature of the crime.

No. 450(Commander-in-Chief) —Drape the Caskets of Fallen American Warriors with the Flag of the United States

Resolved, that we are firm and united in our demand for legislation establishing the right of every fallen member of the armed forces of the United States to have his casket draped with the flag of the United States immediately upon departure from a foreign country, and that the law restrict the use of flags or symbols of other nations or international organizations upon their caskets.

No. 451(Commander-in-Chief) —Award the Army of Occupation Service

Medal for Service in Trieste, Italy

Resolved, that we petition the United States Congress to rectify this injustice by awarding the Army of Occupation Service Medal to those who served in Trieste, Italy with the U.S. Army from 8 May 1945 – 26 October 1954.

No. 452(Commander-in-Chief) —Restore Vieques Naval Ranges to Full Use
Rejected

No. 453(Commander-in-Chief) —Accounting and Release of POW/MIA Information

Resolved, that we urge the United States government to release all non-personal and unclassified information about missing American servicemen and post it on the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel web site so that the public may have free access to the information; and

Further resolved, that we vigorously pursue all possible avenues on POW/MIA accounting and remain focused on our goal of achieving the fullest possible accounting of Americans missing from our entire nation's past wars.

No. 454(Commander-in-Chief) —Maintain Pressure on Castro

Resolved, that we urge the U.S. government to continue its present policy of no trade with Communist Cuba and no diplomatic recognition of that Communist state and to increase the economic and political pressure on Castro; and

Further resolved, that we urge the U.S. government to use all measures, short of violence and/or invasion, to isolate and maintain pressure on Castro to hasten the time until Castro's dictatorship is overthrown and the Cuban people can regain its freedom.

No. 455(Commander-in-Chief) —Oppose the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

Resolved, that we oppose ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty by the Senate of the United States.

No. 456(Commander-in-Chief) —Oppose Sister County Relationships with Cuba

Resolved, that we vehemently oppose any national, state, county or city or other government entity from endorsing or otherwise encouraging

through its elected officials, the adjoining of cooperation with the sister City Association concept, until Cuba gets rid of its Communist government and embraces a democratic form of government with free elections in Cuba.

No. 457(Commander-in-Chief) —Oppose International Criminal Court

Resolved, that we hereby oppose ratification of the treaty establishing the International Criminal Court (ICC) by the Senate of the United States, and we oppose the United States becoming a party to the ICC in any fashion.

No. 458(Commander-in-Chief) —Transform the Army to Face Security Challenges of 21st Century

Resolved, that we urge the Administration and members of Congress to support a defense budget and appropriate legislation that helps the Army accomplish its selective modernization and recapitalization of the legacy force (the current force), fielding of the interim force, and comprehensive transformation into an “objective force” Army.

No. 459(Commander-in-Chief) —Balanced Energy Plan for America’s Future

Resolved, that we urge the Congress to pass an energy bill that strikes the proper balance between energy conservation measures and increased domestic production, and take the actions necessary in the areas of conservation, efficiency, alternative source, technology development, and domestic production to reduce U.S. energy dependence on unstable foreign sources.

No. 460(Commander-in-Chief) —No Time Restraints for POW/MIA Accounting

Resolved, that no time constraints be attached to the full accounting of our POW/MIAs.

No. 461(Commander-in-Chief) —Support Continued Live Fire Training at PFC Herbert K. Pililaa Range at Makua Valley, Oahu, Hawaii

Resolved, we support the sovereign rights of the United States government to conduct this essential training at the Pililaa Range on Oahu, Hawaii.

No. 462(Commander-in-Chief) —Adequate Funding for the V-22 Osprey

Tilt-Rotor

Resolved, we urge that adequate funds be included in the Department of Defense fiscal year 2005 and 2006 budgets thereby helping to ensure that the V-22 will reach full operational capability in the least amount of time, thereby paving the way for using this important technology as a key strategic weapon for our armed forces.

No. 463(Commander-in-Chief) —Award a Cold War Campaign Medal
Rejected

No. 464(Commander-in-Chief) —American Servicemembers Protection Act
Rejected

No. 465(Minnesota) —Support of H. Res. 103 to Establish a House Select Committee on POW and MIA Affairs

Resolved, that we urge the House of Representatives to pass H. Res. 103 to establish a House Select Committee on POW and MIA Affairs.

No. 466(Department of Virginia) —Total Force Policy and Viable National Guard and Reserve Forces

Resolved, that we urge the National Guard and Reserves to be realistically manned, structured, equipped, trained, fully deployable and maintained at high readiness levels in order to accomplish the missions and roles indispensable to our national defense.

No. 467(Department of Virginia) —Increased Information Flow from DPMO
Rejected

No. 468(Department of Washington) —Representative McDermott
Rejected

No. 469(Department of New York—)Award of Navy Medical Badges

Resolved, that the U.S. Navy authorizes a Navy Expert Medical Badge for all U.S. Navy personnel completing the Field Medical Service School (FMSS) and a subsequent qualifying examination, and authorize a prestigious Navy Combat Medical Badge for hospital corpsman performing their duties with a U.S. Marine Corps Infantry unit during combat. The qualifying time periods would be the same as the U.S. Army's covering WW

II, Korea, Vietnam and other conflicts.

No. 470(Department of New York) —Navy Good Conduct Medal for Individuals on their First Navy Enlistment, Killed in Combat or Separated from Active Duty Due to Wounds or Disability Incurred from Combat

Resolved, that all Navy personnel, on their first Navy enlistment, who were killed or separated/discharged from active duty because of wounds or disability incurred in combat in World War II, Korea and Vietnam be eligible for the first award of the Navy Good Conduct Medal and the accompany certificate.

No. 471(Department of New York) —Cold War Foreign Service Medal

Resolved, that we petition the Congress to authorize a Cold War Foreign Service Medal to recognize foreign service personnel who served in foreign countries that currently are not recognized during America's longest war, the Cold War.

No. 472(Department of Virginia—)Expand Membership Eligibility for all Southeast Asia Veterans of the Vietnam Era

Resolved, to petition Congress to pass legislation authorizing award of the Vietnam Service Medal to personnel who served 30 consecutive days or 60-non-consecutive days (or were otherwise injured in-country prior to completing the aforementioned time periods) during the period 28 March 1973 and 7 May 1975 in areas where the Vietnam Service Medal was previously awarded.

No. 473(Department of Louisiana) —Reduction of Immigration is Necessary

Rejected

No. 474(Department of Texas) —Amend VA POW/MIA Criteria

Resolved, that we ask Congress to change the current requirement in federal law so that a former POW detained for any period of time will be qualified for all POW benefits.

No. 475(Department of Kentucky) —Grant Five-Star Rank to Admiral Raymond A. Spruance

Rejected

RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

No. 601(Commander-in-Chief) —Adequate Department of Veterans Affairs Budget

Resolved, that we urge the Congress of the United States to mandate a budget and authorize appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs, which will fully fund and maintain the integrity of and enhance the veterans entitlement programs and health care system.

No. 602(Commander-in-Chief) —Concurrent Receipt of Retirement Pay and Veterans' Disability Compensation

Resolved, that we urge the Administration to budget and the Congress to subsequently authorized and appropriate funds to pay full military retiree pay to disabled retirees who also receive disability compensation, with no limitation or off-set from either earned entitlement.

No. 603(Commander-in-Chief) —Timely Access to Quality Health Care

Resolved, that we urge the VA to consider, as the top priority, the reduction of waiting times for access to patient care and services; and

Further resolved, that VHA include improvements in waiting times as part of the Network and medical center directors' performance measures.

No. 604(Commander-in-Chief) —Federal Employees Health Benefit Program as An Option for Military Retirees

Resolved, that we urge the Congress to enact legislation requiring the Department of Defense to offer all military retirees the full range of the FEHBP as another lifetime health care option under the same terms as do all other federal departments, agencies and the Postal Service.

No. 605(Commander-in-Chief) —Entitlement to Nursing Home Care

Resolved, that we urge Congress to mandate and provide funding for the provision of nursing home care for all veterans.

No. 606(Commander-in-Chief) —Establish Presumption of Service Connection for Radiation Related Disabilities

Resolved, that we urge Congress to enact legislation to amend Title 38 United States Code

§ 1112 and provide the necessary elements to ensure consistent determinations under all Title 38 regulations (but especially 38 C.F.R. § 3.309(d)) regarding the granting of presumptive service connection and certain radiation-related diseases of skin cancer, posterior subcapsular cataracts, non-malignant thyroid nodular disease, parathyroid adenoma, tumors of the central nervous system, prostate cancer, and rectal cancer.

No. 607(Commander-in-Chief) —Effective Veterans Employment and Training System

Resolved, that we support a viable and effective veterans employment and training system, which has necessary funding and capability to assist veterans in seeking and maintaining meaningful employment and re-employment opportunities; and

Further resolved, that any veterans employment and training system be held accountable and that veterans receive priority of service in all federally funded job-training programs.

No. 608(Commander-in-Chief) —VA Health Care for Women Veterans

Resolved, that we urge Congress to provide sufficient funding to the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure necessary and appropriate health care services are available to women veterans; and

Further resolved, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to mandate a full-time women veterans program manager position at all VA medical centers.

No. 609(Commander-in-Chief) —Funding Fee for VA Home Loans

Resolved, that we urge Congress to repeal VA Home Loan funding fees previously enacted as a budget deficit reduction measure.

No. 610(Commander-in-Chief) —Mandatory Funding for Veterans' Health Care

Resolved, that we urge Congress to establish a statutory entitlement for veterans health care as a means to assure veterans receive the care they justly deserve, obviate diminished access as the current primary method of cost control, and provide a basis for justification of those capital investments needed to streamline processes for efficiency improvements.

No. 611(Commander-in-Chief) —VA Medicare Subvention

Resolved, that we support legislation authorizing the VA to collect

and retain all Medicare dollars; and

Further resolved, that Medicare subvention collections should be used to enhance, not replace, federally appropriated dollars.

No. 612(Commander-in-Chief) —Small Business Administration Veterans Programs

Resolved, that we support the strengthening and sufficient funding of an effective veterans entrepreneurship program in the United States Small Business Administration.

No. 613(Commander-in-Chief) —Support for Gulf War Veterans

Resolved, that we continue to urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish an open-ended presumptive period until medical and scientific research can be adequately utilized to help determine an appropriate time in which conditions associated with Gulf War service will manifest; and

Further resolved, that we urge the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide health care for all active duty military and veterans and, as appropriately determined, their dependents and survivors, whose health has been adversely affected by the Persian Gulf War, and to conduct all necessary tests to determine the causes of these illnesses; and

Further resolved, that we urge Congress to adequately fund appropriate medical and scientific research, and the departments of Defense, Health and Human Services, and Veterans Affairs to implement all relevant laws that support all research efforts; and

Further resolved, that we petition the departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense to define the Persian Gulf War region (also known as the Kuwait Theater of Operation and Southwest Asia Theater of Operations) under Title 38 United States Code § 1117 and Title 10 United States Code § 101 as including the following geographic locations: Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman, the neutral zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Yemen, the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Suez, Suez Canal, Gulf of Aqaba, and the Red Sea.

No. 614(Commander-in-Chief) —Exempt VA Disability Compensation in Determination of Eligibility for HUD's Assisted Senior Housing Program

Resolved, that the Department of Housing and Urban Development not consider VA disability compensation as income when

determining eligibility for their Assisted Senior Housing Program.

No. 615(Commander-in-Chief) —Support for the Guard and Reserve

Resolved, that the provisions of the Uniformed Service Employment and Re-Employment Rights Act be strictly enforced; and

Further resolved, that we support the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve in its efforts to educate employers on the ever-increasing importance of the National Guard and Reserves and their responsibilities as mandated by USERRA.

No. 616(Commander-in-Chief) —Specially Adapted Housing Allowance

Resolved, that we seek legislation to amend 38 U.S.C. § 2102 to allow a second grant to cover the costs of home adaptations for veterans who are forced to replace their specially adapted home with new housing.

No. 617(Commander-in-Chief) —Service Connection for Hearing Loss and Tinnitus for Combat Veterans

Resolved, we request Congress to enact legislation that will authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to grant service connection to veterans with documented combat service and who have been diagnosed with hearing loss or tinnitus at any time after discharge from military service and as being possibly related to such service.

No. 618(Commander-in-Chief) —Licensure and Certification

Resolved, that we urge a standardized licensure and certification requirement be adopted by the appropriate federal and state agencies; and

Further resolved, that recently separated service members be afforded the opportunity to take licensing and certification exams without a period of retraining.

No. 619(Commander-in-Chief) —Adequate Funding for State Veterans' Homes Programs

Resolved, we support a VA per diem payment that equals 33.33 percent of the national average cost of providing care in a state veterans home; and

Further resolved, that we urge the Congress of the United States to fully fund the State Veterans Home Construction Grant Program, giving priority to projects from fiscal year 2003.

No. 620(Commander-in-Chief) —Congressional Funding for the VA National Rehabilitative Special Events

Resolved, that we urge Congress to provide a separate appropriation in the VA budget for the national rehabilitative special events so VA can continue to contribute its share of the funding.

No. 621(Commander-in-Chief) —Veterans' Preference

Resolved, that we oppose all attempts to reduce or circumvent veterans preference.

No. 622(Commander-in-Chief) —Workforce Investment Act

Resolved, that at least one veterans advocate be placed on the state and local workforce development boards; and

Further resolved, we request all “one-stop” centers created by the Workforce Investment Act provide priority of service to veterans.

No. 623(Commander-in-Chief) —Presumption of Service Connection for Veterans Suffering from Hepatitis “C”

Resolved, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to authorize an open-ended presumption of service connection for veterans with Hepatitis C until such time that medical research can adequately determine a reasonable latency period.

No. 624(Commander-in-Chief) —Department of Defense to Increase the Monthly Deduction to \$1.00 for the Armed Forces Retirement Homes
Rejected

No. 625(Commander-in-Chief) —A GI Bill for the 21st Century

Resolved, that we urge Congress to enact a new GI Bill for the 21st Century, which would provide an educational benefit that covers the cost of tuition, fees, books and related expenses along with a stipend to cover housing expenses at the university or college of the veteran’s choice.

No. 626(Commander-in-Chief) —Homeless Veterans

Resolved, that we urge Congress to fully fund all veterans homeless programs that are administered at the federal level.

No. 627(Commander-in-Chief) —VA Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (Cares)

Resolved, that our national, state and local leadership stand ready to work with the VA in this effort to focus resources where they are needed to meet current and future veterans needs, but will not do so at the overall expense of neglecting the care of today's veterans; and

Further resolved, that the VFW National Veterans Service carefully monitor and coordinate with the Veterans Health Administration to keep the VFW membership informed of the progress of CARES to ensure

No. 628(Commander-in-Chief) —Removal of the Limitation on Payment of Accrued Benefits

Resolved, that we urge Congress to enact legislation to remove the inequitable two-year limitation on payment of accrued benefits and instead make it open-ended.

No. 629(Commander-in-Chief) —Include Dental Care as Part of the Veterans' Uniform Benefits Package

Resolved, that we urge Congress to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide dental care to all enrolled veterans as a part of their Veterans Uniform Benefits Package.

No. 630(Commander-in-Chief) —Amend Internal Revenue Code for the State Veterans' Home Mortgage Bond Program

Resolved, that we support legislation to amend the IRS code of 1986 to allow veterans who served after January 1, 1977, in a military operation and who are authorized a military campaign medal, to qualify for the state veterans home mortgage bond program.

No. 631(Commander-in-Chief) —Change Disability Pension Eligibility Requirements

Resolved, that we request Congress to change the eligibility requirements for disability pension to include veterans who have received the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, the Navy/Marine Corps Expeditionary Medal, the Purple Heart, the Combat Infantry Badge, the Combat Medical Badge or the Combat Action Ribbon for operations not falling within an officially designated period of war.

No. 632(Commander-in-Chief) —Repeal of the Montgomery GI Bill Pay Reduction Provision

Resolved, that we hereby petition Congress to repeal the pay

reduction provision of the Montgomery GI Bill.

No. 633(Commander-in-Chief) —Place World War II Veterans in Enrollment Priority Category Six for VA Health

Resolved, that we urge Congress to enact legislation to include all World War II veterans in at least enrollment Priority Category 6 for VA health care purposes.

No. 634(Commander-in-Chief) —Care Purposes

Resolved, that we inform Congress of our strong opposition to allowing private attorney fee-based representation of veterans during the regional office claims process and appellate proceedings to the Board of Veterans Appeals; and

Further resolved, that we petition Congress to pass legislation that will prohibit the VA from collecting fees directly from veterans disability compensation awards in fulfillment of any fee-based arrangement by the veteran with a private attorney, including those cases involving attorney representation before the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

No. 635(Commander-in-Chief) —Refund of Montgomery GI Bill Contributions

Resolved, that we urge Congress to change the law to permit a refund of an individual's contribution to the Montgomery GI Bill when the service member receives a "general" or "under honorable conditions" type discharge as a result of minor infractions or inefficiency.

No. 636(Commander-in-Chief) —Additional Benefits and Services to Vietnam Veterans Children with Spina Bifida

Resolved, we urge Congress to enact a law to provide Vietnam veterans children with Spina Bifida Cystica with comprehensive health care coverage that will now include attendant services, independent living services, up to 48 months of educational assistance, special adaptive housing and adaptive automobile equipment.

No. 637(Commander-in-Chief) —VA to Pay for Nursing Home Care in State Homes

Resolved, that we urge Congress to allow state veterans homes, who admit veterans that meet the VA requirements for mandated nursing home care, to receive the same average contract rate paid to private sector

nursing homes for providing care to eligible service connected veterans.

No. 638(Commander-in-Chief—Military Retiree Survivor Benefit Plan Reduction

Resolved, that we urge Congress to amend current law that requires the beneficiaries' annuity be reduced to 35 percent of the base amount and restore it to 55 percent, notwithstanding the beneficiary's entitlement to Social Security.

No. 639(Commander-in-Chief) —VA Medication Co-Payments

Resolved, that we urge Congress to provide legislation to exempt all enrollment Priority Category 5 veterans from the requirement to make medication co-payments.

No. 640(Commander-in-Chief) —Provide Sufficient Funding for the Local Veterans Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists

Resolved, that we urge sufficient funding be made available for the Local Veterans Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists.

No. 641(Commander-in-Chief) —Support for Veteran and Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Business Ventures

Resolved, that we support the statutory requirements of the Veterans Small Business and Entrepreneurship Act of 1999 (P.L.106-50) and the National Veterans Business Development Corporation in their endeavors to provide opportunities to veterans.

No. 642(Department of Europe) —Post Exchange and Commissary Privileges for U.S. Military Retirees Residing or Traveling Overseas

Resolved, that we petition Congress to enact legislation requiring the Department of State and the Department of Defense to ensure the protection of exchange and commissary benefits for retirees of the U.S. armed forces in all future treaty negotiations, renegotiations, amendments, or adjustments of any nature.

No. 643(Department of Europe) —Timely Survivors' Benefits Program Entitlement Payment to Survivors

Rejected

No. 644(Department of Europe) —Postal Privileges for Retirees

Resolved, that we petition the Department of Defense to restore full postal privileges to Box R patrons, to include removal of the present weight restrictions.

No. 645(Department of Europe) —Space Available for Family Members of Retired Members of the Armed Forces

Resolved, that we urge the U.S. Congress to amend the applicable U.S. Code to allow the travel of unaccompanied family member(s) on a space available basis for the purpose of visiting an incapacitated retired member of the armed forces institutionalized by competent medical authority in a medical facility distant from the normal place of residence of the retired member.

No. 646(Department of Hawaii) —Uniformed Services Divorce Equity Act

Resolved, that we urge Congress to amend P.L. 97-252, “the Former Spouses Protection Act” to allow for the termination of court-ordered payments to ex-military spouses upon remarriage; and

Further Resolved, that we urge Congress to enact legislation that would prohibit forcing a service member from making payments to their former spouse on the date the service member first becomes eligible to receive retired pay if the service member elects to remain in the service; and

Further Resolved, that we urge Congress to enact legislation that ensures any increase in retired pay resulting from increased service or promotion after a divorce is final becomes the sole property of the service member.

No. 647(Department of South Dakota) —Resolve VA Regional Pension Maintenance Centers and Cease Consolidation of VBA Claims Processing Rejected

No. 648(Department of Virginia) —Honor Promises to Temporary Early Retirement Authority for Military Retirees

Resolved, that we urge Congress to amend present TERA legislation to ensure TERA retirees receive the same benefits as their 20-year counterparts who retired for length of service.

No. 649(*Department of Virginia*) —*Federal Tax Publication for Veterans*

Resolved, that we urge Congress to require the Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service to develop a comprehensive, easily readable tax publication specifically tailored for veterans.

No. 650(*Department of Virginia*) —*Veterans Preference for Housing in the Department of Housing and Urban Development*

Resolved, that we support legislation or administrative initiative that will give preference to American veterans and their families in obtaining housing through the programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

No. 651(*Department of Virginia*) —*Veterans Hiring Preference for Federal Contractors*

Rejected

No. 652(*Department of Virginia*) —*Allow Veterans to Retain \$90 of their Compensation While in Medicaid-Covered Nursing Homes*

Rejected

No. 653(*Department of Virginia*) —*Support Disabled Veterans as Priority Under Americans with Disabilities Act*

Rejected

No. 654(*Department of Virginia*) —*Full Funding for Small Business Loans in VA*

Rejected

No. 655(*Department of Virginia*)—*Hire a Veteran Week*

Resolved, that we encourage Congress to establish “Hire a Veteran Week” during the week of Veterans’ Day in the month of November each year; and

Further resolved, that the President of the United States issue an executive order declaring “Hire a Veteran Week” during the week of Veterans’ Day in the month of November each year.

No. 656(*Department of Texas*) —*Extend the IRS Delimiting Date for Use of Home Mortgage Bonds by Veterans*

Rejected

No. 657(Department of Texas) —Require that Certain Veterans Employment and Training Service Positions Be Staffed by Veterans

Resolved, that the positions of Assistant Secretary of Veterans Employment and Training Service; Deputy Assistant Secretary of Veterans Employment and Training Service; Regional Administrator for Veterans Employment and Training Service; Director of Veterans Employment and Training Service; Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP) and Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVER) be staffed by qualified veterans; and

Further resolved, that DVOP and LVER positions be full-time and dedicated solely to serving veterans.

No. 658(Department of Texas) —DVOP & LVER Positions for Veterans
Rejected

No. 659(Department of Texas) —Support for Full Funding of all Veteran Employment and Training Programs
Rejected

No. 660(Department of Washington) —Restore the Right of Spouses of Deceased Retired Military Members to Fly “Space Available”

Resolved, that we request the United States Congress to restore the right of the spouses of deceased veterans to fly as “Space Available” passengers on military aircraft.

No. 661(Department of Nebraska) —Merchant Marine Compensation
Rejected

No. 662(Department of Montana) —Reinstatement of VA Priority Group Category 8

Resolved, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to reinstate priority group category 8 veterans for enrollment at VA health care facilities.

No. 663(Departments of New Jersey & Illinois) —Improve Veterans Prescription Drug Access

Resolved, that we urge Congress to provide the Secretary of Veterans Affairs the authority to fulfill prescriptions written by private physicians for all veterans enrolled in VA health care.

No. 664(Department of Illinois) —Increase in Special Monthly Compensation

Resolved, that we urge Congress to enact legislation to increase the special monthly compensation under Title 38 United States Code §§ 1114 (l) through (s) by an immediate twenty percent above the current base amount and additionally, increase by fifty percent the current base amount of special monthly compensation under 38 U.S.C. § 1114 (k).

No. 665(Department of Illinois) —Concurrent Receipt of Retirement Pay and Veterans Disability Compensation

Rejected

No. 666(Department of Illinois) —Long-Term Care for Veterans

Rejected

No. 667(Department of Colorado) —Support Federal Legislation Allowing Active Duty Military Personnel to Transfer their Educational Benefits to Dependent Family Member

Rejected

No. 668(Department of Florida) —Health Care for Retired Military Personnel

Resolved, that we support legislation to repeal the portion of P.L. 106-398 that requires military personnel, who retired prior to enactment of the law, to enroll in Medicare Part B to be eligible for Tricare for life without penalty.

No. 669(Department of Florida) —Enhanced Dependency and Indemnity Compensation to Surviving Spouses of Service Members who Die While on Active Duty

Resolved, that we urge the Congress of the United States to enact legislation amending Title 38 U.S.C. § 1311 to include entitlement eligibility for the spouse of a service member whose death occurred while on active duty.

No. 670(Department of Ohio) —Homeland Security

Rejected

No. 671(Department of Ohio—)–Change the Death Benefits Currently Offered to Active Duty Military Personnel

Resolved, that we urge the Congress of the United States to enact legislation to increase the death benefit for burial to \$12,000, none of which is to be taxed; and

Further resolved, that an amount not less than \$250,000 of life insurance be purchased for each member of the armed forces by the United States of America.

No. 672(Department of Ohio) –Veterans Preference in Employing Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist (DVOPs),Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER), Assistant Secretary Veterans Employment and Training (ASVET), Regional Administrator Vets (RAVET), Director Vets (DVET), and Other Vets Staff

Rejected

No. 673(Department of Ohio) –Veterans Employment & Training Services

Rejected

No. 674(Department of Ohio) –Department of Veterans Affairs Employment

Rejected

No. 675(Department of Ohio) –Veterans Preference in Federal Employment

Rejected

No. 676(Department of Ohio) –Licensing and Certification for Military Training

Rejected

No. 677(Department of Ohio) –Civilian Credentials for Military Training and Experience

Rejected

No. 678(Department of Ohio) –Employee Protection

Rejected

No. 679(Department of Ohio) –Concurrent Receipt of Military Longevity

Retirement Pay and Department of Veterans Affairs Disability Compensation
Rejected

No. 680(Department of Ohio) —Veterans Preference, Veterans Priority of Service and Other Special Considerations in Employment and Training Programs

Resolved, that we go on record and move that veterans priority of service be expanded to include any agency or organization, state or federal, that receives federal funding for employment and training, i.e., directly or through federal grants through the states (including the Workforce Investment Act (WIA); and

Further resolved, that the Secretary of Labor shall bring together the appropriate departments to establish Department of Labor wide policy of veterans priority of service in Employment and Training Programs and the Secretary of Labor shall vigorously implement such policy; and

Further resolved, that the Secretary of Labor meet with other Secretaries of the Cabinet to review and establish veterans preference and priority of service in their programs, such as HUD for housing and homeless veterans and their families, etc., to help eliminate social, personal, and society barriers related to employment and training to enable veterans to become productive citizens in their communities; and

Further resolved, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States encourage Congress to make veteran service organizations a mandatory partner in the Governor's and Local Workforce Policy Board in the Workforce Investment Act.

No. 681(Department of California) —H.R. 1742 "Veterans American Dream of Homeownership Act"

Rejected

No. 682(Department of New York) —Provide Grave Liners for all Eligible Beneficiaries who Desire Burial in a National Cemetery

Resolved, that we urge the Congress to amend Title 38 Unites States Code § 2306 to allow all eligible beneficiaries who request burial in a national cemetery, regardless if it is open or closed, to be provided a grave liner at no cost to the family.

No. 683(Department of New York) —Pharmacy Co-Payment Exemption
Rejected

No. 684(Departments of Michigan & Maryland) — Presumptive Disabilities for Former Prisoner of War

Resolved, that we request Congress repeal that portion of Title 38 United States Code section 1112(b) that requires a person to be detained as a POW for a period of 30 days or more in order to be considered for service connection for those appropriate traumatic or psychological disabilities listed in that statute.

No. 685(Department of Michigan) — Government Headstones

Resolved, that we petition Congress to amend Public Law 107-103 to allow the purchase of a government headstone at an applicant's own expense through the government contractors for those interred prior to the enactment of Public Law 107-103.

No. 686(Department of Michigan) — United States Flag for Burial Purpose

Resolved, that we petition the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide guidance to his agency, the U.S. Postmaster General, and the National Associations of Funeral Directors, giving clear guidance on Item #3 of the flag application instructions; and

Further resolved, that all three agencies forward instructions to all entities under their respective jurisdictions and request that these instructions be adhered to and be further posted in a conspicuous area for future reference.

No. 687(Department of Michigan) — Application for United States Flag VA Form 21-2008

Rejected

No. 688(Department of Oregon) — Eliminate IRS Delimiting Date for Home Mortgage Bonds

Rejected

No. 689(Department of Rhode Island) — Emergency Care Services for all VA Enrolled Veterans

Resolved, that Congress enact legislation to provide emergency medical care services for all VA enrolled veterans with life-threatening situations when VA facilities are not feasibly available.

No. 690(Department of Wisconsin) —Eliminate IRS Delimitating Date for Home Mortgage Bonds

Rejected

No. 691(Department of Wisconsin) —Eligibility to Dental Care for Former POW's and Veterans Service Connected at 50 Percent or More

Rejected

No. 692(Commander-in-Chief) —Support Collocation of the Boise, Idaho VA Regional office and VA Medical Center

Resolved, that we oppose renewing the lease for the current VA regional office located in Boise and urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to make funds available for design development, architectural planning, and construction for a new VA regional office building in concert with the overall VA plan for collocation of regional offices on VA medical center campuses.

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8/19/2003

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LW Jake Jacobs	6306	AZ
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Ronald C. Kerr	10097	FL
Robert B. Kesling	573	WV
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Gerald L. Kraus	3457	Pt
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